



# Submissive Desires

Carolyn  
Faulkner



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By Carolyn Faulkner

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## PROLOGUE

### PRESENT DAY

Her feet were beginning to hurt as she hung there, but raising one foot at a time only increased the pressure on the butter-soft suede straps that enclosed her wrists, holding them anchored in the air above her head – just high enough to force her into her bare, pink tippy-toes. Of course, he was enjoying the added benefits that this position afforded him; her luscious naked body arched as if presenting itself to him . . . to whatever implement he decided to use on that as yet pristine white skin.

He adored touching her – it had easily become an addiction with him, so much so that sometimes he worried about his need to always have his hands on her. Never having had the need for any sort of crutch – emotional, physical, or intellectual in his life, it was almost something he could come to resent.

Almost, but not in this lifetime.

Here and now, she felt so good to him . . . too damned good.

Too bad her behavior gave him cause to make her feel not so good, although with her, it was hard to tell. She'd been dripping wet, literally weeping with juice, even after the hardest of sessions. Even sessions that were simply at his own whim, as her owner, with no missteps prompting them, striping her bottom viciously for the sheer pleasure of giving her the pain she needed so badly.

To her complete surprise, he lowered her a little, so that she was flat on her feet, but still with her wrists bound above her head. The matching cuffs on her ankles – with diabolically convenient rings at the four points of the compass – were being pulled apart, separating her legs to an uncomfortable degree while still keeping the soles of her feet on the thick gray carpeting.

“Unnnnnn-ahhhhhhhh,” she moaned, knowing better than to beg for mercy even as he coaxed those slender ankles a good bit further apart, securing each of them so that her privates – which were mandatorily kept strictly bare as were most other parts of her body with the notable exception of her full head of darkish blonde hair, which he barely allowed her to have trimmed every month or so – were completely exposed and entirely vulnerable to him. Then he clicked the bundle of her wrists two notches forwards on the track he'd had bolted into the ceiling where a heavy hook kept those hands nicely elevated, and now, her waist was bent at a truly obscene angle that made it look like she was offering herself up to him for whatever nefarious plans he might have.

And, knowing him, they'd be extremely nefarious.

The tall, muscular man squatted down behind her, frankly enjoying the view as his gently but harshly restrained, agitated treasure tried ineffectively to find a less revealing position. As she began to realize just how vulnerable she was, her squirming became more frantic but nothing helped. She was, as she'd always been and always would be, entirely at his mercy.

And she knew for a cold, hard fact that he didn't possess any of that tender emotion.

She'd been through this – or many scenes very like this – before with him.

Before he let her go, she would be one very, very, very repentant lady.

Even if she hadn't committed a sin in his eyes in days.

He stilled her agitated movements merely by cupping her womanhood from behind as he rose and bent over her a bit, enjoying the feel of her naked, well-rounded cheeks against his denim fly. He kept

her naked most of the time as a reminder of her status, making scrupulously sure that the temperature in the house was perfect for her so that she never felt the need to even ask for any sort of covering.

Not that she'd get it, anyway. He had other ways of warming her up, externally and internally.

"Stay still, little girl, or you're likely to wrench something." His fingers had landed on that prominent bud of hers – both sets of her lips were already, by nature of her position, well separated, her secrets entirely unsafe and unguarded, most particularly that little, ever-pulsating, eternally drenched wonder of hers.

Exactly as he'd planned.

Straightening, he reached to his right, to the triple dresser he always used to hold the various implements she would soon feel on her skin – or inside various points on her body. She couldn't crane her head around enough to see what he'd taken up, but seconds later she both smelled and felt the familiar padded leather discs of her blindfold as it took up residence around her head, adding another dimension to her complete vulnerability, leaving her bobbing her head to try and detect any small beam of light that might work its way determinedly under those firmly placed pads, but there was none.

There never was.

She was completely blinded as she heard something slip off the top of the dresser.

The leather length he had in his hand was nothing too frightening; it wasn't incredibly long or wide or spiked or decorated with anything, although there was about an inch and a half of doubled width, right at the tail end of it that was stiff and much harder than the rest.

It looked rather innocuous, really, he thought. It was one of his most recent and best designs, if he did say so himself. And so effective in driving home the point . . . or no point at all beyond the fact that he could and would do this to her any time he wished to.

But no description could have been further from the truth.

The strap's first slice against her body had the poor woman sucking in every ounce of air around her until she was still left gasping, as if there wasn't enough oxygen in the room for her to process what she was feeling. Just as her throat closed around a bone deep scream that began at her toes and slowly worked its way out another crack landed, pre-empting the first agonized yell in favor of another long, ragged draw of air.

It took till the fourth stroke before she could get that scream out, and by then it had turned into an animalistic howl that set the hair on the back of his neck on end, not that that stopped him from delivering another crisp slap as he jerked his powerful wrist up hard, sending that wonderful implement crashing up onto her exposed pussy, the dense tab at the end flicking further up between her legs than the rest of the leather, seeking and finding that most precious nub as it – and she – tried desperately to cringe away from its painful kiss.

Her poor, swollen genitals – which had been swollen for entirely more pleasant reasons before he'd taken that atrocious weapon to her – were aflame. Each tremendous wallop drove her out of her mind with an agony she wasn't sure she was going to be able to survive, until the next one piled even more acute sensations on top of the last ones. She tried to dance away from them, from his discipline, but there was no hope for that unless she completely dislocated something vital.

No, she was exactly where he wanted her to be, and she was going nowhere. There would be no relief for her until he decided – if and when he decided – that she had had enough. Until then, all she could do was take it, feeling those tender tissues swelling with the searing pain each time he snapped his arm up, laying the body of the strap along her groove over and over, and making her little clit the subject of that small tab's affections until it was bright red and hot to the touch, and more abnormally swollen than ever before.

It amazed him, though, as his broad fingers roughly explored those well-beaten folds, that she was still able to drench him in her cream. He scooped up a fingerful from her poor sore entrance and brought it up to her abused button, marveling at its size even as she surprised him yet again by both



hissing in obvious pain at his touch and arching towards him, craving the ache he was both creating and relieving in her.

But he wasn't about to let her come, knowing her well enough by now to stop just short of her completion, drawing a guttural moan from his lovely lady.

His lips pressed to her ear. "Surely you didn't think you would be rewarded so early in the evening, my dear? Your little strap is just barely becoming acquainted with such intimate territory. There's lots, lots more to come before I release you, physically or sexually."

And the relentless rhythm of genital punishment began.

Again.

And again.

And again.

## Chapter One

FIVE YEARS AGO:

Just for shits and giggles, Maura Boardman sat down at her computer. It was nine at night, and there was nothing on TV, so she decided to indulge an occasional passion: Internet Relay Chat. She signed in and hit the channel search for “bdsm” – eighteen rooms came up, from “slaves ‘n masters” to “female humiliation.”

She chose a generic “female submission” channel with a decent population and joined in. The discussion was lively, revolving this evening around dildos and butt plugs and various uses thereof. She said hello to everyone and hugged a few people she knew. Two private messages popped up immediately from men in the room, both of which began with the de rigueur “a/s/l” – age, sex, location – that was this era’s “what’s your sign?”

Maura promptly ignored both of them. It was stupid, she supposed for a submissive, but she hated pushy men like that. Her nick always garnered a lot of attention, but politeness and courtesy still counted, as far as she was concerned.

As always the chat wandered from the main topic, but not too badly. Eventually they wandered onto the topic of lubes, and Maura chimed in with her old standby favorite, KY.redbotmgirl: It stays where you put it – doesn’t dribble down onto the sheets like Astroglide, etc.

SirLoin: I use elbow greas here.

MsTress2U: I’ve heard that about u, Loin ;)

redbotmgirl: I don’t usually have too much a problem with lubrication, luckily . . . <beg> Several of Maura’s friends appeared, and she greeted them all warmly, needling them gently but humorously about their lives and particular tastes when the opportunity arose, and then a polite, in-channel request popped up: CaptHawk: Redbotmgirl, may I p.m. you? CaptHawk wants to private message me, huh? Maura thought. Probably some jet-jockey wannabe who pushed a broom all day, she mused. Before she decided on whether or not to allow him to private message her, she did a little investigating. She used the “whois” function to see what other rooms he was in, and this was the only one. He was using a server out of Texas, but that didn’t necessarily mean anything. She lived in Albuquerque and deliberately signed in to a server in Virginia. She scrolled back up through the chat and saw where he’d entered and sent his greetings rather formally to the room, then lurked in the background, making only the occasional, pertinent comment. It amazed her, though, in this day and age of sloppy spelling and grammar, that everything he’d sent was letter perfect.

And he’d asked her permission in channel, which was a big plus, and frankly, almost never heard of, unfortunately.

She told him “yes” and seconds later they were conversing in their own private room. CaptHawk: Good evening. Thank you for allowing me to chat with you. Maura’s eyebrow rose, but, not wanting to let him know how impressed she was already, she just typed back: redbotmgirl: You’re welcome. One of the worst things about chatting on IRC was the lag time – it was a Saturday night at around ten, and the channels were packed. Responses took longer and longer to pop up. It was annoying in the extreme. CaptHawk: I’ve enjoyed your comments about tonight’s discussion. Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Simon Hawkins. No a/s/l for him . . . yet. Another notch in his favor. No instantaneous request for a picture or phone sex – two more hash marks for him. And if he was smart, that wasn’t his real name, either. Maura gave him her usual “on-line” pseudonym. redbotmgirl: Well, it’s kinda been one after my own heart . . . okay . . . a little lower . . . ;)

redbotmgirl: Btw, my name is Elizabeth. It was only partly a lie – that was her middle name. CaptHawk: <chuckling> It sounds as if you're pretty sexually adventurous . . . ?

redbotmgirl: I can be, on occasion.

CaptHawk: With the right person? Maura nodded her head thoughtfully.

Hmmmmmmmm. redbotmgirl: Correct.

CaptHawk: If you don't mind, how would you describe that "right person"?

She bit her lip and read the question several times, thinking hard. Unlike ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the population who frequented chat rooms, Maura tried to be as scrupulously honest with the people she was chatting with as she possibly could – it saved on trying to keep her stories straight and keep track of the lies. After all, who the hell were they to her? No one she knew – and she was sure – with the types of rooms she frequented, that even if she did know any of these people in real life, that they were not likely to be anxious to admit it, anyway. She had no interest in trying to impress any of them. If they didn't like her, then they could stop talking to her at any time, and vice versa.

At just the right time – not too short and pushy or too long and obviously occupied with six other, more important private chat sessions, he asked: CaptHawk: Still there?

redbotmgirl: Yes, thinking about my response.

CaptHawk: Thinking is good.

Redbotmgirl: Yeah, I have to admit I don't always do enough of it! <grin>

CaptHawk: That's an interesting confession. But I would like an answer to my question. Maura's eyebrow rose. She was trying to decide whether or not she appreciated his somewhat demanding tone. redbotmgirl: The right person is . . . hmmmmmmmm. Smart, funny, dominant, loving, strict, supportive . . . stop me when you've heard this.

redbotmgirl: I think most subs would build the same man, basically, if they could.

CaptHawk: But those are some of your own qualifications?

redbotmgirl: Yes, along with being able to use words of more than one syllable. I'll warn you, I do notice things like spelling when I chat. I'm a writer; I can't help it. J

CaptHawk: LOL I'll keep that in mind. And physically, what do you like?

Redbotmgirl: Kevin Sorbo . . . Adrian Paul . . . a young Sean Connery . . . I'm pretty boring – tall, muscular, dark, and handsome does it for me. Or at the very least tall and muscular . . .

CaptHawk: And those are the only types of men you find attractive?

Maura felt like she was either being interrogated or psychoanalyzed, but she liked to talk about herself as much as the next person, so if this was how he was getting his jollies, more power to him. And that question was certainly a dead giveaway that the guy was probably five-foot-nothing and looked like Sipowitz . . . but then, since she was no beauty queen herself, looks were of less than paramount importance.

redbotmgirl: Not at all. As a matter of fact, men who look like that are few and far between, and they're looking at women like Cindy Crawford, etc, and not someone with average looks, like myself. Generally, I find myself attracted to personality and intelligence first, anyway.

CaptHawk: I think I might could work with that. I've got the tall down – thanks to good genes – and although I'm no Arnold Schwarzenegger, I'm fairly muscular and fit.

redbotmgirl: LOL – now, Arnold's taking muscles a bit too far.

CaptHawk: I agree. And I have several degrees in varying fields and could probably use some words you've never seen or heard before.

redbotmgirl: I'm sure.

CaptHawk: What do you write?

redbotmgirl: Romance novels.

CaptHawk: Bodice-busters?

redbotmgirl: You're one of the few men I've ever met who is familiar with the term. Yes, they are.

CaptHawk: My ex-wife went through them like they were potato chips.

redbotngirl: Some of them are. Others have years and years worth of research and historical facts weaved expertly into the story. Mine are of the “junk food for the mind” category – no nutrition but lots of entertainment value! J

CaptHawk: As I recall, some of them can get quite steamy . . . she used to read the more . . . titillating passages to me.

redbotngirl: Yup, they can.

CaptHawk: And are yours such as those?

redbotngirl: I think I’ll take the fifth . . . <blush>

CaptHawk: LOL.

redbotngirl: And what do you do, if you don’t mind my asking? Simon minded, but he had his own pat answers to things. CaptHawk: I do some freelance work for the Govn’t.

redbotngirl: Oh. The kind where if you told me you’d have to kill me?

CaptHawk: Not necessarily – I know various other ways to keep you quiet that don’t involve killing you . . . <evil grin>

redbotngirl: Uh-huh.

CaptHawk: I’m a retired Navy Seal, amongst other things.

redbotngirl: Do you mind my asking how old you are?

CaptHawk: You may ask me anything you like. If I don’t want to answer it, I’ll let you know. I’m forty-nine.

As it happened, Maura preferred older men . . . redbotngirl: You can do the same with me. I’m largely unoffendable by now, or I wouldn’t still be using IRC! J

CaptHawk: If you’re sure about that, I might just take you up on it. How old are you?

redbotngirl: 37.

redbotngirl: And a half. <g>

CaptHawk: LOL. Well, you are a young thing, aren’t you.

redbotngirl: <snort> Yeah, right.

CaptHawk: Well, to me you are, anyway. I’m almost old enough to be your Daddy.

redbotngirl: Only if you were an extremely precocious 12 year old . . .

CaptHawk: I do tend to be a bit of an overachiever . . . <s>

redbotngirl: Obviously with multiple degrees AND an O-6 Navy Seal . . . sheesh, what did you do in your spare time, knit tank cozies?

redbotngirl: I think I’m definitely outclassed here, since I don’t even have a degree . . .

CaptHawk: Why doesn’t a smart lady like you have her degree?

redbotngirl: Uhhhhhhhhh . . . next subject.

CaptHawk: I like this subject plenty. Have you taken any college classes at all? You’re obviously intelligent and have a good command of the English language . . .

redbotngirl: Well, I uhhhhhhhhh . . .

Capt Hawk: ?

redbotngirl: I don’t wanna. I don’t jump through hoops well. I don’t give a damn what “x” equals, because I know it isn’t going to do me any good in the real world. I don’t want to have to take statistics and all that other shi – uh, junk . . .

redbotngirl: And why am I justifying this all to you, anyway? You’re not my dom.

CaptHawk: No, I’m not. Whoever is is doing an atrocious job of it.

redbotngirl: No one is, thank you very much. : p~~~~~

CaptHawk: Don’t go getting all huffy on me, Elizabeth. Settle down. “No one is” explains a lot about why you’re running amuck.

CaptHawk: You didn’t answer my question: do you have any college credits?

redbotngirl: <gulp> Yes.

CaptHawk: Don’t make me pry it out of you, young lady. How many?

redbotmgirl: I don't have to tell you <stomp> You're not my dom.

CaptHawk: It's a damned good thing for you that I'm not, Missy.

redbotmgirl: <humph>

CaptHawk: How many years would you have to do to graduate?

redbotmgirl: I don't know. <pout>

CaptHawk: Why don't you have a dom, Elizabeth?

redbotmgirl: I've taken myself off the market.

CaptHawk: Bad experience?

redbotmgirl: LOL – a couple, along with the usual guys who say they'll write and don't, those who want free phone sex, those who are out of the area and that's not even going into those who are married with four kids or those who are women or . . . or . . . or . . .

CaptHawk: I hope the couple bad experiences you had weren't anything too series.

redbotmgirl: No, they weren't. I'm pretty cautious, and it takes a long time to get me to the point where I'll go meet the guy, and I always trust my instincts about whether or not I feel safe, so it was more fending him in a parking lot at my car in the middle of the day – which I can handle fine – than wrestling at night in a hotel room, which I would never do.

CaptHawk: I'm sorry you had to go through that. Not all of us are boors.

redbotmgirl: I know. I guess it's my faith in that idea that keeps me coming here.

CaptHawk: So what did you go to college for?

redbotmgirl: Elementary Education.

CaptHawk: When did you drop out?

redbotmgirl: You've had training in interrogation techniques, haven't you?

Simon was frankly stunned. How could she have known that?

CaptHawk: Yessssssssss . . . what tipped you off?

redbotmgirl: You use the same methods as an old boyfriend of mine who was a cop. He did the same thing you just did – asked me the same question three or four different ways, just to see what kind of answer he got each time.

CaptHawk: You're very astute.

redbotmgirl: No, it's just something I'm aware of because it annoys me.

CaptHawk: I'll remember that.

CaptHawk: Well, Elizabeth Red-Bottom-Girl, I've gotta go, but I've enjoyed our chat enormously. May I message you again sometime? Well, she'd probably never hear from him again. Too bad, she thought. He sounded scrumptious, and right up her alley, so to speak.

redbotmgirl: Sure you can.

CaptHawk: Are you here a lot?

redbotmgirl: No, I pop in occasionally.

CaptHawk: When do you think you might drop by again? She didn't want to be pinned down – not that she had much of a life. Making a date to chat was pretty much worthless in her experience – no one ever showed up when they said they were going to.

redbotmgirl: Possibly next weekend.

CaptHawk: I don't mean to be too forward, but may I have your email address? Maura had a throwaway addy that she gave to anyone with whom she chatted on IRC.

redbotmgirl: No, that's fine. It's: redbottomgirl@e-mailpo.com

CaptHawk: Thank you. Mine is: SHawk@shawkinsconent.com For some reason, she copied the address without thinking too hard about it, and pasted that into her address book before she X'd out of the screen, not that she ever expected to hear from him again.

redbotmgirl: I've enjoyed chatting with you, also.

redbotmgirl: Take care.

CaptHawk: You, too, Elizabeth. You should look into taking some classes on line if regular classes are hard to fit into your schedule.

redbotmgirl: <rolling eyes> Yes, Simon.

CaptHawk: <stern gaze> Someone really does need to take you in hand, don't they? She wasn't going to touch that with a ten foot pole, discreetly not replying. CaptHawk: Have a good night. Sleep well. And he was gone, off the channel and IRC all together. That was one of the most unusual chats she'd ever had – it wasn't entirely focused on sex, and it was literate. He didn't try to order her around, yet he hadn't hesitated to nag her about getting her degree, either – what the hell difference did that make to him?

Maura shrugged her shoulders, took a long shower and crawled into bed, snuggling up to her stuffed animal collection, which made her feel a little less alone in the big bed. She fell asleep trying to form a picture in of him in her mind, but couldn't quite.

They'd never even really exchanged physical descriptions of themselves – in fact, he'd told her more about what he looked like – that he was tall and wiry muscular rather than bulging – than she'd told him. That had to be some sort of record.

He appeared to be completely unconcerned with the specifics of her looks. Was he blind, or just unusual?

## Chapter Two

### PRESENT DAY:

“What did you just say?”

Maura froze in place in the act of washing the dinner dishes. She'd been with him for so long one would think that she'd be used to how he affected her by now, but she was beginning to think that that level of comfort would never come with him. He wouldn't allow it, really. Simon really only wanted her just-so comfortable with him. Anything more than that and she might get too close to him. Sometimes Maura felt he used her submission as a method of keeping her at arms length.

Usually, she felt she was dead right about that.

It was his tone. He knew that she knew that his question was just a method of emphasizing to her what she'd done in error – making her repeat it back to him. It was also childish as well as submissive, and sometimes he leaned that way, too – towards making her feel like a chastised little girl. He'd heard all too well for her own comfort exactly what she'd said. And Maura knew what that was going to mean to the health of her bottom, and probably the backs of her thighs, too.

“I – I – “

He had already slid off the stool he'd occupied around the snack bar, and was coming towards her to stand there with his hands on his hips, and a truly unhappy expression on his face. “Yes?”

Simon was almost never sarcastic – not towards her, at least. Especially in conjunction with something that would end up in a punishment, which, she already knew, this was going to. She knew from experience that he would wait – although not patiently – for her to answer his question, even after it got well past the “embarrassed response” point.

She also knew, from painful experience, that she had better reiterate exactly what she'd said, as close to verbatim as possible, and not try to edit it in any way to make it sound better so that he'd be more lenient with her. That experiment had only happened once, and had gotten her five days of incredibly hard bedtime spankings and a moratorium on sexual pleasure – not that that stopped him from taking his own within her body. “I said that Marcie had a body that any man would die for, unlike lumpy, ugly old me.”

His facial expression didn't soften one bit, not that she'd expected it to. “And what have I told you about not putting yourself down?”

Maura couldn't help but look down at her feet. Everything about him – his posture, his words, his voice . . . and not least of which memories of being in almost exactly this spot for one reason or another over the past years – made her assume a submissive stance. Simon was so dominant that he could easily overwhelm most men. Maura never felt beaten down by him at all, and she had never been afraid to voice her opinion about anything. Simon had always listened to her and taken her opinion into consideration when making whatever decision needed to be made.

But their relationship had evolved, over time, to be what an outsider might well see as extremely restrictive to her, and of her . . . with her complete consent.

Physical discipline – more specifically corporal punishment – wasn't the only method Simon used to convey his displeasure to his woman, but it was by far the most prevalent. And Maura's butt knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt by now, exactly what was coming. So much so that her bottom had already started to clench rhythmically, as if her paddle – the one with her name emblazoned on it that she was required to keep hanging near her side of the bed at all times – was already landing time after time on those poor, rounded cheeks.

Sneaking a peek up at him, then down again, she answered in a soft voice, “Not to.”

Simon almost – but not quite – cracked a smile, not that she would have seen. She was busy studying his boots and her bare toes. Stubborn wench. Naked, stubborn wench, he revised, unable to keep himself from reaching up to touch what he owned in totality, hefting a beautiful breast and tweaking the nipple gently.

He crossed the few steps that separated them, pulling her into his arms, his big hands sliding around her waist to settle at the small of her back possessively as her soft body rested comfortably against him. They fit together as if they'd been created that way; Simon never failed to marvel at how well they meshed – in all sorts of facets of their lives. In all this time, he had never once been bored with her, or so much as looked at another woman. The men he traveled with regularly during the course of his missions had started to tease him about Maura almost immediately, but he sloughed it off. He knew a damned good thing when he had it in his hands – beneath him at night, and crying out as his belt connected with her bottom or breasts for the hundredth time in a session.

He would not give that up without a fight. Although he had never admitted it to himself, much less to her, she was the most precious thing in his world. He would gladly give up all of the trappings of wealth he had accumulated by routinely risking his life for his country, but if it came down to a choice between Maura and money or houses or anything else, he would chuck it all in a second to be with her.

As a matter of fact, Simon had been seriously considering that he might want to retire. He'd not mentioned anything of it to Maura, of course. She had never said anything about his fairly frequent overseas trips, but he knew she worried. Usually when he came back, she looked haggard and worn and thinner, and would often confess in his arms in the afterglow of a rough, hard loving that she hadn't slept much since he'd gone, and, he guessed, had eaten even less out of concern for him.

It worried him when she didn't eat, and he hated that she looked so bedraggled when he came home, knowing he was the cause. She wasn't truly thin by any means, though, his Maura. Simon thought as he brushed his hand down the flowing curtain of her hair, but he'd always preferred women with some flesh on their bones, and he absolutely hated it when she insulted herself by intimating - even in an offhand manner - that she wasn't attractive. Hell, he walked around with a perpetual hard-on. How could she possibly question her attractiveness?

His lips nuzzled the corner of hers gently as his hands reached between them to cup her beautiful breasts. "You know how I feel about you making derogatory remarks about yourself, Maura."

Maura shuddered. How she reacted to this man should be a crime. He always held both her heart and her privates in his hands whenever he touched any part of her at all, even in the most casual of caresses while they were waiting the line at the grocery store – his hand tucked into the patch pocket over the curve of her butt, or his finger looped over the edge of her waistband in the back . . . just there, subtly reinforcing their intimate connection. "Yes, Sir."

"So when you say something like that, you know you're gonna get a spanking. You must want it."

Alarmed, she answered quickly, "No! I don't want a spanking!" It didn't make any difference how she said it, she ended up sounding like a five year old trying to whine her way out of her punishment. But it was true – no one in her right mind would consciously volunteer to take one of Simon's discipline sessions – they were atrociously painful from beginning to end, even for the smallest of infractions.

Maura tried to pull away, but Simon wasn't having any of it. He kept her tight against him without much effort. Simon was so strong it was scary most of the time. She knew, though, that he would only ever use that strength to protect her – spankings notwithstanding.

He turned them so that he could lean back against the counter in front of the sink, his arms still around her waist, his nose nuzzling hers. "Hmmm. I think you protest much too much, my girl. You know you need to be kept in line as much as I need to keep you in line, and that's why you have such a wonderful rounded bottom that fits my hand so perfectly as I spank it."

Maura's lips twisted beneath his at his words as she reached behind her to rub the part in question, remembering some of her more memorable experiences over his lap, or the couch, or the arm of his recliner . . . or . . . or . . . or. "Yeah, but –"



“Yeah, your butt. Draped over my knee. Right now,” he said, moving to prop his booted foot on the railing that surrounded the snack bar. He patted his muscular thigh and gave her that horrible, expectant look from under his brow.

Her teeth automatically began to worry her lower lip as she gazed at the denim-covered place of her demise. He wouldn't wait long before coming to get her, she knew, and she could never tell whether she'd get another command or if he'd just get up and collect her, which inherently meant that whatever punishment she was going to have gotten had just been doubled, at least.

Deciding not to take her chances, she meandered slowly – very slowly – over to him. Simon struggled to hide a grin. A naughty Maura – one who knew she'd done wrong – was almost irresistible in her transparent innocence. He knew she was still hoping against hope that he'd relent – and, secretly, deeply, where she probably couldn't even admit it to herself – hoping even harder that he wouldn't. He knew she didn't really want him to let her get away with anything, and that's why he didn't. Punishments were almost always swift and sure, and always left her wishing she'd thought better of disobeying him in the first place. Simon adored marking her bottom with pretty much anything he could get his hands on – including his own palm. She was so fair skinned that nine times out of ten when he was finished with her butt it was an atrocious sight to behold – so sore it hurt just to look at. If he used an implement – like the paddle, she bruised and blazed. The cane, however, was his first and favorite toy – it formed wonderful, palpable ridges that he always fondled later. She often wore his marks for days at a time, but he never hesitated to create new sets, regardless of what her bottom looked like already. If she needed a correction, she got it – often on the spot. No questions asked.

With an obvious reluctance that he never failed to find endearing, she put herself over his knee, and Simon adjusted her into the position she was quite familiar with – both her hands and her feet well off the floor, balanced over his leg – completely and utterly helpless, her bottom hiked well up into the air to present a better target for him, and quite deliberately increasing her already prominent feelings of vulnerability.

Frankly, there was rarely a time when she didn't feel extremely, deliciously vulnerable to him. It was part of her attraction to him – that he could, would, and had, on occasion, used his superior strength to completely overwhelm her and take her to places she would have sworn she would never have been able to go. He just seemed to naturally know when totally overwhelming her objections – which was nine times out of ten, anyway – was just the right thing for her, just what she needed, even if she couldn't quite arrive at that conclusion herself at the time.

His hand rested on her bottom cheeks, where it had been so many times before, but it never failed to make her tingle with that awful dreaded anticipation. Honestly, she wasn't sure which was worse – being grabbed and spanked in an impromptu manner, which had happened with alarming regularity especially when she was just settling in to living with him and learning exactly what he expected of her in regards to her behavior, or being told on a Monday that she was going to have an “appointment” with him that Wednesday night, and having to spend two days with her stomach in knots while visions of past such dates and the screams they'd elicited danced in her mind.

The spanking began with no preliminary. Simon didn't much believe in warm-ups – he believed in making each swat count to the fullest. As a result, she was already horribly uncomfortable by only the fourth or fifth smack, and Maura knew that this was only the beginning. The very beginning.

He almost always lectured as he punished – except when she'd made him so mad that he literally couldn't . . . like when she'd gone over to a friend's house and hadn't told him she was going or left him a note of some sort, and he'd had no idea if she was dead or alive when he got back from running errands. The tone of his voice when she'd taken the phone from her friend had sent shivers up her spine. Or when she'd let an upper respiratory infection become walking pneumonia. Simon'd been completely solicitous of her throughout her entire recovery, and had been scrupulously sure that she was completely healthy before he'd taken his unhappiness out on her helpless butt in an eerie, unsettling silence that just made her groans

and moans sound that much more mournful over the sharp crack of his palm – and then the paddle and then the cane - against her rapidly overheated flesh.

“I am going to break you of this habit of running yourself down if I have to spank you every night for the next year, do you understand me?”

“Yeeeeessss!” she answered on a yell, knowing his questions were not always rhetorical even in the middle of a punishment and not wanting to earn extra for not answering him.

His hand decorating her white skin with rapidly reddening palm prints, Simon asked in a calm, controlled voice that served as a humiliating counterpoint to her frantic cries and yelps, "And is that what you need me to do for you so that you'll remember your rule about that?"

“N- noooooooooosiiiiiiiiirrrrrr!” Oh, God, just the thought of that – and knowing full well that, if he said he would spank her every night for a year, then that was exactly what he would do, completely without regard to any other disciplinary actions she’d endured during the day.

Once, and only once, he had decreed that she would be put to bed early – seven o'clock, which nearly killed her – for two weeks – with a profoundly sore bottom. It was the hardest two weeks she'd ever experienced in her life, and her bottom had been so swollen and tender she wasn't sure she was going to be able to live through it, but he had never flinched from doing exactly what he'd told her he would do, nor had he balked at putting another layer of bruises down when she misbehaved during the week.

Come to think of it, she'd even gotten her regular, once-weekly session during those weeks. She was almost never allowed to accept a Sunday night invitation to go out anywhere with anyone. Simon could be very understanding about some things, but extremely rigid about others – this was one of the things that he was very staunch about. She was in bed by eight every Sunday night, always on her tummy because her butt had been blistered so thoroughly. Maura thought that in the past five years, he might have made an exception to that rule only about twice – barring sickness or injury, of course – and both of those times were only because the person she wanted to see was from out of town and Maura rarely got to see them. Even then, he'd really not cancelled it. She'd gotten her regular weekly paddling, but on Saturday night instead, so that when she did go out to dinner with her friend, she was sitting, dressed to the nines in a very fancy restaurant, on an extremely tender, black and blue butt.

Maura was wiggling for all she was worth, but Simon could hold her fast without even thinking about it, so her struggles were completely futile and mostly for her own benefit – it was darned near impossible to take one of his spankings without desperately trying to avoid the stinging slaps he delivered with clockwork precision.

“Well, it’s not like you haven’t been disciplined for this before, is it, now, Maura Elizabeth Boardman?”

Her bottom was going to explode . . . or fall right off, she was sure. At least then the ordeal would be over. But no. It stayed right where it was and just got sorer and sorer with each painful descent of his hand. “Tmmmmmm soooooorrrrryyyyyy!” she wailed, knowing she’d said exactly that before in just that manner over just this misbehavior. And Simon never forgot that kind of thing. If she had to be corrected more than once for breaking the same rule, then he usually upped the punishment quite considerably as a deterrent to breaking it again . . . and that method had worked quite well.

The unrelenting rhythm of mind-numbing swats cracking down across her bottom only served to make Maura even more frantic, although there was no way for her to avoid even one slap of what he was dishing out. She knew she looked embarrassingly, humiliatingly out of control, but that was what this man was excruciatingly adept at doing for and to her, pretty much any time he wanted to.

And he wanted to a lot. Simon adored driving his self-controlled, independent, tightly held little woman past the point of no return, beyond her limits, beyond her ability to resist or control anything about herself, so that all she could do was react to what he was doing to her on the most basic emotional level. And Maura found out early on that he could do it was frightening ease. Simon subjected her to pain that, when she looked back at it, she couldn't believe she had tolerated it for a second, much less the long drawn out sessions of out and out torture he favored.

Yet the harder sessions never seemed to jade her in regards to a simple hand spanking – she still reacted it the same way she always had to his hand on her bottom – with the screams and shrieks he loved to hear.

And yet her pussy always dripped a greeting onto his seeking fingers during even the harshest applications of belt, cane, needles, clamps . . .

He knew what she needed and gave it to her, whether or not she thought she wanted it.

And she reveled in it, every time, despite any fear or reticence she might feel.

“I know you’re sorry. You’re sorry you got caught. What do I have to do to get you to obey me on this?”

What he’d ended up doing was a combination of things: continuing to blister her bottom for another fifteen minutes, so that when he finally allowed her to stand, her bottom was so ravaged it would have glowed in the dark, and then making her bend over the kitchen counter they had just been having breakfast at, where they ate so many of their meals. Maura laid her burning cheek on the countertop, remaining in place without having to be told as he sauntered to their bedroom and back. She even knew better than to look back to see what he might have in his hand, although it was a terribly hard thing to stay still, considering that she never knew what he might subject her to next.

“Spread.”

One unforgiving, staccato word delivered from somewhere behind her where she couldn’t see him. She slid her feet further and further apart, practically doing a split while standing before he was satisfied at the extent of her displayed humiliation. Her breath caught as she heard a God-awfully familiar sound – the flip top of a tube of KY being opened.

Click.

“Reach.”

Sometimes he could be so cold to her, and this was one of those times. But not wanting any more – or worse attentions to her butt, Maura did as she was told and reached across the counter to curl her fingers over the edge as if she was holding onto a lifesaver in a rough sea, the point of her chin on the hard granite countertop in the submissive position he’d commanded with that word, unable to look anywhere but straight ahead while the action took place behind her.

“Please, no, Sir,” she couldn’t keep from pleading, having a fairly good idea of the realm of possibilities her position offered to him, and not liking any of them.

Crack. “Uuhhhnnnnmmmmmm,” she groaned as he reprimanded her with several sharp shots against her already well-tenderized cheeks.

“Nonsense, Maura. You know better than to even ask for leniency, don’t you? You know I’ll never grant it, and it’s a waste of time – yours and mine.” He squatted down behind her. She felt him use the fingers of his left hand to part her generous spheres, and knew he was – quite deliberately – looking at a place on her body that she herself had rarely seen. But Simon enjoyed looking at her there, more because he knew it made her uncomfortable and embarrassed than because of any particular esthetics, necessarily.

Although it certainly was humiliating in the extreme, and set her face-cheeks to flaming at least as brightly as her bottom cheeks, that was not the worst of what was to come, she was quite sure. The worst was feeling something big and unyielding pressing against that very naked rosebud of hers, and having a pretty good idea that it was one of those awful, unwieldy plugs he favored stretching her with, and stretch he did. Despite a fairly liberal – although not overly so – coating of slick jelly, the sheer width of the implement he was introducing into her bottom hole made Maura squeal even before he’d pushed the first inch into her.

“Ahhhhhhh – sssssss.” Try as she might, and as well as she knew she shouldn’t, her body tightened automatically when presented with a foreign invader, most particularly one that was forcing her sphincter to open to such a dramatic extent around it.

He withdrew the plug slowly and not very far, then began advancing it again, this time more firmly, and gaining much more ground before retreating to the rising crescendo of her moans and groans. "Try to relax, Maura. You're just making it harder on yourself."

She might have snapped back at him that she knew that, but certainly not from this delicate position. Instead, she tried to concentrate on her breathing, and managed to soothe her tense muscles some, but not, of course, in the right area of her body. It was absolutely impossible for her mind to focus on anything other than the fact that she was being violated – and none to gently, at that – by something that was undoubtedly going to require that one of her most private areas yield much more so than it was currently – that there was nothing in store for her for at least the next ten to fifteen minutes but a lot more shame and pain. And she had no delusions that he would stop then, either, but there was no way that she could contemplate that certainty at all right now.

"That's it," he dribbled out a rare dollop of praise but never let up on that unrelenting pressure as he worked to seat the large plug between her roasted cheeks. He almost never praised her during a punishment. Simon did not believe in what he considered to be coddling her at all. A punishment was a punishment, and he made it his business to make sure that there were no pleasant memories of it for her, until the forgiving cuddles afterwards.

After several more forays closer and closer to the point of no return, then backing off very slowly and only a small amount, Maura heard him say firmly, "This is it," and then, like it or not, she was wearing that huge piece of hard, flesh colored plastic deep inside her, with no possible method of removing it that wouldn't get her into much worse trouble – not that she probably could eject it herself with no hands. It was too well seated.

But he couldn't leave well enough – or bad enough – alone. He had to fiddle with it, twirling and reseating it many times just to avidly watch her rise up on her tiptoes to try to avoid the inevitability of being claimed again each time he drove it home, and hear her low, guttural cries and soft weeping moans as he slid it home within her, holding her cheeks apart one handed so that he could watch it claim her insides for the last time.

Simon stood and patted her automatically, possessively on the hip, then began to drape a simple but elaborate looking series of leather straps around her, snugging one against the flange of the plug where it held her cheeks apart all of its own because of its size and earning a soft "unnhhhh" for his troubles, then feeding it through her legs and making her stand before pulling it extra tight, as if he was cinching the saddle on a horse who had the habit of blowing himself up. After arranging everything else around her waist exactly where he wanted it, he rechecked the strap that ran between her legs, tugging it so strongly that he practically lifted her off her feet by her crotch, which, of course, pressed that awful thing even more deeply into her butt, and forced the strap up between her inner lips to lay directly on top of her pulsing clit.

Grinning evilly, and eminently satisfied with the situation as he'd arranged it, he gave another one word command. "Corner."

Her awkward, splayed legged gait was given a hitch as she walked by when he swatted her again. Trying to arch away from that ever-ready hand was a bad idea, making her opening clench hard around that unforgiving implement inside her, and causing her to yelp out loud when no one was touching her.

Having spent an inordinate amount of time there, she already knew the corner to which he was referring. It was a barren place, as most corners were, away from the traffic of the room – not that there was much beyond Himself – but where he could keep a weather eye on her and make sure that she didn't do any fidgeting, or turn around, or remove her hands from their position laced on the top of her head, or move her nose even an inch from the small dot he'd affixed on the paint where she was required to place her nose each time she was sent there.

Pressing her nose there naturally made her stick her bottom out. Small dark lines in the ice blue carpeting showed her where he required her feet be planted, which, of course, was about as far apart as she could stand so that he had a bird's eye view of both that stuffed bottom of hers and the way her pussy

offered itself to him, dribbling as it did quite constantly in his presence, embarrassingly so, considering the severity of the chastisements she endured.

It seemed he could do nearly anything to her and her body would love it, applauding with a show of rich cream that glistened on her bare lips.

There was no telling just how long she was going to end up being here – expressly uncomfortable, and eternally bored, but usually not fool enough to do anything about either of those conditions, nor idiot enough to try to rub out the sting her poor tender nates past the first time, when he'd laid down a second set of handprints to her already spanked butt, scolding harshly all the while about the fact that she would never be allowed to rub away the traces of punishment that were left on her derriere. Ever.

She hadn't had to learn that lesson twice, despite the fact that every single time she faced that dreary angle, her hands literally itched to sneak down and try to assuage that burning sting. But she resisted.

This time was no different. With every beat of her heart, she could feel the blood coursing through that swollen, hot area, deepening the ache he'd created by a thousand fold, until it was downright unbearable.

What was ultimately worse, however, was when he came to tease her, as he almost inevitably did. Even five years later, he was rarely able to keep his hands off her for very long – hence her serious lack of much of a wardrobe. Sometimes she was sure he was inches away from taking her out of the house stark naked – and indeed he had required, on occasion, that she accompany him out onto his land while completely nude, with no clothing available. Granted, he had a variety of blankets in the truck if push came to shove, but his land was so vast that the only creatures they ended up shocking were road runners and scorpions, even though Maura never became comfortable with being outdoors and naked. Sometimes she thought that was why he commanded her to do it – he enjoyed her complete discomfort.

“Oh, God, I love you like this – all red and sore and punished. That end of that plug looks so big between your cheeks, honey – is it making you ache where it holds you open?”

He only wanted yes or no replies. Nothing elaborate, so she shook her head. It sure did!

“And the harness only adds to its pressure, doesn't it – forcing you to hold it unusually far in, and making sure you can't move it in any way with your own body because you're held so wide open.”

More nodding, and several tears tracing down her cheeks, to fall unheeded on the sloping tops of her breasts. Somehow hearing him tell her about her situation, to describe it to her when he was the cause of it, in that gravelly, sexy voice of his, just made her whole body clench, which, of course, made her yelp out loud, and cry that much harder.

But Simon rarely concerned himself with her tears – at least until it was time for forgiving comfort after he was through with the lesson. Instead, he was extremely interested in that shamelessly displayed pussy of hers. His big palm and fingers settled over that area, cupping that part of her that was most private, most her and the most hers, and taking it as his own – as was his right as her dominant. The usual terms – boyfriend and girlfriend, besides sounding extremely juvenile – just didn't seem to fit the depth of what they had, although lover didn't fit, either, since neither of them had ever professed such feelings. Dominant and submissive worked for them – in practice and in truth in labeling.

It was what she was. It was what he was. To the depths of their souls, and with no one else, although words had never been said to that effect between them.

Two thick, stiff fingers moved the crotch strap aside, eliciting a moan of protest from her, and worked their way up inside her, with much less care and concern than he had inserted the plug – roughly even, knowing the true extent of her delicacy and keeping that always in the forefront of his mind. Still, he never went easy on her, and in this he was no different, raping her hard as she did as was required of her and tried desperately to remain still while the vulnerability of it all, the terrible mixture of pleasure and pain threatened to overwhelm her – promised to, then backed off as he did, only to return again some minutes later when the achiness had died down to a manageable level. He proceeded to relentlessly force

her into that morass again – the seething, churning of his three fingers stretching her to a truly painful extent, stuffed as she was, full of plug and remnants of the pain that circulated around that whole area, adding to the distressed swelling between her legs in a manner that she could neither tolerate nor control.

When he had her like this – when she was naughty, most especially – she felt her lack of control more acutely than any other time. Her complete subservience to him had come very, very gradually, slipping as it had quite naturally out from under the careful wraps she'd constructed of bad memories and incredible fears. But Simon was infinitely patient, especially when the reward for his patience was a woman as special as Maura. He knew that she wanted more – that the submission they'd discussed over the Internet and eventually in person would not be enough to sate her for long. She needed more, even if she hadn't quite recognized that truth at first, he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The gradual changes were couched as offers that she knew full well she could either accept or decline, but that once she accepted his control over an area, she would be subject to his strict rules about it. Simon had no interest in owning anyone who didn't have a mind or a will of their own, and Maura possessed more than enough of the both for her own good. She was whining about financial problems, having taken on more debt than she could really handle. Simon offered to help her whittle it away by putting her on a strict budget.

It took her a few days of wandering around his house thinking about it, but she agreed and he took over her finances – not exclusively. He would never allow that. She always had access to whatever amount of her own money she wanted, and he required that she sit down with him on a weekly basis to go over income, expenditures, and savings. His reasoning for this excruciating torture was two-fold – she could see that he wasn't doing anything to her money that she didn't want; he wasn't stealing it, in other words. And she had to face her monetary irresponsibility – and the consequences therein – on a weekly basis.

Gradually, he assumed more and more control over more and more aspects of her life, not becoming encumbered with trivialities, but rather concentrating on making her responsible to him and responsible for her life and her decisions – he oversaw nearly everything about her. If she dressed in something he didn't like to go out, he would send her back to change, so she naturally took to asking him what he would prefer she wear. Since he was the person she most preferred to be with, it was normal to turn to ask his permission to go out and see friends, in case he had something luscious planned for them . . . to call him at least once when she was out, so that he would know she was okay . . . to yield herself to him in any way she could.

No part of her loss of control ever alarmed her. Simon was at once a gentle, considerate lover and a cruel, harsh taskmaster who never, ever forgave an error, and indeed punished them quite severely each and every time, taking out the price of her submission on her naked backside until it was truly a frightening sight, then taking his pleasure of her, denying hers until the mood struck him, then propelling her to such heights that she had fainted in his arms more than once.

Simon bent over her, reaching beneath her to tweak an impudent, interested nipple hard, rolling and pulling until the breath she'd been holding exploded out of her. He knew she was very close. Very, very close. You didn't spend as much time as he had devoted to the discipline and pleasure of one woman just to ignore the signs she gave of impending ecstasy. He had adored learning those signs, because it added another element of power over her – Simon could play her – did play her – torturing her with the denial of her completion for sometimes days at a time, until she literally couldn't sleep, lying beside him and moving restlessly on the bed, seeking that which only he could give her.

But only when he wanted to. She achieved orgasm if and only if he allowed her to – and was never allowed to touch herself without his permission. Dire consequences ensued if she did.

No wonderful explosion allowed this time. Instead, he straightened behind her, saying, "All right, honey. Ask me nicely and I'll remove the plug for you."

He adored making her blush, making her subjugate herself to him with words, and having to ask him – very politely – if he would remove the implement of her torture from where it was buried deep within her bottom was right up there with all of the other embarrassing things he made her do.

When Maura turned around, her hands automatically going to her face and mouth for some reason, he was right there, arms open, so that she could huddle against him.

“Please, Sir, would you take my butt plug from my bottom?”

He smiled down at her, brushing her hair from her forehead. “Yes, I will, sweetie.” He was as good as his word. Seconds later, relieved of her stretchy burden and that strange internal presence, she was on his lap being cuddled and soothed as she rested on the very bottom that had paid his price for disobedience.

## Chapter Three

FIVE YEARS AGO:

Her rarely checked mailbox – the email addy she'd given him – had a thank you note in it the next morning that he'd apparently written at about four in the morning, repeating his thanks for the chat and asking if she'd like to correspond with him.

Maura shot back a reply then and there that she'd like to do that – with the firm belief that they'd probably not get through more than two or three emails before he dropped off the radar. Men, in general, were crappy correspondents.

By that night, there was another email from him waiting for her.

Elizabeth: (which, by the way, I hope for your own sake is not your real name)

I hope you didn't mind my little comments about you getting a degree. I believe very deeply in education and I really would hate for someone of your obvious intelligence and breeding to miss out on anything in life merely because she was being stubborn and bratty . . .

Maura sucked in her breath at the word "breeding" – it always conjured up much different pictures in her own mind than it did in the average person's, she was quite sure.

I hope your day went well. Mine was of the generic sort – lots of errands and admin <administrative> stuff to do. I don't believe we went into our whereabouts at all, but I live in rural New Mexico – VERY rural New Mexico – about twenty miles from the nearest town and three miles from my closest neighbor. I love it out here, especially at night when it's quiet and calm – cities make my skin crawl. Too many people coming at you from all different directions and not enough room to fend off an attack.

You gave me a description of what type of man you would need in order to be sexually adventurous. Is the description the same for what you would be looking for in a dominant? Have you ever been spanked or disciplined before in any way? If so, please tell me how – it doesn't have to be long or drawn out – just the basics is fine.

Well, I've taken up enough of your time. Hope your writing is going well.

Hawk

Maura read the letter over several times. She couldn't find any spelling errors in it at all. He hadn't asked her for any information about herself, really, just volunteered a bit about himself. How extraordinary. All in all, she was extremely intrigued.

Hawk: (a "romance-novel-hero" nickname if ever I heard one! J)

No, Elizabeth is not my real name. I've been chatting on the Internet long enough that I pretty much never give anyone my real name.

Nope, you can harp on me all you like. I'll just ignore you . . . <grin> And I am NEVER bratty in the least. Nyah!

My day was boring, as usual – write, write, write – working and slaving my fingers to the bone over a hot word processor . . . I generally try to get 4000 words done a day . . . I don't always meet my goal, but pretty much I do.

I live in NM, also, although in a much more populated area than you. Simon sat at his own computer in his spacious, open office and read her reply. He had done a little judicious investigating, and he already knew that Elizabeth was Maura's middle name, and he knew that she lived in a lower middle class section of Albuquerque but that she was born in Wells, Maine; he knew her birthday was July fifteenth and that she'd told him her real age. Simon had her social security number and the Isaac score on her credit rating. He knew she'd been married once – when she was nineteen, divorced at twenty-two –



the typical “starter marriage.” Hell, he even had someone faxing him her DMV photo. Sometimes it paid to be a former spy . . . It was a damned good thing for her that he was one of the good guys or he could have had a lot of fun with identity theft, or stalking.

I don’t much worry about being attacked, and I like things to be convenient – shopping, movies, dinners out . . . stuff like that. My house is small, but it’s all mine and I love it, and it’s not in too bad a neighborhood.

From what he could tell of the physical description of her in her medical records, and where she lived, she needed to be a lot more concerned about being attacked. She was only about five foot three and a little over a hundred and thirty pounds. Pretty much any man who wanted to could pick her up and move her around any time he liked, and her neighborhood leaned much more towards bad than good. Simon frowned deeply at the thought of some guy manhandling her. He didn’t like that idea at all.

He remembered something from their chat, and pulled up the file he’d saved, scrolling back through it. There it was. She’d mentioned having to “fend men off” when she’d gone to her car after meeting them. He shook his head, already starting to worry about her, and he hadn’t even met her.

You asked if my qualifications for a dominant would be the same as the ones I’d given you for someone I’d be willing to be “adventurous” with, and, yes, they are. I mean, to me, being with one’s dom would be the safest one could hope to be – besides, perhaps, being in one’s mother’s arms. The essence of a dominant/submissive relationship is not the giving or receiving of pain or pleasure, it’s the mutual exchange of trust and exploration – adventure (within agreed upon limitations, of course).

That was wonderfully put, and exactly his own feelings – but he also firmly believed that the dom was in charge of the limitations to a large extent.

Spanked? Yes, I’ve been spanked before – one of my boyfriends was very “into” spanking, which was great as far as I was concerned. If the rest of the relationship had held together, he would have been darned near the perfect dom for me.

I am assuming that you are also into discipline? You certainly do come across as dominant – as though a SEAL was going to be the submissive sort – NOT <grin>.

I have to compliment you on your chat manners, however – they’re impressive.

Well, time to go make dinner – the dog is eying my leg and drooling . . . <g>

Take care.

Elizabeth

They corresponded off and on for several months, and met online occasionally to chat. Elizabeth was pleasantly surprised that he did not try to move right in, as some “on-line” doms did, and attempt to assume control of everything about her life when he really knew nothing about her life or what she needed to do in it. He never flooded her email with twenty or thirty messages filled with inane ranting – in fact he was almost relentlessly on-topic; his messages short and concise but very pointed and even somewhat sharp.

The words “unforgiving” and “unrelenting” came to mind when she read his prose. They had spoken about punishments in one particular exchange, and she often pulled up that particular email and read it.

I don’t believe in “playful” spankings. Spankings are for punishment. They (as well as any other physical punishment) are always hard, and always given on the bare, but not always long, depending on the circumstances. Of course, there are other areas to discipline besides a submissive’s rear end – backs of thighs, breasts, and backs of calves come to mind immediately, along with other methods that leave no marks at all . . .

Punishments are swift and sure – not delayed in any way, if possible, and harsh enough to capture the miscreant’s attention, and mark her well as a reminder that will remain with her, to help her behave for several days into the future.

I've never put up with much from any of the people I've supervised in the past, and I'm even less likely to put up with anything at all resembling disobedience of a rule or any sort of disrespect from my submissive, should I be lucky enough to acquire another.

Maura had had to laugh at his verbiage. He spoke as if submissives were something that one had to brave the deepest darkest jungles to find.

There were several days when she didn't receive any email at all and she wondered if he'd found someone else who evoked a more passionate response, but then a message popped up in her box and he explained that he had had to fly out of the country unexpectedly.

Elizabeth didn't know exactly how much she believed about his mysterious "consulting for the government" job. It smacked just a little bit too much of the smarmy "spy" line that lounge lizards tried to use to impress the women they were angling into bed. But, then, he was completely understated about it and never bragged about anything.

He was scrupulously careful about trying to make sure that she felt safe and that she was being safe in her life and her relationships. They discussed safe sex and issues about meeting men online, and he was endearingly concerned that she be careful if and when she did so.

redbotmgirl: I am as careful as I can be. And, frankly, I don't do it very often.

CaptHawk: Good. I'm glad you're careful and I'm glad you don't do it very often.

redbotmgirl: LOL.

CaptHawk: Well, I wouldn't want anything to happen to you.

CaptHawk: Are you seeing someone?

redbotmgirl: No – I don't think you qualify since I don't technically "see" you, and frankly our communications are barely even flirtatious.

Simon didn't know whether that was a compliment or a complaint. He went with his gut feeling.

CaptHawk: Ouch.

redbotmgirl: <blush> Sorry. I didn't mean it to sound like I don't enjoy corresponding and chatting with you. I do. It's just that . . . I don't know. It's like you've got an almost British reserve. Or maybe I'm just used to the more ham-handed approach that most doms online take.

CaptHawk: Please explain.

redbotmgirl: Well, you're just . . . very "hands off" – you're the least demanding dom I've ever met. Beyond trying to corral me into going back to school, which could hardly qualify as a bad thing, you haven't tried to send me to bed early or begged for a picture or a phone call . . .

CaptHawk: I don't beg.

redbotmgirl: ROTFL. Somehow I don't doubt that one iota.

CaptHawk: I'd certainly like to have a photo of you if you have one, but I don't have one of myself to give you, so that would be an unfair trade.

CaptHawk: And I would also be interested in talking with you on the phone, but I wouldn't want you to feel awkward about it at all, and it's never something I would demand that you do. I wouldn't want to compromise your feelings of security in any way. This man was amazing . . . or he was being paranoid for both himself and her?

redbotmgirl: Thank you.

CaptHawk: You're welcome. If it wouldn't be too much of a financial hardship, though, there are always those throwaway cell phones whenever you're comfortable with the idea. No pressure.

redbotmgirl: <shaking my head> You are something, all right. I just haven't quite figured out what yet.

CaptHawk: I'm relatively harmless, whatever I am. Except when the moment dictates.

redbotmgirl: Okaaaaayyyyy . . . One thing she'd noticed about the way he chatted and wrote – it was pretty much emotionless, and she wasn't sure whether that was bad or good. Was a sociopath likely to show emotion, or just show the emotion he thought his victim wanted to see? she wondered. Her messages were full of "LOL"s and grins and emoticons or smileys.

His bordered on the dry, although he did question her a lot about her likes and dislikes, she almost always had to ask him whether or not that was what he was interested in. He didn't provide a lot of feedback – praise or criticism. Maura didn't know why, though, but she felt drawn to him – perhaps it was his very austerity that drew her. She wasn't sure.

CaptHawk: So you do like to be spanked . . . and light bondage is okay with you. What do you have in the way of limitations?

redbotmgirl: Sexual limitations?

CaptHawk: Or any personal limitations in general.

redbotmgirl: Hmmmmmm. No drugs.

CaptHawk: Good. I don't use drugs, nor do I tolerate those who do.

redbotmgirl: Ummmmmm . . . sexually . . . no bodily fluids – pee, scat.

CaptHawk: DEFINITELY.

redbotmgirl: nothing permanently disfiguring – branding, tattooing, piercing. None of that turns me on.

CaptHawk: Okay.

redbotmgirl: “Okay” as in that doesn't do anything for you or okay as in you'd be willing to forego it?

CaptHawk: Okay as in an acknowledgement of what you said. I'm not making any judgments at all.

redbotmgirl: You didn't answer my question.

CaptHawk: I could get into all three of those things, given the right instance and the right submissive. Maura shifted in her comfy chair. Maybe he wasn't going to turn out to be particularly compatible with her at all. CaptHawk: Anything else?

redbotmgirl: I hate to be tickled – I have extremely sensitive skin and I just can't tolerate it.

CaptHawk: Tickling has been used as an effective torture in the past.

redbotmgirl: I know. I was probably a victim in another life, which is why I'm so sensitive.

redbotmgirl: What about you? What are your likes and dislikes?

CaptHawk: I dislike discourtesy, thoughtlessness. I like order – and I like to be in control. A place for everything and everything in its – or her – place.

Boy, she could see that in him. He appeared to be a very controlled, controlling, severely closed person. It made her a little uneasy, frankly.

redbotmgirl: You don't laugh or smile much, do you? Simon sat back in his chair. Well, she'd read him quite well, hadn't she?

CaptHawk: No, I don't. I'm a serious, thinking, conscientious person. I'm very detail-oriented, and sometimes my life – and the lives of others – have depended on those very abilities. It doesn't leave much time for frivolity. Maura consciously didn't respond back for a moment.

CaptHawk: You are almost my direct opposite. You're very glib and I bet you smile and speak to strangers in the grocery store or on the street, and you're very open. I bet you giggle a lot when you have lunch with your girlfriends.

She'd mentioned to him – once and only once – that she had a regular monthly lunch date with some friends. It was almost frightening. He had her personality nailed to an almost eerie extent.

redbotmgirl: Is one of your degrees in psychology?

CaptHawk: Guilty.

redbotmgirl: <shaking head> You are a truly dangerous man.

CaptHawk: In more ways than you'll hopefully ever have reason to know – but never dangerous to you. Rarely to any woman, in fact, unless she was trying to kill me or was a traitor to the U.S.

redbotngirl: Uh-huh I don't think I qualify on either of those counts, but that still doesn't much reassure me.

He was startlingly uneasy when he typed his response. CaptHawk: Am I scaring you off?

She knew, that if she allowed herself to believe that he was some sort of spy-type operative, which she had considerable doubts about – that she probably should have been scared off. The hair at the back of her neck was standing up, and she was feeling just a bit queasy. Her heart was beating so hard in her chest that it hurt each time it contracted. God, what would it be like if they ever met?

If he truly was the man he said he was – the type of man he portrayed himself to be – then she had the right to be just as apprehensive of him as if he was an axe murderer. The power of his personality, of his strength of will, shone through every bit of communication they'd had. This was a man who would never accept any excuses from the woman who submitted to his discipline. She would either be in compliance, or not be in compliance – and Maura knew with a shudder, without his ever having touched her or even spoken to her – that no submissive wanted to do anything to make this man punish her.

As a disciplinarian, he would be slow, methodical, and entirely merciless. He would see any sign of rebellion or failure to obey as a sign of disrespect for him and his command, as if the poor sub had enlisted rather than just submitted.

CaptHawk: ?

Her response, whatever it was going to be, was taking a little too long for Simon's comfort. He didn't want to admit it to himself, and he certainly wouldn't to anyone else, but he intended to tame Miss Maura Elizabeth Boardman to his well-trained hand, one way or the other. He wanted more from her than he'd wanted from any woman in his life, and it scared the shit out of him, which is probably why he was being almost totally unemotional with her. Emotions were dicey at best, and he didn't trust his or anyone else's. He put his faith in what he could see, feel, hear, and smell. Cold, hard evidence – evidence of submission, of desire, of unadulterated pain . . .

## Chapter Four

He was hard as a rock, as he always seemed to be during these discussions of theirs, even the first night when it had been a pretty innocent conversation. It had been her light, bubbly personality as she chatted and teased back and forth with the people in the chat room that had attracted him at first – that along with her nick. Simon had always had a thing for spanking – punishment spanking.

As they'd corresponded over these months, he'd slowly drawn her out about what she liked – sexually and otherwise – before calmly asking her about her dislikes this evening. He knew that she had a wide range of tastes in music from Toby Keith to Eminem, whom he personally eschewed, that she enjoyed cooking and considered herself a QVC Queen, and that she occasionally overindulged in both jewelry and perfumes.

Personally, beyond his automatic concerns for her bank accounts, he liked both of those things on a woman, most especially the perfume. He didn't like to see a woman's hand with a ring on every finger, but a few rings here and there only added to a woman's allure. But scent – he was extremely interested in scents, and just a walk by a perfume counter at Lord and Taylor or Bloomies would have him buying something in a big bag just so he could hold it in front of him to cover his erection while he walked. He adored pressing his lips to that spot right beneath her ear after they'd both worked all day and just drinking in the potent combination of woman-scent mixed with whatever floral or spicy scent she'd worn that day.

And Maura had long hair, she'd told him. It was the only physical description question he'd asked her, and he really hadn't even needed that because he had the information from her license and her DMV picture.

Long hair was almost a fetish with him – or as close to a fetish as he allowed himself – it was right up there with perfume. And Maura's brownish-blond hair waved past her shoulders. She was quite pleasant looking, despite how horribly most drivers' license photos came out.

He sincerely hoped that she wouldn't hold his lack of emotion – his restraint – against him.

redbotmgirl: You make me uneasy, in general. And, frankly, I don't know that I necessarily believe that you do what you say you do. It is a bit mythical, isn't it?

CaptHawk: Well, I find it's easier to tell the truth when I can – or as close to the truth as I can, considering my line of work – than to keep track of lies.

His philosophy was almost exactly the same as hers. It gave her another chill. redbotmgirl: I happen to agree with that – but there are few on the Internet that would join us in our disgusting honesty.

CaptHawk: <smile> I'm sure.

Eventually, she did go out and buy a throwaway cell phone, not mentioning it until she'd gotten it established and charged and had gotten some minutes into her account. She gave him the number in chat one night, and, although she didn't always keep the phone on, she'd gotten voice mail and caller id. As far as she could tell, he hadn't even attempted to call her, and Maura wasn't sure whether or not she was glad about that.

He asked her permission to call in chat one night, and asked her to give him a time when it would be convenient for her to talk to him. She – again – let him know just how amazed she was by his behavior, and told him to call her the next night at seven or so.

Maura sat next to the phone from six-thirty on, some times wishing he'd call early, other times wishing he wouldn't call at all. What was she doing, taking another step closer to meeting this somewhat dour, harsh man?

She knew precisely where this path was leading – to his bed.

Seven on the dot, the cell phone rang.

What if he sounded like Mickey Mouse? What if he was pulling a Cyrano and someone else had been writing his missives? What if he was a psycho stalker-type and he somehow found out who she was and where she lived?

She answered it on the fourth ring, just before it was set to click over to voice mail. “Hello?”

“May I please speak to Elizabeth?”

His voice was just as she’d imagined – deep and dark like good, hot fudge. “This is she.”

“Elizabeth, this is Simon. It’s very nice to talk to you.”

She cleared her throat in a nervous habit he wouldn’t recognize. “It’s nice to talk to you, too.”

“Were you away from the phone?”

The man noticed everything. “No, I was right next to it,” she replied tellingly.

“Couldn’t decide whether or not you wanted to answer it?” There was an almost smile in his voice.

Maura flushed, glad he couldn’t see her. “Uh, yeah, something like that.”

“I shall endeavor to make you feel more comfortable.”

Maura chuckled. She couldn’t help it. She knew he was trying to help ease her nervousness, but it came out just the way she’d come to expect from him – stolid and serious.

“Did I say something amusing?”

That only made her laugh more. “Ahhhhh, Simon. You are exactly as you presented yourself in your letters and chat, aren’t you?”

“Depends,” he answered cautiously. He liked the sound of her laughter, and how readily she did it. That was not his nature, but he admired it in others. “Is that good, or bad?”

Another giggle. “It’s neither. It’s just you.”

“I think I’ll take that as a compliment.”

Still obviously smiling, “You go right ahead.”

“Thank you for answering, by the way,” solemn and somber.

“You’re welcome. I had to – my curiosity got the better of me.”

“Mmmmm. So you’re the curious sort, are you?”

“On occasion.”

“I’ll have to remember that.”

“Somehow, I don’t think that there’s much that gets by you, regardless.”

A soft, almost soundless chuckle. “You’re probably right. I can’t help it. Too much time in the military, among other things.”

“That would do it, I would think.”

“How goes your writing?”

“Fine – how goes your consulting?”

“Fine.”

“Well, we’re just scintillating, aren’t we?” she commented wryly.

Simon smiled, but then she couldn’t see it. “Did you take my advice and look into some online universities?” he asked.

He’d never gotten off the kick of trying to get her to go back to school, which she staunchly held that she had no interest in doing.

“No.”

“Well, that was short and sweet. Why not?” he shot back.

“Because I don’t wanna.”

Nothing. Silence . . . an uncomfortably long silence, then in a grumbling timbre that made Maura melt with its quiet command, “Is that a pout I’m hearing?”

Sometimes she could fall into “submissive mode” very quickly and easily, sometimes she fought it. More often than not, she fought it. “Yes . . . Sir.” Somehow, it sounded very right to call him “Sir.”

He didn’t immediately acknowledge her use of that respectful term. “I don’t like pouting.”

“Yes, Sir.” Was that her sounding so unusually meek and mild?

“Elizabeth?”

“Yes?”

“I’m going to tell you to do something, and you, of course, have free will as to whether or not you do it. We have not discussed where our relationship – such as it is - is going, but, as far as I’m concerned, if you do what I tell you to do this time, I will consider that as a sign that you are amenable to submitting to me in other ways and in other . . . matters.”

“And what do you want me to do, dare I ask?” Maura figured it was going to be something sexual – to describe to him what she looked like or what she was wearing, or maybe to bring him off over the phone.

But she could not have been further off. “I want you to spend some time online finding out about going back to school – I believe that the University of Phoenix has some excellent programs if you would be interested in doing it online rather than more traditionally.”

Maura hesitated. “You’re asking that I do something that I have absolutely no interest in.”

He didn’t hesitate one bit in replying, “And, should our relationship progress that far, I would occasionally do so in the future. Would you disobey because you were asked to do something that you didn’t want to do?”

She was already squirming in her chair, and they’d only been talking for less than five minutes. The answer to that question was “no.” Part of submitting, to Elizabeth, was trusting her dom enough that, even if he had her doing something she detested, she would do it, out of respect – and possibly even love – for him. “Nooooooooo . . .”

“Why doesn’t that answer reassure me very much, little girl?” he asked pointedly.

Elizabeth humphed into the phone. The man was too astute for his own good. “Well, I do retain my free will . . .”

“I’m not asking you to jump off a cliff, Elizabeth,” he replied with gentle reproach.

“I know that . . .” her voice was just shy of bratty.

“Well, then, I want you to take some time looking tomorrow and write me a comprehensive email the next day telling me what you’ve discovered.”

Her eyebrow rose. “You’re assigning me a term paper?”

“I’m giving you a chore to do,” he responded smoothly, “At least that’s how I know you’re going to approach it. I want to know what kind of classes they offer, how the ones you need could fit into your schedule, how much it’ll cost . . . everything.”

“I hate expository writing. I’d rather make it all up,” she almost whined, pretty much to herself.

His response was swift and sure. “That’ll get your bottom beat for sure when I check your references. I don’t mess around, Maura. Don’t be sloppy, and get your facts straight, or you’ll wish you had.”

Suddenly out of breath, she drew in a sharp lungful of air. “Yes, Sir.”

“I want it in my email no later than nine a.m. next Friday. And if it’s less than two thousand words, you’re going to be in serious trouble.”

Gulp. “Yes, Sir.”

True to the same form she’d had in high school, and what little of college she’d done, it was Wednesday night and she hadn’t written word one, nor had she so much as looked anything up so that she could write anything. She hadn’t heard from Simon all day, and was definitely out of sorts from the lack, pouting terribly in front of the computer, until an email showed up. Unexpected trip. No time to call. I’ll call you when I get back.

If she hadn't known his email address, she might not have known who the heck it was from!! At first, she figured she had been granted a stay of execution, from having to execute that report. But as Thursday dragged on, she came to realize that he would never agree that his leaving had left her off the hook. He expected her to deliver that report by Friday, and from what she knew of the man, excuses and assumptions were not going to cut it, in any way, shape, or form.

Rolling her eyes all the way at what she'd gotten herself into, she began the awful thing, hating every ever-loving minute of it. The temptation to fill it out with occasional, negligible fictions was squashed every time she remembered what he'd said about the condition her bottom would be, and how if she didn't get her facts straight, she'd wish she had.

That thought made her shiver from head to toe, but it also spurred her on, and, eventually, she was able to send off what she hoped with an inordinate fervor was what he would consider as a pretty good attempt. She hit send at eight-fifty-five a.m., and went to bed. When Simon got back from wherever it was that he'd gone, he called Maura first thing, sounding tired and worn out for the first time since she'd begun to talk to him.

"Are you okay?" she asked, a little worried.

"I'm wiped out, hon."

Elizabeth flushed. Simon rarely used endearments. "Then why don't you go to bed? I'll still be here when you get up."

She could hear him yawning loudly in the background, as if he'd turned his head away from the phone to do so. "I know. I just wanted to hear your voice. Chatting online doesn't cut it any more."

That was an interesting admission, she thought. And it went both ways. She nibbled her lip. "Yeah. It doesn't, does it?"

He growled directly into the phone, and it sent a chill up Maura's spine; it was so blatantly male, so like how she'd come to think of him - uncompromisingly masculine. "I'd like for us to meet, whenever you're comfortable. I'll come up to you. I'm not trying to pressure you in any way, though. I just want you to know that that's where I'm thinking we're heading in the relatively near future."

The idea of meeting him did two opposite things to her: it made her nervous in the extreme, and it made her privates clench. She was so caught up in the dichotomy of the feelings that she didn't say anything immediately.

"Am I moving too quickly for you?" he asked laconically, as if he really wasn't worried much about it. And he wasn't. Maura tended to be a little hesitant about things, but Simon felt that they were working on a nice bond, and if she was truly not interested in meeting yet, then he'd simply lay off for a while. He'd learned the art of patience the hard way - in various life or death situations. He could wait for her to trust him enough to meet him face to face.

Simon completely understood her reservations, too, and would honestly have been more concerned if she hadn't been as cautious. Any woman nowadays who met a stranger from the Internet without having first taken certain precautions was asking to get raped - or worse.

"No, not really. I'm just . . . nervous."

He could hear the truth of it in her voice. "Nervous is actually good, I'd say."

He'd managed to surprise her, as usual. "It is?"

Maura didn't often sound like she needed reassurance, but this was one of those times, he guessed. "Of course. As close as we've gotten over the past weeks - almost two months - you still don't really know me." Simon didn't add that she probably would never really know him, considering that he would only ever let someone see what he wanted them to see about him. But that was not something he wanted to get into with her. "I'm glad that you're not rushing headlong into meeting me. That's the smart approach to dating - whether you've met them at a church social or on the Internet."

"Thank you." It sounded kind of funny to think of dating Simon, considering what they knew about each other - it was like they had completely skipped those tawdry preliminaries and gone straight to



the heart – or, rather, the genitals – of their relationship. "It's more than that - I'm naturally reticent about meeting anyone, but I like you, so I'm probably more nervous about meeting you than I would be about most other people - although I don't like meeting new people in general, anyway . . ."

Simon laughed softly. "And I had you pegged as pretty gregarious -"

"Gregarious but shy," Maura corrected ruefully, shrugging. "So I'm a bundle of contradictions."

"Yup - most women are."

Maura blew a big raspberry at the phone.

"Watch yourself there, little girl."

"Uh huh," she replied, not particularly chastened.

He sighed. "Well, I think, as much as I would love to stay awake and talk to you, that I'm fading fast and I need to crawl into bed."

An all-too-detailed, fantasy visual of him doing just that - stark naked, of course - flashed into Maura's mind, making her shiver loudly enough for him to hear.

"Are you okay?" he asked solicitously.

"Y-yeah. I'm fine." Her nipples were little spike-berries, and her panties were rapidly growing moister, but then that seemed to be nothing new in the way of her instantaneous response to him.

"You sure?" he sounded genuinely concerned, and Maura didn't doubt that he was.

"Uh-huh. You go get some sleep. I'll talk to you later."

"Maura?"

"Yes, Simon?"

"I'm glad to be home - I missed talking to you."

Her body suffused with warmth at his compliment. Neither was Simon given to extravagant compliments. "I missed talking to you, too, although we certainly kept the email wires burning."

They had - chatting back and forth - as inefficient as that was. Every morning, there was a long email in her box from him, which she fired off an answer to before she even started her day. If he couldn't make their evening chats - and there were times when he couldn't; apparently he was in a very different time zone from home - he always let her know, and sent her an email that night when he could.

## Chapter Five

He was, thank the powers that be, quite happy with the results of her report, although he couldn't resist needling her about being a writer and hating to write. Maura expected him to give her some sort of assignment to register, which she anticipated resisting quite fervently, but Simon could never be counted on to do the expected.

Besides, he was working on other things that he apparently considered much more important at the moment.

It took Simon another several weeks of asking occasionally, gently when she would be comfortable meeting him. He didn't want her to think that he'd forgotten about it, or that he somehow had decided he didn't want to; instead he settled for carefully noodling her whenever he could, but not enough to truly pester her.

Finally, he got a response in the affirmative - if, however, somewhat reluctant.

"Okay, yeah, I'll meet you. Where and when?"

They were on the phone, as usual. Simon paused, consciously giving her an opening in which she could retract her statement if she wanted to. "Are you sure?" He didn't want her to feel that she had no other choice. He could be as patient as he needed to be.

"Yeah, I'm sure." Maura crossed two freezing cold fingers as she spoke.

"Well, since I'm coming up there - "

"But I said I'd come down to you - "

"No. I'll come up. I don't want you feeling trapped or pressured in any way, even just by circumstances or the environment. As I was going to say before someone interrupted me . . ." he began pointedly.

"Sorry, Sir," she apologized not-quite meekly.

"Mmmmm," he murmured. "Since it's your town, why don't you think on the place, and let me know. I'm available the rest of the month - and if something happens to change that, I'll let you know as soon as I can. You take a look at your own calendar and decide where and just let me know. I'll be there with bells on." Maura chuckled at the idea of Simon wearing bells. They just didn't go along with what she knew of his personality.

When to meet was the easy part - they both worked at their own businesses, and their time was largely their own as far as scheduling things. So Maura picked the next weekend, and asked him if lunch was okay. It was great as far as he was concerned. He had absolutely no illusions that he was going to get her to lie down for him on their first meeting. He would have thought less of her if she had, honestly, and he told her as much when she mentioned exactly that to him - that regardless of how well the meeting went, they would not end up in bed.

The place was more of a problem. It had to have good food, and be a place where she was comfortable, and that wasn't so crowded at lunchtime that they couldn't hear each other over the din. Frankly, Maura was still at that early point in a relationship where didn't want to miss a word he said.

So they settled on lunch at Les Oeufs - a restaurant that Maura frequented with her girlfriends. Its atmosphere was almost European. They served breakfast, lunch, and dinner all day, and diners were encouraged to relax and dawdle over their meals. Maura loved the place, and she thought that Simon might like it also. It was just popular enough that they could discuss whatever they wanted without calling attention to themselves, but not so busy that they wouldn't be able to hear themselves think.

And, but it was busy enough that she would be surrounded by people the whole time - in the parking lot as well as the restaurant proper. Maura tried to follow as many rules about meeting someone

on the Internet as she possibly could, and, to her surprise, Simon was mandating that she do exactly the same the same thing – even more so.

The night before they were to meet, he drilled her. "Now. Someone knows where you're going to be?"

Maura, who had already heard this lecture several hundred times by now, was rolling her eyes. Good thing he couldn't see her – but she was having a hard time keeping the exaggerated patience out of her voice. "Yes."

"And there's someone who is going to expect a phone call from you at a specified time this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"And you're bringing your cell phone?"

"Yes." She couldn't help it. Sarcasm was definitely creeping into her tone.

"Stop sounding like you're placating me, Maura," he chided sternly.

Maura gulped. "Yes, Sir," she replied dutifully, but with an irrepressible aura of humor.

"Grrrrr," he growled, letting her know that he wasn't really angry. "This is all for your protection, you know. I could be a serial killer or a psychopath –"

"Aren't those the same thing?" she interrupted, musing out loud. "Can one be a serial killer without being a psychopath, or vice versa?"

His heavy sigh made her straighten up in her seat. "Maura Boardman, you are pushing it – you'll be lucky if I don't bring my paddle with me tomorrow –" he threatened, not playfully enough to let her know that he wouldn't.

"No!" she shrieked, right on cue.

"Well, then, you'd better straighten up and fly right, hadn't you?"

"Yes, Sir." Her pout was visible from miles away.

"Okay, well, tomorrow at eleven-thirty, we'll meet in the parking lot. You have a cute little sky blue Celica, and I have a big black Chevy truck."

"How phallic."

"Maura!"

"Well . . . Sorry. But it's true!"

Simon actually laughed. One of the few times she'd heard that rare sound. "You definitely need to be spanked. Hard. And repeatedly."

Maura squirmed in her chair. "Do not."

"Ooooooh yes you do. And that bill is coming due. Sooner than you think."

"Is not!"

Another small chuckle. Maura loved that she could make him respond in that simple way. "Before you descend any further into childhood than you already are, I think I'll say goodnight." He listened to her huff and puff and humph in the background. "After all, we'll be seeing each other tomorrow."

Maura's heart and stomach clenched tightly, making her feel mildly high and mildly nauseous at the same time. "I know."

"You don't sound very enthusiastic, hon."

"I am. I am. But I'm not. I just wanna meet you for the first time and get it over with, ya' know?"

"You're a real sweet talker, there, Maura – makes meeting me sound like the equivalent of going to the dentist for root canal."

She giggled. Simon loved making her giggle, and she did it so readily. "Well . . . just so's you know, I do look forward to meeting you more so than that . . . but not by a lot."

His ego was going to suffer by this woman, he could tell. "You should go to bed."

"I'm waaaay too hyped to go to bed, Simon."

"Mmmmmmm. I could help you with that, too . . ."

"No, you couldn't," Maura replied staunchly, no matter how much she wanted to give in.

"The offer stands, regardless."

"Thank you," she replied with excruciating politeness, blushing furiously.

"I bet you're blushing."

"Cut that out!"

He was laughing again, deep and rich and pouring over her like honey on a sopaipilla. "Well, try to get some sleep, anyway. I'm gonna go get some work done – you should, too."

Maura sighed. "Yes, Sir."

"Just try, hon. I'll see you tomorrow at eleven-thirty."

"I'll be the one driving around and around and around trying to decide whether or not to park and get out . . ."

"I'll just go stand in front of you, and then you'll have to stop," he supplied promptly.

"If I don't mow you over first . . ."

"It'll be fine, I promise. Really."

"I know that intellectually. But it's very scary to me. Very."

"I know. That's why I'm having you to take as many precautions as possible, Maura. So you'll feel safer."

Maura sat up straighter in her chair. "All of the safety warnings in the world wouldn't alleviate my severe nervousness about this."

"Then we'll hug real quick in the parking lot and then go in and get lunch quick. Food'll distract you."

The man had an answer to everything. "Okaaaaay," she didn't sound at all sure of his ability to make her comfortable. "Maybe what we ought to do is meet in the parking lot and then go away and meet again for dinner."

"As much as I care about you, honey, I'm not going to drive all the way home then all the way back, even for you."

Maura grimaced. "I forgot."

"Try not to stay up too late. I want you in bed no later than one – you hear me?"

She sighed. "Yes, Sir."

"That's my girl. And try to get some sleep."

"Yes, Sir."

"Good girl. I'm gonna go. See you later."

"Okay. Night. Sleep well."

"I will. You too."

Maura hung up the phone and just sat there for a long while, staring at it, hoping she could work up the nerve necessary to stop her car . . . or to get to the restaurant in the first place. Maura spent the entire of the next morning, after her eyes had popped open promptly at the abhorrent hour of five-thirty, futzing about what she was going to wear, how she was going to act, and practicing conversations with him even while she was driving to the restaurant. Her heart was going to hammer its way right out of her chest in a bloody mess, she was sure.

It was only eleven-fifteen, but even before she turned into the half-empty parking lot, she could see a big black truck parked right out in front, and someone – definitely of the male persuasion – was leaning negligently against the back end of it. Deciding to be brave for once in her life, she pulled up into the space next to him and shut off the car.

But she couldn't seem to make herself get out of it. So much for bravery.

Simon knew exactly who had just pulled up beside him, and he was halfway around the end of the truck before she'd cut off the engine. He expected the car door to swing open, so he stayed back a little, but then it didn't. And still didn't. And really didn't.

Finally, Simon walked up to the driver's side window and squatted down. It was such a low-slung sports car that that put him at eye level with her. She looked stark and faint, but the window rolled down electronically, although she had yet to look at him.

"Are you okay?"

She sighed while Simon was busily drinking in her profile. They'd exchanged pictures at one point - and drivers' license photos were atrocious by definition - but hers had not done her justice. He was fairly entranced by her hair as it hung in loose waves past her shoulders - the pictures he seen must've been older, because none of them showed her with hair quite that long. It was luscious, and Simon had to keep himself from reaching out to bury his hand in it at the nape of her neck, capturing a hank of it to let its silky softness dribble over his fingers. He was instantaneously hard as a rock, and nothing of the rest of what he saw in her plain but delicate looks assuaged that in the least. He wanted her desperately on sight, and, if he hadn't been sure she would have to be his before, her bright, feminine looks cinched it.

Normally, he might have been rather impatient with her tentativeness, her hesitation in trusting him. But not with Maura. She was well worth waiting for, and he wanted her to be sure of him before she did something she really didn't want to do.

"I promise - you're just as safe with me as you want to be. I would never let anyone hurt you - including me."

Maura turned and looked at him for the first time, and had the breath knocked out of her even though he was far from gorgeous - too roughly hewn and craggy faced. But he had a presence - an aura, if one believed in such things - that practically knocked her on her butt. She had no doubt about the truth of his words. The problem was that she didn't know how safe she would want to stay with him - and his eyes were so full of sensual promise that she had to look away again.

He was tall and lean, not overtly, bulgingly muscular, but obviously very strong - physically and mentally - broad shouldered with a classic Y-shape. Simon had a full head of graying hair, and a well-kept gray mustache. She wanted him on sight, and the accompanying gush of feminine liquid onto her panties only made her that much more wary of him.

He just sat there, as if they had all the time in the world and he was perfectly content to wait for her to decide to gird her loins and meet him properly.

Finally, after much too long trying to convince herself to move - during which he was remarkably quiet and calm, watching her wrestle with herself about him - she eyed him with more bravado than she thought she possessed. "Well, are you going to move, or am I going to knock you over with the car door?"

He got to it before she did, pulling the handle and backing away as he opened it for her. Feeling distinctly inelegant, Maura exited the car, and Simon took several steps closer to her to close the door with a thunk. Although she desperately wanted to slink away from him, she didn't, and was inordinately proud of herself for standing still, although she was eying him with incredible wariness that Simon wholly understood.

He offered his hand - hoping to show her that he didn't expect intimacies from the outset - that he was quite patient enough to let her get comfortable with him before he touched her in the manner he really wanted to.

Maura just looked at his hand for a moment, as if it was a rabid dog stealthily approaching her, but then she blinked several times and shook it, firmly, pumping twice then releasing. He let her go immediately with no coy attempts to retain contact. "It's nice to meet you, Maura Boardman."

Her eyes slid away from his. "Same here, Simon Hawkins." Her voice was not her own - it was someone else's who was more than slightly timid and awed by both the situation and him.

She wasn't getting any more relaxed, in fact she looked more frightened and unsure than she had in the car. "Well, why don't we go in and get some grub?"

That earned him a small, tentative smile. "Yes, why don't we?" God, after everything they'd talked about online, how could she still feel so damned awkward around him? They started to walk; Simon obviously shortening his strides to accommodate the difference in their statures. He didn't touch her in

any way – didn't put his hand on the small of her back as he wanted to, just to guide her – hell, just to get the feel of her in the most courteous and gentlemanly of manners – didn't take her hand or drape his arm around her shoulders. All of which he almost desperately wanted to do, despite the fact that he wasn't usually the most tactile of people – in fact he was normally quite solitary and self-contained.

Still, there it was; a deep, aching need to put his hands on her, so much so that they literally itched to settle on her somewhere – anywhere at all, even the most inappropriate of places.

Consciously trying to remember all of the courtesies his mother had so painstakingly drilled into him, Simon held the door open for her, which only seemed to add to her discomfort. Since she'd preceded him, she got the next door and held it for him, which made him grin down at the little women's libber. They were seated quickly at a green wrought iron table with matching chairs, as the place really hadn't filled up with the lunch crowd yet. The menu was the size of war and peace, but Maura didn't even open hers.

"Already know what you want?"

"Yup." Her eyes skittered nervously away from his.

"I like that in a woman," he teased gently, trying to help her settle down.

She blushed, and he could only guess that it was full-bodied. It certainly was a deep red. "I don't generally tend to be indecisive."

Simon laid his menu on the table. "Neither do I."

The waiter appeared, taking their orders quickly and efficiently and returning immediately with their drinks – fresh squeezed o.j. for her, and coffee for him.

He watched her fiddling with her purse, rearranging her silverware – doing anything but looking at him.

"Are you all right?" he couldn't suppress the question. She looked so truly uncomfortable.

Her eyes darted guiltily to him, then she sighed. "Yeah, I'm okay. I hope you have a cell phone on you so that you can call 911 when I have a heart attack, though."

Simon put his hand on the table, palm up. "Put your hand in mine."

She met his eyes, her gaze sharp with fear and a complete awareness unlike she'd ever felt before. Her eyebrow rose. "Or else?"

He shook his head slowly. "No. No punishment, no negative consequences. Just when you're ready."

Maura stared at his hand, then at him, then at his hand again. Why was she hesitating – it's just holding his hand, for God's sake! She did it all at once, like ripping of a band aid, placing her small hand in his tentatively. Simon felt as if a tiny bird had come to perch, warily. He didn't try to grab her or hold her in any way, but he did place his other hand lightly over hers, sandwiching those freezing fingers between his warm palms and rubbing slowly.

Although she was surrounded by him, she had the feeling that if she tried to retract her hand at any time that he wouldn't try to hold onto her, and that feeling kept her snuggled happily in that warmth. "Your hand is frozen."

She chuffed. "A sign of a major nerves."

"Is it all that bad meeting me?"

Another eyebrow raise. "I would hate meeting you under normal circumstances, and this hardly qualifies as normal."

"I thought we'd gotten to know each other pretty well in the past few months."

"We have, but that's still quite different from actually meeting you." Her fingers were growing gradually warmer as he rubbed them and squeezed them into his warmth.

"Apparently." Simon felt no need to chat constantly if he didn't have something to say, and online they had definitely graduated to that point. Now he took the opportunity to watch her surreptitiously. The picture she'd given him had not done her justice. She was not classically pretty in any way; instead she had a mish-mash of pretty and half-pretty features that he was quite sure would glow if he could get her to

relax and smile a little at him. The picture had been of her giggling uncontrollably – right now he couldn't imagine her doing that – she was too stiff and tense.

They chatted about stupid things – his drive up, how well she'd slept last night, which wasn't at all – until someone stopped by their table. Maura couldn't place where she knew the man from, but he was very familiar – it wasn't until Simon called him by name that she recognized where she knew him from – he was a Senator.

"Harry! How are you?" Simon didn't smile, his face rock hard with no semblance of greeting in his tone, either.

"Hawkins. I'm fine. Surprised to see that you've crawled out of your cave long enough to join the rest of civilization . . ." The enmity between the men was fierce – like two Alpha males circling each other before fighting to the death for dominance of the pack.

"Allow me to introduce you to Ms. Maura Boardman. She's a writer friend of mine. Maura, this is Senator Harold Kelly."

Maura dutifully shook the gentleman's hand, murmuring, "It's nice to meet you."

The Senator replied with some pat nicety, and took his leave.

"Wow. A Senator."

Simon grimaced. "Don't be too impressed. He's an oily sort, and that's putting it politely."

If she'd needed any confirmation of his identity – that he'd told her his correct name – the Senator had provided it, but it hadn't ended there. Two other people had stopped by their table before they even got their meals – one of whom was the Mayor, and the other the Chief of Police. Both referred to him almost reverentially as "Col. Hawkins". Unlike the Senator's reaction, both the Mayor and the police chief seemed to genuinely like him, greeting him warmly and treating him with the utmost respect.

"Well, I guess you gave me your right name," she offered wryly as the waiter put their food in front of them – his burger and her French toast with sausage. "Three very prominent members of the community just confirmed it."

He took a bite of burger and snacked voraciously on his hand-cut fries. "They could have been look-alike actors I'd hired."

She hadn't considered that, he could see it in her face.

"But I didn't."

"I know you didn't." She said, with noticeably more hope than conviction.

Simon put his burger down, using his napkin and asking gravely, "Is there anything else I can do to help you trust me?"

Maura continued to eat, only because it gave her something to do with her hands – not that she was tasting one bite of what she was diligently chewing and swallowing – so that maybe he wouldn't notice how badly they were shaking. She shook her head. "You've gone above and beyond the call, believe me. And I appreciate it. It's just gonna take a little time, I think."

"I can wait," he said, and she took a modicum of comfort from it, but then he went and spoiled it. "But not forever."

"I wouldn't expect you to wait forever for anyone. But that doesn't mean that you're going to jump me all of a sudden, correct?" She watched his face carefully as he answered.

"No, of course not. Just that I'll step up my noodging you until you're more settled with me." He'd finished his food in an inordinately fast amount of time then just sat there and watched her. "Is there someone in the restaurant right now that knows you?"

Her eyes involuntarily wandered to a booth that was kitty corner to them and her two friends who were alternately eating and watching her anxiously. "Yup."

"Good girl."

For some stupid reason, beamed at his praise. "Yeah, well, I'm only mildly paranoid."

"You should be. Unfortunately, this world is no longer safe for a woman who is not blatantly under a man's protection – and even then . . ."

She chuckled. "That sounds so medieval."

"Works for me."

"I can just see you in your shining armor, victorious on the battlefield."

His smile was rueful at the picture she was painting. Minus the armor, it would have been fairly accurate at one time in his life. He'd never been defeated by an enemy, or he wouldn't have been here to talk with her. "Of course."

"You would have been the black knight – not the favorite of the crowd, but winning every tournament anyway."

Her astute observations had him pegged quite nicely, if five hundred years ago. He was a loner who had no need for adulation, and he played to win at whatever he attempted – jousting or espionage.

By the time the dishes from the meal had been cleared away, Maura appeared at least a little more relaxed than she had. "Feel better?" he asked solicitously, again extending his hand palm up on the table in invitation.

She'd long since reclaimed her hand and patted her tummy with it before placing it in his much less reluctantly than before. Simon's fingers closed slowly, carefully over hers – which were much warmer. He was glad she'd apparently decided he wasn't going to axe murder her in the restaurant.

"You set up a friend that you're going to call when you get home so someone is expecting you to be home at a particular time?"

She couldn't help it. He was almost more paranoid for her than she was herself, and it made her eyes roll, which earned her a sharp scowl. "Yes."

"When are you supposed to call?"

Glancing at her watch, she was amazed by how much time had gone by. "One-thirty."

Upon hearing that, he rose, and held out her chair. "Well, I'd better get you on the road then." Her heart nearly stopped when he popped the next question. "How soon can we do this again – how about dinner Wednesday?"

Maura was taking a last drink of her ice water and nearly did a spit-take. "You want to see me again in four days?" She was smiling broadly and blushing again.

"I want to see you again tomorrow, if I thought you'd agree, but I figured I'd give you a little space to breathe for a while, and maybe you'll be less nervous next time and we can maybe catch a movie?"

The idea of sitting next to him in a darkened theatre made her shiver, but she found herself nodding anyway.



## Chapter Six

Simon had walked her out to her car, touching her for the first time on the elbow when he helped her into it then shut the door, leaning against it with his big arms folded over the rolled down window. "There." He frowned. "Put on your seatbelt, honey. I don't wanna lose you."

Maura frowned up at him. "You do realize that seatbelts kill as many people as they help, and that the state laws were only pushed through because of lobbying by insurance companies?"

Nothing. No expression on his face at all.

With a sigh, Maura reached for her belt, latching it dutifully. "Are you happy?"

"The next time I tell you to do something, don't respond with an argument against doing it. I don't care how it became a law. I'd have you wearing it whether it was law or not. Anything to keep you safe."

She blushed again – it seemed to be a habit around him. "Thank you. But I find them to be a pain in the neck."

A bushy eyebrow rose. "Did I ask? You'd better never let me catch you not wearing your seatbelt, Maura. You wouldn't like the consequences."

"Yes, Sir." It felt so strange to be saying those very submissive words as he watched her every movement.

"So, Wednesday night?"

Maura wasn't sure what to say – for some reason she was feeling very hesitant about seeing him again. "My appointments are all on the computer . . . I don't think I have anything scheduled. Can I call you?"

"Sure," he answered, his eyes narrowing, wondering why she still seemed so hesitant. "Are you okay?"

She tried to slough off any awareness he had about how tentative she was feeling. "I'm fine. How are you?"

"Don't do that."

She couldn't meet his eyes and even begin to lie to him. "Do what?" she asked the steering wheel.

"Gloss over your own feelings in favor of asking me about mine. I want a straight answer to my question, Maura, and I want it now."

The timber of his voice rumbled its way right to her heart and her clit, sitting there like a lump in her tummy and a physical hand cupping her pussy possessively. Maura turned and looked him in the eye with a "get-real" look that, later in their relationship, would get earn her a swift swatting. "I'm fine, really."

He eyed her closely, as if judging the sincerity of her reply. "After you call your friend and let him or her know that you okay, call me on my cell so that I know you got home in one piece."

Her eyes flitted nervously to his and fell in there, unable to look away.

Simon reached in and tilted her chin up, as if he was going to kiss her, but he didn't. "I don't think you're as fine as you say you are. If we had more time together, I'd get you to tell me exactly what you're thinking."

Maura swallowed, having absolutely no doubt that he would do exactly that. It was how he'd do it that worried her . . . "I –"

"Shhhhhh." Firm, but soft. He pressed a finger over her lips to prevent her from saying anything. "Drive very safely, and stay in that seat belt unless you want to feel an entirely different type of belt against your skin. Understand?"

So incredibly full of him, even from such a platonic exchange, all Maura could do was nod.

He straightened, towering over her little sports car. "Don't forget to call – your friend, or me."

“I won’t.”

And then he was gone. Mostly just to give her mind something else to do besides force her eyes to follow his every move in an embarrassingly drooly manner like some star-struck teenager, she backed out of the space and was on her way towards home without so much as another look between them, although her panties became more and more soaked as she drove.

When she called – barely remembering to, frankly – he pinned her down about whether or not she was going to be available on Wednesday, and it turned out that she was. In her mind, she was wondering whether or not she should have a second date with him . . . he was so . . . he was too . . . he was almost too much – she had considerable concerns about whether or not she could handle him in an intimate situation. But at the same time, Maura found him almost irresistible – the firm, sure way he handled himself, and her . . . she was certain there couldn’t possibly be an indecisive bone in his body.

But, of course, she couldn’t resist him, and the tingles he inspired in various areas of her body, and they made another date for dinner and a movie. Immediately after hanging up the phone her mind began to question the intelligence of her decision, although her body was already halfway to paradise, and he’d barely touched her.

He’d praised her – calling her “good girl” – for remembering to call him as he’d asked. She didn’t want to know what he might do if she hadn’t . . . or did she?

Wednesday night’s outing lead to regular dating – albeit casual. It was almost as if their relationship was split into Internet personalities and dating personalities. It was glaringly obvious to Simon that Maura felt much more comfortable discussing various intimacies over the computer than she did while he was sitting across from her, or next to her. Although he enjoyed doing it, every time they were together and he mentioned anything sexual, she turned a beet red.

Maura was amazed at the extent of his patience. She wouldn’t have pegged him as that laid back, but she made it quite obvious – when they weren’t on the computer – that she wanted to take the physical side of things – especially since it was highly likely to include some sort of painful activity directed at her – as slowly as possible. And he minded his manners to the T, keeping his hands scrupulously to himself except to give her an always searing kiss goodnight.

For about three months.

Then one night, while escorting her back to her car after they’d seen the latest action flick, he neatly trapped her against the drivers’ side door before she’d even noticed it. After clicking open the lock with the remote, Maura reached for the handle to the door, and found she couldn’t pull it open because one of his big hands was leaning on it. She turned around quickly, startled to find him much closer than she’d expected. Her turn had put her exactly where he wanted her – up against him, between his legs.

Simon’s head dipped forwards, and her body automatically craned back, until she was plastered against the whole of his unforgiving body in the front and the car in the back. Her hands came up to his shoulders to steady herself, resting very lightly against his shirt, feeling his tightly leashed strength beneath the benign cotton. “Simon?”

She barely got the questioning word out before his lips took hers – and there was no other, more accurate way to put it – he was taking possession of her as surely and blatantly as she could feel his rock hard erection pressing into her lower belly. Their lips melded together – Maura had had no chance to prepare any defenses against him; he had caught her completely unguarded and vulnerable. His lips seared hers as they slid across, deftly coaxing and commanding her mouth to open beneath the pressure of his.

“Uhhmmm – “ Neither could she suppress a groan of pure, unadulterated pleasure that slipped into his mouth as his tongue delved boldly. Simon gathered her to him, his hands splayed on her back as hers clenched his arms, almost but not quite pushing him away, as if she couldn’t decide whether or not she should protest the fact that he was taking liberties with her that she had not expressly offered . . . but

then thought better of it. He had been a tame house cat for longer than she had really expected, letting her set the pace of their physical relationship, which must've seemed positively glacial to him.

But now, he was apparently no longer willing to wait. At least, that was how Maura interpreted this very dominant, very demanding move. Simon cradled the back of her head with his hand, holding her in place for his passionate kiss, leaving no room for her to move away from him in any manner, caught as she was at the waist, neck and head.

Not that she wanted to move, anyway, though. She had known it would be like this – like a tidal wave of heat-seeking sensations that settled at the hottest part of her – between her legs – with a vengeance and smoldered there, building and spreading and licking fire into every part of her, forcing her nipples to hard points that bore into his chest, chafing against the confines of her bra and shirt, begging to be let loose only to be captured by the same masculine mouth that was continuing to feast on her lips.

The fingers that were not buried in the mass of her hair began to slowly move up her body, following her natural curves upwards until they discovered a turgid bud, stroking over it almost, but not quite, roughly, his thumb and index finger framing it and squeezing firmly then twisting, the soft fabric of her shirt making his fingers glide more slickly over her, softening his touch the slightest but not the pressure he applied. “Simon,” she breathed into his mouth and he pulled back just a little at the sound, gazing sharply down into her eyes, trying to gauge what her response, where she was in her head.

Had he come on too strong? Was he being too dominant? He'd been a lapdog for longer than he'd ever been with any other women – he wonder if she realized just how leashed he'd kept his sexuality to keep that scared look out of her eyes . . . Simon wondered why Maura was so free when they chatted online, or even on the phone, but when they were together, she was so reserved and uptight he was beginning to wonder if she had hidden a more sensual, sexual twin at home.

His lips millimeters from hers, he asked huskily, “Are you all right?” catching her eyes for just a second before she lowered them to his Adam's apple.

“Y-“ her voice failed her for a moment, but she cleared her throat and started again. “Yes. I'm okay. I'm just not sure that the middle of a cinema parking lot is the best place to do this.”

He tipped her chin up with a finger that had been actively involved in worrying her nipple until a few seconds ago. “Do you want to get a room?”

The immediate alarm in her eyes gave him an answer before she said anything, but she did manage to surprise him anyway. “No, not tonight I don't.” His face revealed nothing about how he was feeling at having been turned down. The man's poker face would have been admired by an android. Maura boldly met his eyes when she continued, though. “But how about next weekend – maybe get together on Friday at a really nice hotel and spend a long weekend in bed?”

The only hint of how much she'd startled him with her suggestion was a tiny widening of his eyes. Other than that, he remained entirely cool, calm, and collected, as she'd come to expect from him. A shudder rippled through her body uncontrollably when she thought – and realized, deep in her heart – that this man would and could punish her in the way she needed it – unrelentingly. Strictly. Mercilessly. That no amount of screaming or tears or begging would ever deter him.

Oblivious to the people departing around them, Simon asked, “Did I just hear you correctly? Are you suggesting that we have sex next weekend?”

Her tinkling, nervous laugh caught the attention of several couples around them, but they were in their own little world, despite the oddity of having such an intimate discussion in a very public place.

“Yes.”

“Look at me.” A straightforward, uncompromising command.

With some difficulty – her shyness around him was legendary – she did as she was told.

Simon studied her, taking his time, feeling no compunction to ease her discomfort until he got some sense of her feelings about what she'd just said. Why now? Why all of a sudden, he wondered. If he'd known all it would take to get her to offer herself to him was putting a little pressure on her physically,

then he'd've done it months ago. "What prompted this?" he couldn't keep himself from asking, finding no answers in her clear, hazel eyes.

She couldn't hold his gaze, coloring delicately and trying to look down, but he wasn't going to let her get away with that. He wanted to know why, and his finger wouldn't let her move her head down.

"Maura, look at me." Her eyes melted into his again. "I don't like having to repeat myself, woman. Tell me why you've all of a sudden decided that you want to sleep with me."

"I didn't all of a sudden decide anything," she shot back, surprised to see him fight a smile.

She might be submissive, he mused, but she was no one's lap dog. He liked that. A submissive with no fire, no independence, no spark of personality and individuality was of absolutely no interest to him. He wanted a well-rounded person, with their own thoughts and opinions who was willing and able to express them and not subjugate every molecule of themselves to him. Submission was that much sweeter when his woman had to fight against herself to do so.

"We've known each other for what, almost six months? And we've been dating for four or so? Isn't it about time?"

"There's no such thing as 'about time'," he growled, but then he couldn't believe he was arguing against something he wanted so much he could taste it – he dreamt about how she would feel beneath him – how that lustrous, creamy skin would look decorated with red, welted stripes – if she would scream and cry as he punished her or try to bear it stoically . . . his body tortured him with those thoughts and many more explicit ones twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, and had been doing so since just after they'd started corresponding. She was everything he wanted, and he'd known he had to have her for quite some time.

But she was reticent, and Simon was not about to push her – he was terrified of pushing her away from him rather than towards him. So he'd been patient. Hell, he groused in his mind. He'd been a freakin' saint, barely ever kissing her; his mind discounted their incredibly hot goodnight kisses as expected. But otherwise, he'd been more of a gentleman with her than he'd been with any other woman in his life except his mother.

If he believed in it, he would have had to say it was love.

But he most expressly didn't, so he just chalked it up to the fact that he wanted her in bed, and wasn't willing to take the chance of frightening her away by coming on too strong.

That was it. That was all it was – certainly nothing more than that.

"What made you decide all of a sudden that we should be together? My kiss just now?"

"Actually, I've been thinking about it for a while – a long while. I just haven't thought that the time was right."

Simon barely kept himself from snorting. If he lived to be five thousand years old, he would never understand the feminine tendency to determine that there were black and white, right and wrong times for things in relation to the opposite sex. It was on the tip of his tongue to needle her a little, and ask what she thought would be different about having sex with him now, as opposed to waiting a month, but he wasn't about to give her any ideas in that direction.

"And it's right now?" he questioned carefully.

She was biting her lip. "I think so."

His inquisitive attitude was making her wonder if he really wasn't interested in having sex with her. Maybe she'd misread his signals. It had been known to happen. "Look, if you'd rather not –"

"No!" He was awfully, uncomfortably close to yelling. In fact his vehemence made her reel back a little. Simon softened his approach considerably. "No, I'm all for it. In fact, I have just the place in mind for us. I've been picturing you there since not long after we started talking. I think you'll love it. Unless you'd prefer that I come to your house instead." He figured she might want to be in a place that she was comfortable.

Maura was thinking she wanted to be on neutral territory, and she was distracted by the idea that he had already been contemplating where they would make love the first time. It made her body tingle that he'd been thinking of her in that way for so long. "Why do you think I'll like it?"

She didn't seem to be much interested in having him come to her place, and that was fine with him. Whatever worked for her. He'd gotten to know her likes and dislikes pretty well in the past few months, and he never missed a detail, cataloguing them in his steel-trap mind as faithfully as he organized everything (and everyone) else in his life. Maura loved water. She loved baths, lakes, ponds, pools, and the ocean. Any way she could get it, she wanted to be in it every time she could.

"Because it's a place that has big suites with in-room, in-ground, private pools done up like lagoons with lots of lush vegetation, and big four poster king-sized beds, with rails in the headboard that work perfectly with restraints – " At her questioning, almost accusing, raised eyebrow look, he backtracked a little, realizing how that must've sounded to her. "I've been looking online for places for us to go our first time that would be special." He raised his right hand as if swearing to God. "I've never taken anyone there, Maura. I promise."

"I believe you."

He didn't know why her questioning look had his stomach in knots, or why her firm vow of faith in his word made him feel so much better, but it did.

"Well, is it a date?" she asked.

He caught her eyes and held them, taking one of her hands and raising the backs of her fingers to press his lips tenderly against them. "Yes, it is, if next weekend works for you, then I'll move heaven and Earth to make it work for me."

She smiled broadly. He loved the way she smiled so readily. She was almost always in a good mood. Almost.

"If you'll tell me what hotel it is you have in mind, I'll make the reservations."

It was his turn to give her a raised eyebrow glare. "No, I will."

Maura had some sort of bug up her butt about always wanting things to be as equal as possible. She always tried to pay for their dinners out, sometimes beating him to the draw only because he wasn't paying any attention to the fact that the bill had come. Simon was proudly old fashioned, and liked to pay for their dinners and movies. Maura was just as proudly a woman's libber, to say nothing of the fact that she seemed to get enormous joy out of out maneuvering him on those rare occasions. She opened doors for him, she offered to drive them places – which he put the kibosh on immediately – and once, she'd tried to hold his chair out to seat him first. That had earned her a sharp swat, damn the fact that they were in a public restaurant. The imp.

"Then I'll pay half when we check out."

"You most certainly will not."

She refused to acquiesce easily about some things, and this was one of them. "We'll see . . ."

Simon took a step back, finally letting her up enough so that she could open her car door and slip in, but not before she got herself another smack to the bottom for being so impudent. "Hey!" she yelped back over her shoulder at him as she settled into the driver's seat and buckled her seat belt.

Simon squatted next to the window she rolled down. "Hey what?" he reached in and brushed her long hair out of her eyes compulsively, just wanting to touch her in some way.

"No swatting me," she pouted visibly.

"Ohhhhhh yes. Lots of swatting you."

They were contentedly silent for a moment. "Are you sure you're okay with this weekend?"

She nodded without an ounce of hesitation. He would have seen it as he was watching her every response avidly, compulsively.

Simon leaned in and kissed her quick. "I'll let you know about two seconds after I get home tonight whether or not the weekend is okay with me. You can pretty much count on the fact that it will be."

Maura chuckled. "They can all overthrow their own damned governments this weekend, huh?"

He couldn't really even smile at that; it came a little too close to the truth for his comfort. Instead he straightened and patted her arm. "Drive carefully. Call me when you get home to let me know you got there."

"Yes, Sir," she answered dutifully, with just the right touch of sarcasm. She stopped just short of rolling her eyes, which proved to be a smart move considering the look he gave her.

"You're not going to be such a smarty pants as of about five seconds after we're alone in our room Friday. You can bet the farm on that." He squashed a silver Stetson down onto his head, covering that wonderful pelt of salt and pepper hair and striding away, not giving her time to quip back, not that she would when she was concerned about the safety and comfort of her bottom.

## Chapter Seven

The weekend was clear for both of them, and they arranged to meet at noon for lunch, then go to their hotel. Even though they were eating at her favorite barbeque place, Maura found she had absolutely no interest in anything that was put in front of her – not a huge platter of crisply fried onion rings, nor a big plate of fall-off-the-bone baby back ribs with tangy sauce. She had about two of the onion rings and one rib, and proclaimed that she was full.

Simon was having no such appetite problem. He didn't often go out to restaurants, considering the isolation of his ranch house, and he ended up eating both of their money's worth, easily. When she stopped eating, she leaned back in her chair, her arms folded over her chest in a touchingly defensive manner, as if she was hugging herself for comfort.

He used a wet nap to clean his hands up and tossed it onto the remainder of the ribs. That alone was a huge compliment to her – very little got between Simon and his food. Then he quietly put his hand on the table, palm up, saying nothing, just waiting for her to come to him. After a few long seconds, his timid bird finally pried her hand from its safe perch under her arm and laid it tentatively in his. He stroked his thumb over the back of her ice cold fingers. "Nervous?"

Maura nodded, not quite trusting her voice. Her stomach was trampolining all over the place, and she wasn't sure yet whether or not she was going to be sick. What was it about this man that affected her so? She'd never reacted like this before with anyone! Granted, it had been a while – and she didn't much like to dwell on exactly how long – but this was almost ridiculous. If she was truly concerned about her own safety with him, she shouldn't be planning on sleeping with him.

But that was just it. She wasn't at really concerned about her physical well-being with him. She was terrified about the safety of her heart. She knew, deep, deep down, that if he was as good for her as she thought he was going to be, that she would lose her heart to him in a big way.

To a man who didn't believe in anything remotely resembling love in any way, shape, or form. One of their emails back and forth had been on the topic of love, and he had given her his opinion on it quite bluntly – he thought it was a bunch of hooey that Hallmark and Harlequin had thought up to make money. He warned her flat out that he would never be a romantic and that he didn't believe in love. Lust, yes. But not love.

That email had given her pause, but by then she was so interested in him, so completely hooked on him and what he promised so blatantly with his words and his voice and – once she'd met him – his body, that there was no way she could turn back now.

"A little," she out and out lied. "Eat. Just because I can't doesn't mean you shouldn't."

"Oh, I'm gonna. I just wanted to make sure that you were all right, and you're not going to faint on me."

She gave him a small smile. "Nope. No fainting right now, although I can't make any promises about later."

He reclaimed his hand and dug into the ribs, smiling at her wolfishly over one. "I would consider it the ultimate compliment if I could give you an orgasm that would make you faint."

"Simon!" she looked absolutely scandalized, but he looked like he'd marked that down as a goal, which only made her that much more worried.

When he was done, he paid the tab, with a glare at her when she tried to reach for her credit card much too late, darn it. Then he paid for the hotel room, and she practically stomped all the way to the room. "I want to pay my fair share –" she was saying as a bellhop brought their bags in, but the room made her mouth hang open with no sound coming out while he was tipping the man and telling him to put the "do not disturb" sign on the door, please.

It was done in creams and pinks and florals that matched, with a huge, canopied oak four-poster bed with a crocheted cream canopy draped romantically over it. There was a door that led to what she assumed was the bathroom to the left, but the other part of the room contained a very large pool in an irregular shape that was surrounded by all sorts of tropical looking plants and flowers. It looked like they had their very own rainforest in the room!

Before she knew it, his arms had slid around her from behind. "Do you like it?"

"Oh, my God, Simon, it's gorgeous!!"

He kissed the side of her neck. "I'm glad you like it. But –"

She froze, and he hated how she tensed immediately. "But what?" Maura turned in his arms, knowing she wouldn't have been able to unless he'd let her.

"I just want to talk about what's going on, so we both know exactly what this weekend is about."

He guided them over to the edge of the bed and sat them both down in unison.

"It's about sex," she said, taking a stab in the dark.

"It's about more than sex, and you know it. I'm going to spank you, and more."

She gulped hard, and whimpered, "More?"

He smiled in a soft manner she had not seen before. "Much more. I just don't want you to be frightened or surprised by the pain I'm going to give you. I think I know you pretty well, considering we haven't been to bed yet, and I think I'm pretty good at reading you, but I want you to have a safe word."

They had discussed this before, and Maura had been surprised at his insistence on the use of a safe word. He seemed too dominant for that – to give his submissive any sort of control over ending a punishment or any sort of scene he might require or her. But Simon was nothing if not pragmatic and practical. How else was he to know if she was having a cramp, or a flashback to a bad experience, or couldn't breathe, or any one of a million things. She'd already been told that the safe word should never be used just to mitigate a punishment, because if he thought she'd done that she'd get at least twice what the original punishment would have been for trying to avoid it.

"What do you want to use?"

"How about safe word? And if you're gagged –" she squirmed visibly at this reminder of just how totally she would be his over the next three days – "then snapping your fingers should do it. If we're in a bed with a headboard that has spindles, then rattle them to get my attention. I will always be alert to any sign from you that you're uncomfortable for any reason other than what I might be doing to you at any given time. Okay?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Good."

Simon rose and walked over to the delicate green wrought iron and glass table and pulled out one of the coordinated chairs, to turn it towards her and sit down, his eyes settling on her heavily.

"Strip."

Maura's eyes nearly bugged out. "Strip?" she parroted back to him, not moving.

He didn't say a thing, merely raised his eyebrows. "Are you balking at an order already? I wouldn't have thought you'd be bucking for your first spanking this quickly, but –" He made as if to get up again, and this spurred her into action.

She did not want him spanking her under any circumstances, but especially not before they'd even made love the first time. But they had talked about her reluctance to show her body to him – about the fact that she was not beautiful, nor what society considered desirably, being somewhat on the heavy side.

He had reassured her on many occasions that he preferred a more rounded look – that he preferred her look, in particular, not that any of his ample soothing had had any effect at all. She – like most American women – thought she was much too big to be attractive, when he felt that nothing could have been further from the truth.

"No no no!" she cried, bouncing up and shrugging out of her shirt, then peeling down her jeans in short order. The two outer garments came off easily, to be folded and placed on top of her suitcase behind



her. White socks joined the other clothes on the pile. But her baby blue and white plaid panties and matching bra were much harder to part with.

Simon never took his eyes off her, even though she was hardly disrobing in a deliberately teasing manner. Now that she had gotten down to the nitty-gritty, she was hardly disrobing any more at all, reaching excruciatingly slowly behind her to unhook her bra, but then holding it and her arms over her chest so that she was still covered.

"Do you need help?" he asked quietly, nudging her just a little, not sure whether he hoped it would be enough for her to obey him or not . . .

Her face was positively flaming – as her bottom would be more than once this weekend, he promised himself – but she let the bra fall and turned to put it with her other clothes, taking her own sweet time turning around again.

"Maura," he prompted when he felt she had spent entirely too much time facing the suitcase.

She turned, revealing those beautiful breasts to him in their entirety for the first time. They were not perfect, by any means, but they were hers, and the sight of her – blushed a dusky rose-pink all the way down to their beginning slopes – aroused him like nothing else in the world . . . until her arms came up to cover them.

"Put your arms down at your sides," he chided gently, extending his long legs out in front of him and crossing them at the ankles, as if he hadn't a care in the world. And he hadn't, except the raging hard on that was seriously threatening his control.

It took her a while – longer than he should have allowed, frankly, and much longer than he would allow in the future – to obey him, and he could see her struggling within herself to do so. It was quite delicious, and one of the things he enjoyed about taming an independent woman. They liked to think for themselves and decide things for themselves, and he so enjoyed doing that for them in all sorts of ways that would make them uncomfortable and humiliated and dripping, soaking wet. Ways that would remind them of their complete submission to him – of how little control they had over their lives and their bodies, which was just exactly what they wanted.

But, eventually, her arms were where he required, and Maura stood there, breathing heavily – not from excitement, he knew, but from nervousness. Her breasts had swelled as he watched them, though, and her nipples were taut. Her posture was really very good, he thought, especially considering the way most women slouched through life nowadays.

"Panties."

He wouldn't have thought it was possible, but she blushed even brighter, but it took her less time to decide to do as he'd said, although her reluctance was still quite obvious. Her thumbs hooked the waistband of those cute little panties, pulling them down, down, down, until she was bent over, and stepping out of them.

Next time, Simon promised himself, he'd make sure she wasn't facing him when she did that. But he was going a little easy on her because she was so endearingly apprehensive. In another woman, he might have found her nervousness bothersome, but in Maura it was touching and, he knew, completely sincere. She was not trying to be coy; she really was a modest person, and he respected that.

"Turn around."

She desperately wished he would say something, do something to show that he wasn't as removed as his cold, firm words conveyed. But, regardless of his lack of emotion, she hated to admit it but her body loved what he was requiring her to do. But the rest of her – her mind and heart were rebelling – her heart less so than her mind, but it was her mind that was making her blush so furiously and struggle with herself to do as he said.

Her butt was big, and she did not want to show it to him clothed, much less naked. She drew a breath, and it was on her mind to protest, but she decided against it when she looked at his face. It would not be a good idea. Instead she fidgeted in place for a short while, then sighed heavily and turned so that her horribly prominent backside was all he could see, she was sure.

Simon was deep, deep in lust. As far as he was concerned, lumps, bumps and all, she was physical perfection, and he was wearing the evidence that proved it. Her bottom was truly a thing of beauty, and he was near to coming in his pants at the sight of those very full, gently rounded slopes. His was literally drooling at the thought of raining down swat after swat, leaving his hand print on her for hours, maybe as long as a day depending on how delicate her skin was, marking her as his in the most personal way possible. He would give her cane strokes that would be designed to last for days, the welts swelling and growing and bruising long after the disciplinary session was over.

She was so fair, he was quite sure she'd mark easily and hold the marks for a long, long time. Just that thought made his cock twitch in his briefs.

But she was shivering – whether with cold, which he doubted – or with nerves, which was much more likely, he rose immediately and shrugged out of his shirt, tucking it around her and turning her in his arms, pulling her into his embrace. “Shh-shh-shh. That’s enough. You’re fine.” He wasn’t the type to coddle, and there wasn’t any reason for her to work herself into having a panic attack just because she was naked in front of him.

His firm, sure tone reassured her, and she was able to stop shaking quickly. It was just the right approach to take with her – if he'd been sympathetic and cooing, she would have dissolved into tears. Instead, she was able to pull herself together and be strong.

Simon's finger lifted her chin. “Very good girl. You’ve done very well so far.”

It was the “so far” that made her knees shake for a minute before she got control of them again.

“What’s your safe word, Maura?” he quizzed as he opened the bed, pulling the sheet, blanket, and comforter almost off the end of the bed.

“Safe word,” she returned quickly.

“Good.” He came back to her and grabbed her hand, tugging her over to guide her down to sit on the edge of the bed. Simon took both of her hands in his, asking in a very deep, serious tone. “I want you to be very sure you want to do this, Maura. I don’t get this involved with someone easily, and to me, this is the beginning of a real commitment between us – not love, but commitment. Your submission to me will probably, eventually lead us to live together.”

Her head snapped up, eyes wide.

It didn’t make him happy that she apparently hadn’t considered that possibility. “I just want you to know that I’m thinking ahead. Thinking that we’ll be together more in the future.” That seemed to soothe her, and he wasn’t sure exactly how he felt about that. “You have to be willing to be monogamous from this point on.”

Maura almost snorted, but resisted. It wasn’t like men were busting down her door to sleep with her. She’d been monogamous with him from the beginning, if one wanted to look at it that way.

“And make no mistake, I expect the same thing from myself. I will never run around on you. I’m a one-woman man.”

She nodded. “Yes, I have no interest in multiple partners. I can barely handle you!”

“Good.” Her answer seemed to satisfy him. “Lie in the middle of the bed on your back. Put your hands above your head. You can grab onto the headboard if you like or not, but do whatever you need to to make sure that your hands don’t come down again until I tell you that they can. If you move your hands down – even once – I’ll tie them to the headboard and punish you thoroughly for disobeying me.”

She was slow at obeying, but he could – and would – fix that. It was all new to her, and he was enjoying seeing everything through her eyes. Simon hadn’t realized that he’d gotten somewhat jaded, but seeing Maura’s reactions – and trying to see this situation through her eyes – made things sharper for him. He wanted this to be the best experience of her life – he wanted her to want him as much as he wanted her, and when he had a goal in mind, he was positively dangerous.

But never to her.

Finally, she settled into the position he’d ordered, and he could see that she was gripping the rails of the headboard for dear life.

Nervous again.

Well, he had to see if he could knock that out of her for good. Respect was good. He wanted it from everyone he met. He demanded it. But fear – there were elements of it that could be good, that would keep her in line when she might stray from his strict rules for her behavior, but he'd never wanted a woman to truly fear him. Most of them did, because there was something about him that made him a person that was not easy to be around – some people, usually women, sensed that he had seen death – had caused deaths easily and without remorse, and had confronted and come to unflinching terms with his own. Simon discomfited people, and he knew it. That had worked in his favor on occasion.

But, although he would be imparting quite considerable pain to her at times this weekend, and certainly over the length of their relationship – whatever that ended up being – he never wanted Maura to be afraid of him. There would never be any reason for it – he would never really hurt her. He couldn't. She had become much too important to him, even in such a short time.

"Close your eyes."

Of all his commands, that one bothered her the most. Somehow, not being able to see him would make her almost more vulnerable to him than she could stand.

Although he was arranging things on the table to the side of the bed, he was still keeping a close eye on her, and he was quite well aware of the fight she was having with herself, and left her to it. She would either trust him enough, or she wouldn't.

He didn't know what he would do if she couldn't.

But when he snuck a last peek at her, he saw that her eyes were screwed tightly shut. There were tears leaking out of them, to be sure – the hair at her temples was dark and wet. But her eyes were shut. He knew how much it had taken for her to close them, and something burst inside him, something he refused to examine or acknowledge.

She trusted him.

For a woman like Maura – independent, fierce, happy, proud – to offer him her submission was a more profound gift than he deserved.

He mumbled a silent prayer that he would be able live up to that level of trust.

Simon stood at the end of the bed, gazing down at her with his heart in his eyes. Her breathing was irregular as she fought back tears. "Take a deep, slow breath, Maura. Nothing's going to happen other than some things we've already talked about you wanting. And I hope you know that I would never really hurt you."

She opened her eyes automatically when he began to speak to her, but Simon chided, "Ah-ah-ahhh," and she closed them quickly again.

"I know this is going to fall on deaf ears, considering how stubborn you are – " He heard her sharply indrawn breath of indignation, and watched her open her mouth to argue with him, and then close it again, having apparently decided that might not be the most intelligent thing to do. "But please try to relax. Really. I only want to pleasure you – and we both know that that involves some pain for you."

Maura nodded forlornly, rubbing the back of her hand against her cheek for a moment in an almost childlike gesture of comfort, making Simon grin crookedly, but she couldn't see it.

The first thing he wanted to do was to accustom her to his touch, and he did it by laying hands on her, at first on very neutral areas – her feet. He massaged her gently, all over, not avoiding her more private places, but not much acknowledging them, either. During the course of the massage, he naturally separated her legs, and she got so relaxed that she didn't feel the compulsion to close them as she concentrated more and more on the wonderful warmth his fingers created as they glided along her skin. The soft scent of lilacs drifted to her nose, and she realized that he had gloved his hands in a very slick, warm lotion that made them cruise along her flesh like stones skipping on calm water.

"Roll over."

Maura didn't know why exposing her bottom to him seemed somehow even more intimate than exposing her front, but it did, and she took so long deciding whether or not to obey him that he smacked his palm down hard on the front of each thigh, giving her the needed impetus to do as she was told.

When she lay on her tummy, she grabbed the bars of the headboard again in a white-knuckled grip. But all he did was touch her quite innocently, and wonderfully – working kinks out of her muscles that she hadn't known she had with deep, sure strokes of his fingers and hands, drawing long, low moans she hadn't known she was capable of from her mouth. It sounded like he was already bringing her to ecstasy, and he hadn't even touched her intimately yet, really.

Simon worked his way from the soles of her feet up the backs of her calves, her thighs, up and over those beautiful, heavy curves, sweeping up the graceful arch of her back to her shoulders. They were pulled so tight he was concerned they were going to snap. Well, he'd discovered where she'd stored all her nervousness – her shoulders were like rocks, they were so taut. He spent a long time relaxing that area, and all the way down to her fingertips, then up the back of her slender neck and into her scalp.

By the time he'd finished with her, she was as limp as so much over-boiled pasta. There wasn't a tense muscle or bone in her body. The only area he couldn't get to to soothe was the most important one – her mind, which was still running a mile a minute, wondering how the heck she'd gotten herself into a situation like this, where she was naked on a big bed with a large, strong man that she had met on the Internet, of all places, with whom she was going to have sex, and who she was going to trust enough to tie her up and punish her at varying times during the next three days. Was she out of her mind, or what?

Simon could see the apprehension as it crept back into her body – slowly, to be sure, but it was making its way insidiously into her posture. For a long moment, he simply watched her, his hand on her bottom, then he made up his mind.

“Roll over.”

This time the time she took to get onto her back was pretty much entirely caused by the fact that she was still incredibly relaxed and her muscles didn't necessarily want to cooperate with her fully. They wanted more of what Simon had done for them.

She remained mostly liquid, eyes still closed, until she heard him rustling around. He was obviously taking off his clothes, and Maura would have given her eye teeth to have seen him naked, but she resisted, not wanting to earn a punishment so early on in the weekend. She was sure there would be more than enough incidents and she didn't need to go creating them.

She shivered once, and heard him cross the room. Seconds later, the radiator kicked on. He returned to the bed where she lay spread out like a sacrificial virgin, and this time when he came to her he meant business. His lips settled onto hers possessively, demanding a response from her that he knew she could give – had given to him in the past.

Having been caught unaware, she had no recourse but to let her body have its way, kissing him back with a fervor that, if she'd thought too much about it, she might have tried to curb, the taste and feel of his lips igniting sparks much lower as he cupped her head in his big hands, holding her quite still for his kiss. There was no room for compromise in his manner as he took her mouth, plundering confidently, nipping occasionally at the tip of her tongue or her lips, as if daring her to object.

Maura was much too overwhelmed to do so.

His mouth left a wet trail down over her chin, down the side of her neck to her collarbone while his hands sought and found her nipples, teasing their soft tips until they rose to greet his fingertips. He rewarded their eagerness by pinching them insistently and twisting them till she moaned, then releasing them and doing it all again, over and over, until his mouth came to the rescue of one of her tormented buds, soothing and suckling hard at first, then biting ever more insistently until she yelped out loud and opened her eyes, trying to arch up to alleviate the ache.

“Eyes,” he admonished sternly, and hers snapped shut, but she remained bowed until her lax muscles wouldn't allow it any more, and he had just waited it out, his teeth still sunk into her nipple, watching as her upper body had to sink back onto the mattress, thus making his hold that much more

painful as he essentially kept her breast lifted away from her chest, its weight pulling painfully on his sharp grip on her budded out nipple.

Her head thrashed back and forth on the pillow.

Simon released her, then captured the same nipple again and suckled it hard, all the while never leaving its twin alone, pinching and pulling it, flicking it mercilessly, and even spanking it once or twice, drawing such interesting squeals and moans from her that he swore his genitals grew another two inches or so in both circumference and length, although that was a physical impossibility – he'd been fully erect since he'd seen her, and he well knew his own limitations. But the sounds she was emitting were driving him up a wall, because he knew he was the cause of them.

He wondered if she would prove to be as creamy in real life as she'd always promised she was when they chatted – it seemed she christened herself if he but said hello to her, and he had to admit that he did find it flattering. His teeth still in possession of the last centimeter or two of her tender part, he let his free hand began to drift downwards.

Maura's eyes flew open, then scrunched closed, hoping he hadn't noticed. Her hands tightened on the rails of the headboard as she recognized where the drift of those fingers was going to take him. What was it about him that made her both incredibly hot and incredibly apprehensive at the same time? The combination was enough to make her head explode . . . or was that her clit?

He took his sweet time, too. She had a feeling that, when he was in a mood like this, nothing short of a nuclear explosion could make him move quickly. He tickled her ribs – unintentionally she was sure – he wasn't the tickling sort, and the curve of her waist, then down over one hip to the very beginning of her tight, thinnish pubic hair.

She started, trying to wiggle out from under his hand. "Stay still, Maura. You're mine and I want to touch you. I'm going to touch you."

As reassurances went, it wasn't much of one, but somehow it worked for her anyway. She loved the idea of being his, and somehow that helped her not to fight him as her mind suggested, but to reach out and find those elements of submission that had interested her in the first place, that had sparked her libido as far back as she could remember.

And suddenly, all of those feelings came crashing back to her with an incredible rush that made her stop breathing for a minute, just as his hand slid further down and his fingers claimed that area that was most hers to give, or not give, and she knew - with an uncomfortable but tingly jolt - that he was being bathed in her essence.

Simon had never been so truly elated about anything in his life. Most people who knew him would have said that he was just about as emotionless as possible for a human being, and in most cases they would be completely right. But this woman was different. How he reacted to her – and how she reacted to him – was highly unusual. He could have done without his own reactions to her, unpredictably annoying and uncontrollable as they were, but he loved hearing the tone of her voice change as they talked on the phone, how she wrote and chatted exactly as she spoke in real life – with an abundance of warmth and humor - and now how her body demonstrated in an entirely unmistakable manner just how much it appreciated his attentions. Even if parts of her mind might fight against him, she seemed to have found a way to let her body have what it wanted . . . and that gave him hope that eventually she'd conquer the more stubborn areas of her mind, too.

He knew that this was not easy for her in any way. Despite her gregarious outward demeanor, Maura was one of the most private people he knew – almost as private as he was, but for very different reasons. She was sexually interested, but very reserved, almost old fashioned about expressing it physically in person. Internet chatting was harmless and she exercised a lot of control in that situation.

Here and now, though, lying naked and stretched out on a bed with him while he held the heart of her in his hand, Simon recognized that it must've taken a tremendous strength of will to lie there and submit to him. Touched to the core – more than he would ever acknowledge to another living soul - he

leaned over and kissed her gently, tenderly, coaxing rather than taking her mouth until she was kissing him back helplessly.

Then he ruined it by breaking off the kiss and touching just the barest edges of his lips to her cheek, murmuring in a no-nonsense tone, "Spread your legs for me."

She could not comply immediately – but he was giving her a lot of leeway . . . tonight. His hand remained steadfastly in place as her legs moved restlessly, drumming her heels against the mattress as if she was a little girl throwing a tantrum. It made him smile, but not relent one bit.

Maura puffed air angrily through her lips, still wiggling and squirming, not caring in the least that she looked like a disgruntled four year old. But nothing she was doing was having any effect on him in the least. His hand seemed permanently glued to her privates, riding her bucking and writhing like a cowboy with many years of experience at taming exactly this type of filly.

Finally she quieted, still puffing and blowing with in frustrated protestation, wondering in the back of her mind if his patience was pretty much unlimited – which she highly doubted – but also wondering just how far she could or should push him . . . the four year old metaphor was getting closer and closer to the truth, she realized, but refused to examine it more closely.

Slow, uncomfortable minutes passed – or were they years? – as they waited each other out, until Simon took matters into his own hands, as he realized he probably should have done much sooner. He took his hand off her pussy to smack it down, hard, on the front of her right thigh, then did the same to the left. Maura's agonized cries began to fill the air as he continued to swat first one then the other leg, until she got the idea that he wasn't going to stop until she obeyed him, and reluctantly – but faster than she might without the impetus he was providing.

He smacked that palm down on her until she had arranged herself to his tastes, open to an obscene extent, so much so that her outer lips were parted, and she knew that the evidence of her desire was dripping down onto the sheets below. His hand reclaimed the territory it had conquered earlier and then some, fingers naturally ending up very close to her entrance, gently opening that inner harbor to casually crook a fingertip and gather a sample of her honey, with a low groan at its sheer overwhelming amount. She'd told him sometimes when they spoke or chatted that he made her very wet, and now he knew for sure that she wasn't exaggerating in the least. He couldn't believe the sheer amount of honey she was producing – and it was all for – and because of – him – despite (or maybe because of) the way he was treating her.

It excited him to see his handprint still darkening on her thighs as he was bathed in her juices. Simon brought a fingerful up her loosened crease until he felt that little bundle of nerves, stroking over it once very gently.

Maura sat straight up, her hand reaching between her legs automatically, wrapping around his thick, hairy wrist in a veritable stranglehold, and staring at him wide-eyed. Simon raised an eyebrow, somewhat surprised at her reaction. Where did she think his hand was going to end up?

Neither of them said anything for a while – Simon didn't move his hand a bit, and Maura didn't relax and lie back down at all. It took her a shorter time to come to the realization that he wasn't going to back down at all, and that, if she was going to accept him as her dominant, then she didn't have a choice but to do as he preferred. But she fought it all the way, squirming and wiggling and clenching his wrist tight, her fingers leaving it slowly as she sank back down, clamping her legs tight in protest, then spreading them again, knowing he would make her do it anyway.

Simon stayed quiet, letting her calm down a little before he did anything more that would ruffle her prissy little feathers. Even though her body was back in the position he prescribed, he waited until she'd closed her eyes before he moved again, wetting his index and third fingers at her font and worrying that wondrous nub, watching her muscles clenched as she squirmed, almost trying to get away, but not quite. Still, he didn't let it deter him from stroking over her, enjoying her moans and indrawn breath, the way she panted and then licked her lips, arching slightly as if wanting throw his hand off, but not quite daring to.

Smart girl. She wouldn't have liked those consequences at all.

He leaned down suddenly as he manipulated her for his own pleasure – hers being incidental at this point – and nibbled gently at the soft white inner thigh she offered up to him so naturally, biting only enough to let her feel the edges of his teeth, just letting her feel a contrast between the ecstasy of his fingertips making her spiral closer and closer towards her end, and the carefully controlled pain of his nipping mouth and soothing lips.

He worked his way towards where his fingers were busily teasing her, slowly, determinedly, loving the way she was writhing and moaning, pulling hard against the bed frame in her pleasure, air puffing out of her lungs as if she was running a marathon.

But he wasn't about to let her get off that easily, and suddenly, he left her bereft, aching, hips arching and seeking the fiery pleasure he had conjured and built within her, calling to every molecule in her body to yield and submit to him, and, completely ignoring any advice to the contrary from her always cautious mind, they had.

Her body was his, completely his, already.

And he had just left her there, pulsing and aching, hurting and swollen and ready for him. Simon was across the room, getting something out of his suitcase, if she could tell accurately by the sounds of zippers being unzipped.

When he spoke, though, it was from right next to her, next to the bed. "Open your eyes and look at me."

Grateful not to be in the dark any longer, she did exactly as she was told – for one of the few times in her life. But when she turned to find his eyes, what she focused on was the large wooden paddle in his hand. It probably wasn't that big in reality – maybe it was the holes that made it seem that way, or it just looked that way to her because she knew what it was going to be doing to her in the next few minutes . . . And when she looked up, at him, Maura couldn't help but notice how his biceps bulged and flexed. Oh, God, he was so strong! Without trying he could really punish her with that thing!

Simon could see the thoughts running through her head, and did nothing to soothe her at this point. Occasionally, he believed that a little fear was a good thing. And she was going to be disciplined, well and truly, until she was screaming from it.

## Chapter Eight

It didn't turn out that the screaming took long to achieve. Simon was thanking God that this wasn't a cheap place, and that it had pretty good insulation, or the cops would've been beating down their door. When she'd met his eyes, he'd said one word. "Tummy."

Maura's whole body had spasmed, but mostly the area between her legs. She'd always wanted to be spanked and paddled and a whole lot else. But staring down the reality of that paddle, and coming to grips with the fact that it was going to be warming her bottom very soon, at this strong, sinewy man's behest, was another thing entirely.

Still, she swallowed hard once, then rolled onto her stomach.

Simon produced two soft suede restraints, which he secured to the headboard as well as around her wrists, whispering ominously, "I think that you're going to need some help staying still for this, honey, and I don't want you to reach back and accidentally hit your hand with your paddle."

"Your paddle" he'd said. The one that would be used on her whenever she didn't meet his expectations. Obey his orders. Submit to him. The thoughts that churned through her head were making her genitals throb even worse, and now her bottom was going to chime in with them, only for an entirely different reason. She wondered if the pain would add or detract from her arousal? Sometimes she fantasized about gentle punishments – good girl spankings – and sometimes she didn't think there was enough pain in the world to satisfy her, and her dreams when she felt like that always frightened her.

But this was nothing like her wet dreams. This was reality – there really was a man standing over the bed with a very hard looking paddle in his hand, arranging two pillows with a raised eyebrow. Maura didn't even try to pretend that she didn't know what he meant by that. She knew he wasn't trying to see to her comfort in anyway, but rather that he wanted her to lay over them so that her bottom would be an easier target for the strokes he was going to deliver.

Still moving somewhat reluctantly, despite her curiosity and desire, she lay over them, realizing suddenly just how vulnerable this position was going to make her feel – her butt was going to be jacked up in the air – even just slightly bent as she was, her bottom was thrown into incredible prominence, and, with her hands bound, there was no way she would be able to do anything but let her bottom hang out there and greet each stroke as it fell.

"Good girl," he complimented softly, laying the paddle on top of her bottom for a moment while he shrugged out of his t-shirt.

Unable to stop herself, she turned her head and asked him, "Did I do something wrong?"

His grin made her heart stop. "No, Maura. I just want to punish you."

And with that, he began.

The paddle was completely unforgiving, and Simon was totally merciless. She was groaning by the fifth stroke, and screaming by the eleventh, but he paid absolutely no attention. The holes in the paddle were raising lovely round blisters, and he made sure that the entire area of her bottom and the backs of her thighs were nicely decorated with them, then he went back over both areas, laying down a second set of them.

Maura couldn't believe how quickly she'd been reduced to a mass of writhing pain, but he'd done it in a humiliatingly short amount of time. She wiggled and squirmed so much that he put an elaborate system of straps on her ankles that kept her legs trapped fast to the mattress – she could barely even drum her feet, not having enough leeway in the straps to do so. Begging and promising to be good gave her a false sense of hope that somehow, some time she would say some sort of magical phrase that would make him stop – but it never happened.



She didn't know how many strokes she took, and Simon didn't count. He just reddened her bottom in ever more frighteningly deeper shades of red. When he'd finished, her skin was a mottled map of bright and dark red, with several areas – such as the very bottom of her butt curve where butt became thigh, his favorite spot – already working on bruised blues.

Maura had long since done that breathing thing where all of her breath was expelled out at once, then several more sobs came out on the next indrawn breath, only to end up expending it all again as the paddle fell and fell and fell. Whatever makeup she had been wearing – light foundation, eye makeup, lipstick, all of it, had been cried onto the pillow he'd casually placed under her head when it became apparent that she was going to scream through the majority of the session, so that she could stifle her cries and wails into it.

While she was trying to recover her breath, Simon physically turned her over, placing himself between her legs, spreading them wide by the mere presence of his broad shoulders between them as well as his hands on her inner thighs. Testing her waters, he inserted his index finger deep inside her pussy, finding it still as drenched as it had been before her spanking, maybe a little bit more so. Simon was extremely satisfied by this, and added a second finger, stretching her with no preamble and pumping into her firmly, listening for the sounds of her changes in breathing from drowning in pain to noticing the pleasurable feelings he was inspiring at the front of her throbbing backside.

Finally, he pressed his face into her cleft, arranging her legs splayed over his shoulders as his mouth began to suckle, tongue lapping and laving, his rock hard cock becoming just that much harder when he finally drew a long, low moan of pure pleasure from her and he knew she had finally come back to him from that place of pain he'd driven her to, come back to realize that her pussy was very full – having added a third finger with some difficulty – she was marvelously tight – and that her clit was inescapably surrounded by his warm wet mouth.

Still bound tightly, unable to even make a pretense of trying to stop him from doing what he was doing – not that she would after a spanking like that anyway – all Maura could so was lie there on her incredibly sore bottom and be propelled – with absolutely no control about it – inevitably towards what she knew would be a tremendously hard orgasm.

Simon had a type A personality. What he did, he did damned well, and lovemaking and discipline were two things that he liked to think that he excelled at. He didn't brag, but he could almost always deliver what most women were looking for – even in vanilla sex. But Maura – despite her natural reticence – didn't possess a vanilla bone in her body, and what she wanted – what she'd told him she craved and needed from a man – was exactly what he wanted to provide for her. What he'd just done for her – the paddling – was a mere taste of what he would do with her if she truly became his.

Oh, it was a reasonable expectation of how he would punish her regularly – whether she'd done anything to need it or not – but there was so much more beyond that that he wanted to explore with her. They would do a little exploring this weekend, and he hoped that it would be enough to entice her into maybe making the commitment of living with him eventually.

But that was down the line. Right now, he was thoroughly enjoying controlling her pleasure, and was very gratified to see that her responses to ecstasy were as blatant and natural as they were to pain. Her nipples were pink tipped and tight, reaching for the caresses of his mouth or fingers and her wonderful little cunny was literally bathing him in her juices as he worried that little button of hers, watching her head thrash back and forth, loving the way she tugged at her tethered wrists in frustration as he pressed his advantage home, flicking faster with his tongue over the very top tip of her clit, thrusting his fingers deeper, then, the piece de resistance – he reached beneath her with a free hand and squeezed a battered butt cheek, feeling the welts and blisters and deliberately reawakening the hurt there, forcing her into a violent culmination.

And violent it was – he'd never heard a woman scream so long and low – if he hadn't known better, he would have thought that he'd been beating her to inspire such a mournful wail and such energetic bucking and writhing – it was very much as if she was trying to avoid the cane, frankly. That was

what her movements reminded him of. It seemed to hit her very, very hard, and he could barely stand to watch her convulse as she did. He took it in as long as he could, coaxing spasms from her taut body, then let himself go get what he'd wanted for so long – climbing up to lie on top of her, keeping her legs over his elbows, forcing them to spread wide and keeping them back so that he had the ultimate access to her still pulsating body.

Although she seemed to be relaxed when he entered her, and was certainly lubricated well enough, she was still amazingly tight, and he was swollen to epic proportions from his exertions on her behalf – both his explorations of her body and his punishment of it – that he could tell it wasn't an easy accommodation for her to make – which he also liked. He liked that she had to think about submitting her body to him, that it wasn't easy for her, that he had to work to make his way inside her slowly, firmly, determinedly. Maura was whimpering with every advance, tugging on the restraints that kept her hands completely out of his way, and he was sure he was going to disgrace himself at those plaintive sounds, but he managed not to – barely, by the skin of his teeth.

Fully buried within her, he found himself entirely unable to stifle the urge to plunge, and, since there was no real need for him to stifle anything about his wants or needs around her – that was what she was there for – he didn't. Simon loosed himself on her, totally letting go of the tight rein he normally held on himself, and indulging his need to take her – to overwhelm her physically and brand his stamp of ownership onto and into her. He didn't know what she was thinking, but as far as he was concerned, she would never be with another man from this point forwards.

She was his.

That thought paramount in his mind, he rammed into her as fast and furiously as any male with his mate, keeping her submissive beneath him by sheer weight and size, not allowing her to deny him access to her most intimate, moist secrets, claiming them – and every bit of her – as his own.

Lying helpless beneath him, Maura could do nothing but accept him, accept that she must submit to him while still trying to recover from the incredible orgasm he'd wrung from her. His size as he towered over her, hips pistoning, muscles bulging with the effort, and the weight and length of him within her were totally overwhelming, and she knew that that was what he wanted; he wanted her to be so full of him – taste, touch, vision – all of her senses – that she would bend to his will in all things.

And, although it frightened her a little – as most new things did – Maura knew that she wasn't that far off from that exact mind set, even as he plunged into her for the first time, spreading her inner secret wide open around him, then requiring that she remain that way – legs hefted in a horribly exposed manner over his arms to further denigrate her ability to deny him any sort of access. Bound as she was, having this done to her, made women's liberation chants niggle in the back of her mind, but her body loved every overly stretched, possessed, undeniably pleasurable second of it.

He groaned aloud and arched into her, pouring himself into her with several more hard thrusts, stopping just short of allowing Maura a second culmination and leaving her an aching mass of denied satisfaction.

Simon lay atop her for a long while as they both tried to marshal their breathing. He was successful first, and rolled slowly to one side to lie on his back with one hand flopping negligently onto his flat stomach. "I knew you were just going to burn me up, woman. But I think you darn near to killed me," he rumbled, eyes closed, barely managing to breathe.

Maura struggled in her bonds. "Would – would you untie me, please?" she asked, trying to crane her head up enough to see if she could see how the straps worked and release them on her own.

While she was trying to find a way to escape – which he was pretty sure she'd never be able to do, considering the system of straps he used – he rolled towards her, unabashedly naked and lightly bronzed and obviously muscular and fit.

And, apparently in no hurry to release her. One big hand found and claimed her tummy as he settled onto his side.

Maura raised an eyebrow at him tellingly. "Well?"

"Well what?" Sometimes he was so annoyingly laconic that his lips barely moved when he spoke, full mustache barely twitching.

"Untie me."

One bushy eyebrow rose. "Are you giving the orders in this relationship all of a sudden?"

Even exhausted as she was, still throbbing – although it was receding – with unrequited, unfulfilled lust from him leaving her hanging that second time, she still knew enough from that slightly scolding tone to squirm automatically. "No, Sir."

"Don't forget that again, Maura."

"Yes, Sir."

His hand didn't stay still – it wandered up and down while she was pretty much helpless to do anything about it, and she found out quickly that if she moved too much, he would administer sharp smacks to the tender fronts of her thighs to discourage her from doing that. So all she could do was lie there and be touched, whether she liked it or not.

And her body loved it. It only took seconds for her interest to be rekindled to its former sharp, aching degree. Goose bumps rose everywhere he touched, and her nipples immediately tightened as if inviting him to play with them in any way he chose, and of course he chose to hurt them, to punish them for their impudence. They found themselves pinched very, very hard, one at a time, then tugged and pulled and twisted while Maura whimpered and groaned with no hope of finding any relief from this wonderful torture.

"Your nipples are beautiful – you are beautiful."

She couldn't suppress a snort, and got her breast spanked for her efforts. Her angry eyes found his, rebellion brewing in them at that affront.

But he had calmly returned to twirling the nipple of the same breast that had just felt his wrath. By way of explanation, he said, "I don't ever want to hear you denigrate yourself." He caught her chin just as she was about to snort again, forcing her to look in his eyes to emphasize the importance of what he was saying. "And if I ever hear it again, even joking, you're going to get a real punishment session."

Her eyes were huge, and she stumbled over her words. "What would you consider what I just got, dare I ask?"

"I meant with all the accoutrement and accompanying rituals, which I believe I remember you said you wanted and needed?"

Damn the man for his good memory! Wanting to steer him away from that topic, she asked with a wealth of curiosity, "How would you rate the spanking you gave me, then? Easy?" She choked on the word. "Hard? Medium?"

Simon cleared his throat, letting her nipples go to address her question seriously, since she sounded like it was something she was worried about. "I think you could consider that that was a pretty normal, average spanking for me. Something you'll get anytime you're with me and you misbehave."

Maura's breath hissed in through her lips. Dear Lord! That was an average spanking from him?

He seemed to consider what he was saying carefully. "Of course, if and when we ever decide to be together on a more continual basis, then you will be receiving weekly spankings that will probably be very much like that, too – or maybe harder, depending on how you've behaved yourself during the week."

Simon watched her carefully, not wanting to miss even the most subtle nuance of her reaction to what he was saying – and there were lots of them. Her legs had grown restless, as if she was doing the spanked girl dance in the bed, and he was surprised that wasn't hurting her already well-punished bottom. Her pupils were dilated, and her breathing, which had been calming down if slowly, was becoming more rapid. Her nipples were taut and looked sore, but he guessed that was his fault.

It was an extremely rare thing to find a woman who truly desired harsh, punitive spankings. If he'd found her, and it seemed he had, then Simon, who was wired up to get a lot out of delivering such disciplinary measures, was going to do everything in his power to get her and keep her. He wanted her

under his roof. As soon as possible. He could see that a few stolen weekends, here and there, was not going to cut it for long.

But Maura had an independent streak a mile wide, and Simon didn't want to truly crush it, but rather curb it to his will. He would have to continue to proceed delicately, lest she bolt and run . . . not that he would have any compunction at all, after this weekend especially, about hunting her down and dragging her back to his cave. Nope. No qualms whatsoever.

Maura didn't like the look in his eye . . . he looked more determined than she'd ever seen him, and his grin was almost demonic.

And he still hadn't let her go.

He didn't even look like he was thinking about letting her go. He looked like he was thinking of eating her whole, forget the fava beans and Chianti.

But instead what he did was latch onto her throbbing, aching nipple and suckle hard, biting and chewing avidly while his hand reached down and tapped on the inside of her near thigh. It was in the back of Maura's mind to play stupid, but then she accidentally rubbed her bottom against the sheets and started at the burning sensation that small movement caused.

So she did as he commanded, not really wanting to, but then the thought struck her that that was, indeed, the essence of submission – doing what you were told regardless of your own feelings about doing it.

"More," he mumbled, keeping her nipple trapped painfully between his teeth, moving his lips only enough to brush his mustache against her until she had spread herself wide enough for his tastes. "Good girl."

Those rough fingers sought and found what they wanted as if they'd made this trek thousands of times before instead of only once, sliding down to dip themselves into her still gushing opening, then back up to rub with gentle insistence over the center of her pleasure, bringing her to the very edge again with incredible ease, making her squirm and groan to the tune he called.

He almost told her that she had to wait for permission to come, but then he decided against it, just because he wanted to be able to watch everything about her as she orgasmed, and, seconds later, he did – he saw her totally lose control, her face scrunched, growling and groaning loud and low as she arched and bucked against his hand. He would not be dislodged, however, and forced her to ride the whole thing out at the behest of his fingers, jerking and jumping spasmodically at the end until he leaned down and kissed her, then reached up and let her go.

Maura was too exhausted, too wrung out to move her arms for a very long time, despite the fact that she had been struggling the whole time to be able to do that very thing. When she did, her shoulders hurt a little at first, but Simon saw her grimace and immediately began to massage her.

Somehow feeling . . . almost disconnected from the situation – and certainly from the man who had touched her so intimately and brought her such indescribable pain and ecstasy, yet who professed no particular feelings towards her beyond wanting to spank and control her – Maura got up and went into the bathroom, closing the door behind her and sitting on the pot mechanically to pee.

She got up, washed her hands meticulously, then stared at herself in the mirror for a moment, wondering what the hell she was doing here. She'd never been one to sleep around, no matter how horny she got. She could always take care of herself in that department, better than most men, she'd thought sarcastically. Simon, though, had been pretty much irresistible from the beginning.

But neither of them had professed any great love, or any depth of feeling whatsoever. It was entirely unlike her to be in a hotel room with a man who was, in essence a stranger that she had happened to hook up with on the Net who shared her predilection for bondage and discipline.

Was she crazy? Had being alone for so long driven her to these lengths just to get laid?

All of a sudden, it was just too much for her, and as she watched in the unforgivingly harsh glare of the mirror, her eyes filled to overflowing with tears that trickled down her cheeks, and she began to sob, absently turning on both the fan and the water, hoping to drown out the sounds of her sorrow, knowing

she couldn't explain how she was feeling to him and not wanting him to come barging in, asking unnecessary questions.

However Simon, who had rolled onto his back and was lying with an arm over his eyes, pretty much mind-numbingly sated and almost eerily content with how things were going so far, had been blessed with exceptionally keen hearing, especially in the upper ranges. He ignored the first squeak, putting it down to the usual vagaries of hotel heating systems, but then he heard it again, slightly louder, and much more plaintive, and there was no mistaking where that sound came from: a crying woman.

In a flash, he was knocking on the door, his hand already testing the knob. Locked, of course, not that that would be much of a deterrent. He wrapped his knuckles loudly. "Maura? Are you all right?" He'd already decided that if she sounded distressed in the slightest, that he was going to bust the door down.

He could barely detect some sniffing, and then a weak, teary, and highly questionable, "I'm fine."

Since it didn't sound like she was doing anything but crying, he decided to give her the chance to avoid him bursting in. "Maura, open the door immediately."

She surprised him by doing exactly as he'd asked, with what he concluded was very little hesitation. He heard the lock turn, and then the door was opened just a crack. He barged in, trying to assess quickly whether or not there was any sort of real problem, or if she was just having one of those crying jags women were so fond of. He was worried she'd been truly hurt somehow, although he couldn't have said how.

Maura had had just about enough time to dash most of the tears from her eyes, and wipe the rest off her wet cheeks, making herself look minimally presentable before she unlocked the door and opened it only enough that he could see that it was unlocked, then went back to damage control.

As she expected, the door was shoved open and he stormed in, as if he expected to find her struggling with a kidnapper or something – all set to play "rescue the damsel", muscles bulging and testosterone at full force.

But there was nothing for him to do once he got in there but breathe down her neck. "Are you all right?" His eyes quickly scanned her face, not missing the smallest of details. "Don't answer that. Obviously you're not. From now on, if you go into the bathroom for any reason, the door stays open."

Her attempts to protest fell on deaf ears as he grabbed her none too gently by the upper arm and pulled her out of the bathroom, back to the bed she'd just left, hustling her over enough so that he could climb in beside her, stretching out on his side to throw a thick arm over her stomach and pin her to his side on her back. "Now. You're going to tell me what the hell all of that was about."

Maura took a peek at Simon's eyes and facial expression, and they looked exactly as she'd expected them too: uncompromising and stern. With a heavy, almost dramatic sigh that was unusual for her character, she stared down at her own toes as if discovering them for the first time, biting her lip almost bloody and trying to figure out how to tell him what she was feeling and thinking.

She should have remembered from previous experience that he was not the most patient of individuals. Before she had a chance to really collect her thoughts, her taut nipple was being held between his index finger and thumb somewhat threateningly. "Maura, answer me," he ordered, pinching just the slightest bit.

"Stop – don't!" she wailed uselessly. When her hand came up to try to dislodge his, all she accomplished was to make him pull and pinch the poor abused nipple even harder.

"You know better than that," he said in a tone that reminded her of her father's when she'd done something like swear or tell a lie.

But Maura was not a wimp – submissive or not. "You've gotta give me a little time to think before I answer, though – I'm not trying to disobey you or avoid answering. I'm just trying to arrange my thoughts so I can convey them to you intelligently."

He looked into her eyes, somber and serious, then released her nipple, apparently having found the truth of her words there.

She took as much time as she needed, knowing he was watching her and missing nothing about how she was fidgeting with the sheet and licking her lips nervously. “I just – “ Tears rose up to choke her voice, and she fought them down. They weren’t really doing her any good at this point, and she didn’t want to be weak in front of him, which was probably a stupid concern, considering that she was his submissive, but that didn’t mean that she was anyone’s doormat.

Tired of waiting, he couldn’t stop himself from asking, “Did I hurt you?”

Maura gave him a raised-eyebrow disbelieving glance. How could he possibly ask her that after he’d whaled on her with that paddle? Her bottom was still throbbing and stinging from his assault!

“When I made love to you?” he added, seeing her look.

She squirmed uncomfortably. “No. It was just . . . incredibly intense.”

He didn’t say anything for a moment. “And that was bad enough to send you into the bathroom to sob like your heart’d been ripped out behind a locked door?”

Well, when he put it like that . . . “I needed to cry. I need to be alone to cry.”

Simon tipped her chin and caught her eyes, which were already misted over again just thinking about it. “Not any more you don’t. If you need to cry, you come to me.”

Maura swallowed hard. “Uhhhh, okaaaaaaay.”

Her reply could not have been more tepid or doubtful, so his expression became darker and more stern. “Is that the correct response?”

The light bulb went on over her head. “Yes, Sir.”

“You could at least try to say it like you mean it, Maura,” he teased gently. “I will not allow you to go locking yourself away from me – physically or emotionally – when you get uncomfortable. I expect you to come to me. Is that understood?”

Maura nodded dutifully. “Yes, Sir.” But she was mentally crossing her fingers at the same time.

## Chapter Nine

She fell asleep not long after that, with Simon holding her in place against his side, where he was rapidly deciding she belonged on a more permanent basis. When she awoke, it was to a replay of his mouth on her clit, so that she came to almost fully aroused and practically mid-orgasm. In fact, it was his fingers slipping in to her tight, slick channel that woke her on a groan that was torn from her throat on her first conscious breath. Upon her waking, he bent her legs back and began to feed on her voraciously, giving absolutely no quarter, not really wanting her to wake fully before she gave herself over to him and the pleasure he was pressing on her.

"S-Simon!" The high-pitched wail, almost fearful in nature, set the hair on the back of his neck on end.

But he didn't relent, didn't let up one bit, forcing her there, dragging her to ecstasy then hurling her into the maelstrom, making sure he was there in the aftermath, holding her tight, soothing her in the shivers that beset her afterwards, brushing her hair back from her face.

Simon had made love to a not inconsiderable amount of women in his life, in various ways and means and in assorted countries. Some had been explosively sexual – much as Maura was – some had been in it for the kicks or to notch their lipstick cases.

None had prepared him for her.

No woman he'd met had had such a starkly emotional connection to her pleasure. After startling him with a bare-bones scream, then groans that followed and made him serious wonder if he'd killed her, she lay quietly quivering until the storm began, and tears practically burst from her eyes. She tried to run away from him again, but he'd been prepared – forewarned was forearmed – and caught her just as she turned to roll out of the bed, pulling her tightly to him, holding her loosely, but not allowing her to escape, either.

She'd cried fit to wrench his long-dead heart from his chest, although he'd never acknowledge it. Not having a lot of experience in comforting or soothing – he was much more adept at causing physical and emotional pain, consciously and unconsciously – Simon felt the discomfort of being out of his element, which was rare. Generally, he was as in control of everyone and everything around him as he could be. He disliked surprises intensely, as they smacked of being unprepared.

But this was different. This was a woman who was important to him. That he wanted to get to know much better, well beyond this one weekend. He was determined that this would not be a one night stand, and if he had to get over his awkwardness and learn how to calm her during times like this – which he hoped would abate with time, frankly – then he would exhaust every resource he had available to him to do so.

As always, he found himself over-thinking things, and finally just let his instincts take over, caressing her hair and "shhhh"ing her softly, holding her tight when she struggled until she relaxed against him again.

When he'd held her through it and she had almost fallen asleep on him again, he lifted her leg high over his hip, his big hand on her bottom, fingering the welts and blisters he had raised with the paddle as he pushed into her, not allowing her to deny him access to her body.

Maura arched back and whimpered at his entrance, but a second hand stilled her merely by its firm presence at the small of her back, just below her ribcage. She was well and truly trapped in the gentlest but most implacable of cages, unable to move away even an inch, having to lie there and be invaded by him repeatedly, and . . . worse than that, pleasurably. Her body was already so attuned to him that it was impossible for her to ignore the way his thick organ rasped in and out, stretching her almost

unbearably then backing off, then stretching and backing off. He was making her want to writhe, but she was held so fast that she couldn't, and that was a sweet torture, too.

After an embarrassingly few strokes, Simon began to hammer into her, hands less gentle on her hips as he buried himself deep within her and exploded on a deep, low growl. He came so hard he thought he was going to come again within seconds, although the feeling faded, and he ended up sounding a lot like Maura after an orgasm – blowing breath out in great puffs and finding it amazing that his teeth were tingling from the hyperventilation.

That had never happened to him in this lifetime, but he had a feeling he had a lot more episodes of it to look forward to.

He hoped.

They never left the suite the whole three days. Simon would not allow it. He saw no reason to – they lived off the twenty-four-hour room service, swam in the pool, and at one point – after a particularly strenuous bout of lovemaking, he surprised her by having in room masseuses massage them into a stupor. Maura had balked a little, considering the fresh and older bruises on her bottom and the backs of her thighs, but Simon didn't let her protests faze him in the least.

He had joined her on the bed, where he kept her most of the time. Like a sultan who'd found a new favorite concubine, he wanted her where he could get at her comfortably whenever the mood struck. It went without saying that he never allowed her to put on any clothes after ordering her to strip just after they'd arrived, so when his hand delved under the light sheet she'd pulled up to her waist, it encountered only the smooth, soft flesh of her. As it traveled up the backs of her legs, he found the ridges he'd placed there recently with the cane, ears pricked to hear her slightest whimper, and rewarded with several, but she'd learned not to move away from him.

The hard way.

It had begun innocently enough. She was teasing him, fighting him, although she must've had some inkling that whatever advances she was making he was letting her have. Simon was an extremely dangerous man, and was so highly trained that he could kill almost anyone without thinking about it much. But either she realize that, or she didn't much care, because she was fighting him so amateurishly that he was almost afraid he'd accidentally hurt her.

Finally, wanting and end to it, and – after that naked struggle wanting nothing more than to force himself up into her pussy and ride her hard – he grabbed her hair and wrapped it around his hand, using it as a single rein to tug her head back, not hurting – yet – but not letting her move her head much, either.

But she continued to try to get away from him – half playfully, half seriously - until he got that awful gleam in his eye. "Stay," he commanded, rolling off the bed to cross over to his suitcase.

Maura watched in horror as he returned with a straight length of bamboo. It looked as unforgiving as he was. Quickly, she rolled over onto her side, already trying to scrunch across the bed, away from him.

His eyebrow rose. "Didn't I tell you to stay?"

Her whimper – and the look in her eyes - brought him to full arousal in one swift upswing. He loved that just starting to be fearful look in her delightfully feminine eyes.

But he did not like the idea that she was always running away from him, and intended to impress on her how displeased he was by that tendency, and hopefully teach her not to do so any longer.

Maura couldn't believe that he was going to actually apply that wicked looking thing to her tender bottom – especially not to a bottom that had been quite thoroughly worked over by his awful paddle! But he didn't seem to have any sort of concern about the fact that she'd been punished very recently. When Simon got to the side of the bed, he reached across it with amazing speed, fingers wrapping around her wrist and tugging firmly until she literally had no choice but to fall over onto her tummy, and before she could even think of recovering, before the thought had even entered her mind, he had her trussed up like a Thanksgiving turkey – wrists bound above her head in those same soft straps,



ankles secured together to a rung of the frame at the bottom of the bed, nude, of course, and now totally vulnerable to him.

As she should be.

He'd even managed to slide a pillow under her hips, lifting the area so that it presented a wonderful blatant target for the rod he held in his hand.

As much as she struggled and tugged against all of the restraints, none of them gave at any time during the session. And it was a long, quite purposely arduous one. Simon didn't believe in hurrying a punishment, especially not one with the cane.

"Simon – no!" Maura was crying prior to ever feeling stroke number one, rolling as far as possible to one side or the other – which wasn't much, granted – but enough so that he took an extra pillow and used it as a bolster against each of her hips, essentially rendering her completely immobile.

"Yes, Maura. I'm going to give you one of your first serious lessons – not to run away from me. And I can promise you that by the time I'm finished, you'll think more than twice the next time."

There was no other preamble, no other scolding or lecture, only the sharp searing crack of that unyielding length over both of the mounds of her still-bruised bottom at the same time. Maura had read and heard about how atrocious the pain of a caning was because it was comprised of two layers of incredible intensity . . . and she was finding out first hand that the collective "they" were most unpleasantly right!

Just as she was only barely beginning to deal with the dual aftermath of the first stroke, the second fell, and she knew that this was going to be a trying, testing experience as burning sensation built upon burning sensation. Simon only allowed a few seconds between each stroke, long enough – he knew from his own experiences – for the first, more superficial sting to have given way to the second, deeper, much worse burning sensation.

Each stroke was very carefully placed so as never to allow any wrap at all; every burgeoning red line distinct and crisp on the fair white flesh, at first only decorating her rounded pillows, but once there were eight tracks laid there, he moved downwards to the backs of her thighs and christened them as severely. Maura reacted exactly as he expected and wanted her to – somehow, although bottom caning was bad enough, feeling that hard rod biting into the tender flesh at the backs of one's thighs was that much worse, and her outcry at its first visit there was more than reward to his ears.

Simon was almost – but not quite – having a hard time concentrating on what he was doing. His genitals had a mind of their own around her, it seemed. She inspired a tremendous response in him merely by existing within a hundred mile radius, and up close the extent of his perpetual arousal was almost unbearable – much as she must've felt about the punishment she was getting, he thought with a grim smile.

Soon there were matching strips of swollen, welted flesh on her legs, achieved by unrelentingly severe snaps of his strong arm. Maura was beside herself. Her mind literally couldn't process the amount of pain she was in. She was reacting entirely without thought, without an intelligent cell in her body – they were all involved in the total rebellion of agony; he'd reduced her to her lowest common denominator in a frighteningly short time – probably by the fifth stroke.

But it wasn't quite over yet, she found out. The last two strokes were the most vicious of all – one landed diagonally across the backs of her legs – re-igniting the horrible throbbing of each of the previous strokes, and the other diagonally across her bottom flesh. Each was delivered with as much force as he dared.

Simon threw the cane to the floor to the sound of her unholy screams, and for a long moment he just stood there, indulging himself, watching the agonizing process as she tried to come to grips with what had been done to her. What he had done to her – purposely.

And what he would never hesitate to do to her no matter how long their relationship lasted.

She was a sight – most of her backside aglow from his attentions, writhing and twisting to get away even though he was no longer delivering any strokes. The sheets and comforter beneath her face were darkened by her tears, and she was still moaning deep in her throat.

Simon reached down and ran a stiffened finger over her, from just above the back of her left knee to just below the small of her back, tracing a painful line over each one of the welts he was responsible for, watching as her skin purple with bruises as she tried unsuccessfully to flinch away from his touch. In a rare, unplanned moment, he released her feet, then bound each to a separate corner of the bed, spreading her to a certain extent, then he compromised her even further and pulled her knees apart with slender lengths of leather that essentially allowed him to stand at the end of the bed and see every one of her charms without even trying to. She lay there completely exposed, unable to make even the smallest effort to protect her modesty, those luscious charms hanging down in front of him, amazingly swollen and ripe for the picking.

Or rather, flicking, he though wryly, climbing onto the bed between her legs. Simon was curious to see if she was as wet as usual, or if the torment he'd subjected her to had been enough to curb her rampant libido. He fit his whole hand – big though it was – over her privates, and before he'd even let his middle finger work its way in between her plump lips, his fingers were being moistened by her glistening cream. She positively gushed onto him when that finger penetrated her, trailing dampness down his knuckles.

Maura was just barely beginning to recover when she felt him invade her – her breath was starting to settle down, although the fire in her bottom and legs was nowhere near abated. Then he pressed his way up inside her – first that big, thick, middle finger, then his index finger joining it, forcing her to stretch and accommodate him.

To her deep mortification, she also knew that – despite the depths of her torment, or maybe because of it – her body was drenching him in her own sexual fluids. Worse than that, she was finding the combination of what he was doing to her now and the remnants of those atrocious slices with the cane were making her even wetter – she had absolutely no control over him or herself. None. He raped her from behind more and more vigorously, making her want to arch back against him, but she couldn't. All she could do was lie there and take whatever it was that he decided he wanted her to endure.

At one point, Simon leaned up and over her as he plunged his fingers in and out of her, whispering into her ear harshly, "Don't you come without permission, Maura, or I'll cane you again."

She couldn't help it. She keened long and low against the imposition of his will. Maura knew that he did not make idle threats. She had not one doubt in her mind that he would do exactly what he said, despite the current condition of her bottom.

And she was right. He continued the thrust his hand inside her, hard, deliberately bumping his knuckles up against her protruding clit, and she was barely able to keep herself from coming, but then he backed off a little and began to kiss her swollen and sore bottom, and that pleasure/pain kept her distracted enough that she wasn't in imminent danger of losing control.

Then he started up again, adding a third finger to stretch her further, to remind her that he could. But the itchy pain he'd stirred in her bottom was riding her high, and it helped her to not immediately jump into having to fight her own orgasm.

But, eventually, she caught up. He caught her up. Forcibly. Relentlessly. Oh-so-pleasurably. His mouth settling at the small of her back, then descending slowly, wetly down her cleft. Finally, he positioned himself beneath her, mouth open and eager, a big hand sprawled over those sore mounds, pressing firmly, holding her to him so that she couldn't escape his loving attentions, not that she wanted to. Three fingers remained deep inside her, reaching and wiggling and screwing insistently in and out of her.

The orgasm began at her toes and washed over her in a huge, crashing wave that dug a scream out of her from the bottom of her lungs. "Si-monnnnnnnnnnnnn," scraped out of her throat gutturally, and it seemed she couldn't let go of his name, repeating it in fading refrain until her lack of breath overtook her

and all she could do was convulse helplessly on his mouth and hand as they worked another orgasm from her, and sent her well on the way to another.

When he left her, still trying to come to grips with what he'd done to her, it was only to grab some lubricant and seconds later she felt him separating her cheeks with the gentlest of thumbs and presenting the large head of his impressive erection against her bottom hole.

Automatically clenching against him, futilely trying to deny him entry although she knew in her heart that she had no hope of stopping him, her head whipped around, but she couldn't see his face. She could only feel the increased pressure against that small opening, knowing that there was nothing she could do but try to remember to relax, although she wasn't sure she was going to be able to do it – and also knowing that it was going to happen regardless, unless she used the safe word.

He was being careful, but still, being opened back there, no matter how gentle he was or slick he'd made himself artificially, it never felt any other way than strange and unusual and humiliating and shameful and horridly, embarrassingly hot – especially bound as she was.

Slowly, very slowly, he maneuvered the very tip in, always pushing firmly, hooking his fingers around her hips and pulling them back so it would have looked to a third party as if she was mounting him, when nothing could have been further from the truth.

Simon wasn't hurting her at all, but there was all that unexpected pressure and almost discomfort, enough that she had to groan in protest when he was about a third of the way in. "Unnnnn – no – Simon – please."

It was as if her complaint spurred him on – in the opposite direction from what she had wanted. His hips pulsed forwards just as he brought hers back against him, and, in a sure swift movement he buried himself deep inside her tight channel, as far as he possibly could.

He was so big in general – especially for that particular location – that Maura felt that she was being split in two. But it wasn't a stabbing, sharp pain – more of an unpleasant burning – and it was already receding. Simon waited a few minutes, groping her bottom cheeks and enjoying the way she looked all restrained and helpless and full of him in the least expected of areas, the rounded flesh that cradled him all red and mottled with the results of his own disciplinary efforts.

He reflected for a long, luxuriating moment that there was very little better in this life than to be buried crotch deep in your submissive's well-beaten behind. Except, perhaps, to explode within that very same safe, secure harbor, which he proceeded to do.

And there was nothing Maura could do but be fucked by him.

Hard. Never hard enough to cause any damage, but certainly not gently.

He raped her ass, and that was the only way to put it.

And he apparently enjoyed it enormously, because his orgasm overtook him in just a few minutes, making him grunt loudly and groan as he spasmed and bucked into her.

Maura felt him coat her insides over and over, and he took his time leaving her, rubbing her back possessively as he shrank and naturally escaped her clench.

He untied her immediately, then flopped down on his side of the bed, one eye watching her warily. The first thing she did was try to scamper off the bed, but he grabbed her wrist. "Where are you going?"

She bit her lip as she looked back over her shoulder at him. "To the bathroom."

"To pee?"

Maura's face brightened to match the complexion of her bottom. "Yes, as if that's any of your business."

He leaned forwards and caught her chin. "Everything about you is my business from this weekend on, as far as I'm concerned. Leave the door open, do your business, and come right back. Don't be long. You don't want me to come get you."

No, she knew she didn't want that. Exhausted, she did exactly as she was told. When she got back to the bed and tried to roll over onto her side, facing away from him, just to get a little time to herself,

some time to digest what had happened, he reached a strong arm out and dragged her against him, her back to his front, keeping her close regardless of what she wanted.

"Let me go," she whispered.

His mouth was at her ear as his arms contracted around her. "No. I want you here. End of discussion."

She learned that weekend that he was largely implacable, and, in case she'd had any delusions to the contrary, that he meant what he said. She was caned twice, and no matter how she tried to avoid them by behaving as perfectly as possible there were also innumerable spankings in between.

And the sex!

Maura had never had so many orgasms in a three day period in her life! It seemed like all he had to do was look at her and she was most of the way there. Of course, the atmosphere of sex and submission and punishment that permeated the very air in that room certainly helped a lot, Maura mused as she drove home Sunday afternoon, after they checked out at the last possible moment.

She had to shift in the driver's seat at the thought, which set off small explosions all over her, as well as reminding her of how sore the muscles on the insides of her thighs and her shoulders and biceps were, to say nothing of her bottom and the backs of her thighs. And her breasts . . . dear God, he hadn't even punished them formally, promising that for later. But he'd suckled and pinched and rolled so avidly that they were chafing on the inside of her bra.

They had parted slowly – very slowly, kissing and nibbling and touching until the very last minute – until he'd tucked her into the driver's seat of her car and sent her on her way with a last, searing kiss, after extracting her promise to call his cell when she got home, and a staunch warning that if she didn't, there'd be hell to pay when they got together next.

He'd been quite interested in setting another weekend aside, but Maura had stalled him, saying she needed to look at the calendar on her computer before she could commit to anything, not wanting to be wrong and everything and earn a spanking.

The thought of spanking her had distracted him a little, but not much, because he'd mentioned it again before she'd left. "Check on weekend after next. That's the next time I'm free."

Leave it to Mr. Organization to have his schedule memorized in his head. Well, she did to a certain extent, too, though, and she was pretty sure that – since she never had much of a social whirl – she was free. But she did want some breathing room before saying "yes." He was just . . . too damned much of a good thing for her comfort. He came too close to being and doing everything she wanted. That was never a good thing, as far as she was concerned. She was waiting for the other shoe to drop.

There had to be something wrong with him. Maybe he was a mass murderer, maybe he wrote bad checks – no, scratch that thought. You couldn't be in the military for long and exhibit that type of behavior. They had no sense of humor about that kind stuff. Sociopath? She didn't think so. If he was some sort of homicidal maniac, then she'd already be dead. He'd had ample opportunity to kill her if he'd wanted to this weekend, considering that she'd spent most of her time tied to the bedposts, or otherwise unable to stop him from having his way with her.

Ways, she corrected in her mind. Imaginative, often painful, but always sexual on some level, ways. And there were some things they hadn't even done yet – hence his interest in getting together again as quickly as possible. He was dying to try out all of his toys on her. Maura wasn't so sure about that, even though she admitted quietly to herself that she'd probably end up enjoying it anyway, as long as she was with him.

She shivered at the memories that flooded through her body, setting off fires everywhere, but concentrating between her legs. Her panties were already soaking through her jeans and onto the drivers' seat from kissing and groping him goodbye.

He could affect her without even being there. No phone, no IM's, no letters no nothing. Just her avid memories of his voice and his hands and his lips and his . . . everything. Simon set and maintained just the exact tone and atmosphere she craved – submission. He wasn't gratuitously cruel, but certainly never

went easy on her when he felt she needed to be corrected. He'd taken her when the mood struck him, not asking whether she wanted it or not, just reaching out and taking what was his – sometimes hurtfully, but not in a manner that didn't make her tingle madly.

He wasn't a control freak . . . quite. But he certainly did take pleasure in controlling her. The bit about the bathroom drove her crazy all weekend. Granted, she never closed the door in her own house, but that was her own house and she was alone in it. She hated the idea that he could simply come and stand in the doorway and watch her – which, to her complete mortification, he had done at times.

And she was his. She wanted to be his. Badly. But . . . there was that pesky shoe hanging over her. If she could just identify what his problem was going to be, she'd feel a lot better.

## Chapter Ten

The shoe really didn't show itself until much later, and then it ended up being more of a sandal, really. The time they spent together did nothing but get better – explosively better. Maura tried to put him off about their next meeting – she intended to do so, anyway . . . feeling somehow that throwback to the fifties feeling about being to readily available might somehow make him take her for granted. But she shunned those feelings as too old-fashioned; Maura could tell she was starting to channel her mother again and ruthlessly squelched the impulse.

But innumerable phone calls and chats later and she was wetting her panties just seeing his name pop up as available in her chat program. One of the first things he'd done was totally forbidden her to touch herself unless he'd given her permission – which he doled out very stringently. She practically had to beg to get some relief from the white hot passions he stirred in her; knowing him he loved it when she pleaded with him. But there was a fine line, she'd found out the hard way the first time she tried to wheedle permission out of him, between begging and asking politely and respectfully and what he considered whining.

And misjudging that line meant big problems for her nether parts.

"Please please please please please! I'm about to explode, Simon!"

She could hear the self-satisfied smile in his voice, and wanted to wipe it off his face with her wet panties. "I'd love to see that, Maura. I'd pay money to see it, matter of fact."

"Si-mon!"

Nothing.

"You have got to let me sate myself."

More silence, but with a much different tenor. Finally, he spoke, sending a shiver of fear down her spine to settle at her oft spanked bottom. "No, I don't have to do anything."

Biting her lip, she replied, "Yes, Sir."

"You, on the other hand, have to obey me, don't you?"

A heavy sigh escaped her. "Yes, Sir."

"So, if I say no touching yourself – and that includes your breasts – " He'd found out that her breasts were almost as sensitive as her clit and could be used to bring her off almost as readily. " – until we're together again, then you will obey me."

It wasn't a question, it was a statement, but still she answered in the affirmative. "Yes, Sir."

"Good. Then no touching. We're getting together in less than two weeks. You should be able to hold out until then."

Maura whimpered – she couldn't help it. She wasn't at all sure she would be able to do it. Nope. Maybe, just possibly, if she didn't communicate with him between now and then – no emails, no phone, no chats. But even then it was iffy, and he sure as hell wasn't going to agree to that.

So she had to resign herself to having to change her panties every five minutes, and climbing into bed very late at night, throbbing and aching for a release that she knew she could not grant herself – and that he would not allow her until he could do it to her for himself. It actually got to the point, a few days before their second weekend together, that her incessant libido began to keep her awake at night, and by the time they lay down in a bed next to each other, she fell asleep in his arms almost as he was making love to her.

Her mortification when she awoke in the middle of the night could not have been more complete. She apologized so often – in tears each time – that he had to take to threatening her with a spanking whenever she brought it up, and actually apologized for making her wait so long, saying that part of being

a good dom was knowing your submissive well enough to gage what was good for her about submitting. Obviously, that much denial had not been good for her.

She was surprised and impressed by his apology in equal measures. He was totally serious about his own responsibility towards her – not many men – and probably fewer doms – would ever admit they were wrong, especially about something as delicate as misjudging the strength of their mate's responses.

Simon had proceeded to tuck her back in, promising that she would make it up to him tomorrow and reassuring her that he wasn't in the least bit mad, but that he would be if she didn't go back to sleep.

After their second, no holds barred, barely-able-to-crawl-out-of-bed encounter, Maura knew she had to face facts: she was falling in love with this taciturn, solemn, serious man – someone she would have sworn a few months ago was incredibly far from her type. But dear God, he could make her putty in his hands with just a look. And, for all of his agreement with her women's' lib attitudes, he was extremely polite and gentlemanly around her – he opened doors, he pulled out chairs . . . and his protectiveness – even when the person he was protecting her from was, in essence, himself – knew no bounds at all.

She didn't want to fall in love with him. First of all, she didn't want the complications. She liked her life just the way it was, thank you very much. Single suited her . . . eighty percent of the time. The other twenty percent was when her libido ruined her life and made her rub up against lampposts on the way down the street.

Secondly, she knew that he didn't believe in love - that his courteous gestures had their roots in old school politeness rather than any sort of knight-in-shining-armor impetus. He did not want to be her boyfriend, meet her family, or any of her friends. He wanted to fuck her. He wanted to dominate and control her, for each of their interminable pleasure - and he certainly could conjure enough of that for a lifetime in just one weekend.

End of story.

He didn't want babies. He didn't want to buy a house with her. He didn't want to plan a future or give her his name. He wanted her. And that was all he had to offer.

He'd told her as much at dinner that second Sunday morning – the next weekend they were together – while suggesting that she come live with him.

Maura could not have been more stunned.

He'd been fishing around in his jacket pocket – naked – as they both were while sitting at the small table in the very same suite they'd had before, dining decadently late in the morning, almost noon, because they'd been unable to pry themselves away from each other for something as unimportant as sustenance. For a moment, she was agog at the idea – frozen with fear, frankly – that he might God forbid produce a ring.

But no. She should have known him better.

He'd handed her a blue-backed piece of paper that looked like the warrants they handed people on "Law and Order". It wasn't a warrant, though, obviously, unless one got served for the occasional unpaid parking ticket. It was, instead, a cohabitation agreement. Maura had never seen one before . . . and she was frankly wishing she wasn't seeing one now.

"What is this?" she asked, opening the folded document with a sense of foreboding and sheer dread. The first line started with "whereas the party of the first part" and went distinctly downhill from there.

"It's an agreement between two people who live together, just to make sure everyone is on the same page." Completely oblivious to the turmoil she was in, Simon dug into his Belgian waffle with gusto.

Maura didn't read past that atrocious first line. She was allergic to legalese, and, considering the delicate flowering of feelings she was having, this God-awful piece of paper was an affront to her. She folded it back up and put it on the table between them – where it belonged, symbolically.

Somehow, breakfast didn't look as appealing as it had just moments before, and Maura merely picked at it. Simon noticed this, of course, asking her if there was something wrong with the way her French toast was prepared. She shook her head, trying not to become maudlin. He was not behaving any

differently from how he had told her he would. He had never blown any sunshine up her skirt about wanting a loving relationship. Never. She was the one who had gotten all starry eyed and romantic. She almost snorted out loud. He hadn't a romantic bone in his body . . . and she couldn't even claim ignorance of that fact, because he'd confessed to it from the start.

When they had both finished eating – Maura much more quickly than he, Simon sat back in his chair and looked at her. She looked like someone had burst her bubble with a sledge hammer, and she was busy trying to patch it back together with band aids, desperately hoping he didn't notice.

He sighed. It never seemed to matter how open he was about not wanting to fall in love or be in love or not subscribing to "love" in general. Every woman he was with – even those who professed to be as anti-love as he was – eventually ended up in love in their relationship. He preferred to think that they were in love with the idea of love, rather than with him in particular, but he could never be sure, however egotistical it sounded in his head – that every woman he'd been with for any length of time had fallen in love with him.

Some of his relationships had ended in atrocious scenes, and one of the reasons it had been a while since he'd been involved in anything other than the very occasional one night stand was because he detested

hurting women so. Especially when it was entirely unintended.

He liked women, and although he was basically a happy loner, he enjoyed their company enormously even when it was completely platonic. But he didn't and couldn't love them. It would be too much of a compromise of himself. He wanted to own them and dominate them and make them come uncontrollably until they fainted in his arms, but he never wanted to love one, nor did he ever expect them to love him.

It seemed that Maura was the same as the others, although she had assured him when they'd spoken of it that she was not looking for that type of relationship.

He decided to do a little probing. "Is it the living together, or the agreement?" he asked bluntly, nailing her to the wall with his eyes, hooking his elbow over the back of the chair in a completely relaxed pose, when nothing could have been further from the truth.

Simon had never much pursued a woman, especially not as avidly as he was doing with Maura. He wanted her, and he would have her, one way or the other.

Maura nearly choked on a sip of coffee. And she'd thought she'd been doing so well to keep her feelings buried, away from him, so that he wouldn't guess that she was upset. So much for that. She should have known better. If she'd learned nothing from her time with him, it was that he missed nothing – no details of what went on around him – around them when they were together. She'd noticed that when they went out – however infrequently that was since they'd started sleeping together – that he always took a seat that faced the door, so he could see who was coming into the restaurant. He always seemed to consciously place himself in a defensible position, and she knew he'd always put himself between her and any perceived danger.

Suddenly, he abandoned the casual posture and leaned forward, growling, "And don't even try to tell me that you're not bothered. You barely touched your breakfast, and you have a heartier appetite than that, especially after the night we just had. You need your fuel."

He would have to remind her of what had transpired between the sheets last night . . . and on the floor, and on the very table they were dining off of. He'd spread her over it and taken the paddle to her, all because she'd sassed him about something. She couldn't even remember what. When he had her hoarse from screaming as she gripped the edge of the table top fit to pry the finish off it, he turned her over and forced her legs back and kept them there with one thick arm, pushing them so far up that she had to balance largely on her shoulder blades as he stuffed three huge fingers up inside her with no preparation whatsoever – not that she needed any by that point, or ever really around him – and proceeded to enclose her already swollen and begging clit in his lips, licking her thoroughly in torturously slow motion.



And it had gotten better from there. He was like an android – he could go all night. As before, she was denied the relative safety of her clothing, always nude and available to him whenever and wherever, especially next to him in bed. Simon reached for her compulsively throughout the night, to the point where she had flinched a little when he slid – again incredibly hard and wide – into her, to the deepest hilt of himself. He had felt her spasm around him – not from pleasure, and had searched her face, waiting for her to use her safe word if she needed to. But, as it was not forthcoming, he did what he'd wanted to do and fucked her.

Hard.

Very hard, holding her wrists to the bed and raping her mouth as he raped her pussy.

Full tilt, no apologies.

He owned her, and used her for his own pleasure. How could anything be more natural?

A shiver ran through her as she remembered each unbelievably powerful stroke as it rubbed her already sensitized flesh.

But it only felt right to submit to him – never abused or even used in any sort of bad sense.

She was his, and there was comfort in that thought, deep down where she didn't care to look.

"So eat something and tell me what's going on in that imaginative mind of yours."

If she hadn't been sitting on a mottled black and blue and still angry red bottom, she might well have given him more of a fight about eating. But shifting in the chair – even on the generous cushion – took care of any rebellious impulse she might have had. She didn't know how much more she could take if he decided to punish her.

Although, pervert that she was, she also found that concept intriguing in the extreme.

So, she picked up her fork and edged off a small piece of butter and real maple syrup-soaked bread and eating it, if just reluctantly enough to let him know that she didn't really want to obey him.

Mara was trying to couch what she was going to say in a manner that would sound less objectionable to him. "I'm just surprised, is all."

"Again," he said, the edge in his tone letting her know that he wasn't happy at having to repeat himself, "is it the living together or the agreement?"

"Both," she shot back, putting her fork down.

Simon raised an eyebrow at her until she picked it back up and took another bite. He couldn't have said he was surprised. Some women might have suggested that they move in even before now. But not Maura. She was a deeply private person, and very non-pushy. The idea of them living together had probably not even occurred to her, and, truthfully, he wasn't really sure what he thought about that. Maura was a very secure, independent person. She didn't need him.

But she did have what seemed to be a very great need to submit to him, just as he needed her to submit to him. She had confessed to him, during several of their long talks, that she'd always felt a desire – in more ways than one – to be controlled – very tightly controlled. Simon had never met a woman who was such a bundle of contradictions. In his experience, the women who wanted to be as tightly guided as Maura had told him she wanted to be were largely unable to function on their own, anyway, and were looking for someone to do all of the decision making involved even in the most mundane of daily activities. But Maura was quite capable of making intelligent, sound choices on her own, yet she had admitted that she would prefer to have her Dom do most of it.

And to Simon, the only way they would achieve that level of dominance and submission was for her to live with him, so that he could keep an eye – and firm hand – on her twenty-four-seven. It was the next logical step in their relationship, as far as he was concerned, and the only intelligent way to approach living together was to sign a legally binding agreement that spelled out exactly what was expected of both parties, both practically and sexually.

He had found a sample agreement online, and kept most of it, but then added addendums to address their unique situation – spelling out the level of her complete submission – and his own

responsibilities to her therein - in black and white. His lawyer had raised his eyebrow at some of the codicils, but had drawn it up to the letter without so much as a comment.

Simon leaned forward. "I want you with me all the time. I want to keep you close at hand. I want to keep you naked in the house, and fuck you or spank or paddle or cane you whenever the urge hits me. I want to keep you bound in bed at night most nights - all night sometimes - maybe longer."

Maura couldn't breathe at his words. After their exploits this weekend, one would have thought that she would be wrung out sexually, but it turned out that, with him, she was just more and more sexually aroused, by all the things he said and did to her.

But living together? Under a legal agreement? She might not have been quite so shocked if it was a prenuptial - despite the fact that she knew that his feelings about marriage ran along much the same lines as his feelings about love.

"And," he continued in a self-satisfied tone, "I can see that you find that idea extremely intriguing also."

"What I don't find intriguing is the idea of signing my life away," she said sarcastically.

A muscle in his jaw began to twitch, a sure sign - she had learned the hard way - that he was trying to keep a hold on his temper. "You're not. We're just agreeing that - unless we get married - if and when the relationship dissolves, we will both walk away with exactly what we came into it with."

"Aren't you jumping the gun a bit? You just barely brought up the idea of us moving in together. You couldn't let me think about that for a while before springing a palimony agreement on me?" He looked as if the thought had never occurred to him, and she wasn't in the least surprised. "The word 'finesse' has absolutely no meaning to you, does it?"

He flushed - it was the first time she'd seen him do anything resembling a blush. "I figured you would want to make an informed decision, and know exactly where I was coming at this from."

"Yeah. From a lawyer's office."

The mood had pretty much been killed by his little bombshell, so they packed up and left. He escorted her to his car, stowed her suitcase for her, and then practically buckled her into her seat before closing the car door and squatting down next to the open window. The agreement had remained amidst the remnants of their interrupted meal until he picked it up and put it back into his pocket.

"Call me when you get home, honey."

"I will."

She wasn't in a full pout, which he would have been more prepared to handle, but just seemed rather sad and almost defeated. He didn't like it at all, especially since he knew he'd been the cause of it. "Kiss me," he ordered, wanting to recapture some of the fiery magic they'd shared only hours before.

Maura leaned towards him and did as he asked, and it was not a withheld kiss. He would have been able to spot that a mile away because she'd been so naked and abandoned with him, especially this weekend, that even if she'd just had her usual natural reticence he would have noticed.

It was a lovely, passionate kiss that he returned with considerable interest, and when he finally pulled away, he realized that nothing had changed. There was still that indefinable sadness in her eyes and around those expressive lips.

Well, he thought to himself, there wasn't much he could do about it now. He'd put his cards on the table. He wasn't the type to beat about the bush, and he thought she would know that. "Drive carefully, hear?"

"Yes, Sir."

No sarcasm, no attitude at all.

And somehow, that was worse.

She drove off, and he found himself standing and staring long after her car had disappeared from view.

## Chapter Eleven

He hadn't blindfolded her . . . yet. She almost wished he had. She was bound, as usual, in the collar and cuffs she was almost always required to sleep in, the chain between each cuff and the collar severely shortened, and the collar itself attached by a small length to the eyebolt that he'd securely fastened into the wall discreetly behind the mattress of the big California king.

In short, she wasn't going anywhere fast, although her ankles and legs were free, but she'd been told not to move them. Maura hated it when he gave her an order like that and then didn't give her any help in obeying it, no matter how much pain he subjected her to. She would be expected to do as she was told and be still.

She watched him shuffling something around - couldn't see what it was from her angle - but felt something touch her thigh accidentally. It must've been accidental on his part because it neither hurt nor gave her any pleasure.

This wasn't a session that was the result of any sort of misbehavior on her part, nor was it a part of her weekly punishment session. This was what he referred to as a "training" session. They almost always ended up as a test of the level of her submission . . . as if he was interested in pushing the envelope of pain or pleasure she was able to take before begging for relief, or struggling against his efforts - against the imposition of his will. Sometimes, for no reason other than that he wanted to and could, he beat her very hard, always careful not to draw blood, but leaving her backside and the backs of her legs sore for as long as a week - and never failing to punish her physically afterwards if she disobeyed, despite their appearance. Sometimes he attended to her breasts just as fiercely, until they were crisscrossed with thin, sore red lines from the almost baton-like cane he used on them routinely, as well as a flat-bowled wooden kitchen implement, that was like a small paddle he used almost exclusively on her nipples, especially after they'd been clamped for a long while and were extremely sensitive.

After blindfolding her completely using a thick cotton pad over each closed lid and then her disc-style blindfold over that, so that she truly had no ability to see anything - no shadows, no peeping out from under the bottom or over the top of it - nothing, he placed the unit near her hips, and connected the three things he was going to use on her today - and probably every time he subjected her to this particular brand of amusement. Two were silver and quite obviously designed to be worn internally. The other looked like one of those patches they use when they're doing an EKG . . .

Simon was between her legs, squeezing some lubricant into a bowl, then adding several shakes of salt. Maura lay there, essentially immobilized, dying to ask him what he was going to do, but he was not likely to be forthcoming at this juncture . . . or, really, any juncture. Simon could be annoyingly taciturn at times, especially when it came to her punishments. She usually had no idea what was going to happen to her, except beyond the fact that she was inevitably going to be reduced to tears by whatever it was - that was a given for any punishment he dished out.

He forced her legs further apart, to the point where her muscles had to strain to maintain the spread, making her lower body tense so that the insertions would be just that much more uncomfortable for her, because she was holding herself so tight. The butt-plug style dildo came first. It was not half as thick as it needed to be - only about an inch and a quarter in circumference - but he had to make due with what he had until he could scour the Internet for something more suitable for her - something that forced her bottom hole to stretch unpleasantly while he tortured her.

"Pull your legs up, girl," he growled, his face very near her clit, so close she could feel his breath on her already swollen and leaking lips.

Maura did as she was told, hoisting her legs up and back, over her tummy, as if he was going to shave her or diaper her, which he had - on occasion, most often when they were taking a car trip -

threatened to do. He was very diligent when he shaved her, always getting every possible hair away from her privates, and spent a humiliatingly long time inspecting her minutely while she dripped down onto the comforter. It was a position she absolutely detested, as well as being a hard one to maintain, and he knew that full well. Since she'd moved in with him, her stomach muscles had become rock hard, just from trying to stay in the sometimes unusual positions he required of her.

Besides how uncomfortable she found the position, it was even worse when he violated her bottom from this angle, as it wasn't one she had much interest in, thus it was much more of a test of her submission than if she had been on her stomach or side. But he had absolutely no compunctions about what he was doing, and even less concern about whether or not she liked the way he posed her.

With no preparation whatsoever, she felt the broad head of something hard and cool pressed against her rosebud, sliding easily past the resistance she could not control from her own body. It was slick and smooth; its length filling her easily, her bottom naturally clamping down on the thinner end, automatically participating in her own torture.

A second probe was inserted into her pussy, and that did stretch her to the point of discomfort, but it was long enough that he could prop it against something – she didn't know what – so that Maura would not be able to expel it, no matter how hard the spasms were that he was going to put her through.

The last thing he did was use a special ointment on a small pad that he then sealed onto her already swollen, begging clit. It was almost always impressively sized and hard as a little nub, and this time was no different. It jumped as he positioned it, probably not liking being covered one bit.

Simon smiled almost evilly. Her clit would be even more unhappy in just a minute.

"You can put your legs down now, but keep them spread."

She obeyed immediately, knowing the consequences would be worse for her if she didn't.

"This is going to be one of your harder sessions, Maura." He loved the way she squirmed at his words. "It's not going to leave a mark on you, but you're going to be begging me to stop just the same."

Mara shivered noticeably, then tried to still the small movement.

He gave her no quarter, starting the machine fairly low for safety's sake, but cranking it ever higher as he watched her spasm and jerk, her terrified cries filling his ears and his mind, making him even harder than he'd been when he'd first told her to go into their bedroom and get ready for a session. Watching her walk – slowly, almost dejectedly – to her punishment – but walking nonetheless, never failed to bring him to full-mast.

She was at a scream within minutes, and he kept her there as she danced to his tune and strained at her bonds, noting that notching it up even the slightest increased the volume of her wails. Up two more notches and she was begging for relief. Another slight bump and hysterical tears.

After a good long while of what must've been incredible pain, he brought her down and made some adjustments, inflicting intense pleasure instead, making her moan and beg for an entirely different reason.

He stretched out next to her, his mouth by her ear, the unit in his big hands so that he could control her world at his whim.

"Doesn't that feel better, my Maura?"

She nodded, still hiccupping sobs from the pain, unable to escape whatever he chose for her – excruciating agony or intense, incredible pleasure. Her whole lower body was still tingling achingly with remembered misery, which only made her that much more sensitive to the terrible vibrations within her and at her poor defenseless clit as he forcibly pleased her. It felt weird and awful – to be brought to such uncontrollable lows where she would have sold her soul to end her own suffering, and then to experience such tremendous and thorough ecstasy . . . all within seconds of each other.

Maura didn't know if she could stand one more second of it, but then she didn't have any choice. This was what her dominant wanted to do to her. It was entirely his decision, and that had been her choice, once upon a time.

And, despite what he was putting her through – or maybe because of it – she wouldn't change her mind for anything, even right now, in the middle of a torturous wave of sensation.

He gave her a sixty-forty ratio of pain to pleasure, always announcing when he was going to throw her into agony so that it would be that much worse for her – so that she could do nothing but writhe in dreaded anticipation as the seconds of ecstasy ticked by, yielding inevitably to the torment that awaited her at his hands.

It was a long, slow afternoon of complete submission for her, one that he intended to repeat on a more regular basis. It helped to remind her – just as her weekly punishments did – that he owned her, and could do as he pleased, even to the point of putting her body through true torture.

He had set it to run in cycles at one point – hard cycles that would leave her exhausted – seven minutes of pain and only three of pleasure. He set the machine to beep just before switching from something that had her nearly orgasmic to something that had her very close to losing control of her bladder.

And then he withdrew from her.

She didn't know if he left the room – she had tried to strain to hear the door – to hear anything. But she couldn't over her own hoarse shrieks. He could have been on the straight backed chair that resided in the corner of the room, where she was sent for punishments. Or he could have gone into Albuquerque, for all she knew, and left her like this, at the mercy of a merciless machine for Lord knows how long.

But, he did reward her in the end, although he wasn't at all sure that Maura would have agreed that it was a reward. He brought her to a throbbing, crying orgasm without every once having touched her body. Maura did not like that at all. She craved his touch, even in discipline. To be touched in any way would always be better than what she'd just been made to endure.

This – this thing, whatever it was – made her feel – made her feel excruciating things. But with no heart and no soul.

She couldn't stand it – wouldn't stand it again.

But, deep in her heart, she knew she would.

For him.

Always for him.

He took her while she was still wearing the anal and clitoral devices, after making sure that they were well seated. Simon adjusted the settings to an incredibly powerful sexual stimulation, then putting an electrode at the base of his cock. The sex was extraordinary – he had two orgasms almost in a row, and Maura's were literally innumerable.

When he finally turned the blasted thing off, it was with the last ounce of energy he possessed after rolling off her and undoing her wrists. Maura removed the blindfold herself, trying to keep her eyes open somewhat unsuccessfully, since the depth and strength of her orgasms with him almost always resulted in a desperate need for sleep.

But she wanted to see what it was that he'd use on her. It looked rather innocuous, but she knew better than that by a long shot.

It was a TENS unit, something she knew was usually used to alleviate muscle pain. It was often used in the course of physical therapy . . . only that certainly wasn't going to be the case here. He had certainly used it to bring her considerable, unbelievable pain, and just as unbelievable pleasure.

"Well, that was a shocking experience," he quipped wryly in that luscious deep tone of his.

They were the opposite of most couples – she was the one who absolutely had to sleep after sex. She couldn't believe how awake he was, no matter how hard it appeared that he had come. This time, she could barely summon the strength to groan at that statement, turning away from him to curl up on her side while her body was still tingling and contracting violently on its own, as if she hadn't been released from that horrid machine's touch.

Maura knew that he would never allow her to just turn away from him like that. She always slept in his arms, even when she was bound, he curled himself around her from behind, which is what he did right then, pulling her back against his front, nestling his now soft genitals into the bottom of her cleft, keeping them ominously present and close to the secret heart of her, always looking for ways to remind her that she was entirely owned by him. He plucked at her nipples, very softly, just enough to distract her a little, so that she fell asleep aching and wanting but not having, the way he kept her most of the time.

Five years ago:

She had called him when she got home, of course. Just because she was uncomfortable with a piece of paper he'd given her, didn't mean she was willing to throw away her submission to him - their relationship, such as it was.

Truth was, she could no longer imagine what it would be like to not be his, in every way. To have him sending her to bed early because he thought she was tired, scolding her for inappropriate language and washing her mouth out quite diligently when he saw her next for the same, biting into her bottom with that atrocious cane, then licking the welts and fingering her to an explosive orgasm before she really had a chance to recover from the extremely thorough caning.

He had moved into almost every aspect of her life, overseeing her with a tremendous strength and strictness, and a scrupulous honesty that impressed her even as she was being punished for something that the average woman took for granted - like not having to ask permission to go out with her friends. But that was the life she craved - to be accountable to someone, someone who wouldn't let her off the hook when she disobeyed his rules.

And Simon was exactly the man to do that largely thankless job - do it well, and enjoy it enormously, if his constant erections were any indication.

Why, then, was she hesitating about signing the agreement or moving in with him? She'd had her lawyer look it over, and it was pretty much as innocuous as it seemed. It was a statement of what they each had before they came together, and that they were going to keep that if they separated. It addressed what would happen to property they'd bought together, and disclaimed the right to common law marriage. It was pretty straight forward, and honestly what it spelled out wasn't anything more than she would have expected if they'd moved in together and then broken up.

What was wrong with spelling it out beforehand? Granted, it was hardly romantic, but then she knew with whom she was dealing, and didn't expect that.

Frankly, she couldn't believe herself - pretty much planning to move in with a man she'd met a couple of months ago on the Internet. Her friends couldn't believe it either, and were warning her incessantly against it, despite how happy they were that she'd found someone who made her happy - and he did. She never felt repressed or suppressed, despite how quickly and completely he dominated her, and her friends had noticed the difference, wanting her to spill the beans, of course.

Maura had done so delicately, mentioning that he was quite adept in the bedroom, and leaving it at that, no matter how much her friends tried to pry more than that from her. They all wanted to meet him, but Maura wasn't sure how Simon would feel about that, so she was deliberately vague in her response. She couldn't see Simon being any too happy to be vetted by her friends in any way, shape, or form, not that he had ever tried to keep her from seeing any of them.

As long as she remembered to ask, as was required.

He called her the next day, which was unusual in and of itself - they generally chatted every night but he only called her Wednesday nights, usually to arrange a time to meet for the weekend.

The phone next to her computer rang. The caller I.D. said "private". Raising an eyebrow in surprise, knowing who it must be, Maura picked up the phone. "Hello?"

"God you make me hard."

She couldn't help it. She giggled uncontrollably.

Simon was indignant. "Hey! I give you a compliment directly related to my manhood and you laugh?"

Hand over her mouth, unsuccessfully stifling more chuckles, Maura replied, "Sorry. It just struck me as funny."

"Oh, that's good," he said wryly.

Simon seemed in a rare mood – he didn't very often joke with her – he was usually much too busy trying to teach her a lesson or kill her with orgasms.

"I wanted to call and make sure that you're all right about what we talked about on Sunday."

Leave it to him to be straightforward and direct, when she would much have preferred to ignore the situation in the hopes that it would go away. "I'm fine about it."

"You're sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"Any thoughts – good, bad or indifferent?"

Maura leaned back in her desk chair. She'd deliberately bought herself an extremely comfortable chair to go with a very pretty white computer desk set. "I dunno. Mostly bad, I guess," she said, being ruthlessly honest, as he expected.

Simon always said that he would rather hear the truth than to have her dress up a lie because she thought it was what he wanted to hear. Besides the fact that the lie would get her a supreme blistering.

"Bad how?" He would want to know every detail of what she was feeling and thinking.

Against every rule her mother ever taught her about decorum, she propped her feet up on the edge of the bead board desk. "Just a general, overall negative reaction to legalities – legalizing something that's so tentative anyway."

"It's not in the least tentative to me, Maura. I want you with me all the time. You'll have to make some small adjustments because I have need of being pretty careful security-wise, but I want you under my roof and under my thumb, where I can watch you closely and oversee your behavior as strictly as I can. As strictly as you need."

The man could make her shiver with just his words and his voice – more so now that she knew his firm, sure touch, and the way he would wield the cane on her hapless bottom if she disobeyed him. "I think it's a little early for that. And the agreement put me off quite a lot."

"I think I got that idea. And I'm sorry. It wasn't meant to. I shouldn't have sprung it on you like that. I should have approached it better."

Points in his favor. Simon always admitted it when he was wrong, and tried to rectify the situation if he could. He was a secure enough person to do so. "It's okay. I was just surprised. Never even heard of one before, much less had one given to me."

Simon drew a breath and said what he was thinking before he had a chance to reconsider it – knowing that somewhere, somehow, his lawyer would cringe. "I'd be quite willing to forego the agreement if you'd move in with me right now."

"I never said I wouldn't sign the agreement, Simon."

"Yes, but you really don't want to, do you?"

"No, but I have a feeling that you're going to have me doing a lot of things I don't want to in the future, and this is probably the least painful of all. It also protects me, although, granted, I have much less to protect from you than you do from me."

The fact that he was fairly wealthy had bothered Maura at first, and really still did. Simon was flabbergasted by her reaction to the fact that his house – aside from being somewhat of a min-fortress with every possible security precaution taken – was almost five thousand square feet, and sported a large in-ground pool and hot tub, tennis courts, as well as a master bath with a large sunken tub. He owned his own plane, and four cars. She found all of these things out slowly, over the course of their conversations and meetings, because Simon was not in the least flashy about his money. But the truth was that he never had to work another day in his life, and he was only forty-nine.

Maura didn't know what her problem was about his financial success, but she did know that it made her nervous and uncomfortable. She much preferred to pretend that he was just as poor as she was,

and then she didn't have to confront those feelings. But he never let her pay for a weekend stay at the hotel he favored, and the only way she got to pay for one of their meals was by vulturing the waitress for the bill. It frustrated the hell out of her, and she ended up getting a thorough spanking because of it. He felt she had been disrespectful when she was arguing with him about the bill, and that was all it took for her to earn a very unhappy trip across his lap.

So she'd learned to keep her feelings to herself, largely, although that didn't mean that they had changed.

"If you live with me, you won't have to worry about finances. You can just write."

"I already don't worry about them – there's little enough there to be concerned about."

"Well, if you came to stay with me, you really won't have to."

"No, regardless, our finances will be kept separate."

He paused for a moment, then said smoothly, "All right. But I certainly would never let you starve, regardless."

She chuckled warmly in his ear. "Not much chance of that! I could live off the fat of the land for quite some time . . ."

He was not laughing. He hated it when she put herself down. "You've got one coming for that, my dear."

Maura stopped laughing immediately, cursing herself under her breath for forgetting. And she was going to be so good this week that he wouldn't have any excuse to spank her when they got together – not that he needed one . . .

"So when can I come up there and grab all your junk?" he asked, not willing to let the topic drop.

She sighed in a long-suffering manner. "I don't remember agreeing to move in with you. Sheesh! Were you a used car salesman in another life, or what?"

"Nah. I just don't take 'no' for an answer very well, especially not from you. I much prefer to hear a meek 'Yes, Sir' out of your lips."

Maura's genitals clenched. Damn the man! "Well, regardless, this is still my decision, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is." He would never order her to do something like move in with him. He didn't want her there, submitting to him, by coercion.

"Then I'm not ready to do it."

"Yet," he finished conclusively, with not a trace of doubt in his voice.

Reluctantly, she agreed. "Yet."

"Okay, little lady. I'll wait. I seem to be doing a lot of that with you . . . I must not be a very good dom."

Simon never fished for compliments, but she bolstered his ego anyway. "You're the perfect dom for me. Really."

"Good. Now if I could just get you to move in with me."

Maura sighed. "I have a feeling I'm going to be hearing a lot of that until I decide to do what you want, huh?"

He laughed softly. "You betcha. I like to get my own way, one way or the other."

She whimpered, knowing that, in not agreeing today, she was merely forestalling the inevitable. But, she reasoned, it would be good for him to wait some, so that he appreciated her when she finally capitulated.



## Chapter Twelve

Which she did not too long after that – a couple of months or so, although you'd've thought by Simon that she'd made him wait for years. He had completely organized the move so that she didn't have to do a thing or lift a finger. As a matter of fact, on the day of the move he threatened to put her into restraints so that she couldn't touch anything – she had a lot of nervous energy and was trying to help the movers, but Simon finally caught her on his lap on one of the chairs on her front porch, forcibly holding her down while her whole life was packed up and carted away.

She hadn't wanted to sell her house, which he completely understood, so he'd found her a reputable property management company and had them rent the place, with the firm understanding that it was to be kept absolutely pristine.

He even had someone come up and drive her car down. Maura had balked at that, wanting to drive her own car, but Simon had given her "the look", saying that he wanted her company on the long ride down, and reassuring her that the man he'd gotten was an old friend, and that her car was in very good hands. And so would she be, if she didn't put up a stink about her car. If she did . . . he'd trailed off, letting her fill in the blanks on her own, knowing she could do at least as good a job of imagining what he'd do to her if she continued to argue with him as he could.

The ride down was wonderful, she had to admit. They talked about a variety of subjects, and Maura again marveled about how well suited they were – they were both intelligent, inquisitive people, and they whiled away the time so quickly that she couldn't believe it when he finally pulled past a huge security wall and gate and into his driveway.

Simon gave her the nickel tour, showing her the house and the pool – as well as giving her a talk about security that was so vehement that one would think they were discussing the president instead of a retired ex-government worker. And then he presented his baby – a 1964 Corvette Stingray, in silver blue. It was obvious how much he adored that car by the way he touched it, and the look in his eye when he talked about it.

A car he was able to be effusive and emotional about. He could love it. But not a woman. Not even her, for all of their compatibility, in and out of bed.

It made Maura sad, because she knew he'd never talk about her that way.

He saved his bedroom for last. It was done in masculine colors, but was a very spacious room, with a specially made huge king-sized bed. Simon hated to be crowded in bed – but that seemed to be out the window with this woman, because he preferred that she sleep in his arms than anywhere else. But that was a first.

She was looking a little maudlin for some reason he didn't understand, wandering around his room like a lost puppy. "The bathroom's over here," he reached in and lit the cavernous place as she walked past him, looking back and forth as if she was a tourist in New York City for the first time.

"Feel free to redecorate as you like. I don't care what things look like. I just hired someone to decorate and turned them loose, and this was what I got. Otherwise, the boxes would still be here from when I moved in fifteen years ago."

He hated the way she looked. "Are you hungry?"

A slow shake of her head. She seemed to be avoiding looking at his bed, although that was damned hard to do because of its size.

"Tired?"

More shakes.

"Cranky? Grumpy? Sleazy? Doc?"

No smile.

Now he knew something was up.

Well, he was happier than he wanted to be with her here. He'd thought that having her at his fingertips might alleviate some of his constant ache for her, but he was wrong – yet again – about this woman. She affected him like no other had.

Impulsively, he barreled towards her, scooping her up in his arms and carrying her to the bed, laying her down beside him and trapping her there with amazing efficiency. "Tell me what's wrong."

Not a question. A demand. An order. Maura knew she'd be in deep trouble if she didn't tell him the truth – or come up with something plausible. "Just new, and feeling distinctly like a fish out of water." "Why?"

She shrugged, and her apathy surprised him, making him even more concerned about her. "If I'd come down here before and seen how rich you are, I'd've never agreed to move in."

He thanked whatever fate prevented him from having her down here before, and said, "I'm not rich."

"You're waaaaay rich compared to me. I'm one step up from trailer trash in my dilapidated little Victorian. You're living large here, and it makes me uneasy."

Simon sighed. Contrary woman. Why couldn't she be the type who would demand access to his checkbook so that she could redecorate and remodel to her heart's content? Or wondered out loud when he was going to buy her a wardrobe, or a car?

He could more than afford to do any of those things for Maura, yet she didn't want them, and he knew she would never accept them.

Unable to soothe her any other way – his words, he knew, would fall on deaf, stubborn ears – he made love to her, as tenderly and gently as he could, cuddling her to him afterwards and falling asleep before her, which should have been a clue to him that she was still not okay.

Maura was up much later, wondering what the heck she'd gotten herself into – and with whom, exactly. He'd told her that he couldn't tell her much about his work. He'd always been very secretive about it, and has always maintained that it was something like freelancing for the government. He often carried a gun, and flew off to places he couldn't name, either. He lived like this, and now she did too.

Whatever he was doing, it certainly paid well. She just hoped that he wasn't working for the other side, although she sincerely doubted it. He was too patriotic for his own good.

Knowing she wasn't allowed to get out of bed except to go to the bathroom, she didn't fall asleep until dawn. The first day that they were together in his house, she spent it unpacking the multitude of boxes that had followed her down. Simon helped as much as possible, but then he got a call and came back into the room wearing a frighteningly dark grimace. "I can't believe it. I've gotta go."

He pulled her up from where she'd been sitting tailor-fashioned on the floor and tucked her against him. "Now, you have the keys to the front door that I gave you, right? And keys to the cars – except the 'Vette?" As he'd shown her the car he adored so much, he'd told her that if he ever caught her driving it he would warm her bottom for her every single night for a month. She got the idea that she wasn't to drive it.

But then, she wasn't likely to drive any of his cars, despite the keys he'd generously given her.

It was as if he'd read her mind. He looked sternly down at her. "And if you go out, you're to take one of my cars, not drive your own. That thing is a disreputable rattletrap." He hadn't realized how mechanically unsound it was until he'd had the guy who drove it down to the house – who was a demolitions expert friend of his from way back and also a pretty darned good mechanic – had handed him Maura's keys and shook his head, giving him a rundown on what he thought was probably wrong with the car, and why it shouldn't be driven until the problems were fixed.

Maura had shrugged her shoulders at that pronunciation when he'd given Ray's diagnosis to her, saying that the car drove fine as far as she was concerned. When she turned the key, it wheezed to life, and that was all she needed.

Saying that to him hadn't eased the look of consternation on his face one bit. He had caught her chin firmly and said, "You are not to drive that car until I can get it taken care of."

She hadn't said a thing, and, having laid down the law to her, he didn't beleaguer the fact. He expected her to obey him, whether or not she verbalized any sort of agreement.

"If I find out that that car has move so much as an inch from where it is now – and I can, believe me – you will regret it." Despite his tight hold on her chin, his kiss was gossamer. "Damn, I wish I didn't have to go, but I do." Simon kissed her again. "I'll be back as soon as I can. Keep the alarms armed at all times," he warned seriously. "If you have a problem setting them, call the number above the keypad and they'll walk you through it. Your name is already on the account."

"Yes, Sir." She watched him walk away from her, sighing deeply, returning to the endless collection of boxes – the contents of which she really wasn't sure she knew what to do with, not wanting to take up too much space, somehow, as if this was all very impermanent.

Maura went out to the local airstrip with him and saw him off, melting under his obviously hungry kiss goodbye. Well, she thought as she got behind the wheel of his behemoth Lincoln Town car, moving in with him was turning out to be a lot like living alone. Here she was again, by herself, and even more lonely than she would have been at home because she was so far away from all of her friends.

She signed online and chatted for a while since she didn't want to drive one of his cars that far to go see someone. It took her several days to get herself acclimated to the size and expanse of the huge ranch house. Maura secreted her office in one of the back bedrooms, the ugliest room she could find considering the quality of the furniture she owned and how nicely everything else was decorated. She moved the desk herself from where he had had the movers put it – which was in his big, library-esque study, where it stood out like a sore thumb. She wasn't able to write much at first, but then eventually – more due to financial necessity than anything else – she got back into the swing of writing every day.

And then he returned, and raised hell with her. He was not happy that she'd moved the desk by herself, and was even less happy with where she'd put it.

Simon was bone tired and irritable when he got home. He'd been in a country where Americans were not welcomed – which was a huge amount of places nowadays – and that was hotter than the hammers of hell. He'd done the job in record time, amazing his superiors, and gotten the hell out, able to think of nothing besides getting back to his woman, whom he'd barely had the chance to finally install in his household before having to go save the world again.

It was the first time in a long time that he resented the hell out of his job. The last time had been when he'd decided to get out of it on a full-time basis and do it only on as a consultant – not that he wasn't kept hopping busy just consulting.

But now he was chafing that even the consulting was cramping his style, and it worried him a bit. He was getting downright obsessed with Maura, and rarely wanted to be anywhere but with her. Was this a crush? Nah. He was way too old for crushes. An infatuation? Well . . . that sounded a little better, but was essentially the same thing.

He didn't know what to call it, but he knew that he hated the idea that he'd only had her in his bed for one night before being called away. Maybe he'd tell his boss to stop throwing so many assignments his way . . . at least for a while – until the novelty of having her around wore off a little.

Or a lot.

Simon planned on it easing off a lot, so that he could get back in control of his life. He didn't much like how helpless he was feeling about her sometimes. Especially when she seemed to feel no particular interest in coming here to live with him. It took her forever to decide what he considered to be the inevitable – that she would live with him.

And there was little he hated more than to be made to wait.

And this blasted assignment was making him wait to be with her, and when he walked through the door – noting with excruciatingly bad humor that the security alarm had not been set – he was dirty and grubby and cranky because he'd just split as fast as he could after the debriefing to get back here.

But she was nowhere to be found. Literally nowhere. He checked the pool – she'd seemed intrigued by it, being a water baby from way back – and then the bedroom, the living room, and finally his study, calling out for her all the while, and getting angrier by the minute.

He found her in the last place he looked – the back bedroom, one he'd barely ever opened the door to except to check that the maid was doing her job and cleaning everything. There she was – headphones in her ears, humming along to a song he couldn't hear and typing away on whatever it was that she was working on lately.

Simon walked in and lifted the headset from her head, making her start and stand up. Before she had a chance to recover, he had her elastic waist shorts and pretty pink lace undies down to her ankles. Without having said so much as a hello, he bent her over his raised knee – propping his foot on a file crate near her – and began to spank her with great gusto.

Maura was, at first, much more frightened by his appearance than hurting from his spanking. Why was he disciplining her? What had she done?

She wasn't going to find out any time soon, she guessed, as he increased both the tempo and the strength of the swats he was delivering, since the others didn't seem to be having much effect. Within three strokes, she was crying, and a feeling of immense satisfaction washed over him.

This was what he needed. To correct her. Ceaselessly. Mercilessly.

Within ten strokes, she was begging, and that feeling merely intensified.

God, he wanted her! But not before he delivered a good spanking for scaring him like that – and moving the desk without his permission to a dull, dreary room where she was hiding herself away like a servant.

Now, the alarm system being most definitely disarmed – after he'd expressly told her to keep it armed at all times. That was going to earn her a very, very hard session indeed.

But later. Right now, he wanted her in the worst way, and, since he had no need to deny himself, he finished giving her a good hard licking then stripped off the rest of her clothes and put her on her knees on the bed, facing away from him, with her bottom waving in the air, and her head down on the mattress, leaning her right cheek on the comforter, her arms folded behind her back as she'd been taught.

By him.

She was slick, but not slick enough to make it really easy for him to penetrate her, and he was glad of that. He wanted her to feel every millimeter of him scraping along her insides. This time was purely for him, and he rode her hard, nudging her knees further apart just to increase her humiliation, grabbing a hold of her hips and preventing her from moving when he plunged forwards, forcing her to take him as he raped her from behind and exploded into her with a long, hoarse moan.

It was over much too quickly, he thought, suppressing the urge to lean down and press a kiss to the hollow at the small of her back as he slipped out of her.

"The alarm wasn't set."

Maura's face fell and her eyes squeezed shut, knowing that she was in for it.

"I'm going to grab something to eat, and some sleep, and we'll deal with this tomorrow. I intend to make sure that you don't make that mistake again."

He disappeared down the hall without ever having even said hello.

It was hard for her, hours later when she was exhausted and needed to sleep, to get into that big bed with him, knowing that he was going to hurt her badly tomorrow.

But, as quiet as she'd tried to be, he'd been awakened by her movements, and rolled over to spoon her, as usual, and she fell asleep quite naturally without another thought about the trial that might lay ahead.

Simon didn't make her wait very long for her punishment, in fact he did it at what she considered a very unusual time – just after breakfast. She was taken to one of the spare bedrooms that he hadn't shown her on the tour, and when he opened the door, she knew why: it was very obviously a place of pain. There were bolts in the ceiling with chains hanging down, there were rows of progressively more

terrifying implements proudly displayed on the walls, a St. Andrew's cross in one corner, a straight backed chair in the other, and a big horse with four large, heavy cuffs attached at the legs to hold the miscreant still for whatever punishment was necessary.

There was an exam table up against one wall, complete, she noticed, with the embarrassingly familiar stirrups at the end. He had told her that, along with being punished weekly, she would also be examined thoroughly any time the idea struck him. Somehow, she had dismissed that thought from her mind, but the presence of that doctor's office table brought it throbbingly back into her mind.

As he'd said to her so many other times, he again through it casually over his shoulder. "Strip."

Maura knew better than to delay in responding once he'd given her an order, so she quickly divested herself of her clothes, folding them neatly and putting them on the horse.

"Over here." He was standing in front of a wall that had four padded leather cuffs bolted into the wall, dangling on chains that could be shortened easily and adjusted using speed clips. There was also a large leather belt at about waist high.

And that was exactly what he did, backing her against the wall and attaching a cuff to each wrist, merely holding her in place at first, then tightening the chains so that her wrists were stretched high above her and there was absolutely no play available to her – she could not move her arms down even an inch.

Her ankles were restrained in the same manner, legs spread to the point of discomfort, tugging down on her captive wrists, then he wrapped that thick, hard leather belt around her waist and buckled her into it.

As he puttered about the room, Simon was looking grim, and Maura knew that that did not bode well for her. Not at all.

He surprised her when he released her wrists suddenly and had her bend over at the waist, giving her no choice but to rely on the strength of the band around her tummy to keep her from falling onto the floor on her face. Apparently, though, Simon had no such concerns. He was too busy wrapping her breasts in something, near the base of each of them, pulling whatever it was – which appeared to be ace bandages – horribly tight before looping it around her several more times, then tying them off with a slip knot. The last thing he did before he let her up was bind the distended globes together.

When her wrists were again held well above her head, he stopped to caress those instantly painful breasts as they jutted out in front of her, obscenely contorted and aching swollen, hefting them and hurting them at the same time, squeezing them when their mass had nowhere to go – when she had no way to avoid his strong fingers.

Maura whimpered loudly, amazed at how much pain she was already in, just from having her breasts bound, and he hadn't even done anything to her yet. She watched in horror as he turned to the display of implements and selected a very slim stick-like baton that looked about fifteen inches long and was very thin. Her eyes widened as he walked back to stand beside her.

"When I told you that you needed to be very careful about setting the alarm when you first got here, did you think I was kidding?"

Oh, God, he sounded pissed. When Simon got angry, he never yelled, in her experience. He just got sober and serious – even more so than usual. And he looked deadly serious right now – she almost wished he'd blindfold her so she didn't have to look at the expression on that face – or at the implements he selected off the wall so casually.

"No, Sir," she squeaked weakly, already wanting to cringe from that wicked looking rod, but having no place to go – literally, with her back to the wall, and her breasts bound so tightly – individually and together, protruding out in front of her while slowly turning a dusky red before her eyes – that there was no hope of escape for them, either.

To her complete horror, he began to accent the occasional word of his lecture by bringing that baton down sharply on the taut, tight flesh that was not protected by ace bandages, snapping crisply



His mouth soothed her swollen nipples, but only for a second at a time before he cut the ties that held her, knowing that it would make her scream again as the circulation returned to the area that had been starved for it for so long.

And what was worse was that the pain was driving her to move, and moving just made her bounce up and down, which hurt even more.

Simon just stood back and watched her try to cope with something that was designed to be torturous for her, and obviously was. He loved seeing her caught that way between dual pains. She looked like she was at the end of her rope.

But she had one more part to endure, and it was going to be the worse of anything he'd done to her so far.

When she finally gave up fighting and hung limply in her restraints, Simon turned away from her for a moment, then came back with a tray that adjusted to waist height. It was on rollers, like a surgeon would have his implements on.

He wasn't quite going to play doctor with her – yet – but it was close enough. Maura was in too much agony at first to notice what he was doing until he donned gloves and swabbed her still badly throbbing nipples with alcohol, starting in the center and circling outwards, then betadine, which left a brownish stain that would have been orangish if she hadn't already been beaten.

The betadine got her attention, although she snuffled loudly through it. Maura didn't think she wanted to know what it meant, although she already knew in her mind and didn't want to acknowledge it. When he inched the tray over enough so that she could see what he had, she began her vain struggles again, begging and pleading prettily for him not to do that to her.

Now, he could have gagged her, and it might well come to that just to drown out her screams, but Simon strongly felt that seeing what he was planning for her was an excellent psychological tool. She would die a thousand deaths of anticipation while waiting for him to go through with it.

Maura yelled so loudly that she broke her voice before he even touched her for the second half of her punishment.

"You know what's coming, don't you?" Simon stood in front of her, the tray of plastic capped needles laid out neatly to his right.

Her body was beset with shivers. "You're not really going to do that to me, are you?"

Simon stood before her, arms folded across his chest. "Weren't you the one who told me that you were interested in play piercing?"

Oh, God, she was! But not now – with the inevitability of it staring her in the face!!! Maybe not ever! "No, Simon – " his eyebrow rose tellingly at her use of his first name, which was expressly forbidden. "Sir – no please don't do this to me! Please!" The hoarseness of her voice only made her plea more poignant . . . but not to him.

He took a step towards her, cupping her cheek with his big hand, and kissing her very, very gently on the lips. But it was like a red herring, a chimera – his tenderness was completely impermanent, because she knew he intended to do just what he'd prepared for, regardless of how she begged him, because then he took a step back and, surprisingly released her wrists and reattached them behind her, along with a strap pulled tight just above her elbows, forcing her breasts back into almost the same prominence as they had been when they were bound. The belt remained in place, keeping her from leaning too far forward.

Then he reached for her poor mistreated nipple, tugging and tweaking it into a ripe fullness against its – and her – will.

But her will didn't play into her life any longer. She had voluntarily submitted herself to his will, and he had no hesitation in exercising it – especially when he felt that she had put herself in danger. And she had, probably more than she would ever know or realize.

The idea made him break out in a cold sweat, and, to help him, he was going to teach her a lesson she never forgot about being secure while he was gone.

Maura begged and pleaded and begged some more under her breath until he had the tip of the needle against her pooched out nipple close to her areole, ready to drive it through from top to bottom.

Slowly.

As he pressed, her eyes closed and she tried to flinch away, but he'd tied her too tightly for that. She could not get away from the stinging pressure, and she could feel every millimeter of that needle – no matter how small it was – passing through her nipple, where nothing like that ever belonged.

Maura had never felt a pain like that – nor had she ever felt quite so violated in her life. Simon had raped her – taking her whenever he wanted her; it was not the nature of their relationship that he ever had to ask or even deny himself. If he wanted her – which he did on an extremely frequent basis – he took her – hard, uncompromisingly, and with no concern as to what she might or might not want at that given moment. As long as he didn't hear the safe word pass from her lips, then he assumed she was physically okay. Since he'd gagged her a lot in the hotel, they had also instituted a "safe signal", which was snapping her fingers, so that if she had been rendered non-verbal, she could still get his attention and stop whatever was going on.

The rapes were not devastating to her in the way a rape by a stranger would be – they were merely expectations of her submission. Sometimes they were harder to take than others – most usually when he took her anally, with only a thin layer of slickening lube, and forcing himself into her none-to-gently to ride her roughly to his own completion. Even if she was aroused – and she very often was – she was, of course, not allowed to come without permission.

But this – this was a new height of subjugation – and true, unadulterated agony. She could feel the thing sliding into her – as his penis always did into various orifices – and not easily, either. Her nipple was fighting it every step of the way – slowing the process and making it even that much more torturous. Not that he wasn't going to win out, but the density of her flesh automatically created resistance this unnatural act.

He just barely had the tip in, and began to tamp it down, drawing out the painful period where the upper layers of her skin were being pierced.

Maura couldn't breathe. She couldn't hear. All she could do was endure the agony that had become her right nipple as it was deliberately perforated by his small taps on the capped end, screaming with each rhythmic beat as the needle was driven home within her. She drew in a deep breath and screamed bloody murder, making Simon raise his head from what he was doing and give her that completely evil smile of his – the one that reassured her that she had no hope that he might take pity on her and back off.

No, he would do with her exactly as he pleased, and despite the torment she was being subjected to, it pleased her that he owned her that way – so completely.

Finally, after she endured the slim implement of her torture piercing through the bottom of her nipple just as carefully and deliberately as it had the top, he slid it home, well into her, and capped off the bottom so that it could not be removed – not that anyone else but him was going to get the chance to remove it. This was not like a dildo or even a plug, that she had any hopes of pushing out.

No. She was well and truly claimed, branded by that piece of stainless steel lying perpendicular to her nipple, and within it, back towards the beginning of her breast.

Then he punctured the other nipple, near to bursting at the way she was so fervently and humiliatingly begging him not to, and then her high pitched wails and sobs as he proceeded to claim her in that very special way.

It wasn't enough to have pierced her, though. After he'd given her a little time – very little time – to recover, he began to play with the needles, making her hyperventilate and bringing her awfully close to losing consciousness from the pain.

When she breathed at him that her teeth were tingling and she thought she was going to faint, that grin merely grew wider. Fainting was not going to hurt her in any way, and he had ammonia with which to revive her, in any case. If she lost consciousness, he would stop and revive her, but he would not



continue doing anything until he was sure she was with him – he wasn't about to waste an iota of her punishment. She got stubborn about it at that point and pulled herself back from the brink, only to have to experience it all again when he put a second needle in, horizontally, forming a plus sign within her nipple.

Maura heartily wished she could just let herself faint, but she couldn't. She felt every single second of this atrocious disciplinary measure, as he drove those needles home and pierced her flesh at his whim.

Simon took his time, extending the torture by playing with her impaled breasts, then kissing her as he massaged them, making her squeal loudly into his mouth. He clamped his fingers on her chin, drawing back some to look into her troubled, tormented eyes. "Shh-shh-shh," he soothed, his hand belying his words as it hurt her, badly, and continued to do so as he kissed her deeply.

Simon didn't think that he could get any more aroused. He was rapidly approaching the point of no return, so he hurriedly unbuckled her ankles, then lowered his pants and underwear only enough for necessity. He bent down and picked up her legs at the knees, forcing her to glom them around his waist so that she could maintain her balance, and of course his rampant penis was waiting for her – thick and long and ruby-headed, seeking her warmth unerringly as he plunged into her and fucked her hard, making her wail as her breasts wobbled violently with each thrust, coming to a terrible, almost eerie crescendo as he purposely sped up to increase her pain and his pleasure. Her cries, the fact that her arms were anchored behind her and her breasts bobbed so freely as they wore their primitive decorations, threw him into his orgasm almost immediately, but he continued to torture her as he jack-hammered into her, spilling every ounce of himself out into her hot, wet pussy.

Maura was almost shell-shocked by what he had done – what she had endured. He let her down slowly, then dismantled the needles and withdrew them; Maura wasn't sure which way was worse. He released her arms, and helped her to stand, then tended to her breasts as carefully as a mother would, apologizing when he had to alcohol them again and she broke out in tears for the umpteenth time during the past two hours.

He led her to a cool shower, knowing that she didn't have much fight left, although her chin was still up. He'd come very close to her true edge that time, and found the idea unbearably exciting. He also found it arousing that when he'd seated himself within her, with no artificial lubrication, she had provided more than enough of her own. He knew that he'd been hurting her – seriously hurting her, not just spanking or caning, but truly giving her real, hard pain, and he did not expect that she would get off on it.

But then, he should have known that he couldn't count on Maura's responses. Sometimes, they were the exact opposite of what he could predict – that certainly kept things interesting.

Simon washed her as gently as any mother, turning the spray of the huge walk in shower to a cooler setting and joining her in there. She was still a bit dazed, and he wanted to get her into bed as soon as possible. He lathered her and washed her everywhere, even between her legs and between her cheeks, as always. She could never hide anything about her body from him. He demanded and got access to every inch of her. Then he washed her hair with her favorite perfume, rinsed it carefully, then brought her out and dried her off with a huge, soft fluffy towel.

Maura wasn't actively crying, but she was quiet and it was unnerving him. She kept looking at him with those big eyes, blinking owlishly at him as he watched her. Simon lifted her and carried her to their bed, tucking her under the covers then joining her there seconds later to hold her tight against him, whispering, "I bet you won't forget to set that alarm again, will you honey?"

She didn't say anything, but he was gratified when she cuddled against him and laid her head on his shoulder – glad that she would still turn to him after such a hard session.

"Shh-shh-shh," he rubbed her back slowly, rhythmically. "You go to sleep. You've had a hard time of it, woman."

Simon held her tight for a very long time after she had drifted off, gently brushing the hair back from his face, and rubbing her shoulders to alleviate any soreness from their position.

He didn't know what he'd done to have her drop into his life, but he damned well intended to do anything he could to keep her with him . . . short of marriage, of course.

And he certainly didn't love her.- PRESENT DAY:

His plane was in the shop, and he had to fly around commercial like the rest of the population of America. The poor baby, she thought wryly as she waited impatiently outside the gate area at the Albuquerque airport in her big beige trench coat.

At least this was the last time she'd have to do this – or even be without him. He'd decided to retire, and would only be available in times of dire emergency. His decision had amazed Maura, but he had been quite casual about it, announcing it to her as she saw him off on this mission.

He was one of the last people off – of course. Simon hated to join the herd, considering it a security risk he wasn't willing to take. He always waited until nearly everyone else had cleared off the plane before he got off. It drove Maura crazy!

Even though he hadn't seen her for almost a month, his expression didn't change one bit when he saw her, and when he got to her, he didn't hug her or fawn over her in any way that would broadcast to anyone that he might care for her. Simon merely slipped his arm around her waist, as sure of his reception from his woman as he was that the sun would rise in the morning, and corralled her firmly towards the baggage claim area.

He had made a declaration of his feelings, in his own way, but there was no need to be overt about it as far as he was concerned. The decision to retire had overcome him when he realized how much he didn't want to leave her – not for any reason. They had created what was – for them – a place that was awfully close to Paradise within the four walls of their house, and he didn't want to be flying away from her all the time. He wanted to spend all of his time with her – attending to her in all the myriad ways his devious mind could come up with.

By now, Maura knew what to expect from him and wasn't bothered by his lack of emotion. Simon was extremely hot blooded, but not very demonstrative. She'd learned to cope, finding other things that assuaged her need for public displays of affection.

Or really any affection at all. That wasn't Simon's way, and Maura had either had to learn to deal with that or leave him, which she would have found completely impossible after about the first month with him, when she realized just how perfectly matched they were intellectually and sexually. Granted, he was even less introspective than the usual American male, but nothing like that mattered to her. She had gladly given up any possibility of connecting with a guy who would surprise her with roses or plan an elaborate picnic by a river, but what he did for her she found completely priceless, and knew she would never find anyone who would be more compatible with her sexually – and her sexuality was enough of her personality – of her lifestyle – that she would gladly give up pretty much anything to be with him.

And she had – she'd given over almost total control of her life to him, and the both of them luxuriated in that fact.

He took her submission to him very seriously. It was not "role playing" for him – it was the way he was – his way of life. He was an entirely natural dominant, and she was a natural submissive. She couldn't imagine ever being with anyone else – she couldn't imagine trusting anyone else the way she'd come to trust him. And he'd lived up to her expectation in every instance.

Simon grabbed his small suitcase off the belt, then reclaimed her, his hands wandering enough to realize what she'd done. It brought that sexy, evil smile to his face again, which was just what she was aiming for.

She had gotten a primo parking spot in the first row, and, after stowing his luggage in the back, he turned to lift her into the cab, his hands sure and strong on her waist, lingering there as he kissed her hungrily, his fingers loosening the ends of the belt she'd casually knotted around her so that they could touch her bare skin.

All of it, if he wanted to.

Beneath her coat, Maura was stark naked.

"I'm pleased that you obeyed me."

Maura was completely uncomfortable doing this, he knew, but she had put her own fears and her own will aside and had done as she was told. That deserved a reward, and he would make sure that she got one, after he indulged himself a little.

In the afternoon sun, not far from the hoards of people who were also looking for their cars, he boldly covered her naked breasts, cupping it possessively, and even sneaking a quick suckle as she tried unsuccessfully to crane back away from him.

"Uh-uh-uhhhhh," he warned, "Don't be naughty or I'll spank you right here and now. I don't give a damn who sees me. You're mine to touch, take, or punish in any way, anywhere I see fit." Simon caught her chin, forcing her to look at him. "Aren't I?"

"Y-Yes, Sir."

"And if I tell you to turn over, and I take up the back of your coat and give you a good blistering, you're going to lie there and take it, aren't you?"

Her cheeks blushed as red as he would make her bottom if she denied him. "Y-yes, S-Sir."

Simon's cupping hand moved to brush her hair back, his eyes soft. "Good girl. And who do you belong to?"

"You, Sir," softly, almost bashfully, although she adored saying it and her pussy dripped at the reality of it.

"Very, very good. I'm extremely pleased that you've done this, although I know you didn't want to."

"I'm glad that you're pleased, Sir."

An older couple walked by them and Maura automatically tried to cover herself nervously.

Simon reprimanded her sharply. "No! Put your hands on the seat."

Huffing and puffing to let him know that she was frustrated by his command, she did as she was told. Her bare breasts were effectively thrust into his face, and he took complete advantage of that fact, murmuring against her soft skin, "No one can see anything. I'm standing in front of you."

Maura was whimpering at the pleasure he was creating.

"Just for that, I'm going to take you as soon as we hit my land."

She'd been expecting just that.

But Simon hated to be at all predictable. "I'm going to shove myself up inside your bottom, my Maura," he grabbed a handful of her hair, close to her scalp, and held her head completely still with it. "After I've licked and sucked you with my mouth – but I'm not going to allow you to come until midnight tonight."

Maura's eyes flared wide open. Oh, God! When he did this to her, gave her a time when he was going to orgasm her into oblivion, he would spend long chunks of time teasing her mercilessly – and she knew she was not allowed to experience release until he told her she could. She knew – further – that even at midnight, when he'd said she could come, that she should never come without asking his permission, regardless.

She was in for a long, torturously pleasurable evening.

And, as he kissed her hard then closed her door and rounded to his own, she realized that she wouldn't want it any other way.

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