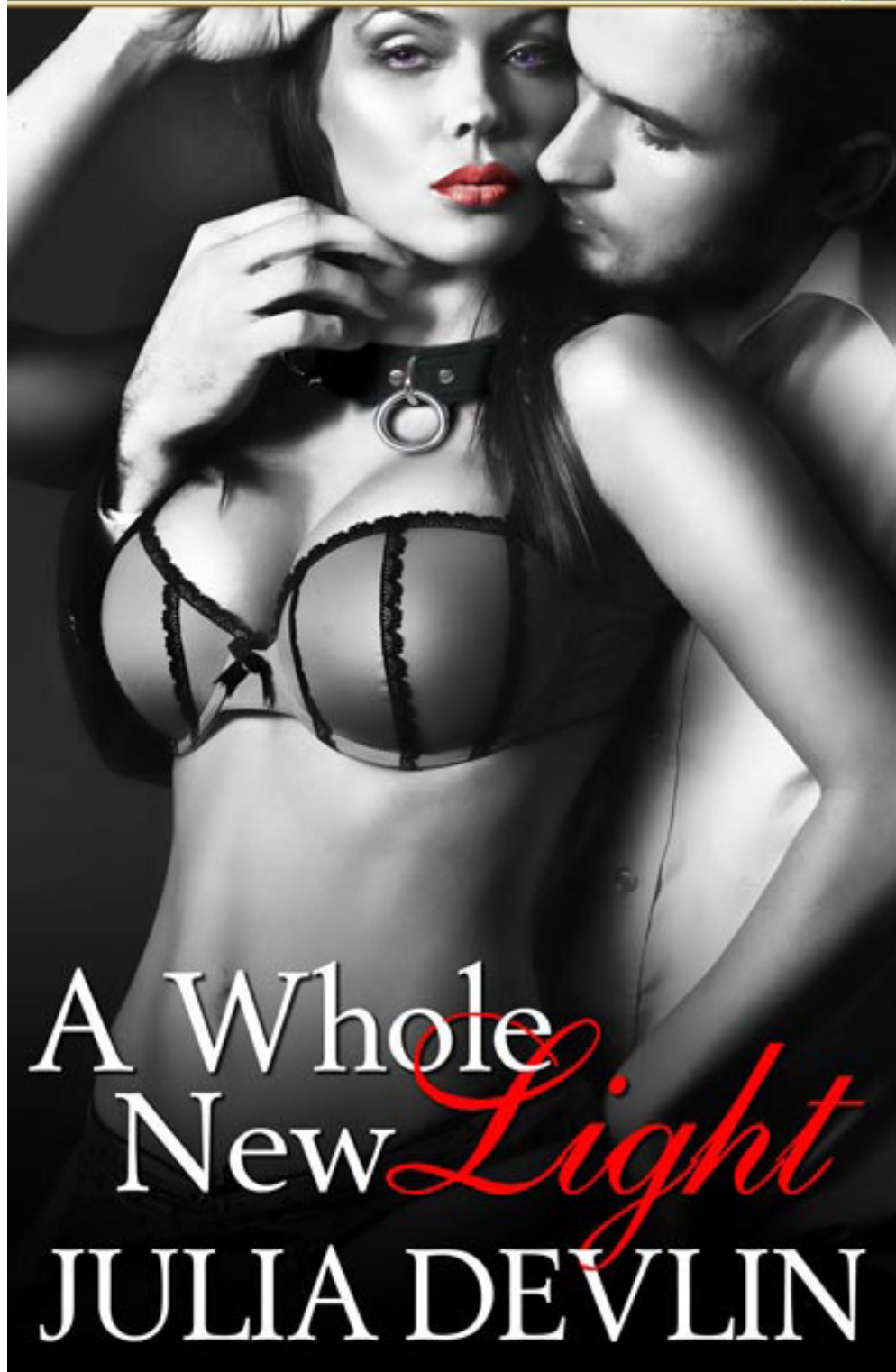


ELLORA'S CAVE TABOO



A Whole
New *Light*
JULIA DEVLIN

A Whole New Light

Julia Devlin

Computer expert Ethan Savage is done with his crush on his beautiful coworker. The dazzling Violet Moore is not interested and she doesn't have a submissive bone in her body. And Ethan can't do vanilla, especially with a woman he can't stop thinking about owning.

In a box hidden under her bed, Violet hides her submissive fantasies. No one has ever guessed her true desires and she intends to keep it that way. Modern-day women do not want to be tied up, spanked and ordered about.

When Ethan discovers Violet's secret, he sets out to give her a taste of true submission in one whirlwind night, but will the reality be too much to handle? Or will Violet finally see Ethan in a whole new light?

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A Whole New Light

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A WHOLE NEW LIGHT

Julia Devlin

Dedication

To my husband – who loves me even though I’m a neurotic, crazy writer.

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Boy Scout: The National Boy Scouts of America Foundation

GQ: Advanced Magazine Publishers Inc.

Ken Doll: Mattel, Inc.

Chapter One

He wanted to dominate her. In every way possible.

Ethan Savage stood against the wall, ignoring the throngs of people who filled the living room to capacity. Between the music, laughing and buzz of nonstop chatter, the walls practically vibrated. Violet Moore threw one hell of a party. Not that he was surprised. She did everything well.

Annoyance pricked at the base of his spine. Why had he promised her he'd come to this shindig?

Because she'd asked, and he was a sucker.

He could be wielding a paddle at his favorite dungeon with a willing sub instead of holding up the wall. He'd tried to say no, but Violet looked up at him with her big lilac-colored eyes, thick, sooty lashes fluttering as she pleaded, and he hadn't the heart to deny her.

Now he was stuck at this godforsaken party.

He sighed. With most women, he was on the other side of the rope, but not with Violet. Damn woman had him tied up in so many knots he couldn't break free.

And he didn't like it one fucking bit.

He'd tried everything to cure his infatuation.

Logic had been useless.

Other women pointless.

Reason didn't hold a candle to his lust. And it was so frustrating. He ground his back teeth, repressing the low growl deep in his throat.

He understood the physical reaction—she was beautiful—any red-blooded man would want her. What he didn't get was why his emotions refused to cooperate. He

was a software expert, he made his living being analytical. His heart should listen to his brain, it was the far more rational of the two.

Besides, he dealt with fact. And the facts were simple. Violet didn't want him.

End of story. Case closed.

He was her buddy. Safe. How ironic, considering his sexual preferences. Safe would be the last word any of the women he'd dated would assign to him.

He glanced around the room scattered with strangers and his coworkers from Dynamic Links. Wouldn't they all be surprised to learn that the serious computer whiz Ethan Savage dominated woman in his free time.

Which led him to his other problem—his gaze narrowed on Violet, laughing up at some GQ-model type—she didn't have a submissive bone in her body.

He'd known her going on three years now. He'd traveled with her, talked with her, listened to her. Hell, she treated him like a damn girlfriend. And not once did she ever say anything that even hinted at those desires.

And he needed it. He couldn't do vanilla. From what he could tell by the men Violet dated—she did nothing but.

Ethan prided himself on being a realist, on brutal honesty. If he thought he could play it straight for her he'd blow his ego to hell and confess his feelings. But that wasn't possible. Nothing less than her complete surrender would satisfy him.

And that was never going to happen.

As if sensing his stare, she turned, giving him her megawatt smile, jet-black hair swirling around her bare shoulders in glossy waves. How'd she get her hair so shiny? He grimaced, taking a sip off his beer. What the fuck was wrong with him?

It irked him how dazzled he was. Not that he was alone. Violet dazzled everyone. It was her nature. It was why she was a superstar at Dynamic Links. Why she was an excellent sales manager. Potential customers, men and women alike, couldn't resist her

considerable charisma. Time and again, he'd watched her woo clients 'til they were eating out her hands. And he was no different.

She waved him over. He shook his head. The man she'd been talking to slid his arm around her waist. Ethan's grasp tightened on his bottle 'til his knuckles turned white. That guy was all wrong for her. No passion there at all. A slick, smooth Ken doll.

She rolled her eyes, turned, and stood on tiptoes to whisper something into the guy's ear then she slipped from his grasp and started her way over.

He watched her glide across the room, giving her a look that would make his previous conquests shiver in anticipation—but Violet didn't even falter. Didn't even seem to notice.

And why would she? Just last week she'd gushed on and on about how much she valued him as a *friend*. How she could be herself around him. How she didn't have to put on an act. How comfortable she was. Blah, blah, blah.

With a humorless laugh, he raised his bottle to his lips and let the cold liquid slide down his throat. He valued their friendship too, but it didn't stop him from wanting to take her and show her exactly who he really was.

Let's see how harmless you think I am then, sugar.

He watched the sway of her hips in a periwinkle blue halter dress made from some silky material that looked as though water streamed over her body when she walked. His cock stirred. Goddamn thing didn't have any sense.

When she reached him, he raised a brow, and she smiled up at him. "Not really your scene, huh, Eth?" Her smooth voice sent an electric current right to his balls, reminding him just how long it had been since he'd had a really good, hard fuck.

If you want to know my scene let me take you into your bedroom, tie you up and smack that delectable ass until you beg for me. He smiled back. "You throw a great party."

She laughed, a soft tinkling sound. "You're so transparent, I know you hate every minute of this." She stood on tiptoes and snaked an arm around his neck, pulling him down to give him a squeeze. Automatically, his palm settled low on her back. In his ear

she whispered, "I'm glad you came anyway." When she pulled back, her pink glossy lips curled into a grin. "As your friend, I thought it was good to get you out of the house."

Friend. He hated the word. Wanted it stricken from the dictionary. And why did she assume he sat alone every night? Alone?

A muscle jumped in his jaw. The intellectual understood her dismissal. The man was irritated. He chuckled her under the chin. "Who says I stay home, little girl?"

It wasn't that he didn't get it. He completely understood why he was firmly in the friend zone. If this were high school, she'd be the prom queen and he'd get first place in the science fair.

The only reason why he'd even gotten to know Violet was because they had to travel together as the sales and technical team sent in to close important, high-profile deals. Violet was the glitz and glamour. He was the practical collateral.

At times, he was tempted to tell her about his other life. The life where he let all the power he kept carefully in check at work come out to play. And he knew how to play. Knew just how to drive a woman to heights she'd only dreamed about. Just how to drive a woman to surrender.

But to what purpose? He sensed none of the submissive longing in Violet. None. People without those desires didn't understand them.

Her gaze narrowed. "What did you do last Saturday night?"

Whipped a woman to orgasm, how about you? "Oh, nothing exciting enough for you, Violet."

She planted her hands on those full hips he wanted to take a bite out of. "Exactly my point. You need something exciting."

He glanced around her living room then gave her a wolfish grin. "This is the tamest party I've been to all year."

“Ha!” She shook her head, exasperation radiating off her. In an instant, her whole face lit up. Ethan could practically see the bulb pop over her glossy black head. “Hey, you know who you might hit it off with—”

“No.”

“She’s here.” Violet started to frantically scan the room. “Ah, there she is.” She pointed to a cute, innocent-looking blonde he could eat up for breakfast. “Her name is Casey. I used to work with her at my old company. She’s in marketing.”

“No.”

“Just talk to her. What are you afraid of?”

His head snapped to glare down on her. Did she think he was a complete pussy? “Not my type.”

Violet’s chin tilted up with that stubborn defiance he knew so well. God, he wanted to take that jaw in his hand and give her a little shake before he took her mouth and kissed her in a way she’d never forget. He sighed. Of course it would send her running for the hills where he’d see nothing but her dust.

“Just who is your type, Eth?”

He gritted his teeth. “Not her.”

“I think she’d be perfect for you. She’s sweet, has a great personality, and she’s adorable. I can already see you on a Christmas card in matching sweaters, fire lit behind you, arms around the golden retriever between you.” She smiled up at him, eyes guileless.

It hit him like an unexpected punch to the gut, she didn’t know him at all. Their friendship was completely one-sided. The friendship he valued was no more than smoke and mirrors.

It wasn’t Violet’s fault. She asked, he held back. While she could be herself around him, he didn’t return the feeling. In fact, all he felt comfortable with was the façade. His

chest tightened. He needed to get out of there. He slid his beer bottle on the accent table next to him. "I'm going to hit the restroom and take off."

Her mouth curved down. "Fine, you don't have to meet her. But stay?"

"I've got something I need to do." His jaw was so tight he could feel the muscle work across bone.

"Like what?"

Like purge you from my system once and for all. He had to forget her. This sixteen-year-old's crush wasn't getting him anywhere. Maybe he needed to get a new job. Then he wouldn't have to see her every day. He got regular calls from headhunters, the next time they called for an interview, he'd say yes.

"What do you have to do?" Violet peered up at him, an almost maternal expression on her face.

"What the hell does it matter?"

Her eyes flashed. "I worry about you."

"Well, don't." Shit. How had he created this image of himself in her eyes, so foreign to who he really was that he didn't even recognize the person she saw. He stared down at her, unblinking.

Her lips parted on a tiny, imperceptible gasp. "What's wrong?"

"Violet, you don't know the first thing about me."

Confusion creased her normally smooth forehead. "I know enough."

"Oh? Like what?"

"You keep everyone at a distance. You're brilliant."

He cocked a brow. "Tell me something no other coworker knows?" He knew this wasn't her fault. He'd created this beast, but it didn't stop the irrational anger that she never saw through it.

"Why are you being like this?"

He shook his head. "Never mind. See you Monday."

He walked past her, but before he could escape, her soft hand fell on the warm skin of his forearm. An electric shock jolted up his arm. Son of a bitch. So pathetic. Thank God she had no idea. At least he'd done one thing right in this debacle.

He peered down at her.

"Ethan, please tell me what's wrong."

"Nothing. I just need to take off." He'd meant to come off as bored, but each word shot out like a bullet.

"We're friends," she started, searching his face for clues to his sullen behavior.

He couldn't take one more fucking minute of this. "Are we?" He pulled away and weaved his way through the crowd, not bothering to look back.

This stopped now. Jesus. With the way he was acting, even he was hard-pressed to recognize the Master. He'd hit the restroom then take off. Put this party – and Violet – behind him. Cold turkey. No more lunches. No more IMs throughout the day. No more long, leisurely dinners when they traveled. No more drinks. Or morning coffees.

Complete detox.

He made his way down the hallway, pausing at the closed bathroom door. He jiggled the knob. Locked. Taking a deep breath, he leaned against the wall. From the closed room he heard a muffled moan, followed by a low groan. Great. Inconsiderate assholes taking up the only bathroom to fuck. He shook his head, straightening.

From the corner of his eye, he saw her bedroom door slightly ajar. She must have a master bath. She wouldn't care if he used it. After all, they were such good buddies. He walked toward it, pushing open the door with the touch of his fingers.

He'd never seen her bedroom. He glanced around. Froze. It wasn't what he expected. He'd expected girly pinks and floral.

It wasn't. It was sensual. Deep blood reds, satin sheets, dark, almost gothic-looking furniture. It was beautiful. Exactly how he would have decorated. The room looked ripe

for sex. Carnal. Decadent. The carved headboard with its planks and scrolls the perfect place to tie a woman down.

His cock hardened as his mind slid to an image of Violet, bound, slithering over those sheets, her black hair the perfect complement to the wine-red pillows. Under his complete control.

Stop it. Stick to the plan. He headed into the bathroom.

A couple of minutes later he emerged from the facilities, pausing to take one more look around the room. Not at all what he expected. Was it possible he didn't know her as well as he thought he did? He shook his head. Didn't matter. The facts didn't change. She wasn't interested, and while she obviously had a sensual side, it didn't make her submissive. End of story.

He took two steps only to halt. His heartbeat rose into his throat. No, he was mistaken. Looking for something that wasn't there. He looked again. Was there a woman in handcuffs on the cover of the book peeking out from under her bed?

His gaze slid to the cracked door. He should leave. Invading her privacy would be wrong. He took a step toward the door. Fuck it. He swung around and kneeled by the bed, pulling the book from its hiding place. Blood rushed through his veins. *Holy shit.* A woman blindfolded and handcuffed filled the image of the cover. He flipped it over, skimming the jacket.

Was it possible he was wrong? Did Violet crave submission? She certainly hid it well. He'd been into dominating for a long time, he was good at it. Knew the signs. He'd caught the faint hint of desires other men would miss, but he'd never sensed any in her. Maybe it was just a curiosity. He leaned down and lifted the bed skirt. He shouldn't be doing this but didn't care. He needed to know. Underneath was a box. He pulled it out, lifting the lid. His cock went hard as steel. Not a passing fancy at all.

His little Violet had a secret.

He'd bet a million dollars she'd never submitted to any man. Every instinct he had told him she'd never been claimed. That she'd never experienced her darkest fantasy.

He pushed the box back under her bed.

End of story, his ass. Violet was about to get the surprise of her life.

Chapter Two

With two steaming coffees in hand, Violet made her way to Ethan's office. She didn't know what had happened on Saturday, but she was determined to find out.

She depended on his good nature. Her friendship with Ethan was important. In a way she didn't quite understand, she needed him. She couldn't explain it. They'd been working together for three years, and she'd felt a kinship with him from the second they'd met. Of course it had taken her a year for him to treat her as anything other than a passing acquaintance. Maybe that was it. With Ethan, unlike most men, he didn't have ulterior motives. He never tried to get into her pants. Never made suggestive comments. He made her feel like a person instead of a prize to be won.

Around Ethan, she could relax. And she loved that about him.

Lately, it seemed as if Ethan was the only person she felt comfortable around. With her demanding job, she had to have her charisma pumped up to maximum capacity, and more and more she found she just wanted someone she could curl up next to in her sweats. She could do that with Ethan.

So, whatever was bothering him, she'd fix it.

Immersed in whatever complexities were displayed on his computer screen, Ethan didn't notice her. That was Ethan's way, single-minded and focused.

What was bothering him? It couldn't be that bad. If it was, wouldn't she have a clue? She took a deep breath before blowing it out slowly. "Hey, I brought you coffee."

He jerked his attention away from the computer screen, his blue eyes narrowing behind his wire-rimmed frames.

Her gaze drifted to the chair in front of his desk. "Can I come in?"

He nodded. "Shut the door."

She blinked, her heart kicking up for some unexplained reason. She took the three steps into his office, placed one of the cups on the desk before outstretching the other in a peace offering. He stared at the cup for a second then slid his hand along her own. "Don't forget the door, Violet."

Something about the way he spoke made her pulse thud. He sounded almost... She searched for the word, but came up blank. Not like him. She released the cup into his capable grasp then stepped back to shut the door. He said nothing as she sat.

She shifted in the seat, trying to get comfortable under his watchful gaze. Why should she feel nervous? It was just Ethan. He looked exactly the way he always did, neat brown hair, white button-down and khakis. Yep, exactly the same, in what she fondly called his uniform. She cleared her throat. "Did you have a good weekend?"

"Yes. You?"

She shrugged. God, this tension was brutal. She wanted that easy feeling back. "I was bothered by what you said Saturday."

"Forget it." Still, he didn't look away from her, his gaze intense enough she shivered.

She ran her hands through her hair, flipping it back over her shoulder. "I don't want to. The thing is, you're right."

"About what?" He sat forward, putting his elbows on the desk.

"I don't know much about you." She bit the inside of her cheek. "But you also don't let me in. I'd like to change that."

"And why's that?"

Huh? Why wasn't he putting her at ease like he always did? She bit her lip. "I just do."

"Try again." He smiled at her then, in a way she'd never seen, transforming his attractive but bland face into something carnal and wicked.

Butterflies took flight in her stomach. She clenched her suddenly sweaty hands in her lap. "Why are you being like this? It isn't you."

The phone on his desk rang, making her jump clear out of her seat. He didn't even glance at it, just kept his blue-eyed gaze locked on her. The ringing stopped, plunging the room into silence. "That's the point, Violet, this is exactly who I am."

The walls seemed to be closing in on her. Her fingers fluttered to the small silver chain that held a pale lavender sapphire her mother had given her for her sixteenth birthday. "W-what do you mean?" This was Ethan, for god's sake, she didn't have a reason in the world to be nervous.

He got up and came around the desk. She normally dated tall men, but now, Ethan, who was probably only six feet with a good measuring stick, seemed to fill the whole space in a way those men didn't. She stayed rooted to the chair, resisting the urge bolt.

He leaned against the desk and crossed his arms over his chest. His corded forearms flexing with the movement. Violet had never noticed how strong they were. She stared at them, at his long fingers. He could wrap one hand around both her wrists with no trouble at all. She blinked. Why would he do that?

Her belly heated and she felt herself flush.

He cocked a brow. "Hot?"

The word rolled off his tongue, giving the question another meaning entirely. *Stop this*. It was her imagination. She didn't think sexually about Ethan. "It's stuffy in here," she cleared her throat, "with the door closed."

Yes, that was it. She needed to get that door open. Needed room to breathe. That must be the problem.

"Hmm...is that it?"

Why did it seem as if some sort of table had turned? She needed to escape. She glanced at her watch and lied. "I have a meeting in a few minutes."

"No you don't. You want to escape."

She stood up, fighting to gain back some of her customary control. A control she sometimes longed to give up. *No, don't think about that now.* Trying to sound light and breezy, she laughed. "Why would you say that?"

"Because I'm making you nervous."

They were too close. She took a step back and banged into the chair. His lips curved into a knowing smirk, and she had the urge to slap it off his face. "Y-you're crazy. We're friends."

He raised a finger and traced the pendant at her throat, never touching skin. She gasped. Why was he being like this? What had changed?

"Where'd you get this?"

What was going on? Where was *her* Ethan? And who was this guy? "My mom."

He rubbed at it. "It's pretty. It matches your eyes."

She glanced at her watch again. "Oh, look at the time, I've got to run."

Ethan's fingers dropped from her throat, and she released the breath she hadn't realized she was holding. He nodded. "Before you do, there's something you need to know."

She stepped to the side, moving around the chair. "What's that?"

"I saw the stuff under your bed. And my days of being your best girlfriend are over."

Chapter Three

Violet had run.

There had been no other choice. Her heart still pounded in her ears as she leaned against her closed office door. She should be furious, but at this second, the panic consumed her.

He'd seen her stuff. The hidden stash under the bed. Her secret. She'd never told a soul about her desires for submission. Who would believe it? She didn't even believe it.

She took a deep breath, willing herself to calm down. On shaky legs she walked to her desk, sinking down into the chair. The phone rang and she jumped, gaze flying to the caller ID. It was only her salesperson Jeff. Somehow she'd been sure it was Ethan. Heat crawled up her legs, rolled over her stomach and chest.

He knew. He knew. He knew. A hysterical bubble of laughter rose in her throat. She pressed her ice-cold fingers to burning cheeks. *Calm down.*

She forced slow, deep breaths in and out of her lungs, willing her heart rate to slow.

She needed a plan.

Her computer dinged.

Pulse kicking back up to two-forty, she turned toward the screen.

Ethan Savage: *Be forewarned, you don't have long until I come get you.*

A healthy dose of anger fought its way through the panic. Latching on to it as if it were her last lifeline, she swung toward the monitor. Her fingers stalled for a split second before she struck out.

Violet Moore: *Go to hell.*

Her pinky smacked the enter button, sending the message into cyberspace. She stared at it, groaning. *Lame.* He deserved much worse than that. She pressed the heels of her palms into her eye sockets. And now he knew she'd lied about the damn meeting.

Ding. Her head snapped up.

Ethan Savage: *I like feisty. Keep it up, and I'll be banging down your door in no time.*

Her entire body went hot. Her stomach clenched. She gasped. Ethan was not turning her on. No. She was mad. That was her problem.

This wasn't the man she knew. The man she knew was safe. The man she called her friend would never go through her things. She should be giving him a piece of her mind. Laugh at the preposterous notion of him being dominant. It was Ethan Savage, for god's sake. The most harmless man in the company.

Was it an act? She moved the curser over the X that would close her out of the instant messenger. She'd think about it later. Give herself time to gather her —

Ethan Savage: *Close IM and I'll be at your door in thirty seconds flat.*

Her index finger twitched. How did he know? Should she risk it? Call his bluff? She hovered over the exit button.

Except she wasn't sure he was and she couldn't face him. Not when all her emotions bubbled this close to the surface. Not when he knew her deepest, darkest secret.

Violet Moore: *What do you want from me?*

Ethan Savage: *I want to take you out for your birthday on Saturday.*

He wanted to go out on a date? He was out of his mind.

Violet Moore: *Have you gone crazy?*

Ethan Savage: *Yes or no, Violet.*

Her nipples hardened into hard little points. This tone, the commanding way he'd spoke in his office. The sharp, dominant nature of his statements, it was the exact kind of thing she'd always fantasized about. But still, it was Ethan!

Why did she have to keep reminding herself?

Violet Moore: *I have plans.*

Ethan Savage: *Break them.*

Liquid heat pulsed between her legs. *Stop it.*

Violet Moore: *Do you expect to be rewarded for your bad behavior?*

Ethan Savage: *I expect to be rewarded for making your cunt throb.*

She gasped, her head jerking back at his words. Fire licked at her belly all the while denial sprang to her lips. No one had ever talked to her like this. The men she dated tended to turn poetic on her, which always left her cold. Deep inside, she craved this rawness. But still. She stared at the computer screen. Could this be Ethan? Could he be this kinky? It had to be an act.

Ethan Savage: *Yes or no, Violet.*

Violet Moore: *I can't.*

For several minutes nothing happened. She stayed transfixed, watching the space that would tell her he was typing. It stayed empty. Her throat closed over. Was she disappointed? No, it couldn't be.

A sense of loss slithered down her spine. How could she ever go back to thinking of him as a friend? How could she face him? Work with him? Spend the night in the same hotel with him?

He was typing!

Her heart turned over.

Ethan Savage: *What's it going to be, Violet? This is a one-shot deal. You want to experience what you've been fantasizing about? Or are you going to be a chickenshit and keep it hidden under your bed?*

She gulped. He was daring her. What was she going to do? Fantasy was one thing, reality another—and the truth was, she'd never planned on telling anyone about her desires. She'd planned on keeping them a secret. Locked away, hidden, just like Ethan said.

She bit her lip.

Violet Moore: *I might not like it.*

Ethan Savage: *You'll be thirty-two on Saturday, it's time to find out.*

Fear and excitement vied for equal attention. She shook her head. This was Ethan. Deep down, at the core, he was the same person. She could tell him what she thought.

Violet Moore: *You're scaring me. This doesn't seem like you.*

A short pause.

Ethan Savage: *You said you wanted me to let you in. Put your money where your mouth is.*

Nerves skidded along her skin, her stomach clenched.

Violet Moore: *Is this a joke?*

Ethan Savage: *I'd never joke about this, Violet.*

She blinked as her throat tightened. Was she going to do this?

Violet Moore: *Have you done this before?*

Ethan Savage: *Yes.*

Was he telling her the truth? How was it possible for him to hide this from her all this time? Wouldn't she have suspected?

Ethan Savage: *Come with me on Saturday, and you'll find out for yourself.*

What did he plan to do with her? What did she want him to do? She pressed her thighs together. She was hot. Burning. She throbbed, just as he said. But still, it was Ethan. She stared at the blinking cursor as though it would provide her with the answers.

The clock ticked by, but he didn't say anything else. No prodding, no talking her into it. It was just like him. Patient. Ethan didn't rush. Would he be like that in bed?

Violet Moore: *All right.*

Ethan Savage: *I'll pick you up at eight.*

Chapter Four

Saturday evening

Ethan watched Violet while she nervously sipped a vodka and cranberry and tried to look as if she didn't feel uncomfortable. Over dinner, he'd kept the conversation light, defusing the tension that had been radiating off her when he'd picked her up. But since they'd sat down at the private club he belonged to, it had returned, and he'd let it simmer between them.

A Mistress and her slave walked by and Violet's eyes went wide as saucers. The man trailed after his Mistress on all fours, leash and collar securely tied around his neck. As she passed, black thigh-high boots clicked on the floor, she nodded to him. "Master Ethan."

He returned her nod. "Having a nice stroll, Mistress Angelina?"

The woman tugged harder at the leash and flashed him a grin.

Ethan turned back to Violet who looked at him as if he'd grown another head. He raised a brow. "Yes, Violet?"

She toyed with the straw in her glass then traced the water rivulets with her finger. She was nervous. Unsure of what to expect—both from him and the experience.

Good. He wanted her off balance. Her expression would be less guarded and he could better gauge her desires, both the ones she was and wasn't comfortable with.

She licked that bottom lip again and he stifled a groan. She'd been working that mouth of hers all night long and it was starting to distract him. She cleared her throat. "He was on a leash."

He nodded. "He's Mistress Angelina's pet and she treats him as such."

She blinked, her fingers coming up to toy with her necklace. "That's horrible."

By the strong, clear tone of her voice, Ethan knew she meant it. Which was fine with him, he'd never been much for that kind of play, but still, he wanted to feel out her reaction. "Why's that?"

"B-because." She looked away, gazing out at the writhing bodies littering the dance floor.

"Violet."

"What?" She still didn't glance away from the dancers.

"Look at me." When she remained frozen, he added, "Now."

Her head jerked, a stain of color rising fast to her cheeks.

"Better. In case you haven't figured it out yet, I like to be obeyed." He let the Master show in his voice, watching closely to gauge her reaction.

She looked like a skittish filly, ready to bolt at any second. All week he'd been subtly laying the groundwork for this moment. The moment when he'd make his intentions to own her clear. Violet wouldn't submit to him easily, she was too scared of her own desires, but she did want it, and she wanted it from him.

Even if she didn't know it yet.

Unblinking, she stared at him, but he didn't miss the catch in her breath at his words. He pressed forward, leaning over the table. "When I ask you a question, I expect an answer."

"I don't want to be tied up with a leash." The words tumbled from her lips as though she couldn't say them fast enough.

If she were an experienced sub, he'd toy with this limit, testing to see how strong her aversion went. But Violet needed a softer hand. "Did I make that request?"

"But I don't want to do that." Her breath started coming in soft pants.

Fear. He enclosed his fingers around her wrist and stroked over her hammering pulse. He softened his voice. "Violet."

As if he was her safe harbor, her gaze flew to him and clung.

"I'm not going to make you do anything you don't want."

Relief passed over beautiful features. "You won't?"

He shook his head. "And neither is Mistress Angelina. Believe me, what you saw was by mutual consent." He grinned, trying to ease her anxiety. "Didn't you see how hard his cock was?"

Her head snapped back. "I didn't look."

"Such an innocent." He laughed.

She tucked a lock of glossy black hair behind her ear. "She called you...um...by name."

"And this surprises you?"

"Yes. Very much."

"Is it because she called me by name? Or because she addressed me as Master?"

"Both." Her chin tilted up in the air. "How could you hide this from me? We're supposed to be friends."

"Why didn't you share your desires for submission with me?"

"That's different!" Her eyes flashed as her voice rose.

"Why? We weren't romantically involved, why would I discuss my sex life with you?"

She twirled the straw in her drink, staring down into the pale pink beverage. "But..." her soft voice trailed off.

He leaned over and grasped her around the waist, pulling her snug up against him. Low into her ear, he whispered, "But you've never told anyone, have you, sugar?"

She shook her head.

He ran his palm up over her arm, curving over her shoulder. She trembled under his touch. "Are you frightened?"

With a slight nod of her head, she looked up at him, violet eyes shimmering. "Who's the real you?"

"They both are, I suppose. I've wanted you for a long time, since I first laid eyes on you."

The muscles in her throat worked as she swallowed. "You never said anything."

He shrugged. "I didn't sense any interest from you, and I'm not the pretty-boy type you go for." He stared deep into her eyes, wanting her to experience the full impact of his words. "I wanted to own you. I couldn't settle for anything less."

"Oh!" Her cheeks flushed.

He trailed his thumb over the cords in her neck. "Do you trust me?"

She nodded.

He slid away from her and stood. Holding out his hand, he said, "Then come with me."

She blinked at his outstretched palm, biting her bottom lip. "Where are you taking me?"

"You either trust me or you don't, Violet. The choice is yours."

The man who stood in front of her was Ethan, but not. His normally neat brown hair was tousled, highlighting golden streaks she'd never noticed. His glasses were gone and his blue eyes glittered in the dim light. Without the wire frames, his face took on a harsher appearance, making him less scholarly and more dangerous.

His uniform had been replaced by a black short-sleeved t-shirt stretching across a wide chest that tapered down over his flat stomach. Black flat-front pants, tighter than anything she'd ever seen him in before, completed the ensemble. He looked...lethal, sexy and sophisticated.

All she needed to do was reach up and grasp his fingers. That's it, and he'd take it from there.

So what was stopping her?

Maybe because on an instinctual level, she understood what taking his hand meant—that he had her permission to make her his. Owning, belonging, submitting—they were all words she’d read about, fantasized about, dreamed about—but did she really want them in real life?

In typical fashion, Ethan stood, patient, arm outstretched, waiting. No pressure or coercion, no filling the silence as her brain clicked away.

He’d told her the truth—he was both of them—the computer whiz geek and the—she cleared her throat—the Master. Either persona would let her make up her own mind.

Somehow, she’d always taken this Ethan trait as a sign of his introverted personality. But now she recognized it for what it was—confidence. He was so quiet about it, so unassuming she’d glanced right over it. But he’d always had this commanding presence—when Ethan spoke, people listened. Probably because both his words and his actions were never wasted.

She glanced up at him, his average face had been transformed into something strong and masculine. “Will this ruin our friendship?”

The light blue depths of his eyes flickered but remained steady. “I don’t know, Violet. This will be the first time we’ll be dealing with each other honestly, it’s hard to predict what we’ll discover.”

“I don’t want to lose you.” The words slipped past her lips before she had time to think about them, but once they were out, she knew they were true.

“I don’t want to lose you either.” His gaze lit up as if someone had set a match to him. “But the path we were on, the loss was inevitable.”

She blinked. “It was?”

He gave a short, abrupt nod. “At your party, I’d decided I’d had enough, that I couldn’t take being around you anymore without being able to have you.”

"Why are you telling me this?" It was a shock. To learn he had feelings for her all this time and she'd never expected it. Most men wouldn't ever make this kind of confession for fear of showing weakness.

"When I found your secret stash, I made a promise that I'd be honest with you. It's the truth."

She stared at his palm, so strong and capable. She wanted to take it but needed to test further. Needed to feel as if she held some control over the situation. "What if I don't want to have sex with you?"

To her amazement he laughed. He shook his head and grinned down at her, so cocky and arrogant, her stomach heated.

"You sure you want to play that game, little girl?"

Pinpricks danced across her skin. "I don't know what you mean."

"Your choice." He shrugged. "If I make you a promise, would that make you feel better? More safe?"

Violet sensed a trap hidden somewhere in the words and velvety smoothness of his voice. But what? She hooked a lock of hair behind her ear. "It would."

"All right then." He leaned down over the table and, to her surprise, his strong, white teeth sank into the flesh of her lower lip. Excitement skidded over her nerve endings. He smelled delicious, all masculine and something indefinably Ethan. His tongue stroked over the flesh he held captive before he released her. "I promise you'll have to beg me before I fuck you."

Alarm slammed through her, mixing with her lust and throwing her off balance. "What?"

"You heard me." His expression turned downright wicked. "I warned you not to play."

Chapter Five

Violet glanced around the darkened room as though waiting for something to jump out and snatch her. Ethan smiled and rubbed at the tight muscles in her neck. Caleb Morrison, one of his closest friends, had agreed to put on a show for them since his current sub was quite the exhibitionist.

Ethan had always thought of submission as a gift, one he wanted Violet to give to him. A little taste of what that looked like would help her understand what she'd be offering.

She turned to look at him, her legs crossed primly as she searched for a comfortable spot on the couch. "What are we doing here?"

"Be patient." The room was dimly lit where they sat, but the front of the room was completely dark. From Violet's perspective she couldn't see that Caleb and his sub, who'd been ordered to remain completely silent, waited until Ethan gave the signal to proceed.

Violet shifted, the slit in her dress revealing an expanse of smooth, bare thigh. Unable to resist, he trailed his fingers along the satin skin. She jumped, her body tensing in anticipation.

He bent his head into the curve of her neck, inhaling her sweet and spicy scent, a mixture of innocence and sex that fit her perfectly. "You need to relax, sugar."

None of her tension lessened as she remained ramrod stiff next to him. Again he ran his hand up her thigh, letting his fingers slip under the hem and curl around her warm flesh. A sound escaped from her throat, and his cock lengthened.

God, she was driving him out of his fucking mind. For three years he'd been itching to touch her, and now he wanted to devour her whole. Feast on her like a glutton. But

still he restrained himself, knowing that the anticipation, the uncertainty, the hyperawareness would heighten her arousal.

Her hand covered his, clutching at his fingers. "I can't relax. This is torture."

He laughed, pressing his mouth against the skin at her neck so the sound vibrated along her flesh. A tiny gasp escaped from her. She tried to pull back, but he said, "I wouldn't recommend that."

"Oh!"

He nipped at her earlobe. "Are you wearing panties?"

"Of course."

At her appalled tone, Ethan smiled. Under his touch, her skin heated while her breath grew shallow. Good. Cat and mouse was one of his most favorite games, and to know it turned her on was like lighting a match to his already raging desire. "Before we leave this room, you're going to open those legs for me, and I'm going to slip my fingers inside your panties."

Her pulse kicked up under his lips. "I will not."

"Oh yes you will." He squeezed his fingers around her thigh to emphasize his point. "You're going to be wet. And I'm going to play with your pussy until you're moaning."

"I d-don't moan," she squeaked out. Again she shifted, this time moving closer to him. Her muscles twitched under his fingers.

"You will." He made his voice firm, commanding. She trembled.

Jesus Christ, this was hell. He had no idea how he'd keep from attacking her, but he would. He'd summon every damn ounce of control and patience he could muster because by the time he was through, she needed to belong to him.

He pressed his mouth full on the curve of her neck, sucking hard enough to make a mark. His mark. "You're going to want to come. But I'm sorry, I won't let you. I'm going to bring you right to the edge, and then I'm going to stop."

A hiss escaped her pink glossy lips as she dug her nails into his hand. "Never."

He lifted his head and took her chin with his free hand, forced her to look at him. Those violet eyes of hers shimmered with a hunger she couldn't hide.

He'd never wanted a woman more. He wanted to throw her to the floor and fuck her brains out. Wanted to pound into her so hard she couldn't walk, couldn't think. Wanted her to come so hard she saw stars and passed out. He gritted his teeth, fighting to remain in control in the face of the need shining in her gaze.

He raised one brow. "Just for that—I'm going to treat your cunt like my own personal toy and bring you close to orgasm so many times you'll be spreading those fantastic thighs wide for me and rocking into my hand. You won't care who's watching, how you're acting, what you're saying. You'll care about one thing and one thing only — when will I come."

She started to pant, her chest rising and falling in rapid rhythm.

"And I'm just going to keep saying no."

She let out a little mewing sound and tried to jerk away, but he held her fast. Forced her to look at him. "Before we walk through that door, your body will know who owns it even as your mind rejects it. But deep down, where it counts, we'll both know the truth." He bit at her bottom lip and squeezed her thigh. "And there won't be a corner dark enough for you to hide from the knowledge."

He let her go. So fast, Violet fell into his lap. As if they'd been talking about the weather, he grasped her arm and straightened her into a sitting position. She was shaking, her body on fire.

Run!

She swallowed hard, breathing so fast her head started to spin. Panic clawed at her stomach. She couldn't find the door. The room was too dark.

Run. Run. Run.

She couldn't survive this, didn't want to do this anymore. This was Ethan. Her friend, and all she saw when she looked at him was how incredibly dangerous he was. In five minutes he'd managed to arouse her to a state she'd never experienced with any other man. Her nipples were so hard they ached. Her pussy throbbed. Her panties were wet with the evidence of what Ethan Savage was doing to her.

Run! Get the hell out. Escape.

She pressed a trembling hand to her forehead. She was sweating.

A large, warm palm settled over her back and began to rub in slow, smooth circles. "Just take nice, easy breaths."

She sucked air into her lungs. This wasn't like the books.

"Don't worry, sugar, I'll take care of you." His voice was like warm molasses sliding along her skin. "Trust me."

"I don't want to do this." To her horror, her eyes filled with tears. She blinked them away.

His fingers grasped her chin, gentle this time. "Look at me, Violet."

She didn't want to but raised her eyes to his. He stroked her cheek, soft, a featherlight touch. "See past the panic. You want this."

She shook her head. "This isn't the same as thinking about it."

Another stroke along her skin, a fraction of her anxiety edged away. "No, it's not the same. What did you think giving up control would be like?"

"I d-don't know." Her voice broke, coming out like a baby bird's. She was mortified. What was happening to her? "More fun."

His fingers slid to the back of her neck and rubbed at the soft spot there. "Sometimes it's more fun than others. When it's all new, the intensity of your reactions can be scary. I want you to think, what's really frightening you? Because I know you're not turned-off."

The tight coil in her chest loosened. Her breath slowed to where she was no longer in danger of passing out. "How do you know?"

"Because it's my job to know." He smiled then, looking just like the old Ethan, the one she knew and loved. The one she understood. "It's okay to be scared. I promise to keep you safe. Do you want to continue? Or do you need a break?"

What did she want? Was it possible to want both at once? Would he let her leave? Would he back off? The Ethan she knew would, but she didn't know this new Ethan enough to place her complete trust in him. But on the other hand, she couldn't imagine walking out the door.

She'd never been so confused in her life. She cleared her throat. "If I needed a break, you'd let me?"

"Of course." He continued his slow neck massage. "Let me lay it out for you. I have no interest or desire to coerce you into submission. You either give it to me freely or you don't. It's that simple. No force. No letting you. It's your choice."

This was the man she knew. She relaxed into his touch. He was still the same person. She had to keep remembering that. His core hadn't changed.

He smiled. "There's a catch. I can't do vanilla with you. I just can't. I want to own you. I can't settle for less. So, when I offer a break, that's all it is—a break until you feel safer. And there will be times where no break is offered, and you'll just have to suffer through your panic, trusting me and yourself that you'll get through it. Do you understand?"

She did and she didn't. There was a weight to his words, and implication that her agreement bound her to him in some way. Did she want that?

She couldn't imagine putting her trust in anyone else. She nodded.

"Are you agreeing to my terms? Say the words."

"I..." She cleared the hoarseness from her voice. "I agree."

His blue eyes glittered with undisguised hunger. "Now do you need time to think? Or do you want to continue?"

Today was her thirty-second birthday. She'd never been a coward and didn't intend to start now. She'd squeezed the words past her tight throat. "I'd like to continue."

"Good girl." He leaned down and captured her mouth, kissing her with such ferocity she melted into him, those two little words igniting a fire inside her.

His tongue slid past her lips as if he had every right to do so, commanding her response. A tiny moan, lodged in her throat, escaped as his fingers wrapped around the back of her neck and squeezed, angling her head to the position he wanted.

The kiss felt like possession. Tasted like ownership.

Violet needed more. She moved forward, clutched at his shoulders. Her nails dug into his skin through the cotton. She wanted to climb into him. She needed closer. Needed to feel pressed against him. Needed pressure to relieve the ache between her legs.

He tore his mouth away, his ragged breaths matching her own. His forehead pressed against hers. "You're going to be a little wildcat, aren't you?"

She'd been called many things, but she'd never been mistaken for wild. Violet shook her head, unable to speak as she fought for air.

"Oh yes. And I'm going to draw it out of you, force you to embrace it. I'm going to feed it and encourage it 'til you can't remember being any other way."

"You're...crazy." She wasn't like that at all.

"You can retract your claws now, Violet."

What? She forced her heavy lids open. Her hands were buried into his shoulders. She snatched them away as though his skin were scalding. Her cheeks infused with heat. "Oh."

His low, wicked laugh slid over her skin. He leaned back onto the couch and opened his legs, gesturing to the space he created. "Come here. I still need to give you your surprise."

A sudden shyness crept through her. It seemed somehow improper to sit between his legs.

"This is an easy request, Violet. If this is too hard, maybe you need that break after all."

Her chin shot up. What was the big deal? She stood, smoothing down her skirt then turning to face him. She stared at his lap, eyes widening at the large bulge between his legs.

She took a step toward him.

His hands shot out to grip her waist, putting a stop to her descent into his lap. "Wait."

She frowned, her pulse kicking up. Why did she suddenly have a bad feeling?

His eyes gleamed with a carnal knowledge she couldn't even begin to understand. "Take off your panties."

She jerked, her hand coming up to cover her now-pounding heart. She swallowed past the fear clogging her throat. "You're not going to make this easy for me, are you?"

He grinned. "Now what fun would that be?"

"B-but, but...I don't want to." Her voice sounded so petulant she might as well have stomped her foot like a three-year-old.

"Too bad. Do it." This time there was no teasing in his tone, only the command.

Her pussy clenched. Goose bumps popped up along her overheated skin. Why did she have to like this? And she did like it. The reality stirred a physical response that made her fantasies pale in comparison.

She could do this. She *would* do this. Fingers trembling, she reached under the hem of her tight dress. She gripped the waistband, peeled the panties down her legs and stepped out of them. She straightened, clutching the lace tight.

He held out a palm. "Hand them over."

Not seeing much of a choice, she dropped them into his hand.

Her eyes widened as he rubbed the damp fabric between his thumb and forefinger. Heat spread over her chest, up her neck.

"Come and sit." He scooted back so there was enough room for her to be comfortable.

Surprised and grateful he didn't mention the embarrassing state of her underwear she sank down between his splayed thighs. When she'd settled, he gripped her around the waist and nudged the curve of her ass against his erection. His lips skimmed her neck. "You think you're wet now, just wait, I'm going to have you dripping." His teeth grazed the corded muscle between her neck and shoulder.

"Oh!" She broke into a sweat. Mortification and arousal warred inside her.

At the front of the dark room, a spotlight went on. Violet gasped in disbelief. A tiny slip of a woman was on her knees, arms spread wide from a bar hanging from the ceiling.

Violet's stomach did a double summersault. What the hell was going on?

Chapter Six

"What—" Violet's voice broke and trailed off.

"Shh, just watch. Trust me." Ethan's smooth voice soothed her ragged nerves.

Had the woman been listening to them? Before she had time to ponder or ask, a man wearing black pants and no shirt stepped out of the shadows. Violet flinched. *Oh my god!*

The man was huge and scary, his muscles rippled under scrolling tattoos. His short blond hair emphasized the sharp, harsh angles of his beautiful, almost-savage face. He turned and looked straight at Violet. With the spotlight, she knew it was impossible to see more than an impression of her form, but it didn't stop the impact of that piercing gaze. An angel, although whether he was sent from heaven or hell was too hard to say. She slid closer into Ethan. She gulped. "Who?"

"Caleb, a friend of mine. Relax, he's going to give you a little show."

Had they been here the entire time? Listening? Watching? "Have they—"

"Quiet." Ethan's tone implied if she didn't obey there would be trouble. He skimmed his fingers along her collarbone. "You can ask questions later, now I want you to stop thinking and watch."

Stop thinking? Was he insane? He might as well ask her to stop breathing.

The man up front—Caleb—turned to the woman kneeling on the hard wood. Her face was down, her gaze on the floor. He curled large fingers around her jaw and lifted her chin. He said something, but Violet couldn't hear the words. She leaned forward, straining to hear. "What did he say?"

"What *I* said was no more questions," Ethan growled the words so fiercely her spine went rigid.

She whipped around, mouth already open.

One look at Ethan and she snapped it shut. He raised one brow. "Let me explain how this works, Violet. I speak. You obey. Now sit back, be quiet and watch."

She stared, unable to move, to speak.

He placed his hand over the flair of her hip and squeezed hard enough to make her jump. "Next question and you'll be over my knee, bare ass in the air. Got it?"

"You wouldn't!" The words tumbled out of lips before she could stop them.

"Ask me another question and find out."

Their gazes met, and his eyes glinted like hard bits of blue steel. He meant it.

She had no doubt.

A desire to fight him rose fast and furious within her. The need welled in her chest and pounded against her rib cage. But underneath, something else coursed hot in her veins. Arousal. It vibrated through her, along her skin and between her legs. She wanted him, wanted this. Now wasn't the time to be stubborn. Besides, she was pretty sure she'd lose.

She pressed her lips together and settled along the hard length of his torso.

He chuckled in her ear. "Smart move, little girl."

Determined to ignore him, Violet focused on the scene in front of her.

The woman was pretty, almost pixyish with her small features. She wore a white silk blouse that covered her from neck to wrist, and a navy skirt fanned the floor. Caleb stroked the bone of her jaw, leaning in to whisper in her ear. With downcast lids, she nodded, and he stepped away.

He disappeared into the shadows, and the woman stayed on her knees, motionless except for her chest that rose and fell in fast rhythm. As if connected to the woman's growing anticipation, Violet squirmed in her seat.

What was going to happen? She wanted to ask but kept her mouth shut.

Ethan's fingers brushed over her waist, she jerked. Into her ear, he whispered, "Relax, sugar." His hand moved to her thigh. He stroked the flesh and she quivered under his touch. "Put your head on my shoulder."

The woman center stage glanced up and for a fraction of a second. It seemed as if their eyes met before the woman's gaze quickly looked back toward the floor. Her arms began to tremble, rattling the chains that hung from the ceiling.

Compelled by the scene before her, Violet rested her head against Ethan. His fingers slid up her stomach before his thumbs brushed over the curve of her breasts.

The hard buds twisted and puckered. She held her breath, anticipating his touch. He grazed the tips with his fingers, and then he was gone. She bit back the moan. Squirmed again, pressing her ass against his erection.

He nipped her ear. "Are your nipples sensitive?"

"Yes." She wanted them touched so badly. Her breasts were heavy, swollen. She wanted to ask for it but refused. She couldn't be that wanton so quickly. That would give him way too much power and the man didn't need any more.

As if hearing her silent plea, he grazed over the peaks, circling. The pressure was too light. She craved more. She moved into his touch. He didn't move to deepen the contact. Frustrated, she thrust her breasts into his hands. He didn't comply to her will, instead keeping his caress light, teasing.

It wasn't enough.

She wanted bare skin.

"Have you ever come from having them played with?"

She shook her head, her fingers clutched at his thighs. That was impossible.

He lightly pinched the tips, rolling them between his fingers. Pleasure shot through her, her belly clenched. *Oh yes. That was it.*

His hands fell away.

The protest sprang to her lips, but before she could voice it, he pushed her forward, his fingers brushing the skin on her back as he sought out the zipper.

What was he doing? She stiffened.

He didn't hesitate at her silent resistance, and before she knew it, her dress was unzipped halfway down her back.

She didn't want to be naked in front of strangers. Hell, she was scared to be naked in front of Ethan. She wanted to scream for him to stop. But the words stuck in her throat.

He settled her back onto his chest, keeping her covered. "I just want room to play."

Relieved, she sighed.

Caleb stepped out of the shadows, and Violet gasped. The girl's eyes widened and she jerked back.

He held a whip. A bullwhip.

He walked over to the girl and lifted her chin. This time Violet had no problem hearing his words. "I told you not to move."

"I'm sorry, Master."

He released the tail. With a soft flick of the wrist, it twisted around the girl's waist like a lover's caress, the end falling to the floor. Violet's eyes widened. All the moisture evaporated from her throat. She swallowed.

The woman flinched, but her mouth parted and she licked her lips.

Strong hands cupped Violet's shoulders and she flinched right along with the girl onstage. Ethan's fingers trailed over her collarbone, the lines in her neck, the hollow in her throat. Lower. He seemed to stroke every single bone. Making her want to beg for him to touch her breasts again. Making her ache for it, for him.

"You'll have to make it up to me, now won't you?" Caleb's deep voice rang through the room, and Violet trembled right along with the woman he held bound with both chains and whip.

“Yes, Master,” the sub said in a soft voice.

Another flick of the wrist and the whip was back in Caleb’s hands, he paced back, muscles rippling under the black ink of his tattoos.

Ethan’s fingers slipped under the fabric of her dress, skimming along her skin, leaving a trail of heat. She held her breath. Prayed he’d go lower. He caressed the plump curve of her breasts. His hands dipped lower, the tips of his fingers circled her nipples. She moaned. So good. She forced herself to not arch into his hands. Again and again he looped over the hard peaks with that featherlight touch. “Mmmm,” he murmured. “I think I can make you orgasm like this. I’m barely touching you and already you want to beg. Don’t you, Violet?”

She shook her head. Why had she made such a big deal about this earlier? Now her pride wouldn’t let her say the words she wanted to voice and he wanted to hear.

Crack! Fast as lightning, the whip whizzed through the air right at the woman’s chest. The button on her blouse flew off.

“Oh!” Violet couldn’t stop the exclamation, she squirmed.

Ethan’s slow, easy torment of her breasts didn’t let up. “Caleb’s an expert with a whip. Probably the best there is. Maybe someday I’ll let him use it,” his tongue flicked the lobe of her ear, “on you.”

Crack! Another button popped off.

Ethan simultaneously squeezed her nipples between his thumbs and forefingers. Sensation swept through Violet, a helpless sense of being tossed about in a rolling wave.

Crack!

Ethan pinched. Rubbed over the tips. Torture. A pleasure-filled burn. A scream welled in her throat, she bit lip hard enough to draw blood. Her pussy clamped on nothing as she felt warm liquid seep onto her thighs. Oh god. This was embarrassing. An orgasm built like a tidal wave. She hung suspended on the edge of cresting.

Crack! The girl moaned as another button flew through the air. Ethan pulled her nipples. Violet couldn't stand it. She jerked under his hands. She was going to die.

Into her ear, he growled, "I want to hear you."

Crack! The blouse hung open now, exposing the sub's small, bare breasts.

Violet couldn't stand this. It was too much. Too intense.

"Let go," he commanded. "You want it, moan for me. Please me, Violet."

He released his tight hold and dragged his fingers over the aching buds. Her pussy clenched, throbbed. Oh Jesus, she was going to have an orgasm. She—the woman who had to work for it every time—was going to come without even a stroke on her clit. The need built and spiraled, tightened until she might snap. Once again he pinched her nipples, pulling them up and away from her body. She arched back, her lips brushing over his jaw. She bit down.

He grunted. "That's it, let me feel those teeth, sugar."

A small scream ripped from her throat. "Oh god."

"There we go, that's my girl." He eased up, trailing his hands along the slope of her breasts. He pressed his thighs together and ground his hard cock into her ass, his breath hot and fast in her ear.

"It's too soon to come." He gripped her chin and brought his mouth on hers in a hard, brutal kiss that was over before it even began.

She lifted her heavy lids to meet his eyes. They blazed with such intensity she shivered. Violet had been on the admiring end of a lot of men's attention, and never had anyone looked at her like this. He turned her chin so her attention moved back to the stage. "Watch."

Ethan had never been in such an exquisite hell. He'd barely even touched her, hadn't even gotten started, and she was already needy with desire, so hot to come he needed to take a break to keep her from going off.

Caleb walked forward, a pair of scissors in his hand that Ethan hadn't even noticed him getting. He leaned down and sliced the sub's blouse off in one fluid motion, causing a tiny gasp from Violet.

Caleb placed the shears on the floor then reached down to unzip his pants, shifting to pull out his cock. He fisted it, moving up and down the length of his erection, smiling down at the woman. "You want it?"

"Yes, Master."

"Ask for it." Caleb continued his slow, easy stroking.

"Please let me suck your cock, Master."

Caleb took a step and ran the head along the seam of her lips. The sub's pink tongue snuck out to lick the slit. Caleb continued the tease, not giving in to the temptation she presented.

Violet squirmed. Ethan gritted his teeth as her ass shifted along his shaft. He pushed her hair back so he could see her face. Lips parted, she seemed transfixed on the sight in front of her. He ran his hand up her thigh. "What is it you like?"

She glanced at him, brow furrowed.

"Is it the sight of his cock? The way he's teasing her? The way she has to ask for it?"

"I, I don't know." Her gaze skirted back to the scene.

Caleb slid the head into the sub's eager mouth and started an unhurried, shallow thrust.

"Yes you do, tell me."

She shrugged.

Ethan smiled at her resistance but made his tone hard. "You have a choice. Tell me and get rewarded, don't and get punished. It's all up to you."

Irritation flashed across her face as she glanced back at him. He knew what she was thinking—why focus on this when she'd been all hot and ready for him. Why ask her questions when she was willing to spread her legs.

Her motivations were understandable, normal.

His, however, were not.

He'd never had to slow his pace. Never had to ease off in order to calm the fuck down. It was disconcerting as hell. But damned if it wasn't the truth.

Violet was going to be the death of him.

She opened her mouth, and he could read a question in her eyes. Excitement and desire pumped in his veins as his blood ran fast. His heart raced. Palm already itching, he grinned. After hours of dreaming about smacking Violet's ass, he was finally going to get his chance.

"Wh—" She stopped, remembrance stiffening her spine. Snapping her jaw shut, she took a deep breath.

Ethan couldn't help feeling a stab of disappointment. Damn. Now he had to wait. He sighed. Just as well, he'd rather spank her in the privacy of his own home. Patience. He'd never needed much but suspected Violet would be testing his on a repeated basis.

He raised a brow. "Yes?"

She bit her lip. "He reminds me of you."

Surprise flashed through him so quickly he knew he'd revealed it on his face. In a slow voice he asked, "And this is what arouses you?"

Her cheeks flushed. "Yes."

Jesus. For a man with a healthy ego, she couldn't have said or done anything hotter. His cock was in danger of exploding at any minute. He ran his hands through his hair. "You're killing me here."

Her lavender eyes lit up and she looked so pleased with herself, he growled.

When she giggled, he yanked her back against him and hooked his arm around her waist. "That's it, now it's time for you to pay."

Chapter Seven

“Drape your leg over mine.” Ethan was ready to get down to business. He told her he’d make her pay and Violet needed to understand he always kept his word.

“But—” She shifted against him. Not obeying him, of course.

He cut her off. “But your pussy will be open and exposed. I know. Do it.”

She looked back, questions in her eyes while she tried to figure out if he was serious. In a conversational tone, he asked, “Are you going to fight me every step of the way? Because I’ll win.” He leaned in so their faces were close. “Every time.”

Without another word she turned back to watch as Caleb’s sub now deep throated him. Violet didn’t make any move to heed Ethan’s wishes.

He waited a few more seconds, watching the uneven rise and fall of her shoulder blades as she breathed. He could practically see the wheels turning in her head as she plotted a way out of obeying. Now that her impending orgasm had waned, she was more conscious of her actions, of her position, and that he was taking control.

For a woman like Violet, the lack of power was hard to accept, to submit to—even when she wanted it. And she did want it, she was hungry for it—her mind just refused to cooperate.

Ethan understood her confusion, understood the war going on in her head as she fought between her desires and what society told her a modern woman should want. He’d spent enough time talking to Violet to know she considered herself a feminist. She’d been reared in a matriarchal environment and was a successful female in a long familial list.

Even in her relationships she’d had the control. The men she dated were promptly eating out of the palm of her hand within a week. But not him. Not even when he’d been in the throes of unrequited infatuation. Now he realized it was what had drawn

her to him like a moth to flame. All too clearly he saw their past with new perception. He'd been so sure she hadn't returned his sexual feelings he'd never paused to consider why she had been so adamant they were close. But like everyone else, he'd been so dazzled by her he'd never questioned her motives. Now he knew. He was the only man Violet trusted. On some base level, Violet had recognized him as her Master and had claimed him as hers.

Tonight was about showing Violet that he was more than up for the challenge. About showing her that even though he wanted her more than he wanted his next breath, he had the self-discipline to maintain the control and power.

Just as she needed.

She'd manipulate him and test him. Hoping he'd succeed and fail in equal measures. And, although sometimes she'd hate it, Ethan had no intention of failing.

Still, she made no move to comply and he took it as her first true test of his dominance. This didn't feel like the confusion that had her tied up in knots. She darted a glance out the corner of her eye and squared her shoulders before her lips curved into a small smile.

Oh, she needed proof.

And he'd be giving it to her. He stroked her hair, combing through the silky black strands until her muscles relaxed. The second the tension left her, he fisted it at the nape of her neck and yanked back, twisting as he pulled so she'd feel the sharp tug and prickles of pain in her skull.

She let out a startled yelp, hands digging into his thighs as she struggled for balance.

He held her fast and bent down to the shell of her ear. Lowered his tone to his best hard-ass, don't-fuck-with-me voice. "Obey or go home. What I'm asking for is easy. But since you continue to defy me, I'm going to make it harder. Now the other leg has to go up too. You're going to sit on my lap, skirt hiked up, legs wide apart just like I promised." He knew with the spotlight Caleb and his sub really couldn't see them, but

Violet wouldn't be thinking about that right now. All she'd be able to think about was how exposed and vulnerable she felt. "Do what I say. Or don't, and we'll call it a night and I'll take you home. You have thirty seconds to decide. Your choice." He let go and sat back.

Her jaw set, her spine stiffened, but she couldn't hide her reactions. Breath fast, her skin pink, he'd bet her nipples were hard and her cunt wet.

He looked at his watch.

Up front, Caleb had rebuttoned his pants and now kneeled on the floor, scissors in hand, cutting off the fabric of the conservative navy skirt. Naked, the sub's chest heaved.

"Spread those legs like a good little slut." Caleb's voice boomed.

Violet took in a sharp intake of breath. The cords of her neck worked as she swallowed.

Ethan grinned. Obviously his friend had heard enough of his conversation to mirror the command. Of course, unlike Violet, the sub complied without hesitation.

Caleb reached between her legs and stroked her clit. Her head fell back and she moaned. He sank his fingers inside her, rotating his hand, grinding the heel of his palm against her pelvic bone. "Is your cunt wet for your Master?"

"Oh yes, Master. Please..." Her hips rocked, trying to deepen the contact.

"Please what?" He thrust hard into her, almost brutal in his force.

Violet squirmed, her breath coming in a fast rhythm that matched the woman kneeling on the floor.

"Please, Master, may I come?"

"No." But instead of backing off, Caleb increased his motions, thumb working her clit. Making it impossible for the woman to comply with his command.

Violet sat frozen against him.

"Master," the sub gasped. "Please, I'm going to come."

"Do and you'll be punished." Then the sadistic bastard latched on to her nipple, working her over from every angle.

The sub cried out. The chains that bound her wrists shook as she struggled in a futile attempt to maintain control over her response.

Violet's breath turned ragged, gaze transfixed on the stage in front of her.

Ethan said in her ear, "Time's up. Let's go home."

She jerked against him. "No!"

"Then do what you're told."

Her expression remained on the couple in front of her, the woman kneeling in chains, moaning loud, begging for permission that Caleb continued to deny.

Violet sucked in air then pressed her ass against him as she lifted one leg and draped it over his thigh. He stifled the groan as she shifted against his erection. God, he'd never been this hard in his life.

"Good girl, now the other one."

Almost in a trance, she did as he asked. The hem of her dress hiked far up her legs but she tugged until she was covered.

He ran his hands over her taut thighs.

Up at the front of the room, the sub cried out as she broke and a fierce orgasm shuddered through her small frame. Caleb didn't stop, using his fingers and mouth until she went slack against her restraints.

Against Ethan, Violet didn't even breathe.

Caleb stood abruptly. "Now for your punishment."

Violet blinked as the big man stepped once again into the shadows. Her head swam. She didn't know what to think about first. The brutal way the huge blond man made the woman come? How he intended to punish her for her body's natural response? One that he provoked?

Would Ethan be like that?

Her legs were spread so wide the beginning of a burn seeped into her muscles. Ethan stroked her thighs, slow and unhurried. God, she was so open. So exposed. The cool air brushed over her damp flesh. Her skin tingled as if she had heat stroke. She'd never dreamed she'd respond like this. Embarrassment threaded through the heavy blanket of desire as she felt a trickle of liquid slide down the curve of her ass.

The man, Caleb, once again stepped into the dim light, bullwhip back in hand. Unable to help herself, she flinched.

Ethan's calm breath soothed her overstimulated nerves. "Relax, Violet. Concentrate on the touch of my fingers. Trust me, she'll come to no harm."

She licked her lips. "He did that on purpose."

"He did."

"B-but that's not fair," she protested, feeling the panic well hard and fast within her.

"He doesn't need to be fair. He's the Master, he makes the rules."

The fine thread she had on her control frayed a bit more. Ethan's fingers played at the juncture of her inner thigh. Her body quivered.

"I'm going to touch you now, sugar." He practically purred the words into her ear.

Her muscles tensed.

At the same moment Caleb said, "Chin to the floor."

Without a moment's hesitation, the girl leaned down and placed her head against the floor. Caleb circled around her, standing by her feet.

Higher and higher Ethan's hand drifted up her thigh, a slow, deliberate path. She didn't dare breathe. His fingers stroked the skin in the crease of her leg. She jumped. Oh god, he was going to touch her. His thumb brushed her clit. Sensation jolted through her. She squeaked.

He chuckled, the sound almost lazy. "If you're this nervous about a tiny little touch, you're going to be in for a big surprise."

Caleb paced back, stopped, waited. On the floor, the girl's spine bowed as if in offering. "Stay still," he barked.

"Yes, Master."

The room closed in on Violet. It was all too much. These were things she'd read about, but the reality, all the stimulation, it made her head swim.

"Relax, Violet." Voice smooth, like aged scotch sliding over ice.

She couldn't relax. Every muscle coiled tight. A dull ache crept up her spine as she fought to keep her posture upright. All she wanted to do was melt into him. But she couldn't. Something hard and unyielding stopped her. Again he feathered his fingers along her pussy with the briefest of contact. Her nerve endings exploded with an almost overwhelming pleasure.

From one little touch. It scared her. Terrified her. She shrank back.

The whip in Caleb's hands sliced through the air, the tip fell across the pale skin of the woman's back. A second later a red welt formed on her delicate flesh.

No way. She could never do that. Her pulse pounded so loud she could hear it in her ears. Never. No man would mark her, whip her. Not even Ethan.

"You're wet, soaking." Ethan's voice, sounding distant, still jerked her out of her thoughts. "Your body wants this even with your mind fighting."

She snapped her head to look at him. She let her legs fall from his and yanked her skirt down below her knees. Her arms crossed over her chest, ensuring the draping fabric remained firmly in place.

Dangerous. Lethal. His blue eyes glittered with hunger and raw power. Panic crawled over her skin. He watched her. Studied. Knowing. Her heart raced, beating so hard she was sure it would slam out of her ribs.

The sound of the whip broke through the room, cracking along the air that seemed to sizzle with all the heat in the room. Violet didn't need to look know another red mark would mar the woman's skin. She inhaled deeply. The scent of sex assailed her, made

her dizzy. The inner walls of her pussy rippled, as if asking to be filled. Another trickle slid down her thigh. She shouldn't like this. It was wrong.

Ethan ran a thumb over her mouth. "Look at her face, Violet. She's not in pain."

Slowly she turned to look at the woman on the floor. What she saw frightened her more than if the sub had been in agony.

Her cheeks flushed a pretty pink, her eyes closed. Her lids were relaxed, not shut tight like Violet's would have been. The girl's lips were parted as though on a sigh. She looked... Violet struggled to form the work in her mind...at peace. Almost rapturous. Beautiful.

Her heart clutched as if it were being squeezed like a fist.

She turned back to face Ethan.

He studied her closely, his hand resting lightly at the curve of her hip.

Her mind went blank. Nothing. No thought filtered through. Just overwhelming feeling. She opened her mouth, not knowing what to say. "I want to go home now." Was that flat monotone hers?

His blue eyes narrowed as though he were trying to peer inside her and read her soul. She flinched. She couldn't let him see what was in her heart.

The need. The hunger. The fear that she desired to be just like the girl on the floor. It couldn't be right. To want like this was wrong.

She steeled her spine, ready to fight to get the hell out of there.

What was she doing? She didn't need Ethan's permission. She frowned. So why the hell was she sitting here, waiting for it?

The knowledge struck her like a blow.

He was training her. Worse yet, she liked it.

His fingers slid up her bare spine and she was unable to help the shiver of response that danced over her skin. Her body craved him. Wanted him with an unnatural desperateness.

Another loud crack sounded along the air.

Get out. Now. She couldn't look, closed her eyes. She didn't want to be a part of this. It wasn't her. She was a nice girl. She'd been reared in a nice, safe Chicago suburb in a nice, safe family. She didn't belong with this leather crowd, in a dungeon, watching young women get whipped.

Ethan zipped up the back of her dress and she sagged in relief. Thank god. She'd been sure he'd refuse.

"Stop for a minute, please." Ethan's loud tone practically vibrated the walls.

Eyes still closed, Violet felt the world still to silence. Not even a flicker.

It hit her then. Her throat closed over as she fought the tears that threatened. They were all there for her. This show was for her. It had nothing to do with the woman lying on the floor. Ethan had given her a taste of submission and all she wanted to do was curl into a ball and weep.

She dropped her head into her hands.

Ethan scooped her up and placed her on the couch next to him. "Give me a minute and I'll take you home."

She didn't look up as the warmth of his body left her. Cold seeped through her bones, chilling her blood. She shuddered. What was happening to her?

She lifted her head only to see Ethan talking to Caleb up front. Both men glanced in her direction with twin expressions of concern curving the corners of their mouths down.

How funny. She'd always thought Ethan had quiet, unassuming looks. But he didn't look out of place at all standing next to the huge blond man with the face of an angel.

She shifted her attention to the floor at the men's feet. She sucked in a breath. The girl was gone. Where was she?

Violet started to shake. She needed air. Needed space to breathe. She glanced wildly around the room. Spotted the door.

Ran.

Chapter Eight

"She's getting away." Caleb pointed toward the door.

The door closed behind Violet. *Fuck!* Ethan jerked his head in a sharp nod. "Later."

He took off in a run. The door practically flew off the hinges as he shoved it open. Like a wild man, he scanned the room.

Where the hell was she?

He pushed through a crowd, paying no attention to the disgruntled looks. A flash of white in the corner of his vision had him heading left.

Anger, hot and irrational, flooded through his system, pushing his adrenaline into overdrive. He knocked a drink out of someone's hands. Glass crashed to the floor and liquid splattered on his pants. He didn't even break stride.

"Hey, asshole!" a deep male voice called after him.

She didn't trust him.

Nothing he'd done tonight had proved anything to her. He'd fucking stopped. With any other sub he would have pressed, prodded, commanded until she surrendered. Not because he'd force her, but because it had been what they both wanted.

It was what Violet wanted too, what she needed. Her pussy had been soaking wet, her nipples hard. He could have used his hands and mouth until she forgot all about her fears. Forgot everything but his touch and the orgasms he was pulling from her body. But he hadn't. She'd asked him to stop. And he'd done it. For her. Because he thought if he continued it might damage their relationship and he wanted to prove she could trust him.

He'd gone against his Master's instinct because he hadn't wanted to risk the fragile threads of their fledging bond. He'd been prepared to take care of her, pamper her, talk to her all night until she felt better.

But she hadn't trusted him enough to do any of that. Instead, she'd run from him, from herself.

If she thought he'd let her get away with it, she was in for one hell of a surprise.

He tore through the crowd. Out the corner of his eye he glimpsed a flash of white. He veered, following the blur, fighting past the writhing bodies grinding to the heavy thump of music under the strobe lights. He kept his sight trained on the exit sign, knowing that's where she was headed.

The heavy wood door angled open. A stream of light from the busy downtown street cast Violet in its iridescent glow. The knot in his chest loosened a fraction.

She glanced over one bare shoulder. Their eyes met, clung. She shook her head, turned toward the night and was gone.

Anger roared through him.

Goddamn it. When he caught her, and he would, she'd be in for a rude awakening. He wasn't one of her boy toys. He sprinted, rushing past a blur of people. Someone called out his name, but he ignored them. Pushed open the door with a hard shove.

The cool spring air hit him in the face. He zeroed in on her like a heat-seeking missile. Her arm was already raised to hail a cab. A fucking cab! Adrenaline spiked his blood, making him forget all about reason, all about taking it easy on her.

The little brat.

He grabbed her by the elbow and yanked her around. She let out a squeal of protest. A wild look flashed in her eyes. "Let me go!" she screamed in a voice he'd never once heard her use.

He dropped his hand and yelled back, "I can't believe you were just going to leave."

"I need to get out of here. I want to go home." Her hands curled into tight fists. "Don't you understand?"

"I told you I would take you." Again he gripped her wrist and waved away the yellow taxi that had pulled to the curb. "Let's go."

"No. I need to be alone." She shrank back, squirmed, yanked her hand to break his hold on her wrist.

"I'm taking you home." He lowered his voice to a deadly tone. "I don't suggest you fuck with me right now, Violet."

"Or what?" she taunted. In place of the composed woman he knew, a hellion glared back at him, eyes blazing, hair a wild mess around her flushed cheeks.

Deviant that he was, it turned him on. He remained silent but raised one eyebrow.

"Don't give me that look," she spit out through clenched teeth. "You're Ethan, my *friend*, I've worked with you for three damn years. You're harmless!"

"Is that right?" His cock thickened, hardened despite his temper fraying at the edges.

"Yes!" She yanked her hand out of his grasp, and this time he let her go. She threw her arms in the air and stomped her foot. Some of his anger loosened its tight hold as amusement took its place. He fought the smile that quirked at his lips. She was throwing a tantrum.

"You're the computer geek," she shouted loud enough to draw attention from passersby on the street, but she didn't even notice. "The safe guy. The guy voted most trustworthy in a dark alley."

Oh, she was asking for it. Dead certain she wanted to provoke him, he checked the temper that threatened to roar back to life. Instead, he jerked his head toward the darkened corridor off to the left. "Then let's take a walk, sugar."

Her face flushed, but her gaze skirted toward the dangerous-looking alleyway. Her lavender eyes flashed with all sorts of heat. "Go to hell."

“If you’re going to brat it up you’d better be prepared for the consequences.” All this wild energy of hers, he recognized it for what it was—she needed him to take control. And by god she was going to get it.

He took a step. Desire sparked in her gaze, but she retreated. He grinned, letting her see the Master. She gasped, stumbled as she tried to evade him. His arm shot out and he righted her. And even though he had her trapped, he dropped his hand and let her get away.

Then he laughed. A low, vibrating sound meant to warn, meant to tease.

Alarm and hunger played across her face.

In a casual tone, he asked, “Have you ever had your ass smacked?”

Cheeks flaming, she gaped at him. “W-what are you talking about?”

“When I reach you—and make no mistake—I will.” He paced one step forward. She mirrored him, keeping the distance between them. “I’m going to throw you over my shoulder, take you into the alley, and I’m going to spank your ass until it’s bright red. Then I’m going to fuck you. So be ready.”

She gave him the finger, turned and sprinted away.

He smiled. Like a good little sub girl, she ran into the alley instead of to the safety she’d been screaming for only moments before.

Just as he knew she would.

He fought the impulse to chase. His muscles jumped but he stayed in place. She looked over her shoulder, her black hair streaming behind her. In that moment, his heart stopped and his breath snagged in his chest. Beautiful. Wild and untamed, she glowed with raw unrestrained emotion. He’d done that. And now he needed to touch, to feel that vibrancy dance under his fingertips.

He began his pursuit.

She shrieked, sprinting faster. Pure pleasure mixed with hot lust as he gave them what they both wanted. His legs pounded against the concrete as he ate up the ground

separating them. Close now, he grabbed her around the waist, hauling her to him, jerking them both to a stop.

"No." Her stomach heaved under his hands as she sucked in air.

The word shot a jolt from the base of his spine to his balls. God, he wanted her. He growled. "You ready to get punished?"

"You're a bastard." Not quite willing to give up the fight even though her nipples were hard and he'd bet a million dollars she was wet, hot and throbbing.

He sank his teeth into the soft skin at the curve of her neck. "And don't you *ever* forget it."

He pushed her toward the wall. Her shoes scraped against the ground as she fought to keep her position. He barked, "Hands on the wall."

Her palms slapped on the brick while her foot shot out and nailed him in the shin.

He winced, fought the urge to lean down and rub the spot. He grabbed her hair at the nape, twisted. "You're going to pay for that."

"Fuck you." Her breath hissed out.

He snaked a hand under her skirt, yanked it over her hips. "Ready to give up the good fight?"

"Never."

"You're going to eat those words, sugar." He kicked her legs apart, spreading her wide. Exposing her to the cool night air. He pressed his hard cock into the seam of her perfect ass, sliding his palm down over her smooth, flat stomach. The tips of his fingers brushed over her clit. She rose on tiptoes to deepen the contact. Ruthless, he plunged inside her dripping pussy. Thrust once. Twice.

"Oh god," the words seemed to slip out of her, unnoticed. She let her head fall between her outstretched arms.

His thumb circled her clit as he slid his fingers in and out of her tight cunt. Her muscles rippled along his skin. She was swollen, ready. He twisted her hair tighter. "You can fight all you want, Violet, but it won't change the facts."

"Facts?" She groaned, throwing her hips back.

"The fact you're my little slut to fuck however and whenever I want."

"Yes. More. Please, Ethan." The tight canal clamped down on his fingers, building in strength and rhythm, signaling her impending orgasm.

He pulled away. Removed his touch and dropped the hold he had on her hair.

"No!" She glared at him over her shoulder.

He slapped her bare ass. A red print appeared against her smooth, creamy skin.

"Ouch," she shrieked. "That hurt."

Lust raged in his blood, so hot, so on the verge of losing control his vision dimmed.

Despite the defiance on her face, he looked into those violet eyes and saw what she was hiding. Need and hunger shimmered in her gaze. She wanted to submit but couldn't say the words. So she fought.

He smacked the other round cheek. His mouth watered. His cock throbbed. "That's." *Slap.* "The." *Slap.* "Point." *Slap.* "Violet."

He continued to rain a series of blows along her ass until it was bright red, and she was pushing into the blows. She rose on the balls of her feet, her eyes closed, her head thrown back.

Jesus. He stopped, smoothing his palms over her warm flesh. Their harsh breath filled the night air to combine with the traffic from the street. Never in all his experience had he been so close to losing control. She could have taken more, but he couldn't.

The knowledge shook him to the core.

With gritted teeth he fought his own hunger to take her like an animal. He reached around and stroked her pussy. She was so wet his fingers slid with no friction. He

grabbed one of her small hands, placed it between her legs, covering it with his own palm. "Has your cunt ever been this wet?"

She pressed her ass into his straining cock. "Please, Ethan."

Smack. "Answer me."

"No," she cried out. "No, never." Under his hand, her fingers began to work her clit in a frantic motion, mindless in her quest for release.

He jerked her hand away and placed it on the wall. Her nails dug into the brick. He unzipped her strapless dress, pushing the fabric to her waist so her breasts were exposed. He skimmed his hands down her back, reached around to find her nipples. Plucked. Squeezed. Twisted.

Her hips began to undulate to a rhythm all their own. She let out a soft, needy sound. "Please. Please. Ethan. Please."

"How bad do you want to get fucked right now?" He rolled the hard buds between his thumbs and forefingers, applying a hard pressure he knew only heightened her arousal.

She tossed her head, sending her black hair flying to swirl over her shoulders in a dark wave.

He released her breasts and smacked her ass over and over.

"Oh. God. Yes." She rose onto the balls of her feet again.

"Answer my question. How bad?" He gritted his teeth. Fought his own desire. The only thought pounding in his brain was owning her. Possessing her.

"More than—" She broke, sobbed when he flicked her nipples, rubbed over the very tips. "Anything, ever."

"Beg me." The master in him roared to life, overtook him in dark, possessive need. He squeezed one nipple, reached between her legs and thrust two fingers inside her. Her pussy clamped down on him like a vise. "Don't you dare come, Violet. Not 'til I'm inside you." He bit her neck. "Not 'til I order it."

She cried out. "Please. Please, Ethan, fuck me. I'm begging you."

It should have been enough. With anyone else it probably would have been, but with Violet it was never enough. "Who owns you?"

He pressed his cock into the curve of her ass. She met him, rocking against him. Pleasure prickled across his nerve endings.

"You."

He should leave it alone, but he was too far gone and he needed to hear her say it. "Who's your Master, Violet?"

Again, her cunt clamped down on his fingers. "You. I promise. You."

"Tell me who owns you?" He reached for his zipper.

"You do."

Frustration had him jerking her by the arm. *Say it, damn it.* "Turn around."

She stumbled around, pressed her back to the brick wall to steady herself. Breath harsh, her skin flushed, hair a wild, damp mass around her face, she looked so fuckable. Custom designed to drive him mad.

The only thing that stopped him from giving in was the bone-deep certainty that winning this power struggle would mean he'd won her. Calmed by the thought, it gave him back the ounce of control he needed to see this through. With a slow, deliberate hand he unbuckled his belt and unzipped his pants, releasing his cock. He watched her face, pleased when her eyes widened. He fisted the shaft and stroked down the length of his erection. "You want it?"

She licked her lips, nodded.

"Then tell me who owns you."

Her smooth brow wrinkled. "I said you."

"Who am I?" He slipped a condom out of his pocket. He kept up a slow rhythm, pressing on the underside of the head with his thumb on the upstroke to stave off the need to erupt. When was the last time he felt this way? This alive and excited? He

couldn't remember if he ever had, but Violet reminded him of all the reasons he'd gotten into this lifestyle to begin with.

"Ethan." Her eyes darted away as she raised her hands above her head and stretched out her body. A sub trick – testing his resolve, testing her own.

"Try again."

She blew out her breath, met his gaze and arched her back. An offering.

"Say it. And I'll fuck you like no one else ever has." He ripped the condom open with his teeth. In seconds he was rolling the latex over his cock.

"I don't come during sex," she whispered on a rush of air.

Surprised at the admission, he fought to keep his expression blank. "You will this time."

She shook her head. "I can't. I'm defective that way." A small, nervous laugh escaped her lips.

His heart pounded in his chest, tightened and squeezed. He took her chin in his hand. Kissed her soft and light on the mouth. "I dare you not to."

He skimmed his lips down her throat. Licked at her rapid pulse. He moved lower, cupped her breasts, rubbed his thumbs across the peaks. Her head fell back against the wall. His tongue danced across first one nipple then the second. He sucked the hard bud into his mouth, plucked the other. She clutched his head, dug her fingers into his skull. Her hips moved, sought out his erection, rocked against it.

The feel of her wet pussy riding his cock was almost his undoing. He played a moment longer, until she arched and moaned with each touch.

He straightened and took her jaw between his fingers, forced her to meet his gaze. When those dazed violet eyes met his, he asked, "Who owns you?"

Her breath stuttered.

Several long moments passed where all that could be heard was the sound of traffic from the street. He waited, raised a brow.

Between her thighs, his cock throbbed for attention, but he wouldn't relent. Not until she submitted. Because that was what Violet needed. To submit. To be mastered.

Seconds ticked by.

"You do, Master," she whispered in slow, halting speech.

Power and lust, unlike he'd ever known, rolled through him. He gripped the back of her neck, leaned down and took her mouth in a hard, demanding kiss.

She clutched at him as their tongues met. All night he'd restrained himself, held back for fear of scaring her, but now he gave her everything. His lips moved hers as he fucked her mouth as he'd be fucking her body. When he tore away from her, she practically fell into him. He met her gaze. "Mine."

She nodded. "Yours."

He lifted one slender thigh to his hip and drove inside her, almost brutal in his possession. She cried out. Her neck arching as her body fought to accommodate him.

He closed his eyes for a moment. She was tight, hot and wet, squeezing him like a glove one size too small. Heaven on earth. This hadn't been what he'd planned, but his plans didn't seem to matter right now. All that mattered was making this woman belong to him in a way she'd never belonged to anyone else. His cock pulsed as her muscles rippled.

She moaned, a long, deep, needy sound.

He bit her neck then smoothed the rough spot with his tongue.

He thrust, letting all his raw emotion flow from his body into hers.

"Oh." She sighed as though relieved.

He shifted angles, pumped. Her cunt clenched around his cock. He gritted his teeth as pure sensation speared through him. He bent his knees and drove hard and high into her, circling his hips so his pelvis rocked against her clit.

She let out a shriek. He locked his position and hammered home. Into her ear he ordered, "You will never run away from me again. Understood?"

"Yes." Her fingers dug into his shoulders. She twisted under him. The corners of her mouth drooped as her lids squeezed tight.

He slowed his pace. "Look at me."

Her eyes opened, they glittered wet under the dim light. She shook her head. "I can't. I'm sorry. Not even with you."

Jesus, this was going to kill him. He leaned down and brushed her lips. A soft touch, a brush of flesh against flesh.

With great reluctance, he pulled away. Straightened. "Listen up, little girl." He put steel in his voice. "You're going to come all over my cock in about ten minutes."

Again, she shook her head.

He held up his wrist and showed her the digital watch. "What time is it?" The pale green light glowed in the darkness.

She frowned, and he stroked her pussy with his cock in a slow, deliberate tease. "What time?"

"Eleven twenty-eight."

"Raise your hands above your head."

Confusion played across her face as questions filled her gaze. He squeezed her leg. "I'm going to let go. If you don't keep my cock inside you, you'll be punished."

Her gaze darted away as her pussy clamped down on his erection. He laughed. "You won't like it as much as this one." He slapped the outer curve of her thigh, and she clenched again. He thrust, once, twice, three times. "I used to fantasize about spanking you." He leaned down and brushed his lips over the satin-smooth skin on her neck. "The reality is so much better."

"Oh. Yes." Her head fell against the brick.

"Don't worry, sugar, by Monday morning you won't be able to sit without thinking of my hand." He grinned at her. "Staff meetings will never be the same."

She groaned. "Eth, please." She rocked, her swollen pussy rippling along his cock. "Can't we, um, pick up the pace?"

"Now you're just begging for it, aren't you, Violet?"

She shook her head. "Sorry."

"Don't worry, I know plenty of things designed to keep you in line." He let go of her leg and her muscles tightened along his hip. "Good girl."

He waited until her gaze was trained on him then pulled his belt from the loops.

Her eyes went wide. "W-what ar —"

"No questions."

Her mouth snapped shut.

He reached over her head and wrapped her wrists with the wide leather strap. As he stretched, his cock began to slide from her body. "Remember what I said. Work those muscles to keep me inside or I promise you won't like the consequences."

Her wet, hot cunt rippled along his shaft and he pressed closer to chase her heat. He hurried his motions, drawing the strap through the buckle and pulling tight to lock her wrists in place. "Keep them above your head."

She nodded.

He hooked one leg over his elbow, deepening their connection. He thrust hard into her.

She cried out.

"You have one job." He bent his knees, sought the angle that made her gasp. "Come. That's it. Don't think. Don't question. Don't fight." He plunged into her. Her inner walls tightened. "Submit to me. Please me. Let go."

She jerked and moaned. He pumped harder. Faster. Deeper.

With his free hand he found her breast, played with the hard bud. She let out a small wail.

"That's it." His lungs burned as he fought for air. Pleasure prickled at the base of his spine and his balls tightened as he slammed his hips, each stroke hitting her clit. Her hips moved with him now, with no resistance, no restraint. "Come on, Violet, fuck me." He squeezed her nipple hard, applying pressure until she threw her head back and screamed loud as her cunt squeezed and spasmed along his cock, sending him over the edge with her. His orgasm exploded through him, shaking his very foundation as he emptied inside her. He thrust into her over and over until he was drained and Violet was trembling from the aftershocks.

Exhausted and more relaxed than he'd ever been in his life, he pressed his sweaty forehead against hers.

"What have you done to me?" she asked, her breath uneven.

"Loved you," he said simply. Because it was true. He lifted his head, and her eyes blinked back at him, once again shinning with tears. She opened her mouth, closed it, opened again only to snap it shut. He smiled at her.

Poor thing was at a loss for words.

In the mood for play, he leaned in close and nipped at her bottom lip. Lifting his wrist, he showed her the watch. "What time is it?"

Her expression eased and she rolled her eyes before gazing at the glowing face. She sighed. "Eleven thirty-six."

"Ah, look at that, I even have two minutes to spare." He pulled out of her and discarded the condom then reached up and undid her bound hands.

They spent the next several minutes adjusting their clothes and grinning at each other like idiots. When the task was complete, he pulled her close and kissed her long, slow and deep. The kiss held both promise and possession. When he lifted his head, he stared into those violet eyes that had captivated him since the first time he'd seen her three years ago. "Ready to go home?"

She searched his face and, if the pure joy on her expression was an indication, found what she was looking for. She gave him a smile so brilliant, so genuine his heart skipped a beat. "Yes, Master, I am."

Epilogue

"Are you going to obey me?" Ethan's voice sounded winded as he thrust hard into Violet.

She hung her head, letting it rest against the rumpled bed. Her fingers clenched into the sheets as her pussy clamped around his cock. A scream erupted from her throat as an explosive orgasm threatened to consume her.

A slap landed on her ass. She jerked as stinging heat spread along her skin.

"Answer me."

What had he asked? She searched her mind. Pleasure raced along her skin. Oh god, yes. So, so good. She pushed her hips back, meeting his. She'd come so many times last night she'd been sure she'd never come again. But he proved her wrong and made her crazy all over again.

Smack. Her ass stung as he spanked her over and over. She moaned, lifted in offering, met his blows, reveling in the fiery sensation.

"Violet. I'll ask one more time." His words were punctuated with hard, labored breaths. "Are you going to obey me?"

He hit a spot deep inside her. The spot that made her lose all reason. She pushed up onto her elbows. The pressure building inside her tightened and loomed bright and promising. "I'm going to come."

"No."

"Goddamn you." She beat her fists against the mattress. Sweat broke out on her temple as she fought her body's needs. His denial made her ache, made her ready to die just to come, made her willing to do anything.

He reached around her waist and his fingers snapped against her clit. Shocked, she jerked as pleasure rocked through her. "Oh," she cried out.

Again he tapped those talented fingers. She screamed. Her muscles quivered.

He laughed, that low, wicked laugh that told her she was in trouble. It made her all the hotter. All the wetter.

She licked her lips, fought to find the words. "May I come, Master?"

He thrust hard and higher, pushing her across the bed. "No."

"Can't. Take. Any. More."

"You can." He sought the swollen bud between her legs, squeezed.

The orgasm rushed over her, she let out a loud wail that a month ago would have embarrassed her but now she didn't even notice as brilliant light flashed behind her eyelids and her body shook.

Seconds later, Ethan's shout filled the room as he spilled inside her, filled her up.

She collapsed in a heap, and he followed, resting against her back as they both fought for breath.

Several minutes later, he kissed her neck. "We've got to go."

She moaned. The last thing she wanted to do was go downstairs to the hotel meeting room and give a blasted presentation. All she wanted was to stay in bed with him. She sighed. "If we must."

They untangled their limbs, stopping to kiss and tease as they dressed. Of course he'd made sure they'd gotten ready early in anticipation of not being able to get out the door without a "good, hard fuck" as he liked to call it.

That was Ethan, always prepared, like a deviant, perverted Boy Scout.

He buttoned her blouse, pausing to suck and lick her nipples. Desire she'd been sure was spent tickled low in her belly. His mouth pulled deeper, his tongue licking along the tip. She moaned, pressed into him.

He pulled away and smiled, looking thoughtful. Her heartbeat kicked up. *Oh no.* That expression made her tremble both in anticipation and panic. She knew he took it easy on her, easing her into their relationship and his control over her. But his requests were increasingly getting harder, more demanding.

He cocked his head to the side, his gaze dancing with devious mischief. "You know you never answered me."

"Hmm..." she trailed off, somehow hoping that her non-answer would divert him, knowing it wouldn't. She suspected the only reason he'd let her get away with not answering was because it suited his plans. She pointed to the bathroom. "I need to go freshen up."

He shook his head. "I don't think so. You need to be reminded who controls you, and what better way than giving a presentation with no panties and filled with my come."

Her throat went dry. A couple of weeks ago, he'd insisted on the formalities of a blood test since she was on birth control pills and he didn't want any barriers between them. Now he was using it to his advantage. "You wouldn't."

"I would. I do."

"B-but this is work."

He raised one brow. "Oh? So I only own you during non-business hours?"

She bit her lip, thinking on a way out. She couldn't do this. Now she'd wished she'd just answered him. What had she been thinking? Ugh. Damn man made her lose her head. "Umm...no."

"Hang on." Before she could ask where he was going he disappeared into his adjoining room. People at work had begun to realize they were involved, but Ethan and Violet didn't flaunt their relationship. In only moments he returned, holding a small black cylinder-shaped object.

Her heart thudded, skipped a beat. "What?"

"You came," he said simply.

"So did you." The retort left her mouth before she could hold it in.

On a long, exaggerated sigh he shook his head. "Put your hands on the dresser and lean over, Violet."

"I will not."

One thick brow rose up his forehead. "Keep testing me, sugar. I can think of all sorts of interesting ways to torture you."

Could he? Really? What could be worse than this? Nothing that she could think of. Of course, she'd made the mistake of thinking that before only to be proven wrong.

He stroked the line of her jaw. "You hold on to this defiance, and that's fine, but then you've got to pay the consequences."

He was right. She did hold on to the fight, somehow scared to give it up, afraid of what would happen between them if she did. She took a deep breath. He knew many more tricks than she did. If she denied him this, she didn't doubt she'd pay double her current fine. She leaned over and put her hands on the dresser.

He walked up behind her and smoothed his hand over the curve of her hip. "Good girl." He flipped her skirt up so the fabric fluttered onto her back. He reached around and slid his fingers over her clit. She responded to his touch as she always did, a jolt of pleasure spiraling through her.

"Mmmm... I love how you're such a little slut for me." He slid his fingers inside her, thrust until she arched and moaned, then he withdrew.

She shook her head. "No, please."

"So greedy. So needy." Suddenly his fingers, wet with cool lubricant, circled the tight ring of her ass. "I'm going to take you here, very soon. I think this is the perfect time to start preparing you."

Desire shot through her. She'd been waiting for this, wanting it, but he hadn't done anything but mild, feathery touches that were over before they began. She squeezed her

eyes shut. It was just like him to pick a time she was most vulnerable to introduce her. She tightened.

The tips of his fingers eased into her opening. "Relax."

She responded to his command, letting her muscles unclench, loosen. He slid his finger inside and she rippled with a dark, forbidden pleasure. Another finger followed the first, filling her, stretching her. She couldn't help the moan.

He pulled out, circled the puckered skin, thousands of nerve endings danced to the music he set. She pushed her ass higher into the air, a silent offering.

He leaned down, nipped at the lobe of her ear. "You've been wanting this, haven't you?"

She nodded.

"Tell me. Ask me for it."

She gulped, swallowed. The need he invoked in her, it was insatiable. He worked it. Kept it right at the forefront, making it impossible to lose sight of the fact he controlled her body. On a sob, she said, "Please fuck my ass, Master."

"I will, soon." The head of the plug pressed at her quivering opening. "This is the smallest of three, they increase in size, when you can take the largest, I'll fuck you." The tip slid in. "Relax and push back."

She did as instructed, resisting the urge to tense, to fight. She'd read enough to know the more she relaxed the easier it would be. It stretched, burned, filled her, but god, did she want it. When it was inserted, she breathed out.

"That's it, my good girl." He ran his palms over her ass, pausing to tap the base of the plug.

At his approval, she shivered. The tight muscles rippled, shooting a dark, pleasure-filled pain through her. Her head dropped and she rested it against the dresser. She wanted him more than ever. She wanted to get fucked, in that raw intense way only Ethan could do.

"Time to go." He flipped the skirt back down, covering her.

She blinked, stood, spun. "What?"

"The presentation. We've got to get down there, it starts in fifteen minutes." He stared at her from behind his wire-rimmed frames, hair neat and tidy, his blue button-down tucked into his khaki pants. The unofficial uniform no longer fooled her, she saw him for exactly who he was.

Her Master.

About the Author

Born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago where she still calls home, Julia lives with her husband and two children. She never dreamed about being a writer, although she did go through a light FM, poem-writing phase when she was a teenager. Then one day, while experiencing a lull in her management consulting work and wanting to be good about her internet usage, she decided to open a Word document and play around. A full-blown obsession was born, and the rest, as the say, is history.

Julia welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at www.ellorascave.com.

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