

*Owning
Wednesday*

*by
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Owning Wednesday

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1. Goodbye

For Audrey and Doris
wonderful readers and wonderful friends

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1. Goodbye

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It was six thirty on a Friday night, and I prepared myself to see my lover; a quiet, tender routine between my body and myself. Pluck, wax, soak, shower, perfume, then put on the lingerie, sheer and sleek. The bustier, the stockings, the silk panties. I forewent the dress, fated to spend most of its time in a heap on the floor anyway. The shoes next, black and shiny and slutty. All these things I donned just for him. I put on my make up last, when my tears had mostly been shed, but still, a tear or two managed to escape my eyes.

That night, I prepared myself with utmost care, because I was meeting my lover to tell him goodbye.

Don't worry, he wouldn't be blindsided. Like everything between us, this had been arranged in advance. Planned and agreed upon with calm and thoughtful negotiation. I suppose it's most accurate to say we decided together to tell each other goodbye, but it didn't make it any easier to bear.

When I'd finished my preparations and checked the mirror to be sure my eyes weren't too swollen, I looked around again at my apartment, white and spare. I was almost as anxious about

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him coming here as I was about saying goodbye. He'd been here exactly twice in the eight years we'd been together. He'd come the first time, late, the night my father had passed away; and the second time, the night I had the flu and he'd had to roust me in to the hospital. Oh, the questions he'd gotten that night about the faded marks on my ass. "Consensual," I'd croaked to the nurse through the haze of my fever and anxiety.

We'd both thought that I might die that night as I gasped for breath through pale, and then blue, lips. But I didn't die, and later we laughed over the look of outraged chagrin on the nurse's face. *Consensual?* I could almost hear her harrumph, turning it over in her mind. But no further questions were asked, for which we were both grateful.

It's probable, in hindsight, that she mistook Vincent for my father. Vincent was twice my age and more, in his late forties then. He was fifty two now, but still a profoundly virile man.

But it wasn't his age that drove us apart, or infidelity, or lack of passion, any of those things. What drove us apart was the fact that arrangements like ours had a shelf life. An expiration date of sorts, which was my youth, my biological clock, and Vincent's vaunted sense of responsibility. And then there was Daniel. But Daniel...at this point in my life's story, he was neither here nor there.

I can't remember now who decided to call things off. I think I might have been the first to voice the idea, but it was probably because he had planted it in my brain. I think he never intended to stay with me as long as he had, and he and I both knew that I needed something more than our "arrangement" at some point in my life. I had met him as a hapless 18 year old, and I would be 27 on my next birthday. If I wanted love, marriage, children, the time was now. It filled me with terror, the very idea of going after something so impossible, but Vincent insisted I try it before life passed me by. He had "done marriage and children," as he said, as a young man; his children were grown now, and he enjoyed his life as it was. For myself, I didn't really know what I wanted. I guess I just mostly wanted him to tell me what to do.

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But now he was no longer willing to do that. He felt it was time to get on with my life. Never mind that I was the one who had tearfully suggested it. If I could have taken those words back this night, I would have. But it was too late for that, far too late for me and Vincent. And he was right. It was way past time for us to say farewell.

I busied myself with dusting non-existent dust, straightening things that were already straight, and picking invisible lint off the floor. My apartment was generally clean all the time, but with Vincent coming over, it seemed appropriate to make it absolutely pristine. I had spent eight years of my life trying to be perfect for him, and my apartment could be nothing less. I moved a picture frame one millionth of a degree to the right. *Was it straight? Was it perfect?*

Then I heard his knock at the door, and silly girl that I was, that knock of Vincent's brought tears to my eyes. So perfectly modulated, not too loud or too soft. Two sharp knocks, not too long or too short or staccato. Those two sharp, moderate knocks were *Vincent*, and I knew, like everything else that night, that I would never forget them.

I opened the door with my head bowed, partly to hide the tears in my eyes, but mostly out of long-developed respect. He was my dominant after all, and I his submissive, and nights like these called for the perfect playing of roles. He stroked my cheek softly, just for second.

"Wednesday."

I swallowed hard, steeling myself against weeping. He had already brushed past. I closed and locked the door behind him, before turning and dropping to my knees.

* * *

To say that I loved Vincent would not be totally accurate. I feared him, worshipped him, thrilled under his hands. I gave him everything, my mind, my body. My will. But I was, from the start, forbidden to love him. As in all things with him, I obeyed.

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Love, *romantic* love anyway, was not permitted between us. I was not even his “only.” He saw others, trained others. He played with others when he pleased. I didn’t know who they all were, although he tortured me with stories of them sometimes. Occasionally, he shared me with one of his friends, and they might bring along their own submissive, and I would wonder if this submissive was someone he’d played with before. But it wasn’t for me to know, and unthinkable for me to ask. So these “others” he played with and had arrangements with, they haunted me. I imagined they were all more lovely, more obedient, and more sexually talented than me. I imagined that he loved them where he professed he would not, or could not, love me, and that he dreamed of them, and always them, when he murmured beside me in his sleep.

More and more, in the face of these faceless “others,” I began to have niggling feelings of unrest...or discontent...or perhaps even rebellion. I began to wonder about this alien concept of love and commitment, and as soon as I began to wonder and flounder, instantly he knew. I’m sure he noticed precisely the moment when my fear and desperation to please him commuted to a more self-protective and conflicted state of mind. It took a while, eight years, to get there, but once I was there, there was no going back, and he was the type of man who wouldn’t prolong the life of a dying creature, even to benefit himself.

But as soon as those days of dependence and fear were past me, I desperately wished for them back. I wished to recapture that need, that drive to please him, that pure desire to live for him that had encompassed all my days. Just as I had prepared my body and my apartment to please him, so I did everything to please him once upon a time. I worked out at the gym to make my body what he wanted, mostly toned muscle, but a little softness too. I cut my black curly hair the way he liked, and wore clothes he approved of, clothes he often bought for me. I left time from my activities and assignments for sleeping so I could be rested and alert when I was with him. I ate well, and healthy, for maximum energy, and ate lots of fiber, because he liked to

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use my ass. Too much information? Sorry, but these things mattered very much to someone in my world. I waxed and groomed every inch of myself religiously. The places I couldn't reach, I went to professionals to have done. Through all of this, one thought was always in my mind, and that thought was, *I'm doing this for him*.

I would barely feel the ache in my muscles on the stairclimber, wouldn't feel the wax strips yanking my body hair out by the roots, or the millionth crunch or the millionth push up, because all I thought of was that I was doing it for him. I walked around always in a hyper-awareness of belonging to him, of being perfect for him, a hyper-reality that, I felt, set me apart from all other mere women. My rested, well fed body, my flat stomach muscles, my slim, smooth legs, my tight buttocks, my pristine bikini area, my healthy, fuckable ass, it was all for him. Always all for him.

And what did Vincent do for me in return? Quite a lot, actually. First and foremost, he *wanted me*, and for that alone, I would have died for him. I don't mean *wanted me* in a sexual desire way, because that was just a given. He fucked me high and low. No, I mean it in a sense that he wanted me as a person, for who I was, for what I wanted to be. He wanted to *be with me*. He had chosen *me* to be his lover. Well, one of them, anyway. For me, the forgotten, ignored child that I had been, it was an aphrodisiac, to be wanted to such a degree.

I had grown up the lonely, withdrawn child of a raging alcoholic. Motherless, pitiful, I had sought solace in books. I had made my own life, written it as I wanted it in secret journals, and without those journals, I would have been, by now, completely insane. As it was, I was only half insane. Vincent insisted I wasn't insane at all, only very kinky, but that was only kindness on his part, because I wasn't quite sane sometimes. At least it felt that way when he and I really got going.

Some of the things I enjoyed having done to me, yes, they made me question how sane I really was. Perhaps it was only an homage to his talent as a lover, that I so craved the pain he

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visited on me. The pain he gave, it had a life of its own, as it does for anyone like me. All submissives process pain in their own way, but for me, the thrill was always about the decision. The decision to be still and take it when any sane person would have run. The decision to accept the pain when it was way, way past too much. If you've never been beaten by a whip or caned, there's really no way to describe that moment when it comes, that moment when you literally have to fight with yourself. *I can't take this. I have to get away from this. But I want this, it's what I deserve. It's what I have to endure to make him proud, or aroused, or pleased with me.* You push through it, you *decide to accept it*, and real life, real will, falls away. By the end, you're alive but you're not really there. So why? Why did I want that? I thought about it a lot.

But he never questioned why we liked to do the things we did together, and he got extremely annoyed with me when I did. He forbade me to obsess about it in his presence, and also forbade me to talk about my father, my childhood, or anything that made me feel sorry for myself once he'd demanded the whole sordid story. It was almost as if he absolved me of it. He listened, he judged it as awful, then told me not to dwell on it anymore. He took it away from me, which allowed me to move past it, slide out from under it for the first time in my life. Most kindly, perhaps, he never drank around me, or shared me with anyone intoxicated. He never took me anywhere people would be drunk.

There were people in my life who said he was abusive, people who looked at him with outrage, like that misguided nurse, but it caused me pain to think that people would see him that way, because his kindnesses to me were of the life-changing sort.

Yes, I admit, there were also times he was just plain cruel to me. Intentionally or unintentionally, there were times he hurt me to the quick. Sometimes he hurt me with whips or paddles, sometimes he hurt me with words carefully selected to cut, but that was just part of our arrangement, and he almost always soothed the pain away.

And then, there were those heart stopping moments when he

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let his hand linger long on my cheek, let his fingertips trail more softly than usual over my back, or let his lips rest on my nape just a second longer than I expected. Those moments were rare and seldom, but when they came, I treasured them like diamonds. I had at least enough of them to make a choker, if not a necklace. Enough to make two bracelets, at least.

* * *

Vincent looked around my apartment, his face betraying nothing. I waited on my knees to be told what to do. He had brought nothing with him and I felt a strange disappointment in that. I had secretly hoped he'd tote everything over here, all the instruments of torture he'd ever used on me. I'd imagined him using them all on me one last time, one big conflagration of pain to mark the end of us, like the huge, jaw dropping display that ended every fireworks show. But no, he most definitely had brought nothing, unless he had some nipple clamps stowed away in his pocket.

I knelt, wishing I could go to him, wishing he would put his hands on me, but he did nothing and I started to fear he might only say goodbye and walk out the door. I bit my tongue to keep from pleading with him. *Please take me. Please hold me close before you go.* But he wasn't leaving, and he wasn't moving. He was just looking around, and looking only occasionally at me.

I tried to read him, to read if he felt anger, or sadness, or perhaps relief. But as usual, I could read nothing. I never could unless he wanted me to. But me, he could read me like a book. Surely he knew exactly how hard I was fighting tears, knew I was desperate to pour out my heart, knew I wanted him to come to me. I'm sure he even knew I was trying to read him, and how frustrated I was at my usual lack of success. He knew me inside and out, to a staggering degree; I'm quite sure he knew a great deal about me the first moment our eyes met.

I was sitting in the back of his classroom at UCLA, a graceless, confused freshman of 18. I thought myself pretty

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important since, based on recommendations and writing samples, I'd been allowed to bypass undergrad English for an upperclass creative writing class. Vincent told me later that he'd been in on the decision, and that his recommendation had only been "maybe," but that once he'd seen me in class, he'd known I was where I belonged. And what did I think when I first saw Vincent? Certainly not that we'd end up where we did. I thought he was intelligent, soft spoken, serious, and yes, attractive in a hot-authority-figure type way. He was rather tall, but substantial, not thin like so many tall men are, with a broad chest and shoulder muscles that were defined enough to see through his sweaters. He had dark hair, a little long and tousled, but not too long, and peppered with grey.

But his looks weren't what drew me. At that point I wasn't looking at him in lust. Later I would, yes, but at first it was other things that drew me to him. I adored the powerful way he gestured, and I loved the deep, quiet rumble of his voice. I came to hang on his every movement, his every word, but ultimately it was his eyes that hooked me. When he spoke to me, his eyes pinned me down. Even now, when they fell on me, sometimes I shivered, sometimes I quaked. Sometimes I cried. Sometimes I laughed. Not today. There would be no laughter today.

There was not much laughter back then, either. I was as quiet and withdrawn at eighteen as I'd been as a child, and I was a virgin sitting in that classroom, believe it or not. I was far too awkward and estranged from the world to have even considered an encounter with one of the fresh-faced, vigorous boys who'd populated my high school, who seemed, even at UCLA, to be everywhere. And those boys, those young men, they took no note of me. But Vincent noticed me that very first hour I'd sat in his class. We never really discussed that first moment our eyes met, but I don't think I'm wrong in this; he felt something at once, and I did too. Our relationship was slow to unfold, but our eyes met again and again that first day, that hour I pouted and postured at the back of his creative writing class, certain that I, in my incredible talents as a writer, was far too good for them all.

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And perhaps I was. But too good for him? Not nearly. He had many things to teach me. First in writing, and books, and the world of words, and then in the world of relationships, which I was to discover encompassed so much more than the standard dating, falling in love, getting married, and having babies.

But no, not at first. It wasn't precipitous with us. We didn't fall swooning into each other's arms, not even close. The semester he taught me, he made no moves at all. I had no indication at all what he felt, although in hindsight it seems clear enough that he was laying the groundwork. He urged me to work hard on my writing, to hone my "voice," and to mercilessly edit my work. He kept regular office hours which I took advantage of, going over my pages with my head bent to his, spellbound by his closeness. I thought then that he had no idea what he did to me, but surely, he'd been well aware. He dissected my writing with a brusque and businesslike clarity that both thrilled and cowed me, and to hear him comment favorably on a phrase or a metaphor would nearly cause me to come.

Well, not really. At that point in my life I had no idea what coming even was, and it certainly never occurred to me that Vincent might one day make me come in so many inventive ways. No, at that time, he was strictly my writing teacher, and being the responsible man he was, he didn't come on to me until I'd received my final grade from him, which was, annoyingly, only a B+.

I had gone to confront him about that B+, which just seemed a crappy excuse not to give a full A, especially considering how hard I'd tried, and how conscientiously I'd worked on improving and developing my writer's voice. I'd gone during office hours, and he hadn't looked surprised to see me, or to hear what I had to say, but he'd still refused to change it, asking instead if I wanted to go to lunch. And what a lunch that was. The most strange and mind-blowing lunch of my life.

In short order, he pulled from me a confession of my attraction to him, and made a careful admission of his fascination with me. He told me he'd like us to become lovers, that he would

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like to give me pleasure, *pain* and pleasure, if that was something I might be interested in. And yes, I was interested in it. His power, his stern demeanor was exactly what attracted me to him, and I told him, yes, I wanted him to hurt me and make me feel something real. *Something real?* he had repeated. *Wednesday, I can make you feel more real than you ever dreamed.* But he told me right away, that very first hour, while I was still resonating with the thrill of his proposition, that we could not fall in love, that he would not tolerate any such thing. I remember thinking, so naively, *well, what else is there between lovers? How can there be pleasure without love?* I was to find that it was absolutely possible, terrifyingly possible, the very minute he put his hands on me.

He had given me a lot of warnings that day. I think part of him wanted to scare me off. He had warned me about real pain and submission and obedience, and the more I agreed to, the more he presented to me for consideration. We had eaten, and walked around campus, and talked, and by the end of it, this little virgin had had an earful about what was to come, and this virgin was anxious to get started, and this virgin showed up at Vincent's house to start lessons the following day.

But I hadn't told him I was a virgin, and I had pretended to know what I really didn't know, and while he knew my bravado and equanimity was a front, he had truly been shocked to bust through my maidenhood. Shocked, angry, furious, all those things. I had honestly hoped he just wouldn't notice, but my yelp and the blood was a hell of a giveaway, and he'd jumped away from me like I was some kind of leper. He was livid that I hadn't told him I was a virgin, and sent me away with orders to never come back.

I was devastated by his fury at my dishonesty, and I never, ever lied to him again. And yes, there was an again, and again, and again. He forgave me, and the next time, he finished what he started. Even the stunning pang, the pain I felt when he thrust inside my virginity made me desperate, just desperate for him to fill me up again. When he sent me away the first time, I cried

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bitter tears for the empty ache he left when he pulled out of me. So the next time, the first time he really, truly fucked me, I felt I had finally found the purpose of my life. His cock was like the missing puzzle piece, the thing I needed that I didn't know existed. From the very start I wanted it inside me constantly, *his* cock, and it was, in short order, inside me all the time. My mouth, my hands, my cunt, my ass, between my breasts, wherever he wanted it to be, it was there and I wanted it. I wanted everything he did to me.

And he did do *everything* to me, although not as quickly as perhaps it sounds. He took his time, and it was probably a year after I met him that I finally felt like a halfway decent submissive. At that time, when I was nineteen, and this whole world was new to me, I would have died if he'd left me. I really would have died.

As it was, here and now, awaiting his words of farewell, I was barely keeping it together there on the floor. My breath was catchy, and my knees, if I hadn't been on them, would probably have collapsed.

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“Stand up, Wednesday,” he said. “Let me look at you.”

One last time, my mind added. Let me look at you *one last time*.

I stood up with my arms at my side the way he'd taught me, standing still and straight, back slightly arched. He came over and stood behind me, running his hand over my ass. A subtle pressure, and I was down again on my knees, bending forward while he knelt behind me unfastening his pants. I waited, open and ready to take him, and a moment later he slipped inside. He fucked me slow and deep, his back curved over mine, and as always, I had the strange, terrifying feeling of being one with him. I started to cry, I couldn't help it.

“Don't.” He pulled me back to him, his lips beside my ear. “Enough. This is because of you.”

I shook my head, but if he said it, then it was true, and he was no longer gentle after that. He pulled out of my cunt and thrust into my ass, and while there was plenty of lube still on the condom, I felt punished by the way he used me, just as I wanted to feel.

Vincent always knew just what I needed when I needed it. He always knew just how to make me feel. When I met him, my feelings were fuzzy and imprecise, as if cushioned in bubble

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wrap. Now, I felt a lot with him. Too much. Growing up, I'd found that not feeling worked best for me. I didn't feel my father's blows, his rage-filled tirades raining down on me. I didn't feel the empty, silent home I lived in. I felt nothing at all.

Later, after I'd left home, my father became a monk in an abbey on the east coast. He'd mastered the alcohol, but written off the daughter, his only family, as a loss. He'd replaced booze with a focused and obsessive spirituality, and he frightened me almost as much in his sober monkhood as he had as a drunk. He made a few weak overtures to me on his deathbed, which I ignored. Eventually, the administrator of the abbey called to let me know that if I was going to come, I had to come *now*, but still, I did not go. A week later I called Vincent to tell him I couldn't come the following night as planned, that my father had died. He must have heard something in my voice over the phone; when I got on the plane in the morning, he was beside me holding my hand.

At the abbey, I signed the papers I had to sign to say goodbye to my father forever. I wanted to leave then, to not see him, but Vincent forced me to the funeral. I stood against the back wall of the small chapel. I couldn't and wouldn't approach the pine casket even though it was already nailed shut. Vincent stood beside me, tall and still, until the final note of chanting, when they carried the coffin away to bury it on the grounds. As they carried him out in that plain pine box I thought to myself, goodbye to you, you who took away my life, while beside me Vincent stood like a statue, the one who had given it back.

I let myself imagine, just for a moment that day, that it was Vincent in the casket, and I realized how impossible that would be. I cried all the way back to the miserable boarding room we'd taken on the edge of the grounds, and then stood crying just inside the door. Vincent watched me, mulling over what best to do. Finally, I begged him to beat me, and while he was never one to take orders from me, in this case, he did as I asked.

He hadn't brought anything to beat me with, aside from his belt, which we both knew would not hurt enough. Finally, he'd

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gone out and broken off a switch from one of the saplings in the yard, and used it on me mercilessly. He actually drew my blood, which he hated to do. But I'd gratefully kissed Vincent's hand, for the pain and the release at last. Afterwards he'd held me close until I'd cried myself out, for an hour or more, and I took it for what it was, not love, not affection...understanding.

That was always the thing about Vincent, I guess. He understood me, deeply, and wholly without judgment, as a parent might know and understand their child. Yes, Vincent had raised me, no less carefully than a parent, and for that, I would always love him. Not the love of a girl for her first lover, which he was, or the love of a wife for her longtime husband, but the love of a child for a parent: pure, elemental, indisputable as the sun and the moon in the sky. Vincent had not only been kind enough to raise me, he'd been tuned in enough to recognize me as his own.

I always thought it romantic that he'd *found* me, that we hadn't met where most D/s couples meet, at a sex club. There were plenty of them in L.A. and I knew he frequented them regularly. They were full of beautiful, reckless, brave, willing submissives that wanted and craved exactly what the dominants wanted to dish out. Most of his slaves, he told me, he'd found at these clubs. *But not you*, he would remind me often. *Not you*. Sometimes he said it in irritation, as if it explained why I was so hopelessly inept at pleasing him. Other times he said it as if it set me apart from the others, and in truth, I hoped it made me a bit more special to him, reserved a place of honor for me in his affections. *This one, I didn't meet her at a club. This one, I found myself.*

I can probably count on one hand the number of times he took me to the BDSM clubs. I think in a way he felt I didn't belong there in that shiny, theater-esque forum, and more than that, I think he wanted to guard what was his. Maybe, too, he had other slaves there he didn't want me to see, or to see me. He took me a few times just to teach me the protocols and prohibitions, but I didn't enjoy it at all, and each time we left, he forbade me to ever come on my own.

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But I never would have, even though most of my nights were free. I was happy under Vincent's tutelage, and no dom I saw at the club did so much as turn my eye. Vincent saw me just two nights a week, but it was always enough. Anyway, on Friday nights I slept over, so we spent time on Saturday too. Sometimes just a quick fuck on Saturday morning, other times he'd keep me around until late afternoon. It never felt like enough, but it was enough. Any more, and he would have taken over my life.

But it will probably surprise you to learn that this story is not actually about Vincent, even though he was so much a part of my life and who I am. No, this story is about Daniel, and only partly about Vincent, because Vincent is the one who brought me to him.

Which is why, when he introduced me to Daniel, our relationship became a lot more complex. That blind, faithful desire and fidelity I felt for Vincent was, for the first time, challenged. I made myself sick over it, the guilt and confusion, but not at first. As with Vincent, Daniel's eventual connection to me was slow to develop.

I first met Daniel last year on my birthday. He had been a student of Vincent's years ago, but he was now a very successful screenwriter. His last film was one I had seen and loved, so I was a little star-struck when Vincent told me we'd be going to dinner with him. My own writing, I'm ashamed to say, had fallen off in direct proportion to the intensity of mine and Vincent's affair. I had been reduced, by this time, to my current job as an editor for a small publishing house, which was all right. I actually enjoyed it, but it wasn't my own writing I was whipping into shape.

So, in this state of partial shame and partial excitement, I was introduced to Daniel, the successful writer, over dinner downtown. It was a present of sorts from Vincent, who rarely took me out, much less introduced me to professional friends. Of course, there was a chance their friendship wasn't entirely professional. I watched for a while to see if I could pick up that vibe, that indication that Vincent intended, after dinner, to share me. I didn't feel it, but I wasn't always right about these things. I

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could tell nothing, in fact, of what was going on between them. Daniel gave off decidedly dominant signals, but then, many vanilla men did. The tenor between them was impossible to read, and so I settled in and resigned myself to waiting.

But as the evening wore on, quite against my will, I found myself drawn to Daniel, not as submissive to a dominant, but as a woman attracted to a man. I started to wonder what he thought of me, my dress, my hair, my fuck-me pumps. Did I turn him on? What if I did? This feeling of curious lust both surprised and startled me. I can honestly say during all the years I was with Vincent, no other man had interested me. I only had eyes for Vincent and his utter perfection, but now, inexplicably, I began to hope that Vincent had made plans with Daniel to share. But if he had, Daniel hid it well, he didn't stare at me possessively as his other friends often did, tipping me off to what was to come. He just looked at me like I was a normal respectable woman, the woman of his old friend.

I suppose, in general, I did look totally normal. Vincent collared and cuffed me sometimes in private, but never in public, so there was nothing to make anyone look at me sideways, or think I was kinky or odd. I did perhaps have striking coloring, thick curly black hair, and light blue eyes lined with black eyelashes which contrasted sharply with my pale skin. The joke, of course, is that my name is Wednesday. I was not named for the dour daughter of the Addams Family, I was named for the day I was born, but everyone assumed I was named for her, as from my earliest years, I have looked very much like her. As a child, as some kind of sick joke, my father kept me in long black braids. All I lacked was the black dress with buttons down the front. It was funny to everyone but me.

But now, suddenly, for the first time, I wondered if my hated black hair, my strange clear eyes might be fascinating to him. I found him looking at me often. He had light blue eyes too, but his scruffy pale blond hair seemed much more appropriate to their shade. I began to dream that perhaps he found me exotic and mysterious looking. My lips were painted, as usual, almost

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black. I knew I had pretty lips, full and sensual, and a nice, white-toothed smile. I hated my small, light eyes, but my lips and mouth made up for it. Vincent loved my mouth, in more ways than one, so what did Daniel think of my mouth, I wondered? Did he dream of thrusting inside it while I moaned around his cock? Good Lord, where had that thought come from? I glanced at Vincent, who frowned back at me, unamused.

I tried to put the brakes on my libido. It would be blatantly clear to Vincent by now that I was attracted to Daniel. I wasn't sure what the result of that would be later, but I had an inkling it wouldn't feel good.

The night wore on, fast and yet slow. Dinner seemed to take forever, yet I dreaded it coming to an end. When Vincent wasn't glowering at me, he ignored me. The only conversation I contributed was the conversation Daniel prompted from me. Even then, Vincent interrupted, leaving me to sit looking stupid, which I did, just as he wished. What Daniel thought of all this, I have no idea. Vincent showed me no affection, so he surely knew we weren't a couple, and yet we sat side by side as a couple, and Vincent showed a rude possessiveness towards me. I was dying, absolutely dying to know if Daniel was in on it, and, as it turns out, he was.

I actually got a little breathless when I realized it, that Daniel was coming home with us, that we were going to play. After he and Vincent fought over the check (Daniel won), he helped me put my coat on, and touched my hand, and that was the moment when I knew. I turned to Vincent, half traumatized, half thrilled, and he'd smiled tightly at me.

"I invited Daniel over to the house with us, Wednesday."

"Yes, Vincent," I'd replied, which was all that was really required, and all I dared say at that moment for fear of embarrassing myself.

Daniel said he'd drive his own car, a very sensible Acura in jet black, and so Vincent and I endured a tense drive alone in his car together through the city to his home. Vincent had a nice house, not too fancy, but airy and spare, exactly the type of place

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I liked. I hated clutter. To me, a clear space was a clear mind. My home as a child had been dark and littered with junk. Bottles and papers and clothing and trash and various instruments, in and out of tune. My father had been a musician, that at least he had been good at. But Vincent's home was utterly clean, with the exception of his desk, which always looked like a paper factory exploded, because, unlike me, he still wrote.

I waited in the car for him to clue me in on how he felt about the fact that I was lusting after his friend, whether he was annoyed or furious. Unfortunately, he gave me nothing, only the equivocal silence I knew so well. Perhaps, like me, he didn't know exactly what to feel. This was new ground for both of us. So I sat, silent and anxious, and waited to see how things would go. I hoped he wouldn't be too hard on me since I had tried, at least, to hide my attraction to his friend. If Daniel had sensed it, it would have meant he shared Vincent's uncanny ability to read me, to see through me, and I didn't think he did. He looked at me more like I was a puzzle that he wanted to figure out.

Daniel had arrived before us. He was leaning against his car when we pulled up. I was already wet as I'd ever been between the legs. There was something about his demeanor, something tender there, instead of just tough. Honestly, I'd been shared many times and I had no doubt, if Vincent had invited him, that he knew what he was doing. But I also had a feeling he would be an entirely different creature than Vincent or any of our previous thirds.

I looked at their backs as we walked up the sidewalk, noted that Daniel was shorter than him, and perhaps just a little more muscular, but not by much. Daniel wasn't what you would call classically handsome. His face was too broad, a little ruddy and rough. But his lips...yes, I'd noticed...were full and sensuous, and his eyes were beautiful, expressive, deep, icy blue. His hands were big and capable looking. Submissives always checked out hands.

I wondered what he was feeling as he walked with Vincent towards the door, towards the door behind which he would be

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allowed to touch me, explore me, and use me at will. Lust, desire, curiosity? All the same things I was feeling? I wanted to ask him a million questions. *Are you attracted to me? What will you do to me? What do you like? What do you want?* But it wasn't my place to ask, and he would let me know soon enough what he wanted of me, so I just followed behind them while my pulse beat wild and fast in my ears.

Inside, Vincent offered him a drink which he refused, to my relief. Not that I imagined him as the type to get sloppy drunk. I just didn't want to wait for things to get going. Vincent led him to the play room, which looked just like the rest of the house, only the walls were soundproof and there were hooks hidden everywhere, and cabinets full of "toys." Toys that I knew, by this point, exceedingly well, toys I was sure that Daniel, having been invited here, was familiar with too.

There was no real talk, no negotiating. Vincent told me to undress, but as I began to unhook my stockings, Daniel said, "Have her leave them on."

I looked at Vincent, who nodded shortly, and then I knelt down, and he buckled on my collar and cuffs. He looked at Daniel and said, "What do you want?"

Daniel looked back at him, and then at me. "I'd like to have her alone."

"No, I don't think so," replied Vincent with a terse smile. "But she's perfectly capable of attending to us both. Wednesday," he prompted quietly.

I crawled to Daniel in my stockings and heels, and knelt at his feet, looking up at him, my lips parted just slightly. I had been trained not to offer myself, to wait always for orders, but it was certainly clear to him what was at his behest.

"Yes," he said, after a moment. "You can suck me. Undress me first." He undid his pants while I worked on his shoes and socks. He had his shirt off before I could even get to it. He seemed eager to show his body to me, and no wonder, because nude, he was absolutely breathtaking. Vincent was no slouch, but this man, he worked out. A lot. I wanted to caress him, to run my

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hands all over his perfectly honed, masculine body, but I didn't. I only fell back to my knees and let him guide his cock into my mouth.

Daniel was a big man, but so was Vincent, so I had no problems accommodating his size. I sucked him off within a few minutes, and a snap of Vincent's fingers had me scurrying over to him next. I'm ashamed to say that even as I sucked Vincent, thoughts of Daniel, hard and beautiful, crept into my mind, and surprisingly, he knelt behind me before I'd even finished with Vincent, and thrust that hard, beautiful cock I'd been dreaming of deep inside. I had no idea how he'd gotten hard again so fast, or how he'd rolled on a condom without me noticing, but I was too far gone to think on it very long. He fucked me, rough and steady, reaching around to pinch my nipples, and precipitously, uncontrollably, I'd come.

Unfortunately, I wasn't allowed to come without permission, which I'd most certainly not been given. Daniel didn't stop but I knew he'd felt it, because he'd moaned just a little and squeezed my hair in his fist.

When they'd both come, Vincent in my mouth and Daniel in my pussy, I stayed on my hands and knees, breathless and aroused.

"Your submissive came," Daniel said to Vincent as he threw the condom away.

"I know. She's a real slut that way. I'll punish her. Or you may, if you wish, since it was you that made her come."

And I knew, not even looking up at Vincent, that he was furious. So be it, what was done was done. Daniel had made me come, and now he'd punish me for it. I was dying to know the strength of his hand.

Vincent rattled off the implements at his disposal, asking Daniel what he wanted to use.

"I want to spank her over my lap," he answered, "if you don't mind."

"No, I don't mind," Vincent said evenly, although I could hear the irritation in his voice. "Why don't you plug her while

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you're at it, and we can both take a turn in her ass when you're done?"

"Sure. That sounds good. Come, Wednesday," Daniel prompted me, patting his lap. It thrilled me to hear my name on his lips, and the authoritative, quiet way he said it. I crawled over and let him pull me across his thighs. He took a moment to run his hand over my ass, the tops of my thighs. His fingers traced down the straps of my garter belt to where they met the lacy tops of my stockings. I was perfectly in position, but he manhandled me anyway, pulling my hips closer to his, taking my arm.

"Would you like me to restrain her?" asked Vincent.

"No," laughed Daniel. "I think I can handle this one." Vincent handed him a toy for my ass, and being annoyed as he was, he had chosen a huge one. Daniel was careful, but still I moaned plaintively as he drove it home. "Hush," he'd chided in a low rumble. "You know it doesn't hurt that much."

Then he began to spank me, even giving me a short warm up first. God, this man was wonderful, I thought, but I quickly realized why the warm up was necessary with him. He spanked like a freaking pile driver, hard and direct and relentless and fast. He took my breath away, and made me struggle, and even, finally, shed some tears, and through the entire ordeal he hadn't once, not once, loosened his firm grip on my arm.

Finally, when my ass was so flaming and raw that it was beginning to go numb, he stopped and stroked my bottom cheeks thoughtfully.

"She takes a good spanking."

"She takes a good strapping and cropping, too. Paddling. She's an obedient girl. Hold her, and I'll cane her a little. She really hates the cane."

Holy shit. He was really mad at me. Daniel released me and pushed me off his lap. Surely he realized it was his fault, Vincent's anger, but while he may have felt regret at his part in it, I think he was also eager to see me caned. I turned and offered my hands to Daniel, but instead he had me lay my head in his lap. I folded my hands at the back of my neck, and he held them

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for me there. Cool, firm hands closed around my clenched ones. Vincent laid into me then, ten hard strokes. I sobbed and quaked from the devastating pain, and even Daniel's scent and heat and rock hard thighs couldn't distract me. Even his hands, his unforgiving hold on me, couldn't fully shelter me from the anger Vincent was venting on my already red-hot ass. By the end I was a complete mess, crying and straining against his grip.

"God, Vincent," he said. "She's a beautiful girl."

Vincent hadn't answered, but I'd kissed and nibbled softly, just once, at the juncture of Daniel's beautiful hard thigh. It was a forward, naughty thing to do, but I did it anyway. In answer, he guided his cock to my lips as Vincent pulled the toy from my ass and thrust into me hard. He fucked me while Daniel slid in and out of my mouth, and I felt at that moment absolutely mastered, lost and bodiless and fully given over to sex, to my master. My *masters*. The master at my front, and the master at my back. Vincent came in short order, and then Daniel, already hard and ready from my attentions, rolled on a condom and took his turn at my ass.

Vincent just watched, and I knew that this act would conclude our scene, and that I would never see Daniel again, so I gave myself up completely to sensation, to the invasion of his body in me. His hard thick cock, in and out, deep inside, and then back, and then deep again. I arched and sighed and reveled in it, which would have infuriated Vincent, but Daniel, I think it drove him on. His hands roved all over me, as if he too knew this was a moment that wouldn't keep. When I drew up taut like a bowstring, determined not to come without permission and cause him displeasure, he leaned close to me, right next to my ear, and whispered, "come."

And somehow I knew it was to be our secret. Seconds later, I came, came hard and long, but I didn't make a sound, made no outward sign at all. The silence of it seemed to intensify the sensation. It seared me, raw, stinging pleasure across my nerves. He came too then, loud and rough, and I let out a soft moan under cover of his growls. He had fallen over me, taut and

2. Secret

breathless, and nipped me on the back of my neck, just as I'd nipped his thigh. As if he was telling me, *It will be our secret.*

Or maybe *Remember me*, was what he'd actually meant.

3. Silenced

Vincent had certainly been angry that night, which I chalked up to disappointment that I'd lapsed so far from how I'd been trained. Felt too much, lusted too much, lost control of myself. Fallen for someone I didn't belong to. Fallen hard.

After Daniel pulled away, Vincent yanked me up by my collar. "Wednesday, thank our guest."

I murmured quick, breathless thanks to the floor at Daniel's feet. Then Vincent had dragged me to the corner and hooked my cuffs to a bolt in the wall. I hung my head, laid my hot forehead against the wall's cool surface. He and Daniel talked for a few more moments, perhaps even a quarter hour, about professional matters, writing, upcoming plans. Vincent gave no suggestion of a future meeting, and Daniel finally bid him goodbye. I wondered, close to tears, if he'd looked over at me one last time before he left.

If he had, he would have seen a pitiful creature, beaten, tethered, head bowed; a sub bracing, resigned, for more pain. He would have known that my evening was only starting, that Vincent was not pleased with me, that I would be punished further after he left. Did he feel sorry for me? Guilty? Titillated? Resentful? I had wild visions of him rescuing me, whisking me away. *She's mine now. Only I can hurt her, not you.* Silly

3. Silenced

visions. Tears came to my eyes again. I was so confused.

Vincent returned and sat watching me for a long while. It was punishment enough, his deep disapproval washing over me in waves. He walked to me then, standing right behind me.

“You’re a little slut, you know.”

I let out a sob.

“Tears. Save it. Are you still thinking of him now?”

I sobbed louder, hating myself. “I’m sorry, sir,” I said in a voice that sounded like a plea.

“I’m sorry too, Wednesday. I didn’t ask him here for your pleasure. I asked him here to use you like the fucking whore you are. And he did,” he added, “although he seemed to think you belong to him now. Who do you belong to, Wednesday?”

“I belong to you, sir. Only you!”

“Do you?” He said the words quietly, but he might as well have screamed them.

“Yes, sir. Yes!” I sobbed, finally turning to look at him. “Please, sir, I belong only to you.”

“Turn around. I know you do.”

He left me and came back with a little whippy crop. He used it to mark my buttocks, my legs, and my back, and while I moved from him a little, I mostly stood still. I let him beat me, as he should have, because that night, the rules that defined us had been broken by me, broken recklessly, perhaps, past the point they could be fixed.

When he’d finished with the crop, I ached and hurt, felt emptied out from within. He’d pushed me to the floor and fucked my ass again, hard and rough, then yanked me up, and it scared me that still, *still* he was angry. He’d slapped my face once, then again, hard, then said, “Happy birthday, Wednesday,” before unhooking my cuffs and collar and dragged me up to bed.

But honestly, for a birthday, for me, that one was pretty good. I’d had worse, much worse, when I’d had them at all. My birthday as a child was always a crapshoot. Sometimes I got presents and a cake, sometimes nothing at all. Most often, racked with guilt in the face of his inadequacy as a parent, my father

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spent my birthdays getting drunk, as always, and beating me down.

But Vincent, he didn't beat me down. That night, in bed, he'd held me in his arms. I'd cried uncontrollably, and while he hadn't deigned to speak to me, he'd held me close, and still held me when I woke up the next day.

And now, this excruciating night of goodbye, it was moments like that that came to my mind, those *moments* we'd had. The *moments* he'd given me like a gift, over and over, sharper and more true than anything else. Those moments were what I mourned for.

This night, too, that Vincent and I were ending, there was no Daniel waiting in the wings, so I was truly bereft. I hadn't heard from or seen Daniel since the night of my birthday, and any hopes and dreams for a future together had long since faded away. Anyway, I thought, with Vincent's exit, that part of my life, that phase, was over. I was on to real life, because Vincent said I should move on. Ever the obedient sub.

* * *

When Vincent finished with my ass, I stayed still on my knees, my forehead to the floor, while he sat on the bed, took off the condom, tossed it in the trash. Never, in eight years, had he used me without one, although he'd done tests, bloodwork, to prove he was clean. He was my only partner, but I was not his, and so, in deference to that inequality, he protected me. He protected me in many ways, actually, many of which I would probably never even know. Pain and yet pleasure, jeopardy and yet protection, I love you...but not like that. Complicated, probably, but I understood, as did he. Would anyone else ever understand me? Well, yes...but I didn't know it then.

My hands were fists beside my head. I felt the lack of cuffs, the lack of a collar, with devastating clarity. I hoped he might bring them and leave them with me, a souvenir of our time together. I had nothing, absolutely nothing of him, save my

3. Silenced

memories and a few, very few, ghostly pale stripes of scars across my ass. Even that, I'm sure, he wished I didn't have. When he was gone, he would be truly and utterly gone. There was no hope in my mind that we would reconcile, that we might decide, on second thought, to reunite. This was the most final goodbye I'd ever participated in. Even the goodbye to my father had not felt so acute.

After a few moments, I have no idea how many, he came and sat beside me, and ran his fingers up and over my back, across all the curves of my compliant, submissive form. "Wednesday," he'd breathed. In hindsight, it was at that moment, when he breathed my name in something akin to reverence, that perhaps, just perhaps, he was in danger of falling apart too. But such an occurrence would have traumatized me, and thankfully, he held himself together, and took another quiet breath. He caressed me for a long time as I knelt there, still. His fingertips traced over my ass, the curve of my hips, the round hollows of my shoulders, then he reached below me to fondle and squeeze my breasts. Eventually, his fingers worked their way into my hair, and he pulled, hard enough to tell me what he meant. I sat up and moved to him, and he guided me over his lap. He spanked me for a while, but he was never much of a straight spanker. He stopped after a few moments, when I had barely warmed up.

"Go and bring me your hairbrush." He knew I had one that was good for spanking, because he'd given it to me himself. I stood and went to fetch it, and brought it back, handing it over with a sigh. It hurt like hell, that hairbrush. It made me wild, but for tonight, I suppose, it was a good thing. He held me hard as he paddled me with it. I jumped and fidgeted, I couldn't help it. It was a hard spanking, one of the hardest ever, as I'd expected it to be. *Something to remember me by*, he told me wordlessly, each time he brought it down on my ass.

Finally, when I was crying real tears of pain and anguish, he put the brush down, and I went still. I let myself relax over his hard thighs, sobbing, the pain of goodbye forgotten, replaced with the torment of a hard, inescapable spank. He stroked my

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hair, letting me calm myself, feeling me shudder as he stroked the welts. He pulled me onto the bed then, and I lay down on my stomach, but he stopped me and turned me over onto my back.

My eyes and cheeks were still wet with tears, and I winced as my tender ass came to rest against the sheet. He parted my legs and began to stroke the tender skin between my thighs, and then stroke my clit. His fingers slid over it; it was wet and hot, but I shivered as he looked down at me. Then he dipped his lips to my body, kissed me there, sucking on my clit, and then stroked a slow, deliberate trail across my slick folds with his tongue. The pleasure was amazing. I shivered with it, but at the same time, I was unsure of what he wanted me to do. He smiled, enjoying my flustered unease. He had taken me this way, with his mouth, few enough times that I was unbalanced.

“Put your hands over your head, Wednesday. Leave them there.”

I did as he said, and he wrapped his hands around my buttocks, pulling me closer, and then he lowered his mouth to me again. My God, he had a talent for this, it was a shame he hadn’t done it more often, but it felt a little too submissive, on his part, for us both. Not that he did it in a way that could, by any stretch of the imagination, be called submissive. He was relentless, rough, and thorough in his attentions, and he made me come, or perhaps more accurately, demanded that I come, twice before he pulled away.

Then he parted my legs even further, parted them wide, almost past comfort, and arched up over me. I was limp and lazy with pleasure by that point and he slid inside me with ease. He held me close and fucked me, body to body, chest to chest, stomach to stomach, and I thought I would just die if he ever, ever stopped. *You have to remember*, I thought to myself frantically, *you have to remember this feeling of him inside*. He had been the very first man inside me, and still, he felt like that first time, urgent and thick and perfect and amazing.

We moved together there on my bed like one body, one creature. My breaths were his breaths, and his hands were my

3. Silenced

hands. My hands were crushed in his, still raised obediently over my head, and his lips found mine and kissed me with passionate insistence. "Come, Wednesday," he urged me. "I love how you look when you come." I came hard, gritting my teeth against the pulsing, overpowering climax. I let it wash over me, clenching my fists. I hadn't acted or embellished my reaction, no, because that wasn't what he wanted. He never wanted any pornographic reactions from me, bucking and screaming and thrashing or anything of the kind. He only wanted to see me tense all over, and gasp for breath from the pleasure and shock of it, just as I did under the whip, under his hand, and so I did. When Vincent made me come, I came for both of us, and he came after me, a growl in my ear.

For a long time then, he lay on top of me. *Remember, remember*, I exhorted myself. *Remember his weight on you, the scent of him, the tickle of his chest hair, the brush of his breath against your ear.*

"Kneel beside the bed," he finally said, soft and authoritative as always. "Face me, with your hands in your lap."

I stood, my legs weak and shaky from too much pleasure, and then knelt as he told me, my eyes cast down.

"Don't cry," he said. "Just listen."

He leaned forward and cupped my cheek, and kissed me softly, more softly than he ever had, on both my eyes.

"Thank you, Wednesday, for everything. I'll miss you."

I'll miss you too, I wanted to cry out. I'll miss you so much! I don't know how I'll ever survive.

"I wish you the greatest happiness in life," he continued. "I wish for you everything you want; you'll get it. Don't settle."

I bit my lip. I could still feel his lips, soft and yet hard, brush against my lids. I looked at the ceiling, at the walls, and then at him. *Please let me speak. Let me say it all.* I started to open my mouth, to just tell him everything, or even just one thing, *thank you...*

"No," he said. "No." One word, *no*, but in our economical language I understood the myriad layers of it.

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No, I want to remember you as you are.

No, we're saying goodbye, let's not risk this.

No, you'll say something you'll regret.

No, there are not enough words for the weight of this moment between us anyway.

So I knelt, hot with sadness and unshed tears, and ground my teeth to keep the weeping at bay. Even so, a few tears escaped and rolled down my cheeks. They were ignored. Soon after, with one last kiss to my forehead, he stood and left, closing the door behind him.

So all the words that longed to spring from my tongue were forever silenced. No matter. In the way he had of understanding everything about me, I'm sure he knew exactly what I felt, exactly what I would have said down to the last syllable, exactly what I would have said if I could have, which is why, probably, he insisted on my silence until the bitter end.

* * *

Beautiful, beautiful Wednesday Carson. I would never forget her. I had meant to say those words to her at the end, *I'll never forget you*, but at some point I just had to get the hell out.

Poor Wednesday, how many things she'd wanted to say to me, kneeling there on the floor. Hopefully she understood why I couldn't let her, why it was better this way.

There were no words in the world anyway to do justice to the eight years she'd lived under my hand. I hated the way words sometimes belittled moments, which was a strange way to think since I was a writer. I guess, as I writer, it annoyed me more than the average person, how words never quite lived up to real life.

But Wednesday, what faith she had in words. It moved me, it always had, her blind belief in words as a panacea. I didn't agree with that belief, any more than the savior worship feelings she had for me, but I wouldn't, couldn't take those beliefs away. It would be too cruel.

I remember the first time my eyes had fallen on her, sitting

3. Silenced

intentionally apart in the back of my class, all cynical frown and feigned confidence, not realizing she was a minnow in a pool full of sharks. She was small anyway, but she'd looked smaller next to all those older students, or more fragile somehow, like a breakable china doll. I'd wanted to cradle her in my hands every bit as much as I'd wanted to see her shatter.

By that time I was already quite familiar with her writing. I'd read everything in her file, fascinated by the grasping, fearless way she used words, even at the tender age of eighteen. I'd told her that I'd been ambivalent about her talent, that I hadn't pushed one way or the other to have her in my class, but the truth was I'd been the one to suggest it, to insist upon it really. This was raw material I had to form. I had to put my hands on her. I had to mold her before she moved along. Little did I know exactly how much my hands would be on her. If I had known, well, I probably still would have done things the same.

And when had I known, really known, my hands would be *on her*? I had told her, when she asked, that I had known at once, the moment I laid eyes on her, but that's probably a little disingenuous. I had perhaps *hoped*, more than *known*. My feelings for her, my fascination and interest grew over weeks and months, and by the time I finally laid things out for her, it would have killed me if she'd balked. But she hadn't balked. She'd come to me without hesitation, and she'd never, not for a moment, ever given me less than one hundred percent.

Well, again...my words are inaccurate. Until right before the end, she gave me one hundred percent. At the end, she gave me something close to ninety percent, the other ten percent a frantic amalgamation of guilt, fear, and sadness that was painful to watch. I could only endure it for so long; still, I let us go on, selfishly, much longer than was probably wise. I'm not sure why I clung to her so peevishly at the end. It was obvious to us both that it was time for her to move on. I suppose Wednesday was just somehow extra special to me. Too special. Too young and special to waste her life with me, which is unfortunate, because honestly, I'd like to be with her still.

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Why so special? I guess because Wednesday came to me a baby, an innocent, so innocent it almost hurt me to take it away. But I had taken it away of course, every last shred of her innocence, in short order, for my own selfish means. I had even, God, taken her virginity. Was I worthy? I like to think I was in the overall scheme of things, although that first encounter wasn't exactly fairytale-like. Her fault, not mine. But she enjoyed it all, every minute of her time with me, so I'd waste no time feeling guilt. Anyway, there would always be something, *something* about her that was pure and untouched. That was just Wednesday. That was just how she was, and likely always would be.

You're probably wondering, if she was so special to me, why we couldn't just take a chance? But love, romance, happily ever after...sorry, too trite. If a student turned in a story like that to me, they would have gotten an F. Anyway, it would only be romantic until she started having to change my diapers and endure my fits of dementia in old age. No, no, no, not for my Wednesday. I would be an old man alone.

So, she was feeling sad and lost at this moment in time, but I wasn't worried about her. I had a pretty good idea where her life would go. She would be happy and find love, that love she didn't yet realize she so desperately wanted and deserved. I knew she would also find someone just as wonderfully kinky as her, because an imagination like hers would be a crime to waste.

And me? Yes, of course, I would be fine. I would miss her. I would remember her, but life goes on. I actually had a date already planned with a new girl, a club girl, young and eager to please. I could already tell this one would be uncomplicated, easy to control. At my age, the dance of seduction was just a nuisance. At my age, you didn't care so much about the chase.

But tonight, just tonight, I'd let myself mourn a little, turning over her collar and cuffs in my hands. Bring the leather to my lips, breathe in the scent of her, the subtle, haunting scent that still lingered on my skin. I'd mourn for that lovely curved back, those velvet thighs, that stunning round ass. Those thick black

3. Silenced

curls, the porcelain skin, the dark lips. The blue eyes looking at me like a sober little doll, open and willing. Frantic to please. Those shining eyes just bursting with things to tell me, the words trapped behind that tremulous, fearful, brave, submissive smile.

4. *Bid*

“Thanks,” I said to the waitress as she set the coffee down.

“Sure, Mr. Laurent.”

I rattled my paper and furtively checked my watch.

7:55.

Almost time.

Okay, I didn’t do this every day. I’m not that pathetic. But yes, I did it often enough that the wait staff knew me by name.

God bless Wednesday for telling me where she worked that night over dinner. It made her easy enough to find, and once I’d located this café across from her office, I’d embarked on an ongoing weekday morning habit. I knew she got into work around eight, and left to walk home every evening at five. I didn’t watch her leave very often though. The temptation was just too great, the temptation to cross the street and “run into” her. *Wednesday, hi. What a surprise. Are you hungry? How about dinner? I can drive you home afterwards.* It would have been so easy, so quick.

But no, that wasn’t really an option. Dominants, unfortunately, had a code of conduct in matters like these. Wednesday was Vincent’s and until she wasn’t Vincent’s, she couldn’t be mine. So I’d been doing this instead, waiting here to catch a glimpse of her, since way back in March. March 29th

4. Bid

was the day I'd met Wednesday, and the first day I'd sat here watching for her had been April 1st. April Fools Day. And yes, I was a fool for her, of that you need have no doubt.

I was not generally a foolish person. Playful sometimes, silly, yes, but never a fool, and certainly never over a woman, but, well...things change. I thought I had my head on pretty straight when I got into this life. By *this life*, I mean the clubs, the meet ups, the organized underworld where people exchanged accepted social rules for a dance of their own, a sometimes erotic, sometimes strange dance of power and submission. *Hurt me. Own me. Take me. Want me. Be my master. Be my slave.*

To be honest, I had always been attracted to this dance. I had always, for as long as I can remember, wanted to possess a woman, have her in my power, in thrall to me, under me, breathless and submissive. I can remember at nine or ten, chasing girls on the playground just to hold them down, just to see that spark of rebellion in their eyes, feel them struggle to get away. The best ones only pretended to struggle, looking at me as if we shared a secret. *I understand you, and you understand me.* I chased those rare girls again and again. In time, I became friends with them, and by the end of my college years, I was entrenched in the D/s world. But I was never one of those serious hard core players. Not like Vincent.

I met a lot of men like Vincent at the sex clubs, and a lot of great women. After college, women got harder to meet. The right women, anyway. The ones who would let me play with them at the same time we played boyfriend and girlfriend. Women in the real world were a lot less adventurous than college girls, and when I went back in search of the wild, kinky college girls I'd known they were all grown up and married too. So I turned to the clubs even though I was not really at home there. I thought if I stuck it out, I would run into the girl I needed, who needed me and what I wanted to give. But I found the clubs were mostly posturing and falseness, the playing of roles that ended on a word.

I didn't want a "scene." I wanted a relationship, but it seemed

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that everyone around me preferred finite games and empty sex. The submissives wanted you to do what they wanted, what they liked, what they preferred, and the dominants played along, only pretending to have control. Maybe it was the writer in me that dissected them all so ruthlessly. I played along anyway, out of necessity, and inevitably each scene ended, and I returned, unsatisfied, to real life. I thought that was all there could be to it now. Play. Pretend. Surface rituals without deeper love. I thought that's all I had to look forward to, until Vincent invited me to his house that cold, rainy March night, and I learned there was a place for love in this strange world after all.

Running into Vincent at the clubs had seemed a boon to me. I had respected him as a teacher years ago, and I'd seen him now and again during writerly pursuits. It didn't take long to notice that he was at the pulse of things here. He knew what he was doing, although he clearly wasn't in it for love. It gave me a certain respectability to be friends with him, and we talked often at the clubs over drinks, of work, or the scene, about the state of the modern submissive, about this girl or that, about our experiences in the scene and what we wanted from it. I'm sure he scoffed inwardly at my desire to develop a deeper relationship here, but he was outwardly encouraging, in a condescending kind of way. He didn't tell me right away about the girl he knew named Wednesday, the girl he *owned*, and when he did, it was as if he shared a secret of great import.

"She's a special girl," he told me. "You would enjoy her. You can enjoy her if you'd like, if you'd like to come over one day."

"Come over?" I knew this game of sharing went on a lot, but it was something I'd never understood, being the jealous, possessive type. I narrowed my eyes. "Hmm. I don't know."

"It's completely up to you, Daniel," he said, but I got the strong feeling he wanted me to agree. "We could go to dinner first, if you need a 'deeper relationship,'" he'd added archly. "We generally do have dinner, before *dessert*." He spoke of it so casually, sharing his lover. It turned me off.

"You share her a lot? If she's so special to you, why do you

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share?”

“I don’t share her a lot. Now and again. If I find someone I think is worthy to bring into our little world.”

“Someone worthy? I’m flattered. But that also shows you love her, if you select so carefully.”

“No, I don’t love her. I value her. I’ve told you she’s very special. I’m careful with her, yes.”

“Why then? Explain to me. Why do you share what you value so much?”

He pursed his lips, annoyed. Surely he saw me as the callow dilettante, to ask such a thing.

“Because, Daniel, it shows how much she worships me, how much she’s willing to obey me. How much she’s willing to give.”

I frowned, stirring my drink. “So I’d be a trial for her then? A test of obedience?”

Vincent sighed. “Don’t read so much into it. The pleasure will go three ways, I assure you of that.”

The pleasure will go three ways. I am a man, after all, with a pretty high sex drive. As he probably intended, those words titillated me enough that I finally agreed to go. We set a date for the following week, as if we were setting an appointment. We would meet for dinner first, get to know each other, and then “play.”

Ugh, that stupid word. Playing was the last thing on earth I wanted to do, but I was intrigued, very intrigued by this Wednesday that he so carefully deigned to share. I wondered now and again as I looked ahead to our meeting why he’d decided to share with *me*, who he so clearly found to be lacking in discipline and professionalism. Vincent was a professional dom. I was just a schoolboy in his eyes, so why had he chosen me to share this sub he so valued? Perhaps to show her how superior he was to me, or because he would not feel threatened by me. Whatever. I got hornier and hornier as the week went on.

As I said, sharing went on a lot in these relationships, but for me, this was to be a first. Vincent assured me that he would

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move the scene along, that I only needed to wear condoms and play with his girl however I saw fit. Back on the playground again. When we would all grow up? The idea of dinner first, too, seemed nothing more than playing. Playing at civility, at normalcy, at politesse. Take her out to dinner, buy her a nice meal before you use her, before you take her home and fuck her like a toy. I would have rather just skipped dinner and cut right to the chase.

But when the day arrived, when I got to the restaurant, I realized that dinner actually wasn't just a game. It was foreplay, and heightened, effective foreplay at that. I was so wrought up by the time the check arrived I was finding it hard to breathe.

I fell in love with Wednesday Carson not when she dropped to her knees in Vincent's playroom, but during dinner, as she peered at me over her wineglass, curious and sweet.

And I did, honestly, fall in love with her right then, right there, over candlelight and pasta and wine. Here was the girl for me, serious and complicated, smart and beautiful. She was a writer like me, obviously intelligent, but besides that, she was just perfect in every way. She was petite but not skinny, pale and delicate but not sickly, and attractive to the point that I couldn't look away. She had black hair in a mass of curls falling to her shoulders, and crazy, pale blue eyes that made me want to stare. She kept them lowered more often than not; just as well, or I might have forgotten my place. She looked like what my grandmother used to call "fairy folk," like a fairy princess, strayed too far from the wood and caught in a strange world, held by a powerful king. Held by *Vincent*, I reminded myself. Not by me.

Because for all the careful smiles, the subtle glances she gifted me with that night, she was his possession through and through. It wasn't just that he sat, glowering, right beside her, but also that she, in her body language, left no doubt that she was his. Nothing so overt as snuggling up to him or taking his hand, or even sharing a smile with him. No, it was such an elemental thing, this possession. It was just *there*, in her careful posture, in

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her subtle gestures, in the compelling depths of her eyes. Yes, she was assuredly his, but for that night, at least, she'd be mine too.

And she was mine later, completely willingly. If she had balked, even a little, I would have turned on my heel and left, even as much as I wanted her by then, as much as I ached to put my hands all over her. I wouldn't have ever taken her against her will, but she came to me with absolute trust and openness, and no shame at all. At the end, I'd held her lovely little hands and kept her still while Vincent caned her, and I thought, suddenly, of those secret shared looks on the school yard ground. *I understand you, and you understand me. We understand each other. Your secret is mine.*

I understood something else that night, quite clearly. Vincent was in love with this girl, this sub he claimed to only "value." Well, love is a word that can have many manifestations. Valuing someone, being careful who you shared them with, being jealous, possessive, it all showed love. Not getting close to someone you couldn't keep, letting go of them for their own good when you didn't want to, perhaps, showed the deepest love of all.

Last week, for two days in a row, she hadn't shown up for work. The following day, she reappeared, but dragged along like her world was at an end. *Finally*, I'd thought, *Vincent cut her loose*. It was about fucking time. I checked around to be sure that was what had happened, that that was the reason behind her gloom. Now that she wasn't his, she could finally be mine. Soon, not right away. I planned and waited. I sat silently behind my paper and watched, and planned, and craved. Since I'd met her, winter had turned to spring, and spring to summer, but soon enough she would be mine. There was no need to rush. No, it had to be controlled. No precipitous propositions. No declarations of desire.

But God, there she was, *right there*, all legs and short skirt and wild hair, and her too-big messenger bag banging against her hip. I could have eaten her alive. Every day I wanted to go to

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her, cross the street and lay claim to her, take her in my arms, but instead I only watched her disappear into the office, squelching the urge to call out to her.

I looked down at my watch.

8:07.

Late again. Naughty, naughty girl.

* * *

The words on the page blurred. What time was it? Time to leave yet? Not that I had anywhere to go. *God, Wednesday, pull it together.* The story wasn't half bad, but I couldn't focus. I rubbed my eyes and put my head in my hands. I wondered, as I did a million times a day, what Vincent was doing now, if he was thinking about me, if he missed me at all. The answer to that was, *probably not*. Of course I knew exactly where I could find him. I'd sat in his classroom enough times myself, but there was no way to go there now. It might as well have been on Mars. I did half feel I was in outer space, dazed and confused, weightless and floating in a world of my own. It had been nearly a month. I was sure he'd already forgotten me, but me, I was no closer to finding true love.

I had no idea where to even get started on this quest. I had no appetite to meet a new man. Even if I met a wonderful man, I wouldn't know what to do, how to behave. I wouldn't know how to relate to him the way a normal woman was supposed to. I guess the problem was that I felt ruined now. I felt strange and unwelcome in the world of real men. I was sorely tempted to go to the sex clubs. At least there I would have been understood, I would have found someone to *want* me. But God forbid Vincent saw me. There was no way I wanted to chance that scene, so I worked, and then I sat at home and waited, alone.

I was used to being alone, but before, at least, I had always known *he* was there. Now I had no one, save a few sympathetic co-workers inviting me to dinner now and again. I was too shy to meet new people, too embarrassed to set foot in a bar, too

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nervous to attempt to go on a date. Vincent would have been disgusted with me, the pathetic way I was behaving.

But so what? What did it matter what he thought now? I wasn't his anymore, to approve of or disapprove of. I wasn't his to judge anymore, I had to keep reminding myself. Old habits die hard. I still judged myself constantly by his exacting standards, even though he was out of my life, what little life I had left.

Well, enough of my pity party. It was finally five, so I packed up to go. I would take the story with me, and try to give it the attention it deserved later. But first, I'd stop by the gym.

The dreaded gym. I actually loved to work out, loved the feeling of well-being it afforded me. But now, it reminded me of Vincent, like a million other things in my life. I still followed the same regimen I'd adhered to when I was keeping myself up for him. I don't know why it still seemed important. I guess it was second nature, after eight years.

At the gym, I made my way straight to the treadmill, and I ran until my legs were about to fall off, but even then, the pain, the effort, wasn't nearly enough. Honestly, I don't know if I ran because I missed him, or because I wanted to run away from him, forget him, absolve myself of him as he had once absolved me of my past. The more distance I achieved from him, the more I looked back in memory, the more stupid and ridiculous I felt. Those silly collars, those capricious, exacting rituals, all the importance I'd placed on pleasing the whims of a horny old man. An old man who, in hindsight, had basically used me for sex.

I had given eight years, *eight years*, to this man, and even now, he still dogged my mind at every turn. Even now I cried for him at night into my pillow, guilty and ashamed that I dared look back on him with disrespect.

What I really needed was some space, some time to find myself. Some time to forget what I used to be, a silly, needy girl crawling around with a collar on, seeking the approval of someone who perved on pushing me away. What I needed was to be alone for a while, completely and utterly alone to figure things out.

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The problem was, being alone was so lonely and sad, and I was more confused than I'd ever been in my life.

* * *

"The usual, Mr. Laurent?"

Damn perky waitress. She was probably some aspiring actress or something. Snickering with the other girls over me hiding behind my paper, sitting and spying here every day.

"Yes, the usual, Ashley."

Yes, it was every day now that I was here spying on her. It had been a little over a month since Vincent let her go. Long enough for my patience to start to wear thin. Every day that went by was one day closer she got to mental health. She barely dragged anymore. In fact, yesterday I'd sensed an alarming new bounce to her gait. I think she was finally over him, and God forbid she'd meet some other nice guy before me.

So why did I still sit here spying? Fuck, why was this so difficult? Why not just walk up to her, shake her hand? *Remember me? You sucked me off once, it was great. Then I fucked you, two times actually. And I spanked you over my lap, just to make your lover mad.* So maybe it would require a little more finesse than that. I was the king of finesse, though. I was a screenwriter, for God's sake. My dialogue made actors speechless with gratitude and reverence. *Daniel Laurent? I love his work.*

But what about little Wednesday? Had she loved my work? She seemed to that night, but with submissives it was hard to tell. Most of them pretended they liked stuff even when they didn't; a necessary evil, I suppose, when you lived to serve. I know for sure though that she came like a fucking maniac. She'd come for *me*, with *me*, more than once that night. I had felt it, felt the delicious squeeze and shudder. Something that strong even Wednesday couldn't fake.

Anyway, I was certain that "fake" wasn't her policy, that it wasn't even in her repertoire. She'd approached our little scene,

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our amoral threesome, with a seriousness and dedication that gave me pause. What would I do with her? How would I hold her once I had her? What could I give her, what could I show her to keep her at my side? And most importantly, why on earth did I want her so much? It was long before she'd knelt and taken my cock in her mouth, that she'd crawled under my skin and insinuated herself into my soul.

I sighed and walked back to my car. Soon. Tomorrow. I'd just happen to be nearby, walking by her office door. *Wednesday? Imagine meeting you here! Would you like some coffee? There's a café just across the street.*

Then, well, hopefully things would go as I wanted. She'd become my girlfriend, my lover, my submissive slave. I'd broken up a few weeks back, like Vincent, with a girl who was far too young for me, who, at nineteen, was off to college in another city and state. Bless her heart, she had been absolutely lovely, but immature as the day was long. She'd loved to play, but Wednesday, she seemed a more serious sort. I wanted to get serious. We'd get serious right away.

I'd reached the point in my life where playing was mostly a novelty, a fun thing to do when nothing else could be found. But I was tired, so very tired of playful club girls. I wanted a real girl, and no one, no club girl I'd ever met was more real than Wednesday. I wondered where on earth Vincent had found her. He'd told me he'd been her teacher, the old leech. God, let me be fucking and sending girls into fits when I was in my fifties. At least one girl. Wednesday, if the fates were on my side.

Did I really want to be with her at fifty? Yes. For me, that wasn't even fifteen years away. The mid thirties: the time to own up to the fact that you'd fucked up your life, and you'd better fly right before it passed you by.

I opened my car door, got in, revved the engine and stepped on the gas. One more day. Twenty four hours. Let her be here, tomorrow, let me run into her. Let her be mine then, God, just let her be mine.

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* * *

The next day I had meetings, meetings full of idiots. The meetings wouldn't be so excruciating if people weren't so dense. I was so flustered by afternoon that I reconsidered going after her that day, but the weekend loomed, two days without seeing her. I screwed up my dominant mojo and drove across town to try and track her down.

But of course, nothing ever comes off that smoothly, not in the movies, but especially not in real life. I lingered around outside her office until I realized I must have missed her, and at 5:15, disappointed, I headed back to my car. I was right by her building, a disappointed scowl on my face, when the door flew open and there she was. She jumped back, confronted by my stormy expression, while I stood and stared at her like a fool.

I hadn't seen her close up like this, not for months now. She rendered me speechless with those otherworldly eyes, and so there I stood, not a word, not a movement. She looked back at me as if she'd seen a ghost.

"Hi," I finally managed to spit out. *Brilliant. More please, before she runs.* "Wednesday, right? Do you remember me?"

"Yes. Of course I do."

Of course she did. "You work here? I remember you said you were an editor." *You remember, that night that you and I fucked? God, just smile at me, please...*

"Yes, I've worked here for a couple of years now."

I know. I've actually been stalking you for about, oh, five months of that time. "I was just passing by. God, it's good to see you."

"It's good to see you too."

She said that as if she'd rather see anyone, *anyone* else on earth. Had I imagined it, the connection we'd felt? I tried to read her. She just looked totally scared.

"Listen, I guess this feels weird, since the last time...the last time we were together..."

"Yeah," she said. "It does feel a little weird."

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"I just want you to know..." I stopped. What did I want her to know? God, so many things. "I just want you to know that I really had fun that night. I mean, I thought you did too."

She made a faint noise of agreement or assent, looking around.

"I'm sorry, I mean...it was more than just fun to me. Maybe this isn't the place to discuss this, out here on the street."

"Probably. I'd better be getting home."

"Can I walk with you?"

She frowned a little, but didn't say anything when I fell into step beside her.

"I hear that you and Vincent broke up."

"Yes. About a month ago."

"I'm sorry to hear that. You made a good couple. He loved you very much, I could tell."

"We were never a couple, and Vincent never loved me."

"Didn't he?" I wondered if she really believed that. She seemed convinced, naive little thing. "Well, I don't know much about you and Vincent, but I was grateful to him for sharing you with me."

"Do you do that a lot?" she asked coolly. "Sharing?"

"I'd never done it before you."

"Never?"

"No, it's not my thing."

"But you still shared me with Vincent."

"Yes. Unfortunately for you."

She looked confused. "Unfortunately? Why do you say that?"

"I think I got you in a fair bit of hot water that night. And I drew a few tears from you, if memory serves me right."

Blush, blush, blush, and that soft laugh.

"Yes. You made me cry a little bit, over your lap."

"I've been told that I spank too hard."

"By who? Not your submissive?"

It was my turn to laugh at her scandalized expression. Vincent, that old dog, he had sheltered this one well.

"More than a few girls have yelled it at me before they

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stormed out of my house.”

I watched her digest that little tidbit of information. Yes, it happened to dominants, to be honest, it happened all the time. With the best submissives, the idea never crossed their minds, but with others, it happened, and you shrugged, and you tried again with someone else.

“I would never storm out on someone,” she said.

“How do you know?” I asked. “How do you know that you wouldn’t? You’ve only been with one man, haven’t you?”

“I was with more than one man,” she murmured with a frown.

“Sure, men that Vincent carefully selected for you. You don’t think he invited just anyone from the clubs?”

She shrugged. “I’m too much of a good girl to run out anyway, no matter what.”

Suddenly, with those words, I was scared for her. Suddenly it seemed critical that she belong to me. This girl, she would give and do *anything*, for anyone, *anyone*, who showed her love, and not everyone who showed her love would take care of her.

“So, are you seeing someone new?” I lowered my voice, added just a hint of authority. It was time to pin this down.

“No. I’ve been...busy with work. I haven’t been...ready to get out there yet. I’m not even sure I’m into it any more, honestly.”

“I can understand that, I suppose, with all you’ve been through lately. I’m a little disappointed to hear it though. I had hoped you and I might give things a try.”

She walked a little faster. “I...I just don’t know.”

“Wednesday, you know, I’m nothing at all like Vincent. I actually think you and I would be a much better fit.”

“You seemed a lot like Vincent that night.”

“I mean, yes, I am like Vincent. I’m a dominant, yes. But I want to be more than that to you. I think there’s more to life than these fun and games, and I think you do too.”

She walked in silence for a moment.

“What do *you* want, Wednesday? Where do you want to go next? What do you want your life to look like?”

“I don’t know, Daniel. Honestly, I just don’t know what I

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want right now. I'm really confused."

God, that was obvious. I wanted to take her in my arms, make all her fear go away. Instead I said, "Let me help you figure things out."

"How? Scenes in your play room?"

"I don't actually have a play room, Wednesday. Or collars, or a dungeon with bolts in the walls. I'm not like him. I want something different."

"Something different? What does that mean?"

"I don't know, but I'd like to find out."

I took her hand loosely, and she let me, leaving it cool and still in mine. "Wednesday, we had a connection that night. You felt it just as I did."

We stopped in front of her apartment building. "Daniel—"

"Didn't you, Wednesday? Answer me."

"Yes," she finally admitted. "I guess I did feel something, but that was another time, months ago—"

"I still feel the same," I said quickly. "And I think you do too. I think you're just scared."

"Yes, I am scared! And I'm not even fully over Vincent yet, and this is just...so soon...too soon..."

"We can take things slowly, take our time."

"Can we?" she asked, not so naive after all.

"We can try."

"I have to go, Daniel. I'm sorry." God, I couldn't let her go, not like this.

"Wait, Wednesday. Let me take you to dinner, tomorrow night. Just one dinner, and then, if you say it can't happen, if there's nothing there, I'll leave you alone. But can't we at least talk, you and me? Yes? Please?" I pressed her, full benevolent dominant mode. It was now or never, it was time to make my bid.

"Okay," she said finally. "I guess we can have dinner one time."

She said *okay*, but she was far from convinced.

5. *Dinner*

Oh God, let me breathe now. Please give me breath. Daniel, *Daniel*, was arriving to take me out to dinner soon. Daniel, who I had dreamed about so many countless hours before I finally realized he wasn't coming back for me. Daniel, who wanted to be with me after all. I didn't know whether to celebrate or cry.

He'd actually walked me home from work yesterday. I'd left for another miserable weekend alone and there he was, like some kind of godlike specter. He was more sexy, more compelling than ever, impossible to resist. I should have pretended I didn't see him and kept walking. Would he have let me go? *No*. He had seemed quite insistent on talking to me. In fact, I wonder if he just *happened* to be there, or if it had been planned.

Either way, I let myself talk to him, mistake number one. I'd let him walk home with me, spilling words in my ear, words that had convinced me, *almost*, that it was a good idea to try again at that miserable lifestyle. That lifestyle of belonging to someone, giving myself over to someone day in and day out, that lifestyle of lying in bed, or kneeling, or standing bolted to the wall, waiting to be *done to*. That lifestyle I was done with, it was suddenly back. *We can take things slow*, he assured me, but we were already far past slow. We had been past slow the very moment we'd met.

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He'd insisted on walking me upstairs to my apartment. He'd taken my number, set up a time to pick me up the next evening for dinner and whatever else would come. Now he knew where I lived. He knew my phone number, he knew where I worked. Well, I had told him where I worked five months ago, but then I hadn't been so afraid of him. Now, I was afraid of him, and of what would come.

And I knew with absolute certainty, something was coming. We would go to dinner, and we'd end up at his place or my place. There was no way not to. Even now I could feel the insane rush of desire between my legs. I had been wet to the core just from walking home with him, just from that subtle brush of his lips against my ear as he said, *goodbye, Wednesday, I'll see you tomorrow.*

I stood against the door, breathing in and out, trying to calm myself. I dreaded belonging, already so soon, to another man. The belonging was exciting to me, yes, but still terribly draining. Even Vincent, who held me at arm's length, had managed to take over my life. He had taken over *me*, made me not completely my own, and Daniel seemed to hint at wanting something even deeper, an actual relationship. Commitment. *Love*. It drew me, fascinated me, and yet repulsed me. Alarmed me. Scared me. I was so used to being alone.

I was all in black, from head to toe and underneath. Wednesday Addams had nothing on me, but I was not a child anymore, with impish black braids. I was in mourning for the death of my attempt to find myself, to take some time for myself. Time was up. I swept my hair up in a loose chignon so he could look all he wanted at my neck. The timeless tease from submissive to dominant, the bowed neck, unfettered and pale. I imagined for a moment his thick fingers smoothing a black collar around my fair skin. I could almost feel his rough fingertips graze my nape, working the clasp...

Oh Jesus, I had to get a hold of myself before he came to the door.

Then right on cue, there was the knock, right against my

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back. He was there, now, on the other side of the door. Where had I heard that knock before, not too loud or too soft? Not too long or too short or staccato? *Don't think of him now.* I took one last deep breath of freedom, and picked up my small black bag.

I opened the door almost warily. *Daniel.* He looked just as amazing as he always did. Dark jacket, crisp white shirt, a tie the exact color of his beautiful eyes. Classic, masculine style. He seemed such a virile man standing there that I had to fight the urge to drop to my knees. He smiled a half smile as if he could tell exactly what I was thinking, then moved closer, took my hand, murmured my name softly, and kissed me on the cheek.

I floundered, I floated. I almost fainted. Vincent had never greeted me this way. Daniel's cheek was warm against mine, slightly rough, and his lips...I was acutely aware of the place they pressed just below my ear. I breathed in and felt his chest brush against mine for a second.

"Shall we go?" he suggested quickly.

"Yes," I breathed, saved.

* * *

Do we really have to go to dinner? We both thought it to ourselves, I'm sure. Wisely, she didn't invite me in, or I'm quite certain all hell would have broken loose. No, we had to go to dinner first. We had to talk. We had to explain, profess, discuss, negotiate. Limits, guidelines, desires, expectations, safe words, arrangements, rules. It's how any serious relationship like ours got started, and our relationship was going to be serious if I got my way.

She was wearing a little black dress that made my breath catch. She was as pale and doll-like as ever, her pretty lips curved in a scared, breathless smile. I took her hand and kissed her. I had to, there was no way to resist touching her. I was probably nearly as nervous as she was, but I had to hide it. I was the one in control. I was the one who had to convince her that she needed, wanted, to come where I led.

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And where, exactly, did I want to lead her? I know I wanted to lead her to bed. This evening, this very night, if I got my way. I really, really wanted to wake up in the morning with her still beside me, satiated and sweet. But more than that, I wanted to lead her away from Vincent, from the things Vincent had taught her, the way he'd treated her all those years. Yes, he had loved her, but he had damaged her. She had no idea what love was, besides fear and impersonal care.

I was not an impersonal dominant or an impersonal person, for that matter. I would want to know her and love her, *all* of her, and I would want her to know and love all of me. Vincent was a talented and exacting dominant, I was the first to admit it, but his way wasn't mine, and he'd had his hands on this lovely woman for far too long.

She sat beside me in the car, tense and still, and I could feel the protective shield drawn around her like a veil. I reached over and took her small hand in mine.

"You're nervous, what's the matter?"

"I'm just...you'll laugh at me," she said with a shake of her head.

"I won't laugh at you. Tell me what's wrong."

"I've never actually been on a sort of...you know..."

"Date?"

"Yes, if that's..."

"Yes, that is what this is, Wednesday. A date. A man takes a woman out to dinner, and talks to her, and pulls out her chair, and pays for the check."

"I mean, Vincent took me out sometimes, but it was mostly..."

"Foreplay for his threesomes?"

"You *are* laughing at me."

"No, I'm not laughing. I don't find this funny in the slightest, I promise you. Vincent—"

I clamped my mouth shut. I was going to say, "Vincent wronged you," or perhaps even go so far as to say, "Vincent mistreated you," but tearing down her long time lover and his

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eccentricities probably wasn't the way to ingratiate myself.

I had a lot more to say to her at that moment, but we'd arrived at the restaurant, so I bit my tongue and handed the keys to the valet. I led her inside with my hand splayed possessively on the small of her back, looking down at her lovely pale neck, remembering his collar there.

When we were finally seated at our dark and private table, she perched on the edge of her chair and looked around in a daze, as if she'd suddenly, inexplicably, fallen into real life. Like Alice down the rabbit hole. *Now what do I do, what do I do?* The fear, the panic, showed all over her face. I wanted to soothe her, reassure her. *This is how men treat women in the real world. This is how men treat women that they want to know. And I do want to know you, Wednesday. I want to know you very well.*

The menus arrived and I ordered wine and dinner for both of us, and that...*you'll eat what I tell you to eat...*that at least seemed to put her at ease. Dominant 101, order for your submissive. Take away her choices in the insignificant things that didn't really count, but learn what really mattered to her, and work your ass off to give her that.

"So, Wednesday," I said, leaning back in my chair. "Tell me about yourself."

"What would you like to know?"

"Everything. I'd like to know everything."

She laughed. "There's an awful lot to know."

Good girl. So she had retained at least some shred of self-identity after all this time. "What do you like to do? When you're not on your knees?"

She blushed. "I like to write."

"I like to write too. We have that in common."

"I like your writing," she said quickly, "I've seen all your movies, I love your style—"

"Yes, thank you," I cut her off gently. "But we're talking about you. What else do you like to do, Wednesday? Besides write? You like to read, I assume?"

"Yes. I read a lot. And I work a lot, too."

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“You like your job?”

“Yes. It’s really rewarding, to edit people’s writing. It’s a big responsibility. They give it over to you when it’s so personal and meaningful to them. Entrust you with it, to improve it. I don’t know. It’s hard to explain.”

“I understand. Taking care of something given over to you in trust.” She met my eyes. *Trust me.*

“I’m sure you’re very good at it, Wednesday.”

“I try to be.”

“And so do I.”

She fell silent again.

“What else?” I prompted. “Surely you do more than work and write.”

She shrugged. “I like to work out.”

“You like to work out? Most people find it a chore.”

“I like to work out and...think. I think about things while I work out. I like to just think about things sometimes, for hours. I’m boring, I know.”

“No, you certainly aren’t. What do you think about, when you think about things for hours?”

She balked then. *You can’t have my thoughts. You can have everything else, but not that.*

“Okay,” I said, conceding. “Tell me this. What did you think about last night as you fell asleep?” I lowered my voice suggestively. “Did you think about me?”

Her eyes skittered away from mine, abashed, but she didn’t even consider lying.

“Yes.”

“Tell me what you thought about.”

She shrugged. “I thought about tonight. What we would talk about. How it would be to...be here with you. How it would be...if...”

“If you were mine?”

“Yes,” she said, her voice like a whisper.

“I was thinking about that last night, too.”

“You were?”

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"I've been thinking about it for quite some time, actually. Since March, truth be told. It's been a long, long time to think."

"I know," she said. "It has."

She stared down at the table, took a small sip of wine.

"Let me tell you what I've been thinking about, Wednesday. Look at me, please. When I talk to you, I'd like you to look at me." Just like that, the authority crystallized in my voice, and I'd already taught her a rule. She took a deep breath and obeyed, and my eyes held hers.

"Before we take this any further, I'm going to be blunt with you. An "arrangement" like you and Vincent shared would not be enough to satisfy me."

"I know," she answered, shifting a little under my gaze. "And that makes me a little scared."

That quiet, open admission gave me hope for us. "Thank you for being honest. I'll always want you to tell me how you feel. One of my kinks, I suppose," I said with a half smile. "I'm going to want to know you inside and out."

"If I'm going to be yours," she amended softly.

"If you're going to be mine, Wednesday," I agreed, "I'm going to want to know you, inside and out."

"But why?"

I shrugged. "Because the better I know you, the more easily I can..." I almost said *love you*, but thought better of it and said, "the more easily I can make you happy." For me, loving and being happy were the same thing. For her, well...I wasn't so sure. I hadn't said *love you* because I'd known she'd get freaked about it.

But then I asked, "Have you ever been in love?"

"No, I never have."

"Why?" *Open up to me, Wednesday. Tell me.*

"I guess because love is so messy, and it makes people strange."

I couldn't hide my smile at that, although I tried to. "So what you and Vincent had, that wasn't strange?"

"You disapprove of Vincent." She frowned at me. "And you

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disapprove of me for staying with him so long.”

“I’d prefer if you didn’t tell me what I approve or disapprove of. I don’t think you have any idea yet what I actually think. Vincent did things his way, but his way isn’t mine. Vincent and I are different, as different as night and day. I’m sure he was an excellent dominant to you, but you’ll find I’m not much like him.”

“Yes, that’s pretty clear to me,” she said, and bowed her head. Nice trick, trying to distract me with her beautiful neck. No dice, I knew all the ploys submissives used.

“I can be just as strict as him, just as exacting, believe me. But love and care is a big part of it for me too. Why don’t you want to be cared for, Wednesday? Why are you so afraid to be loved?”

“I’m not afraid,” she lied. If she was already mine, I would have punished her harshly for a lie like that.

“You are afraid,” I corrected her. “Why? Do you think you’re not capable of love? Or not worthy?”

She looked at me. We hadn’t discussed a safe word yet, but if we had, she would have used it then. Her eyes begged me for mercy. I gave none.

“Why are you so afraid of love, Wednesday?”

“I’m not afraid. I think you’re reading too much into this. I just got out of a very long, very intense relationship. If I’m afraid, it’s because I’m not ready to give up too much again, too soon. And anyway, isn’t everyone afraid of love a little? You know what they say. Love hurts.”

I laughed softly after a moment. We were both writers, we both knew that tired, trite cliché. And I appreciated the irony that love *did* hurt in relationships like ours, that it was supposed to hurt, that hurt was the thrill of it; but I wanted honesty, not writerly wit.

“This isn’t a joke, Wednesday. I’m dead serious.”

She looked back at me, too serious by far. “I can’t give you love, not yet, so please don’t ask it.”

“Oh, Jesus Christ. He taught you well, didn’t he? Like

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dominant, like submissive, I see.”

Our food arrived then, perfect timing. We both retreated, regrouped, grateful for her Chicken Marsala and my steak and asparagus as an excuse to puzzle things through.

“How is it?” I asked as she picked at her food.

“It’s good. Really good. Thank you, Daniel.”

She barely ate anything. I think if she could have, if it had been in her power, she would have stood up at that point and left. But it wasn’t, so she sat there across from me, thinking, I’m sure, that her fifty dollar entree tasted like sawdust in her mouth. My food was delicious, but I didn’t enjoy it either. Things weren’t going very well. By this point, I thought we’d be discussing preferences, specifics, how she would address me, what she would wear, the days we would meet. Instead, I was racking my brain for a way to salvage things.

Finally, when the silence grew ridiculous, I fell back on the only thing I knew would work.

“You know, this is what he wanted for you. What he wanted you to find.”

She didn’t have to ask who *he* was. *He* might as well have been sitting at the table with us both.

“Do you still love him, Wednesday? Is it really too soon for us?”

“I didn’t love him. I don’t.”

“You did. You do. You’d return to him right now if he’d let you.”

She looked up at me as if she’d been slapped. She was very closed to finished. Not finished with her meal, finished with me.

“I don’t know what to tell you. I don’t think I can be what you want me to be.”

“Original, Wednesday. You’re a writer. You can do better than that.”

“This is who I am, how I am, how I’ve always been. Even before Vincent. If you don’t like this, if you don’t like who I am—”

“I don’t know who you are! I don’t have the first idea who

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you are, or what you want, or what you hope for—”

“I’m not like you! I can’t be all honest and open. I can’t give you everything, not like that.”

“Why not? What have I done to make you so afraid?”

“You haven’t done anything. I told you, this is me, this is how I am. If you don’t want me—” she said miserably.

“I want you, god damn it, you just don’t want me.”

That shut her up, and she put her fork down. I sighed long and loud and signaled the waiter for the check.

* * *

I drove her home in tense silence, which was probably more excruciating for her than for me. Was I giving up? Not even. For the moment I was, but eventually she would be mine. I had no intention of giving up on her, no matter how messed up and confused she was. No, I would give her some time to think about what she really wanted, and then I’d try again.

But poor Wednesday, she was suffering there beside me. I could have smoothed things over, made them easier for her, but I decided not to. Let her feel one tenth of the disappointment I was feeling. It would be good for her.

As I led her up the walk to her apartment building, I knew I could have said words that would have made it all right. Backtracking words that would have meant giving in to her. *Okay, Wednesday, we can try it your way. You can be mine, but not give everything to me. Okay, we’ll see how it goes. Let’s just play for a while.* But no, I didn’t want to do that. I wouldn’t, even if it meant I couldn’t have her tonight, this moment, a few minutes from now. I didn’t want her that way. I wanted her my way or no way at all.

Unfortunately, I hadn’t banked on her arsenal, the secret weapon she pulled on me at the door. I guided her inside, and was just going to bid her goodnight when she looked up at me with shimmering, tear-filled eyes.

Tears. Fucking tears from this woman. From *any* woman, but

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especially this one. It was like a blow to the solar plexus. As soon as the first tear fell, I caught it on my tongue. My hands were all over that face, those damp cheeks, that beautiful neck.

“Wednesday, don’t...” I protested, but it was too late for me then, too late.

I pushed her inside her little apartment, shut the door behind us, took her in my arms. I kissed her hard, trapping her hands at the small of her back, both of her small hands that fit perfectly in one of mine. With the other hand, I pressed the back of her nape, drawing her closer, tasting her, taking what was mine.

Finally she pulled away, but I didn’t let go of her. With a sigh, she pressed her body against mine and rested her head on my shoulder. The poor thing was exhausted from running away.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” she said over and over.

“Shh, it’s okay.” I nuzzled her cheek and she turned up to me, offered her lips to me, trembling and scared. I kissed her thoroughly, voraciously. This time, it was I who broke away from her.

“Turn around,” I said in a low, urgent voice. I prayed that she’d obey.

And wonder of wonders, she did. I still kept her hands trapped in mine. Gently but firmly I pressed her shoulders against the wall, telling her without words to be still. With my other hand, slowly, oh so slowly, I traced a line down her back, over the curve of her hips, then dropped my fingertips down to the top of her thighs. I inched up the hem of her dress with steady pressure. She let me do all these things, still and pliant, her back trembling against my front.

I was harder than I’d ever been in my life, wild, teeming with desire, but somehow I managed to only touch her, although what I wanted to do was tear off her dress and thrust deep inside.

But no, I only inched that hem up little by little, caressing her velvet thighs as I went. Her hands clenched inside mine and she tensed as my fingers hooked in the top of her panties.

“Be still,” I whispered. “Just let me touch you.”

She shivered a little as I eased them down over her garter belt

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and the tops of her stockings, leaving them to rest there just at the top of her thighs.

“Part your legs.” I wasn’t asking now, I was ordering, and she did as I asked.

“Wider.” With a soft sound of something akin to hysteria, she obeyed.

I caressed her intimately then, explored her soft, slick center. As my fingers cupped her mons, I pressed my hips forward against her ass. My raging hard on nestled perfectly between her ass cheeks. She took deep halting breaths, her hands still trapped there in mine, between us, in little fists.

I delved lower past her swollen clit, to the moisture, hot and wet, deep between her legs. I dipped my fingers inside her, just a little.

“Daniel,” she whimpered.

It was time to tell her. I wouldn’t keep her in the dark.

“Wednesday, you’re going to be my submissive. You’re going to be with me,” I said. “You’ll give me as much as you can give me, and I’ll live with that. For a while anyway.”

“Okay,” she breathed. “Yes. Okay.”

“And you’ll let me do the things I want to do to you. And you’ll obey me, and put your trust in me.”

“Yes,” she moaned.

“And you and I, Wednesday, we’ll figure things out.”

Later. We would figure things out later, because my hand left her to free myself. I put a condom on, and was easing inside her, and still, still, I hadn’t let go of her hands.

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I would never let go of her. Never, never, never again.

I fucked her there against the wall, grasping and artless. I felt wild from the feel of her skin sliding against mine. I couldn't touch her enough. I couldn't get close enough. When she came with a gasp, when she tensed up beneath me, all I could think was, *I can't let her go*. Afterwards, we slid to the floor and I knelt over her and whispered it in her ear. *Mine, you're mine*. I helped her up, pulled her dress over her head, and led her straight to the bed.

"What do you have that I can tie you up with?" I asked. "Something strong," I added as an afterthought.

She didn't have anything we could use, so I did what any desperate pervert would have done. I took a pair of scissors to her sheets. "I'll replace them," I muttered, when she looked at me like I was nuts, cutting off the four long strips. *Wrist, wrist, ankle, ankle*. Enough for now. I had to tie this girl down.

"Come, quickly," I said to her, patting the middle of the bed. She crawled to the place I showed her in her lovely black garter belt and shoes, her naughty little ass right up in the air, the way I'm sure Vincent had taught her. Delicious little tease. Her hair was a mess now, all disheveled and falling down in strands around her face. The sight of her kneeling on my bed drove me

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to madness. I had to be inside her now.

Patience. Patience. Patience. Soon. “Lie down on your back. Put your arms up.”

She did without a moment’s pause. Her eyes were shining dark with desire, and although she was silent, her body was on fire.

I took one wrist and fixed it to the headboard, and started to wrap the cotton strip around it in a knot she’d never be able to undo. “I suppose now would be the time to discuss a safe word.”

“I don’t need a safe word,” she said. “I trust you.”

“Even so, we’re going to have one. At first. Don’t be a foolish little submissive. You’re too trusting, Wednesday, you really are.”

She smiled, gazing up at me. “Are you going to hurt me?”

I frowned back. “This isn’t a joke. You’re awfully fast and loose with your safety. It pisses me off, since you belong to me now.”

I watched her digest those words. She was mine, and after I’d finished with her that night, she’d be mine even more. No, she wasn’t wearing a collar. I wasn’t into ownership like that. My ownership of her wouldn’t come off and go in a drawer, or hang on a hook on the wall. My ownership of her would be much more indelible, and much more abstract than a circle of black leather.

“Either you pick a safe word, or I will,” I prompted. “How about *Vincent*? That’s a word you would only say in our sessions if something was seriously wrong.”

“How about *I love you*? That’s another thing I’ll never say.”

Oh, she was fucking asking for it now. I tied her other wrist a little tighter. I knelt down at the edge of the bed to tie her ankles. Her little bed was too small to spread her as I wanted her, but it would have to do. For now.

“How about *Untie me, Daniel*?” I suggested. “Not that you’ll ever use it, you reckless girl. But there it is, if you need it.”

“Okay,” she said, squirming a little. She was testing her bonds, but they were tight. I sat beside her still fully dressed, and

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stroked her cheek.

“Now, Wednesday, now that you can’t get away, you’ll listen to what I want.”

We went over the rules then, or rather I told her what they would be, and she listened as well as she could, but I kept her rather distracted, a finger there, a pinch there, a stroke there. I explained that I wouldn’t use a collar on her, but that she was to understand that she belonged to me. I told her I would restrain her when I felt like it, but that when I didn’t restrain her, she was still expected to obey. I admitted that I was a hard disciplinarian, that I would expect her to accept serious amounts of pain. She squirmed a little when I said that. I knew she was dying to feel my hand again.

I told her that I would expect to see her regularly, but that I wouldn’t interfere with her work or her life. I told her that I would take care of her when we were together, that in return she would show me due respect.

“Due respect?” she interrupted. “What does that mean?”

“Well, not interrupting me, for one. Obeying me, not being a smart ass. You showed respect to Vincent, I’m sure.”

“Vincent never talked to me this much. He just did what he wanted.”

“I’ll do that too, a lot of the time.” I knew she was feeling lost. “You’ll get used to what I want soon enough. I’ll make it very easy for you to understand. And in return, you just be Wednesday. You give me your body, and your reactions, and your fear, and your beauty, and your obedience. Okay?”

“Okay, Daniel. How should I address you?”

“You’ll call me Daniel. And I’ll call you whatever the hell I want. And you will come when I tell you to come for me, and when you don’t have permission, as you probably suspected, you’re not to come.”

“Okay, Daniel,” she said a little breathlessly. I smiled, delving between her legs with my questing, slickened fingers. I gave it about two minutes before I brought her off and she had to take her first official punishment from me.

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“Daniel...” she pleaded. I only shook my head.

“Please.” She squirmed under my touch. I leaned over to lick one taut nipple.

“I don’t want you to come yet.”

She sighed, somewhat irritably.

“Careful, Wednesday. Don’t get petulant with me. That will really make me mad. Let’s see how much control you have. Don’t come.”

She looked away from me, trying to distract herself.

“Look at me,” I growled. “Be a good girl.”

“Do you really want me to be good? Or do you want me to be bad, so you can punish me?”

I pinched her nipple hard, naughty little slut. “You can be a good girl for me, Wednesday, mostly good, and a little bad. And I won’t have to treat you like shit to get off on it all. Your happiness will be enough for me.”

“My happiness?” she echoed. My fingers circled her clit, and she sighed.

“Do you know what I think, Wednesday? I think you want to feel cared for. You want to feel treasured and safe.”

She just looked at me, and there was no need for any words then. We both knew that I was right.

“I can do that for you. I can take care of you, little one. You want someone to please, someone to be a good girl for. Be a good girl for me, and I’ll make you glad. And Wednesday...don’t come.”

She shook her head, as if that settled things, as if by her will alone, she could obey. But my wicked will was involved here too, and I couldn’t wait to give her a little pain. I lowered my lips to suck first one nipple, then the other. I thrust my fingers up inside her, felt her hips move, felt her shiver, and felt her come. I’ll give her credit. She made no sound or indication, but I felt it, and her guilty eyes met mine.

“I remember,” I whispered conspiratorially. “Your secret orgasms. I remember them well. You’ll never fool me, though, so don’t even try it.”

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“Daniel,” she whispered back. “I’m sorry. I want to be a good girl for you.”

“You will be,” I said. “It will take practice. Don’t worry, I’ll help you learn.”

I untied her, and retied her on her tummy, where she’d remain for the rest of the night. I pulled my belt out of my pants and doubled it over, and looked down at the beautiful, beautiful girl on my bed.

“I’d like you to count, Wednesday. Up to twenty.”

“Yes, Daniel,” she said.

* * *

OUCH! JESUS! I thought he *spanked* hard. His fucking belt was pretty hard to take. *Ten. Eleven. Twelve!* Vicious, aching sting. I hadn’t taken a spanking in over a month then, so yes, I counted for him, but it wasn’t easy to do. By the end, I was really, truly crying, even thinking the words *Untie me, Daniel* in my mind. But no, I didn’t say them. This wasn’t really a safe word moment; it was just a spanking that came when I was far too relaxed and loose.

Daniel had fucked me first, to my infinite pleasure, my face pressed against the wall beside my door. His cock was just as lovely as I remembered it, thick and insistent, and he’d let me come too, urged me to it actually. Then he’d tied me up and toyed with me until I hummed and ached with need, and yes, intentionally made me come without permission, just as I’d known all along he would from the insidious look in his eye.

I couldn’t blame him at all. He was aching to discipline me. He had been all night, he had been for months, I suppose, so, no, I wasn’t surprised. To be truthful, I wanted it too. I had waited impatiently for that moment when he’d take me in hand, when he’d tell me how to be good, exactly how to please him. I wanted him to call me his good girl, to correct me and punish me and make everything okay.

Afterwards, he’d knelt over the back of me, soothing me. *All*

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these tears, Wednesday, he'd said. I could feel his hard cock resting between my legs. All I cared about was that he fuck me again, right there, right then, right *now*, and he had, and I'd come like mad the moment he said I could. He had chuckled afterwards, sprawled over my back, and said *I can already see you're going to be a hard one to control*.

But no, I didn't think so. Hard to control? He already controlled me, that was plain enough to see. He already had me completely under his thumb, under his heel, wrapped around his little finger. All those trite expressions, I was all of them and more. While I thought of that, I'd fallen fast asleep underneath him, before he even had slipped away from me.

I woke up a few hours later, in darkness. I panicked for a moment in my bonds, thinking myself alone, until I turned to see him there. My clock said 2 AM, and I really had to go, but I was still tied securely to the bed.

"Daniel. Daniel!" His arm was thrown across me, he was dead asleep. I started to struggle in earnest, and called his name louder. "Daniel! Untie me, I have to go pee!"

He came awake and drowsily started to untie me, but he wasn't getting anywhere fast. "It's an emergency," I whimpered.

"Scissors. They're here somewhere." He groped around the top of the bedside table, then down on the floor.

"Please, hurry!"

He found them, and cut through the ties. I ran to the bathroom, the strips of sheets still dangling from my wrists and ankles, and managed to get there on time. I stumbled back to bed, half asleep before I even lay down, and next I knew, morning light was filtering into the room.

Daniel stirred beside me, reaching out to enfold me in his arms. It was a strange feeling, this morning coziness. Vincent had usually woken me with a thrust of his cock. But Daniel turned me to him and kissed me, and stroked his hands down my arms until he found the pieces of sheet.

"I suppose I should untie you now, shouldn't I?"

"You probably better," I agreed. "Although I enjoyed being

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tied up by you.”

“I know you did, I could tell.” He already had the first one loose and I flexed my wrist with a smile. He moved next to the ties at my ankles, and had to use his teeth to get those undone. It was playtime suddenly, as he chewed at the fabric scraps, leering at me and biting my calf. I laughed, feeling totally new. It was like he untied me from the old me, from my old life. Fun in bed, what a novel occurrence. I’d not laughed in bed with Vincent, not once in eight years. I’d cried, and thrilled, and come for him, but laughed like this, and played?

Daniel crawled up my body then to untie my other wrist, looking down at me while he worked at it with his hands. I shivered a little from the look he gave me, and the strong, unfamiliar feelings in my heart. Warning bells were going off in my brain. *You’re falling in love, Wednesday. You’re falling in love.*

But Daniel had given me no ultimatum about not loving him. He actually wanted us to be lovers, true lovers, romantic and sweet. And I’d told him so rudely, *that’s another thing I’ll never say*. So silly and prideful, because I was already in love.

“What? What’s wrong?” he asked as he undid the last tie and set it aside.

“Nothing.” *I’m just scared half out of my mind right now.*

“I’ll buy you new sheets today, I promise, I’ll send them over.”

I laughed. “No, no, it’s not the sheets. I have plenty of those.”

“What then? Tell me.”

I thought a minute.

“This just...isn’t what I’m used to. I don’t know what to do now. I don’t know what to say.”

“Just tell me you adore me, that you live to serve me, and that you really enjoyed our date.”

I giggled as he licked my ear.

“I enjoyed our date.”

“Good girl.” He paused and looked down at me. “The spanking...it wasn’t too hard?”

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“It was a little hard,” I said, trying to keep the tremor of pleasure from my voice. “But it was fine. I...I really liked it.”

“Because you’re such a naughty girl,” he said into my neck. “Now, tell me you want me to fuck you again. Tell me.”

“I want you to fuck me again.”

I sighed and stretched as he nuzzled me. Why did he have to feel so *right*? It scared me, these sudden feelings of contentment, scared me more than anything he could do to me with his belt. His lips were tracing lower, to the tops of my breasts, and then he took one nipple in his mouth. I arched to him, overcome with desire and unfamiliar emotions.

“Mmm. You like that,” he whispered, and it wasn’t a question.

I moaned as he took the other taut peak in his mouth. I couldn’t have spoken if I tried, even if he’d ordered me to.

“Put your arms up, Wednesday, over your head,” he said. “Moan again for me.”

It was impossible not to. I moaned and sighed and stretched and gasped for him. Soon he was using his teeth, gently nipping and biting my nipples. My hands curled in fists over my head, held fast by nothing more than his will. His hands roved over me, insistent and rough.

“Daniel...” I was half-gasping, half-begging. His hands and his mouth were driving me insane. I wanted him more than anything on earth.

“Soon. Be patient. When I’m ready...”

I moaned even louder. His fingers found my center, hot and slick. I bucked against his hand. I was desperate to pull him to me, but I didn’t dare move my hands from where they were.

“Shh, shh,” he soothed me, stroking me, making me shiver. “You be a good girl.”

Yes, yes, yes, I’ll do anything, anything if you’ll just come inside...

Finally he left me to get a condom and stood over me, rolling it on with a look I couldn’t place. Desire? Mastery? Infatuation? I just wanted him to take me, and take me hard.

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He climbed on to the bed, crawled up between my legs, thrusting them open with his powerful thighs. He laid on top of me, pressed against me, and pulled me hard against him, skin to skin.

"I've got you, Wednesday. Don't I?"

"Yes," I whispered.

Slowly he moved his hands up to cover mine, stretching my arms even higher over my head. My body fit against his like a puzzle piece. I squirmed under him, basking in the feel of his hard muscles, his scratchy chest hair against my skin.

"Behave. Be patient. You'll get it," he scolded. "I know this isn't how you were taught."

I stilled at those words. No, this wasn't at all what *he* taught me. This was something else altogether. This was so different from Vincent's lovemaking, I had no idea what to do. It didn't matter, though, because Daniel did everything.

He parted my legs wide, and roughly and efficiently lifted my hips and plunged deep inside. He fucked me, holding my body against his, pressing me to him so I couldn't breathe, couldn't move without him yielding space and breath to me. Each time he moved inside me again, I felt, for the first time in my life, that I was one with another person. With *him*. It amazed and terrified me, and I tried to pull away.

"No," he said in my ear. "No."

"Daniel, Daniel," I whimpered over and over. I didn't know what else to say. "Daniel, I need..." What did I need? With Vincent, it had never been about me.

"What?" he breathed. "What do you need, lover?"

I need this to never end.

"Daniel," I said frantically, "Can I come now, please? Am I allowed?"

He chuckled. "With or without my permission, I think you will."

He was right, either way it would happen. I would take a hundred lashes to feel the pleasure he was giving me now, to give in to the climax that was threatening to overwhelm me.

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“You come then,” he said, “and do it like you mean it.”

I came hard a moment later, stars behind my eyelids and my gasping breath in my ears. Each pulse and undulation of my climax seemed to take my whole body and shake it loose, loose from fear. Loose from emptiness. He held me close while I went to pieces under his weight, and soon afterward he came too, but he never loosed his grip on me. When I came to my senses again, he was looking down at me strangely, and I realized, to my shock, that I was crying. Not a tear or two from the power of the orgasm...no, I was sobbing, somehow. When he released my hands I put them to my cheeks and they came away soaked with tears. I stared at them, stupefied.

“I don’t know...I don’t know why...”

“It’s okay,” he said. The tears weren’t stopping. He, too, wiped some away. I closed my eyes, confused and overwhelmed.

“No, open,” he insisted in a low voice.

I opened them and shook my head. “I can’t explain —”

“That’s okay. You don’t have to. I just want you to look at me, to see me. To know that I’m the one who moved you this way.”

I think maybe I flinched a little then, but somehow I kept my eyes on his as he wished. He tilted his head to one side, as if trying to figure me out.

“You know,” he finally said, “you didn’t cry like this when I spanked you, or used my belt on you.”

“No, Daniel.”

“I wonder why now. I wonder.”

I just shook my head. “I don’t know.”

“You’re not hurt? You’re not scared?”

Scared? God, I’m terrified.

My breath caught, and he rolled away from me.

“I suppose you could use some air.”

I could use a little space, Daniel, right now. Yes.

He didn’t leave me though, only lay beside me, his arm across my waist. He was so possessive. I both loved it and hated it. I was relieved to have his weight off me, but just as anxious to

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have it back.

He gave a contented sigh, his fingertips caressing me.

"I really enjoyed fucking you, Wednesday. I really did," he mused as if he was just thinking aloud.

I was silent. We both knew what he'd done was more than fucking. I had no idea what to say. I really wanted to say something that would get him out of my apartment, so I could have some time alone to think.

Unfortunately I had nowhere to be, and absolutely nothing to do. It was Sunday. I was free all day, but I didn't want to tell him that. Please, God, let him have obligations today.

But he only stretched beside me, getting comfortable. Crap.

"Um, so, do you have any plans for today?" I asked. *Please let him have plans.*

"No, not really," he said. "What about you?"

"I'll probably go to the gym." That wasn't a lie; I did some of my best thinking on the treadmill. He gave me a look.

"I go almost every day."

"To think. Yes, I remember."

"To think, and be in shape. Don't you want me to look good for you?"

He was still giving me that look. I didn't know him well enough to read it, but if I had to guess, it would be a look of *Is she crazy, or not?*

"Do you think I only like you for your body?"

"Yes," I answered without pause. "I do."

"Your body is nice, and I intend to make good use of it, but I like you for more than that. Do you want to know why I like you, Wednesday? What really draws me to you?"

"Yes." *No. Yes. Maybe.*

"Because you're a mystery to me. A complete mystery."

I looked away. I could give him mystery, definitely. I was even a mystery to myself. Maybe he could figure me out eventually...right before he left me.

"When you know me better," I said, "you won't like me anymore. When the mystery is gone."

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“Maybe,” he said, pulling me under him. “Or maybe I’ll like you more. Maybe,” he said, looking down at me with a thoughtful frown, “maybe I’ll fall in love with you and marry you and we’ll live happily ever after.”

I made a strangled sound, half laughter, half panic. “I don’t know, Daniel. This isn’t a fairy tale.”

“Isn’t it?” he said, pulling a face, his wonderful lips drawn together in a pout. “You’re not a princess, and I’m not your prince?”

“I don’t know yet,” I said noncommittally.

He sighed and pulled away from me.

“I don’t want to go. I don’t want you to disappear on me.”

“Disappear? You know where I work.”

“Tell me the next time I can see you again. I want to have times, regular times to see you. Nights that are mine, that I can look forward to.”

The softness was gone, just like that. He was giving orders. I sighed. “I can’t. I can’t do that. Not yet.”

He scowled at me as he dressed.

“Why the hell not?”

I toyed with the shreds of sheets next to me. I was untied, free, but for how long? Not long at all, it seemed, if he had his way. His eyes were stormy, and his mouth was set in a hard line. I wasn’t free at all, and it grated on me suddenly.

“Can I just call you?” I hedged.

“No,” he said. “I want to set something up now. Dinner, movie, whatever you want. How about Wednesday, Wednesday?”

I’d heard quips like that a thousand times, but his sudden lopsided smile charmed me.

“Okay,” I agreed. “Wednesday is okay with me. Dinner...I guess...if you want.”

“Yes, I want,” he snapped. “I’ll pick you up at seven. Don’t wear any panties under your dress.”

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It was six thirty on a Wednesday night, and I prepared myself to see my lover; a quiet, tender routine between my body and myself. Pluck, wax, soak, shower, perfume, then put on the lingerie, sheer and sleek. The bustier, the stockings, but no panties, not tonight. I would need the dress, though, for dinner with Daniel. Sweet and provocative, in an innocent schoolgirl kind of way. The shoes next, black and shiny and slutty. All these things I donned just for him.

Yes, I know you're heard it before, but for a submissive these things never really change. The slow preparations felt warm and familiar to me, like putting on a favorite coat finally back in season. As I sat to apply my makeup, the ivory powder, the dark lipstick, my mind wandered in endless circles around him, always him. He'd called me earlier in the day to remind me he would be picking me up at seven, as if I could possibly have forgotten. I had thought of little else, honestly, since he'd left on Sunday. Had I wanted time away from him to think? I'd had enough time. I needed him now.

His voice on the phone had set me trembling, so deep and resonant, so firm. *Have you been a good girl since I saw you last? I've tried to be, Daniel. But I've probably been a little bit naughty.* He laughed then, and there was promise and fondness

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in that laugh. Vincent had laughed at me on many occasions, but not very often in a nice way, more often in a way that was cruel. I had laughed, truly laughed, with Daniel many times already, and I smiled even now, waiting for his knock.

He arrived right on time, he and his impeccable manners. As I undid the chain and lock, I remembered standing right here with him, pressed against the wall, his hands all over me, controlling me, taking me. Making me his. He had done it, right here beside the door, less than a week ago.

I tried not to look too giddy and excited when I opened the door for him, but my heart was hammering in my chest, and my cheeks flushed scarlet from the way he looked at me.

“Daniel,” I said. God, he looked gorgeous as ever, dress slacks and a cashmere sweater I wanted to rub up against like a cat, in no small measure because it was tight enough to show off his muscles. His muscles, God. His arms, his shoulders, his rock hard abs. I didn’t dare look lower, unless I wanted to lose it completely.

Get a grip, Wednesday. His control, it seemed, was starting to wane too.

“Are you ready to go?” He said, dragging his eyes from my décolletage.

“Yes, Daniel.” I wondered if, later, we’d go to his place or return here. One or the other, it really didn’t matter to me, as long as he was there.

As you probably already suspect, Daniel treated me like a princess when he took me places, opening doors for me, guiding me around like he guarded the crown jewels themselves. This night, he drove me across town to a wonderful, small, smoky jazz bar, and we fed each other tapas dishes over glass after glass of wine. I was no connoisseur of fine wine, not even close, but the wine he chose for us was absolutely delicious, and I drank probably more than I should. I was flushed and excited, not just from the way he looked at me, but from the awareness of what was to come.

I was also aware of my nakedness under my dress. I kept my

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legs pressed together, but the way he looked at me made me feel exposed. He looked at me across the table so possessively, as if he owned me. He looked at me like he wanted me, but it was okay, because I wanted him too.

We were both thinking about *later* the whole time, I suppose; but we somehow managed to talk like normal, civilized people over our meal. We talked about his work, and mine, about our travels, our experiences, our likes and dislikes, but he steered clear of asking about my family, even though we talked about his. I wondered if Vincent had warned him off of it, but when would he have? And why? Daniel was so solicitous about every aspect of my life, I found it strange that he would ask nothing about my family. But he didn't, and I suppose, in the end, I should have been relieved.

We danced a little, when I was nice and tipsy, and Daniel laughed as I tottered on my heels. Ever the gentleman, he held me close and guided me, compensating for my impaired balance. In time, I laid my head on his shoulder, and he pulled me even closer. I drifted on the scent of him, clean soap or aftershave, and the warm, hard feel of him against my cheek.

"You aren't going to sleep, are you?" he said in my ear. "That's not allowed. Our night is just beginning."

"I'm not sleeping. I'm just relaxing. You're so warm," I added, rubbing on his sweater as I'd ached to do all evening.

"You feel a little cold," he said, stroking my bare arm. "I bet you're cold under your dress."

I laughed. "A little."

"Don't worry." His fingers tightened on my waist. "I'll warm you up soon enough."

Soon enough? I thought, pressing my cheek to him. *How about now?*

"Well, Wednesday," he said then, to my relief. "Would you like to see where I live?"

Daniel lived not far from me actually, and he had a wonderful house. Not too big or ostentatious, but not too small either, and decorated in a singular way. While his house was not

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exceptionally big on the whole, everything in his house was on a massive scale. He had a big couch, big tables, big chairs, big art, big area rugs, big sculptures, and a huge tree in his living room. A real, live tree, some kind of birch or something growing out of the floor, and yes, it dropped leaves.

I was to discover that during the day his house was flooded with light from wall to floor, but it never felt blinding because the paint and decor was very dark. It was all strangely out of balance; a smallish house full of huge things, a light-drenched house cloaked in dark walls. A tree that belonged outdoors, growing and thriving inside.

Of course, I didn't notice all this that first night, distracted as I was. He'd barely closed the door behind us before his hands were up my dress. He cupped my ass, caressing it, and his fingers traced over the top of my stockings with a moan.

"God, down," he said gruffly.

"What?"

"Down, down on your back, now."

My legs were already weak with lust for him, so he had no problem half-pulling, half-guiding me down onto the floor. He pushed my dress up so impatiently I was glad it wasn't tight fitting, because I had no doubt he would have ripped it to shreds to get at what was underneath.

He wrapped his arms around the top of my thighs, holding me tight, pulling me closer. He parted me and I gasped as he lowered his mouth to kiss me. He licked and nibbled as he blazed a trail to my clit. I was trembling so hard from the delicious, striking sensation of what he was doing to me. I was thankful he held me so tightly, otherwise I would have completely fallen apart.

Over time, I would come to know and respect Daniel's lovemaking abilities, marvel at them really, but that night, this was, again, something new. I could count on one hand the number of times Vincent had gone down on me, and when he had, well...it had been nothing like this.

Daniel went down on me just as he did everything else in the

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bedroom, with complete and utter abandon, and unabashed carnal lust. Not mindless lust though. No, Daniel concentrated. Every moan, every movement I made, he filed that knowledge away. *She likes that. She likes that. She doesn't like that quite so much. Ohh...that makes her moan.*

I know that he did this because he was incredibly accurate at hitting my spots. He had done it that first night with Vincent, had done it with me at my apartment when he'd tied me up, and he was doing it now. It was almost as if he fed off my reactions, as if they drove him on, as if he got off on them, as opposed to Vincent, who generally just did what he wanted, and ignored whatever I felt.

God. Oh...oh God. I moaned and bucked under him from the pleasure, but he tightened his hold so I couldn't get away. His fingers twisted in my garter straps as he kissed and sucked on my clit, worrying it softly, with just the right tension between his teeth. My hands made fists, I had no idea what to do with them, whether to pull him closer or push him away. In the end, I twisted them in the pile of his carpet to hold myself to the earth. It wasn't exactly a shag rug, but it was awfully close, and I was glad it was there, because I desperately felt I needed to hang on. I noticed vaguely a leaf drifting to the floor beside me as I twisted my hips in breathless desire. I looked up in sudden confusion. Where was I, inside or outside? *Why is there a tree in the house?*

I was close, so close to orgasm. My hands reached blindly for him, and I twined my fingers in his sandy hair. It felt so soft and thick in my hands.

"God, please, Daniel..." I begged. "Don't stop, please!"

He didn't, only redoubled his efforts, pressing my clit with his tongue with exactly the pressure I liked. I took it as permission to go off whenever I wanted and I did. I came like a maniac, shuddering through wave after wave of pleasure, and I really pulled his hair.

He didn't seem to mind though. I lay trembling and breathless, unable to move, while he looked at me with a self-

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satisfied grin, rightfully proud of himself.

“Daniel,” I breathed, totally speechless.

“You liked that. Good,” he said. “My turn next. Dress off, stockings on. Let’s go upstairs to my room.”

He pulled me up from the floor and unzipped my dress in the back, tore it over my head and tossed it aside. He growled at little at the ensemble I’d worn for him. It was classic Hollywood slut wear: sheer push up bra, high waist garter belt, and lace top stockings in black. He made me walk in front of him up the stairs and down the hall to his bedroom, and he was awfully grabby for someone who was certainly, definitely about to get anything he wanted.

Up in his room, he ordered me to undress him, his face hard and his eyes burning blue, but in the end he ripped his clothes off a lot faster than I could with my shaking hands, so he did most of his undressing himself.

His room was dark like the rest of the house, and he had a huge black iron bed with lots of spindles for...well...you know. He may not have had a dungeon or a playroom, but his bedroom filled in just fine. It would be no great thing to strap me a thousand different ways to that massive bed of his.

He had other plans though, for the present. He sat on the edge of his bed and looked at me with a look that I was coming to know well. It was a look of *I want you, and I’m about to fucking take you. You’ll do what I want, and you’ll like it.*

I just stood in the middle of his bedroom rug as still as I was able to in my current state of arousal, let him look at me, my chin up, my ass out, my arms at my side. The rug was shaggy and I curled my toes in it a little.

“Turn around,” he said.

Just the way he said that had the power to drive me wild. I’d just come hugely, but that stern tone in his voice made me want to come again. It was crazy, the way he affected me. I turned and showed him my back, and he drew his breath in a little. Well, I was good at this stuff too.

“Beautiful,” he finally breathed after a minute. “Let me see

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your hands, Wednesday. Put them at the small of your back.”

I did, and bowed my head just a little. Time seemed to stand still, long moments went by, and I could feel his gaze like a caress roving over my back. Finally, I dared a look over my shoulder.

“Yes, okay. Come here. Come here and stand in front of me.”

I walked over to him, met his gaze for a moment or two, but then my eyes were drawn to his cock. God, he was huge and hard as hell already. Every time I saw him erect it gave me a little jolt. He was definitely, *definitely* bigger than Vincent, I decided. Without a second thought, I started to my knees.

“No,” he said, stopping me. He pulled me up, pulled me closer between his legs. His cock was sticking up in front of me, poking at the juncture of my thighs.

“Look at me, Wednesday. Focus.”

I blushed and tried to pull back a little, away from the huge distraction in front of me, but he held me fast, his hands planted on the globes of my ass.

“Wednesday, do you know what I want to do to you?”

“Um...I have an idea.”

“Don’t be a smart aleck.” His hands roved where they willed. His fingertips ran over the laces at the front of my garter belt. “This little outfit you had on under your dress all night...garters, stocking, no panties...I think you wore this just to provoke me.”

“You told me not to wear panties,” I pointed out as meekly as I could. Not meekly enough. He pinched the top of my thigh, just below my ass. It really hurt.

“Are you purposely trying to piss me off?”

I shook my head, the picture of innocence.

“Don’t shake your head at me. Answer out loud.”

“No, Daniel.”

“I don’t handle smart alecks well at all.” It was a warning, and I got it. Don’t be a smart aleck. *Check.*

His gaze traveled to my very erect nipples, clearly visible through my sheer bra, and back again to my face.

“I think you’ve been a little mouthy tonight, for a submissive,

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especially one who just had a very nice time on my living room floor.”

“I’m so sorry, Daniel.”

“I’m sure you are, but I’m still not happy with you. I think you’re a little out of practice, and you need to be whipped back into shape.”

“Yes, Daniel.” *Whipped?* Yes. I was finding it really hard to breathe under his stare.

“Well,” he said with a sigh. “I’ll punish you later. First things first. Kneel down in front of me and put your hands in your lap, and act like a good girl, even if you’re not.”

I knelt and did just as he told me. My eyes went from his face to his cock and back again. I wasn’t sure where to look. It was pretty difficult not to stare at his cock actually, right in front of my eyes, insistent as it was.

“I know Vincent kept you on your knees a lot, Wednesday. I understand that, but with me, you won’t just be dropping to your knees right and left. When I want you to kneel and suck me I’ll tell you to. The rest of the time, you’ll wait for commands.”

“Yes, Daniel,” I answered. New master, new rules. Don’t kneel until ordered to. *Check.*

“Open your mouth,” he said, drawing me back into the moment. I parted my lips and waited for him to thrust inside. He didn’t at first though, only traced the satiny head of his cock over my parted lips, the tip of my tongue. It was an unexpected, erotic thing for him to do, and I felt the gorgeous sensation of his skin all the way down to my nipples and cunt. I was actually starting to salivate, I was so anxious to taste him and take him in my mouth. He teased me, though. He made me wait, and I did wait like he’d told me, with my hands patiently folded in my lap.

“That’s a good girl,” he said, and then he lifted my chin and pressed my lips further apart with his thumb, and buried himself in my mouth. He sighed deeply as I started to fellate him. My mouth was so hot and wet by that point, that even at his size, he found it easy to thrust in deep. “That’s right,” he whispered. “Good girl. You just suck me now, and make me come.”

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There was no possibility of a “yes, Daniel,” at that point, since he was buried by then in the back of my throat, but I had every intention of doing exactly what he asked, even though it was hard to take as much of him as he wanted me to take. It was awkward too not to use my hands, but he seemed pretty keen on thrusting into me himself, probably since that way, he controlled how deeply he went. Still, I’d honed this skill for eight years, so I’m proud to say I only gagged once.

It wasn’t long before he was peaking, and then he told me to use my hands to stroke him and fondle his balls. I did, and he buried his fingers in my hair, and really thrust deep inside. That’s when I gagged, but I doubt he even noticed at that point. Moments later, he spilled inside me, right down my throat, with a stifled groan. I swallowed his cum gratefully, like all submissives do, and waited to let him withdraw from me when he desired.

“Wednesday...” he sighed, stroking my hair. “You’re really good at that. You’ve made me a very happy man.”

“Happy enough to forgive me for...earlier?” I only asked a question like that to reassure myself he would be strict with me.

“Lie down in the middle of the bed,” he answered. “Face down.”

Yes, he would be strict. I had known it all along.

* * *

Oh, God. Beautiful. Beautiful. *Beautiful.*

Yes, it’s true, I’m a very kinky man. That was never more apparent to me than times like these, when something as basic as a reclining woman could make me lose my mind. The way she looked there, waiting for me. She had an epic ass, she really did. The sexy bra, the lingerie, black garter straps on pale skin, it was only the icing...very nice icing, yes...but even without it, her body was obscene.

I waited a long time, just watching, just looking at her, just thinking what to do to her next. I had to collect myself anyway.

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It had killed my control when she knelt between my legs and took me in her mouth. Jesus, the girl was fucking talented, and it bothered me a little that it was *he* who'd made her that way. But it didn't bother me enough to distract me from the fact that her oral talents were truly beyond compare.

Now she lay still there on my bed, her face hidden, her legs pressed together, her hands in fists at either side of her head. Her body language was somewhere between tense and euphoric. There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that she was enjoying every second I made her wait. She was wondering to herself, *what will he do to me? How much will it hurt? How much can I take? Will he stop before it becomes too much?* Yes, Wednesday. I'll know. And this time, I'm not going to use my belt.

No, I wanted to feel her against me this time, feel every fidget, every flinch. Every squelched impulse to flee. I wanted to feel her tense and then uncoil as I spanked her. I wanted to feel her lovely soft skin under my hand.

"Wednesday." She didn't look at me, only burrowed her face more deeply into the bed.

"Wednesday," I said a little more sharply. "Are you crying again?"

"No."

"Look at me then, when I talk to you."

"I'm sorry, Daniel," she said, turning to peer up at me.

I sat beside her and stroked her hair.

"Let me guess, you weren't allowed to look at Vincent when you were being punished."

"No, I wasn't supposed to."

"I want you to look at me always. I want to see you. Never more than when I'm punishing you. How else will I know how you feel?"

She was silent a moment, then said the exact words I expected.

"Vincent never cared how I felt."

"Perhaps so, but I do." I took her arm and pulled her towards

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me. "Come. Come here." I sat on the edge of the bed, and made her sit up on my lap. "Look at me, Wednesday."

She swallowed and met my eyes. Why was it so hard for her? I ran my fingers over the tops of her thighs.

"I'm going to spank you first, and it's going to hurt, but if you're good for that, afterwards, I'll fuck you and let you come. Okay?"

"Okay. I'll try to be good. But...how hard will you spank me?" She shivered a little.

"Pretty hard. Very hard actually. I'll probably spank you until you start to cry. Real tears, not fake ones."

She drew a deep breath. "Okay."

"What's the matter? Are you afraid? Or are you excited?"

She shook her head, and her soft black ringlets tickled my cheek. "I don't know."

"Do you want this?" I pressed her, my voice barely above a whisper. "You want it, don't you? You need it?"

"Yes, Daniel," she nodded. "Very much."

"Okay, then," I said, again the brusque disciplinarian. "Over my lap."

It was so intimate, this capitulation, the way she draped her body across my lap. I pretended to help her, to position her, but she knew exactly how I wanted her. She let one arm, the one nearest me, wrap loosely around my leg. By the end, that arm would be clutching me hard enough to cut off my circulation, but I didn't mind. I caressed her lovely upturned bottom, lustfully, yes, but gratefully as well. She was *mine*. She was giving herself over to *me*. I let myself have a little growl over it, just once, and as if in answer, she squirmed just a bit.

I spanked her then, and for quite a long time. Probably longer than I should have, although I didn't hurt her, not really. I started slowly, warmed her up a bit before I really lit into her. When I began to spank her harder, she whined first, then cried out, then frantically reached back to cover herself.

"No," I said. "You know better."

"You're hurting me! It really hurts!"

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"It's supposed to hurt, Wednesday. It's a spanking."

She moaned softly, pressing her cheek against my leg.

"Please..." she begged, wiggling her now-reddened bottom in my lap.

"Nice try. Did that work with Vincent?"

"No."

"And it won't work with me either. Give me your hand. I'll help you keep it out of the way if you don't have the self-discipline to do it yourself."

I took her small hand in mine and pulled her arm up across her back. *It's okay, I'll hold you. Don't worry, I won't let go.*

After that, it didn't take long to break her down. She was already crying penitent tears for the stunt with her hand. The more real her crying became, the softer it got, and the more tears fell, so it wasn't hard for me to judge. She struggled just a bit, fought against me when the pain was hard for her, but when it got too much, she ceased to struggle at all, and only her little fist in mine clenched and unclenched frantically.

"Okay, Wednesday," I relented then. "Okay. That's all for now." I pulled her into my lap and kissed her lovely tears. "It's okay now. It's okay. You're my good girl, aren't you? You took that very well."

"I...I tried to, Daniel," she stammered. "But it hurt."

"Yes, it tends to," I said, pulling her closer. "It didn't hurt *that* much though, surely. I think you're just a crier."

"It hurt a lot."

"Well, you know why it hurts, don't you, Wednesday? Why I hurt you?"

She buried her head in my neck. I could feel the wet tears there. It seemed so intimate, her hot tears against my skin. She nodded. "Yes."

"Why?"

"Because you care about me?"

No. Because I love you. "Yes, because I care about you very much, and I want you to know that, and remember it later, when I'm not around."

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She shifted her sore ass cheeks on my lap. “I don’t think that will be a problem.”

She looked down, noticing what I was already well aware of, my endless erection rising again. I tossed her back onto the bed and turned her onto her tummy. God, that beautiful ass. I took a moment to kiss each reddened cheek before I reached for a condom and nestled between her legs. One hand slid down to find her center and part her gently, stroking her clit. She was so wet for me. I whispered next to her ear, “You’re mine, aren’t you? You’re mine.”

“Yes, Daniel.” She squirmed under my touch, moving her hips back against me as much as she could.

“No, wait. I know you want it. You just be patient.”

I smiled at her plaintive moan. I teased her some more, just for fun, stroking her, trailing my fingertips through her swollen, soaked pussy lips. I could feel her breath grow more and more erratic under my chest. I dipped inside her just a little, enough to addle her.

“Daniel, please!”

“No, not yet.” I teased her again, entering minutely, so she writhed under me, helplessly bucking against me when I backed away.

“Please!”

“Does it feel good, Wednesday?”

“Yes, yes! Please, Daniel, please—”

“Please, what? Say it. Beg me. *I want you to fuck me.*”

“God, please, I want you!”

“*Daniel, I want you to fuck me.*” I teased her again with the tip of my cock.

“Daniel, I want you to fuck me!” she pleaded.

I twisted my fingers in her hair and pulled, whispering in her ear as she trembled under me.

“Will you be a good girl if I give you what you want? Will you behave?”

“Yes, yes, yes!” she said, twisting under me.

“Stop fidgeting,” I snapped. “Lie still. Don’t be naughty.”

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She fell still under me, breathless, waiting.

“Good girl.” I entered her slowly, a half inch, an inch at a time, until I was finally completely seated in her. “Good girl. Be still. Just let me fuck you. Let me go deep, let me feel you.”

She made a sound, half-groan, half-sob, as I held her and sawed steadily in and out. I could feel her warm pussy holding me, gripping me. I looked down in wonder at her tight, round ass straining back against me.

“Daniel!”

“Shhh...shhh,” I soothed her. “You wait for me.”

I fingered her clit, stroking it in rhythm with my deep thrusts.

“No, don’t come yet. Not yet.” I was having a hard time drawing it out, but she had it worse. She was actually holding her breath.

I suppose it was cruel to hold her back that way. Wednesday must have had some special gift of nerves or anatomy that made it impossible for her not to come. But she tried, she tried so hard, and it touched me, how she tried.

“Okay,” I answered to her frantic breaths. “Soon.”

I never wanted to stop. I never wanted to stop fucking her. My hand left her clit to stray up the curve of her hip, to the small of her back arching under me, then up to her nipples, hard as little stones. I pinched one, and was rewarded with a throaty yelp and renewed begging.

“God, oh God, please!” She was really desperate now.

“Okay,” I sighed, feigning impatience. “Come if you must, you ridiculous girl.”

She flew to pieces, went absolutely wild under me, and I loved every second of it. The snapping of her hips and her open-mouthed gasps tipped me over the edge, and I came too, bucking inside her like an animal.

We lay together afterwards, my front to her back, my fingers twisted in her hair. She smelled like sex and sugar. She was hot like fire under my hands. I turned her head to me and kissed her lovely lips again and again. I kissed her until she could barely breathe, just to feel her gasp and come up for air.

8. *Progress*

Jesus, I had work to do, but I couldn't do it. She haunted me every fucking minute of every day. I had pages to write, dialogue, scenes, real work to do, but all I could think of was:

Daniel: I want to fuck you.

Wednesday: Yes, Daniel.

So here I was, pulling my hair out from lusting after her. Thank God I was seeing her tonight. It had been a ridiculously long three days.

Three days.

Three days and I was just about driven to madness. Pathetic.

Okay. I was going to call her. I would talk to her just a little while, and then I'd buckle down, get my work done before our date tonight. I had to call her anyway to see if she'd gotten my gift. I put my hand on the phone, but it rang as soon as I touched it. Crap, it would be Wiseman calling about the pages. They were almost, *almost* done. I thought quickly of some excuses. *I've been sick*. Well, in a way that was true, if being heart-sick for a sexy, come-crazy siren counted.

8. Progress

Maybe it was Wednesday calling. Fuck, she never called me. She waited for me to call her. I frowned and picked up the receiver.

“Hello, Daniel Laurent speaking.”

“Daniel.”

“Oh. Hello.”

“How are you?”

“I’m fine. And you?”

“I’m doing great. And how is our Wednesday?”

Our Wednesday? I don’t think so, you old lecher. I bit my tongue, hard. He had passed her on to me, which I suppose deserved some gratitude, and some limited polite conversation, however insincere. Hell, he probably hated me every bit as much as I hated him.

“So,” I said, “to what do I owe this unexpected call?”

“You promised to keep in touch with me. That was one of the terms of our deal, was it not?”

“Listen, Vincent, I’m not one of your shrinking subs, so I’d appreciate you not taking that tone with me.”

“Did we or did we not agree you would keep me apprised of Wednesday’s well-being?”

“Fine,” I ground out. “What would you like to know?”

“She’s with you now, as we agreed?”

“Yes, she’s with me. I’m seeing her tonight, actually, for the third time.”

“Only the third time?”

“We only went out the first time last week.”

“What took you so long?”

“Look who’s talking! Could you have taken any longer to break up with her?”

That shut him up. I could practically see his scowl through the phone.

“Look, she’s fine. She’s doing great. We’re getting along just fine.”

There was a long silence from his end, then a frustrated sigh.

“That’s all you’ll give me? That’s it?”

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Ugh. This whole conversation, this whole situation made my skin crawl. This is what I got for entering into an unholy alliance with this twisted old perv. The only reason, the *only* reason I agreed to play along is because I knew he truly had loved her, and probably loved her still, and so he struck me as somewhat sad. But God, I really *had* to play along. He had me over a barrel now, because if he ever told Wednesday how he'd plotted to pass her off to me so he could let her go and yet still keep tabs...

Okay, before you judge me, you really have to hear the whole story, which actually started months ago, the night of March 29th. And no, I didn't know that night, the night he shared her with me, what his plans were. But if I had known, yes, I still would have gone along. The night I left Vincent's house, with one parting glance over my shoulder at Wednesday, *my* Wednesday, chained there against his wall, I had already decided I would do whatever I had to do to make her mine.

But as I said before, it wasn't that easily done. There was no way I could approach her, a girl belonging to Vincent, without completely losing the respect and esteem of everyone at the clubs. I sat and stewed for two whole days convincing myself not to try it, that she wasn't worth it. But she *was*.

In the end, it was Vincent who rescued me from my own folly, who called me out of the blue and suggested we meet for lunch. Of course, I immediately agreed even though I despised him, hated him for holding the girl who I felt should have been mine. But lunch with him might at least lead to another round of sharing. If I couldn't have her, sharing her with him was the next best thing. I was surprised, because he'd been fairly miffed at the way I'd played our last scene. Maybe it was Wednesday who'd asked him to have me back.

That was a laugh. Honestly, nothing could be more implausible. Still, I let myself daydream that she pined for me too. As the day of our lunch meeting approached I even let myself hope, against all reason, that he might bring her along.

But no, she wasn't there, just Vincent, smug and placid. God, let me be as put together as him when I was that old.

8. Progress

Even though she wasn't there, which disappointed me greatly, she might as well have been, because the entire hour, we talked about her.

He began by feeling me out about our scene the week before, what I'd thought of her, not just as a submissive, but as a person. I guarded my answers, tried not to sound too effusive, but surely he heard it, the desperate longing under my carefully chosen words. He saw right through me, like he saw through all the girls he played with. Like he saw through Wednesday. I wanted to beg him to tell me what she thought, if she liked me, if she'd enjoyed the things I'd done to her. It was excruciating, keeping silent.

Finally he'd leaned forward on his elbows, rubbing his forehead. He'd looked old then, his true age, for the first time I could recall.

"I want you to take over with Wednesday," he'd said quietly.

I choked on my drink. "You want me to—what?"

"Be with Wednesday. I want you and her to be together. I want her to have a life, a life she can't have with me."

I just sat there, stunned. He sighed heavily at my silence.

"I've been with her for eight years, and I'm the *only* one who's been with her." He gave me a look. God, really. The *only* one?

"I need to let go of her, but I...can't let go. Not unless..."

"Unless what?"

"She likes you, Daniel. I can see she's thinking about you now when she's with me. I want you to be with her, because you're a good guy. And in return for giving her to you, I want you to keep me apprised of how she is, so that in some small way I can still be part of her life. Not that you could tell her that, obviously."

"Keep you apprised? What do you mean? Spy on her for you? Feed you reports?"

"Reports? God, Daniel, I would just want you to tell me, generally, how she's doing. If she's happy. How her life is. That she's safe."

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He leaned closer to me and looked me in the eyes.

"I want you to love her and baby her and discipline her and marry her and get her pregnant with little Daniels and Wednesdays—"

"Wait, stop," I sputtered. My head was spinning. "You can't...anyway...you can't just *give* her to me, like she's some *thing*, some *property* of yours to pass on—"

"Can't I?" he cut me off impatiently. "Daniel, I already have. I brought you to her, and just as I suspected, she fell for you. And you like her. In fact, you want her desperately, don't you?"

I sat in stony silence. Of course I did.

"Well, then. She's yours. I give her to you."

God damn it.

"Look," he said. "Let's not make this complicated. I'm going to break up with her, and then you're going to gather up the pieces."

"Gather up the pieces, huh? Just like that. And what makes you so sure she's going to fall swooning into my arms?"

"Because I know her. I know her like I know myself. I know she can't be alone, and I know what she needs to be happy." He paused, stabbing violently at his salad for a while. "She thinks she'd be happy with me forever, but she won't be. She shouldn't be..." His voice trailed off.

I took a hard look at him. He was serious as the grave.

"So the whole time...this whole thing...last week...you were planning this," I said. "When you invited me to your house."

"Yes. I had a feeling you were the one for her. I needed to see you together, just to be sure, and yes, you are."

I frowned. I'd never participated in such an insane conversation, or even imagined anything so insane in any screenplay or story I'd penned. What was that saying? *Truth is stranger than fiction*.

"Why?" I asked. "Why me? How did you know?"

"Because I watched you at the clubs. I talked to girls you've been with, and I talked to you. I've known you a long time. You remember, I used to be your teacher."

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“Yes, I remember.” He had been a good one, too.

“I chose you mainly because I trust you. And more than anything else, I don’t want her to get hurt. You’ll understand what I mean when you’re with her. She won’t be safe until she’s with someone like you.”

“Someone like me? What does that mean?”

“Someone who loves to give pleasure and affection as much as pain.”

He leaned back and cleared his throat, looking around, as if our conversation was over, and everything that needed to be said was said.

And well, you know the rest. I went along with it. We had a few more meet ups where he told me everything I needed to know to protect her, to nurture her, to thrill her, to make her mine. I can’t say why I went along with it, this scheme, and I wasn’t completely sure it would work. I suppose I felt compelled to play my part in this little hand off because he loved her so, and because he was willing to give her up for her own good.

But now I wondered if he’d given her up at all. Here he was on the phone, pumping me for details. What did he want to know? What rules I’d laid down for her? How many times I’d fucked her so far? All the positions we’d used, on the bed, on the floor, against the wall? Did he want to know how many times I’d disciplined her, and what she’d done, if she’d struggled against me or cried? Those were the kinds of things I would want to know, if I was him. But I wasn’t him, and I sure as hell wasn’t in the mood to share.

“Listen, Vincent, things are going well. We’re making progress. But as I said, tonight will only be our third official date.”

“You’ll have to press her, Daniel, to get her to come to you, to really come to you. She tends to hide.”

“I know, yeah. I’ve seen that a little. No, she’s doing okay. She’s been really brave, really open so far. Pretty open,” I qualified quietly.

Had she been? I didn’t really know her much more than

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before, not that I would admit that to him.

"Anyway, I'm taking things slowly. I don't want to scare her off."

"Of course," said Vincent, and the way he said it, it sounded like, "you're an ass."

"Anyway, I've got to go. I was actually about to call her."

"What are you doing tonight? Taking her out?"

"Yes, out to dinner. I actually take her out on dates, you know, open the door for her, push in her chair, pick up the check. She's finally getting used to it, although it was all totally alien to her at first." I was unable to curb the self-righteous sarcasm from my voice. He just chuckled.

"Well, good. I'm glad to hear it. She was always a quick learner. Very quick. I knew she'd be all right, and as you know, I wish both of you only the best."

"Thank you." *Go to hell, you fucking bastard.*

"So I'll talk to you later then. Enjoy yourself tonight," he added acerbically. "Give her some good licks for me."

Ugh. I felt so dirty after that conversation that I had to take a shower before I could talk to her. I dressed and looked at my watch. It was just after four o'clock. She should have gotten my package by now. I was desperate to hear her voice after the revolting talk I'd had with Vincent. She picked up on the third ring, her lovely, shy voice in my ear. *Hello?*

"Hello, sweet." I didn't bother to edit the infatuation from my voice. Like Vincent said, she was quick. She knew.

"I think I will look sweet, in these white lacy things you sent me." I could hear the smile in her voice.

"Hmm," I teased. "White probably isn't your color, but we can pretend."

"I like to pretend," she said softly, and I wanted to jump through the phone and have her right then.

Instead I said, "I know. And I'm sure you'll look lovely in it. I can't wait to see you tonight. Did you find the other things?"

Yesterday I had gone shopping for her and had it all wrapped in a white box with a pretty white bow. A white lace balconette

8. Progress

bra, and a hopelessly frilly white garter belt, white backseam stockings made of real silk, and at the bottom of the box, four white velvet restraints that would be soft as a cloud against her lovely skin.

I heard her sigh softly. "Yes, I found them, Daniel. So my sheets are safe."

I laughed. "Yes, your unfortunate sheets."

"Shall I wear the cuffs too, with everything else?"

"Oh, you'll wear them," I promised, "and very often. But leave them off for dinner or the other people in the restaurant might stare."

She laughed, lilting and melodious.

"You're probably right. They're so beautiful though, and so soft. Where did you find them?"

"I know a lady who makes them. I've already ordered a matching set in black." *And burgundy, and gold, and green, and lavender...* "You don't worry about where I got them, little one, you just be sure you bring them along tonight."

"Yes, Daniel," she said in that way that made me shiver with lust.

"I'll pick you up at seven sharp. I'm dying to see you."

"I'm dying to see you too, Daniel. Where are we going?"

"Somewhere nice."

"*Very* nice?"

"Yes, somewhere really very exceptionally nice. It'd better be, considering what I plan to do to you later."

I could almost hear her squirm through the phone, that subtle change in her breath.

"Seven o'clock, Wednesday. Don't be late."

* * *

He was staring again. God, I wish I could describe to you what it felt like to be pinned under his stare. We'd rushed gracelessly through dinner, thinking of those velvet restraints bundled in the bottom of my purse, and he'd driven me to his

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home afterwards very fast.

Once there, he'd led me straight to his bedroom.

"Undress," he said. "Stand against the wall."

He sat on the bed and stared while I kicked off my shoes and undressed down to the naughty white lingerie as slowly and erotically as I could.

"Take off everything?"

His lips curved. "Not everything. You can stop there."

I touched and admired the lovely lingerie he'd given me, partly to arouse him, but partly because it was so thrilling to be dressed in his gift.

"Thank you for these beautiful things, Daniel. I love to wear them. They're the next best thing to having your hands on me."

"You're welcome, Wednesday. It's my pleasure. Literally." He laughed, but the smile didn't touch his eyes. He just stared, stared, stared, stared at me until I shivered.

"What are you thinking?" I finally dared to ask. I would never, *never*, have asked such a thing of Vincent, but Daniel had different rules. I was allowed to talk. In fact, I had the feeling he wished I talked to him more than I did. I tried. It was just so hard to put two words together under his gaze. *Those eyes...*

"I'm trying to decide what I'm going to do to you tonight."

"Well, do I have any say?"

He laughed. "Absolutely not. But I'm sure you'll enjoy whatever I dream up."

Of course I would. So there I stood against his wall, waiting for the fun to begin. I tried to look as enticing as possible, trailing my fingers absently over the tops of my thighs. He watched me with a half-smirk, as if to say, *I know your tricks*. But, a moment later, he stood and started to undress.

"You've decided on a plan of action?" I watched his beautiful body revealed to me. Golden, muscular male.

"Yes, I have," he said. "I decided I'm going to fuck you until you beg me for mercy. I'm going to fuck you so much that you're just not going to feel right unless my cock's inside you."

Fair enough.

8. Progress

“Bring me the restraints, Wednesday. If you want me to tie you up, bring them to me.”

“They’re downstairs in my purse.”

“Then run and get them. Quickly.”

He didn’t have to ask me twice. I returned and walked to stand in front of him, suddenly shy, placing them in his outstretched hand.

His rough fingers closed around the soft velvet, and his other hand came out and caught my elbow, pulling me close.

“My little doll,” he said. “You look like a doll, all dressed up like this.”

“I never had any dolls that dressed like this.”

“Didn’t you? I would have thought you sprang right from your mother’s womb in fishnets, holding out a whip.”

My eyes flicked away from his. “No, I didn’t. I never had a mother anyway.”

“You did once. Or you wouldn’t have been born.”

I didn’t want to talk about my mother, a fact he probably gathered from the look on my face, because then he said, “Go and lay down on the bed.”

I crawled into the middle and he crawled right over me, pushing me down onto my back and making short work of fixing me, spread eagled, to the bed. The restraints weren’t very big, but they were velcro on one side, and that velcro really didn’t give at all. When he was done, he sat back on his heels. Again with the stare, and now I was doubly pinned, by his eyes, and by the velvet cuffs which barely let me move. His eyes roved over every inch of me.

“What are you doing, Daniel?” I finally whispered.

“Looking at what’s mine.”

I swallowed hard and shifted a little. When he talked like that it made me wet. I looked at him, my gaze pleading. *Please touch me.*

“I like you in white. You were made to wear white, a sweet little girl like you.”

He ran his hand over my taut stomach, then down between

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my legs. I was barely recovered from the pleasure of him touching me when he leaned down and began to kiss me between my thighs, and then went to work on my clit, tasting me like a starving man.

“Oh, Jesus! Oh, God,” I moaned. I pulled at the bonds, spread my legs wider, then drew them together as far as I could, which was not at all. His mouth was driving me crazy. I wondered briefly how many girls he must have been with to hone this kind of skill. *Don't think about it, Wednesday.* “God,” I gasped. “Don't stop!”

“I won't,” he said against the inside of my thigh. “Not until you come.”

It was a shamefully short time later that I did just that. I would have liked to draw it out, to have him love me like this for hours, but my body betrayed me as always, and I couldn't make it five minutes under his mouth, especially tied down as I was, completely unable to escape. I keened as the hot waves of fire overtook me, and the tension released like a slingshot, shaking, singing nerves. He sat back when my cry of satisfaction finally faded, a lascivious smirk on his face.

“You're a show off,” I muttered.

“Be careful, darling,” he warned. “Respect, please.”

“Thank you, Daniel, that was lovely,” I said in my best submissive voice.

“You're welcome,” he replied, staring down at me, stroking himself.

He was hugely erect, and I waited for him to climb over me and shove his cock down my throat. *My turn...*

But he didn't.

“I think I want to fuck you, Wednesday. Would you like that?”

I writhed in the restraints from the way he said it to me, all growly whisper, insistent and intense. I nodded breathlessly.

“Answer me out loud. Say it.”

“God, I want you, Daniel. I really do.”

He laughed. “Oh, you'll have to do better than that, lover.”

8. Progress

“Daniel, I want you to fuck me, please!”

“Hmm...that was slightly better. But I don’t know...”

“Daniel, please, please fuck me, I want your big hard cock inside me now. Please!” I was pulling at the restraints in earnest, begging. He smiled.

“That was pretty good,” he said, and reached into the bedside drawer to get a condom to roll onto his cock. “I’m still not fully convinced though,” he shrugged, kneeling closer to me. He entered me just a little, but at my relieved moan, he pulled out again.

“No, please, Daniel! Please don’t tease me.”

He laughed, watching me squirm in the restraints. “I guess I can do whatever the hell I want to you right now.”

“You’re mean,” I whined, before I could stop myself.

He was really enjoying every moment of this. “Tone, Wednesday. Watch your tone. I believe I’m the one in charge here. I had no plans to spank you tonight, but I will if don’t control yourself. I think I’ve been pretty soft to you so far, actually. You want mean, lover?”

“Will mean get me fucked faster?”

He sighed. “Right.”

“What?” I asked, alarmed. He was leaving me.

“Do you want the crop or the belt?”

I shook my head.

“Okay, I’ll choose then. Now, tied or untied? You decide. I’m really going to hurt you, so you choose.”

“Tied,” I whispered shakily.

“Okay.” He turned me over in a very businesslike way and reattached my ties. Yes, it was better to be tied at times like these.

“I’m sorry, Daniel.” I didn’t know what had come over me, to talk to him like that.

“You *will* be sorry, I promise you. I’m not sure you fully realize what *sorry* is yet.”

“What are you going to do to me?”

“That’s for me to know and you to worry about.”

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I heard him rummaging around in the armoire in the corner. He returned and thwacked whatever he had in his hand hard against the bed, and yes, I jumped out of my skin. *The crop.*

He tapped my ass with it a couple of times. "Lift up a little, Wednesday."

No! Hell no!

"Do it," he ordered, and with a sigh, I arched my back for him, thrust my bottom out.

Thwack! Oh, God, freaking...*God...* Crops fucking hurt. He stopped, tapping it against his hand, and sighed.

"You're beautiful, Wednesday. I could do this for hours. I really could."

But he didn't do it for hours, much to my relief; he only beat me a little, and he only left a couple welts. When Vincent went for the crop, it was to beat me to abject tears. No, Daniel wanted to fuck, he was only doing this for me. At least tonight, this was all for my benefit. I'd intentionally drawn it, that was why I'd spoken as I had. I tested him, every bit as much as he tested me. We were both still testing the waters. New relationships were hard.

And wonderful. Sometimes new relationships were wonderful. So much for "hurting me." After a few lackluster licks, and a few half-excited, half-pained-filled cries from me, he tossed the crop to the floor. He crawled on top of me and buried his head in my hair.

"God, you get to me. You get to me. You do."

I moaned as he thrust inside. I stung just enough from the crop that his skin against mine made me nice and sore and fidgety. I moved and writhed under him, which I knew he loved, and I wrested a growl from him.

"Oh, Jesus, I love how you move. You like it? You like to feel my big cock inside you?"

"Yes, Daniel, yes!"

"Pounding against your hot, red little ass? I should have beaten you harder, but I couldn't wait to get inside your pussy, you hot little slut."

8. Progress

“Oh, God, Daniel! Please, please, I’m going to come!”

“Come for me, Wed,” he growled. “I want to feel it. I really want you to move.”

The pleasure built, teemed, overflowed. I came like a madwoman, held fast and flying wild. I moved under him like he wanted, as well as I could, tied up as I was. He came too, jerking against me, and collapsed over top of me. I shivered a moment later as he traced his fingers across my back.

“Untie me, Daniel,” I sighed weakly.

He laughed, kissing my shoulder.

“It’s a little late now.” He reached up and released my wrists with a *rrrrrip*, then leaned back to undo my ankles, and then he gathered me in his arms. We spooned, my back to his front, so for once, I wasn’t pinned under those eyes.

“Wednesday,” he said after a moment. “Why do you like it? Why do you want me to be mean to you?”

“You weren’t mean, Daniel. I asked for it.”

“I know you did. Why?”

I turned to him, reaching my arms around his neck. He was so big, so strong, I was completely transported when he held me tight in his muscular embrace.

“You know, the hardest part of being tied up is not being able to touch you,” I sighed.

“Don’t change the subject. Answer me. Why do you like what I do? Why do you like when I hurt you?”

“I don’t know,” I said, drifting on the wonderful, musky smell of him. “I guess because afterwards, you’re so awfully nice.”

9. Questions

She sleeps.

I smiled to myself. She was sleeping like a baby. She was a wildly sexual siren by night, but in the morning, she was just an adorable girl. Just a worn out, cuddled-up girl sleeping in my bed. I didn't help that I'd woken her up before sunrise to fuck her again, and once overnight. I pulled the covers around her and tiptoed out of the room.

I started to do a little work in the office, but I found I couldn't concentrate with her so far away. I went back up to the bedroom and crawled in beside her with my laptop, typing quietly at first, until I realized she was pretty much impossible to wake.

I did good work for an hour, and then I put my laptop aside to stare at her some more. She was so pale. Her skin was so beautiful and soft. She was so terribly, frighteningly innocent in sleep. I thought of what Vincent had told me once. *I'm the only one that's been with her.* Of course, that wasn't true, God knows how many men he'd shared her with, including me, but he'd had her *first*. That's what he'd meant when he said that to me. I wish it had been me, and not him. However he'd taken her virginity, it wasn't good enough for her, I could have done it better, I was sure.

I leaned closer, so close I could have kissed her if I wanted to,

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if I wasn't so afraid of waking her up. I didn't want her to wake, because when she did, she'd run out on me like she always did, even when I wanted her to stay. God, I wanted her to stay permanently, to move in with me. I wanted her to be with me always. I hated waiting around for her to agree to come and see me, to go out with me before we came home to fuck. She belonged here with me always. I wanted her every minute of every day. I never wanted her to go home.

I looked at her long black eyelashes resting against her pale skin. She had dark smudges under her eyes that made me frown in concern. She was so tired. Had I really worn her out so much? I woke her twice from a deep sleep to have my way with her. Poor girl, those dark circles under her eyes were usually hidden by makeup, but I'd kissed or licked most of it off. She was still stunningly beautiful, even more beautiful than when she was all made up. I was charmed to find a freckle or two on the bridge of her nose.

Those freckles, wow, so adorable. I just stared at them, picturing her as a child, pale and freckled, with that curly mop of black hair. It was always in the back of my mind that Wednesday had once been someone's daughter, someone's child. I hoped to have children of my own someday, and if they turned out to be the submissive variety, I hoped they would never be misused as she had been before she came to me.

More than that, I felt I owed it to whoever had brought this lovely Wednesday to the world to treat her fairly and responsibly, although it was really difficult sometimes to picture a sex goddess like her as someone's child. Someone, sometime, had wrapped her in a blanket to keep her warm, had cut the crusts from her sandwiches, had plaited her hair, someone who had the same hopes and dreams for her all parents had.

But Vincent had told me that Wednesday wasn't anyone's child, except perhaps his own, and warned me not to bring up, no matter what, her early life. Of course, that had bothered me greatly and I had pressed for more specifics, and what little he'd given me made me wish I'd held my peace. No mother to speak

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of, an abusive father. It was easy to try to psychoanalyze, especially with the things we did, the things she desperately wanted me to do to her.

I couldn't imagine growing up without the loving warmth of a mother. My own mother still babied me, thirtysomething man that I was. I'd been an only child, like Wednesday, only I'd been spoiled rotten by two loving parents who hung on my every word.

A rhyme from a storybook I'd loved long ago came unbidden to my mind.

Monday's child is fair of face.

Tuesday's child is full of grace.

Wednesday's child is full of woe.

Thursday's child has far to go.

Friday's child is loving and giving.

Saturday's child works hard for a living,

But the child who is born on the Sabbath Day

Is bonny and blithe and good and gay.

She'd been born on a Wednesday surely, to have the name she did. I pictured her as a young child, pale and serious, sitting in an empty home devoid of any warmth. *I like to just think about things sometimes, for hours...* I wanted to hug her, to hold her for a long, long time. I wanted to somehow make up for all that heartache. *Wednesday's child is full of woe.* How do you take away a childhood like that? With only your own thoughts, your imagination for a friend? With no one to nurture you, to make you feel safe and valued?

I had been born on a Friday. I had plenty of love to give.

I sighed and gathered her next to me. I couldn't help it, if she woke, so be it. She stirred but didn't wake completely, content to sleep in my arms. I could feel her heart beating against my chest, I held her so close to me. I tried to imagine a father, even a father primed with alcohol, harming her as a child, even more sweet and helpless than she was now. Perhaps that was why he abused her, because she was everything he was not. He was mean and horrible, and she...she was as bright and resilient as the sun.

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Now I see that Vincent had been right, as much as it chagrined me, to pass her on to me, to not chance her falling into someone else's hands. If she ever ended up with anyone like her father, it would have felt normal to her, even comfortable, and she would have sunk right back in. She would have taken anything, *anything* without complaint, and without any expectation of love. She would have stayed with such a person, such a user, forever, and, like Sir Stephen and O, would have probably even resigned herself to death.

No, no, no, no, no. I was seized with anxiety when I thought about it, thought about losing her, thought of her being hurt in some circumstances beyond my control. I saw it now finally, saw Vincent's point of view. *In turn, you'll keep me apprised of her well-being,* he had said. *Or else I might lose my mind,* he'd probably added to himself. I understood now, and I found some peace in that, but still, I knew Wednesday would never understand if she found out I was informing on her to him.

She sighed in her sleep and whimpered softly. *Daddy*, she whispered. I narrowed my eyes. Disgusting Vincent, had he played daddy and daughter games with her? Blech. It wasn't his normal style, but why was she whispering *Daddy* in her sleep? Was she dreaming of her childhood, so long past, here beside me in bed? Was she dreaming of him, the first man who'd beaten her, beaten her before she'd been given a choice of whether to submit to it or not?

I'm cold, she whimpered again. I pulled her close, soothing her quietly. Poor cold and lonely Wednesday, lost and adrift in old dreams in my arms. *Wake up.* I wanted to shake her from her cold, cold dreams. *You're with me now, everything's all right.* She would wake soon enough, though, and run off.

Damn it. I needed more...more than she was willing to give.

* * *

No matter what my needs were, or how *strong* they were, it was almost two weeks before I saw her again. If I had been

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slightly insane after three days, I was pretty much bordering on lunacy now. She was good at excuses. A slight cold first, which I believed, because I got it too, then a pressing deadline at work. It was a feat of herculean personal strength that I didn't go spy on her from my old haunt across the street.

But no, I managed not to, somehow. I wanted to trust her. I wanted to believe that she was just working hard, that she wanted to see me, but she was just too busy right now. I finally pinned down a date with her on the weekend, invited her over to my place for dinner. Never underestimate the seductive power of cooking dinner for a girl.

She was seduced too, very easily. My fears and worries about her stepping out on me faded away. She couldn't have been seeing someone else on the side, not from the way she was looking at me. She smiled at me over the rim of her wineglass, exactly the way she'd smiled at me the night we met. That kittenish glance, innocent and yet seductive. She killed me. And she wanted me, of that I had no doubt.

I leaned forward and put my glass down with a sigh.

"Wednesday. The innocent thing isn't very convincing, but it's nice to look at just the same."

"I am innocent. Didn't you say you loved me in white?"

I snorted, leaning back in my chair. *The sweet act. Nice, but it won't work.*

"You know, I'm angry with you. Surely you realize that."

"Daniel, I'm sorry. I really was busy." She had the grace to look apologetic.

"Too busy to see me? Just for one night?"

"My boss moved up a deadline at work. And I do have a life."

"I have a life too. I still make time to see you. Which is more than you've been doing."

"I've wanted to see you," she protested. "I just—"

"You just what?"

"I just...I don't know."

"*I don't know.* That doesn't work for me. More clear, lover. Talk to me. Are you unhappy? Was I too soft last time? I can be

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harder.”

Her wide eyes flew to mine.

“I’m not unhappy. God, no. No, you’re perfect. You’ve been perfect for me. I just...I think...”

“What? Just say it.”

“You make me a little scared.” Her hand opened and closed on the stem of her glass. I stared at her, trying to puzzle her out.

“I thought you liked to be scared.”

“I do. Sometimes.”

“Put the glass down. Look at me.”

She dragged her gaze to mine with an effort, twisting her hands in her lap.

“I know I demand a lot from you. I know I’m not easy. But Jesus, Wed, neither are you. You torment me like no one ever has, and you revel in it.”

“I don’t torment you! If I do, I don’t mean to.”

“Lying to me is not a wise choice tonight. I’m not in the mood for it.”

“What are you in the mood for?”

Little minx, all but batting her eyes at me.

“Come here. Just come here.” I was weak. I couldn’t resist that look, as much as it was only meant to distract.

She pushed back from the table and walked around to my side. I took her in my arms and hugged her close.

“Wednesday, what am I going to do with you?”

“You could fuck me.”

“I’ll fuck you if and when I want to,” I reminded her. “Look at me. Why won’t you look at me?”

“I am,” she protested, but she wasn’t, she had her eyes fixed stubbornly on some spot down by my lips. I jerked her chin up.

“Look at me. In my eyes. Don’t do this, Wednesday.”

“Do what?”

“Make me angry. Test me. I’m going to beat your tail either way. Don’t be the naughty girl tonight. You don’t have to. I’ll give you what you need without all these games.”

“They’re not games,” she said, and her eyes filled up a little.

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“Oh, perfect. Now the crocodile tears.”

She turned from me, tried to pull away from me. *Not a chance, little girl.*

“Come on. Come with me. To the bedroom.”

Inside the door, I shoved her forward against the wall, one arm trapped nice and hard behind her back. She didn’t fight. I don’t know why I was so angry with her, but I was. With my other hand, I started taking her clothes off none too gently.

“Let’s see what Wednesday has worn tonight to make me burn...”

I peeled off her little skirt, her tight sweater, to reveal a lovely pink set. A corset laced up in the back, with garters and stockings and a little pink thong.

“It seems a shame to ruin these,” I said, just before I ripped the panties off her with a snap.

She gasped, whether because I’d ruined her panties or because I’d buried my fingers in her cleft, I don’t know. I made her dance around a little, stroking her clit, not letting her come. Then I pulled her over to the bed and spanked her hard. It was a pretty strict session, she was wriggling and crying in no time.

“Daniel, please! That hurts!”

“Yes it does. You need to understand how I feel about this running away and hiding you do.”

“I wasn’t running away, I was busy!” she wailed, scissoring her legs.

“Too busy for me? You’re not helping yourself.” I paused for a moment to pin her kicking legs between mine, before I laid into her again.

“Ouch. Ow!” She struggled against me, her arms squeezing ever more tightly around my leg.

“Stop. Present your bottom to me the way you’re supposed to and stop squirming like a child. You earned this spanking, you’re going to take it. Do you understand?”

She cried quietly, real tears.

“Answer me, Wednesday.”

“Yes!” she sniffled. “I understand!”

9. Questions

“Just be a good girl and let me do this. You know what to do. Behave yourself.”

She was good for about three seconds before she started fidgeting again, then reached back to try to shield herself. It just took a moment to trap that naughty hand behind her back.

“Every time,” I hissed. “No. You know better. If you can’t keep your hands where they belong, then I’m going to tie you down and use my belt on you.”

“No,” she cried. “I’ll be good!”

“I’m serious, Wednesday.”

“I know. I’ll be good! I will...just please...please don’t be mad at me!”

“Then tell me the truth!”

I stopped and held her pinned across my lap. “Tell me the truth, Wednesday. Why wouldn’t you see me for so long?”

“I told you why,” she sobbed. “I’m afraid.”

“Afraid of what?”

“Afraid of how you make me feel. It scares me...how much you make me feel.”

How much. I knew what she meant. I let her go and she scrambled away from me, backed up against the wall. I looked at her, and she looked back at me, breathless and tearful. *Please, her gaze said. Please don’t be mad.*

I sighed. “Yes. Okay. I’m not mad anymore. I’m just trying to understand.”

I stood up and moved to her, and she backed away.

“No,” I warned. “Don’t ever shrink from me. Let me hold you.”

I pulled her back into my lap and hugged her until she sighed and finally relaxed in my embrace. She shuddered now and again as my fingers moved slowly all over her. I could feel her unwinding, getting loose.

“Wednesday. Just trust me. Just be mine.”

“I am yours,” she said. “I’m trying to be.”

“I know you’re trying.” I nuzzled her and ran my fingers down her back, then parted her, probing her asshole gently. She

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tensed and pulled away.

“No.” My arms tightened around her, holding her. “I’ll do what I want to you, lover. If I want to play with your bottom, I will. If I want to beat it ’til it’s red and sore, I will. If I want to stick my big hard cock in your ass and fuck it, I will. You know that I will.”

“Yes, Daniel.”

“Do you like it when I touch you there?”

I probed again, and she shivered.

“Answer the question.”

“Yes.”

“Finally, some honesty.” I set her back on her feet with a sigh and pushed her away.

“Go stand against the wall. I want to look at you.”

She walked over and turned and leaned back against it. She flinched a little at the contact with her sore ass.

“It hurts, huh?”

“Yes, Daniel.”

“Turn around, I want to see.” She turned and put her face against the wall. Classic submissive pose. I felt my cock twitch and grow harder still. And her ass... God, I’d really spanked her hard. I could see the angry red marks, the welts from my fingers. She stood still as a statue, but then she shifted just a little bit. It was a tiny movement, but it sent me over the edge.

I was still fully dressed, but I couldn’t rip my clothes off fast enough. I rolled on a condom and was behind her in an instant, pressing my cock against her ass. I took her hands in mine and pinned them over her head to the wall, and hissed in her ear.

“Listen to me, Wednesday. I’m not tying you up, not tonight. But you’re going to leave your hands over your head, just like this, and you’re not going to move them. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” she said.

I pressed against her, breathing down her neck.

“Why are you scared?”

“Are you going to fuck my ass?”

“I might. I thought you liked that.”

9. Questions

“I do. But you...you’re bigger than he was.”

“Do you think I would hurt you that way? Really, do you?”

“No...I don’t know...I don’t think so.”

“No, I wouldn’t. You know better than that. I’m not going to fuck your ass tonight, baby. If that’s what you’re shaking about. Soon, but not tonight.”

I ran my hands across her sore ass, and she jumped as I positioned my cock between her legs and started to work it up into her tight, wet pussy.

“But when I do finally fuck your ass, Wednesday, I’m going to do it a lot. And sometimes I’m going to do it just like this, right against the wall, so you have nowhere to go. No way to get away. And you’re just going to take it, aren’t you?”

“Yes, Daniel,” she sighed.

“Yes. Because I know you, Wednesday. I know what you want.”

I thrust inside her again, hard, lifting her toes from the floor. “But for now, I’m going to fuck your tight little cunt. Because that’s what I want to do right now.”

She sobbed, moving restlessly back against me, her sore ass cheeks buffeted again and again by my hard thrusts.

“Keep your hands over your head. Don’t move them. I promise you’ll regret it, if you move them.”

She shook her head, but her hands clenched and unclenched against the wall. I fucked her hard and steady, then reached down to part her and stroke her clit. She was like a wild creature under me, trapped against the wall, trying to get free. She felt electric, gasping and moaning and crying out.

“Do you want to come, Wednesday?” I asked, pinching her nipples. That was all it took. Her fists pounded the wall, and I grasped her hips hard, basking in the feeling of her pussy clenching and coming around my dick.

Oh, yes, it was so fun to fuck her. There was nothing like the feeling of her going crazy under me, groaning and pleading from the touch of my fingertips. Afterwards, I had to pick her up to keep her from falling. Her legs were still shaky as I laid her on

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the bed, and I pulled her close to me, soothing her, brushing back her curls. She looked wild and satisfied, like some ancient queen.

"Are you okay?" I asked after we'd both caught our breath.

"Yes," she hummed, cuddling closer. "I'm fine."

"What did you learn tonight, Wednesday?"

"I learned you can cook a hell of a steak."

I laughed softly. "Okay. What else?"

"That you spank even harder when you're angry, and you're going to fuck my ass soon."

"It couldn't be soon enough for you."

She was quiet, blushing charmingly. *Oh, nice try, you little perv, with the blushing act...*

"And when are you going to go out with me again?" I pressed. "In two weeks again, or just a few days?"

"A few days," she said. "I'll try."

"Don't just try. Do. You can't be too busy for me. I'm your dominant and you're my submissive. We should have set up regular hours by now."

"I know, Daniel. But you did say we could take things slowly..."

Damn it. I might have.

"We have taken things slowly," I reminded her. "It's been a month now. Over a month."

"I know."

We lay together another minute, and I knew she'd be fast asleep soon. I traced a pink garter strap from her hip to the top of her thigh.

"Wednesday, are you really mine?"

She looked at me then, a look I didn't quite know. Suspicion, maybe. Or fear.

"Why is that so important to you, Daniel? To own me?"

Good question. I wish I knew.

10. Love

I was woken up Saturday morning by a delivery, a gift from Daniel. I slowly opened the box, and then stifled a smile. As if I needed a reminder. Where the hell did he find a toy like this in pink? Jesus, he probably had them in every color. I was already getting warm between the legs. There was a note.

I'll be there at seven. You'd better be wearing this.

I sighed and bit my lip. What a pervert he was. But yes, it would be my pleasure to wear it. Dinner, before dessert.

It had been a week since I'd seen him. He still felt it was too long, but I felt it was too soon. I completely lost myself when I was with him, and each time I left him, it was a while before I could go back. The same thing had happened with Vincent, and I was so awfully afraid of it happening again, because it was hard enough when Vincent had left me. If Daniel left me, I'd never survive.

Even the times he was only angry with me, I was beside myself. I already needed his approval far more than I liked. I had tried to be so careful, to hold myself just far enough away from him, but I was failing miserably. He made it really, really hard.

When he came to the door at seven, I was dressed and ready to go, and I had his toy in my ass just as he'd said. He knew I did too, from the expression on his face. Instead of guiding me out

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the door, he pushed me inside. *Thank God*, I thought as his arms came around me. He kissed me, hard, deep, passionately, crushing me to him. His hands drew up my dress and first found the toy, and then the hot wetness between my legs. He made a sound in his throat that scared me a little.

"Take your clothes off. Every fucking stitch. Take everything off."

I obeyed him as quickly as I could, before he started ripping stuff off. He took everything off me, even my bra and stockings, until I stood before him completely naked, breathless and flushed.

"I'm going to fuck you now, Wednesday. And it's not going to be in your hot little cunt."

I swallowed hard. I felt all shivery and I stood and watched as he too shucked all his clothes. God, he was hard, jutting in front of me. I knew he wouldn't hurt me, but he looked like he really, absolutely could.

"Come here," he ordered, and he guided me to the side of my bed. I felt naked somehow without the lingerie I usually wore. I think he wanted me that way at that moment, totally naked, totally defenseless and given up to him.

He bent me over, pushing down on my shoulders, and started to nudge my legs apart. I stiffened a little, but he tsked and said, "Wider. Open your legs for me, now," and so I did.

He took the toy out, and I heard the rattle of the condom wrapper, and felt the cool lube against my ass. "I'm a big man, Wednesday," he warned. "You're going to have to let me in."

"Yes, Daniel," I sighed. *Yes, yes, yes.*

He paused and rubbed the small of my back. I was weak in the legs, remembering another time he'd taken my ass. That time, I'd already been stretched by a larger toy than the pink one, and even then, it had hurt a little bit. But I wanted it, I craved it, the conquering pain.

"I've been dreaming of doing this to you all week now," he growled softly.

"I've been dreaming of it too."

10. Love

“Have you?” he said, pressing lightly to me so I flinched a little. “You’re not afraid, are you?”

“No, I’m not afraid.”

“You want me? You want me to fuck your ass? What if it hurts? What if I hurt you, baby?”

I moaned softly. “You can hurt me if you want.”

He started to ease in to me. God, it felt so huge. So frightening. So good.

“I don’t want to hurt you.”

“God, please. Please!”

“Please what?” he asked, breathing against my ear. “Please fuck your ass?”

Oh, Jesus, yes, please...

“Say it to me, Wednesday. Tell me what you want.”

“Please, Daniel,” I begged. “Please fuck me.”

“*Please, Daniel, fuck my ass,*” he prompted me.

“Please, Daniel, fuck my ass. Please!”

I was pressing against the bed trying to relieve the pressure in my clit, but he wouldn’t let me. He pulled me back against him with a low chuckle, teasing me with his cock. He was an absolute terror, and I was quickly losing it. If he didn’t take me soon, after I’d dreamed of it all week... I’d dreamed of it for months, since that first night back in March. Oh, God...

“Do you want me to spank you first?” he teased.

“Oh, God, Daniel.” I buried my head in the bed, and my muffled voice reproached him. “This isn’t funny!”

“It’s funny to me. I’ll use my belt if you want. I know you like that.”

I moaned and wiggled my ass back against his cock.

“Okay, okay. Soon. Arch your back.” He ran his fingertips along my spine and I arched my back, opening to him. “So beautiful,” he breathed. “Good girl. Are you sure you’re ready for me, Wednesday? Either way, you’re getting me. And you’re just going to stand there and take it like a good girl. You’re not to pull away or move your hands from the bed, do you understand?”

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“Yes, Daniel,” I whispered. “I’ll be good, I promise.”

“And you’re going to open up and relax for me, like a good little girl who wants to get her ass fucked.”

He started to enter me, just easing the head in. Oh, Jesus. Wow, he was big. He pressed into me slowly, while I fidgeted against him and whimpered.

“Okay?” he asked.

In answer, I sighed and wiggled my ass. He grabbed my hips hard in his hands, and thrust deep inside me with a groan.

“Oh, fucking—God...you feel so good. I’m going to fuck you so hard, little girl.”

“Oh, God, please,” I think I said, or maybe I just said some kind of gibberish. I remembered this feeling, this incredible, indescribable feeling of him in my ass, and I had not thought, months ago, that I would ever feel it again. I really, *really* loved ass fucking, preferred it in fact. The edge of pain to it, the care he had to take, the intense feeling of sharing something so forbidden. Apparently, he liked it as much as I did.

He fucked me forever, slow and deep, a little harder towards the end. I reached back for him, close to coming, and he took my hands hard in his and pressed me forward on the bed.

“Come for me, baby. Come now. I want to feel you come with my cock in your ass.”

Of course I did, and as soon as I did, he did, and we came together, raw pulsing orgasm, making a racket there on my bed. He pushed me down and lay on top of me, and he stayed hard a while longer, just resting in my ass. Finally he withdrew, turned me over and kissed me.

“Again,” he breathed in my ear.

* * *

We never did get out that night. Eventually we ended up in the bathtub though, eating takeout in the nude.

“I like this better,” I told him. “Better than going out with you.”

10. Love

“Do you?” he said. “I like to take you out. I like showing you off to everybody.”

“Really? But I’m just as happy here. I like this, just relaxing with you.”

“Move in with me then.”

I choked on my Lo Mein. “What?”

“If you like this, just move in with me. We could do this all the time. Every day. Every hour.”

I fell silent. There was nothing I could say that wouldn’t sound mean. *All the time? I don’t want that. I don’t want you taking over my life. I don’t want to always have you all over me, even though I like it once in a while.*

“I’ll think about it,” I said instead, buying time.

“I’d like to get blood tests done too, soon, you and I. At least me. I trust that you’re clean.”

“Really? That’s a lot of trust.”

“Vincent told me he always used condoms with you, and insisted on them with whoever he shared you with. He said you’ve never had unprotected sex.”

My eyes narrowed. “When did he tell you that?”

How the hell much had they talked about me? Why did he suddenly look so guilty?

“Well,” he shrugged, “you know, we talked about it. When he invited me over. You know.”

“And what else did he tell you about me?”

“Wednesday,” he murmured. “Watch your tone.”

Watch your tone. In other words, shut up. If I don’t want to talk to you about it, I won’t.

“The water’s getting cold,” I said, not caring what my tone sounded like. “I’m getting out.”

He grabbed my ankle.

“I’m cold, Daniel! Do you mind?”

“Yes, I mind. What are you pissed about? Yes, we talked about you. I was coming over to fuck you, after all!”

“Fine, whatever,” I said. “Get a blood test. I’ll get one too, I’ll go on the pill. Whatever you want, Daniel,” I said, drying off. He

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dried off too, eyeing me angrily. I started to pick up the food from the bathroom counter, but he stopped me.

“Leave it. Go kneel down by the bed.”

For a minute, just a minute, I thought of refusing. *Fuck you.* But instead I bit my tongue and managed to say “Yes, Daniel.”

I went into the bedroom and knelt down like he told me. He took his time toweling off and carried the food back to the kitchen himself, making me wait, like an obedient sub, for the pleasure of sucking him off when he was mad. Finally he came and stood in front of me, hard already, and buried both his hands in my wet hair.

“Open your mouth.”

I did, but not quite enough for him to get in.

He drew his breath in, a warning.

“Don’t. Don’t draw me, Wednesday. I promise you, you’ll be sorry. Suck it. Stop fucking around.” His fingers tightened in my hair, and he pulled so it hurt. “You fucking pissed me off, now you’re going to make it better. Open your pretty fucking mouth, and open it wide.”

I did, and he found the back of my throat. I gagged a little, as I’m sure he intended me to. I knew why he was doing this, and I sucked him like he wanted, but I wasn’t changing my mind. I wasn’t moving in with him. The silent, effective reminder, a big cock shoved down my throat...*I’m the one in charge here, lest you forget.* Yes, he was in charge, but he didn’t own me. No, not yet.

He left me soon after he came, either because he felt guilty or because I’d shut down. I fell into bed, hating him, hating myself, and cried myself to sleep with the taste of his cum still in my throat.

* * *

I fought with myself all the way home. I should have gone back. I shouldn’t have let her shut me out like that. I was so fucking pissed. I would have turned around and gone back to

10. Love

her, but it would have been too ugly of a scene. I was too angry, too frustrated, too worn out by her. I'd had enough topping from below for one night.

Back at home, there was a voicemail from Vincent. "Fuck you," I muttered, and hit delete. I went into the kitchen and poured myself a drink. God, she plagued me. Stupid, scared girl. I would have thought by now she might trust me. I had never hurt her, not once, even though I could. I easily could have hurt her if I wanted to. I didn't want to. I just wanted her to have what she wanted, pleasure and comfort. Why couldn't she see?

I threw myself back into my work the next morning, determined not to call her, to let her call me. That lasted about fifteen minutes, and then I got in my car and drove to her place. I was afraid I'd be waking her up, but she was up when I got there, and her eyes were red. Not red from just waking up, red from crying.

"Jesus, Wednesday. Can I come in?"

She stood back to let me pass, her arms crossed in front of her. It wasn't a welcoming feel. I walked by the bed where we'd fucked just yesterday. I stood in the spot where I'd ordered her to kneel.

"Listen, I'm not here to apologize. I didn't do anything that wasn't within my rights. But it's obvious I upset you last night."

"You didn't upset me."

"You've been crying."

"I cry sometimes."

"Wednesday," I said. I refused to go to her. I was here for her, but she had to come to me.

She looked up, tears in her eyes again. "I'm just so sorry. I'm so sorry that you're angry with me."

"I'm not angry with you anymore. I was last night, yes. But it's okay now."

"No, it's not." She shook her head. "You'll always get angry when I—"

"Run from me? Hide from me? Yes, I will, until you stop. But I won't give up on you, Wednesday. I'll never give up. I'll

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always come back and keep trying, just like I'm doing now."

"Why?"

"Because I love you, you foolish girl. That's what love is."

She was sniffing now, and she wiped her nose against her sleeve. This wasn't the way I'd pictured the moment I declared my love for her, but I supposed it would have to do.

"I love you, Wednesday, and I have for a long time. For longer than you even know. And don't ask me why, or tell me that it isn't true. I love you, Wednesday Carson, that's just the way it is. Now you can stand there and keep crying like a baby, or you can come over here and let me give you a kiss."

She took a couple steps towards me, then ran the rest of the way, and God, she was back in my arms.

I kissed her for what seemed like an eternity, like I could convince her, by kissing her, of just how strongly I felt. After I kissed her, I fucked her silly and then held her sated body in my arms. We lay together on her tiny apartment bed and I thought to myself, *why are we here? Why wasn't she home with me where she should have been?* I kissed the top of her head and thought to myself that she hadn't said *I love you* back.

"Wednesday, this is impossible for me," I said.

She sighed.

"No, hear me out. It's like torture, this arrangement."

"What arrangement?"

"Exactly. What arrangement? I never know when I'll see you. You're never there when I need you."

"I was here this morning when you came for me."

"I'm just selfish. I want you with me all the time. I'm selfish, I admit it. I know I am."

"No," she said. "I'm the selfish one. For making you live with this 'arrangement' that you hate."

"Wed, let's not start again. Let's not fight now. I have to go on a trip."

"A trip where?"

"A location. A movie set. For almost two weeks. Script work. Is that enough space for you?"

10. Love

“Oh, Daniel, you act like I don’t like you, like I don’t want you. Don’t you understand? I just need to have my own place.”

“To get away from me.”

“No.”

“Then why, why can’t you stay with me?”

“I just can’t. I just can’t yet. Please give me some time.”

I was riling her up again, and I didn’t want to. I’d put off my trip as long as I could, but now I had to go, and I didn’t want to leave her angry. I tilted her chin up.

“Look at me.”

She gazed up at me, guilty and worried.

“Listen, I love you no matter what. I love you enough to let you be you. If you can’t move in with me, I’ll take what I can get.”

“Will you really?”

“Yes. I promise, no more pressure. For a while, anyway. For now.”

She looked dubious still.

“Are you sorry you ever met me?” she asked.

“Yes, I wish I’d never set eyes on you,” I teased, gathering her up and squeezing her. “And, Wednesday, I’m going to miss you terribly while I’m away. Don’t you dare so much as look at another guy.”

* * *

Time crawled by while I was away from her. I was at a film set in Italy but I might as well have been on the moon. Almost two weeks stretched into an unbearably frustrating three weeks, and even the nightly phone sex couldn’t scratch my itch. Not that our calls didn’t get raunchier and raunchier... By the evening before I left, our phone sex acts were pretty much breaking international law. Far from scratching my itch, the phone calls actually made me hornier, eager to try out some of the naughty things I’d done to her over the line.

The night I got in, I called from the jet way. I was so hot for

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her, it would have probably been safer to leave her alone. I would kill her, I thought, from the force of my passion. How had I managed before her? After three weeks I was ready to die. My fingers shook as I dialed her number, like some junkie questing for crack.

“Wednesday,” I said when she answered. “I’ll be home soon. I want you to wait for me at my house.”

“Okay,” she said, sounding as wrought up as me.

“Do you remember the alarm code?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, I’m just getting off the plane now, but I’ll be there as soon as I can. Don’t be late.”

“I won’t, Daniel.”

“It’s dark, take a cab.”

“Okay.”

“And prepare yourself, because I’m going to fuck your brains out.”

I was, too. I was going to fuck her silly, anyway, anywhere I could give her my cock, and then I was going to kiss her until she was breathless and I was going to make her sleep in my bed. It was Monday, I knew she had work in the morning. Poor thing was going to be tired. Too bad.

When I arrived at the house, I threw my bags down. There she was, a vision in a black corset and stockings at the top of the stairs. So pale, so beautiful, I raced up the stairs to get my hands on her. I carried her right into the bedroom and dropped her down on the bed. I leaned over her and kissed her hard.

“Stay.”

* * *

As if I would have gone anywhere... I waited, squirming with lust, for him to return. He stripped off his clothes and grabbed the restraints from the bedside table. He tied me quickly to the bed, kissing my ankles and wrists as he did. He stroked and licked me all over before he burrowed between my thighs. I

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fought the bonds as he started to kiss and lick me. *No! Yes! No!* I wanted to sob. I loved when he did this, but I didn't want it now, not now after three weeks without him.

"Please, Daniel, no. Please just fuck me. I want your cock!"

"Hush," he said, nipping my clit. "Behave."

"Please!"

"No, I'll do what I want to you."

"Daniel!"

"No. When I want."

I groaned in aggravation but he had his way with me, at least until he realized that I was refusing to come. He stepped up his efforts, but I wanted him to fuck me. I groaned and looked away, steeling myself.

"All right," he growled, "But you'll pay for this later."

I waited for him to roll on a condom, desperate for him to come inside. He didn't tease me, thank God. He took me right away and fucked me so hard I thought the restraints would come loose.

"God, Daniel. God, please don't stop, please don't stop, ever!"

"No. I'm going to fuck you all fucking night."

He rocked in me, fucking me hard, but I needed it hard. My pelvis was heavy and aching. The pleasure built with each thrust, arced through my entire body. I was one giant quivering mass of nerves, and he was the force holding me together.

"Please! Please!" I begged as I got close. I clenched my thighs together and pressed my pelvis against him. Just as I nearly reached my apex, he stopped.

"You need to turn over."

I gasped. No.

I knew I should be punished for holding back on him earlier. That was one of the first things he'd taught me when he laid down the rules for me. *You'll come when I say.* But this was so harsh. As he turned me over and tied me to the bed again, I felt my near-orgasm ebbing away. I felt ashamed and guilty. Too late to go back and obey now.

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I closed my eyes, my face burning, feeling close to tears. Behind me, I heard him gathering some things. I felt cold lube against my ass, and I tensed a little. I always did.

“Relax. Open. Don’t fight me. You’re in enough trouble as it is.” I tried to relax as he slid the toy in, but it was hard. I gasped and fidgeted, even though it didn’t hurt much, not really. Even angry, he inserted it carefully. He took such good care of me, all the time. *God, I loved him. I did.*

I said it then, without meaning to, just blurted it out. “I love you, Daniel.” I said it softly, but I felt it so strongly in my heart.

He stopped. I couldn’t see his face. He put his hands on me, kissed the small of my back. “I love you too.”

He stood up, and I heard him pull the belt from his pants, and looked over to see him double it up in his hands. His big rough hands, God, I almost went off again. He came and sat beside me on the bed. He let the belt rest on the sheets in front of me, and twined his fingers in my hair.

“I’m going to hurt you, Wed,” he whispered. “This is going to hurt. I have to punish you when you’re naughty.”

“I know.” And I did know. It was why I loved him so much.

“Do you really love me?”

“I desperately do.”

He sighed and kissed me between the shoulders, running his tongue up to the nape of my neck.

“You don’t have to count, Wednesday,” he said. “I’ll stop when it’s enough.”

I knew then it was going to last a long time, and it did and it hurt, but it felt so wonderful, so good.

He started out leisurely, some mild strokes to get me started, but then he picked up and really hit me hard. A belt is a wonderful instrument, because it stings and feels terribly punishing, but it rarely leaves welts, not like a crop or switch or cane. His belt was my favorite, which he knew, because he could use it a long time. And he did. Over and over, I wailed, “I’m sorry,” and still he brought the leather belt down on my ass. It hurt, but I loved it. I needed the pain. He beat me until I was

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weak from writhing and crying, even tied as I was to the bed. He beat me until I'd reached my limit, until I almost used our safe word, and then he beat me a little more. I loved him for that, because it made me feel absolutely euphoric when he finally put down the belt.

"Daniel," I wept. I felt so emptied out and punished. I loved him. I loved him so much. He knelt between my legs and rubbed my back until I caught my breath. My ass was so hot. It felt twice its normal size. He caressed it and I moaned.

"Shh, okay. It's all over. That's enough. I'm going to fuck you now."

"Daniel," I said again, a plea.

"I'm going to fuck you in your ass, Wednesday, since you did so well, and you can come as much as you want, for being a good girl."

"Thank you, Daniel," I moaned, arching back against his hands.

He pulled out the toy and pressed against me, but I was so tense and worked up from the beating that he couldn't get inside.

"Wednesday, relax. Let me do this."

I shook my head, buried my face in the sheets.

"I don't want to hurt you. Don't make me hurt you."

"I can't."

"Yes, you can. Open for me."

He reached around to fondle my clit a little, and we could both feel how wet I was.

"Let me fuck you. I'm gonna make you come so hard. You have to trust me, Wed. Don't you trust me?"

I moaned, trying to relax for him. He pressed against me while his fingers played over my clit. I really, really wanted him to fuck me.

"Open up. Obey me, Wed. Ohhh...that's a good girl."

I could feel him slide into me, slow and careful.

"That's right," he said, running his hands up my back to squeeze my shoulders hard. "Arch your back for me."

I arched under him and moaned from the desperate pleasure

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of feeling him move deep inside my ass.

"Oh, God, baby, I love doing this. I missed fucking you. I've missed you so much."

I jerked under him, trembling. He pulled my hair, reached around to pinch my taut nipples, driving me on. I moaned, I sobbed, I bucked back against him. It felt so naughty, so good.

"Jesus Christ, I want to fuck you forever," he groaned. "I never want this to end."

And yes, he did indeed fuck me, and the monumental orgasm he'd kept from me earlier was visited on me twice before he finished with my ass. Afterwards, we lay together, breathless and still. He untied me, and turned me over to face him.

"I love you so much, Wednesday."

"I love you, too."

"I'm sorry though, about my belt. I must have hurt you."

"No, you didn't. I'm okay."

"No, I hit you longer than I should have. You're going to be bruised all to hell."

"I wanted it, Daniel."

"It doesn't matter. It's still not okay. I went too far. What happened to *Untie me, Daniel?*"

"Never. I'll never use that."

"You can always say it and I'll stop. Don't forget that. The last thing I want to do is hurt you and scare you off. God, your ass, Wed. It looks awful."

I peeked back over my shoulder. Yeah, it looked pretty bad. I didn't care though. It would be fine in the morning. Even if it was sore for a few days, I'd enjoy that reminder of him. I tried to distract him with a kiss, but he was frowning when we broke apart.

"Daniel," I chided. "It's fine."

"Sometimes I wonder that you don't run very far away from me. I wonder if maybe it wouldn't be better for you if you did."

"It wouldn't be," I said, begging for another kiss with proffered lips, which he tenderly gave.

"Just...don't ever let me...Wednesday..." I kissed him again,

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but he took my chin in his hand and made me look at him.

“What is it?” I whispered. “What’s the matter?”

“Don’t ever let me hurt you in anger. Just don’t ever let me. If you do...if you do, you’ll be in so much trouble from me.”

I laughed through emotional tears. I felt a strange, scary feeling of closeness with him, and I clung to his shoulders, buried my face in the warmth of his neck.

“I mean it, Wednesday. I’ll make you sorry.”

I laughed again, but it sounded more like a sob, and I realized I was crying again.

He pulled away from me. “Look here. Look up at me. What’s the matter? Why these tears?”

Because you’ll leave me some day, I know it. You’ll leave me. I’ll never survive.

“Daniel,” I sobbed, “I need you. Don’t ever leave me.”

“No, Wednesday,” he said, kissing both of my wet cheeks.

“No, Wednesday, I never will.”

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I can't really describe what that felt like, hearing her quiet voice say *I love you, Daniel* for the first time. Not just say it, but really mean it. I felt we turned a corner that night. She still did her share of hiding, of course, and probably always would, but now, at least, she realized and admitted that she loved me, that she needed me as desperately as I needed her.

After that, I stopped worrying so much about losing her, and started concentrating more on making her happy. I accepted that she needed her own place to retreat to, and that acceptance seemed to make her more relaxed. We soon began seeing each other more often, sometimes several days a week, and at least once or twice a week she'd sleep over, although at least as often, she made excuses to go home. Sometimes we went out and did things together, but more often we just stayed in and had sex, which we now did without condoms, since tests had been done and she was on the pill.

It pleased me inordinately to be her first, not the first one to have fucked her, but the first one to have fucked her skin to skin. The first time I thrust inside her without that barrier, that latex sheath between us, it seemed like a metaphor for all of the new closeness we felt. It was incredible, being able to feel her, really feel her, and she, who had never had sex without a condom—she

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was absolutely dazzled. The entire time, that first time, she'd marveled at how different it felt.

To me, it just felt very committed, not using condoms; another reason I loved it so much. She wasn't crazy about taking the pill, but the alternative, getting pregnant, seemed to terrify her to tears. She had grilled the doctor when we'd gone to get them. "*Will these definitely work? You're absolutely sure?*" He'd given me a strange look as she'd gone on and on. *Poor schmuck*, he'd thought, wondering why my woman was so dead set against having my child.

I'd actually had to stop beating her a couple weeks before the doctor appointment just to be sure there would be no marks. That afternoon when we'd come home, though, I'd been so excited about not using condoms, and so anxious to get back to our scenes, I'd gotten creative and cut a switch right from the birch in my living room. I'd found a nice whippy one, stripped it and eyed her while she stood before me trembling with lust. When I tied her to the tree and beat her with it, she'd really gotten into it, moaning and straining against the ropes. Afterwards, I'd left her tied and fucked her right up against the tree, which was incredibly hot. That lovely scene was now a favorite, one of many favorites in our vast repertoire.

Now that we were more settled as a couple we tried to do things other normal couples did, too. Sometimes we went out to art shows or parties. I introduced her to some work friends, and she introduced me to some friends of hers. It felt great, this expansion of our relationship, these forays into real life. We were your average loved-up couple, with a secret that made us both thrill.

Vincent, unfortunately, continued to badger me with phone calls, hounding me for information on how she was. I began to worry that she would be there with me some time when he called, so I finally agreed to meet him at his house. I felt horribly guilty about meeting him, and snuck over there looking over my shoulder. I knew that Wednesday was at work, but still I had an unreasonable fear of being caught.

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Several times I just considered telling her, explaining all the machinations to her and hoping for the best, but in the end, it seemed just too risky at present, with the complicated way she felt about us both. I hoped eventually Vincent would get over her, and the whole thing, the whole secret would just go away. But I was disabused of that notion soon enough.

It was just before Thanksgiving when I went to meet him, and I was only partly surprised to find a girl kneeling at his feet. "I'm training her for auction," he'd explained, in between offering me coffee and taking my coat.

"Yeah, okay," I said, unable to keep the distaste from my voice. She was a pretty girl, but she looked sixteen if she was a day.

"She's a very good girl, very talented. Would you like to try her out?"

"No," I said with a grimace.

"You're welcome to. I'm sure she'd enjoy it very much."

"She's lovely, Vincent," I said quietly for her benefit. "But no."

"No, of course not. How silly of me." He patted the girl on the head, and I saw Wednesday for a moment, kneeling there collared and cuffed. "Don't take it personally, Samantha. He's just very much in love with someone else. You are still in love with her, aren't you?"

I shot him an arch look. "Of course I am."

"And she's in love with you too?"

"I hope so. She says she is."

"And she's keeping herself up for you nicely?"

I frowned. "What the hell kind of a question is that?"

Vincent looked surprised. "I certainly didn't mean to offend you. She was just always a very serious girl about her body, about her looks—"

"She looks just fine," I interrupted. "More beautiful than ever. It suits her, being with me."

"I'm sure it does. So she's living with you now?"

"Not yet. Soon, I hope."

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“You *hope* she loves you. You *hope* she’ll move in soon. Who’s the top here, you or her?”

God, I hated him, what an asshole. How had she managed to put up with him for eight years? The way he spoke to me, it was as if he was asking, *who’s the top here, you or me?* He all too clearly thought it was him. *I don’t think so, you old leech.*

“She’s mine now, Vincent,” I answered, measure for measure. “What I hope for with her is really none of your business.”

“Isn’t it? I suppose not. But I bet the sex is as good as ever. Have you been enjoying using her? I hope you’re making good use of her ass.”

“Vincent—”

“It’s true she enjoys it probably more than a submissive should, but that doesn’t mean you should deprive yourself. Not letting her come every once in a while worked wonders with me—”

“Enough,” I snapped.

“What is it? Are my questions making you mad? You have to remember what she was to me. Just a sub. Not so sentimental a relationship as yours.”

“You’re so full of shit,” I said with a sharp laugh. “Why don’t you just cut out this posturing bullshit, Vincent? Say what you really mean.”

“What are talking about?”

“This isn’t a game, you sick fuck. I’m not here to get you off. You sit there and ask me the stupidest questions. ‘Does she still like to be ass-fucked? Does she still go to the fucking gym?’ Is that really all you want to know? Really? Don’t you want to know if she’s happy? Jesus, it’s very disrespectful to her.”

“I do not make a habit of respecting my submissives,” he replied in a voice dripping with mockery, utterly unruffled by my outburst.

I narrowed my eyes and leaned forward, staring at him.

“I would like to hear, just once, how you truly felt about her.”

“Daniel,” he tsked, as though I was the ridiculous one.

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“No,” I pressed. “I’d like to hear it from your lips. I’d like to hear you admit exactly how much you loved her, how much you still love her, even now.”

He frowned, his face suddenly stormy.

“Samantha, go and wait for me in the bedroom. On your knees, by the bed. Go now.”

“Yes, sir,” she said, her eyes wide. No doubt she’d have preferred to stay and listen. She’d gotten an earful to think about from the submissive point of view. It’s true it was very poor form of me to have spoken of such things in front of her, and he was rightfully mad, but I was tired of his shenanigans, the way he belittled Wednesday, who had given him so much.

As soon as Samantha left the room on her hands and knees, Vincent fixed me with a look.

“I’ll thank you not to dress me down in front of any submissive of mine ever again.”

“I’ll thank you not to dress me down, too, while we’re asking. I’m not your toy, Vincent. I’m not even your friend. I don’t appreciate you using me to do this, to help you bust one more nut over your ex-sub.”

“I gave her to you. A little gratitude might be called for.”

“You have my gratitude, but you don’t have my respect. I’m sorry, but I’m not going to share the details of our sex life with you, or the private parts of our lives. If you want to know how she’s doing, if she’s safe and happy, then fine, I’ll share. Whatever else you want to know about her, you’ll have to find out yourself, if she’ll even speak to you.”

After a moment, he sighed. “Daniel, we’re two very different people. And we play this game very differently.”

“Yes, we do, Vincent. And you’ll remember that you chose me for her because of how I play.”

He rubbed his chin for a long time, looking back at me.

“That may be so. And it was because of how I play that I gave her up. I’ll thank you to remember that, Daniel, before you exhort me again to confess my undying love for her.” He stood then.

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“Now, if you’ll pardon me, I have some...pressing work to get back to,” he said. “I’ll show you to the door.”

* * *

The whole way home my mind turned in the car. What the hell was this all about? What sickness compelled him not just to try to own a girl who’d moved on, but try to own me too, and own mine and Wednesday’s relationship? Just because he’d introduced her to me? Just because he’d engineered our meeting, now he was privy to the rest of our lives?

Unlike Vincent, D/s wasn’t the world to me, and I didn’t hang out with other dominants the way he did, so I had no idea if this was acceptable behavior, or if he was as far out of line as I thought. I hadn’t been back to the clubs since I’d been with Wednesday, and I was never even remotely tempted to go, or share her, or do the swinging thing. I don’t know how she felt about that, but it was out of the question for me, which she surely knew.

She seemed content enough, anyway. I pushed the envelope whenever I could, now and again, to keep her on her toes and keep her interested, and that seemed enough for her. For me, she fascinated me endlessly, and probably always would.

Over time, too, we developed routines that worked for us. Seeing each other so much, it became hard to always follow the rules. Wednesday complained sometimes that I didn’t let her come enough, and for me, controlling her all the time when she was so wild did start to get on my nerves. Sometimes I was perfectly happy to let her do as she wished, but other times I wanted to control her even more strictly than I probably should. It was an unstable, ever-changing dynamic, so we began to negotiate and plan before each meeting. Sometimes we played hard, and sometimes we played soft, and sometimes we just played.

But don’t think for a minute that I wasn’t still her dominant at all times, that she wasn’t still my submissive through and

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through. Even though we didn't always play our roles as they were written, we fell back on them more often than we let them fall away. In fact, when they fell away, neither one of us felt easy and we both scrambled around until things were back to rights. Of course, it fell to me, as the dominant, to make that happen when we veered off course. I got pretty good at it over time, at keeping her in exactly the right place.

One night a couple months into our relationship, we had one of those nights when things turned upside down. Wednesday had been struggling with deadlines and was quite possibly PMSing too. It would have been wiser to let her stay home that evening, but she'd agreed to a date, and I didn't want to let it slide. We stayed in, at least, because I figured it would be easier on her.

I ordered take out for her from her favorite place, and after dinner, we settled in to watch a movie on my couch, some action flick with lots of abrupt twists and turns, and the editor in her started to go mad.

"Daniel," she'd pouted about twenty minutes in, "this movie absolutely sucks."

"Do you think so?" Perv that I was, I was enjoying watching her fume. I might have, *might* have selected this movie with the express purpose of pushing her buttons and getting her riled. She detested poorly written movies, went haywire over them, which entertained me as a screenwriter, but even more so as her dom. Something about seeing my meek little submissive get sassy and petulant drove me wild with lust. It made me want to discipline her down.

"You aren't even giving it a chance," I goaded her, somehow keeping a straight face.

She made a strangled frustrated noise that made me finally lose it and laugh.

"It's not funny, Daniel. This is two hours of my life going to waste."

"We don't have to waste it." I reached for one of her black-stockinged legs. Even just to lie around on my couch, she wore a garter belt and stockings. My precious little slut, God, I loved her

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so much. I pulled her leg over into my lap to find the backseam, and ran my fingers up it until I found bare skin.

She ignored me, shifting just a little, but I left my hand there, and then quested a little higher. Damn it—panties. She tried to pull her leg away, but I held it tight.

“Why do you wear these? The garters, the stockings?”

“To drive you wild.”

“No, that’s not the only reason. You wore these long before you met me. You wear them to work. You’re wearing them now, when most women would be lounging around in sweatpants and a tee shirt.”

“Sweatpants?” she said, wrinkling her nose.

“By this point in most relationships, yes.”

“Well, I don’t know, Daniel. I guess I wear them because that’s what I fucking choose to do.”

She yanked her leg, trying to pull away from me, but I only tightened my grip.

“Are you in a mood, Wednesday?” I asked, with a bit of warning in my tone.

“Maybe. Can’t I be in a mood? Do I need permission from you now to be in a mood?”

“I think it’s a little provocative when you’re in a mood,” I said ominously.

Her answer to that was to pull away even harder, but that only drove me on. My hand clamped around her calf like a vise.

“I’ll let go of your fucking leg when I’m good and ready, so you just simmer down and lie still.”

She lay back with a dramatic sigh and came dangerously close to rolling her eyes at me, then muttered under her breath, “I just wish you’d stop pawing at me all the time.”

“I’ll paw every fucking inch of your body,” I retorted, “and up inside it too, if I want.”

“You’re so fucking crass,” she said. “Let go of me!”

I was on her in an instant, spreading her legs roughly, settling hard between her thighs. I tilted her chin up to me.

“If you want to scrap, lover, we’ll bypass the movie and go

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straight to the bedroom. Is that what you want?"

"No, that's what *you* want! That's what you always want!" she yelled in my face.

She tried hard to get away from me, but I had her pinned down good and hard. She wasn't going anywhere until I calmed her down. I let go of one of her hands to brush her curls back from her face.

"Shh, shh," I soothed. "Settle down now, before you say something you're going to regret. Shh, baby."

"I'm not your baby," she said through clenched teeth.

"You're my baby."

"I am not!" Now she was spitting mad. "You don't even know me, not really! Not like you think you do!"

"Oh, don't I? I know more about you than you think—" I closed my mouth abruptly. *Careful.*

"No, you don't!" She struggled under me. "Let me go!"

"No."

"I'm not in the mood for this tonight!"

I was obscenely hard by this point. I pressed my raging erection against the juncture of her thighs. She stilled a little at the feel of it.

"What are you in the mood for then, lover?" I breathed.

Even with my pants between us, she shuddered to feel me there. She pressed her legs together but I nudged them back apart.

"I think you're in the mood for a really degrading, nasty fuck," I whispered next to her ear. "The kind of fuck where you can't face yourself in the mirror afterwards."

"I am not! No," she said, her hands straining to release themselves from my grasp.

"I think you are, and I'm not too fond of the lying."

"I'm not lying. Let go of me!"

"Shut your fucking mouth and spread your legs. Spread your legs wide open for me."

"No!"

"Do it," I pressed. "You obey me."

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Believe me, if I didn't know she was aroused halfway to Tuesday, I wouldn't have forced her like this. I would have just let her go, but I could feel how hot and wet she was even with both our clothes on, and I could see it in her eyes. *Please take over me.* She was like those girls I'd tackled on the playground, the ones who would fight me just so I'd force them more brutally to the ground.

It would be a long night and a crazy scene, but I was up for it. Whatever she needed, that's what I would do. She looked at me, half cool, half panicked.

"If you want me to spread my legs, you're going to have to make me."

I almost came right then, right in my trousers. I started to tussle with her, but it was like a lion toying with a mouse. She put up a great fight, and of course I didn't fight back, all I did was restrain her so she wouldn't accidentally hurt herself. She got those thighs locked though, I'll give her that, and she landed a few good slaps and one knee that came dangerously close to the jewels. I let her go at that point in self-preservation. Hell, I would get her eventually, and I would enjoy the chase.

She bolted upstairs to the spare room with me at her heels. She slammed the door and locked it a half second before I arrived. I stood outside a minute to give her a chance to reconsider, and then I knocked on the door.

"Wednesday," I said, unbuckling my belt. "You have ten seconds to unlock this door before you get the thrashing of your life."

"Go away," she screamed, and I heard a projectile hit the door. A shoe? A book? With an impatient curse, I walked through the other bedroom, through the adjoining bathroom which she hadn't thought to lock, and descended on her.

She yelped when she saw me coming. I pinned her arms roughly behind her back.

"You never, ever run from me, do you understand? You never lock me out. Never."

"How can I run from you?" she cried. "Where can I go? I

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can't run anywhere. You don't ever give me any space, ever!"

"I don't give you space? I give you space until it kills me, Wed! You refuse to move in with me even though I've begged you—"

"You think you can have whatever you want, whenever you ask, at once! You think you own me!"

"I do own you! That's not in question! You're mine like water is wet, you little fuck!" I turned her, not letting go of her hands, and kissed her, hard and rough. She resisted and then she bit me. Fucking hell. Struggling was okay with me, but biting was not. She had bit me before once, on the leg, while I spanked her, and I'd read her the riot act.

"I fucking warned you about the biting!" I railed, pushing her away from me. "You fucking lie down on the bed!"

"No!"

I pulled my belt out from my pants and doubled it over, blocking her way to the door.

"Do it, or I'll make you."

"No!"

I took her and dragged her to the bed, kicking and screaming, with my ears ringing from her *no, no, no, no, nos...*

"Let me go!" she screamed. "Stop it, Daniel. I mean it!"

"No." I pushed her down and she fought me like a wild thing. God, she was little, but she was strong.

"I won't love you anymore if you do this. I won't love you anymore!"

I pinned her with the weight of my body, stealing her breath. I pushed the belt to the side and dragged her hands over her head and held her there. She wasn't angry. She was afraid. She was terrified. *Don't let me go*, her eyes pleaded. *Not now*.

I yanked her dress up and tore off her panties.

"You're mine, Wed. I'm sorry you don't like it. But what's true is true. You're my fucking toy."

She moaned, then burst into tears.

"Daniel..."

She pressed against me miserably, and I just looked down at

11. Worthy

her and watched, half anxious, half wondering, as she fell completely to pieces in my grasp. I nuzzled her as she went passive and limp under me. I let go of her arms and she wrapped them around my neck. I felt her hot tears falling on my skin.

“Shh, okay. You’re okay now,” I soothed her, dropping intermittent kisses on her lips, her ears, her neck, her tear streaked cheeks. I could feel her tension and anger ebbing away. “Okay, Wed, I’ve got you. Everything’s okay.”

“It’s not okay,” she sobbed, shaking her head.

“It is okay, baby,” I said. “Look at me.”

“No!”

“Look at me.”

“No, I don’t want to,” she moaned.

“Why not? Let me help. Tell me what’s really the matter with you.”

“I...I can’t.”

“Why? Why can’t you tell me?”

“Because...because I don’t know. I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

“Nothing’s wrong with you, Wed. Nothing’s wrong with you,” I murmured, slowly parting her legs.

She shook her head, even as she buried her face in my neck and pulled me closer. I began to undo myself, and she sighed and pressed against me, no longer struggling.

“That’s better. Don’t fight me. It’s so much easier if you just don’t fight.”

I freed myself, kicking my pants off quickly, never taking my eyes from her.

“Wed, I know exactly what’s wrong.”

“No, you don’t.”

“Yes, I do. You just get afraid sometimes that I won’t keep you in line.”

“No,” she moaned softly. “No.”

“That I won’t be there when you need me to take care of you.”

She shook her head, shuddering in my arms.

Owning Wednesday

"I'll always take care of you, Wednesday. Always. Who's in charge of you, Wed?"

"You are," she whispered.

"Yes, I am. I'm going to fuck you now, because you belong to me. Put your arms around me and hold on tight, because I'm going to fuck you hard enough to remind you that you're mine."

I did fuck her then very thoroughly. I held her down and she fought me a little more, but not too hard. I understood that she needed to fight me sometimes. I could feel the vitality of her submission in her grunts and sighs, in her straining muscles. I fucked her until she shuddered and shook, until her nails dug into my fingers where I held her hands. When I heard her moan and sigh, and felt her pussy contract around my length, pulsing and squeezing, I came with her, pounding in her hard.

Afterwards I took off every stitch of her clothes, even her stockings and garter belt, and spanked her over my knee. I held her close, feeling her cries and jerks at the painful blows. She didn't have much fight in her then, so it wasn't a long spanking, but when I let her up she was a very, very penitent girl. I sent her to stand facing the wall while I lectured her about tantrums, and respecting her dominant, and the importance of following the rules, blah, blah, blah. Then I told her to turn and face me, and I asked her, once more, to tell me what was bothering her.

She looked at me a long moment, and then she sighed.

"Sometimes I get really tired of you trying to own me. I get tired of feeling owned."

"Owned? I'm not trying to own you, Wed. I'm trying to love you. The way YOU like to be loved, I might point out." I crossed my arms over my chest and frowned at her. "You're the one who likes to be controlled, told what to do—"

"Yes, sometimes! In bed!" She frowned right back at me. "Now you're insisting I move in here with you, and you hound me for a commitment I don't want to make—"

"Oh, forgive me for wanting a commitment! How could I be such a fucking horrible person, to ask for some fucking commitment from you!"

11. Worthy

“You don’t want commitment, you want control! You want to control me, all the time!”

“Because I want you to move in here, because I want to be close to you, that means I want to control you? *He* controlled you, Wed, not me. I give you so much more than him, so much more than just *control*, and this is what I get, this is the thanks I get—”

“I’m not with him anymore! How long are you going to hold that crime over my head?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m ashamed enough of the way I am, without you throwing my relationship with Vincent in my face every fucking time—”

“I don’t throw it in your face!”

“You just did! You do it constantly, all the time!”

“Constantly? What the fuck are you talking about?”

“God, sometimes it feels like the two of you are still sharing me!”

I shook my head in denial, but the hair rose on the back of my neck.

“I’m not sharing you with anybody, Wednesday, and you know that I fucking never will. Maybe that’s what’s wrong. Maybe you want me to. Maybe I’m not enough for you.”

“Again! See, you did it again! I’ll always be Vincent’s slut to you. That girl who let him share me with whoever he wanted. You have no respect for me, you never have—”

“Wednesday,” I warned.

“You hate me for being with him, for being the way I was then!”

It seemed suddenly there was such distance between us, an impossible distance from my seat on the bed, to the wall where she stood. Miles and miles. The things she was saying to me, I’d never once, not *once*, thought them. In her mind, I thought them all the time.

“Come here, Wed,” I said. “Just come here.”

For a moment I thought she would refuse, but then she walked slowly to my side.

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“Come here. Stand in front of me.” I pulled her closer. I laid my head against her chest, wondering what to say next, wondering how to bridge this divide between us. I listened to the sound of her heartbeat, the rush of blood through her veins.

“Are you really ashamed?” I asked. “Are you really ashamed of what we do? Of the way I make you feel? Do you really believe that I have no respect for you? That I...*hate* you?” God, I could barely say the word.

“Daniel,” she whispered. She was crying again. “I just don’t think I’ll ever feel worthy of you.”

God, I wanted to kill her as much as I wanted to love her.

“You listen to me, Wednesday,” I said, never lifting my head from her chest. “I love you. I adore you. If anything, I’m afraid that I’m not worthy of you, of everything you give to me.” I hugged her tighter, cupping her ass. “As for shame,” I continued, nuzzling against her warm, lovely breasts, “you will never again utter that word to me. Or think it, or feel it, concerning the way I love you. Do you understand me?”

She shifted a little, and I felt a tear drop onto my forehead, felt it run down my temple, then down to my chin. “Do you understand me, Wednesday Carson?”

After a long, quiet moment, she whispered, “Yes.”

The tears, God.

I would have done anything in the world to find the source of them and make them go away.

12. The Weekend

It seemed impossible that it was January already. A new year. I was so happy with Daniel, so ridiculously happy, that I looked over my shoulder constantly for impending doom.

Now, in the cold calm of early January, on Daniel's birthday, I lay on my side in his bed. I was a little uncomfortable, but more than that, I was terribly aroused. I looked at the clock, annoyed with myself that I still couldn't sleep. It was just after three in the morning, three hours since he'd matter-of-factly driven the toy home and ordered me to go to sleep. Every time I moved though, I could feel it in my ass, a constant reminder of him. Just what he had intended.

"Go to sleep, Wed," he said as I squirmed. Every time I stirred, it woke him. How couldn't it? I was held, as I always was when I slept over, tightly in his arms. I was on my side, since I'd confessed to him the night before that I felt it most that way. "I want you to sleep on your side then," he'd said. "All night."

Of course, the idea of removing it did not even enter my mind. I was a submissive. I loved this kind of shit. Nor did I dream of putting my hand between my legs and letting my

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fingers assuage some of the arousal, at least to the point that I could sleep. No, I didn't even consider it, because I had done that the night before and been caught. I swear, the man woke at the drop of a hat. As soon as he realized what I was doing, he'd pulled my panties down and spanked me to penitent tears. "More tomorrow," he'd said. "I'm too fucking tired to get up for my belt."

And he had given me more, first thing in the morning, so I hadn't had to dread it for long. He had pushed my shoulders down and marked my ass with something new—instead of the belt I loved, a very strict wooden paddle. I was crying out before I was even fully awake. He'd paddled me to tears, then taken out the toy and fucked my ass and made me come until I'd begged him to stop.

Yes, it had been quite an adventure so far. I had been looking forward to this weekend with a mixture of excitement and dread. It was completely my idea, this weekend together. A birthday gift for Daniel, something I knew he would appreciate. An entire weekend out of the world, out of reality, out of time. An entire weekend to have me, to use me in whatever way he desired.

I didn't feel dread because I feared pain, or degradation, or humiliation, or any of those things. No, that had never been Daniel's style. I dreaded because this would be unbounded intimacy. I had taken away my choice to say, "*Good bye, Daniel, I'm sleeping at home.*" Or "*No, Daniel, I don't want to have dinner.*" Or even, "*No, Daniel, I can't see you today.*" For this weekend, I was his, completely his, and I knew he would demand the intimacy I feared, the intimacy I guarded from him most of the time. But a gift is a gift, and he deserved a gift from me, so I would deal with the intimacy, no matter how terrified I felt.

Daniel told me Friday morning on the phone to wear a black dress that night, and nothing else, so I put on the one I knew was his favorite, a short velvet baby doll dress that was fitted at the top, fuller at the bottom, with lace across the empire waistline. It had a bow on it too, once, but it had been far too innocent

12. The Weekend

looking. The bow had to go. Now it was perfect; half childlike, half euroslut. A perfect balance. I'm sure that's why Daniel liked it so much. He loved to have everything in balance, which is why I think I drove him so often to distraction. We were not in balance, him and me, but we thrilled one another, and so we kept on.

When he knocked on the door, he did it softly. He knew I'd be waiting, just sitting and waiting for him. And I was, in my little black dress, and nothing else, not even the garters and stockings I usually wore.

It was lovely to see his face when I answered the door, because he was filled with just as much excitement and dread. I knew he had already formulated plans. He always had plans, wicked, creative ones. He never let me flounder. He always took me in hand—in more ways than one. I wondered what was brewing in that perverse mind. I couldn't wait to find out.

"Hello, Wednesday. You look beautiful."

I smiled an infatuated smile. He came in, and as always, the energy changed at once, like magic. The air around me became charged, electric. *He's here. Daniel's here.*

He said nothing more, just dropped to his knees and opened the shop bag he had in his hand. I didn't catch the name on it, nor did I care, because the first thing he did was reach brusquely up my dress. I think I laughed a little, which he didn't mind. He smiled up at me approvingly.

"Nothing on."

"I am ever obedient."

"Hold your dress up, Wed," he said in that sharp voice that made my knees weak.

He reached into the bag and pulled out some lingerie. Of course, I had known what it was, but it still gave me that little frisson of surprise. He had shopped for me. He had chosen something to adorn me with. He lifted the black silk garter belt around my waist with his big, impatient hands.

"Turn."

I did, and he laced it up in the back. I stood still like a statue

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while he fussed with it. I might have thrust my ass out a little bit more than usual just to tease him. How could I not? I have a feeling he made it more of a production than it needed to be. I felt his breath, soft and even, at the small of my back as he fiddled endlessly with it. He couldn't resist copping a very invasive feel when he was done, running his hand between my thighs and up over my ass cheeks, squeezing them.

"Beautiful."

I was quiet. If I had spoken then, my voice would have trembled.

Next he pulled out the stockings. Only the best for Daniel. Fine, silky, backseamed. He gathered the first expertly in his hand. He didn't have to tell me what to do. I stepped into it and held onto his shoulder for balance as he smoothed the stocking up my leg with both broad hands. I looked down, watching him, overcome with some strange emotion. The eroticism of what he was doing was not lost on either of us. I was normally the one who knelt at his feet just before he shoved his cock down my throat. But this was another form of his domination, even as he bowed his head before me, working at the garter clasps.

Daniel did not subdue me with collars or leashes. He never treated me like a slave, or an animal, or worse. No, Daniel somehow held me with garters and lace. I knew, when I had these on, that I was his possession. With Vincent, I had grown used to being collared and cuffed in rough leather whenever he was around. It had always been that way, and I'd imagined that I'd miss those stark, uncomfortable symbols of my submission to him.

But no, I didn't miss the collars at all, and I realized with a shock that I missed Vincent even less.

And now, forever after, when I dressed up in garter belts and stockings, what I would really be doing was wrapping myself up as an offering to *him*. To Daniel. Just as he was wrapping me up now, for himself. *You're mine*, he said, completely without words. *You're mine*, said his fingers, working the clasps. *You're mine*, said his hands as he ran them up the backseams,

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straightening them, smoothing the nylon. *You're mine this whole weekend, Wednesday, and I'm calling the shots.* He didn't have to say it aloud. It was obvious. As he got to his feet, I let go of my dress.

"Daniel, thank you," I said, "They're absolutely beautiful." But what I meant, and what he heard, was *I'm yours. Completely yours.*

* * *

And so, being his, I lay as still as I could at his side and didn't touch myself, because I knew he wouldn't have liked it. I didn't touch myself, although the toy kept me in a constant state of arousal. Daniel lay beside me, utterly relaxed and asleep, because he knew I was there, and that I was his for still one more day and night.

And being his, I had a feeling I would wear the toy all Sunday night as well, before he let me go back to my real life Monday morning. Back to work, away from the dream. I think part of why I resisted living with him is that I knew that life would take on some strange, dreamlike quality. That it wouldn't seem like real life, but a waking dream I could never escape. I don't know why that scared me so much, because I enjoyed every second I spent with him. I guess because then, the return to real life would be too difficult. Even after one weekend, it would be jarring. So I tried not to think about saying goodbye on Monday morning and wiggled my ass some more to try to relieve the longing. Maybe if I wiggled against him enough, he would wake up and jam his cock in me. Worth a try...

"No." He put his hands on my hips to still them. "In the morning," he promised drowsily. "And don't wake me again."

I sighed and he pulled me closer, nuzzling me. He was half hard, but I knew he wouldn't wake up. Instead I daydreamed back over our weekend so far. I could probably make myself come from the memories themselves, with the help of that rigid little toy wedged in my ass. I wondered if he would know if I

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came, even not moving, even not touching myself. Yes, he would know. He would feel me get tense. He would know just from the change of my breath, he knew me that well.

This weekend so far had been very instructive to me. It had shown me a side of Daniel I had suspected but not fully experienced. I had in essence given him permission to test my—and our—limits, which he was determinedly doing. He had been even more inventive than usual, producing a few new toys that surprised and thrilled me. A shiny little paddle that hurt like hell, but that I loved. Some angry little clips for my soft parts that made me terribly wet. And of course, the new improved toy I was now sleeping with for the second night, which stretched me just a little more open than I was comfortable with, but that made me instantly prepared to receive Daniel as soon as he decided to thrust into my ass the next morning.

This charming attention to “training” made my heart just overflow for him. I knew he did it mainly because he knew it would get me off like mad. Only Daniel could be wholly dominant, and still the kindest, most accommodating lover in existence. I wanted to satisfy every whim, every desire of Daniel’s, because of this. No matter how sick and perverse his requests, the moment he made them, I complied. I wanted to please him. It was all I lived for when I was with him. I wanted him to love me, and I wanted him to hurt me.

So far, the weekend had brought almost too much pleasure, if there can be any such thing. After a long, delicious dinner out on Friday, we had driven back in tense impatience to Daniel’s house. Well, Daniel had pretended patience, but I can’t imagine that, like me, he wasn’t mad with desire. By the time the check arrived and he had so meticulously paid it, I was tapping my feet under the table with nervous energy. As he drove home, he reached over and flicked my dress up over my thighs so he could look at the lacy tops of my stockings. I flexed my legs the way I knew would drive him mad, moving my thighs together just a little, shifting them. He made a face then, this face he has where his lips kind of purse, and his expression gets hard. I was having

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trouble breathing, the way he looked at me. He seemed truly mad with desire for a split second, and he reached over to squeeze my leg, a warning, or perhaps reassurance. *Yes*, his hand promised, *I am going to fuck you to tears*. The trip to his house seemed interminable.

Before the door even closed, he had me bent over, my dress up over my back. He kicked off his pants and took me around the waist. I gasped when he entered me, big, invasive, insistent, thick. I was moaning so loudly he clamped his hand over my mouth. *Hush*, he'd soothed me, then fucked me even harder.

We had spent today, Saturday, in a haze of sex and experimenting. It had begun with the merciless paddling and the assfucking of my life, then a dip in a bubbly warm tub. Then a light breakfast, followed by the most lovely and inventive torturous games. As always, Daniel was a shaman in bed, his brusque orders to me like incantations. He knew just what to do to me at exactly the right moments, and he revealed things I would enjoy that I'd never even thought of. It all came straight from his sexually talented brain.

After breakfast Daniel tied me to the bed, hand and foot, with my favorite white velvet restraints. That little *rrrip* of velcro being parted could now make me wet my panties no matter where or when I heard it. Like Pavlov's dog, it signified only one thing to me: mind-numbing, awe-inspiring pleasure. He'd waited until I was tied to show the clips to me. They were little silver clips, shaped like shells, strangely lovely for their basely pornographic purpose. Daniel-style clips. He would have chosen them carefully, passing over all the cheesy, dangly ones to select the most elegant. They hurt like hell, but I came off the bed with lust from the way they made me feel, and I knew I would beg for them every time from now on. He clipped my nipples, hard and pert as little cherries, and parted my legs to attach one to my clit while I almost came apart with need. He licked me then, over and around it, until I came screaming like a banshee. I'm ashamed to remember it probably took under two minutes. I wish it had taken longer. I could have happily taken four hours of that

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torture. Still breathless, still writhing under the bite of the clips, I opened my mouth to receive his cock as he knelt over me. He, too, came very quickly, because nothing turned him on more than me totally out of control. He gently undid the clips then, and licked and sucked my nipples until the sting was gone, and then, for what seemed like an hour, but was probably only a few moments, he caressed and kissed me all over until I fell asleep there, tied to his bed.

Well, in all fairness, I'd barely slept the night before, what with the toy jammed in my ass and the knowledge I was going to get my butt beat in the morning. He let me rest for a while, and then woke me up when he came over me and started to fuck me. I was still wet as hell from the clips and the cunnelings. He fucked me really hard, like he likes to when I'm restrained, then he turned me over and reattached me...*rrrip*...and spanked me really hard with his belt. He really laid into me until I cried real tears, and I begged, truly begged him to stop, which he did, just a little afterwards. Like all good dominants, he always gave me a little more than I thought I could take.

Then we went out to lunch, which was lovely and bizarre. I couldn't sit comfortably, which made Daniel smirk. We took our time eating, sated for the moment, but by the time lunch was over we were both aching for more, and as soon as we got back to the house, he ordered me to undress. I did, and he pushed me to my knees in front of him. I sucked him off, long and leisurely, savoring every moment. I tasted the soft skin on his cock, licked his balls, licked up into his ass and all over, everywhere I could. He was normally impatient with me when I meandered like this, but this time he let me have him, sighing and trembling a little. I felt powerful when he stood over me and shuddered. So rarely between us, did he let me have power like this.

We rested then, and watched TV on his couch. We were playing house, and we both enjoyed it. He drank a beer and watched a game, while I laid my head in his lap and daydreamed. I felt sort of groggy still, even with my nap, and as he gently stroked my hair, I drifted half in, half out of sleep. His fingers

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parted and twirled my hair, lifting curls and letting them drop against my cheek, my ear. Absently, he rubbed the back of my neck, my shoulder, and gently squeezed my breasts when he felt the urge. *Mine, mine, mine*, he seemed to say as he did these things. *Now you see that you're mine. You always have been, but now you see.*

Later, before dinner, he fucked my ass again. He told me to kneel on the bed, and then he changed his mind and told me to turn over, and he pulled my legs up over his shoulders, and fucked my ass that way for the first time, face to face. He looked down at me, watching me intently. I put my arms over my eyes. It was far too intimate for me. That made him angry though, and he told me to take them away. "Look at me," he had growled, but I had closed my eyes, lost in sensation. He had turned me over with a hiss then, and fucked me hard. It wasn't very often he tried purposely to hurt me, but this was one of those very rare times.

Afterwards, I told him I was sorry. He said he was sorry too, only he meant it. I felt bad for him when he reeled from the guilt, which was often, I think, when we really got out of control. I was perfectly fine, but he kissed and stroked me anyway, murmuring apologies. I just lay drowsily, still drunk on sensation and the feel of his fingertips on my skin. We got up after a while and dressed for dinner. He had bought more clothes for me, which he produced with a flourish. A beautiful white dress, with matching lingerie of course. He always laughed when I chose white. I suppose he thought it was false advertising, but he liked me in white. I think he liked me in white more than any other color. Again he pushed up the stockings, fastened my garters. These stockings were almost opaque, with tiny bows up the back seam. I felt flirty and happy in them, and Daniel cheered up too. We had our moments, I suppose, like any other couple, but they soon blew over, and we laughed and played at dinner, and had a lot of fun. We went dancing afterwards at a small Italian restaurant, where all the other couples were old and grey. He spun me around and they all smiled indulgently, nodding and laughing.

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Ah, to be young again. I wondered if they would smile so fondly at us if they knew how we'd spent our day, if they saw how my bottom looked under my dress. But they didn't, and we all danced and had fun, while the owner of the restaurant spun old LPs in the corner.

Afterwards we walked, instead of going right back home. We were both a bit fucked out, so there wasn't the impatience of the first night, only the comfortable certainty that more pleasure was there for the taking. But Daniel wanted to talk, and so walking was safer, because when we were alone together, the talking always stopped. He asked me if I'd liked the weekend so far, and I'd laughed and said, "What do you think?"

Then he asked me more blunt questions, and I knew better than to lie. What was my favorite thing? What hurt the most? What did the clips feel like? How had the toy felt as I slept? What had I wanted more of? I told him honestly that it had all been a surprise and delight. That I loved the little clips most, of all the new things. But that my favorite would always be when he fucked me in the ass, and he smiled and bit his lip, because he'd known that all along. When we got home, he had me suck him once more, and then he put the toy back in me, to torture me all night.

And it was torture, now he was truly testing me, testing my reaction to him actually being cruel. He could have at least let me come once more before bed, just put the clips on me, and with the toy already in place, I would have gone off at once. But he didn't. He very deliberately didn't, and so, here I lay, miserable and burning with lust, looking at the clock, barely past three.

It would be at least four more hours before he woke again.

13. His

I must have eventually managed to find sleep, because I woke feeling heavy and helpless with relaxation. I could barely rouse myself to stretch my muscles. I was drawn from this hazy, deep sleep by the feel of his fingers stroking my clit. He turned me to him and fucked me a very long time, gently, with the toy still in my ass. He seemed also half asleep, and we both drifted and came hard on the strange sensation of half-conscious sex.

He seemed to rouse himself afterwards, returning in his wakefulness to my stern commander again. He sent me with explicit instructions to take out the toy, and return to him quickly so he could fuck my ass. I did as he directed, his crass and emphatic phrases ringing in my ear. He fucked me then again, in my ass as promised, even longer and more intently now that he was awake. Long and slow and steady, and yet gently. *Mine, mine, mine, mine.*

We showered together, and planned our last day. Daniel joked that he would need to fit in as much sex and spanking as possible before his time was up. He outlined a schedule that was both ridiculous and tempting, and obviously epic in depravity. Instead, laughing, we dressed and left for brunch. His imagination might sometimes shock me, but I always knew he would keep me well fed. I said this to him with a smile.

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“Energy, lover,” he laughed in explanation.

Lover. He called me *lover* oftentimes, as if he felt he needed to remind me that what we had together was actually love. That when he spanked me and tied me up and tortured me through the night, he was actually making love to me. That he was my lover, not my tormentor. *Yes*, I always wanted to reassure him, *I know*. Because the more he tormented me, the deeper I fell in love.

We sat across from each other at a sidewalk cafe and enjoyed the unseasonable warmth, although we were still bundled in coats. No one joined us outside, so we had a measure of privacy. Still, he leaned close to me when he talked as he always did. I sat across from him and watched fondly all the danielisms I had come to love; the gestures, the fidgeting, the silly, stupid jokes. I stared at him, still half asleep and sex-drunk. How did he do it, I wondered idly. How did he act like he hadn’t just fucked me to within an inch of my life? That we hadn’t spent the last two days in a haze of naughty sex? But he went on and on about inane, workaday things, and I talked back to him, shy now, as I always was under his gaze.

There was always a strange disconnect for me when he took me out in public, when we did normal things like eat lunch at a sidewalk cafe, when we went to a movie, or a museum, or a party. For me, it was semi-reality, our time together outside the bedroom, but for him, it was just life, regular life. I had never done such things with Vincent, of course, and they still seemed strange and somewhat fantastical to me.

More and more, too, for me, these lovely times developed a layer of uneasiness. I loved just being with him, beside him, his hand holding mine. But there was always the guilty subtext, the unspoken accusation: *We could always have this, if you’d only come be with me*. I wondered if he even realized the disconnect for me, since he so obviously didn’t feel it himself. No, he was still chatting away, and I hung on every word.

Yes, somehow, he always managed to find words, especially those times when I was struck dumb. When I was overcome with passion or sadness, there was always his voice narrating what to

13. His

feel. In the middle of our most torrid moments, through orgasms and breathlessness, he would talk on and on, as if the words themselves drove our arousal. Maybe they did. I didn't mind it. I depended on those words, actually. *Tell me what to do, Daniel. Tell me what to feel.*

After we ate, we went to a park because it was super windy. I told him as we ate that on windy days I liked to stand in open places and feel it blow on me. He'd gotten a devilish smile on his face, and I thought too late that I should have stayed silent. I pictured myself stripped naked in a very windy public place. But no, he just took me to a park he knew, laid out so that the wind blew hard down the small slope of the lawn. I spread my arms wide and let the wind take me. He looked at me with this wonderful fond smile, as if for once, it was he who was excited to please me. I ran up and down the hill like a maniac while he watched and laughed. I did it partly to show him how happy I was, but I felt free too, free and wild like a child. It was easy to be wild around Daniel, because I knew he would never let me come to harm.

Afterwards we lay on the grass together and looked up at the clouds. It was straight out of some cheesy romance novel, or maybe some chick flick in Daniel's pile of scripts. It didn't matter, I enjoyed every second of it. He talked some more. *Blah, blah, blah, blah.* I could listen to him go on and on forever. Finally, he shut up and took me in his arms and kissed me senseless. The wind blew over us, so my hair tickled his face. He turned his nose into my curls, nuzzled against them, and said how soft they were.

That was when I started to get suspicious. What was he up to? Why all the charm? Then I realized, of course, it was in preparation for the impending *you have to move in with me* tirade. The obligatory *give me more commitment* maneuver. Oh, great. Just fucking great. But no, it didn't actually come until later.

First we went back to the house and he ordered me into stockings, and put the lovely clips back on me, and made me

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kneel down in front of him. "Spread your legs more," he said as he undid his belt and unbuttoned his jeans, producing his huge jutting cock. "Back straighter. Stick your tits out. Open your mouth." The romantic, charming Daniel always turned demanding soon enough, but I didn't mind. I loved when he got strict with me and coarsely asked for what he wanted. I got wet as hell just kneeling there, and he knew it, and he fucked my mouth harder than usual. He held the back of my neck with both his hands, and made sure to find the depths of my throat. Next he pushed me back on the carpet and parted my legs and thrust his fingers inside, finding me wetter than hell. Again, he licked and sucked me around the silver clip, and I came like a volcano in just a minute or two.

I was breathless and limp then, just a puddle on the floor, but he wasn't finished yet. He was already hard again. He undid the clips and sucked my nipples until I moaned. Maybe he bit them, at this point I couldn't tell. I pulled my legs up around him and he slid inside me roughly and gathered me to him.

"From behind, Daniel," I begged.

"No. This way."

"Please!" I wanted him over my back. But no, he wanted to look me in the eyes.

I closed my eyes, turning from him. He never stopped fucking me, but it really pissed him off. He grappled with me, turned my face firmly to his, but I kept my eyes shut tight, and we fought as much as we fucked. I don't know what got into me, why I fought him so hard. I guess because our time at the park had felt so good. I had felt so close to him suddenly, too close, frighteningly close, and it scared me to death, and when that happened, something took over me and I just wanted to run and hide. Daniel had sensed that crack in my armor and thought this might be the moment. *I'll fuck her now, and she'll be mine.*

But I wouldn't be his, he was realizing to his chagrin, even with his cock mastering me. Even with his hand splayed on my sore ass, the other pulling my hair. Even with his punishing kiss taking my breath away. I refused to open my eyes. *I won't look*

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at you, Daniel. I'm afraid of what I'll see. I don't dare look, or I'll never look away. I refused to open my eyes, and his thrusts grew angrier and angrier. I didn't really have to see him to know how he felt.

I didn't come, but I guess I didn't deserve to. He pulled me up as soon as he finished and shoved me against the wall. Not even a word. He was pretty furious, and I dreaded what was coming next, because I knew from his mood it would hurt. He pulled his belt out of his jeans. The sound of that belt coming free had the power to make my knees weak—with pleasure, not fear. He started to whip me with it, and he didn't warm me up first. He started hard, and I went up on my toes with a squeak. By the third awful stroke, I put my hand in the way, something I almost never did.

"Don't you dare. Put them on the wall, Wednesday, or else I'll tie you to the bed."

Actually, that would have been a lot easier, to be tied to the bed. It would have removed the awful ability to escape. It was so much harder to stand still against the wall when I wasn't restrained; to not shield myself, or turn, or run away screaming, all of which were things I could do.

But I didn't do those things. For me, those things were unthinkable. Instead, I put my hands on the wall, resolute. It was difficult, as Daniel laid them on harder and harder, but I managed. I didn't run away, or end up tied to the bed. I just laid my forehead against the wall and cried, my hands in fists. I hopped a little when it was too much. When he finished, he dropped the belt and stalked away, and sat across the room on the couch. I stood still against the wall the way I knew he expected me to. For nearly twenty minutes, he just sat and watched me. Looking, I supposed, at my black and blue ass, and wondering how the hell he could ever get me turned into the submissive he wanted me to be.

And I fully expected I'd get it now, the *when will you move in* lecture. He was running out of time, it was already Sunday afternoon. This would have been an apt time, with my face to the

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wall like an errant child, my bottom still on fire from the sting of his belt. But he didn't start the lecture. He did something much, much worse. He sighed, stood up, and walked out of the room.

Then I started to cry in earnest, because I didn't think I'd made him *that* mad. I could take anything he could dish out—orders, beatings, rough sex, vicious toys. The only thing I couldn't survive was anger and abandonment, and he knew it, but he'd left. It was uncharacteristically cruel of him to leave with no orders, no kisses, no explanation of what was going on. He just left me there, half in the real world, half out. I had his stockings on. He wasn't supposed to leave me this way. Another test? This one was too hard. I stood there and fell to pieces against the wall. It was probably only five minutes before he came back, but to me, it felt like five hours.

At last he returned and he put his hand on the back of my neck and rubbed me there, ran his fingers up into my hair. I sighed a big shuddering sigh, my hands still pressed in fists against the wall. Then he picked me up and pushed my head down on his shoulder, and carried me to bed, while I sobbed into his neck.

* * *

We both slept then. It seemed the only way to move on from where we'd ended up. Sometimes Daniel's frustration, combined with my masochistic tendencies, took us to a place that wasn't completely safe. It was an occupational hazard of relationships like ours. No harm done. The bruises always went away.

He let me sleep longer than he did. I think he did some work, although he claimed he hadn't. When I went back downstairs, he was watching TV, but not really watching. I waited to see if he was okay. He held out his hand, and I crossed to him. He pulled me over his lap and ran his fingertips over my ass cheeks.

"Does it hurt?" he asked, tracing the welts.

"Yes." I turned a little and looked up at him. "Are you better now?"

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He didn't answer right away.

"Let's go for a walk," he said finally.

We went back upstairs together to get dressed for real life. I took off the garters and stockings, and we put on our coats. We walked for a long time in silence, and then, for once, I was the first to start to talk.

"I don't think dominants are supposed to be wracked with guilt."

"Be careful, Wed," was his only answer to that.

It really wasn't funny. It was no fun to have him hurt me if he hurt himself. I reached for his hand, and he took it, and squeezed it.

"Why do you let me do it?" he asked.

"Oh, Daniel. We go over this every time. I like it. If I didn't like it, I would stop you."

"Would you, Wednesday?"

"Yes, of course I would."

"I don't believe you."

"I know you don't. You know, it's not fair. You complain that I don't trust you, but the truth is, you don't trust me. If it was too much, I would tell you. I would."

"Yes, from a pool of blood on the floor."

"I have a very high tolerance for pain!"

His eyes widened in disbelief. "You cry like a baby when you skin your knee!"

"No, I don't," I said, but he was right. He knew me. "I mean, erotic pain. I have an infinite tolerance for erotic pain."

"Well, it bothers me. Sometimes it bothers me."

"What are you talking about? You love it as much as I do. You only hate when you lose your temper."

"Why don't you stop me then, when I do?"

"Because I want you to do it! Isn't that the agreement? You do what you want, and I take it without complaint."

"What would it take for you to stop me? What would actually be too far?"

"I don't know." I was starting to get annoyed. Nothing was

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more irritating to a submissive than a whiny, uncertain dominant.

“Why did you get so angry anyway?” I asked.

“Why do you think? Why do I always? Don’t play innocent. You know why I’m pissed. You know exactly why.”

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

“Don’t you?” he snapped back, not fooled for a second. “You hold yourself away from me, when you know I want you the most. You do it all the time, just to torture me. It’s terrible fucking behavior for a submissive. You really ought to be ashamed.”

“I don’t! I don’t mean to. I mean, that’s not why I do it, to make you mad—”

“I don’t care why you do it. I just want you to fucking stop!”

I saw now why he wanted to walk. If he lost his temper now, it was safe. We walked nearly two blocks in silence, his face dark and stormy, but he never dropped my hand.

“I want you all the time, Wednesday,” he finally said. “I hate it when you go. I really fucking hate it.”

“I know you do.”

“You shouldn’t ever go.”

“I have to go sometimes. I have to go home.”

“I don’t want you to go home. I want my house to be your home.”

“Daniel, I have to have my own home. My own life.”

“You can have a life with me. How is this not life? We have fun. We talk, we fuck. We play. I know that you like it.”

“Like it? I love it. I live for it, Daniel.”

“Then move in with me. Be with me. All the time. Stop fucking around.”

“Okay,” I said.

“Well, look—what?”

“I said okay. I will move in. If you can’t let it go, then yes, I will.”

He searched around for words, off kilter. Apparently he had prepared himself for my argument, but not my capitulation.

“Well, good,” he managed finally. “When?”

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“Whenever you want. Some time next week. Whenever you hire someone to do it, because I’m not moving all my things by myself.”

“No, of course not. I’ll help you. You have what...half a carload? I’ll carry the heavy stuff.”

“I know you will.”

“Try not to sound so fucking excited about it.”

“Well, I’m not excited. I’m doing it for you. I do a lot of things for you, actually.”

He thought about that a moment.

“I know you do,” he finally said. “So what can I do for you?”

“I need concessions.”

“What kind of concessions?”

“Nothing big. I want to have some time to myself. Some time when I’m not at your command.”

“Okay. We can work that out. You’ll have plenty of time on your own. I do work, you know.”

“So do I,” I reminded him. “And when I get home, I won’t always feel like dropping to my knees and sucking your cock.”

“Okay, fair enough. You’ll be allowed some time off the clock.”

“And I want my own room.”

“No,” he said at once.

“Yes,” I insisted.

“I want you with me. I want you to sleep next to me every night.”

“I will sleep with you. I want my own room to have a place to go, a place for when I need to be alone. I know you don’t understand there are actually people like that.” A cheap shot. I teased him sometimes about his inability to be happy by himself. I thought it was funny, but he frowned. I was pushing it. He wouldn’t think twice about spanking me again, even on my aching, sore ass.

“Fine,” he said. “You can have your own room, but you will never lock me out.”

“I can’t promise that.”

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“If you do lock me out, I get to paddle your bottom.”

“Okay, I guess that works.”

“And you’re in my bed every night. Every night,” he said. “Whether you love me or hate me or just cursed me to hell.”

“Every night,” I agreed. “I’ll be there.”

“I won’t even put a bed in your room.”

“Fine. Maybe you can just put a pan of bread and water on the floor, and some hooks on the wall for me to hang from.”

He tried not to smile, but I knew he secretly loved when I got brave enough to sass him. Now, I was pretty much guaranteed a spanking. Oh well. At least he wouldn’t be as angry this time.

“I’ve been thinking we should experiment with some hooks and chains,” he teased. “I see you’ve been thinking it, too. Maybe I’ll buy you another of those old collars you used to wear.”

I rolled my eyes. “Why don’t you just trick my room out like a dungeon? We’ll spend today painting the walls black.”

“Hmmm. Might be hard to explain when company comes.”

We both laughed at that picture. He kissed my hand.

“You can paint it whatever color you like, lovely girl. And pick out furniture, and artwork, whatever pleases you. You can make your little hideaway whatever you like, as long as you never forget that you belong to me.”

And when he said that, he didn’t say it harshly, or threateningly, or proudly. He just said it like it was a fact. Because it was.

* * *

When we got back, I stood and waited for him to order me over his lap, which he did the moment the door closed. He spanked me for a long time, just with his beautiful, firm hand, and it wasn’t angry at all. No, it was loving. Tender. I thrilled under the sting of it, the jarring contact. I knew that he adored me completely, and that this was, in essence, a celebratory spank. Some couples would have cracked open champagne, but

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not us. We had our own, more rigorous celebrations.

To be honest, I still wasn't sure I would follow through with it. In fact, I didn't know why I'd actually agreed to it in the first place. I had steeled myself for this confrontation to arise some time this weekend, as it always did between us, and I was glad he had at least waited until the end. I had my typical cold refusal already well rehearsed. *No, no, no. I need my space.* But when he asked me this time, I said yes. I had been shocked to hear the words leave my lips. *Okay, Daniel. I will move in.* I had been shocked at myself, and totally confused.

In these kinds of relationships, it was all about degrees. For him, it was *how much of her can I have? What can I make her do? What can I make her give up?* And for me, *where do I end, and where does he begin? And what will I do when he's finished with me?* I knew Daniel would scoff at that question. He believed that we would always be together, that he would always love me. I was not so optimistic. I often thought, *how will this end?*

Yes, these were questions that kept us both coming back to this complex and sometimes exhausting dance of dominance and submission. But now, today, the choreography had altered. The song we'd been dancing to for so long had changed. I was terrified by this, and he knew it. When he finally finished spanking me, he pulled me into his lap and pushed my hair back, and looked deep into my eyes. He kissed me and stroked my cheek. There were no tears, like there were when he punished me, only bright wide eyes that begged for reassurance. His expression turned tender, and he pulled me close, tucking my head under his chin.

"It's going to be okay," he soothed, his deep voice rumbling against my ear. "I promise you, Wed. It's going to be okay."

And then a few tears fell, but I don't know if he knew it.

Yes, he probably knew it, because this was Daniel, and he knew everything. Wordlessly, he held me tighter still.

Soon after that, he took me up to bed. He put everything on me, dressed me up just as he wanted me—pumps, stockings, a

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prim little corset we hadn't pulled out in a while. He made me lie down and tied my hands, and just gazed at me for the longest time. Then his fingers started, tracing every part of me, both outwardly and intimately. On and on he did this, and he ordered me sternly not to take my eyes from his.

So here it was, at last. The excruciating exercise in intimacy, so strict and torturous it took my breath away. His eyes held mine, utterly unforgiving. I hated him at times like this as much as I loved him, because I knew he did this only to show me how much control he held; that he could by make me, *force* me to do what I hated the most.

On and on he stroked me. Eventually, as he knew I would, I started to soften. I started to relax and open up to him, the impatience in my eyes commuting to a vulnerable plea. He made love to me then in a way he never had before, almost as if I was his bride, an untried virgin on our wedding night. He was so slow and gentle it nearly brought me to tears. He took so much time caressing and priming me that I came hard the very moment he entered me. He laughed softly, that he could do this to me, too proud to get angry that I hadn't had permission to come. He made me come twice more in the same quiet way before he was through, before he untied me and let me look away.

And that night, there was no toy to endure, no terse orders to sleep on my side. There was no need to remind me anymore, all night, that I was his. No, I dreamed all night of him, as he probably knew I would, and each time I woke, he pulled me closer and I drifted again.

* * *

The next morning our weekend was over, and he woke me with his hard cock sliding inside. I thought this would most likely be my daily alarm clock once I moved in. I actually liked the feel of coming awake with him inside me. *Wake up, Wednesday. Can you feel that? You're still mine. Wake up, and be mine some more.*

13. His

He made breakfast again, the wonderful light breakfasts he could make that weren't a chore to eat. I smiled at him over the table, but I still felt scared. We made tentative plans about my transfer of residence. No matter when my things came, he wanted me home with him that night, *and every night thereafter*, he said very softly. Sometimes the things he said the softest, were the most difficult things for me to accept.

Then he drove me home and walked me to my door. He pulled me to him in a suffocating hug, and whispered in my ear.

"Thank you, Wednesday. It was the best weekend ever."

"Happy birthday, Daniel," I murmured back.

I felt strangely bereft, to bid goodbye to this weekend. There would not be another like it, where we tiptoed so carefully between commitment and freedom. No, those days were gone when I could skip away from him at will. I would be back soon with him to stay. I would have all my things with me, and I would be his. I would bring all my things to him, and they would find a place in his home, just as I had, however warily, accepted a place in his heart. They would be there a while, while they were still welcome. Just as I would be in Daniel's heart...for a while.

14. Black and White

I sat by the window, a faint smile on my face. Wednesday was in a rush. I had made her late again.

My dearest Wed, she was so pissed. She came bounding down the stairs, her curls bouncing, and flashed me a vicious look.

“Be careful, darling,” I murmured. “Or I’ll make you even later.”

She knew it made me horny when she got pissed at me. When she had her little tantrums, when she talked back to me, she might as well have been begging *fuck me like a whore*. But she was late this morning, so she wisely lowered her eyes and turned her face away. I could tell she rolled her eyes, though, even looking at the back of her head.

Yes, I had made her late, I really couldn’t help it. It was a rare morning I didn’t wake up rock hard for her. It was even rarer that she wasn’t wet and ready for me, and that morning she had been in rare form. Once hadn’t been enough. No, not even close. She’d gotten up to shower for work, and waved her little backside at me, that curvy little ass of hers still crisscrossed with marks from last night. Jesus Christ, what did she think would happen? I ordered her to her knees in an instant.

She could have said no. Of course she could have. She didn’t

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have her stockings on at that time, after all. We had struck on an arrangement soon after she agreed to move in with me. She would always be my girlfriend, my love, my charming submissive, but when I put her in stockings, then she agreed to be my slave.

Slave. I never really cared for that word actually, although I suppose it best described what she was to me sometimes. When she had on a garter belt and stockings, she was completely mine, and she couldn't even come unless I allowed it. But me, I could do to her as I wished, no matter how unreasonable or depraved. At those times, there was no "no," no slow obedience, no smirks or laughter or moods, at those times, there was only me and my base desires, and her body, for me to use as I wished.

Not that she didn't enjoy every moment, those times that I used her. In fact, it was my constant intention that she did. I talked strictly to her about training and obedience for no other reason than to turn her on. The fact was, she already did everything I wanted with great skill and talent, and anything new I asked of her, she did that too. But because the idea of training turned her on, I became an Olympic caliber coach for her body. Because she wanted to obey, I demanded obedience of her with emphatic severity. Because you see, in the end, all I ever needed to find my own pleasure, was to find new and better ways to give pleasure to her.

For some men, some dominant men, the kink was the debasement, the defilement, the utter stripping away of their submissive's dignity. For me, what mattered more was my own satisfaction and pleasure, and that hinged, quite basically, on Wednesday shuddering and coming in my arms. So in a way, I was as much a slave as she was. If she had withheld feeling the pleasure I worked so tirelessly to give her, it would have crushed me. I would have crawled away a broken man. So in a way, I was a slave to her, just as she was a slave to me. We were slaves to each other, but I always led the dance.

So far our little stocking system had worked out well for both of us. She liked the clear delineation of the degree of obedience I

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would expect from her, and for me, there was that delicious thrill when I'd send her to put the stockings on. I dreamed, yearned, obsessed over it, ordering her off to dress in that silk and lace. In quiet moments I'd rehearse the perfect words to say. I could have sent her running for them at any time with just a look, but I enjoyed it very much more to send her off with some blunt, explicit words.

I would wait until the perfect time, when we had a couple of hours, when she wasn't tired, when she seemed restless. Or sometimes, when she was sad and grouchy, and it seemed the best way to bring her around. When the moment felt right, my breathing would change. My expression would harden, and she would know what was coming. The words I used to orient her to my will were as much a turn on to her as they were to me.

"Go put on some stockings," I might say. "At once." Short and simple. Always effective.

Or I might say, "Wednesday, I feel like fucking. Fucking every hole you have. Go put on your stockings, so I can use you I like a whore." More creative, and she always thrilled to the expletives.

Or I might say, "Wednesday, stockings, now. Kneel on the bed and wait for me." And I would make her wait, sometimes for an hour, getting wet for me on her hands and knees.

Or I might just say, "Wednesday, put on your stockings, I think you need some discipline. I'm going to mark your ass." She would scurry off without word or hesitation, anxious to take whatever I would give her.

Sometimes I would follow to help her choose a set. I'd smooth the stockings up her legs, help her hook the garters in the back. Sometimes I would follow and just stare from the bed as she prepared herself, imagining how wet she was getting before I'd go to her and check, thrusting my fingers between her legs. Sometimes I wouldn't follow at all. I'd sit and work myself up into a frenzy of horny anticipation before going upstairs to find her where I'd ordered her to be. Kneeling by the bed, or standing with her hands on the wall, or on all fours in the middle of the

14. Black and White

bed. Wherever I told her to be, there she was, waiting for me to use her.

As you can probably imagine, I began to obsess over stockings. Since meeting Wednesday, I couldn't pass a lingerie store without ducking inside. I would spring huge erections choosing provocative ensembles for my lover. The shopgirls were ever discreet, pretending not to notice. Stockings, garters, and corsets haunted my every dream. Lace tops stretched on trembling thighs, straight backseams, beribboned garter clasps. I always, always woke up hard.

After our sessions, as soon as I released her, Wednesday usually ran off, and I let her go with as much grace as possible. I tried not to take it personally when she ran away so fast. I knew she needed a decompression period to become herself again. She would go off to her own room, the private room she had insisted upon before she agreed to move in. The room she had remodeled, much to my surprise, in stark white from top to bottom. White bed, white linens, white walls, white furniture, white carpet. When you went into Wed's room, it was like walking into a total white out. When I asked her why, she just said that it relaxed her. I thought about the rest of the house, the dark decor, wondering if it then agitated her. She laughed when I asked her if it did. *No, I just like white*, she'd said. *Don't worry about me, Daniel.*

But I did worry. The white room freaked me out, and not just a little. I had promised she could decorate it as she wished, but I wondered about the psychology of wanting to pretty much live in a cloud. And yes, there was a bed in there, even though I had denied it to her at first. She said she needed a bed to truly relax, which I understood. I had ordered her a luxe one, huge and expensive and yes, pristine white. I had it outfitted with crisp white French sheets and a white satin comforter that had cost a small fortune. It was an offering for my goddess, an altar for her, and we never besmirched it with sex. At least not yet, though I'd often find her in that bed, dead asleep after our sessions. Before I went to sleep, I'd go and get her, and carry her in my arms back

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where she belonged.

She didn't always run off afterwards though. Now and again she'd stay and we'd go back to bed together. After really hard sessions, *really* hard ones, she would stay. I'd undo her lingerie, the hooks, the laces, the clasps, and lay her down. I would caress her all over, and worship her and love her, and fuck her really gently, until she trembled in my arms and came. Was it an apology? I know she thought it was, but no, it wasn't really that, it was more like a thank you. *Thank you, Wednesday*, for trusting me to use you. *Thank you, Wednesday*, for being so vulnerable to me. *Thank you, Wednesday*, for being brave when I hurt you. *Thank you, Wednesday*, for letting me lose my mind.

Sometimes we would go days between these stockings sessions, sometimes only hours. It depended on a lot of factors, mood and timing. Need. Even when she didn't wear stockings, I took her at least twice a day. Any less than that, and I ached with need. Any more, and we considered it a bonus. The stockings were certainly central to our sex life, but even when they weren't on, I confess I used her hard. Even when I fucked her gently, fucked her so gently she was almost in tears, I was still hard on her, because I never let her hide from me. I refused to let her hide.

And there she was now in the harsh morning light in my kitchen, my brave lover, dressed for another day on the job. I could have kept her like some treasured concubine, paid for everything she needed, but she wanted to work. I paid for everything anyway, and she put away her money in her own accounts. There was only one reason I could fathom that she would keep working, and that was that she expected me to leave her someday. Leave her high and dry, as if I would. But because that was her worry, I let her keep her job and accounts for her peace of mind.

She glanced over at me. I smirked back at her. *Yes, I'm watching you, Wed. Of course I am.* With a sigh, she grabbed an apple off the counter. Breakfast was a strict household rule. Wednesday hated to eat breakfast, but I insisted on it. Of all the

14. Black and White

rules I forced her to follow, most of them perverted sexual rules, the ones that annoyed her the most were the simple ones concerning her health. Eat breakfast. Sleep well. Don't bottle your feelings. Exercise. Laugh every day. Take your vitamins. Be a good girl. I suppose because I used her body so ruthlessly, I felt a certain selfish need to keep it healthy for further usage, and a certain guilty responsibility to promote both mental and physical health for her, since I performed such acts of depravity upon her mind and body every night.

But not everything I required of her was purely selfish. I insisted on these rules, also, because I loved her. I loved her with the fire of a million suns. I told her so, often. Maybe someday she would fucking believe me.

Sweet little girl, she was so cute and fuckable in her office clothes. Stylish little suit and shiny pumps, and yes, stockings underneath most days. She had enough sets to choose from, there must have been nearly fifty sets by now. She said wearing them to work reminded her of me while she was away. Sometimes it was all I could do not to fall on her as she headed out the door, and now was one of those times. I'd had her twice already, made her late, and yet I still wanted her. She gazed at me from across the kitchen.

"I'm not coming over there."

"I'll be good. I promise," I lied.

"I'm already late. You've already made me late."

"I'm sorry. Come over here. Let me apologize properly."

She fought a smile. "I'm serious. You have to let me go."

"I will! Just one little kiss goodbye."

She walked over to me like she was approaching a wild lion. I guess what I was feeling was written all over my face—and in the tent of my pants—but I was good. All I did was lay a passionate kiss on her, one that I hoped she'd remember all day.

"I had fun last night," I whispered, caressing her beautiful bottom over her skirt.

"I did too," she said, her eyes shining. Then she pushed away. "I'm going to be so late."

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“Do you want me to drive you?”

“No. I’ll see you later.”

I watched her ass sway as she walked out the door, slamming it behind her. I really fucking hated it when she left.

She worked as an editor with erotica, among other things, at a slick little publishing house down the street. An apt job for my little pervert, certainly. I had numerous naughty fantasies of her at work. Well, when did I not have naughty fantasies of Wednesday? But the work ones were some of the more exciting ones, because she had forbidden me to visit her there. She found it too difficult to concentrate when there was a chance I might pop in, so after a couple of breathless, tempting visits, I had agreed it was probably better to leave her to her tasks.

But I still had *fantasy* visits. Oh, yes. I visited her office regularly in my mind. I pictured her leaning over a manuscript, her reading glasses on the end of her nose, legs crossed under the desk, the tops of her stockings just peeking out from beneath her pencil skirt. I would knock on the door and she’d look up at me, and her lips would part ever so slightly. I’d come in and lock the door, and order her to her knees. Or bend her over the desk, spreading her legs wide with my feet. “I’m going to start in your pussy, and finish in your ass,” I’d growl. Papers would scatter, phones would knock off the hook, pens and paperclips would go flying. Her moans would get so loud I’d have to muffle them with my hand.

Ah, the lovely office fantasy. Smart girl, barring me from her work.

And yes, she truly loved her work. She didn’t only do it for security. I told myself she did to make myself feel better, but the truth was, she just fucking loved her job. Unfortunately, she would need to leave it soon, for a while anyway. I hadn’t told her yet. I was putting off that chore because I knew it would mean an ugly standoff. She would fight me tooth and nail. She was not going to be happy, but I had accepted a script assignment that would take me to an overseas shoot for several months. There was not a chance I would attempt it without her. I was going to

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have to give her the news soon. I hated to force it on her, but it couldn't be helped. It was too much of a trial for me to go so much as a day without her now. A week? No, torture. Months? A flat impossibility.

But God, it was going to be wretched. It was going to be a bigger fight than we'd ever had. What would I end up doing? How far would I go to subdue her?

Between us, those lines of allowable force were sometimes blurry. And so I stayed quiet probably longer than I should.

* * *

I decided to talk to her on the weekend, but Saturday began with such wonderful intimacy that I pushed it back to Sunday. Sunday over breakfast, when we ate our favorite yummy foods. Pancakes, eggs, fruit, mimosas. And dread, because she knew. She knew exactly what was coming. She knew my upcoming schedule, that it would separate us. She knew what I would ask, had known for weeks. But now, here it was.

"Wednesday," I said. "Can you take some time off of work? A leave of absence?"

"For how long?"

You know how long, I wanted to say. She wouldn't make it easy.

"For three months or so. Maybe four."

"Four months? No. I'll lose my job."

We both kept eating. Avoidance. She stabbed her pancakes around in her syrup while I took a sip of my drink.

"Well, you'll need to quit then, if you're going to come with me."

She was quiet a long time. Then she said, "I don't really want to quit."

"I know. I know you don't. But you'll have to. There's no other way."

"Can't I just visit you? Spend the weekends, now and again?"

"Now and again?" I laughed humorlessly. "No. Now and

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again doesn't work for me."

"Daniel—"

"It's too much travel anyway to be flying back and forth. I want you to be with me."

"Yes, I know." And she said that, *I know*, very snidely, in a tone she would have been punished for in the bedroom. As if I was nothing to her, as if she only stayed with me because of my unreasonable demands.

"Wed." It was a warning. She put her fork down and folded her arms on the table.

"I don't want to quit my job." Not *I'm not going to*, or *I won't*, or *No fucking way*. Just *I don't want to*, because she knew she would, whether she wanted to or not.

I just looked back at her. *It is what it is*. I tried to look sympathetic. I tried.

She stood up, stormed off. I followed.

"I knew you were going to do this!" she yelled. I cornered her in the living room by the birch tree. She stood behind it, as if she could hide there from me.

"No shit, Wed. What else can I do? What did you expect? That I could piss off from you for four months? That it would be okay? No fucking chance."

"You think that you own me!"

"Yes, we've discussed this before. I do."

"No, you don't!" The foot stamp. Classic. "You don't own me!" she insisted, as if she could make it true.

I cocked my head to the side. "Don't make me show you. Not now, when I'm angry. When you're angry."

"I'm not angry!" she shouted, her hands in fists at her sides. "I'm bored! I'm tired of you always acting like this! You're so selfish, Daniel, always! Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine! How about letting me be my own person? Are you that afraid I'll run off? Sometimes you're pathetic. Sometimes it's pathetic, how you cling to me! How needy you are!"

I was on her before she even finished talking. Her careless words, they made me see red. I took her face between both my

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hands, not gently, and I hissed at her.

“You listen to me, you stupid little fuck. The only thing I need is you kneeling at my fucking feet. The only thing I’m afraid of is not being able to choose which of your three holes I want to fuck first. The only thing that’s pathetic is how you pretend you don’t fucking need me. If anyone is pathetic in this fucking relationship it’s you, you desperate, damaged little slut.”

She slapped me hard, tears shining in her eyes. I barely felt it. It didn’t really hurt, but it did make me stop, get a hold of my mouth. Because what her stinging slap really said was, *now, Daniel, you’ve finally hurt me.*

I should have apologized, just apologized for my words. God knows I hadn’t meant them. She turned and ran. Ran up to the fucking cotton ball she called her room and slammed the door. I could hear her throw the lock from downstairs.

I had told her once that locking me out would get her bottom paddled, but I had a feeling at this point she really didn’t give a fuck. I didn’t go up to her. It wouldn’t have been safe. I probably would have broken the fucking paddle over her behind. No, I let her hide away in her little cloud. Maybe it wasn’t really a cloud though, that freaky room she’d created up there. Maybe it was a fog, just like the fog she lived in. The fog that didn’t let her see clearly that I loved her, that she was precious and necessary to me. *I’ll make this room into fog*, she must have thought as she did it. *White, smothering fog for me to hide in, from him.*

The fact of the matter was that she had already capitulated. She had known long ago she would be coming with me. This was just the bitter process of coming to terms with it. The final, wrenching concession that she really did belong to me. For her, it felt like a final farewell to her independence. It wasn’t, but to her, it was. To her, in her foggy, clouded brain, it was.

I did strive for calm sitting downstairs, I really did. I even had a drink, early as it was, but I still seethed. I seethed from the words she’d spat at me. *Selfish. Boring. Pathetic. Needy.* Very flattering. After all I’d given her, it was nice to know she held me in such high regard. I waited an hour, just sitting and

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seething, justifying it in my mind that she needed to be with me, not just for me to use, but for her happiness, for her safety. Halfway across the world, I would be too far away to come quickly if she needed me.

Finally, I thought I had collected myself enough to talk to her, to get her to see the truth of things. That she had to be with me, that she could return to her job later. That this was necessary. That she needed me too.

I trudged up the stairs to her room. I knocked on the door, and she opened it. Her face was drawn and pale. She'd cried hard. I looked down at her, tracing the shadows of the tears on her cheek, then cupped her face in my hand.

"Wed," I said. "We need to talk."

She shook her head, putting her hand over mine.

"Daniel," she whispered into my palm, "I want to put on some stockings."

* * *

And those seven words began our darkest hour. *I want to put on some stockings.* Just seven words. If I'd had any idea what she meant, I would have run wild and screaming out into the street. But I didn't. I didn't have a clue what was coming. I took her arm and led her to our room. Once there, she put on some stockings, our favorite set. A lovely black corset and fishnet stockings that made me drool, and plum lipstick on her lips. Then she smiled a smile I didn't recognize and gave herself over to me.

And I took her. My God, I took that girl. I took her until my fucking nerves started to fray. I took her until I started to feel sick, because she stubbornly gave and took nothing in return. She gave me back nothing, no sighs, no shudders, no bright eyes or small twitches, no resistance, nothing. Nothing at all, but a body to fuck. I fucked her every way I knew how, every way that usually got a reaction. Nothing. Nothing from her but resigned acquiescence. Her mumbled answers to my ever more abhorrent

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demands were robotic and dull. She was making her point, and it really fucking inflamed me. *I'm here at your feet, Daniel, your three holes to use.* I goaded and tested her, black temper and fury. *Here's your damaged slut, Daniel. Do your worst.*

And I did, I'm ashamed to say. I did my very worst to her. It was warfare and it was ugly and vile. I cycled through every angry toy I had, every instrument of torture, to no avail. I couldn't believe we could be so cruel to one another, I to her body, and she to my mind. But we were. Neither of us flinching, both of us hurting, trapped in this unending scene from hell. She was using the only power she had left, and she was using it to hurt me. It infuriated me. It made me wild. It made me want to break her completely.

We hadn't used safe words, not since she'd moved in, but she could have blurted them out any time and I'd have backed away from her. We hadn't used them because we were past that stage. We were so far past it, which was a shame, because we could have used those words now. If she would have just said *untie me, Daniel*, whispered it, screamed it, whatever, we could have let it end. But she didn't, and I kept on and on at her, determined to find her breaking point no matter how long it took.

And it took hours and hours. Fucking hours. We went at it for hours, she never cracked. I never broke her, though I tried it all. Hours and hours.

I fucking failed.

Yes, I was the one who gave up in the end. I ordered her onto the bed, tearing off what was left of the stockings. I crushed the corset in my fists, twisting the boning, then I balled them all up and threw them in the trash. I never wanted to see them on her again. I had a serious urge to throw it all on a bonfire, every stocking and garter we had in the house. But I didn't, I was actually past that point.

"You go to sleep, you fucking bitch," I growled at her as I stalked out, slamming the door.

I stormed to her room. There was only one way to hurt her the way she had hurt me. I stood there in her precious fucking cloud,

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fighting with myself, and then I went and did it before I lost my nerve. I went down to the cellar and found some old black paint. God, if only it hadn't been there, but it was, from painting the railings the year before. I picked it up and carried it back to her room. In her pristine white room, I opened that black paint and I defaced everything I couldn't destroy with my hands. I shredded her comforter, her curtains, her books and notebooks. I destroyed her carpet, splattering it with paint. I ruined her mirror, her bed and other furniture, crushed into shards her few CDs on the shelf. I splattered and smeared black paint on every white surface. The black was starkly effective, but red would have been better, because it hurt like fucking drawing blood. Defiling this pure white cloud of a room felt like blood and murder, because, for the first time, I realized that she was stronger than me.

But that didn't stop me, that shocking, unwelcome thought. No, unfortunately, it didn't even slow me down. I continued on in full knowledge of what I was doing, that I was violently murdering her trust in me. That I was raping her defenseless little room. Taking it by force, destroying it, brutal and haphazard. *Apropos, Daniel*, was all I could think.

When I'd destroyed all the things I could destroy, broken everything, I turned my wrath to the walls. I painted words in huge broad strokes, across two whole walls. YOU STILL BELONG TO ME, I scrawled.

And under that, even larger, big black letters, "YOU ALWAYS WILL."

Yes, I was a selfish monster, horrible, vile, of course I was; but I was a *heartbroken* selfish monster, if that's any more of an excuse. But really, there was no excuse, no way to excuse away this thing I'd done. What I had done was inexcusable. I tried to destroy her, and when I found I couldn't, I had destroyed everything else she had.

Jesus Christ, I already had more of her than I deserved, more than anyone else had ever given me, but because she wouldn't give up her job for me too, I'd behaved like a nefarious, power-

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drunk king. I'd laid waste to her body, abused it and used it, and then laid waste to her fortress, ruining everything she owned. She would never forgive me. How could she? To be honest, I would never forgive myself.

I turned to the door in dread, feeling her there. I could barely meet her eyes. The look on her face, Jesus Christ. If I'd had a gun, I'd have used it on myself. She stood there, pale and shaken, my angry marks every bit as starkly visible on her body as my black words were on her wall.

"Jesus, Wed," I finally sighed helplessly.

But by then, she was already gone.

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I let her go, I didn't have a right to stop her. I don't know where she went. Somewhere safe, I hoped. I fervently hoped she hadn't gone to Vincent. I half expected the police to come, but no one came, no police and no Wed.

Not that I'd expected her to return, not really. I'd hoped she would, but I was proud of her that she didn't, and relieved.

A week went by and I stopped waiting. I told myself it was better if she never returned, and I certainly couldn't go after her. I had completely lost the right to do that. But as a penance, I repaired everything I had destroyed. I replaced what could be replaced with new, exact copies. Her notebooks and photos I restored as much as I could. I grieved over her personal, irreplaceable things I had ruined and left them as they were, in a toile box under the bed. I repainted the walls, coat after coat of stark white enamel until the black words no longer showed through. New white furniture, carpet, curtains exactly as she'd had them. Even if she never came back, it was something I had to do.

And did it make me feel better? No, not really. But I sat in that white room many hours and thought back over that black day. Sunday, bloody Sunday. What the hell had happened? Did we set out to destroy each other? Because that's what we'd done.

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I was leaving the following week for my assignment in Australia. I threw myself into preparations, packing, meetings, arrangements. I had plenty of work to keep me busy. I didn't even miss the sex, not as much as I missed having her in my life, the happiness she'd brought me, her smiles, her myriad moods and expressions. My bed was terribly empty at night, and during the day it was hard to work because I saw her all over the house. Places we laughed, places we fucked, places we played. Places we fought. Places she cried.

Sometimes I punished myself by imagining she'd fled back to Vincent. I would shake with anxiety picturing her cowering under his hand, kneeling at his feet beside Samantha. But I doubt he would have taken her back, as much as he loved her still. I fought the urge to call him, since if she wasn't there, I'd end up revealing to him that she'd left me. I didn't go to her work, or even wait across the street to see her, for fear she would catch my eyes, see me there and still walk on.

I tried to get out of the house to get away from thoughts of her. My friends were kind enough to have me over ad nauseum. I wore out my welcome because I hated to go home. But I had to eventually. Every night I went home. I had to be there in case she turned up. A part of me still hoped she would magically turn up again as she'd turned up in my life to begin with, completely out of the blue.

I craved her like air and water, and without her I felt wild with grief. It had been such a struggle to make her mine. I'm not so sure I ever really accomplished it, but I had come close, so close in the end. After those many weeks and months, after all that work, I had managed to drive her off in the space of one black afternoon. Now, even if she came back she would never trust me again. It made me depressed.

It was just while thinking these depressing thoughts up in her white room, the weekend before I left for the shoot, that the phone rang.

What had it been? A week? A year? Her tremulous voice on the line made my heart almost stop. It had been twelve days. I

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had been counting, but it felt like I was talking to her across an eternity. What could I say? What could I actually say to begin to apologize? I thought, among all the other thoughts, that at least by now the marks I'd left her with would have faded. The outward marks anyway. The bruises inside, I wasn't so sure about those. But she was calling me, maybe just to tell me she was pressing charges, that she wanted her things back before I left town, however damaged they were. But at least, at least she was calling, and I waited with my heart in my throat to hear what she'd say.

"Daniel," she said, and then silence. My own words spilled out, desperate and loud.

"Wed, I fixed everything I broke. I fixed everything I ruined." *Everything but you.* "Your room is back like it was...mostly."

She was quiet. I heard her soft breathing. Then she said, "Thanks."

"I want you to come back. You shouldn't, but I want you to. I'm so, so sorry, Wed. Truly, I am. If I could go back, I swear to God, I would."

She was silent on the other line. My hands made fists. I wanted her so bad. I needed her back with me.

"I'm leaving Monday," I said mournfully.

"I know," she replied. "I want to come too."

I was so shocked, I actually started to choke. I managed to spit out, "You do?"

"Yes, I want to come with you. Can I? If you still want me to come."

"Jesus. My God. Of course I do. Where are you, baby? Where are you right now?"

"I'm outside. I just got out of a cab."

"You're outside where? Outside my house?"

"It's raining out here, and it's cold," she said plaintively. "Can I come in?"

* * *

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I threw open the door and there she was, her arms wrapped around herself, pale and scared. Then she was inside my house, in my foyer, dripping wet cold rain on my floor. I closed the door, and for a minute I just touched her hair, the damp curls, cold and soft under my hands.

“You’re all wet.” I went to grab a towel and tried to think what to do, what to tell her. I had to say exactly the right thing so she’d never go away.

“Wed...” I began, and my voice sounded strained, but then she launched herself into my arms, and after that there was no need to say anything else.

I took her straight to bed and held her while she cried, cried too hard to tell me where she’d gone, how she’d been. I didn’t fuck her even though I wanted to, because she seemed so miserable and spent. In the dead of night she woke up and I pulled her close, and we talked in whispers. We didn’t say much, just heartfelt I’m sorry’s, and Why?’s, and pleas for forgiveness. I insisted it was all my fault. I was the dominant, I should have had better control. But she shook her head and said she had stolen my control on purpose. *Why did we hurt each other?* she whispered soberly. *Let’s never, ever do it again.*

In the morning, I reached for her tentatively, unsure of my reception. She turned to me without hesitation and took my cock in her hands. She would have ducked under the covers and started to suck me, but I stopped her. I wanted her near, not down between my legs.

I pulled her under me and aligned her warm, lithe body to mine. Her hips to my hips, her thighs to my thighs, her heart to my heart, and my lips against her neck, licking her pulse. I wrapped my hands in her hair and I kissed her, an endless kiss. Somewhere in the middle of it, I parted her legs and drove inside. I hugged her so close to me while I fucked her that I could feel every breath, every flex of muscle, every heartbeat. It was as if I could feel the blood thrumming in her veins. When she came, I felt that too, like a brand, and I don’t really have words for that, for how that felt to me.

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We lay still a long time afterwards, until my perpetually hard cock finally grew soft and slipped from her. I made her stay while I brought breakfast, and we fed each other in bed. While we ate, I spoke of my efforts to repair her room. I told her she could choose a new room if she wanted and make it different, if the memories would be bad. She didn't answer. She just got up and padded down the hall naked as the day she was born. I followed and stood outside the door watching her. She looked a long time, looked at everything. While she looked, I looked at her and remembered that awful Sunday when she had been bruised and marked from our standoff. I marveled at how white and unmarked her skin was, pale and pristine, completely unmarked as it hadn't been since she'd moved in.

She smoothed the covers on the bed, and looked a long time at the walls.

"How many coats did it take?"

"A few," I confessed. She laughed softly, and I did too.

"Thank you for fixing it back the way it was."

"It was all I could do. I didn't feel like I could come after you, so I did this instead."

"Why did you feel you couldn't come for me? Because you didn't know where I was?"

"Because I didn't feel I deserved you back. I still don't. Where were you, by the way?"

"A friend's," she said after a moment. She didn't go into specifics, but I knew she hadn't been with Vincent or she would have been marked.

"Well, I might have come for you eventually. After I got back. When I was nearly mad."

She looked doubtful. "You'd have found someone else by then."

I laughed. "Do you think so, Wednesday? It took years and years for me to find you."

"Oh, you would have found some lovely submissive somewhere."

"More lovely than you? I don't think one exists." Of course I

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meant it from the bottom of my heart, although she gave me that half smile that made me always want to shake her. The disbelieving smile, derisive and self-deprecating. *Jesus, why don't you look in the mirror?*

She did look in the mirror then, looked over her shelves and boxes, and saw all the things I'd replaced, including the carpet and the bed. She touched the comforter and looked up sideways at me. "I guess it cost you a lot to fix all this up."

"Yes, it did. No less than I deserved. And I did all the painting myself."

"Did it make you feel better?"

"No, it didn't, not at all."

I knelt by the bed and pulled out the box that contained all her ruined personal things. "I'm so sorry about these. I fixed what I could. But these are the things I couldn't replace."

A childhood picture, a well hugged bear, a worn pillbox hat. A dog-eared copy of an out of print paperback. Some clippings and poems from her wall. She looked at them, one by one, and her face really told me nothing. Then she put the lid back on the box and shoved it under the bed.

"Well," she said, almost to herself. "There are always casualties, aren't there?"

So, no, I didn't feel I was totally forgiven, and I didn't feel she trusted me any more than she ever had. But she was there in my house with the intention to stay, and I bought luggage and travel things for her the next day. Her clothes were all still there, too. Thankfully, she kept most of them in my room. Even the clothes in her room had somehow emerged untouched. I had defaced the white bureau, but had not thought to open the drawers. Even the many garter sets, save one, were still tucked safely in the armoire in my room.

Maybe you thought I would have parted with those? Destroyed them all in guilt and sorrow? Believe me, I considered it daily, but in the end it had been too hard to even lay eyes on them. To even put my fingers on them, it would have burned me, so they were untouched, unmolested, waiting in their crinkly

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French tissue paper. When she packed later, I worked alongside her, offering advice of what to take, what travelled well. So I knew when she went to the armoire and rustled through, choosing some sets of corsets, garters, and stockings to carefully pack alongside the other things.

And, because Wednesday packed the costumes, it was only right that I pack the props. I collected all my instruments of torture and tucked them into her bag. She made no comment, only continued to pack as usual. I sincerely hoped no one demanded to inspect her luggage.

After we packed, we fucked, fast and rough. We did it right on the floor because her suitcases were still on the bed. It was a *welcome back*, and an *I've missed this* fuck. It was a fuck to say to her *I'm sorry. I promise to be better from now on.*

* * *

The night before we left I decided to take her out to dinner, to the same fancy restaurant I'd taken her on our first date.

"And Wednesday," I said as she left to get ready, "if you don't mind, I'd like you to wear stockings under your dress."

"Yes, Daniel." The way she said it... She said it like nothing would please her more, but that she wouldn't get too excited, because I might not like it. She said it like a perfect little slave, and I stared at her across the table for two hours like she was one. She shifted under my gaze all through dinner while I stared silent promises at her. That's why I took her there, because it took a long time to eat. I loved to anticipate the pleasure of fucking her. I loved to watch her squirm, impatient and hot with lust. I loved watching her and knowing she was mine.

All the way home she fidgeted in the car until I snapped at her to stop. She pressed her legs together and looked out the window.

"Yes, Daniel," she said in that way that made me wild.

Back home, we didn't make it past the foyer. I bent her over the table there and unfastened my pants. I had every intention of

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making her suck me, but I found I had to be inside her that very second. She moaned as I entered her, deep and fast, and her hands searched frantically for purchase. She needed to be restrained at times like these. I trapped her hands in mine and held them hard at the small of her back. We both came less than a minute later, nearly knocking the table over. She laughed while I bit hard at the back of her neck, then licked away the sting. I unzipped her dress and pulled it over her head, running my hands over her tits and the flare of her hips.

“Upstairs,” I said. “Playtime’s over.” I felt her shudder a little, and I thought I would die.

Up in the bedroom, she turned and faced me. God, she was beautiful, beautiful and brave. I ripped off my clothes and sat on the bed. I patted my lap. She knew what to do, draping herself across my broad thighs. I didn’t spank her right away. I spent a long time just looking her over, a lovely blank canvas on which to leave my mark. She waited, not squirming or tensing. I had taught her that, to relax across my lap and wait. Then I gathered her hands in mine and held them tight, and I started to spank her. I spanked her for an eternity, longer than I ever had.

I started out softly, just making her bottom flush pink. I got gradually harder so the pain was always there for her, but I didn’t really mark her, didn’t really bruise her until nearly the end. She was crying by then, sobbing into my leg, gorgeous whimpers and pleas. I loved the sounds she made, and I put my hand down to caress her lips. She nibbled and licked at my fingers. She was strung tight as a bowstring. I would have to let her come soon.

I was hard again by that time, so I tumbled her onto the bed, arranging her on her hands and knees. I reached around for her clit. Soon, she was moaning. She was so hot and wet. Jesus, she loved to be spanked. I thrust lube up deep inside her ass, the cinnamon kind that made her sting, and I put the head of my cock at her ass and pushed inside. Slowly at first, just the head of my cock, and then, when I felt her relax for me, felt her open, I took her hard, all the way to the hilt. She started to cry, not

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because I hurt her. She cried because she wanted to come, and she knew that she wasn't allowed yet.

"Hush. Let me fuck your ass, Wed."

"Please," she begged. "I'm going to come."

"No. It's time you learned patience. Wait for me." I nibbled her shoulder, lost in sensation. I struggled to imbue my voice with some semblance of strictness as I reeled from the pleasure. "Wait for me, or I'll punish you. You know the rules."

She shook her head, sobbing. "I can't, Daniel. I can't!"

And she couldn't. She came a few seconds later. As I'd known she would.

"Naughty," I whispered in her ear. Well, I would punish her later. For the moment, I kept fucking her ass, and even though she'd been naughty, I let her come again before I finally climaxed inside her. I pulled her hair hard as she bucked against me. The feel of her coming around me always made me insane. I held her close to me while we struggled for breath together.

When I finally drew away from her, she collapsed down on the bed.

"Oh, no," I said. "We're not finished yet for the night. You came without permission."

"I know, Daniel," she replied, too fuck happy to care.

All our toys were packed, the clips and whips and restraints. I improvised and returned to the old standard, my thick leather belt. That lovely little tramp, I swear the very sound of me pulling it from my pants was enough to have her hovering at the edge of another orgasm.

"Don't you dare," I warned as I doubled the belt over and pulled her hands up roughly to grasp the iron bed frame. "You hold on here and you don't let go, lover. And don't for a moment think of coming. You're being punished."

"Yes, Daniel." She was already grinding against the bed. I gave her a sharp crack on her bottom.

"I mean it."

I gave her twenty, which was the agreed upon penalty for coming without permission, but it was a losing battle when she

15. Lost and Found

was in this mood. She did come again before I finished, sobbing with satisfaction and release, so I added twenty more, because to let it go would have disappointed us both. Afterwards I lay awake and looked at her a long time as she slept, at her lovely marked bottom and thighs, at the black lacy stockings that haunted my dreams.

That's how we ended up on a plane the next morning, holding hands while she shifted uncomfortably next to me on the soft first class seat. Every so often, our eyes would meet and we'd smile at the secret we shared, and almost laugh from the happiness of it all.

I had her again, and she had me. God, she had me.

She was mine again, and this time, I hoped I wouldn't fuck it up.

16. Flying

Ah, airplane daydreams. Or night dreams, rather. Something about the persistent hum and claustrophobic closeness of an airplane cabin lent itself to wanderings of the mind.

It was late at night and the cabin was dark. Daniel was awake next to me concentrating over his script, but I was night dreaming, and my panties were getting more soaked by the minute. We'd been traveling all day, it seemed. Who knew it took so long to reach the Australian Outback? But I wasn't doing so badly, preoccupied by the delicious memories of our playtime the night before. God, he had fucked me and spanked me and fucked me and then spanked me some more. He was the most virile and energetic lover I'd ever known, and the most talented too. I don't know why I'd pushed him away for so long. I belonged with him always, right next to him.

I shifted in my seat, pressing my thighs together. I could still remember the feel of his cock in me, hard and thick. I wish we weren't on a plane, even a darkened plane with our own aisle in first class. I wish we weren't on a plane because I really wanted to attack him right then. It was all I could do not to sigh in frustration as I fidgeted next to him, grinding subtly against the wide, comfortable seat.

"Little Miss Wednesday," Daniel murmured, not even

16. Flying

glancing up from his page. "What are you doing over there?"

I blushed hot. *Caught*. I swear he noticed every minute shift of my body, every movement of muscle, every blink of my eye. Damn it. I looked over at him, his brows drawn together as he studied his pages. I could see, though, the tiniest hint of a smile at the corner of his lips.

"I'm just thinking, Daniel," I said with as much innocence as I could muster.

He laughed, not fooled. "Thinking about what?"

Oh, as if he didn't know. I shifted and gave him a look. He looked back at me, and then closed his script.

"Go to the bathroom and take off your panties, and then come back here. Go. Now."

"Right now?" I looked around at the other passengers to see if anyone had overheard his quiet words. To my relief, it seemed most of them were sleeping.

"If I have to ask twice, you'll be sorry later. I won't spank you on the airplane, but we'll be going straight to the hotel when we arrive, and we'll have a very private and soundproof room."

Point taken. He moved his legs to let me get by, not missing the opportunity to stick his hand up my skirt. His fingers grazed the top of my thigh-high stockings. No garters on this trip, it was way too long.

"Hurry." His whispered order had my knees going weak. I couldn't meet his eyes. I was suddenly blushing like a schoolgirl. I walked down the aisle feeling already naked. His piercing eyes and insistent demands had a way of doing that to me.

I wedged myself into the tiny airline bathroom and looked at myself for a moment in the mirror. In the harsh light I looked pale and otherworldly. My eyes were wide, my pupils dilate, reflecting the primitive and elemental effect he had on me. I reached under my skirt to pull off my panties and just as I suspected, they were soaked through. I knew he would take them from me when I returned to my seat and inspect them himself, and whisper to me, *naughty*...

Crap. I hadn't even brought my bag with me. My skirt had no

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pockets, nor did my top, so I balled the little silk panties up in my fist and took a deep breath, opening the door. If I had felt naked on the way to the bathroom, I felt ten times more naked on the way back. Daniel watched me return, his eyes alive with that light I had come to recognize well. His lips held back a smile, but I saw it dancing around the edges. He was itching to play.

Again, he shifted to let me move past him.

"Give me," he ordered before I'd even taken my seat.

"Daniel!" I pleaded softly, looking around the cabin.

"Give them to me," he repeated in a voice that I had to obey.

I handed them over, damp and crumpled. I blushed a thousand shades of red while he manipulated the small scrap of silk in his broad palm.

"Now, Wednesday" he said, leaning towards me with a wicked smile, "you are going to sit still there in that seat and you're going to tell me exactly what you were thinking of to make these panties so wet. You're going to use lots of descriptive details," he added, "and you're not going to fidget like that."

I tried hard to still the unconscious and desperate press of my legs against the seat. My clit was throbbing at this point. Oh, yes, he was planning to play with me, and he was going to play with me for a while. Well, I guess it was a long flight for him too, so I couldn't really blame him. I thought for a moment, planning my words, and then I leaned close to him.

"I was thinking about last night. About the things you did to me."

"What things? Specifics."

"I was thinking about the look you gave me before you pulled me over your lap. The way you looked at me, it made me want to do *anything* for you." I breathed the word *anything*, infusing it with all the love and lust I felt. He took a breath beside me, and shifted a little.

"Then, when you pulled me over your lap, I remember the feel of your rock hard thighs, and the feel of your leg hairs tickling me. I wanted to rub my clit against your thighs."

16. Flying

“You did, you silly slut, don’t you remember?” I felt his smile against my ear. Our heads were bowed close together. If someone passed by, they might have imagined we kissed.

“Yes, I did,” I admitted. “At least I tried, but you wouldn’t let me be bad. Only a little bit bad.”

“Yes, you tried hard to be good. I remember, little girl.”

“But it was easier when you held my arm to keep me still while you spanked me. I love when you take me in hand like that.”

His only answer was to lick my ear.

“After that, remember what you did to me then?” I continued in a soft voice, trembling with need. “I can’t think of it without getting all wet and crazy for you.”

Daniel’s face looked hard. “Open your legs.” He pulled a blanket over us both while I obediently parted my thighs. God, I was so fucking wet. When his fingers found my clit, I couldn’t stifle a moan. “Hush, Wed,” he said through gritted teeth. “Don’t make a sound. Put your hand on my cock.” I did, but I was finding it really hard to breathe.

“Go on,” he urged as I stroked his rigid length. “Tell me. Tell me why you liked what came next.”

“I liked how you pushed me onto the bed, and pulled up my hips, and made me...made me take you in my ass.” My eyes closed. His fingers were killing me, turning me inside out. I could barely put two words together. “I love...I love how it feels when you put the head of your cock against my ass, because I know...I just know...” Jesus Christ, I was about to go off. His cock was hard and pulsing under my fingers while I fondled it.

“Because you know...?” he prompted in a tight whisper.

“Because I know how good it’s going to feel when you slide in...when you slide all the way into me and...and fuck me deep. God, Daniel, it feels...” I pressed my forehead against his, gasping for breath. “Daniel!”

“How does it feel?” he ground out.

“It feels...it feels...it feels so naughty and intense... and...”

I arched against his hand. He slid two fingers into me, never

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stopping the maddening teasing of my clit. “And what?” he breathed.

“It feels like I totally belong to you, and I never want your cock to stop fucking me, ever...” My fingers clutched his cock as I came, breathlessly, the last of my words a weak exhalation. I tried hard as hell not to moan out loud as his fingers worked my pussy and my walls contracted on them again and again. I came hard around his hard, thick fingers and he didn’t take them out of me until I was exhausted and still beside him.

“Daniel,” I whispered. My hand was still wrapped around his cock.

“Suck me, Wed. Fucking suck me. Now.”

He didn’t have to beg. I dived under the blanket. At that point I didn’t care if anyone saw, although in the quiet dark cabin I doubt anyone did because it took less than a minute for him to come. I swallowed him down with satisfaction, being careful not to spill one drop.

Sheepishly, I emerged from under the blanket, and Daniel smiled at me. “No one saw,” he reassured me in a whisper, smoothing my mussed up curls back to rights. He kissed me then, deep and hard, his lips overtaking mine.

Finally, limp and satisfied, I sat back in my seat and looked over at Daniel.

“You make me do naughty, naughty things.”

He opened up his hand, where my now very rumpled and damp panties were still clutched. “I do? I think you’re quite naughty without my help.”

I snatched them back with a mortified blush.

“Now,” he said, “go and put them back on, you naughty, naughty little slut.”

And I did as he said, as he watched me walk all the way there and all the way back with the same undiminished gleam in his eye.

* * *

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I slept after that, replete with contentment, slept against Daniel's comforting frame while he kept my hand trapped in his. He gently shook me when we were almost to our destination, and kissed me to wakefulness.

"We're almost there, sweet."

I stirred, blinking, to find myself staring into his cerulean blue eyes. "I'm glad you were with me," he said next to my ear. "What a flight."

I smiled. "Yeah, I agree. I've never been on one quite like it."

"So, are you a new member of the Mile High Club?"

"Daniel," I snorted, "I've never even flown first class before, much less sucked someone off under a blanket and had them finger-fuck me until I came."

He laughed and we stood up to gather our belongings. Thankfully our little conversation was drowned out by the bustle of passengers preparing to disembark. I looked around at their tired, blasé faces. They had no idea what we'd been up to in the wee hours of the morning, I was sure.

We quickly made our way from the airport to the hotel and checked into our room. Daniel teased me again that it was soundproof, but it looked like a regular hotel suite. I wasn't much of a screamer anyway, more the crying and pleading type. Anyway, who would call hotel security and make a report that someone was being spanked?

It was actually a beautiful room, tastefully furnished and decorated, with a sitting room and a well stocked kitchenette. The bathroom was the size of my old apartment and we had a lot of fun playing around together in the huge two-person shower, helping each other wash off that grimy travel feeling as soon as we arrived. Even so, it was still a hotel room, bland and austere, and I was relieved that I'd decided to come, for Daniel's sake. I hated to think of him alone on that long flight, then going to sleep in the massive hotel bed all by himself.

Thinking of Daniel and the huge bed together made my clit suddenly start to sing again. God, what was wrong with me, shouldn't I be jet-lagged? I was wide awake, and I wanted to

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fuck.

I wasn't the only one. Daniel had barely dried off from our shower when he turned to me and fixed me with a look.

"What?" I asked, hugging myself.

A broad, slow smile spread across his face.

"You came for the first time last night on an airplane. Have you ever come in Australia, Wed?"

"I've never even been to Australia. But I'd love to come here, if you think you could arrange that."

"I think I might actually be able to," he said, approaching me like some wild thing stalking its prey.

I started full on giggling before he even got to me. The look on his face was so horny and fierce. He grabbed me and threw me in the middle of the bed and climbed on top of me while I laughed the whole time. I jumped when he touched me, which made him start laughing, and made me laugh harder still. He started to tickle me, the absolute tyrant.

"Shhh, shh!" He tried to muffle me with his hand when I started screeching. "This room is not really soundproof."

I could barely catch my breath to laugh at that. I pushed at his hands, begging for respite.

"Stop! God, stop! Don't tickle me! Please!"

No one on earth was more ticklish than me. He knew it, and he tortured me sometimes because he knew all my most ticklish spots by heart. I lay under him gasping for breath, screaming out loud even past the barrier of his hand.

He finally stopped and smiled down at me, tormenting me by wiggling his fingers just above the surface of my skin.

"If I really want to punish you, Wednesday, I should tickle you rather than spank you. I think you hate it worse."

"I do," I said, gasping for breath. "Please. Mercy. I'll be good."

He nuzzled me, his fingers finally growing still. "You haven't even been bad, have you? Have you, Little Wednesday? You've actually been very good. I have no excuse to punish you now. That's no fun."

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“Maybe you can punish me for not giving you a good reason to punish me.”

“You’re a genius.” He schooled his face to a stern look of reproof. “You naughty little girl. How dare you behave when you know I want you to be bad?”

“I’m sorry, Daniel,” I whispered in mock remorse. “I have no excuse for what I’ve done.”

“Hmm,” he said with a dramatic sigh. “I suppose you need to be disciplined. You’ve gotten completely out of hand.”

“Spank me, Daniel,” I breathed in his ear. “It’s the only way I’ll ever learn.”

His mouth twitched a little at the corner. “Wed, darling, who’s in charge here?”

“You are, Daniel.”

“I am, aren’t I?”

I nodded mutely, because I didn’t trust myself to speak. He arched over me, his hands on either side of my head, and I wanted him to nestle his cock between my legs. He didn’t though, just looked down at me thoughtfully, brushing my hair back from my eyes.

“Monday.”

I giggled. “My name isn’t Monday.”

“I like to call you Monday sometimes.”

I shivered as he licked my neck. “I know. But that’s not my name.”

He stroked his hand down my arm then, soft and slow. “Tuesday.”

I smothered more laughter. “Daniel, quit.”

He stroked my jaw, cupped my chin, licking and nibbling my lips.

“Thursday.”

“Daniel...”

“Friday.”

“Oh, Daniel, please. I asked you nicely to quit.”

“Saturday. Sunday. Christmas. Easter. St. Patrick’s Day.”

“It’s Wednesday, Daniel. You have to face facts.”

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“Hmm,” he said, considering. “I’m partial to Monday.”

I rolled my eyes.

“Wednesday,” he murmured softly.

“Yes, Daniel?”

“I don’t feel like spanking you tonight. I’m too tired, and too happy to have you here.”

“Oh,” I said, and I felt a little disappointed. Crap, my dominant was turning soft.

“But you know,” he continued a moment later, tracing his fingertips lazily up my arm, “I can think of some other ways to torment you. Some very effective and torturous ways...”

“Torturous?” I asked, my eyes wide and round.

“Mm-hm...” he breathed. “To you, yes.” He nuzzled into my neck, making me shudder, and drew his fingers up the side of my leg. “Put your hands up over your head, and leave them there.”

I did exactly as he told me, and he left me to open his suitcase and root around. He returned with the beautiful white restraints, and heat and pleasure flooded through my veins. He knelt beside me, cuffing my hands together with one, then using the other to secure them to the bed. He improvised. This bed didn’t have all the points of attachment that our other bed did. When he was satisfied that I couldn’t get away from him, he leaned back and looked down at me. His cock was already hard and swollen. I wanted it inside me like nothing else on earth.

He had other plans for me though. “Part your legs.” I did, but I think he wasn’t satisfied because he pushed them even further apart. He stared down at me and slowly parted me with his hand, drawing the moisture from between my legs up over my clit. He started to rub it, and I moaned, arching up into his touch. He did it until I started to drift, until the sensation made it really hard to lie still. He did it until my breathing grew frantic and labored—

And then he stopped.

I moaned. *Oh, God. Oh, God no.* He really meant what he said about torment. I pleaded with him, “Daniel!”

He just shook his head. *I have the power here.*

I lay there, still and unsatisfied, while he watched me with a

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faint, teasing smile. Then he said, “Do you want me to taste you? Do you want me to put my mouth on you?”

“Yes!” I said. “God, yes, please, Daniel.” I was so hot, so hot from his touch and from the bonds. He knelt between my legs and opened me wide with his shoulders and lowered his mouth to me.

Oh, my God, his lips were incredible. His tongue, his teeth, they all worked in perfect and practiced harmony to make me go completely wild. As I writhed and bucked beneath him, there was only one thought in my mind. *Don’t stop. Don’t stop. Please don’t stop!*

But just before I came, the man fucking stopped.

I actually sobbed then. “Daniel, no! Please! Please! Please don’t do this to me, you’ll kill me.”

“Hush, lover. Behave yourself.”

I pulled hard at the restraints, but of course there was absolutely nothing to do. He wouldn’t even let me squeeze my legs together. When I did, he snapped at me, “Open them, Wednesday!”

He brought his mouth to my nipples. I could smell my scent on his lips and his tongue. He nibbled and teased my breasts and nipples until I cried like a frantic child. He was truly, literally driving me crazy. If he didn’t touch my clit, I was going to die. I felt like every ounce of blood in my body now pooled and teemed right between my legs, waiting to explode.

“Daniel, this is too mean! You’re being too mean to me!”

“Mean? I think I’m being pretty nice. You can’t tell me this hurts. You seem to be enjoying it very much, judging from how wet you are.” He thrust his fingers deep inside me and I came up off the bed, moaning and panting in desperation. “Yes, definitely wet.”

He dived down between my legs again, as soon as he knew I wasn’t close enough to come. And of course, being Daniel, he knew exactly when I was about to come, and at that exact point, he left me again.

I think I might have cursed at him then. I don’t remember.

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My brain was too wrecked. He tsked at me in disapproval. "Language, Wednesday. You sound like a sailor."

I sobbed. I begged with my eyes. He stroked my hair while I stared and longed for his hard cock. So close and yet so far. He watched me knowingly.

"What do you want, darling? What do you need?"

"Please, please fuck me, Daniel! Please let me come!"

He considered. "I'm not sure I've tortured you enough."

"I think you have," I pleaded, my hips straining towards him. Again, his fingers teased my clit.

"Don't. Please don't...not unless you'll let me..."

"Let you what, Wednesday?"

"Find some release! I'm dying, Daniel! You're driving me crazy! Totally crazy!"

"You drive me crazy all the time."

He was merciless. I looked in his eyes, the way he really loved for me to do. I looked deep in his eyes and I held them there and I begged him, begged him from the heart. "Daniel, please!"

He looked back at me, then crawled over me, spreading me wide. I thought I would die from the anticipation of feeling him slide deep inside. But of course, he didn't. He only teased me. I pulled and tore at the restraints in earnest then.

"Stop it, baby. You'll hurt your hands," he said as the head of his cock nudged just at the edge of my opening. He slid just a little in and then out, a ruthless tease that was making me more frustrated by the second. I closed my eyes and pouted, trying to pretend he wasn't there.

No. He wasn't having that.

"Look at me, Wednesday. Open your eyes."

I did, and my eyes were half furious, half despairing. I whispered, "Daniel, please, let me come."

"I want to fuck you first, Wed."

"Okay," I panted. "Yes, fuck me now!"

"Right now?"

Oh, he was maddening. If my hands weren't restrained I think

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I might have attacked him then.

“Yes, right now. Please! Right now!”

“You’re awfully bossy for a submissive. I think a bossy submissive like you should be put to bed with no orgasm and no cock. Maybe a little toy in your ass and explicit instructions not to touch yourself.”

Oh, God, that thought filled me with horror. “I’m sorry,” I begged. “I’m not bossy! I’m desperate!”

“Desperately horny,” observed Daniel with a smirk.

“PLEEEEEAAASEEE!” I groaned. “Please give it to me!”

“Beg me.”

“Please, please give me your fucking cock! Your fat, hard, beautiful cock! Please let me have it, Daniel! If you’ll just please fuck me now, Daniel, I’m yours, whatever you want!”

“More,” he said, and I moaned in frustration.

“Please slide your big, fat cock inside my cunt, please! I’m so wet and hot and horny for you. I’m so fucking wet, I’m going to come the second you’re in me! Please, give me your cock right now!”

“What if I want to come in your mouth?” he asked.

The look on my face made him start laughing.

“Oh, Wed, I fucking love you so much. If you want me to fuck you, darling girl, then that’s what you’ll get.”

And without further ado, he slid inside me, and I thought I would just about die from the way that it felt. I came right away, while he laughed against my lips and whispered, “I’m guessing twice more, at least.”

I shook my head. I was so spent and so blown away from that massive release that I couldn’t believe I could possibly ever come again, but yes, he did make me come twice more, holding me down, fucking me, devouring me, before he came himself with a low groan.

Afterwards, he lay back beside me, just studying me. He caressed my wrists, still tied.

“You like this?” I asked him. “Seeing me bound up here for you?”

Owning Wednesday

“You know that I do,” he said, stroking my shoulder, then down between my breasts to the curve of my hip.

“Why? Why do you like it so much?”

“I guess because it shows how much you trust me.”

“How much I trust you?” I laughed. “Quitting my job and flying to the Outback with you and your suitcase full of scary toys shows how much I trust you.”

“You love those “scary” toys, Wednesday. You can’t live without them. You won’t live without them,” he added ominously. “I’m sure my itch to spank you will return all too soon. In fact...”

“Oh, no.”

“While you’re already all tied up there...”

I screeched and laughed as he brought his broad hand down on my ass with a stinging slap.

Soundproof or not, that night the other hotel guests got an earful of someone getting spanked, that night and many nights to come.

17. Life and Death

Wednesday, Wednesday, Wednesday, Wednesday.

That mantra had gotten me through the afternoon's stress and aggravation. I'd already called her from the set to tell her to put on her stockings. What a day.

The project was actually coming along pretty well, minimal rewrites and less tantrums by the talent, but yeah, there were still tantrums, and Daniel the writer had to swoop in and make everything okay. Soothe the director's nerves, coddle the actors who didn't like their lines, who wanted more speeches or less profanity. I worked with these big movie stars all the time, they were a lot like children; very pleasant if they got their way, but if you told them *no*, well...

Wednesday.

I could tell Wednesday no, and she'd bow her head and obey. I could tell Wednesday anything while she had stockings on and I'd get my way. There was no feeling on earth quite like it, and I loved her for giving that pleasure to me. It was just the kind of pleasure I needed at the end of a day like this.

I stalked through the hotel lobby, my breath already tight, my hands impatient fists. What would she have on up there? Black, white, pink, dark green, lilac, red? I didn't care, as long as there were stockings, as long as she was ready to be under my

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command.

I got in the elevator and fidgeted impatiently. I was already halfway to hard just thinking about her and I moved my laptop bag in front of my crotch to hide the growing tent. I breathed a sigh of relief when the elderly couple beside me got off on the 14th floor. Only 6 more floors to 20. Come on, come on, come on, come on.

I fumbled with the key at the door, banged it open, and, God, there she was.

I gave myself just a moment to take her in before I went to her, before I put her under my thumb. *White*. Of course. White was exactly what I needed when I was stressed out like this. She was so elegant, so beautiful. The high garter belt she wore emphasized the lovely curve of her hips, tapering to thin, impossibly graceful legs. Her bra, sheer and corset-like, pushed up her round, soft breasts like offerings to me. Clips, I needed clips to put on her nipples, and where the hell would I fuck her first?

I crossed the room, shedding my clothes.

“On your knees.”

She was down in an instant, her mouth open to receive me. She knew that I liked to guide myself to her lips, that I loved to hold her neck and thrust inside, so she waited passively and accepted me with an almost grateful reverence when I entered her mouth. That gratefulness for cock, that blind desire to please your master, it was something vanilla women just didn’t understand. But Wednesday, she understood exactly what she did to me and how much I loved her for it, never more so than when I was coming in her throat.

I pulled her up then, and she gave a little gasp before I kissed her, rough, passionate, deep. I was just getting started for the evening. No one knew that better than she.

“Go kneel on the bed, Wednesday. I want to look at you.”

“Yes, Daniel.” She knelt on the bed facing away from me, then bent forward from the waist so her back was arched, her legs spread, her pert little bottom cheeks opened just so. I had

17. Life and Death

taught her this, the exact posture I liked, and she did it just right. She still had some light marks from the night before when she'd had a paddling before bed. I just looked at her for a while, stroking my half erect cock, gazing at the ass I'd enjoy later. I chose a toy to put in her, a small one, because later when I took her I wanted it to hurt just little bit. I spread her ass cheeks and inserted the lubed toy carefully. Her little flinches and moans were lovely, and my cock twitched again. When the toy was seated, and Wednesday was blushing beautifully, I ordered her back to her feet.

I went to the drawer in the bedside table to pick out some clips; by that time we had several pairs, each producing varying degrees of pain. The set I selected for her tonight wasn't as rigorous as some of the other sets we had, so she was able to wear them a longer time. I pulled the shelf of her demi-bra down just enough on each side to expose her pink nipples. She was so hot already, I barely had to roll them between my fingers before they were hard as little stones. I could feel her gaze on me as I attached one clip, then the other. She gasped softly, fidgeting against the pain, but not protesting, no, never protesting. I met her eyes, and the look she gave me said, *I want to come right now, Daniel, but I'll do as you say.*

There was a delicate chain attaching the silver clips to each other between her breasts, and another longer chain that trailed down between her legs. Sometimes I used that longer chain to attach her to something, or lead her around, but tonight, I attached the clip on the end of it to her clit.

"Walk around," I ordered her. She did, and part of the fun for me, as always, was knowing how turned on she was, plugged in her ass, with her nipples and clit clamped. Knowing that all she wanted, what she wanted more than anything else in the world, was to get off *right now*. The chains swung gently as she moved across the room and back in my direction. "Touch yourself," I said quietly.

She sucked in a soft breath, and swallowed hard.

"And no, you may not come."

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She sighed and reached between her legs with trembling fingers.

“Stroke yourself,” I said. “Don’t just play around.”

“I’ll come, Daniel,” she whimpered.

“Don’t you dare,” I said sternly. “Don’t you dare come.”

I watched her touch her hot wet cleft for about ten seconds before I was rock hard. I crossed to her and thrust my own fingers into her center. She pressed her pelvis against me.

“Don’t come,” I warned again as I dragged her over to the couch and pushed her onto it, positioning her on her knees. “Spread your thighs and arch your back. Give me your hands.” She reached back, and I took her little fists and held them fast at the small of her back as I thrust inside her deep. She moaned, tormented. She was seconds away from coming.

“Don’t you come. Don’t you dare. If you do, I’ll use the crop on you.”

“Please, please,” she pleaded. Hopelessly, she knew.

I moved my fingers around the front of her to tug on the chain by her clit, and seconds later, as I’d expected, I felt her come around me hard. She shuddered from the force of it, arching back against me as if I could save her from herself.

“You naughty, naughty slut,” I muttered tightly. “You little tramp. You’ll have to be punished now after I’m done having my way with you.”

“I’m sorry, Daniel,” she sighed, still trembling from the force of her orgasm.

A soft chuckle finally escaped at that. “I don’t think you are. I think you’ll probably come again, you little come-whore, before I crop your little ass the way you deserve.”

Ha, if she came only once before I finished it would be a miracle. As it was, she came twice more as I drilled her from behind, my hands tight on her hips, my cock in her cunt filling her doubly, as she still had the toy wedged in her ass.

After I’d come and caught my breath and pulled away from her, she stayed just as she was, panting and mindless, waiting to be told what to do. I took my time just looking at her, because I

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never loved her more than when she was like this. Absolutely, totally in thrall to me, all sensation and desire and elemental lust. And it was I, I who had made her that way. It made me high, it really did.

I wrapped my fist in her hair, breathing menacingly down her neck. "Are you ready to be punished, Wednesday?"

"Yes."

"Put your hands on the back of the couch, lover, and don't let go. Don't you dare move those hands."

"No, I won't."

"Hush," I said sternly. "Just do it, no lip."

I don't know how I was able to remain so stern and impersonal when I was burning with lust. I guess I was able to do it because she loved it and it made her hornier than hell.

I went for the crop, rummaging around in drawers and under papers. Our stuff was scattered everywhere because we always dropped everything when we were done and crawled into bed and fucked. I found it hidden, purposely I'm sure, at the bottom of a pile of clothes and books. *Nice try, Wednesday*. I came back and thwacked it really hard against the arm of the couch just for effect. Those little flourishes, they really did it for her. I think she almost came again.

I made a big fuss out of positioning her properly just to put my hands on her. I pulled at her hips, cupped her spectacular round cheeks, parted her knees even further, and made her stick out her ass.

"You stay just like that. Be a good girl and take your punishment. I've told you a million times not to come without permission."

"I know, Daniel. I'm sorry," she whispered.

"Not as sorry as you will be."

"Yes, Daniel," she said. Then, "OW!" as I landed the first stroke.

I had to hand it to her. I never could have taken the pain that she did. I guess that's why I was the dominant and she the submissive. She trembled and cried penitent tears, but she never

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broke the pose. She kept her lovely ass high in the air, offered to me for punishment. I only gave her twenty, which I made her count, and I only aimed for the toy a few times. I whacked her hard at the end, and the resulting jumps and wails were gorgeous. Of course, by then, she was down, deep down in sub space.

When I put down the crop I reached around her to take off the nipple clips and the clip between her legs. She sniffled a little as I did and looked back at me with her wide blue eyes. I brushed back her hair and dried the few tears remaining by running my tongue lightly across her cheeks.

“Good girl,” I said. “God, I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

“Let’s go to dinner, Wednesday. I’m hungry. I’ll fuck your ass when we get back.”

Dominant 101. The longer you make them wait for it, the wilder they get. Another good hour and a half with that plug in her ass, reminding her of what was coming later...nice. I could see her turning it over in her brain. *Oh, no. Oh, yes. But oh, no.*

Oh, yes, Wednesday, I’m looking forward to watching you fidget through yet another dinner.

At the restaurant, we found a nice, private table where she could squirm at will. “I love you, Wednesday,” I said to her over the menu as she fidgeted in her chair. “Now sit still, before I bend you over this table.”

“You wouldn’t,” she accused softly.

“Are you sure of that?” Of course I wouldn’t, but it was fun to pretend I would once in a while. We were still smack dab in the middle of a scene, a really nice, really involved one. We didn’t have scenes this long very often, but when we did, I pulled out all the stops.

“I’m hard already for you,” I said, putting the menu down, “but we’re going to eat first. Hmm. Just think how riled up I’ll be when I finally have my go at your ass.”

Her hands clenched in her lap, and she blushed hot as the waiter arrived just seconds after I’d finished my sentence. I

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wondered if he'd heard me. I wondered if he knew. How could he look at her and *not* know, not know that she was hornier than he could ever make any woman. That she'd just been beaten and fucked and toyed with mercilessly, and was being made to wait now over a leisurely dinner, for me to finish her off with my cock up her ass.

He looked at me while I placed an order for both of us, and no, he didn't know. He didn't have the slightest clue what was going on, but sometimes, yes, people did. Maybe they just noticed a strange dynamic between the two of us, a tension that went above and beyond what couples usually showed. Sometimes people *knew*, and I knew they knew, and we exchanged knowing and conscious glances before looking away.

But this guy, no. No imagination. As vanilla as a soft serve ice cream cone. *If only you knew what you were missing. You're young...maybe some day.* Maybe someday he would meet his own Wednesday, a girl who made him want to be more than the average Joe, to do more, feel more, demand more, accept more than your run of the mill sex, your run of the mill intercourse and orgasm. Maybe not. Maybe he'd be vanilla all his life.

Not my problem. I looked back over at Wednesday, still blushing, still squirming under my gaze.

"Hanging in there, Wed?"

"I'm doing fine," she answered with a smile.

But her eyes said, *I really want you to fuck me.*

Soon, lover was what my eyes replied.

* * *

But it couldn't have been soon enough for either of us, and when we returned, I tackled her right inside the door. I pushed her to the floor and she moaned as I knelt behind her, pulling the toy out and falling heavily over her back. I positioned my cock and began to press into her ass slowly, savoring the moment after the long build up and giving her time to adjust to my girth. We both groaned from the overwhelming feel of it, and I held her

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hands, as unforgiving as steel, above her head.

“Daniel,” she pleaded. “More!”

“Hush. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“I want you to hurt me!”

“I know,” I said, pulling her hair, “because you’re a hopeless slut whore.”

“Yes, Daniel,” she moaned, agreeing with me so wholeheartedly I had to laugh.

“You just lie still and let me fuck you, and I’ll hurt you as much as I see fit.”

I pressed deeper then, with excruciating slowness, until I was all the way in. She groaned and squirmed under me.

“Wednesday, settle down. Behave.”

She did try. She calmed down a little and let me fuck her, but soon enough she was tensing and trembling from the strain of trying to be still, trying not to come without permission. I ignored her, focusing on the amazing sensation of plumbing her tight asshole, but her keening got louder and louder.

“Daniel!” she cried. “Daniel, please!”

“Yes, okay, yes,” I said. “You come whenever you want. You come ten times if you want.” I would have given her anything, *anything* at that moment, anything on earth she asked. We finished fucking and both came hugely, and then we fell into bed together and slept until dawn when we woke and fucked again.

That was our usual pattern, for the most part. I woke her up with a quickie, and put her to bed with a scene. And in between all that carnal activity we found time for real life too, for friends and dinners and trips around Australia, and for all those little everyday things that normal couples do. Work kept me busy, busier than I liked, since that meant Wednesday was sometimes bored and alone. I’d made her come half a world away from her job with nothing to do except wait on me, which suited her fine in the bedroom, but not so well the rest of the time. She grew very restless at times, and at other times seemed so despondent I started to fret. I urged her to start writing again like she used to, even bought her a laptop and notebooks and every type of pen.

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She did eventually begin to put some words on paper, after some nudging on my part, and yes, threats of punishment unless she did as I asked. Whatever worked. She did grow happier when she started writing again, and we both settled in to a more satisfying routine, and I started to feel less guilty about bringing her along.

About halfway through our stay we celebrated an anniversary of sorts, March 29. It was Wednesday's birthday, but it was also the night we'd met. I made a big fuss, a huge, ridiculous fuss over her birthday, but we reminisced only briefly, and somewhat uncomfortably, about that night. *Vincent is still a ghost standing between us*, she said. *Maybe he always will be*.

God, she had no idea how true her words were, or how much I wished it wasn't so. She hadn't seen or heard from him since he'd broken up with her. For all she knew he couldn't care less where she was now. But no, he still called and emailed me regularly, and I kept him *apprised* as I'd promised to do. He had been happy to hear she was writing again, and actually asked if I could email him some of her work.

"Absolutely not," I'd answered. She wouldn't even let *me* look at it, not that I would have admitted that to him. In most other things, she had grown less secretive around me, and intimacy scared her less. But her writing remained strictly off limits. *You can look at it, Daniel, when it's done*. But apparently nothing ever was actually done, because she never showed me a thing. She would show me when she was ready, I reminded myself. I was a writer too. I knew how that worked. As long as she was happy typing away on her laptop, I was content.

It was also around March 29th, that uneasy anniversary, that something else happened. Wednesday started to feel really tired and really sick. We bought a pregnancy test, and another, and another, until she finally, tearfully, had to face up to the fact that she was knocked up.

For what it's worth, both of us were to blame for this disaster; she, for forgetting to take one of her pills, and me, for thinking it wasn't a big deal and fucking her anyway. For me, it wasn't such

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a disaster. I actually got quite enthused about the idea of starting a family with her, but she felt differently and cried for days.

I hadn't known, hadn't the slightest idea that her mother died in childbirth, had died having her. If she'd only told me, I would have approached everything very differently. But by the time she told me, she had already moved on to making her own funeral arrangements, giving me a list of what she should wear for the viewing and what songs I should play.

"Garters and stockings," I told her, scanning the list, "for a start. Under that little black dress I like."

"It's not funny, Daniel. I know I'm going to die."

"Just because your mother died, doesn't mean you will," I explained gently. "Obstetrics as a science has come a long way. They're a lot more careful now, with all the lawsuits and what not. Besides, there's no way I'll let you die."

"I'm sure my father felt the same way about my mother." That shut me up for a minute. Her father, had he always been an alcoholic, or only after his wife had died? Only after she'd died trying to give birth to the child he planted in her, leaving him alone with a new baby, but no wife?

"Wednesday, I won't let anything happen to you. Believe me. Everything will be fine." *Please let everything be fine, because I can't be like her father. Even alcohol couldn't save me if she dies.*

But no, I didn't believe for a second that she was going to die or I would have ripped our baby from her womb myself. When praying fervently to lose the baby naturally didn't work for her, she made an appointment to have an abortion, which, because we were in Australia, got rather involved. In this, for once, I did not feel I had the authority to control her, so I held my silence and waited for the day. As I suspected, she was unable to go through with it and came home from the appointment a mess. She cried for hours in my arms, wretched and scared.

But from then on, from that emotional afternoon, it was a reality. We were having a baby. Wednesday and I had created a life together, however accidentally, and we would soon be a

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family. As soon as we returned to L.A., I made Wednesday my wife. She only fought me a little. A few good, strict spankings did the trick.

And yes, it galled me that I was doing exactly as Vincent had directed me, doing *exactly*, to the letter, what he'd prescribed. *I want you to love her and baby her and discipline her and marry her and get her pregnant with little Daniels and Wednesdays...* He'd been excited to hear about the baby, but he hadn't been invited to our wedding. Not a chance. Our shotgun wedding was a private affair between her and me and a justice of the peace. Afterwards I took her home and fucked her in the middle of the living room with her wedding dress over her head, and then tied her to the tree and spanked her. She wouldn't have had it any other way.

After that, we kept as well as we could to our usual routines, even as she grew and changed before my eyes. Her breasts, wow. Pregnancy and breasts. God's apology to men for those pregnant hormones that made life a living hell. Of course, I still found ways to discipline her, although inventiveness was the order of the day. No nipple clips, because nipple stimulation could bring on labor; I think we both almost cried over that. No very hard spankings, no rough stuff, and no marks or welts when she had an appointment coming up. At the end, in the 8th month, she had to start going weekly to the doctor, and at that point, we mostly gave up.

But I still fucked her, still lusted for her. I still bedeviled her even when she pushed me away complaining that she was a house, a blimp, crying that I couldn't possibly be attracted to her. I was attracted to her more than ever, although I could never convince her of that.

Unfortunately, she was also still convinced her chances of survival were slim. She regularly fell into fits of deep despair and fear. We attempted a childbirth class together. I hoped it might help her manage her anxiety, but all it did was make her more fearful and she pulled me out of the classroom the first hour. So finally, I left her to her writing and her nervousness and

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did all the things that had to be done to prepare. She wouldn't shop for clothes or pick out anything for the baby, ambivalent as she was, so I did everything, down to painting and fixing up the nursery down the hall from our room.

It was the smallest bedroom, and the darkest, for good baby napping, but I lightened the walls. I painted them white. I painted them the same color as the walls in Wednesday's old room. Even though she now used that room rarely, I couldn't have taken it away. No, the baby got her own white room down the hall, our baby *girl*, as we'd discovered in an awe-inspiring ultrasound.

That was the closest I'd come to losing it with her during the pregnancy, that day when she wouldn't look at the screen. But I looked, and I saw, and I described it to her later in bed over her soft sobs and tears.

"Ten fingers, ten toes, two arms, two legs, Wednesday," I'd whispered, trying to infuse my voice with all the enthusiasm I couldn't draw from her. I wished I could pour it into her ears like my words, that enthusiasm and excitement she refused to feel. "It was all right there on the screen. You should have seen it. She was beautiful. I looked right into her face."

"Who did she look like?" she asked, curiosity overcoming her stubborn attempt not to care.

"Well. Skeletor, a little, but she has some more time to grow and develop." She'd laughed then, relaxing against me. "You could see her eyes and her nose and her mouth, Wed. It was just amazing, seeing her there."

After that, we'd called our poor baby girl Skeletor for months. We were unable to decide on a name.

"Let's just decide when we see her," Wednesday suggested, tired of me poring through books and bouncing ideas off her. "You can pick out the name when you see her."

You can. Of course. Because, Daniel, I'll be dead.

18. Shared

The baby was going to kill me, I knew it, if she didn't kick me to death first, or kill me from lack of sleep and lack of sex. Daniel tried, he really tried to fuck me, and he did manage somehow, but it was hard for me to enjoy it when I looked and felt like a whale.

From time to time, to torture myself, I went to the armoire in the corner of the bedroom just to cry over the lingerie sets I used to be able to wear. I couldn't even fit one of my boobs in those skimpy bras now, and it would have taken three or four of the garter belts to span my distended, grotesque waist. This baby must weigh fifteen pounds by now. I'd never get her out. Of course, that was how she would kill me. I'd killed my mother the exact same way, from being too big for her to get out.

But no one took my concerns seriously. Not my doctor, not the nurses, Daniel least of all. I finally just stopped talking about it and resigned myself to the fact that I would die.

He would see. He would be sorry later that he'd mocked me. He would understand finally and admit I was right when he was grieving over my body, and I'd be up in heaven, or more likely down in hell, saying *I told you so*.

But in the meantime, I busied myself writing, trying to put down my life before it was gone. If my daughter survived me, I

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wanted her to know my story, the good and the bad. I wrote about my childhood, my time with Vincent, my time with Daniel, sanitized a bit of course. I still specified on the title page in bold and italicized caps, ***DO NOT READ UNTIL YOU ARE AT LEAST 18.***

Daniel loved to see me writing even though I wouldn't let him read it. It was just too personal for me to show it to him, at least while I was alive. When I was gone, he could read it, and hopefully it would sustain him until he was strong enough to get on with his life. I put it all in there, all the depth of my feelings for him. All the hope and happiness he'd given me, all the love and emotion I felt. He begged constantly to see what I was working on, especially as I typed through tears.

"It's too personal," I said, over and over.

"Personal?" he'd scoffed. "You're nine months pregnant with my child. Let me see."

"No, but I love you. Maybe someday. When it's finished and perfect." *When I'm dead.*

"Speaking of finished," he said with a grimace. "The nursery's almost painted. I should finish it up. We don't have much time left, do we?" He leaned down to kiss my huge belly.

No, we don't have much time left.

So there I sat one afternoon in the soothing autumn sun while he painted, letting the unseasonable warmth seep into my sore bones. I hunched over my laptop, typing as well as I could over my massive belly, pouring my heart out to him. I was almost finished with my story. I was almost to the end. I wasn't sure exactly how to wrap up everything, how to sum up all the amazing moments we'd had. *No matter what happens, no matter how miserable I am right now*, I was writing, when the phone rang, pulling me from my work.

"Hello, Laurent household," I answered.

There was a momentary pause on the other end of the line, and then, "Is Daniel there?"

Is Daniel there?

I knew that voice as well as my own, had listened to it for

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eight years. Had obeyed it and cowered under it and ached for it for almost a decade of my life.

I took a deep breath. “Yes, he is.”

Another pause. “Well, then, Wednesday, put him on the line for me.”

Not *Wednesday*, *how are you? What are you doing there?* Not *Wednesday*, *I hope you’re okay*. No, just matter-of-fact orders to hand the phone over to Daniel. The sick part of it was, his voice made me instantly, unthinkingly obey. I might have asked, *why are you calling here?* but no, I was already heading across the room.

“Just a minute.”

Woodenly, I carried the phone up the stairs. I thought I was over Vincent after a year, but I was really hurt that he ignored me and asked to speak to Daniel instead.

I opened the door to the nursery. God, it was so white in there.

“Wed,” he said, “don’t come in here. The fumes—” He looked at my face and fell silent. “What is it?”

I held out the phone to him like it was a snake.

“Vincent. For you.”

I’m not sure about the look he gave me then. It was frustration, anger, annoyance, and guilt, but it wasn’t surprise, and not seeing any surprise on his face...I really wondered at that. He shepherded me out the door quickly. “Go, Wed. These fumes. They aren’t good for the baby.”

When I was out in the hall again, he slammed the door.

And yes, I stood there like a statue and listened, desperately tried to hear what was being said. I only heard a short, terse conversation, Daniel saying good-bye, and then nothing. Back to the walls.

I drifted downstairs and sat at the desk in front of my story, but I couldn’t write anymore. Instead I put my head down and cried, just a little, a few tears. I’d forgotten what it felt like, abject worthlessness, and it really scared me how easily that feeling came back. I waited for Daniel to come down, to explain

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why Vincent had called, but he didn't, and my mind started imagining all kinds of things. Maybe Vincent was sick, or dying. Maybe he was moving away. Maybe he wanted Daniel to share me with him as he'd shared me.

But no, it ended up not being any of those things.

It wasn't until dinner that I accepted Daniel wasn't going to tell me on his own, so I asked him point blank.

"Why did Vincent call you today?"

He frowned and avoided my eyes. At first I thought he would just ignore my question, but then he said, "It's none of your business."

Blame the pregnant hormones, or the heartburn, the lack of sleep, or the annoyance of feeling like a whale, but I saw red at that moment. I screamed, "Why the fuck did he call?"

"Just calm down, Wednesday!"

"No, I won't calm down!"

"You shouldn't be getting all excited in your condition—"

"Fuck my condition, Daniel! Why did he call?" I yelled.

"To talk to me, Wednesday! That's all," he yelled back. "Just to talk, okay?"

"Why?"

He made a face, not answering me.

"What do you have to discuss with Vincent?"

He sighed heavily. "You. Okay? You. He calls to talk about you."

"He *calls*?" I echoed. "He's called before?"

"He calls a lot, actually."

I looked at him a long time.

"You never told me. You never once told me he called."

"The reason for that, Wednesday, is that I didn't want you to know."

"You didn't think I had a right to know?"

"No, I didn't and I don't! And I can decide not to tell you whatever I fucking please."

"Oh, that's right," I muttered, picking angrily at my plate. "I'm just your fucking sex slave, who's not even good for that

18. Shared

now.”

He threw down his fork in frustration. “Why do you care so much, anyway? Are you still in love with him? Do you want to go back to him now?”

“No, I’m just wondering why—”

“Why? Why I didn’t tell you? Because I hate him, Wed. I think he’s an ass. You’re mine now, not his. I don’t want you to care if he calls or not. It’s not important. Just let it go.”

We both sat and fumed a moment. I don’t know why I couldn’t let it drop.

“What do you tell him about me?”

He crossed his arms over his chest, and looked at me a long time. I had asked him quietly, but he looked at me like I screamed. He looked defensive and guilty.

“What do you tell him when he calls?” I asked again.

“I tell him everything,” he said. “Whatever the fuck he wants to know.”

I took a deep breath. “Why?”

“Because that’s what I agreed to do.”

Now it was I who crossed my arms in front of me defensively. I felt like I’d just been punched in the chest.

“Wednesday—”

“What you agreed to do when?”

He looked like he would have given anything not to answer, but he did.

“When he broke up with you, Wednesday, so that you could start dating me.” He sighed again, another great exhalation. “Okay, now, are you happy? What else do you want to know? Ask me everything, damn it, because I don’t ever want to discuss this again.”

“So you...so he...”

“He broke up with you to give you to me. In return, I agreed to keep him informed about you—”

“Informed?” I was dumbfounded.

“Look, Wed, just—listen. It’s not what it sounds like. It’s not nearly as bad as it sounds—”

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“Isn’t it? The two of you wheeled and dealt for me?”

“No! I never—”

“You bought me from him for the price of these calls?”

“No!”

“What do you tell him? What did you “agree” to tell him? What we do together?”

“No, just...how you’re doing. If you’re happy, if you’re healthy. He just wanted to keep track of how you were—”

“Keep track, huh? Why didn’t you two just share me? Why don’t you now? Isn’t that what you’re doing anyway?”

“Wednesday—”

“You give him reports on me? Regularly?”

“It’s not like that—”

“Do you give him photos? God, do you film me? For him?”

“No, God, never. Wed, come on. Don’t freak out! He misses you. He’s happy that you’re happy. Why are you so mad?”

“Because you didn’t tell me! All this time I thought I was free of him, that I had left him behind. All this time he’s been more in control of me than ever. He’s controlled everything. All of this!”

“I control you, Wed! Not him!”

“He controlled you,” I retorted, bursting into tears. “He talked you into taking me.”

“No!” He stood and came at me then. “No, you have no idea! He didn’t talk me into anything—”

“That night you came over,” I sobbed, “it was just an audition, wasn’t it? A fucking audition—”

“Stop! You just get a hold of your mouth. You calm down and think about what you’re saying—”

“Vincent set up all of this. Our great love...”

“No, he didn’t,” Daniel insisted. “No—”

“You don’t know him,” I yelled. “You don’t know how he is! You don’t know how he gets off on this, controlling me, controlling you, controlling everything—”

“Yes, I do! I do know, Wednesday. Believe me, I know, but I went along with it for you, so I could have you, so he would break up with you and let you come to me—”

18. Shared

“Vincent set this all up. Everything, all of it, a set up.”

“No! I took you because I wanted you, not because Vincent wanted me to. I watched you from the café across from your work for months, Wednesday!”

“What are you talking about?”

“Vincent approached me about taking you on, but it was after, Wednesday! Long after I’d fallen for you!”

I took a step back, my hands in fists. What was he talking about? “Long after? When did you...”

“When did I fall in love with you? The first minute we met. The first second. I fell in love with you the night of March 29th. When did I strike up a deal with him, for you? The next week. And then I waited fucking months, Wednesday, to have you. I would have done anything to have you. I still would. I always will.”

He reached for me, but I backed away again. I was almost to the damn birch tree.

“Look, Wed, sit down, baby. It’s not good for you to get all excited in your condition.”

“My condition,” I echoed with derision. “Did Vincent tell you to knock me up?”

He rubbed his eyes. “If you keep saying that, that I knocked you up, so help me, Wednesday—”

“Well, you did!”

“You’re the one who forgot to take the fucking pill! I don’t think Vincent had anything to do with that!”

“And you’re the one who wouldn’t wait! Who wouldn’t go back to using condoms even though I told you I’d missed a dose!”

He made a sound then that scared me. “I swear to God, if you don’t—you’re having a fucking baby, Wednesday,” he yelled, waving his arms at my belly. “Just face facts. Get over it! Jesus! Enough! You know what would be so fucking wonderful? If you could find some fucking tiny shred of maternal instinct buried somewhere inside that messed up brain of yours, and stop whining every hour of every day about how miserable you are,

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how much you hate our child—”

“I don’t hate our child!”

“You hate her! And lately I think you hate me! What happened to us? What happened to what we had? Was it all an act? You never loved me. You’ve never trusted me, and now, because of this, you trust me even less. I’ll never be good enough for you. I’ll never be enough for you, will I? I’ll never beat you hard enough, treat you shitty enough to live up to *him*!”

Him. Vincent or my father? Either way, I was done. I walked away from him, angrier than I’d been in my life. I started up to my white room. Of course he followed, but I stopped him halfway up the stairs.

“Daniel, don’t. If you don’t get away from me right now, I promise you, things will get bad. You know how bad things will get,” I reminded him. “Just go away. You just get the fuck away from me until I want to you to come back.”

I sat in my room until I heard Daniel’s door slam, and then I opened my door, and I left.

* * *

I walked, or rather, waddled as fast as I could manage. If Daniel had come after me, I would have fought him tooth and nail, but he didn’t. I’m sure he hadn’t heard me leave. I walked on, furious and intent. It was dark and it was late, but I dared anybody, any hapless criminal to try to mess with me. I walked several blocks until my belly started to cramp from the strain, and then I hailed a cab to take me the rest of the way.

When I got to Vincent’s, I pounded hard on the door until he opened it. When he saw me, his eyes went wide.

“Wednesday,” he said in his usual placid, fuck-you tone, “what a surprise.” He looked my pregnant body up and down and muttered “You’re looking...well.”

I slapped his face so hard that my hand smarted. “I need to talk to you, Vincent.”

He rubbed his jaw and nodded.

18. Shared

“All right. Come in.”

I stood in the middle of his living room, seething mad. He kept his distance.

“You’re welcome to talk to me, Wednesday, but I won’t let you hit me again.”

“Okay, I’ll try not to.”

The submissive kneeling beside the couch stared at me, shocked. He waved her away. “Into the bedroom, Gretchen. Wait on your knees for me.”

Wait on your knees, Wednesday. I’d heard it a thousand times.

“Now,” he said, turning to me, “what do you want to talk about? To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?”

I refused to be baited by his tone. I stared at him icily. “Why won’t you let me go?”

He looked back at me, the picture of confusion.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. I let you go a long time ago. Over a year ago.”

“You’re a liar.”

He sighed. “Sit down, you look tired. Can I get you something? Some water? Tea?”

No, I wouldn’t sit down, but my mouth was awfully dry. I was thirsty as hell. I heard myself say, “Water, please,” even as I decided I wouldn’t take a thing from him. When I accepted the glass, I stared at his hand, I couldn’t help myself. I remembered it still, those long, powerful fingers, that dusting of hair.

He sat on the couch and leaned back, regarding me as if I was the most annoying intrusion of his life.

“So what did he tell you?”

“He said you gave me to him. Is that true?”

He considered a minute. “Yes, I suppose it is. Why does that bother you? You were mine to give.”

Tears sprang to my eyes, the cold way he said that. “And in return you made him agree to report on me. To tell you about me and him.”

“I just wanted to know what became of you.” He shrugged. “How silly of you to be angry about it. An informal agreement

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between dominants, that's all it was. These types of arrangements are engineered all the time in our world, you know that."

These types of arrangements. So that's all I was. "If that's what you were doing, why didn't you warn me? Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I do what I want, and what I do is none of your concern. Wednesday, what's become of you? What's become of my well-trained girl? All these questions—there's not an ounce of submission in you. Does he like you this way?"

"He likes me just fine," I said defensively. "He's a better master to me than you were, a thousand times better—"

"I know. I chose him especially for you. I knew he would be good for you, be what you needed. I told him to have babies with you." He looked meaningfully at my belly. "Boy or girl?"

"None of your business." So he'd ordered the baby after all.

"He's apparently let you run wild. A shame. You were a great submissive once. Very good at what you did."

"I still am!" I hated how I sounded, like a child on the playground. *I'm not, you are!* "I still am a great submissive, and he's a great dominant, and he loves me very much!"

"Yes, you're welcome, Wednesday. You have me to thank for all this love and happiness." He said *love and happiness* like it was something dirty. "It's what I always wanted for you."

Oh, I was supposed to be *grateful*.

"I don't like it that you gave me to him! It wasn't your right! To just give me to him like I was some cast off thing of yours—"

"Cast off thing?" he interrupted, advancing on me. "I gave you like a gift! I valued you very much! I always cared for you deeply!"

"Did you love me, Vincent?" I cried. "Did you ever love me?"

"Wednesday—"

"Did you? Just tell me! In eight years, did you ever, for a second, love me?"

He was close to me now, an arm's length away. "What do

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you think? Did I love you? Wednesday.” He looked in my eyes. “Could I have given you up any other way?”

We looked at each other, just looked at each other eye to eye, not as sub and dominant, but as old, old friends. No, not friends. Lovers. Lovers who’d shared a very strange love.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked through tears. “Why won’t you just let me go?”

“I’ll never let you go. I can’t. I can’t let go of you.”

“Then at least, at least...” I sniffled, wiping my nose on my sleeve. “Admit you love me, then. Just once.”

He took me in his arms, slowly gathered me to him. I let him hold me against his chest, hold me tight, as tightly as my huge belly would allow. My tears fell on his shirt. I could feel his heart beating slowly against my ear.

“Can’t you say it just one time for me, Vincent?” I whispered.

“Why do I have to say it,” he asked, “when you know? But if you want me to say it, I will. I love you, Wednesday. I love you very much. I always will.”

“But you can’t have me anymore. You can’t own me. You did once, but not anymore. Please, Vincent, if you love me. I’m Daniel’s now.”

He was quiet a long time. *Beat, beat, beat*, his heartbeat in my ear.

“Okay,” he said. “I’ll always love you, and you’re Daniel’s. Okay.”

“Only Daniel’s,” I persisted. “I don’t want to be shared.”

“If you wish. Only Daniel’s,” he conceded. “Can we still be friends though, you and I?”

“Friends?”

He held me there, not loosening his hold, not until I pulled away first. I stood in front of him, suddenly weak, woozy. I was weaving on my feet. He reached out for me.

“Wednesday? All right?”

He had loved me. He did love me. Wasn’t that all right? He had given me to Daniel because he thought it was best. Wasn’t that just another form of love? Wasn’t it okay? So he’d given me

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to Daniel. Daniel who loved me, who always had from the moment we met. Why was that a bad thing? Why had I made it so sinister and sad?

“Vincent—” I began. I intended to apologize, to say that yes, we could certainly be friends, that everything was okay after all, but then I felt a pain more excruciating than any I’d felt in my life. I doubled over, and if he hadn’t been holding me, I would have fallen down.

“Vincent! God, Vincent, it hurts! Something’s wrong!”

“Nothing’s wrong,” he said. “This is perfectly natural. You’re in labor, I think. We should probably go.”

“Go? Go where?” I cried, holding my belly.

“To the hospital. Which one?”

Panicked tears were streaming down my face and I couldn’t think which hospital, or what the hell to do. Vincent whipped out his cell phone and picked up my bag for me.

“Call Daniel, please!” I sobbed, a moment before I realized he already was.

“Daniel? Wednesday is with me. I think you’re about to be a father.” He paused. I heard yelling on the other end of the line. “No, just meet us there. Which hospital is it?”

More yelling.

“I’ll drive carefully, yes. We’ll see you there.”

By this time he was helping me into his car. I moaned in the seat next to him.

“I’m going to die, Vincent.”

“You’re not going to die.”

“At least if I die, she’ll have a good father. Not like mine.”

“Your baby will have a good father,” he agreed calmly. “And you’ll be a good mother too. Now, enough about dying. Try to breathe through the pain.”

It occurred to me that Vincent had been through this before. He had several children to his name. Years ago he’d driven his wife to the hospital, perhaps exactly this same way.

“If I don’t make it,” I whispered, “tell Daniel I love him, and that I’m so sorry I ran away.”

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“You can tell Daniel you’re sorry and you love him a few minutes from now, when we get to the hospital and you safely deliver your baby. And I hope he punishes you very soundly for your behavior tonight after you’re recovered.”

I held on to his seat hard, trying to steel myself against the pain. I felt a great rush of warmth between my legs.

Blood? No, just water. My water had broken in Vincent’s car.

Oh, Jesus, he was going to be pissed. But nowhere near as pissed as Daniel was going to be.

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At least if I die, she'll have a good father, she said.

Jesus. Perish the thought. She wasn't going to die, at least not on my watch, if for no other reason than Daniel would kill me if she did.

So she was having a baby girl with him. That seemed appropriate and good. Just as I'd filled in for her reprehensible father, she could now raise this little daughter to have the life she never had. The warmth, the care, the understanding, the nurturing. Lucky, lucky baby. This baby would know love.

I drove as quickly as possible to the hospital, breaking as few traffic laws as I could, but it wasn't easy with Wednesday's shrieks ringing in my ears. I was distracted too by thoughts of poor Gretchen kneeling stoically at home by my bed. I wondered how long she would wait there before she gave up and went home.

I thought too, as my anxious mind wandered, that this wasn't the first time I'd driven Wednesday to the hospital like this, late, in the dark. I remembered, even though it had been years ago now, rushing to the hospital as she gasped beside me for breath. She hadn't been screaming that time. She'd been in respiratory distress from a bout with the flu gone horribly wrong. I didn't even realize the dire degree of her illness until later, stoic

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submissive that she was. It wasn't until we arrived at the hospital, when she couldn't walk and she couldn't breathe through her blue lips, that I realized she was fighting for her life.

What did she remember of that night long ago? Did she ever think of it now? Did she know how my own breath had fled when I realized how bad off she was? Did she know that I'd squelched the urge to flee so I didn't have to watch her die? Did she know I'd cried in the dark beside her hospital bed, thinking that I almost, *almost* hadn't gone to her that night? Hadn't gone to check on her, because of course she was only my submissive, and not worthy of such lengths.

I remembered, would always remember, how, with her very limited breath, she had made the effort to gasp that the bruises all over her were okay, that they were agreed upon. For me, to protect me. Silly girl.

It wasn't me who needed protecting, between us two.

But there was no silent, stoic submissive beside me now. I never before realized just how loud Wednesday could scream. In eight years of beating her, cropping her, caning her, fucking her ruthlessly, the most I'd ever heard were a few pleading cries. Yelling like this, no, not ever. She had certainly changed. Back at my house, I'd pretended disappointment at this new backbone of hers, but I was actually delighted to see these changes in her. Amazing, sweeping changes, thanks to him.

I had known all along he would be good for her, but the pleasure I felt at that took me by surprise. How soft he must have been on her, how nurturing and kind. Her pain threshold had certainly re-set to a much lower bar. Wednesday seemed unable to take much pain at all. I'm sure she would have seen the humor in it if she hadn't been in hard labor.

"How far apart are the contractions?" I looked over to check her. Her color was all right, but she was clearly at ends.

"How far apart?" she mumbled, dazed.

"How long between them? Didn't you take a childbirth class or something?"

"No. Why would I? I can take pain."

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“It appears you can’t take pain as well as you used to.”

“Shut up, Vincent,” she yelled so loudly her voice cracked.

“Listen, how long have you been in labor? Contractions don’t just come on like this.”

“Oh, I didn’t realize you were an obst—obtrec—obster—doctor,” she finally spit out.

“I’m not an obstetrician, dear, but I’ve been through this before. How long have you been having contractions?”

“I don’t know! I don’t know. I’ve had them every day this week. All the time the last day or two. But painless ones, nothing like this.”

“No, they start mildly. They only get hard and close at the end. So how far apart, would you say? Ballpark.”

“It’s just...it’s just one long contraction! I don’t know!”

Well, fuck.

“Do not have a baby in my car, Wednesday. Do not. You just press those pretty little thighs together, and you wait.”

My orders were drowned out in another scream, but fortunately we were pulling up to the ER. I half helped, half carried her inside.

“This woman is in labor,” I said stupidly to no one in particular, not that anyone would have had any doubt that the panting, doubled over woman beside me was about to give birth. “She’s in *hard* labor,” I said a little louder. “I think the baby’s crowning.”

That finally got us some attention. Nurses scurried out from behind the desk, and an orderly strolled over with a wheelchair.

“No!” Wednesday screamed. “I have to lay down, now!”

That seemed to light a fire underneath them all, and they returned a moment later with a gurney. They helped her onto it, strapping belts and monitors onto her belly. She fought with them while a nurse ran along beside me asking me questions. Name, age, week of pregnancy, doctor’s name?

“I don’t know the name of her doctor,” I said, “or how pregnant she is, but she looks about done.”

“Aren’t you the father?”

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“No, I’m just a friend, but the father will be along soon, I assure you.”

I heard him then back at reception, yelling at the top of his lungs.

“That would be him.” I said. At that moment alarms started going off and voices started speaking sharply, and the orderlies changed direction and started to run. The nurse cut me off, trying to turn me around.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“The baby’s in distress. They’re going straight to the OR. You’ll have to wait here.”

I wasn’t waiting, not a fucking chance. I brushed by the nurse and ran after the gurney down the hall. The nurse ran beside me, grabbing at my sleeve, but all I could think of was Wednesday. She was crying. She was so scared. Her black curls fell down the back of the white sheets as she struggled and shook her head. I just stared and stared at those curls.

Then Daniel was beside me, fighting with the nurse too. She stood her ground and blocked us at the door.

“This is a sterile area, gentleman! Just a minute! You can’t go in there. You will have to wait here!”

* * *

Just a minute.

Just a minute? Fuck, that was my wife. *You will have to wait here.*

I couldn’t wait. She needed me now. I beat on the doors which were, of course, securely locked and accessible only with a fancy white hospital card. I looked around for one to rip off someone’s neck.

“Daniel—” Vincent tried to calm me.

I pushed him hard against the wall. “What did you do?”

“I drove her to the hospital, that’s all! I didn’t do anything to her!”

Fuck, I couldn’t believe this was happening. When Vincent

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called I'd flown out the door and driven here without regard to anyone's safety, least of all my own. I couldn't believe she'd run to him without telling me. I couldn't believe it was *him* who'd driven her here. *I* was the father. *I* was her husband. No one should have taken care of her but me. No one could take care of her like I could. Now I had the door slammed in my face, and *him* holding me back.

Vincent shook me, pushing me away from him. "Get a hold of yourself. She's going to need you soon. You need to calm down."

"What's wrong? What happened to her? Why is she in there?"

"The baby's in distress. That's all I know."

"Oh, God, she was right. She's going to die," I moaned. "It's all my fault."

"Jesus Christ," Vincent snorted. "You sound just like her. She needs an emergency c-section, that's all. It happened with my first wife. It happens all the time. I'm sure she and the baby will be perfectly fine. Why don't you just calm down. We'll go sit in the lobby and wait—"

"I'm not going anywhere! I'm waiting right here until someone lets me in. That's my wife!"

"Yes, we all heard you yelling that earlier. I'm sure they're aware."

"Just shut up, Vincent," I snapped. "Shut up and get out of here."

He leaned back against the wall. "I'm waiting here too. I'm not leaving until I know she's okay."

"No, you leave! Now! This is all your fault!"

"Oh, my fault? How so?"

"You and your stupid ass phone call. You got her all riled up! Why didn't you just hang up when she answered?"

"Daniel—"

"You still want to be with her! You're trying to sabotage us, and guess what, it fucking worked!"

"Jesus, Daniel. I have my own girls now. Plenty of them

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actually—”

“None of them are like her!”

“No, they aren’t! But they’ll have to do, since I can’t have what you have!”

I stared at him. I’d never heard cool Vincent raise his voice.

“Why did she come to you? What did she say?” I pressed.

He laughed humorlessly. “I’m sure you’d like to know.”

“Tell me, or I’ll pound you. Tell me, after all I’ve told you.”

“It’s private. It’s personal, Daniel,” he said. “I’d rather not share.”

I could have easily killed him, which I think he could tell, because he added, “Nothing inappropriate, I promise you. What do you think, that she came back to be with me? That I’d try to woo her back while she was in labor with your child? There’s too much water under that bridge. Believe me, she’s yours. We just came to some...understandings. It was long overdue.”

“What kind of understandings?” I muttered suspiciously.

“Understandings that you wouldn’t understand,” he said tightly. “Some business between me and her, and now it’s finished. It’s all straightened out. Let’s just say...” He searched for words a moment. “I guess I confused *owning* her and *loving* her. It got tangled up in my head.”

I just stared. That was a lot to get from him.

“I had to work that out too,” I finally replied, remembering black words scrawled on white walls. “It’s possible to do both, I guess. But maybe not always...the best thing to do.”

The door banged open, startling both of us, and the nurse stared us down with a frown.

“One visitor only,” she said. “The father can come back.”

* * *

The father can come back. The father. That was me.

I could barely put on the paper socks, the paper outfit, the gloves fast enough.

I heard the baby when I walked into the room, but all I saw

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was Wednesday still asleep on the table...asleep or... No, not dead. I could see her chest rising and falling, even though she was pale as the grave.

"Is she okay?" I asked the nurse over the crying of the baby.

"Yes, she's okay. She'll wake up from the anesthesia soon. In the meantime, would you like to hold your baby girl?"

"Okay," I said, and she put her in my arms.

I fell in love at first sight, for the second time; fell in love with that baby from the very moment we met. She had deep blue eyes, the same as both her parents, but her hair, oh...her hair was Wednesday through and through. Blue black, thick and already curly on her head. She looked so much like her mother, I could only stare.

Wednesday started to cough, and awakened with a soft moan. I handed the baby back to the nurse and went to her side.

"Wednesday. Baby." I put my head down beside hers. She was still groggy, trying to focus on my face.

"Daniel. Where's our baby?"

"Our baby is right over there. Are you okay? Does anything hurt?"

She sighed. "No, I'm okay. I'm tired. I'm sorry," she said mournfully.

"Sorry for what?"

"I'm sorry I went to Vincent's. I'm sorry you weren't here. I'm sorry I couldn't have our baby...the right way..."

"Oh, Wed, no. God, don't cry. Look. Look at our perfect, beautiful baby. She looks just like you."

The nurse brought the baby over to us, and we both leaned over her while I brushed away Wednesday's tears.

"Look at her, Wed. Just look at her."

"She's sleepy," she whispered in awe as the baby yawned and sighed.

I stared at my beautiful girl, the mother of my child. "You did everything perfectly, Wed. You did."

"Wow," she said. "What are we going to call her? I guess now we have to come up with a name."

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“Well, it’s obvious, isn’t it? Today’s Tuesday. Tuesday it is.”

“No,” she laughed. “No way. Not a chance.”

“No? We could try to make a whole week together, you and I.”

She rolled her eyes at that suggestion.

“Seriously, Daniel. What do we call her? She looks so sweet. She looks so calm and peaceful.”

I remembered that childhood rhyme again.

“Hmmm. How about Grace?”

* * *

God, she was such a wonder.

She looked just like me, but she wouldn’t be like me. I was determined about that. She wouldn’t be anything like me. Daniel said she was like me because she cried all the time. Ha ha, very funny.

Vincent came in to see her as soon as we were settled in the recovery room. I was surprised to see him and Daniel so civil with each other, but I suppose they’d had some time to talk. Vincent picked Grace up like a seasoned pro and held her close. Daniel and I looked on in shock as he cooed and dandled her in his arms.

“What?” he asked when he noticed us gawking at him. “I’ve done this before. In fact I have a grandson now,” he said, reddening slightly. “Last June.”

So Master Vincent was a doting grandpa. The whole world was upside down.

“How lovely she is, Wednesday,” Vincent said, sobering. “You did a really good job.”

“I had something to do with it,” Daniel reminded him. Both of us scoffed.

“Yeah, you did the easy part. You didn’t even have to drive her here, listening to her ear-splitting screams. Honestly, next time, invest in some ear plugs. Trust me.”

Daniel chuckled, but I was too spaced out on the strangeness

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of the moment to laugh; Daniel and Vincent sharing a joke while Vincent, *Vincent* cuddled our newborn baby girl.

“That’s a sweet baby,” he cooed at her. “Smile for Uncle Vincent, that’s a good girl.”

“Oh, hell no, *Uncle Vincent*,” Daniel said. “No way. You won’t order *this* girl around.”

So everything was okay between us, I think, at least for the most part. We still had our awkward moments with Vincent, but he was part of our lives now, for better or worse. Gracie did come to call him Uncle Vincent by the time she learned to talk. He was always there for special birthdays and holidays with some expensive, ostentatious gift for her.

And how did Daniel and I take to parenthood? Very well, even though, for a few trying months, Gracie pulled us away from our games. It was hard not having that release, that intimacy for a while. But it was a small sacrifice to make for a miracle like her. And when we did finally get back to it, we appreciated it that much more.

Daniel was determined that we ease back in slowly. I wanted to jump his bones willy-nilly, but of course, as always, Daniel was in charge. He tormented me terribly while I was recovering, taking things one small step at a time. He loved to tie me up and tease me. *Is that what you want, you naughty little slut? Maybe next time.*

While I waited impatiently for him to take me again the way he used to, I took care of Gracie and tried to keep up with work. Daniel pitched in whenever he could so we both had time to write, and time together, and time to be with her.

It was about six months after I’d given birth that we finally got a babysitter and went out on a date. Daniel watched from the bed while I got ready. “Stockings, Wed,” he said. “No panties. Wear stockings tonight.”

“Yes, Daniel,” I said.

It wasn’t exactly like our pre-Gracie dates. We both sat at the table feeling there was something we’d forgotten.

“She’s fine, Wed,” he murmured when I fell silent and

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thoughtful for the umpteenth time.

"I know. I know she is." I blushed.

"You're such a mommy now." He said it like *you're such a goddess*. "I knew it all along."

"Knew what?"

"That you wouldn't die. That you would love our baby girl like mad."

"I do love her," I said, "and I love you too. I love being here with you."

"I love being here with you too. God, Wed, you look beautiful tonight."

I know. Yuck. Disgusting. It went on like that for two hours, over wine and salad and dinner and dessert, the most disgustingly loved up conversation you ever heard, and the whole time, I was wet as hell for him. The way he looked at me, like he wanted to jump me...it made me so hot. By the time the waiter brought the check, his hand was snaking up my dress to follow my silk stocking to the top and touch my bare skin.

"Wed, I swear, I'm going to fuck you," he whispered. "I'm going to fuck you so hard when we get home."

When we arrived there, we threw money at the babysitter and nodded impatiently at her recap of the evening's events. *Baby's sleeping? She's fine? Okay, well, call you next time! Good bye!*

I wanted him the second the door closed. I wanted him to push me to the floor the way he did sometimes when he just had to have it. But no. He had that gleam in his eye.

"Go to the tree, Wednesday. Go stand there."

I sighed and did as he said. He watched me for a minute, then came over and cut off one of the lower branches, peeling off the bark slowly, deliberately, eyeing me for maximum effect. When he finished, he stood close behind me and had me hold it while he unbuttoned my dress and pulled it over my head.

I was already dancing around with lust, fighting the urge to go up on my toes. He was really going to lay into me, I just knew it. He pressed me to the tree trunk and whispered in my ear.

"Should I tie you, Wed? It's been a while. It's been a long

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time since you've really been disciplined."

"What am I being disciplined for?" I asked softly.

"I don't need a reason," he replied. "But you just gave me one. You should never question your dominant, should you?"

"No," I sighed, pretending shame.

"Tied or not?"

I took a deep breath. "Tied."

He had me wrap my arms around the tree and cuffed my hands in front so I couldn't pull them loose. For added effect, he tied me around the waist like in *The Story of O*. I couldn't move at all, couldn't move my ass one inch to get away as he whipped me with the switch; switches gave a stinging sharp pain almost as bad as a cane, and it hurt. It hurt terribly, and I wailed at each stroke, but the pain was such a relief. It was so reassuring and wonderful. It was his way of saying, *yes, I'll still be strict with you. Yes, you're a mother now with a baby, but I'll still treat you the same*. He beat my ass until the safe words began to turn around in my head, *Untie me, Daniel*. Then, of course, he knew that, and he stopped.

He put the switch down and dropped to his knees behind me, rubbing and kissing the welts forming on my ass cheeks, while I moaned from the combination of pleasure and pain.

"You beautiful girl. You look so punished standing there."

"I feel punished," I whimpered, although he hadn't drawn tears from me. I was far too aroused to be crying tonight. I was excited to hear him shedding his clothes.

I waited for words, for promises of what he was about to do, but he only ordered, "Stay right there," and went into the bedroom. He returned and I felt the cold, sticky lube against my ass, and then the toy. Ouch...a big one, thrust home between my burning cheeks.

"What about now?" he asked. "Do you feel punished now, Wed? Do you feel like a naughty girl?"

"Yes, Daniel," I managed to say somehow, and I truly did feel punished and naughty. I was tied, quite immovably, to the trunk of the tree, and now, with the massive toy in my ass, I felt

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more controlled and dominated than ever. The exciting part was that I passed back and forth by this tree all day, every day. Whenever I did, I remembered, with a hot blush and wetness between my thighs, all the moments like these. He knew I did and he liked that, and I'm sure he remembered them all too. He fondled my ass for a long time while I floated on the feel of his hands. Then he fucked me somehow, even though I was tied there, even though I couldn't move an inch, he thrust up inside me again and again and again.

I could feel the muscles of his chest, his stomach, moving against my back, hard and unyielding. I felt the scratchy hair on his abdomen and chest tickling my skin. I could feel his fat cock filling me up from inside, rubbing against the thick toy in my ass. He reached around to insinuate his large hand, his rough fingers between the tree and my clit, and he stroked and pinched me there so I thought I would lose my mind. He let me come, once, twice, three times, before he finished, and when he released me I fell into his arms, a very grateful, well punished girl.

Afterward, he carried me upstairs and tucked me under the covers. "The toy will stay in your ass all night," he said, "so you can remember how much you belong to me."

"Yes, Daniel," I'd replied. "I'm yours."

So yes, by six months after Grace's birth, things were back to normal for us. Well, as normal as they'd ever been, if normal was getting tied to a birch tree in the living room of a house, and getting whipped with a switch and then fucked silly, and put to bed with a toy in my ass.

* * *

I was supposed to be working, but I couldn't work. I kept staring over at that wonderful tree. How wonderful to have a tree in the house to tie my lovely wife to, especially when she was a bad girl who needed to be put in her place.

I smiled, remembering how she'd thrilled and hummed there

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the night before. The stroke of genius had been tying her around the waist. No doubt she'd imagined herself a modern day O, pinned there. Next time, I'd have to be sure to fuck her ass, maybe even use a little less lube than usual, so it felt a little, just a *little* bit, as if she were being forced. Little pervert. God, I loved her. I'd do anything to make her happy, anything at all.

She'd gone with Grace this morning to Baby Time at the library, and me, I was supposed to be doing some work. And I would, just as soon as I finished mooning over her a little. I got up a moment later and went upstairs.

I thought I might hop online and buy her another outfit. Another bra and garter belt set, or maybe a corset, or some slutty dress. I went to the armoire to see what she lacked, what color, what style. I laughed to be confronted with exactly how many sets she had. I knew she had a lot. Each time I gave her another set, she said that she'd have to start giving some away. But wow...she had a lot of sets now.

I began to sort through them, remembering this night, that night, this day, that wondrous afternoon... I sorted all the way through them, each set wrapped in crinkly tissue, until I got to the bottom. Then I stopped, staring, because there, with my name on it in big black writing, was a white envelope labeled *If I Die...*

20. No Words

I walked downstairs with it and sat for a long time looking at the envelope. It had my name on it. It was obviously meant for me. I was sure this was some leftover handiwork from before Grace's birth, when she'd been so certain her death was imminent. She'd chosen a perfect place to hide it if she wanted to be certain I found it after her untimely demise. I would have sorted miserably through those corsets and garters, remembering in my grief all the ways I'd known her, just as I'd reminisced, in happiness, over them now.

I turned it in my hand. It was heavy, too heavy to just be her notes on funeral songs and what she should wear. I struggled with my conscience, with whether to open it up or not. I thought to myself that I should wait until she returned home and ask permission. Then I thought, well, it was meant for me. It had my name on the front, clear as day. If it was mine, why shouldn't I look inside? I ignored the fact that it said, in large black swirly letters, *If I Die*, since she most definitely hadn't died and I wanted to open it anyway. I undid the clasp and pulled out the papers, which were, in fact, a lengthy manuscript with a letter on top.

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Dear Daniel, the letter began,

If you're reading this, I guess I died. I told you so. But I'm so, so sorry if I've left you; that wasn't ever what I wanted to do. I wanted to be with you forever, because only with you did I feel safe.

I stopped reading, half-choked up with sentiment, half laughing at the way she wrote so matter-of-factly from beyond the grave. I had to read it all now, start to finish. I sat back on the couch, cradling the pages in my hands.

I'm sorry I wasn't more open with you, especially in the beginning. You know it was hard for me. It wasn't because I didn't love you. It was just the weight of all I had to say. But I want to say it to you now. Everything. I want you to know everything I felt, everything I wanted, everything I loved about you, and everything you always wanted to know that I couldn't tell you. So these pages are for you.

Please take care of our baby girl, Daniel, if she survived. Make sure she's nothing at all like me. When she's older, if you think it's a good idea, let her read this too, and every night, every night of her life, give her kisses from me.

I love you.

Wednesday

I thrust the note aside, as much as I loved it, adored it, to get at the manuscript, to read it at once. I started to read frantically, voraciously. I just couldn't read the words fast enough. I knew if she arrived home, if she came home and saw me reading it, she would take it away. I started on the first page.

I was born on a Wednesday...

I read with my brows furrowed, my hands clenched, my heart in my throat. Her voice was so true, so vitally *there* on the page,

20. No Words

if she'd really died, I don't know that I could have read it at all. It would have been like reading with her ghost right beside me. I could hear her voice, soft and sweet in my ear.

I didn't have much of a childhood, but I made it through each day.

She went on about her childhood, her experiences with her father which were very hard to read. I cycled through pity, shock, outrage, fear, anger, all of those things. It was so bleak a story I actually was relieved when Vincent came into the picture. She spoke of him, also, matter-of-factly, just telling the story and not the deeper feelings, perhaps to protect me. Or perhaps she still didn't believe in her heart that he really loved her as he did, that she was worthy of that love he still held for her, like a secret, deep in his heart.

And from Vincent, the story moved on to meeting me. I smiled, biting my lip, reading over her account of how she'd felt when we met that auspicious night of March 29th. I was so touched at the carefully chosen words, each carrying so much weight. I had to say she nailed it exactly, every pang, every secret thrill we'd both felt. As I read, I thought, *Wednesday is a writer. She's a better writer than me.*

But more than that, I was carried away by the revelations and feelings she shared on the page. She could never have said such things to my face. I knew that. That was just the way she was. But it was a gift of untold value, to finally hear the things she felt. I was so captivated, so enthralled. I was so moved by her writing, by her relentless words, that I didn't hear her come in. She found me there lying on the couch reading her work when I was just at the end, where it abruptly cut off mid-sentence, during the abject misery of her pregnant ninth month. *No matter what happens, no matter how miserable I am right now...and then it stopped.*

I looked up at her and I would have looked guilty, I suppose, if I hadn't been so overwhelmed with love at that point. She didn't look mad, or embarrassed. She mostly looked like she wanted to run.

Owning Wednesday

"You weren't supposed to find that. I forgot I'd hidden it there."

"I found it," I said. "I read it all, until the end. Come here." My voice was thick with emotion. "Come here to me now."

She left Gracie sleeping in her baby seat and walked over to where I sat. I put the manuscript down with an effort. I wouldn't let her take it from me, that was for sure. I would have fought her tooth and nail before I'd let her take it away.

"Are you mad?" I asked.

"Are you mad at me?" she replied tremulously.

"No. Why would I be?" I gathered her in my arms, brushing her hair back. She wouldn't look at me.

"I should have told you all those things. I wish I could have. But I couldn't." She was already crying, nestling into my chest. My little crier.

"It's okay, I know. I knew them anyway. I felt them in my heart. But your writing, Wednesday, it's so beautiful. I had no idea you had all those words inside."

She looked thoughtful then, as if she was remembering something, but she stayed silent. I reached down to pick up the manuscript, showing her the last page. "But the end here, you didn't finish."

She looked sheepish. "I was writing that the day we had the fight. The day Vincent called."

I smiled. "Gracie's birthday?"

"Yes, Gracie's birthday," she said, laughing. "I tried to finish it a few times afterwards, but I couldn't. I just couldn't find the words." She looked at me, sniffing, calming. "I couldn't find any words that were big enough, and deep enough to sum up what we had."

"What we *have*," I corrected her, wiping away one last, glistening tear as it rolled down her cheek. "I still have you, and you still have me. I have you forever, Wednesday, and we don't need any words for that."

* * *

20. No Words

Long ago, it seemed like long ago anyway, I'd knelt at Vincent's feet. I'd been bursting with words, reeling from the pain of keeping them inside.

Daniel said to me, *I had no idea you had all those words inside*. But I didn't, not anymore, because with Daniel, those trapped words had finally found voice. Not in any one story, or any one conversation, but over days, over weeks, over a lifetime of moments in two years.

How could I possibly have distilled all that life, all that love Daniel had shown me into something as workaday as words? It would have been an impossible task, and I realized now I had been foolish to try.

No, it wasn't words that could define me and Daniel. It wasn't words that would make sense of our lives, of the strange, intense love we felt for each other. No, it was moments, those moments he gave me like magic. Moments like a pot full of gold at the end of a rainbow, each glittering disk infused with its own priceless story. Moments like stars in the sky, impossible to quantify or understand, but magnificent all the same.

There were so many of them, each a droplet in a waterfall, and they poured on me whenever I needed to remember I was loved.

I'd like to have her alone.

What do you want, Wednesday? Where do you want to go next?

Well, you know why it hurts, don't you, Wednesday? Why I hurt you?

You were made to wear white, a sweet little girl like you.

Go stand against the wall. I want to look at you.

I do own you! That's not in question! You're mine like water is wet.

I won't let anything happen to you. Believe me.

Stockings, Wed. Wear stockings tonight.

I want you to remember how much you belong to me.

You're such a mommy now. I knew it all along.

Owning Wednesday

Do you understand me, Wednesday Carson?

Yes, I understood. I understood everything deeply, elementally, although I could never have put it all to words. I finally understood what really mattered, that Daniel loved me, and that I was, as he'd always insisted, worthy of that love.

* * *

Wrist, wrist, ankle, ankle.

His lips met my center, and I writhed, moaning, on the bed. Of course I couldn't get away, not that I wanted to. I just gave myself up to the love.

Yes, yes, yes. He blazed a path from one edge of my cleft to the other, then nipped lazily at my clit. My whole body tensed. My pelvis ached with arousal. "Oh, God, Daniel, please," I moaned.

"Yes," he said.

I let go, I shattered, I came, and he held my hips down in his hands so I wouldn't fly off the earth.

"Now me," he said, when I'd finally caught my breath. "Suck me, Wednesday."

"Yes, Daniel," I said.

He knelt over me and fucked my mouth. I savored and treasured him like a gift. Before he finished though, he pulled away and said, "No, I want to hold you close."

He trailed his cock down from my mouth, over my breasts, over my hips, to the wet juncture of my legs.

"Yes, please, yes, Daniel," I begged softly.

"In a minute. Behave."

He loved to take his time, loved to draw things out. He loved to make it last forever at moments like this. His patience was epic while mine was nonexistent, but I tried like a good girl to make him pleased. I tried to be still, and not plead for satisfaction as he dipped inside me just a little, then out, then in again. I moaned as softly as I could, but it was impossible for those sighs and moans not to escape.

20. No Words

“Quiet. Shh,” he soothed me. “I’m going to fuck you. And you can come, Wednesday, as many times as you like, for being a good girl, such a very good girl to me today.”

He spoke about the book he’d found, the book I’d written for him. The book that had made his eyes glaze over with emotion, and love, and things I couldn’t grasp. Had I wanted him to find it there at the bottom of the armoire, under all those stockings and garters and lace? I’d left it there even though I hadn’t died, and let myself believe I’d only forgot. But deep inside, I knew I wanted him to find it, needed him to know all the things I couldn’t say.

Now he knew. Yes, he knew, that much was obvious. I could tell just from the way he came inside, grasping me close as if he was one with me. He held me so close, running his fingers over me everywhere, that I suddenly wanted to do the same. Suddenly I wanted, more than anything, to hold him close, to touch his soft, unruly hair, the mat of fur on his chest, his muscular, powerful buttocks as he thrust inside me, making me his.

And I was his, completely without question. He owned me as much as he owned his own self, our daughter Gracie, this house, the strange tree that grew up in the center of it. He owned all of it, and his ownership was absolute. To be fair, we owned him too, me and Gracie. He was ours every bit as much as we were his. I needed him to release me, to undo those velvet cuffs that held me in his power, so I could touch him as he was touching me.

“Untie me, Daniel,” I said. He stopped mid thrust and looked down at me.

“What hurts? What’s wrong?”

“I need you to let me go. I need to hold you. I need to touch you. Please!” My voice grew stronger with each word that came from my mouth. “I want to put my hands on you! Please, let me go. Untie me, Daniel.”

Rrrrip. Rrrrip. Rrrrip. Rrrrip.

With an indulgent smile, he released me. I pulled him close and wrapped my arms tightly around his neck.

Owning Wednesday

“Better?” he whispered in my ear.

“Better,” I sighed, and after that, there was no more need for words.

He cupped my bottom, holding me close to him as he fucked me, as if there was no possible way to get as close as he liked.

And me, I just held on, I just held on for dear life, because I knew, with his arms around me always, I would be safe.

That’s how I learned that words aren’t the important thing, that everything doesn’t always need to be said.

No, words are nice, of course, but the important thing is belonging to the one you love.