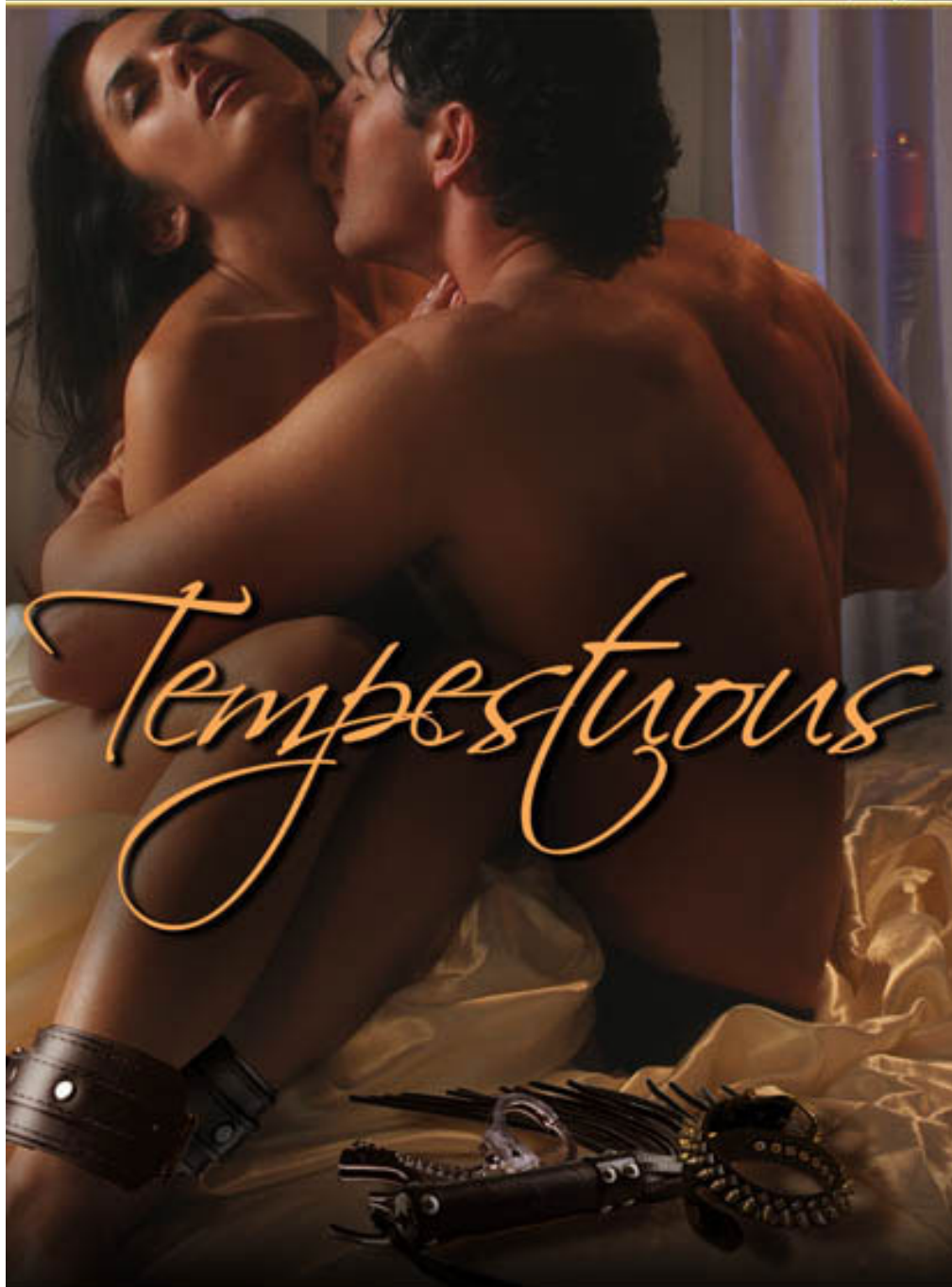


ELLORA'S CAVE TABOO



NICOLE AUSTIN

Tempestuous

Nicole Austin

Once a woman's deepest, darkest desires have been exposed—whetting her appetite for taboo pleasures of the flesh—her unquenchable hungers will not be denied.

Floggers and whips

Chains and leather restraints

Erotic rewards and punishments...oh my!

Seduced by erotic stories and the forbidden lure of Dominance and submission, Evie Sloan longs to explore the scintillating delights firsthand. While some fantasies are better left to the imagination, for the chance to visit a real BDSM club, she's willing to take a risk.

Been there, done that, seen it all—or so jaded Dominant Niko Kovalenko thought. Evie's arrival on the scene reawakens long-dormant passions and ramps them up to a whole new level. She's an exciting challenge, a dangerous temptation, igniting the compulsion to possess. To collar.

Evie is no man's submissive pet. Niko strips her bare, sheds light on all her secret desires and weaknesses, but it's still not enough for him. To win her man, she'll have to confront her fears and find a way to bridge the distance between them.

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Tempestuous

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TEMPESTUOUS

Nicole Austin

Dedication

To Sire Don & Pam. I will always treasure your friendship and generosity!

Author's Note

Tempestuous is a work of fiction and incorporates only simplified elements of BDSM. It is not intended to accurately portray the complexities of a true Dom/sub relationship. Play safe, be well!

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Chapter One

Evie Sloan pondered the hotel's breakfast buffet and found the same boring fare she'd been eating all week. She'd kill for a big bowl of Frosted Flakes swimming in ice-cold milk. Not thin, tasteless skim milk either. Give her the fully loaded whole milk. *Oh yeah!*

Loud chatter filled the cavernous room and assaulted her aching head. If one more person hit her with a sunshiny greeting before she got her morning dose of caffeine the phony smile pasted on her lips would darken into a permanent scowl. She'd been anticipating the erotica conference thinking it would be a blast but long days of endless networking had drained her energy and bottomed out her enthusiasm. She needed to refuel.

Leaning forward, she grabbed the silver tongs for the bacon and prayed it wasn't something disgusting like turkey bacon. Evie shuddered.

Smile, she reminded herself for the gazillionth time. *This is supposed to be fun.*

Yeah, well, the elusive good times would have to happen without her until she had breakfast. She had priorities, after all. Food and coffee were at the top of her list.

A solid wall of male flesh blanketed her from behind. Shivers raced down her spine and goose bumps erupted on her arms. Warm breath caressed her neck, bringing every nerve ending to tingling awareness.

"We have an open spot tonight. You want in?" The odd yet seductive words were whispered in Cain Thorne's authoritative, deep voice.

Sir Cain at Rendezvous, a BDSM club in Tampa.

We have an open spot tonight. What exactly did that mean? Cain wanted to play with her? He had a piece of equipment he wanted to tie her up to? At the BDSM club?

Oh holy crap!

His large hand squeezed her shoulder, the casual gesture stealing the breath from her lungs. Everything fled Evie's mind other than the man, his intriguing invitation and potent touch.

Damn, did that feel good! But still, what was he offering?

Hard-core bondage images flashed through her mind. A nude body strapped to a St. Andrew's Cross, pale skin bearing an intricate web of angry red marks from a recent flogging.

Her body.

And towering over her, a gorgeous Dom.

Dormant lusts crackled with sizzling new energy and stirred her senses. The sinful imaginings should not be turning her on. But they were. Big time.

"What about it, Evie? Wanna come?"

Hell yeah!

What red-blooded woman with a pulse would say no to the handsome man and his provocative offer? But she couldn't get the words past the huge lump in her throat.

Her swollen breasts rose and fell in sync with the rapid beat of her heart. The erotic thrill and possibilities threaded within Cain's words moved Evie beyond reason and straight into pure sensual excess. With her pulse pounding in her ears, she blinked several times as she struggled for composure. The whispered enticement had frozen her to the spot while the morning rush went on around them as if nothing of significance had happened.

She swallowed hard as he moved away. Evie enjoyed watching the flex and play of powerful muscle beneath his white T-shirt as he continued to peruse the breakfast offerings, filling his plate calm as could be, while she struggled just to make her lungs work. She may be breathing fast but the oxygen wasn't reaching her sluggish brain. Zapped of strength, her legs quivered like a couple of overcooked noodles.

The massive Dom had propositioned her...right there at the breakfast buffet. Before she'd even had her first sip of coffee.

With the length of the buffet tables between them, Cain winked at her. His intense brown eyes gleamed with awareness. Damn if that hot stare couldn't melt an iceberg.

Jesus, this had to be a dream. She was sound asleep in her hotel room indulging in one heck of a wicked fantasy. Yes, that had to be it.

A pointy elbow slammed into her side and the tiny bit of air she'd managed to suck into burning lungs escaped on a mumbled curse.

Okay, not a dream.

"Wake up, Evie." Michelle Thorne, Cain's wife, business partner and sexual submissive, flashed a devious grin and batted long eyelashes. "And close your mouth, honey."

Evie's jaw snapped shut. She glanced at the tongs, her grip so tight her knuckles had turned white and her fingers had gone numb. Relaxing her hold, the bacon dangling from the end fell onto the white plate. The dish she no longer cared about clattered to the table as she quickly turned and latched on to the other woman's arms. "Wh-what the fuck is he asking? What open spot? What does that mean?"

Michelle flicked golden blonde hair over a slender shoulder and laughed. "Oh, you are priceless, Evie. Absolutely priceless."

Evie shook the woman, hard. "Tell me!"

"All right, already. Sheesh!"

Michelle took her sweet time, making a point of brushing imagined wrinkles from the sleeves of her blouse. "We're going to club Rendezvous. The owner is letting us in

an hour before it opens. Cain knows you're interested and is asking if you want to tag along to check it out. It's much safer with an experienced club member than going off on your own."

Evie stumbled back a step, mixed emotions spinning in a wild frenzy. Her heart pounded out an erratic beat and fire raced through her veins as all her muscles tensed. Her mouth probably hung open again too.

That clinched it, Evie had to be dreaming. No way was she lucky enough for this to be real.

The erotic stories she read had ignited the spark. Her insatiable curiosity provided the kindling. The resultant blaze had grown into an out-of-control wildfire. Each new tale increased her need to witness the thrill of dominance and submission firsthand. But she was also afraid of the effect it may have.

Internal alarms shrieked, warning her to proceed with care.

She should be running the other way, shouldn't she? Or maybe opening herself to the temptation would be good.

Would it be possible to get the full impact of the experience while being cautious?

She had so many unanswered questions about BDSM. Like other than being in control, what did the Dom get out of a scene? Would a spanking make her wet? Would a bit of pain make the sex better?

Damn, it was enough to make her go crazy. And Cain had just handed her a golden ticket to find out if reality would live up to her imaginings. She could go to the club, drink it all in without worry while under the guidance of the respected Dom.

A win-win situation and she had nothing to lose.

Michelle tugged her over to the side, out of the buffet line. "Breathe, Evie. In and out. Slow and easy. Jesus, honey, you're shaking worse than a palm tree in gale force winds."

"I can go to the club?" she squealed. Evie slapped a hand over her mouth to prevent further outbursts. When she spoke again she used a much quieter tone. "You and Cain are taking me to Rendezvous? Oh. My. God."

A horrible idea struck her and Evie's chest tightened as she searched the other woman's expression. If Cain wanted to play with her would Michelle be jealous? Angry? The last thing she wanted was to hurt her new friend. "And you're okay with this?"

Michelle laughed again. "Of course I am. Cain may demonstrate some of his toys, but there will be no sex or nudity. Well, not among us personally. I'll be right by his side." Her grin turned saucy. "And at the end of the night he'll be going home with *me*."

Evie threw caution to the wind and spoke before she had a chance to talk herself out of going. "Then count me in!"

Even if she had to sign away her firstborn child, she would. No way could she turn down this chance.

The meal passed in a blur, no longer holding the importance it had earlier. She didn't touch the food that she'd craved with such desperation. The conversations of several other vendors gathered around the table carried on without her. Even her coffee sat untouched and grew cold as her mind raced with thoughts of the night to come.

And her body...whoa. Her body hummed as if electrified by a high-voltage wire.

"Misty, I'm not going to make it to the concert tonight. Got a better offer. You want my ticket?" All conversation stopped and the others appeared dumbfounded.

"You're kidding me? What the heck could be worth missing Sir Elton John?"

"Only one thing I can think of," one of the women commented. Her suggestion didn't need clarification. Her sinful grin made it clear she meant sex.

There was no masking her huge smile as Evie handed over her prized fourth-row ticket. Nothing measured up to exploring the scene at the invitation-only club with a respected Dom she trusted.

And she'd be going...tonight.

Evie bit her lip and took slow breaths as she struggled for composure. Doing a happy dance in the middle of the hotel restaurant would draw unwanted attention. She couldn't even imagine coming up with an explanation to justify such crazed behavior. There would be no explaining Cain and Michelle to this vanilla group.

Chaotic thoughts drifted, taking her back a few days to when she'd met the couple while visiting their booth in the crowded conference hall. The memories were fresh and vivid in her mind. It had been the most notable experience of the week...

Leather cut through the air with a subtle whoosh. The contrasting loud crack as the tail of the whip connected with the wooden table millimeters from her hand resonated through her. She jerked back from the soft suede falls of the red flogger she'd dared reach out and touch and looked up, way up, a solid mountain of muscle to meet the dark-haired man's expressionless face. He intimidated with more than his sheer size as his clear, emotionless gaze gave nothing away.

"Always ask permission before touching."

Ookay, good to know.

Evie nodded, uncertain if it was better to respond or remain silent. She definitely didn't want to provoke the huge man holding the whip.

"Cain!" A petite blonde move around the man, bumping him out of the way with her hip, not impressed in the least by his size. "Don't go all Dom and scare off the customers...again." She smacked his arm and released a long-suffering sigh.

With a friendly smile and open expression, the woman held out her hand. "Hi! I'm Michelle Thorne." She glanced over her shoulder. "The big scary guy is my husband, Cain."

The giant scowled and grumbled something under his breath as they all shook hands.

"Hi! Evie Sloan. I'm a bookseller." She pointed over her shoulder. "My booth is a few aisles over."

"Great. I've been meaning to check out some of the books. I'll have to stop by when the slave driver lets me take a break." Michelle's green eyes sparkled with mirth as she picked up the red flogger and held it out. "Go ahead, it won't bite."

She leaned over the table a bit and whispered, "Neither will Cain."

Evie didn't resist the urge to stroke her fingers along the soft tresses, shuddering as she wondered how different they'd feel slapping against her bare bottom.

"Everything you see has been handcrafted by Cain. He prefers to work with each customer one on one and create custom pieces, but these rack items are all for sale. Were you looking for a particular type of flogger? Cain works with a variety of materials—suede, rabbit fur, deerskin. It all depends on the sensation you're after—thuddy, stingy or perhaps something in between."

"Oh...um, I was just looking."

"Okay. Do you have any experience with leather toys? Have you ever been flogged, Evie?"

At the frank question she gasped and cast a surreptitious glance around those nearby. Had anyone heard?

She sighed with relief, even more glad when Cain lost interest, moving away to help another customer. Evie found that Michelle's easygoing nature helped her relax and talk openly.

"I've never been flogged, never been to a club," she shrugged. "Most of my time has been spent building my business. There hasn't really been any room for play." And didn't that sound pathetic. Ugh!

Michelle shot her a knowing grin. "But you're curious. I bet you've read some of the books you sell and wonder how much of it is true. The stories turn you on but you're not sure if BDSM is right for you. Correct?"

"Am I that transparent?"

"Not really, it's quite common. And I sense both your interest and hesitation."

While Evie browsed the booth, she watched the couple work. She would never have pegged them as being in the lifestyle or their roles. Michelle seemed to be in charge and had her husband wrapped around her little finger. Their relationship captured Evie's imagination and she couldn't resist indulging her curiosity once Michelle was finished helping another customer.

"So how does it work? Are you and Cain..." What? How was she supposed to ask such personal information?

Michelle had no qualms about filling in the blanks. "Cain is a Dominant and I'm his submissive, as well as his wife. We don't live the lifestyle 24/7. Far from it. As you've probably noticed, I take the lead most of the time when it comes to business. I'm much more approachable and better with people, some of whom take one look at Cain and

clam up. He's better with his hands." Her satisfied grin left no question how she felt about Cain's skilled hands.

Evie figured a lot of people would be timid around the large man. Being near him you couldn't help sensing his power and noticing his authoritative nature. But watching the couple interact made it clear Cain would move heaven and earth for Michelle. He may be big as a bear and growl a lot but he was warm and cuddly with his wife.

She liked them both and wanted to get to know them better. Might help her learn a few things about herself too.

"Don't you think so?"

Misty squeezed her hand, bringing Evie back to the crowded hotel restaurant. "Evie?"

"Huh? Oh...sure."

She nodded when appropriate but didn't pay attention to the conversation. Not because it wasn't interesting. Her thoughts remained on the upcoming evening. She would get to see the Thornes in a whole new light. With Michelle there, she hoped to be able to relax and enjoy. The very idea of observing Cain in action at a real BDSM club had her squirming around on her chair.

All her fantasies of visiting a club, maybe playing a little, were about to come true.

Floggers and whips.

Chains and leather restraints.

Erotic rewards and punishments.

Dominance and submission...oh my.

It was bound to be one of the most enlightening nights of her life.

* * * * *

Don't pace, and for crying out loud, do not look at your watch again.

Evie had to calm down. Her whole body vibrated with anxiety and jumbled emotions as she waited to meet the Thornes.

Our group will be gathering in the lobby bar at six. We'll go to dinner first then head over to the club.

Those had been Michelle's sketchy parting instructions before hurrying off to open Cain's booth for the day, leaving Evie with too much time to think. All day she'd been unable to concentrate on anything else. Not even her own booth and the work she loved were able to keep her mind from wandering.

What on earth had she gotten herself into? At the ripened age of thirty-one Evie didn't consider herself to be naïve, although her sex life had always been rather bland. Good old reliable vanilla, thank you very much. Still, tonight would be new and

exciting. It would either prove to be a night of sensual discovery, adding fuel to her fantasies, or a major nightmare.

She'd fantasized how it would feel to give up control and responsibility, placing herself and her pleasure in the hands of a man solely focused on taking her to unbelievable heights. To have a man ignore his own sexual wants while seeing to her needs. Trusting him with her body and mind. Believing in his ability to push her boundaries without going too far.

On the surface it sounded heavenly, but a true power exchange was probably nothing more than pure fiction. She didn't know anyone capable of completely letting go, granting authority to another. Could she do that? Evie didn't think so. And why would a Dom want to take on so much in the first place? The few men she'd shared a bed with were only interested in getting off and wouldn't consider something requiring that much effort.

Yeah, and maybe the problem was, with one exception, she'd only ever been with men she considered safe. Ones who allowed her to remain in her comfort zone by taking charge in bed. Guys who asked what she wanted in a non-threatening manner, without demands.

Then there was the ability to turn off the dominance once outside the bedroom to consider. She would never put up with a man trying to run every aspect of her life. She worked hard and was proud of her success. And she was more than capable of thinking for herself.

No, Evie didn't want to be a possession. She was no wimp who would bow down and allow someone else to make her decisions. Not in this lifetime. She wanted an equal partner, someone to share her life with, not a dictator to take over.

"Are you nervous?"

The deep voice came from close by and Evie nearly jumped out of her skin. She twirled around and tipped her head back to meet Cain's knowing smirk.

"I'm more excited and anxious than nervous."

"Relax, Evie. You'll be under my protection tonight and will only be observing. No one will touch you unless I grant them permission."

"Um...and you won't...right?"

"Not unless that's what you want or need."

The conviction in his steady gaze reassured Evie and allowed her to take a calming breath even while she wondered about his wording. He wouldn't let anyone touch her unless she wanted or needed it. How would he determine if she needed it?

"What do you mean if I need it?"

"At different times and for various reasons a person may not realize or be able to acknowledge their needs. It is then up to the Dominant to determine those needs and provide for his or her submissive."

"And how does the Dom determine what the sub needs?"

Panic tightened her chest briefly as Evie's scattered brain ran off in another direction. Had she messed up? Was she supposed to address Cain a certain way now since he had stepped into the role of her...what? He wasn't her Dom. More of a protector really.

She took a breath and shrugged off her worries. Cain would tell her everything she needed to know before they arrived at the club. She had to stop freaking out because of the fiction she'd read and have some faith in him to guide her on this adventure.

"I'm trying to set aside what I've read and not have false expectations."

The corner of Cain's lip twitched the tiniest bit and she got the impression her answer pleased him, which flooded her with a surprising surge of pride. Then Michelle called out, drawing Evie's attention, and the bottom dropped out of her stomach.

The petite blonde headed toward them, her arm linked with the living, breathing incarnation of Evie's every sexual fantasy.

Time stopped. Everyone and everything else faded away. There was only him.

I've died and this must be heaven.

More than six feet of solid masculine perfection and corded muscle moved with fluid grace straight toward her. The way he moved made her body all hot and liquid like melted chocolate. Thick black hair teased the top of the broadest shoulders she'd ever seen. The silk shirt he wore was copper, a shade lighter than his bronze skin, and made him seem to glow. The lucky shirt lovingly encased one hell of a mouthwatering chest. The first few buttons had been left open, revealing sculpted pecs her fingers itched to touch. His torso arched down to trim hips and powerful legs covered by black slacks that clung to all the right places and had saliva pooling in her mouth.

Dayummm, was he ever F.I.N.E., fine.

Her gaze tracked all the way down to expensive black leather shoes before making the delicious journey in reverse. She struggled not to linger over the impressive bulge on prominent display beneath a thin leather belt, instead continuing on to a square jaw shadowed by a few days' worth of beard and the most kissable pair of lips God had ever created. Evie wanted nothing more than to feel those lips on her. Everywhere.

He had a strong face, sculpted with a broad forehead and thick brows. His hard features were softened by a few laugh lines. Normally she didn't go for mustaches but the thin strip outlining his upper lip added a touch of rugged bad boy to even out the elegant rake's appearance. She wondered how his coarse facial hair would feel brushing against the flesh between her thighs. Very wet flesh.

She met his wide-set brown eyes, which pierced straight through to her soul, holding her entranced for several long heartbeats. Not even Michelle tugging at her arm released her from his gaze. They were expressive eyes, saying more with one smoldering glance than other men could in hours of sweet talk. Bedroom eyes that declared he had what she wanted, and when he got her between the sheets, he'd take his time delivering exactly what she needed.

Whoo-damn! She'd take a man with seductive eyes over a talker any day!

The devastatingly sexy hunk had her well and truly captured until he turned to talk with Cain, breaking his hold. The loss of his intent focus left her feeling rather bereft. Abandoned.

"He's trouble." The kind of trouble that made Evie ache to be bad.

"I had a feeling you'd like Niko. Isn't he delicious? Damn, this is going to be fun."

"Who the hell is he? I mean, I know he's a Dom. That's obvious. But...damn. The man is sex personified."

Michelle's voice dropped to a hush. "He's not just *a* Dom, he's *the* Dom. The one every sub would kill to play with. I'd love to do a scene with him, but Cain would never go for it. He'd be afraid I wouldn't come back once I got a taste of Niko." She shrugged. "Hell, I probably wouldn't."

Evie nodded. No doubt Michelle would enjoy playing with Niko but with Evie's lack of experience, he'd be too much for her. It would be the same as putting a rookie just learning to drive behind the wheel of a race car. "I'd be too afraid to play with him."

"It takes time to get used to the scene, much less contemplate being with a Dominant as masterful as Niko."

Evie finally noticed Michelle's very sexy leather skirt and blouse. Crap, had she made a mistake by wearing a casual sundress? "Is what I'm wearing all right for the club? I can run back up to the room and change pretty quick." Not that she had any leather clothing.

"Nah, you're fine. If you were going to be playing your Dom would have specified what he wanted you to wear. Since you're only observing don't sweat it."

She kept an eye on the men while talking with Michelle. At one point, Niko looked over and met her gaze. That brief connection was all it took to get her heart racing again. It slammed against her ribs hard, beating so loud she wondered if the others could hear. The heat in Niko's gaze spread through her body. She felt as if she should prostrate herself before him, beg for his attention.

Another couple joined the men and the group approached Michelle and Evie. Squaring her shoulders, she refused to follow Michelle's example and drop her gaze. Once again she reminded herself that Niko wasn't *her* Dom. She wouldn't alter her behavior or act submissive, even if those powerful eyes made her feel that way.

"Niko Kovalenko, may I present Evie Sloan? She is joining us tonight to learn more about BDSM. Evie, this is Niko. You may call him Sir or Master."

Master? She wouldn't be comfortable using that term with someone she didn't know. "Hello, Sir."

Niko extended his hand. She stared at it for a moment as if it were a coiled snake before good manners had her reaching out. God, he was so warm. Instead of the handshake she anticipated, he twisted his wrist and lifted her hand to brush those soft lips over her knuckles.

“Enchanted.”

Sexy, sophisticated and charming – a triple threat!

His deep and seductive voice stroked over her skin smoother than raw silk and his courtly gesture went straight to her head. The room tilted and his other hand shot out, clasping her elbow to steady her. Thank goodness. Without his support, Evie would have made a fool of herself and fallen on her butt. She fought to say something around the lump in her throat but all that came out was a rather pathetic whimper.

Cain’s lip did that little twitch thing again and she wondered if he was laughing at her as he made introductions all around. She managed a hello for the other couple, Kelly and Lee, but found it difficult to think of anything other than Niko and the heat of his touch.

“Let’s head to dinner and we’ll discuss our plans for the evening,”

Evie got the impression Cain’s statement was more declaration of intent than suggestion.

How was she supposed to eat? Hell, she only managed to stand with Niko’s support.

As the group headed for the doors, his hand moved around to the small of her back. Evie shivered. The intimate touch made her skin feel stretched tight and highly sensitive. A tingle started at her scalp, raced down her neck and spread all the way to her toes. A blast of tropical heat enveloped her.

Jeez, had the hotel’s air conditioner gone on the fritz or was it just her?

Her thoughts flashed to the other group attending the concert she’d given up. She hoped they were having fun and was happy to realize she didn’t feel like she was missing out on anything. Seeing Elton John had been something she’d looked forward to, but the sexual promise in Niko’s gaze had already made the change in plans well worthwhile.

Chapter Two

From first glance, Niko wanted Evie with a fierce need bordering on desperation. He wanted her down on her knees—those delightful curves bared for his enjoyment—his fingers tangled in her chin-length black hair, holding her still as her wide red lips stretched around his cock. He would take his time, feed her every inch, push her to take all of him.

Or better yet, he'd restrain her standing upright and fuck her with those mile-long legs wrapped tight around his hips.

He understood the desire. The need. Was capable of handling both. What bothered him, however, was the unfamiliar urge to possess.

Niko shook his head to dispel the ridiculous idea that should have him putting distance between them instead of moving closer. He had not spoken with her, didn't know the woman, but the instant connection that snapped into place between them was undeniable. He had every intention of spending time with the intriguing beauty and exploring the odd feelings to see where they may lead.

He'd never claimed a submissive for himself. Play with them, yes. Share or train, sure. Stake a claim, NO. Not a chance. Yet something drove Niko to do just that and he had to fight against the rash impulse.

Regardless of the obstacles, he took a deep breath, walked right up to Cain Thorne, and made his intentions clear. "I want her! No one else plays with her."

"Whoa! Slow down, Niko. I only met Evie a few days ago. She has no experience as a sub. We invited her tonight because she expressed an interest in learning more and *watching* some play." Cain gripped his shoulder, hard. "And she's under my protection."

Niko nodded. "Understood. I see something in her. She's a natural sub." Maybe even the right sub for him. Frightening thought.

He and Cain had worked together to top various subs over the years. Niko had faith his friend and fellow Dominant would understand where he was coming from. "Evie will be mine...for tonight." Longer if they fit together as perfectly as he suspected they would. "I will be her sponsor, introduce her to the club and help her discover where her interests lie." He left no room for argument.

Cain's eyes widened and his mouth twitched before he schooled his features. "Fine, show her around. But don't push her. I'll be watching every move and won't hesitate to step in if you go too far."

"I'd expect nothing less." Cain always took the comfort and safety of those who entrusted him with their care very seriously, as did Niko. Their beliefs and methods were similar, which is what had made topping subs together work so well.

Putting Evie in Cain's car and watching them drive away was pure torture. Niko gritted his teeth the whole way to the restaurant and until she was seated at his side, right where he wanted her.

He listened idly as Cain explained the rules of club decorum to the group, and openly observed Evie. She had a very tactile nature, unconsciously touching the things around her, getting a sense of her surroundings through her fingertips. She traced the pattern on the silverware, rimmed her wineglass and even stroked the lacquered tabletop. He made note of the habit certain to get her into trouble.

"The information Cain is providing will be important when we reach the club. Unless you know more about BDSM than you've told Cain?"

Her head jerked around, bright amber eyes locking on him as that wandering hand went to her throat. "I-I...um, no."

"No, what?" He knew it bothered her, but she caught on and used the title as prompted.

"No Sir. Well, yes."

"Which is it—yes or no?"

"I know a little. I've read some books. Everything Cain's saying is common sense and courtesy, Sir."

He decided to test the validity of her statement. "You have a cell phone?"

"Yes, of course...Sir."

"May I see it?"

"No," she denied then rushed to explain. "I don't have it with me. I left it in my hotel room, Sir."

Perhaps she understood more than Cain had given her credit for. Good. He found no pleasure with subs who simply followed commands and were willingly led around like pliant sheep. He much preferred an intelligent sub who asked questions, sought a deeper understanding of themselves and the scene, offered a challenge. It had been ages since a sub had truly challenged him.

No doubt Evie would, every step of the way.

"And your PDA?" He saw her as the type of businesswoman who went nowhere without all her information and business contacts.

"Also in my room, Sir. All I have with me is my driver's license, a credit card, and some cash."

Smart and sensible, prepared for whatever came her way. Tough. He liked that—a lot—and kept testing the waters.

"If you're watching a scene and have questions, is it acceptable to voice them?"

Her brow arched and she countered with a question of her own. "When you're part of a scene do you expect the submissive to just be quiet and follow your orders or is she allowed to question your actions, Sir?"

Ah, there's her backbone. Excellent.

"Never blindly follow anyone, Evie. For a scene to be satisfying to both Dom and sub there has to be equal give and take, honesty and trust. Each has to be invested or there's no payoff."

And damn if just discussing the topic didn't make him want more. He needed to be closer to her. Giving in to temptation, Niko leaned forward, initiating a more intimate connection. He didn't think Evie realized she followed suit and leaned toward him.

"You may observe any scene of interest or watch the demonstrations Sir Cain conducts. Do not touch anything that does not belong to you unless a Dom offers an item for your inspection."

She nodded and for some unknown reason he allowed the lack of a verbal response to slide.

"You will be free to move between the common areas of the club. If things become too intense you may step outside for some air, but not alone." He captured the hand toying restlessly with the napkin in her lap. "You will be testing the waters of the club atmosphere, but do not test me on this rule, *moy kotik*—"

"Wait a minute, what's that mean, *moy kotik*?"

"My pet—"

Evie gasped and her cheeks flushed a pretty shade of red. "I'm not—"

"Evie." Niko dropped his voice to the low, commanding tone guaranteed to gain a sub's full attention. "You will be calm and listen unless you'd prefer I turn you over my knee—right here in the restaurant—and give you the spanking you are asking for. And you will not be reminded again of the proper way to address me."

Her jaw opened then snapped shut with an audible click. Niko leaned back and sipped his wine, giving her time to consider her options. He could read her thoughts with ease since she made no effort to hide her expression as an experienced sub would. Her eyes darkened to a burning flame rife with emotion—anger, defiance. Curiosity.

The flicker of interest elevated his heart rate. She had an inquisitive nature and the idea of being spanked turned her on. Evie's nostrils flared, her body tensed and her nipples hardened, pressing against the thin material of her dress. He wondered what color they'd be. Dusky pink, coral or a deeper shade of rose?

He couldn't wait to find out.

Thinking about her nipples and wondering how she'd taste had distracted him from the important task at hand. Niko sipped his wine, giving himself a moment to refocus before continuing.

"Now, as I was saying. You will not step outside of the club alone. While you are there, you are under the protection of both Sir Cain and me. We do not take your safety lightly. Understand?"

"Yes...Sir."

Ah, progress.

"Good. The club is divided into three areas. The first room upon entering is a social gathering area where you will find refreshments. In this room you are free to speak with anyone. The second room is used for punishment and mild scenes. You may move about this room to observe as long as you remain unobtrusive. These are the common areas.

"The dungeon is the largest room, comprising more than half of the club. You will not enter the dungeon without either Sir Cain or me, and when you do, you'll stay with us. This is not a room where you are free to roam about once the club opens."

He paused and waited for her to acknowledge his instructions. "Now, *moy kotik*, I must learn about you and your experiences. You said that you've read some erotic fiction about the lifestyle?"

"Yes Sir."

She didn't object to the endearment and remembered to use his title. Without even realizing, Evie was learning to submit. "Good. Have you attended any of the erotic demonstrations at the convention?"

"No Sir. I've been busy working."

Her answer pleased him yet Niko had no trouble suppressing a triumphant grin. The idea of Evie taking in erotic scenes without him bothered Niko and he preferred not dwell on it.

"While at the club you must remember that everything you see happening is consensual. Do not get upset or attempt to intervene if a Dominant disciplines a sub and he or she cries out in pain. Those being caned or whipped are willingly surrendering to what their Dom knows they need. There are Masters at the club who monitor the scenes and ensure no one is harmed. That is their job, not yours."

"Yes Sir."

Evie hardly believed this was happening. All around them people talked and laughed, going about their normal activities, never knowing a taboo conversation was being conducted right under their noses. She wondered how others could look at their group and not guess they were deviants. Kinky sex freaks. How could anyone look at her and not see she was very naughty and involved in socially forbidden behavior?

What a silly idea. Of course no one would glance her way and get the impression her stomach was tied up in knots as she imagined being bound and punished by Niko.

The more he spoke about the club the higher Evie's anticipation spiked. She hated that the group lingered over the meal. Weren't they ready to go? She fidgeted in her

chair, toyed with the silverware. Perhaps another glass of wine would help calm her down.

Evie reached out for the bottle only to find her wrist locked within Niko's tight but gentle fist. She met his hard gaze and he shook his head.

"No, *moy kotik*. No more wine. You need to be clearheaded at the club."

What an idiot. She knew better.

"Yes Sir. Forgive me."

Alcohol and BDSM didn't mix, she knew that. But why the hell had she found it necessary to add that last bit? Jeez, he was doing a mind trip on her already and they hadn't even made it to Rendezvous yet.

Evie felt lost, set adrift in uncharted territory. It appeared that each and every thing done within the small group meant something and followed a certain protocol, from who sat where at the table to different forms of address considered appropriate.

And she'd fallen in line with barely any fuss.

The dinner conversation would be better defined as an interview. Cain spoke quietly with Kelly and Lee, while Niko focused his intense concentration on her. He projected a deceptive air of casual elegance as he leaned back in the chair and sipped his wine but the man missed nothing. He may appear relaxed but she sensed a coiled energy ready for anything.

"Would anyone like coffee or dessert?" the waitress asked, then rattled off an enticing list of sweets.

Evie groaned and rolled her eyes as the others placed their orders. Damn it! She was dying to get out of there.

She tried to distract herself by listening to the conversations at nearby tables. One man droned on about his crummy work week. A woman gossiped about her neighbors with a female friend. An elderly couple didn't even speak to each other, their attention solely on their meals.

Sheesh, normal people were boring.

Niko, the arrogant jerk, had no trouble seeing right into her head and sensing her frustration. She didn't even realize she drummed her fingers on the table until he caught her hand, stilling the restless movement.

"Relax, Evie. We have another half hour before we're due at the club. Here." He placed his fork at her lips and she obediently opened her mouth.

"Close your eyes. Savor the flavors."

She decided to play along. The rich chocolate mousse melted on her tongue and exploded across her taste buds. Evie hummed as she enjoyed the decadent dessert, intrigued by how the lack of sight sharpened other senses.

"Ah, *moy kotik*. So very open and responsive." Niko's low and sexy voice reached a spot deep in her soul, making her feel sultry and desired.

"I can't wait to have you blindfolded and bound to my bed with red silk ties. To place my mark on your gorgeous body. Watch your writhe and scream with pleasure at my touch."

She clearly pictured the scene Niko described. Wanted it. Needed it. Evie longed to give herself over to this powerful man. Her breasts swelled, grew heavy, and her nipples hardened to tight points that ached for his touch. Since she'd forgone wearing a bra anyone who looked at her wouldn't miss seeing them. Normally the thought would mortify her—with Niko it didn't. As strange as she found the notion, a part of Evie wanted him to see what he did to her. Prayed he noticed her shallow, rapid breathing. Wished he knew her panties were soaked and her clit throbbed, dying for his attention.

Damn if that didn't shock her! But she was still nobody's pet.

"Niko." She spoke his name sounding breathless and wanton. Was that her voice? She'd intended to be firm. "I'm no pet."

"Evie," he growled. Her eyes snapped open, the possessive heat churning in his dark eyes leaving her speechless.

"Make no mistake, you are *my pet*."

That shouldn't arouse but the way he said the words. *Oh God, yes!*

Take me. Make me yours!

Her stubborn streak protested, warring against the lustful urges of her body and fanciful heart. She was no man's doormat, and she would not be conquered or enslaved by this virtual stranger—even if he was so hot and sexy he should be declared illegal.

Still, the whole pet thing freaked her out. She had to show him where she stood.

"Let's get things straight here, Niko. I am nobody's pet, certainly not yours, and I am not your sub. It pisses me off to call you Sir so don't even expect to hear me call you Master. Not gonna happen."

His gaze narrowed and the dark pools turned thunderous. She felt it coming, some dominant crap she didn't want to hear. Evie held up her hand before he said anything. "Back off with the arrogant lord-of-the-manor routine. It does absolutely nothing for me."

"Liar," he accused. "It makes you hot. Even if you won't admit it to yourself."

Damn, he was good. He did see her clearly. She would not cop to it though because it also scared the hell out of her.

Chapter Three

As Cain drove through the neighborhood where Rendezvous was located she started to understand Niko's warning about not going outside alone. The run-down area was dark and menacing. Anyone who didn't know about the club would never find the place housed in a row of warehouses, many of which were boarded up.

Cain parked in an alley behind the building and Niko pulled up in a sleek Mercedes. Evie added to his growing list of faults—too sexy, arrogant, powerful and rich. Definitely not her type. It was becoming a long list.

Their group gathered before an unmarked door for last-minute instructions from Cain.

"We will have the club to ourselves for one hour. Master S and I will perform some demonstrations in the dungeon. Since we have a second Dom with us tonight, I will show Kelly and Lee around. Evie, you will be with Sir Niko."

She considered insisting on staying with him and Michelle but Cain's closed-off expression stopped her. The big Dom wouldn't listen to any argument and she was so anxious to check out the club she'd agree to just about anything. Being stuck with Captain Ego Trip for one evening wouldn't kill her.

Although she might wind up killing him.

Will I serve more jail time if the murder is premeditated?

Knowing her luck, yes.

Evie shook her head. She had to at least be honest with herself instead of hiding from her intense emotions. Killing him was the last thing she wanted. Now playing with him, that was a different story. Intimidating and enticing.

If she got the chance to play with Niko she wouldn't turn him down. Not even if it became embarrassing. She wanted to know what submitting to Niko meant and how it would affect her.

Evie suppressed a grin and walked through the door. The meet-and-greet room reminded her of the break room at the factory where her mother had worked, right down to the white stucco walls and scarred wooden tables with mismatched chairs. The kitchen consisted of one Formica countertop with a stainless steel sink, battered microwave and a refrigerator that had seen better days. To the right side of the door sat a reception desk.

A woman busy setting out snacks turned when she heard their group enter. "Ah, good. You're right on time. Please, come in." She greeted Cain and Niko with respect and obvious affection then turned to hug Michelle before ushering the newcomers over to the desk.

"Welcome to Rendezvous." Her gaze remained lowered and as she spoke a man approached. An obvious couple, he squeezed the woman's shoulder.

"Hello, Cain. And, Niko, what a pleasant surprise. It's been too long." The men shook hands and moved away to talk.

After introducing herself, Tina opened a ledger, logged in the members and explained the fees for guests. Kelly, Lee and Evie were all given a general list of rules as they each provided ID, paid the guest fees and signed in.

"Come on, I'll give you the ten-cent tour."

They followed along as Tina pointed out the major areas of the club. "Feel free to help yourselves to the snacks. There's a variety of juices, soft drinks and water. Alcohol is only permitted here during special celebrations, not while scenes are being played out. A Dom unable to accurately interpret a sub's responses or a sub with dulled senses creates a high risk for injury."

She indicated a set of stairs leading to a lower level. "Downstairs are changing rooms and lockers. The area is restricted to club members only." The distinction made Evie long to explore the secret area and discover exactly what they kept hidden down there.

Tina led them to a room separated from the common area by rope netting similar to what you'd find on an obstacle course for climbing. It had several padded benches and hooks bolted to the walls.

"This is the spanking room. It is also used by some members to warm up with light play. An appetizer, if you will, before moving on to the intensity of the dungeon."

Evie's fingers idly slid over the butter-soft vinyl covering one of the padded benches.

"What were you told about touching, *moy kotik*?"

The words, delivered in that low, seductive tone right against her ear, had Evie tensing. Jesus, she hadn't known Niko had come up behind her. She didn't need to turn around to recognize him as the warmth of his body blanketed her back. Goose bumps broke out over her skin and a shudder raced down her spine.

Not ten minutes in the club and she'd messed up already. "I...uh—"

"Do not make excuses. The rules are for your protection. Touch again without asking permission or being invited and I will restrain these wandering hands."

His fingers slid down her arms, the light touch setting fire to her blood. He placed a soft kiss over her frantically beating pulse. "Mmm...you like that idea."

"No." Her hasty denial sounded weak to her own ears.

"No, what?"

"Huh?" What was he asking? Her IQ dropped about twenty points whenever he came anywhere near her.

"Tsk, ts. Have you completely forgotten how to behave?"

Oh crap, the title. She'd forgotten to use it again. "No Sir. It's just all so new and overwhelming."

"I will permit this one infraction, Evie. Next time there will be no reminder or discussion. Are we clear?"

"Yes Sir."

"Good."

Niko raised his voice to include the others. "Sir Cain and Master Sebastian are prepared for a fire play demonstration in the dungeon and will need your assistance, Tina."

"Yes, Master Niko." Tina nodded and rushed away.

Moving out from behind Evie, he spoke while leading the group into the dungeon. "Fire play is dangerous and should not be undertaken without proper training and safety precautions. Please do not distract the participants. Reserve your questions until after the demonstration is completed."

Last to step through the archway, Evie almost tripped over her bottom lip as she took in the huge room. On the dull gray walls were clever electric sconces that looked like wooden torches and kept the room dimly lit, intimate. A wide variety of apparatus filled the space, only some of which she recognized. One wall contained a large pegboard displaying floggers, whips, straps, metal bars, chains and some frightening stuff she didn't want to know about. She even spotted a straitjacket hanging from one of the many hooks.

She was anxious to check out all the devices and equipment, but the Doms had other ideas. With a wave of his arm, Niko directed the group to the side of the room where Sir Cain, Master S and Tina waited.

At a nod from Master S, Tina took off her blouse and bra. The woman didn't seem fazed in the least by standing half naked in front of strangers. In fact, she looked relaxed and unconcerned about any imperfections, real or imagined.

Evie estimated the other woman to be in her fifties. Gravity had taken a mild toll on her breasts and she had a bit of a spare tire around her waist, yet she stood tall and proud. In the same circumstances, Evie wouldn't be as confident. She had no doubt she'd be covering her breasts with her arms, shielding her body from view as much as possible.

Sir Cain spoke about the inherent danger and necessary precautions while Master S set out a solution of rubbing alcohol. "During fire play it is important to make sure the alcohol and perspiration do not build up on the skin. Because of this, fire play requires an assistant. Master S will flog his sub and my role will be to dry her skin after every few strokes."

Master S kissed Tina's cheek before securing her facing the wall with her arms stretched overhead. He took great care in making sure her hair was knotted out of the way behind her head. While Cain rubbed a cloth over Tina's back, Master S dipped the ends of the flogger into the alcohol and then held the leather falls over an open flame.

Evie watched in complete fascination as Master S used soft strokes to trail the flame over Tina's skin. She didn't cry out in pain or even flinch. In fact, from the woman's sublime expression, she enjoyed the heated kiss of the flames. After several strokes, Master S stepped back and Cain moved in to wipe her down.

"Imagine how she feels, *moy kotik*."

Evie was proud that she didn't jump when Niko surprised her by speaking in her ear. She was rooted to the spot, riveted. Even if she had wanted to, she probably wouldn't be able to move away.

Niko continued seducing her with his commentary. "Stripped of clothing—society's armor. On display for strangers. Held immobile. Entrusting her body to her Master. The sting of the tails, combined with the heat of the flames licking over her skin. She should be terrified, right? But she doesn't tremble, and look at her face. Her heavy-lidded eyes full of desire and devotion."

She wondered how it would feel to put all your trust and confidence in another person. Evie had never found anyone deserving of her complete faith. And she remembered reading somewhere that people who went for BDSM had suffered from abuse or other mental trauma. Wouldn't that make it impossible to give themselves over like this?

Niko maneuvered her away from the rest of the group. "I can see the questions churning. Go ahead. Ask anything you want to know."

"H-how? Why? I mean, aren't the people who turn to BDSM the ones who can't have regular sex? The ones who have had some messed-up stuff happen to them? Why would they ever give up control to someone else?" Remembering the rules she tacked on a belated "Sir".

He sighed. "You've been reading too much fiction. Yes, some who practice bondage, Dominance and submission, sadism and masochism have been influenced by heinous events in their lives, as is the case with most everything. You will also find those who have been mistreated living 'normal' lives."

"Huh?" She didn't understand his explanation.

Niko scrubbed at the stubble covering his chin then tried again. "Each human being is a complex, unique individual. Assuming someone in the lifestyle has been sexually mistreated is akin to judging a person's intelligence based on the lack of a college degree or presuming wealth and beauty equate to happiness.

"Take a good look at the members who come here tonight. They are regular people from all walks of life who you might see in the coffee shop or the waiting room at the doctor's office. Until seeing them here you would never guess they practice BDSM.

"Think about how you would feel if someone judged you in such a presumptuous manner. What if someone you know saw you at Rendezvous, regardless if you are here only to observe, and treated you differently?"

Choked with emotion over the picture he painted, Evie nodded. She had considered herself to be open-minded, and nonjudgmental of others. Niko proved her wrong.

"We all form beliefs about others based on our observations and our unique mindset, but what's right for one person's wrong for another. You have to open yourself up to the possibilities. Follow your instincts. My personal philosophy is that if something feels good and causes no harm, then it is good. I'm willing to try anything once, often if I enjoy it."

As the demonstration ended and they rejoined the group, she gave careful thought to everything Niko had said, becoming more impressed with him in the process. He made a lot of sense. History provides plenty of examples of people being persecuted based on race, religion, gender, sexual practices or beliefs that differed from what was considered to be the societal norm of the times. She refused to be the kind of person to knock another down without first walking in their shoes.

With these thoughts fresh in her mind when Cain asked if anyone wanted to hold fire, Evie was the first one to step forward. But it was Niko who gifted her with the experience. He swabbed some fluid over her open palm and touched a mini-torch to the center.

Once again, Evie lost all power of speech and stared in awe as she held fire in the palm of her hand without getting burned. Time stood still. Nothing existed outside that moment and the mild warmth dancing on her skin. She felt as if she held the world, life, creation.

Niko extinguished the flame and without thought Evie threw herself into his arms. Tears burned at the corners of her eyes and she held on tight. How did you thank someone for such a profound experience? How do you express a depth of emotion that reshaped your world? She had no words.

Niko rubbed her arms and set her back from him. Then their eyes met and she knew words weren't necessary. He knew what she felt. More importantly, he understood.

Chapter Four

With Evie by his side the world was new and different. Exciting. She shared the thrill of discovery with him, making BDSM come alive again for Niko. Her bright smiles of delight, wide-eyed fascination and fresh outlook reawakened his passion and ramped it up to a whole new level.

He observed as she moved around a Chinese grope box, considering the tall structure from different angles and applying what she had learned from the other devices. In particular, the holes cut out of the box at random locations held her attention.

"Okay, so a sub gets restrained in there spread-eagle but then what happens, Sir?"

"Step inside and I'll show you." He was humbled when Evie didn't hesitate. Trust had already started to develop between them. She walked straight into the box and waited.

He secured her arms and legs then grabbed a blindfold from a shelf and placed it over her eyes. "Without use of vision your other senses sharpen." He shut the door, a set of steel jail cell bars, with a loud clang of metal on metal.

"Jeez, that's an awful sound, Sir. Hollow and final."

"Yes. Now how does it make you feel? Don't think about it. Tell me whatever comes to you first."

"Vulnerable. Alone. Yet at the same time almost...safe. Sheltered. Antsy too. I can't wait for what comes next, Sir."

Niko's heart swelled with pride. God, he loved her honest responses. Anticipated them.

He moved around the box, deliberately making some noises to keep her tantalized and on edge.

"When this box is used the sub is restrained, naked, unable to see – defenseless." Niko continued to move, his voice never coming from the same direction. He grabbed a crop from the pegboard as he passed by. "You hear others moving around the club. Have they wandered over? Are they watching you? Did you catch a whiff of someone's cologne?"

A forceful shiver racked her body, jangling the chains. Her arousal would be obvious to any who saw her. Not that he'd share this moment. He was surprised to find himself rather possessive of the curvy vixen and glad they had this chance to play privately, before the club filled up.

"Nothing happens so you begin to relax. From across the room you hear a whip crack and strain to catch the resultant moan of pleasure-pain. From another direction you hear a crank turning as chains elevate a bound sub."

He paused and blew into one of the holes at the level of her shoulder. The warm stream of air teased the exposed skin of her inner arm.

"Oooh," Evie cried.

Niko continued to move and talk, keeping her guessing. He reached in and tickled the back of her bare knee, then from the opposite side, he flicked her hair using the crop.

Her breasts rose and fell rapidly, the perfect size to fill his palms. Her nipples, like ripe berries ready to be squeezed, strained against the material of her dress. He teased one hardened nub with the end of the crop. She shivered and writhed as her arousal grew.

"God, you are glorious in your submission, *moy kotik!*"

He longed to see her body bared and bound for his pleasure but had to be patient, continue to build on the foundation of her trust. He battled against the temptation to rush, ignored his engorged cock, which pressed against his zipper, hard and insistent.

Teasing the tip of her nose with the crop, she rewarded him with a sweet giggle, the soft sound reminding him of the tinkle of chimes carried on a light breeze.

"Members are beginning to arrive. I can hear Tina greeting them in the other room. Perhaps I should keep you in the box, on display for their enjoyment."

Evie gasped his name. "No, please. It's fun with you, Sir, but I don't want anyone else to see me chained and on display." Anxiety elevated her voice several octaves yet she arched her back, thrusting out her breasts.

He noted the contradictory responses, reveled in them.

"Relax, Evie," he soothed and opened the door. "I won't share you with the others. You're mine!" Surprising as it was, he meant every word. Niko harbored greedy intentions of keeping Evie—claiming her for himself if they continued to prove complementary.

Evie's pulse raced and she felt certain her heart tried to escape the protection of her rib cage. He kept the adrenaline surging as she failed to anticipate each fleeting touch, dying for more. And his naughty whispered words drove her crazy. Her breasts were swollen and heavy, nipples aching to be touched, suckled. No doubt her panties were soaked judging by the pulsing heat between her shaking legs.

Niko overrode her fears, took everything she believed and turned it upside down leaving her with confusion and self-doubt. A few cursory touches and inflammatory whispers had her acting reckless, wanton. All her ideas about sex and intimacy went right out the window as he changed her outlook.

Not that I can complain. She loved every second. Craved more.

By far the scariest part—he had her ready to beg for whatever he would give her. She wanted to scream for him to take her. Now. In any way he chose. The more taboo—the farther from her past experiences—the better. She didn't even care if they drew a crowd of onlookers. Let everyone see what he did to her. How wild and carefree she became for him.

Only him!

And that made absolutely no sense whatsoever. Niko was the opposite of what she looked for in a man. Arrogant, dominant, cultured—not her type at all. She preferred her men more laid-back, less devastating. Easy and undemanding.

The warmth of his body engulfed her as Niko removed the restraints. He set her left wrist free, rubbed it to get the circulation moving and in an unexpected tender move, placed a kiss on her inner wrist before moving to the other one.

She was thankful he held her close—uncertain her rubbery legs would support her. Then Niko removed the blindfold. She blinked, adjusting to the dim lighting again, her gaze focusing on his handsome face. A girl could get used to the wonderful sight, easily losing herself in him.

"Niko." There was no holding back the weighty whisper full of emotion.

"Shh, *moy kotik*." He held her face in his hands, dark eyes piercing straight into her soul making her head swim. Niko brought his mouth down on hers, taking her. Sharp teeth nipped at her lower lip and the moment she opened, his tongue thrust inside.

He controlled the kiss, took complete ownership, demanded she respond. And respond she did. Evie melted faster than chocolate on a hot summer day. While she found the kiss stunning, the way he held her, tilted her head where he wanted, turned her blood to molten lava. She was shocked by how much the dominant kiss made her yearn for more. Everything narrowed down to his soft yet firm lips moving over hers and the slide of their tongues. Niko kissed her thoroughly, erasing memories of any other.

"Oh my God. Master Niko's here," a feminine voice squealed.

Evie pulled back, gasping for air, and glanced toward the group of women rushing toward them. The giggly women dropped at his feet—ignoring the fact he still held Evie in his arms—and fawned all over Niko, each talking over top of the other to be heard.

"It's been so long, Sir."

"We've missed you so much, Master Niko."

"No one else can master us like you can, Sir."

Oh, barf! Give me a break! Evie's stomach rolled.

Didn't it figure he'd have an adoring throng of gorgeous subs convinced the arrogant jerk was every bit as wonderful as he seemed to believe himself. Women anxious to be his love slaves and kneel at his feet. The miserable bitches.

She tried to pull free of his hold only to have Niko's grasp tighten. He didn't even glance down at his adoring harem when he spoke. Instead his intense focus remained on her. "I am busy tonight, ladies. Go to Tina and she will find a Dom to punish you for interrupting me."

Their faces fell as the women apologized. They moved away looking sullen and dejected. If she were a bigger person, Evie would feel sympathy for them, but she didn't. She had lost the ability to think and process emotion with the full power of his attention directed at her.

God, the way he looked at her. Niko didn't see the others moving around the room and shedding their clothes or hear the moans and screams as scenes played out. Every ounce of his focus held her immobile and made her head spin drunkenly.

The thought of having his extreme concentration solely on her while tied up in his bed turned her bones and muscle to putty, ready to be shaped by his skillful hands.

"Come, Evie. Let's get a drink and mingle."

Jealousy over the bevy of beauties turned into anger with his imperious attitude and the ridiculous emotions. Why the hell should she feel envious over him? Why did her knees tremble from the weight of his stare? She would not be his little pet or act the brainless bimbo as the harem did. Not gonna happen.

Evie patted his shoulder, making a valiant effort to ignore the ripple of corded muscle beneath her fingers. "You go on, *Sir*." The title came out on an exaggerated hiss. "Catch up with the harem. I'm going to check out the toys Master S and Sir Cain are showing the others."

"No." He held firm. "I won't let you run scared."

Scared? Uh-uh.

"Excuse me?"

"Excuse me...what? You know by now the respectful address I require. And questioning your Dom in this way is unwise."

Why, of all the egotistical, overbearing –

"Kiss my ass!"

Oh shit. That just slipped out. Not good. Damn her temper.

Someone gasped. Evie's head snapped around to see several people close by. Great, she'd cussed at a Dom before an audience. He would be forced to do...something. Hell, by showing such blatant disrespect she was asking for a spanking.

Crap, crap, crap!

Sure, she'd fantasized about spankings, imagined how it would feel, if the heated sting would turn her on. Still, intentionally provoking a Dom. That was way out of character. She hadn't done that on purpose, had she?

One look at Niko's hard expression told her she'd more than crossed a line but he'd have to get over it. Her backbone stiffened. "I am not a sub. I won't fall down, kiss your feet and beg forgiveness from the great and mighty Niko. I am only observing tonight."

Maybe Cain would save her? She searched the growing crowd but she didn't see him. "I'm under Sir Cain's protection," she tossed out for good measure.

Evie made another futile attempt to escape his grasp as her mind frantically cast about for a way out of the mess she'd gotten herself into.

Damn mouth always gets the better of me! Why the hell had she provoked him, poked a stick at the rattlesnake?

"Master Niko." Tina spoke, drawing everyone's attention. "Shall I prepare a spanking bench in the other room or would you prefer something here in the dungeon?"

Spanking? Or one of the very scary devices right out of a medieval torture chamber?

Oh holy crap!

His flat affect was unreadable but those damn gorgeous eyes heated with desire as he appeared to consider the options. The hard ridge of his cock jerked where it pressed against her soft belly and she knew the idea of punishing her turned the bastard on.

Damn it, think, Evie! Figure a way out of this fine mess.

Perhaps if she swooned, pretended to faint?

No, that only worked for delicate Southern belles. There had to be something she could do and still keep her dignity intact.

Niko took a key from his pocket and handed it to Tina. "Would you please retrieve my bag from the locker room?"

"Yes, Master Niko." She bowed her head then scurried off.

Great, Evie had no allies. Even Tina would help the jerk. The harem became absolutely giddy with the idea of Evie having lost favor. They fawned all over Niko, asking what her punishment would be and if he needed assistance.

She kept watching for Cain but the man remained conspicuously absent from the dungeon, damn him. Hell, the rat would probably side with Niko anyway.

"I believe we'll move out of the dungeon to one of the spanking benches."

Chapter Five

“Wait,” Evie implored. Her sandals scrabbled for purchase on the concrete floor as he half dragged and half carried her from the dungeon.

“Niko. Please, wait a minute. You have to listen to me.”

The beautiful amber color of her eyes became overwhelmed by huge dilated pupils. His little pet fought against herself as hard as she fought against him. She was shaking in her shoes with erotic anticipation. The more she wiggled against him the more turned-on Niko became.

He’d known it was only a matter of time before she tested the boundaries and him as a Dominant. Being approached by the club strays sped up the process by putting Evie in a position of ensuring she had his attention. She was evaluating the limits of his control and learning the landscape. This was also an assessment of herself to determine if BDSM was really something she wanted and could handle. Niko would not let her down. Evie would get the entire experience, including a well-deserved punishment.

“You agreed to follow the club rules, *moy kotik*. Your act of disrespect was tantamount to a demand for punishment—a challenge to me as a Dom.”

If he permitted the transgression to go unpunished it would encourage her to continue with the bratty behavior. By beginning as he intended to go on there would be no mistaken expectations.

“Not to discipline your outburst would be the same as turning my back on my role as a Dom. It is my right—my obligation—to spank that fine ass.”

“You bastard,” she growled and went limp in his arms.

Niko didn’t break stride. He lifted her over his shoulder and continued through the club. His nostrils flared, drinking in the heady scent of her arousal. Oh yeah, she was loving this.

Unfortunately for Evie her actions had ensured every pair of eyes in the place would be there to witness her spanking. He didn’t want to embarrass her. Humiliation and degradation did nothing for him. However, her earlier comment let him know she had issues with being stripped bare before others. He would encourage her submission and help her overcome her fears.

Of course, Evie would fight harder if he referred to her as a sub. Her fierce independence would not stand for what she would view as a derogatory title. But the term was not meant to belittle. Niko had great respect for anyone strong enough to yield control and entrust another.

Her final plea even managed to show deference. “Don’t do this, Sir. Not with everyone watching. Please, I beg you. I promise to behave.”

Her next desperate words almost brought him to his knees. He'd never thought to hear them pass Evie's lips.

"Please, *Master* Niko!"

"You may beg and cry all you want, *moy kotik*."

When they reached the benches, he chose the most prominent one, front and center. As he attempted to place her on the padded surface the hellcat kicked, fought and screamed in a stunning display of defiance. She put on a good front but the truth of how much the idea of a spanking had her turned-on was readily visible. A pink blush colored her skin and she rubbed her legs together restlessly, creating friction.

She wanted this. Needed it.

And he'd deliver.

WHAM!

The firm smack to her lush bottom sounded loud in the hushed room. Shocked, Evie went still, providing the perfect opportunity to get her restrained.

He noticed the crowd part for Cain. With a silent nod the other Dom strapped her arms to the front legs of the bench while Niko secured her ankles. A final strap placed around her torso would hold her secure and prevent injury.

"Do you want her gagged?"

Her head snapped up at the sound of Cain's voice. She blew strands of hair out of her face and appealed to him for assistance.

"Cain! Please, Sir, make him stop. He's hurting me."

"No, Evie. Sir Niko is disciplining you. There is a difference."

"But, Cain, you said I was under your protection. I don't want this!"

Cain nodded. "You are under my protection and if I thought Sir Niko acted out of anger or intended to harm you, I would intervene. Honey, you need this!"

"But the bastard is harming and humiliating me," she cried.

Cain's booming laughter offered no comfort. "Evie, you have a smart mouth and right now you are being a Brat. That's a sub who refuses to obey and taunts her Dom to incite a response. You've excelled at the task."

Cain's voice dropped to a stage whisper. "Don't worry. Sir Niko will make it good for you."

"Damn pushy, domineering— Owwww," she screeched as Niko's palm once again connected with her round bottom.

Without hesitation, he flipped the hem of her dress over her hips. The firm mounds he sought were practically bare, covered only by a miniscule strip of black silk. He had an unhampered view of the drenched triangle covering her pussy and thighs glistening with the evidence of how much she enjoyed being dominated.

No matter how vehement Evie protested, she wanted this. And Niko was powerless to deny her anything.

Her natural beauty stole his breath. In fact, he would have sworn all the air had been sucked from the room. He lost the ability to speak and think. All he managed was to picture her enticing ass bearing the pink imprint of his hand. He had every intention of making that visual a reality.

"Oh God. No, Niko. Please, Sir."

He stepped around the bench and squatted down to face Evie, gently smoothing the hair from her pretty cheeks.

"I know right now you are angry, embarrassed and you want to hate me. Search deeper, *moy kotik*. You long for the sting of a spanking, you're just too proud to admit it. And that's okay. Nothing will stop me from giving you this experience."

"But I don't have a safe word."

"And you're not getting one. Not for this."

"You can't," she gasped. "That goes against your precious club rules."

"This discussion is over. Time to accept what you've worked so hard to earn."

Evie bit back an anguished scream. What did he know? And how could he treat her like this? She'd never been more humiliated in her life. Carried through the club, hamming it up to see how far she could push him. Now tied down and exposed to all these strangers. Many of the men, along with several of the women, gazed at her bare bottom hungrily. Except for the harem. They looked disappointed that Evie held Niko's rapt attention. Hell, they would probably switch places with her in a heartbeat.

Not a chance! All the eyes on her bare bottom, knowing they would watch as Niko spanked her – the erotic thrill had her on the verge of orgasm.

The struggle she put on was bound to have enticed him and right now she wasn't sure giving him what he wanted was a good idea. She decided to shut up and take her licks in silence, withholding her cries from him.

A rustling sound caught her attention. She turned her head, attempting to see what was happening. He was out of her line of vision, which had her straining against the bonds. Not to escape, but to see what he was doing. He finally stepped into view with a scary black paddle in hand. It had circles cut out of the end and resembled a spatula.

Oh holy crap! She'd thought he'd use his hand, not some cold, impersonal paddle.

Her vow of silence took a flying leap out the window. "You wouldn't!"

He didn't have to respond. She looked in his eyes and saw the truth. He would. Evie strained against the bonds in earnest. That paddle was going to hurt.

"Cain. Oh God. Please, Cain. Stop him before this goes too –"

Air whistled through the holes in the paddle a split second before it collided with her bared bottom. She yelped, more out of insult than anything else, and dropped her head. Her hair covered her face, allowing Evie to relax her expression and take stock.

Hmm...not horrible. There had been the jarring impact, the embarrassing jiggling of her fleshy ass, but none of the sharp pain she'd anticipated. Maybe this whole spanking thing wouldn't be so bad after all.

The sting came a moment later. Wicked burning tendrils spread from her offended ass cheek and shot to every nerve ending. Evie had no time or breath to scream and curse the evil bastard as the next three blows landed in rapid succession.

Again, she felt the initial thud and had those few seconds of gritting her teeth and waiting for the heated blast to hit. When it did, whoo-damn!

Her ass was on fire.

She briefly entertained the idea that he had lit the paddle on fire as they had the flogger in Master S and Sir Cain's earlier demonstration. She dismissed the idea as heat spread flash-fire quick and pooled in her pussy. Moisture gushed from her slit. Before she became conscious of the movement, she flexed her thighs, lifting her ass for each swat as much as the restraints allowed.

She needed something, anything, inside her to relieve the empty ache. To hell with the witnesses or what they thought of her. Screw worrying about useless feelings of shame.

Evie had the insane impulse to scream out, "Thank you, Sir. May I have another?" Thank goodness she somehow managed to bite back the challenge. The last thing she wanted was to egg him on any further and prolong the torture of being restricted. She had to get free to get off. Even if only by her own fingers with them all watching. She didn't care how. When — that's what mattered.

Something was happening to her, a shifting deep within. The extreme sexual desire Niko pulled out of her with seemingly little effort blurred any pain. By itself, each profound sensation had a concentrated effect. As arousal and pain intermingled they changed into something else. Some inexplicable new phenomenon her body desperately craved.

In her current predicament such complex thought went beyond her ability to absorb. Evie filed the information away for later, when time and distance would allow her to scrutinize the concept and understand.

She lost count of how many times Niko swatted her bottom. When he set aside the paddle, calloused palms rubbed over sensitive flesh and Evie's entire body clenched. Her swollen clit pulsed and the walls of her pussy spasmed. All the signs of impending orgasm were there, which was insane.

Getting off from being spanked?

I'm a perverted freak!

Freak or not, holding back the immense orgasm headed straight for her took every ounce of self-control she could muster.

Breathe slow, think of other things. Mundane things. She thought of boring chores such as doing laundry. Or her most dreaded task, going to the dentist. She was convinced all dentists were sadomasochists. *Evil bastards!*

She prayed Niko didn't notice how close to the edge he'd driven her. Not until they could get somewhere private. Evie forced her muscles to go limp and waited to be

released, sighing in relief when he stopped rubbing her offended bottom. Okay, without him touching her, a slim chance existed that she'd get out of this without losing all control and dignity.

Two thick fingers slid beneath the edge of her panties to tease sodden flesh and the battle was all but over.

"So hot and wet, *moy kotik*."

Leave it to the arrogant jerk to not only notice but to broadcast the information to everyone else. Evie wished a hole would open up in the floor and swallow her.

"You took your punishment very well and deserve a reward."

NO! Nonononono! Don't do it. Don't even think it.

Oblivious to her internal pleas, Niko's fingers thrust into her pussy, stretching her, providing the fullness she longed for. His fingertips hit an amazing spot her previous lovers had not managed to find and she teetered on the edge, hanging on by her fingernails.

"I-I can't." She lacked the strength to explain. She would never be able to meet the gaze of anyone in the room if he made her come in front of them. Orgasms were too private and intimate to be shared with strangers. Evie fought against the building pleasure tooth and nail.

"No. S-Sir, please."

Her begging fell on deaf ears. Niko's thumb pushed down on her clit. He didn't move it—didn't have to. The pressure was more than enough to shove her over the precipice.

His command sealed her fate.

"Come for me, Evie. Come now."

Her body complied in a big way. The most explosive orgasm she'd ever had started in her clit, spread through her pussy, and flowed outward to involve her whole being. The club, the members, it all dropped away as she flew away on a cloud of bliss. Bright lights exploded behind her tightly clamped eyelids and Evie drifted somewhere above her body.

How much time passed, she didn't know. Didn't care. She heard soft feminine whimpers along with Niko's murmured words of comfort and reassurance.

Evie opened her eyes to find herself cradled in his lap on a couch in a darkened office.

"Wh—" Her voice cracked. She cleared her throat and tried again. "Where are we?"

"Ah, you're finally back. We're in Sebastian's office. I thought you would appreciate some time to regroup before going back out into the club."

Evie groaned. "No, Niko." Belatedly remembering she added in a "Sir" for good measure. "I can't face them. Please, will you just take me back to the hotel?"

"*Moy kotik*—"

She pushed against his chest, trying to escape his smothering hold. "Don't call me that. I'm not your pet or your sub." Which put them right back where they'd been before—nowhere.

His lips crashed down over hers, effectively silencing her argument. She didn't resist and opened her lips for his tongue, reveling in Niko's bone-melting, breath-stealing passion.

When he broke the kiss, Niko cradled her cheek in his palm. "I will not hear your denials. Not after the way I made you fly. Whether your head wants to accept it or not, Evie, you are submissive in here." His hand moved down to cover her rapidly beating heart.

"I can't do this, Niko. I'm not this docile, needy person. I am a businesswoman and a hard competitor. I won't be led around on a leash or sit at your feet half-naked while you conduct a conversation with other Doms. This lifestyle isn't for me." And she regretted not being able to be what he wanted.

"Are you finished?"

"Huh?"

"Are you done arguing, Evie?"

"Uh, yeah. I guess so."

"Good, now listen. I know what you think, and you're wrong! I don't live the lifestyle. And I don't want a mindless puppet to do my bidding. Master/slave relationships don't do it for me. The last thing I need to be doing is making every decision for a woman who is incapable of handling anything on her own. That would be incredibly draining.

"Yes, I have a dominant personality and I will not apologize for it. Most of the time that quality is limited to the boardroom and the bedroom. I don't require the kink of BDSM to enjoy sex or get off, although I do prefer to be in control during sex. This allows my partner to relax and think of nothing but the pleasure I can give her.

"The term submissive does not mean weak or powerless. And it does not mean you are submissive all the time. It's often women who are dominant and independent while out in the world who are most attracted to the benefits of a D/s relationship. She is able to set aside the burdens of all the responsibility of having everyone rely on her."

Niko rubbed at his jaw, obviously searching for the right words to make her understand. A new picture started to form but she waited to hear more. Hungered to learn what made the intriguing hunk tick.

"There is an exchange of power. The sub puts her trust in her Dom. She depends on him to know what she needs, even when it's unclear to her. She trusts him to push her boundaries, allowing her to soar high, without going too far. It's a bond that requires a lot of work and must be developed over time. Really, that's all I'm asking you for is to give BDSM a try. Give us time. Each couple sets their own rules, defines their relationship based on what works for them as they go along."

He turned that mesmerizing stare on her. The one that made her melt. "Are you willing to give me a chance?"

Niko knew he'd given Evie a lot to consider. With her head spinning, she would want to take a break, step back. But he wouldn't let her run from what was developing between them. And in case tonight ended up being all they had he'd make it a night she'd never forget.

"I'm tired and want to go back to the hotel now, Sir." She stretched and faked a rather exaggerated yawn.

He saw through the ploy. Evie had demonstrated how important appearances were to her. To have a group of strangers witness her defiant challenge and subsequent punishment would be embarrassing. Worse yet was having those same strangers witness an intimate and personal moment of orgasm.

"Yes, that's fine." They'd leave, but under his terms. He rose and steadied Evie until she was able to stand on her own, then guided her to across the room.

"Umm..." she hesitated at the closed door. "Isn't there a back way out of here, Sir?"

"No. You will walk out there and stand by my side as we say our goodbyes, Evie. This is nonnegotiable. I won't let you hide because you feel self-conscious. The only way to defeat your discomfort is to face it down. And besides, Cain will want to ensure you are all right after your punishment."

Her gaze dropped. He gently lifted her chin, forcing Evie to make eye contact.

"Evie, they all saw what a beautiful woman you are, both on the outside and within. You handled your punishment and reward well. I guarantee that every Dom out there longs to play a scene with you and every sub wishes she'd been on the receiving end of all that pleasure."

"Okay, sure, but —"

She didn't believe him...yet, which was understandable. Niko decided to take what had become the easiest means to ending her racing thoughts and curbing her resistance. He leaned forward and kissed her into submission.

When they moved toward the door again, she didn't protest.

Chapter Six

Evie stepped through the door into the dungeon and forgot all about being embarrassed.

Michelle stood several feet away, facing Evie. Behind her, Master S's wrist worked a whip in a fluid arc, making the length of leather appear as an extension of his arm. In gradual increments, Master S increased the swaying of his wrist and decreased the distance between Michelle's back and the lethal business end of the whip.

Evie took a step closer and Niko's hands closed over her shoulders. He pulled her back against him and spoke softly. "Don't break their concentration, *moy kotik*. Michelle must remain still so Master S will not unintentionally harm her."

The intense concentration of both Master S and Michelle was astonishing. Evie tried to put herself in the other woman's shoes. What control and trust it must take to remain in place as the end of the whip came closer. It had to be pure torture not being able to see what went on behind her. The increasing whistle of the whip slicing through the air. Knowing that if she shifted at all it would throw off his aim. Just watching had Evie on pins and needles.

Master S's skill became quickly evident. Using the tip of the lash he flicked Michelle's hair over her shoulder. Michelle's concentration remained intact and seemed focused inward. She never flinched or gave any indication of pain as the tail caressed her back.

Evie lost all sense of time until the demonstration ended and Michelle flashed a brilliant smile her way. "Hey, Evie. You've got to try this."

She chewed on her lip, assaulted by conflicting emotions. She wanted to try but what if it hurt? What if she messed up and moved?

"I promise Master S will not hurt you, Evie. You have to try it. How else will you know what it's like?"

God, she wanted to but her feet remained rooted to the spot.

"I'll kiss any spot that does burn and make it better." Niko's voice had dropped to the seductive tone that promised sex. Lots of great sex. She couldn't resist that tone.

"Go, *moy kotik*. You'll never know if you don't try."

He gave her a slight nudge. Not much, just enough to get her moving forward. She struggled to find her voice, wondered how to word her request. Master S saved her the effort.

"Evie, would you like a turn?"

She nodded and took Michelle's place, disappointed to see Niko had stepped off to the side. As if reading her thoughts, he explained. "Don't look at me, Evie. You must concentrate on remaining calm and still."

Niko coached her in a way that did not distract. "Focus on your breathing. In and out. Slow and steady."

The room fell silent. Evie wondered what the hell was going on. Why didn't she hear the whistle of the whip? Feel the brush of air? Every instinct screamed for her to look over her shoulder and see what Master S was doing. Was he teasing her? Testing her?

She resisted the impulse, knowing the moment she moved could be the one he struck. Evie found a well of patience within herself she hadn't known she possessed. Drawing on this resource she did not move a muscle as everything slowed down. She tracked the slow draw of each inhalation through her nose and into her lungs, then the reverse path.

Same as when she'd been blindfolded in the grope box, her other senses sharpened. The tinkle of chains preceded a deep moan of agonized pleasure from the other side of the dungeon. Nearer, to her left, came the whoosh of shuffled feet. Behind her, a whisper of sound steadily built to a whistling.

After what seemed an eternity, the hem of her dress fluttered as if touched by a gentle breeze. The sensation increased, rising over her legs, brushing against the small of her back. The lash continued its upward path, at times leaving a deep sting where it licked at her flesh.

Evie found it hard to maintain her focus. She felt as if she were swaying back and forth and wondered if that was why the lash bit into her back a few times. She gritted her teeth, pushing down her desire to run straight to Niko and tell him everything roiling around inside her.

The whip teased the ends of her hair, making it float across her cheek. It tickled and she had to smother a laugh. Her body swayed and she took a stinging hit to the nape of her neck. The pain was sharp, sinking deep beneath her skin, burning down to the bone. Her concentration faltered.

Master S truly deserved his title. He made note of her every breath and stopped soon as she broke the position.

"You did very well, Evie."

As praise goes it wasn't much but it made her feel ten feet tall. All her previous discomfort had vanished, driven out by each new discovery.

Master S showed the group a variety of implements used for punishment and to inflict pain. Slappers, crops, floggers, whips and canes. They were all given the opportunity to wield each item. Lee bore a dark purple welt on his calf from the whip snapping around and getting him good when it was his turn to try the implement. The whip was offered to Evie but she took a step back. "I'll pass."

At a table nearby, Cain had brought out a case containing a violet wand. He set up the device and shot off a purple spark of electricity that brought a stop to all conversation, capturing the attention of their small group.

"Oooh, look." Evie vibrated with pent-up energy, practically bouncing on the balls of her feet with eagerness.

"Come." Niko took her hand and the other couple followed along. "Let's see what tricks Sir Cain has in that bag of his."

They didn't make it that far. Tina interrupted with a request for Niko's help in another part of the dungeon. He seemed reluctant to leave her, which she found endearing.

"Go ahead," she whispered to not disturb the others. "I'll stay with Sir Cain."

While he remained busy she witnessed several scenes and demos that fired her curiosity for more. A new respect and desire to be a part of this world that had opened up before her blossomed. When Niko finally caught up with her again she was disappointed to have the night come to an end.

Niko was pleased she'd remained busy and by the time she remembered to be mortified he had her settled into the passenger seat of his car. He slid into the driver's seat, not bothering to hide his smug grin.

Evie pointed her finger at him. "You are dangerous! And don't go acting all arrogant now. I know what you did."

"Ah, yes. I am sneaky." What was she accusing him of? Easing her through what had the potential to be an uncomfortable situation. Helping banish her fears. Introducing her to new things. He'd do it all again in a heartbeat. "You'd best keep a close eye on me."

"I— You! Ugh," she moaned in frustration and wagged her finger. "I'm not fooled, mister."

He laughed with pure delight. "I wouldn't have it any other way, *moy kotik*."

As they traveled down the road, he asked, "What were you and Sir Cain whispering about?"

A devilish grin flashed across her sweet face. "I asked him if you were a serial killer and if it was safe to go wandering off alone with you."

Her response pleased him more than she could know. "Good girl. I'm proud of you for being conscious of your safety."

For a while they rode in silence. He gave her a chance to process her thoughts but would not let Evie hide from the emotions. Finally he broke the quiet. "You were introduced to many new things tonight. Which ones piqued your interest most?"

She pondered her answer for a moment. "I don't like pain. The whips, crops and canes don't do anything for me." A visible shudder of revulsion racked her body.

"You looked so proud of yourself when Master S let you feel the sting of the whip, though."

"It wasn't the sting—that freakin' hurt. I was proud of my composure." She became more animated as she warmed to the subject. "I stood there, anticipating the cracking sound and whoosh of air, but it didn't come. Everything in me screamed to look over my shoulder and see what he was doing. Of course, I knew better. The moment I looked back could be the one he struck and I might have taken a hit to the face."

She turned in the seat toward him. "The anticipation drove me crazy. It was the not knowing that made it very intense. Afterward, Kelly told me he'd been getting a knot out of the whip's tail."

Niko felt his own rush of pride. Evie had learned more in their short visit than he could have hoped for.

"The violet wand was awesome," she continued. "When Cain put it on Tina's arm and had me hold her other hand I was shocked the muted jolt passed through her into me. Then he brought out the knives." She gave a telltale shiver.

"He looked into my eyes and asked if I trusted him. I didn't jump to say yes. I thought about it, reasoned out the fact he was only giving a demo." She laughed. "When I answered his lip did that little twitch thing and I knew he appreciated my considering first before granting my trust. I've got to tell you though. There was a moment when he drew the curved blade from the scabbard when I froze. That is one hell of a scary knife. Once he started talking to me though, I was okay."

He found her elation contagious and divided his attention between the road and Evie.

"Did you know that even when you concentrate on remaining perfectly still it feels as if you're moving subtly? And I didn't know I was holding my breath until Cain told me to breathe."

Her easy laughter was the sweetest music to his ears.

"The knife didn't hurt even though he rubbed the sharp edge over my jaw and down my neck. I actually got kinda tingly, which is weird."

An unwarranted spark of jealousy had him tensing. Niko had to concentrate to relax and not upset Evie. He wanted nothing to stop her from sharing her joy of discovery.

"There was so much going on. Some of it's jumbled in my head. I think it will take days, if not weeks, to process it all. Does that make any sense?"

Wanting to keep her talking, Niko kept his responses short. "Yes, it does."

"Good. Okay, so while you were gone, I wandered out to get some juice. In the other room a Domme had her sub restrained flat on his back while she dripped hot wax on him. *Holy crap!* I have no idea how he lay there all calm and cool as the wax landed on his privates."

"On his what? What part of his privates, Evie? Be specific."

She gave an excited squeak. "I almost forgot. He was uncut."

"What was uncut?" Niko wanted to hear her say the words.

"His...penis. The woman held it stretched out over his abdomen by the foreskin. Wouldn't it hurt for it to be pulled on like that?"

She didn't pause long enough for him to get a word in.

"Anyway, she held his privates stretched—"

"His cock. She held his cock." Evie waved him away as if swatting at an irritating fly. Niko just grinned.

"She held his cock stretched out over his abdomen, dripped the wax onto the base and it rolled down over his balls. And they didn't shrivel up. I would think a guy's balls would tuck in close against his body to hide from the hot wax. Tina told me they use a special wax that doesn't get hot enough to burn. I wonder how it would feel. If it would turn me on?"

Caught up in her story, she reached across the console and squeezed his arm to be certain she had his attention. As if he could think of anything else.

"To get the wax off they use a knife. I can't believe the guy kept being so calm. Having the knife rubbed on my neck and arms was one thing. I'd freak if someone came at my pussy with a sharp blade. Talk about frightening. One slip and your sex life's over."

Evie shot him a hard glare.

"What? What's wrong?"

"You." The wagging finger was back. "A public spanking is one thing. Ripping a person's skirt up and baring her ass to the world without any warning— I've never been so horrified in my life."

"Ah, but the punishment wouldn't have been half as effective with clothing cushioning your pretty bottom. And you have nothing to be shy about. Your ass is lush and round—beautiful."

She snorted. "Yeah, whatever."

"What bothered you more, the lack of forewarning or the actual exposure?"

"I'm not sure. Let me get back to you after I think about it."

Evie shifted again and Niko became riveted by the sight of her lean legs rubbing together.

"Hey!" The finger was back to wagging. "Keep your eyes on the road, mister. Oh, and another thing? I've been talking almost nonstop for the past fifteen minutes, haven't remembered the proper address for a Dom once, and you haven't said a word. How come?"

"As I explained earlier, I do not live, eat, breathe and sleep Dominance and submission. When at a club or while playing in private, I will require you to use the title. It's a show of respect and helps maintain the proper mindset. The rest of the time you may address me as you see fit."

Evie liked that he didn't expect her to always call him by a title. Hell, she liked Niko. She thought about how he'd proven to be the ultimate gentleman. He had seated

her at the restaurant, opened doors for her, and when they walked together, he tucked her safely into his side. Then there was the uncanny way he always seemed to know exactly what she needed or wanted before she did.

He escorted her into the hotel and seated her at a cozy table in the lobby bar where he ordered them each a snifter of brandy. She was treated to another glimpse of his casual elegance as he held the bowl of the snifter in the palm of his hand, allowing his body heat to warm the brandy. He swirled the golden liquid, took a deep breath before sipping, and closed his eyes, savoring the drink.

Evie followed his example since it was the first time she'd tasted brandy. The rich, complex flavors burst over her taste buds and created a warm trail down her throat. She enjoyed it and decided getting used to the finer things in life wouldn't be hard at all.

"At dinner all you wanted to talk about was BDSM and my life. Tell me about you. What do you do? Where are you from?"

"I was born and raised here in Tampa, although I do a lot of traveling. My family has business holdings throughout the U.S. and abroad. Since my father stepped down last year, I manage our interests."

"Ah, so you live nearby?"

"Yes."

Short, to the point. No details.

"I live just outside of Orlando so we're about an hour drive apart. How often are you in this area?"

"Yes, we are close. My schedule is always changing so I'm never really sure how long I'll be in town."

Boy, getting personal information out of him wasn't easy. "You don't like talking about yourself, do you?"

Niko shrugged and sipped his drink. "There's not a lot to tell. I find you to be a much more enthralling subject."

Ugh! They were back to the lord-of-the-manor routine again. While his attitude of superiority irritated the hell out of her, it also turned her on.

She sipped her drink and decided Niko was very similar to the brandy—rich, complex and refined. The powerful mystique of a skilled Dominant surrounded him. All in all, she found him to be confident and charming with a bit of bad boy roguishness thrown in to keep things interesting. He fascinated her and she hoped eventually he'd open up to her.

As they sat and talked the excited rush of earlier wore off and exhaustion set in. It had been a long day. Niko took the glass from her limp hand and set it aside.

"Come, Evie. You're tired. I'll see you to your room."

She didn't protest, stifling a yawn behind her hand as they waited for the elevator. Niko walked her to the door, took her keycard and held it open for her. She waited for him to follow her inside, but he remained at the threshold.

"Aren't you coming in?"

"I'd love to, but not tonight, *moy kotik*. You need to rest. I'm sure your conference day will start early."

"Oh." Her heart dropped and the brandy churned in her belly. Yes, she was physically drained yet she didn't want to see the amazing night end. The erratic emotions went on a downward spiral. She felt cheated, inadequate and dismayed. She'd thought he'd stay the night. Didn't he want her? What if she never saw him again?

She let her gaze wander down to his pants and sure enough, Niko still sported a hard-on. Good, he still wanted her. Why wasn't he coming in, though? She'd gotten off at the club, had the best orgasm of her life. Shouldn't she be returning the favor?

A low growl rumbled up from the back of his throat and Niko pulled her into his arms, surrounding her with his warmth.

"Don't let that overactive mind of yours go crazy now, *moy kotik*. This isn't over. I want you so much it hurts."

She imagined it did. The hard evidence pressed against her belly likely ached for relief. "Then let me take care of you."

He held her face and pressed his forehead to hers. "You are pushing the boundaries of my control, Evie. I want you so bad but not now. I won't rush this. When I get you in my bed, I want to have all night to make love. You need to catch a few hours of sleep. Rest up so you are ready for me."

"Oh!" She didn't want to wait, but liked the idea of spending all night making love.

"Tonight I will come and take you to dinner. A real date. Okay?"

For the first time, she detected a bit of uncertainty in Niko. Did he question whether she'd want to see him again? How could he?

"I'd like that. A lot!"

"Good. I will call your room later, *moy kotik*."

Her hands fisted in his silk shirt, desperate to hold him close. Then Niko gifted her with one of those spine-tingling kisses. It started as a soft seduction—a gentle, teasing brush of lips. His tongue stroked the outline of her mouth then slid along the seam. She opened, sucked him into her mouth, and they both groaned. Heated need spiraled.

One hand swept down her back, moving slowly lower until he squeezed her ass. Still sore from her spanking, a new kind of heat, tangled in with pain, blasted through Evie. She moaned into his mouth while pushing her ass more firmly into his palm.

By the time he ended the kiss they were both gasping for air and keeping each other from falling down.

Niko rested his forehead on hers again. "Yes, I definitely need more than a couple of hours with you in my bed, *moy kotik*."

He turned her toward the bed and smacked her bottom.

"Go. Rest up, sweet Evie. I'll see you tonight."

Chapter Seven

Sleep, ha! Who could sleep after having their heart and soul stolen during the most marvelous kiss ever?

Evie had been dying to talk with her best friend. She booted up her laptop and logged on to an instant messenger program. Of course, at three in the morning Amanda wasn't awake. She settled for sending an email that would leave Amanda salivating for more details and flopped into bed, fully dressed.

Two hours later the alarm went off. She showered and worked her booth on automatic pilot. Since it was the final day of the conference, most people were packing up to leave so things were slow.

Michelle and Cain passed by as they were leaving. She exchanged email addresses with Michelle and promised to keep in touch.

Hugging her close, Michelle whispered, "I want details about you and Niko. Explicit details!"

Most of the booths were closing up early and she decided to follow suit. Once she had everything packed away in her car, Evie indulged in a room service lunch, followed by a soak in the jetted tub and a much-needed nap.

With nothing to do until Niko picked her up she decided to go shopping. She hadn't packed anything appropriate for a date. The dark red off-the-shoulder dress she found in a nearby shop hugged her curves in luxurious satin.

"It's a daring look," the saleswoman commented.

Considering how much of her cleavage was on display, Evie had to agree. Matching patent leather sandals with crisscrossed straps and stiletto heels made walking a challenge but they also made her legs look fantastic.

Decked out to the nines and waiting in the lobby, she started to have second thoughts about her outfit. It wasn't her imagination—everyone stared at her. Too busy gawking, one of the porters tripped over a suitcase. She lost count of how many mumbled comments she'd heard. A wolf whistle ringing out from the bar sealed the deal.

Evie turned on her heel, intent on going back upstairs and changing into one of her boring business suits. The lobby doors slid open behind her with a soft whoosh and Niko's velvety-smooth voice stopped her in her tracks.

"Where do you think you're going?"

She didn't move, didn't dare breathe.

"Turn around, *moy kotik*."

Her mind screamed *keep going*. Her body had other ideas. Compelled by the command in Niko's tone, Evie slowly turned to face him...and almost fell flat on her face.

Tampa P.D. needed to outlaw the sinful stud for the protection of all female citizens. The local hospitals were probably full of women who suffered heart attacks just from watching him walk by. His potent, instant effect on Evie threw her hormones into overdrive.

He wore another silk shirt, this one black, the requisite first few buttons left undone. The charcoal gray jacket slung casually over his shoulder matched his tailored trousers. Tonight, his leather belt bore a gold designer buckle.

More arresting than his sharp-dressed hard body was the ever-present aura of dominance and power he radiated. His dark gaze captured hers and Evie found herself drawn closer, putting extra sway into her hips with each step.

He said something in a foreign language. Evie didn't need an interpreter to understand it had to do with hot and sweaty, mind-blowing sex.

"You take my breath away."

Her? Ha! He's the one who needed to be banned worldwide. He did funny things to her insides while simultaneously making her feel more feminine than she ever had.

"How am I supposed to be a gentleman and keep my hands off you during dinner? You look good enough to eat!"

A surge of feminine power broke loose, emboldening Evie. She'd always been strong and confident in business. It was her potential as a woman that had remained untapped, buried deep inside. After one evening together, Niko had managed to bring her femininity to the forefront by proving how seductive and tempting he found her.

She slid a red lacquered fingernail along his bottom lip and spoke with a throaty purr, barely recognizing her own voice. "Why don't we forget dinner and skip straight to dessert?"

Talk about aplomb. Wow!

Surprisingly the come-on wasn't awkward or forced. The proposal was real, compelling, and provocative.

His arms wrapped around her, pulling Evie's soft body snug against every hard inch of him—some inches harder than others. The expensive jacket dropped to the floor completely forgotten.

"No, Evie. God help me, I don't know how I'll survive this night, but I want to do it right."

"There's always room service."

Rawr! He let go with one of those animalistic growls that buckled her knees.

"Let's go." The words were clipped, his tone tight, yet when Niko turned Evie he held her as if she were a cherished treasure. She figured he wasn't the only one who would find surviving their meal difficult.

A valet waited with Niko's car. The young man opened the passenger door and moved to assist her. Niko refused to yield possession, scowling at the other man and helping her into the car himself.

Why the hell did she find his Neanderthal behavior so damn attractive?

"I hope you like Italian?"

"Love it. Unfortunately, it clings to my hips."

Niko frowned. Evie had a gorgeous body with the perfect amount of soft curves. Not too skinny or too lush. She was just right.

Perhaps her fear and embarrassment over being vulnerable—stripped bare physically and mentally—before others came from body image issues. Well, he was the perfect person to help her overcome her hang-ups. He would be proud to put her on display as his sub, either on his arm, or on the St. Andrew's Cross at the club. Both held equal appeal.

While he'd been away from her everything had clicked into place. At first he'd been alarmed and felt trapped by how fast he'd come to care about her. Evie meant something to him. Then he'd remembered the story of his parents' whirlwind courtship and marriage two weeks after meeting.

Niko did not believe he and Evie were ready for marriage. A major lifelong commitment could be possible if given time. But she would wear his collar. Soon! He wanted there to be no doubt that Evie had been claimed by him. And a public collaring ceremony at the club would also be a great way to work past her fears.

He had to remind himself to slow down though. If he rushed her, Evie might run the other way. They would indulge in some casual dinner conversation, take the time to get to know each other better, then spend the night in his bed. The rest he'd figure out later.

With his plan set, Niko started to relax.

He glanced over at Evie and the possessive instincts she inspired threatened to overwhelm him.

Go slow, compliment her.

"You own that dress, Evie. It's the perfect shade to set off your silky black hair and gives a fiery glow to those amber eyes."

"Yes, it does suit me."

Damn if he didn't love the sexy new confidence she projected. Maybe those body issues weren't as much of a problem as he'd thought. Pushing her at the club had definitely made an impact. He became more convinced a public collaring would be the final shove in the right direction.

As they were seated at a table in the ostentatious restaurant, Evie became nervous, evidenced by her constant fidgeting.

Niko squeezed her hand. "Look around, *moy kotik*. I am the most envied man here tonight. You are so sexy and beautiful it makes me crazy."

She rewarded him with a wide smile and relaxed. By the time their entrees were served they were talking and laughing like old friends.

"Favorite food?" she asked.

"Italian. You?"

"Thai."

He took a turn. "Favorite color?"

"Depends. In cars I like brilliant blues." She waved a hand along her side. "In clothes, red."

He upped the ante. "Most embarrassing moment? Something other than last night because you enjoyed your spanking."

She sighed. "Fine. High school graduation. I wasn't used to high heels. Tripped on the hem of my gown while walking across the stage to get my diploma. Fell on my face and the whole packed auditorium laughed at me."

Bastards! He wanted to go find everyone who had laughed and whip them until they gave a sincere apology.

"Come on. What's yours? Surely the high and mighty Niko has done something he'd rather forget."

"My first board meeting. I stood before all those bigwigs and thought I'd given an awesome presentation. Afterward, the chairman pulled me aside and told me if I wanted to be taken seriously then I needed to be sure to zip my fly." He snickered. "Of course, being full of myself, I had to turn it back on him."

"Oh no," she gasped. "What did you do?"

Niko shrugged. "Asked the old pervert why he'd been checking out my dick and if he was hot for me."

Evie's musical laughter rang out, turning envious gazes in their direction. He'd happily tell her every crazy thing he'd ever done to keep her laughing with such pure joy.

"Okay, fess up. First kiss. How old? Who with? Was it any good?" Evie's eyes sparkled and she waggled her eyebrows comically as she asked the questions.

Niko grinned as the memory surfaced. "In first grade we played a game. Every day at recess the boys chased the girls around the playground. It was always the same until one day Melissa Hartman let me catch her. Since that had never happened before I had no idea what to do with her."

Evie's expression showed disbelief. "You're lying."

"No, I'm not. The game was chase, not catch. Melissa knew what to do though. She put her hands on my shoulders, lifted up on her toes and kissed me. Right on the lips."

Several appreciative male glances turned her direction again as Evie laughed. He ignored everyone else. "Every day for a week I caught her and Melissa kissed me. All of

a sudden I was big man in class. My feet never touched the ground. The other guys were looking up to me and the girls gave me the sweetest smiles.

"Over the weekend I got sick. My mother kept me home from school on Monday. When I went back on Tuesday, Melissa let Bobby Templeton catch her. She waited to kiss him, made sure I was watching."

"Oh, Niko." Evie's hand fluttered over her lips as she shared the pain of his tragic story then got angry on his behalf. "That little tramp."

He took her hand, brushed a kiss across her knuckles and didn't let go. "I was devastated. Absolutely heartbroken. I still moped about three days later. But then Suzie James let me catch her."

"I bet you broke lots of hearts."

"Perhaps." He shrugged. "Your turn. Tell me about your first kiss so I can go find the fool and kick his ass."

"Well," she sighed. "Since I was a tomboy and considered one of the guys while growing up, my first kiss didn't happen until the summer after eighth grade. It was terribly hot and a bunch of us went swimming at the pond. I was drying off when Ross Avery walked up and without a word, kissed me."

He muttered a few choice curses under his breath. "And?"

"I punched him in the mouth."

Niko had never been happier or prouder. His lips stretched into a wide grin.

"Wow!" Evie's voice dropped to a sultry whisper. Heat darkened her eyes to the color of aged scotch. "You have the most amazing smile."

That quick his muscles tightened and his erection rose to press against his zipper.

"You should do it more often. It lights up your whole face—eases the aura of danger. Makes me want—"

"What? Makes you want what, *moy kotik*?"

The waiter arrived at their table to inquire about dessert, interrupting the moment.

Evie was glad for the break and decided to change the subject. She had a Dom at her disposal and he'd been opening up to her. Time to get some of her questions answered.

"So, why BDSM? What does a Dom get out of it? At club Rendezvous the rules state no penetration or actual sex. From what I saw while we were there, more often than not, the subs reach orgasm during a scene. What about the Doms? Do the couples race home to have sex? It seems a bit one sided."

Niko steepled his fingers under his chin and remained silent for a few moments. "No two relationships are the same, whether the couple is conventional or into Dominance and submission, so I can't answer for anyone else."

"Of course." She waited for him to continue.

"Society puts a great deal of pressure on women. You are expected to be tough and independent, have high-powered careers while also taking care of a home, marriage and family. You have to be everything for everyone."

And then some!

"A woman who is soft and feminine gets nowhere in business. Rise to the top too fast and it's assumed you slept your way there. Dress too sexy and you are given no respect. Most women take all their wonderful feminine qualities and lock them deep inside, never to be seen again.

"For men it's different—easier. We can be very male and no one thinks twice. If we sleep with a female superior to get ahead, we get slapped on the back. And generally less is expected of men with parenting and daily household work."

"Yeah, society is extremely gender biased. Men still get paid more for doing the same jobs. They tend to get more recognition than women." She shrugged. "What does any of that have to do with BDSM?"

He reached over and gave her hand a squeeze and continued to hold their hands clasped on the table. It was a comfortable gesture. Warmth climbed up Evie's arm and spread through her body keeping her highly aware of the physical contact.

"Some Dominants enjoy having power and control over a submissive. For them it's about mastering the sub and being obeyed—"

"So it's about being a bully," she huffed.

"For some, yes."

"And what about you, Niko? What do you get out of it?"

His thumb rubbing slowly along her wrist distracted Evie. He was doing it again, the Dom thing, closely studying her expression and her body to gauge her reactions. An electric jolt raced through her waking up every nerve ending, similar to how the violet wand affected her. She was wired, alert and ultra-aware of Niko.

With each breath she drank in the subtle aroma of soap, sandalwood cologne and Niko's own unique scent. The combination went right to her head. His quick wit, intelligent mind and thoughtful nature were appealing. Add in that dark and dominant aura, and he was one hell of a sexy package she couldn't wait to open.

"A woman granting me her trust is a precious gift. It is my first goal and I take great care to nurture her trust since I cannot be effective as a Dom without it. When engaging in a scene with a sub, I focus completely on her. I put aside my own desires and strive to release that soft feminine core she keeps locked away from the world."

Oh holy crap!

Yup, without a doubt the man was lethal. Just a few words and that penetrating stare were all it took for her to go up in flames. Her breasts ached, her panties were soaked, and her clit throbbed. Damn, she needed to get some place private and let him have his wicked way with her.

"Evie."

"Huh?" Her head snapped up and she got lost in those melted chocolate eyes. "Oh, umm...go ahead. I'm listening."

"By restraining a woman, I take responsibility out of her hands. She doesn't have to worry if she's pleasing me or anyone else. She is free to be a woman. To feel and experience all the pleasure I can give her."

Sounds heavenly!

"Remember what you experienced when I bound you to the spanking bench. At first you fought giving up control but once you did, Evie, you flew."

Boy, did I ever.

When she'd stopped fighting and went with it everything else melted away. The room, the people, her embarrassment all disappeared. The indescribable pleasure took over and she'd simply floated away. And afterward, the euphoria—damn. If she could bottle that there would be no more wars and she'd be a millionaire.

"That's it, Evie." Niko's voice had dropped to that seductive tone. "That expression on your face. God, I love it. When men climax, we get that agonized, tortured expression. When a woman reaches orgasm she is soft and sensual. Her back arches, she makes all those sexy sounds, and her expression—pure bliss. There is nothing I enjoy more than conquering a woman's inhibitions and taking her to that place."

If he didn't shut up and get her out of the restaurant, Evie would die. She craved what he described. His voice alone had the power to reach into her body and stoke her desires, seduce her mind. She hungered for him with desperation bordering on physical anguish.

And her beautiful new dress probably had a huge wet spot in back.

"Niko, now! Get me out of here before I spontaneously combust." Her tone edged on panic, and she growled at him. Jesus, she was going crazy, acting reckless. Primal.

"I need you. Now."

Chapter Eight

"I thought we were going to your place?" Evie watched the large iron gates swing open when Niko pushed a button in the car.

"We are."

"H-holy crap! You live here?" Looked like a luxury Mediterranean resort to her. The place was huge.

"Yes."

"You and what army?"

Niko chuckled. "Right now it's just me. This is my primary residence. It's my family's home, and they stay here when in the area."

Just him? The main building appeared to be two stories. Instead of taking the circular drive to the front of the house he drove around the side to a garage with six bays, parking in the first one.

"Evie?" She'd been so stunned that she hadn't even realized he'd opened her car door.

"Are you going to stay out here in the garage?"

She placed her numb fingers into his outstretched palm. They walked along a covered breezeway to the front entrance and through etched glass doors. The foyer had tall columns and beautiful marble floors. Her heels clicked as she walked, the empty echo sounding rather lonely.

He flipped a switch and Evie gasped as the lights came on. A large bouquet of fresh flowers in an ornate vase decorated the glass table where he carelessly dropped his keys. Past the pair of tall columns the space opened to a curved marble staircase with decorative wrought iron railings. Glancing up—way up—at the towering ceiling she spotted a huge chandelier. While it was undeniably beautiful, she couldn't imagine living there. It seemed cold and impersonal. More of a showplace than a home.

She took a few steps forward and turned in a circle, taking it all in. Speechless, she faced Niko to find his heated stare watching her every move. His intent gaze and odd expression made her nervous. He appeared feral, hungry—in full dominant mode.

"I'll give you a tour later." Niko took a step toward her and she involuntarily took one back. He stalked her across the foyer until she'd backed into one of the columns. "I think we'll save the playroom for later too. You've been driving me crazy all night in that sexy red dress and I have to get my cock in you now."

"I, uh—" Evie put her palm against his chest.

She couldn't think with him crowding her and tried to push him back. Niko was unaffected and moved closer. His fingers wove through her hair and cupped the back of her head, which he tilted to the side. For the space of several long heartbeats he stared into her eyes. Then he said something primitive sounding in a foreign language and slowly descended.

Nothing in the world – at least not to her knowledge – compared with his amazing kiss. Her body softened and her hands fisted his shirt in an attempt to ground herself as his sensual mouth devoured her. His kiss was possessive, demanding. A complete claiming – body, heart and soul.

His free hand slid down her back and grabbed hold of her ass, pulling her even tighter against his hard frame. The length of his cock pressed against her hip. She wanted that. Inside her.

"Wrap your legs around my waist," Niko ordered. He lifted her with ease, as if she weighed no more than a feather.

The firm ridge of his cock slid along her slit. She felt the heat of him right through the layers of cloth.

Evie held on tight as he moved across the room, heading for the stairs. Her fingers went on a sensual quest. She removed the band that held his dark hair back and relished the silky strands sliding through her fingers. Using her nails, she massaged his scalp and Niko drew in a sharp breath between clenched teeth.

She had an advantage over him. Niko had to hold on to her while her hands were free to roam. And roam they did. She brushed over the corded muscles of his shoulders through the silk shirt then moved her hands beneath the material at the open front.

His bronzed skin was smooth beneath her fingers, which traced the delineated groves between his pecs. "So much muscle. I bet you're strong enough to take me standing up."

Niko muttered under his breath as he stumbled on the steps. "Damn, Evie. I want to do this right – on a comfortable bed, not the hard floor or against the wall."

She didn't want to wait. Didn't need foreplay or a bed. Her panties were soaked and the throbbing of her clit loosened her tongue. "But I'm so wet." She flexed her thighs and her pussy slid over his erection. "I want you so bad it hurts, Niko." She slid back down with a moan. "I need you to make it better."

This time when he stumbled, Niko set her down on the stairs. Her bottom hit the cold marble and Evie squeaked. Pulling off his jacket, Niko positioned the material just so. He moved too fast for her to anticipate, grabbed her hips and flipped her over. The jacket cushioned her knees, helping to protect her from the hard stone.

"Hold on to the rail, Evie, and don't let go."

She followed the gruff command without thought, holding on tight as his hands closed on her ankles and spread her legs before continuing upward. He teased the sensitive hollow behind her knee, caught the hem of her dress and dragged it over her legs.

More curses followed as he bared her ass to find the racy black thong she bought on her shopping trip. "Damn, Evie. You trying to give me a heart attack?"

His calloused palms teased over her bottom, across her back and down her hips before covering her cheeks and squeezing. He kneaded her ass, pulling the cheeks apart, opening her in a way she had never been before.

She gasped as a finger circled her anus. "Niko!"

"Has anyone ever fucked you here, Evie?"

He was doing the growling thing again, which made it hard for her to speak much less come up with a coherent answer. And the way his fingers clenched on her ass drove her crazy.

"I need you."

"Answer the question," he demanded. "Have you let anyone fuck this gorgeous ass?"

"N-no." The taboo idea should disgust her. She should be embarrassed to be so exposed, to be discussing anal sex on their first real date. To her complete surprise, the idea excited her. Her pussy clenched, a rush of hot cream coated her thighs. She didn't care how or where he fucked her as long as he hurried up.

"Damn it, Niko. Fuck me already."

A firm palm landed on her right butt cheek. Instead of chastising her, the slap made her bolder, wilder. Needier. "Now," she ordered.

"This ass is mine and only mine!"

Whatever. At the moment, she didn't care what he took possession of. She had to have something inside her. If he wasn't going to fill her with his cock she'd take matters into her own hands.

Evie held the railing tight with one fist and slid the other hand between her legs, driving two fingers straight down the front of her panties and thrusting them into her pussy. A sharp cry passed her lips as she rode her hand, slamming her fingers deep.

"Did I say you could touch *my* pussy?"

She continued, ignoring the rustling of clothing as Niko moved around behind her. Her thighs trembled and the walls of her sex spasmed, sucking at her fingers. She was close. Real close.

Evie arched her hips, pressed the heel of her hand over her clit and cried out as the wonderful sensations built. Almost there. Just a few more strokes —

Niko's fist closed around her wrist and pulled her hand away.

"Niko," she screeched. "I was almost there."

"And I didn't give you permission to play with my pussy."

Cool leather closed around her wrist. Niko stood, straddled her back. He wrapped her fingers back around the rail and wound the leather belt through the decorative

scrollwork until he reached her other wrist. In a matter of seconds he had her bound to the railing.

"I warned you about those wandering hands of yours."

Evie pulled a few times but the belt held her firmly in place. "Niko, please."

"Please what?"

"Please, Sir."

"What are you asking for, pet? Be specific." He grabbed her panties and ripped them from her body. Damn, that was hot.

"Fuck me. Please, Master Niko. I need you!"

He didn't say a word. She heard the crinkle of a wrapper seconds before his warm hands gripped her hips. The head of his cock teased her slit, separating her folds and she whimpered. With the crown resting at her entrance, Niko paused.

"Whose pussy is this?"

At that point she was willing to say anything, do anything, to get him inside her. "Yours, Sir."

"That's right, it's mine. And who do you belong to, pet?"

"You," she sobbed. "Master Niko, I'm yours. Make me yours."

As the words left her mouth, Niko thrust hard, filling her beyond capacity. Evie screamed. Her delicate tissues stretched, burned. It was too much and she loved every thick inch.

Now if he would only fuck her.

Niko gritted his teeth and held her hips still as the wildcat tried to buck against him. "Don't move!"

If she did he'd come before they even got started. "So hot. Tight."

He had to give her body a chance to adjust. Wouldn't risk hurting her. Not for anything.

Evie had other ideas. She clenched her muscles, squeezing his cock and snapping the last of his control.

He gave in, fucked her hard. Fast. Pounded into her over and over. His balls slapped against her pussy with each powerful thrust as he took her without restraint, giving her everything.

She made the most provocative sounds, arched her back, tossed her head like a wild filly. God, it was an amazing sight when she forgot about appearances and let all that passion free.

Reaching one hand around her hip, Niko framed her engorged clit with two fingers and squeezed.

Evie bucked and screamed. Her pussy clamped down on him, locking him deep within, sucking at his cock as if it were a mouth. Her powerful orgasm took him over

the edge. His balls clenched and hot semen burned along his shaft, erupting to fill the condom.

Unable to move, Niko caged Evie's sweat-slicked body beneath him. His chest wheezed, struggling to breathe in a room devoid of oxygen. With his head resting on her back, he caught sight of her wrists, still tied to the rail. Reaching over her head, he worked her hands free, silently cursing himself in three languages at the sight of her red, chafed skin.

Fuck, she'd done what no other ever had—stole his control, and along with it, his heart. She challenged him, not just as a Dominant, but as a lover. As a man. Damn if she didn't thrill and please him beyond anything he'd ever know possible. And what did he do—abuse her trust. He was supposed to take care of her, make sure nothing harmed her.

He pulled back and tucked his cock, condom and all, into his pants then scooped her up in his arms, noticing that her knees hadn't fared much better than her wrists. The abraded skin was a slap in the face. Damn it! She was his responsibility and he'd failed, taking her on the unforgiving marble like an animal in rut.

What the hell was wrong with him?

As he carried her up the stairs, Niko stared down at her blissed-out expression. At least he'd given her pleasure, now he would make up for the neglect.

Making quick work of removing their clothes, he carried her into the shower. She was unsteady on her feet and leaned into him, trusting Niko to support her as he washed her soft skin. After toweling her dry, he laid her on his bed and rubbed some ointment into her abused flesh. "I'm so sorry, *moy kotik!*" he whispered.

She didn't appear bothered by his actions. Instead, she looked sated and happy.

He decided that Evie belonged in his bed, her black hair fanned out over his pillow. With a contented sigh, Niko slid in beside her and watched her sleep.

Chapter Nine

The disconcerting sensation of movement woke Evie. She uttered a protest that came out garbled and tried to go back to sleep.

"I've got you, Evie. It's okay."

Niko.

Why he thought it necessary to carry her everywhere was a mystery. One she was too tired to question him on. She snuggled into his chest and drifted.

Chilled air hitting her skin snapped Evie awake. She blinked and squinted against the bright lights as her arms were raised above her head. Something soft was being wrapped around her wrist. She lay on a padded surface and wondered where they were.

"Relax and let me take care of you."

With her arms bracketing her head she wasn't able to see much, but what she did see alarmed her. Chains and pulleys were bolted to the white ceiling above her. She started to struggle, pulled at her arms.

"Stop."

The barked command stopped her cold.

"Don't fight the restraints, Evie."

"W-what are you doing? Where am I?"

"We're in my playroom. I want you to rest and let me pleasure you."

His playroom?

Oh great. What a way to wake up.

Niko moved into her field of vision, leaned over and placed a chaste kiss on her lips. "Hi, sleepyhead. It's time to have some fun."

Fun?

She recognized the heat in his eyes and wondered what wicked ideas were racing around in his dirty mind.

He stepped away and she pulled at her hands, not surprised by the jangling sound of chains. A tremor of anticipation shot through her body, driving out the slight trepidation. Her breathing became shallow as blood raced to all her erogenous zones.

Niko's warm hands lifted her leg, bending it toward her body, and wrapped a soft cloth below her knee. She heard more metallic jangling then something tightened on her leg. When he let go, her leg remained in place. He repeated the process on the other side.

She tried glancing down her body to see what he was doing, but his shoulders blocked her view. He continued working, putting similar restraints on her ankles. When he finished and stepped back, Evie saw more than she'd wanted to.

Flat on her back with her arms above her head, she peered over her breasts to see he had her legs spread and suspended in the air. She attempted to close her thighs but something prevented the movement, keeping her shamefully open and on display.

Niko stepped between her legs where she was able to see him. He slid one thick finger over her folds and held it up. His finger glistened with her arousal, proving her excitement.

"Your safe word is red – not that you'll need it. I only want to give you pleasure but if something goes too far or becomes frightening all you have to do is say the word. Doing so won't end our play. We will take a step back and talk about what's bothering you to determine if it's discomfort over something new or if you don't enjoy what I'm doing. Say it now, pet. What is your safe word?"

Her voice cracked and it took two tries for her to repeat the word.

"Good. From now on if you use your safe word we take a break. But use the word with caution, Evie. I am going to push your boundaries, test your limits. It's the only way I can learn what you enjoy. I will introduce your body to new sensations – some are going to be uncomfortable. If you use your safe word because you are embarrassed or apprehensive, you might miss out on something with the potential to bring you great pleasure. Understand?"

Oh boy. He was in full Dom mode. She worried he'd push her too far, but she wasn't about to miss out on the experiences she'd fantasized about for so long. She had no intention of calling an end to this. "Yes Sir."

He stepped out of view again. She heard quiet sounds and tried to sort them out. Once Niko began talking again, she found his voice soothed her nerves.

"A big part of the thrill is anticipation. I don't want you straining your neck to see what I'm doing so I'm going to blindfold you."

Oh holy crap!

Her heart rate spiked and Evie shivered. Niko moved in next to her shoulder and turned his penetrating gaze on her. The one that saw past all her protective barriers and straight into her soul. "Will you trust me to know what you need?"

She nodded, unable to speak around the lump in her throat, but it wasn't enough for him.

"You have to tell me, Evie. Do you trust me?"

She would have preferred her voice to be strong and sure instead of the choked gasp that came out. "Yes Sir."

He leaned over and kissed both of her eyelids before sliding the mask into place, blocking out everything but the sound of his voice and the soft glide of his fingers over her hair. "Good girl."

The constant cool wash of air over her bare skin and quiet humming noise indicated a ceiling fan swirled overhead. She heard a rough scratching followed by a hiss of flame and an acrid smell. He'd struck a match.

Next came the whoosh of something being opened, then a clinking and rattling. What the heck was he preparing? Would she be able to take what he dished out? Let go enough to appreciate this adventure?

She heard the soft sounds of his approach and knew she was about to find out.

Niko monitored Evie very close, taking note of each spike and dip in her breathing, every flex and clench of muscle, the changes in skin color from pale with nerves to the pretty flush of arousal. He noticed how his silence made her tremble and the sound of his voice calmed her.

"Do you remember our conversation in the car after our visit to Rendezvous, pet?" He kneaded her muscles, working massage oil into her skin.

"Yes Sir." She sighed.

"You were very excited and animated in talking about the things you'd seen." He continued to work the oil into her soft skin as he talked. "You learned the harsh aspects of S&M, torture and pain turned you off, and that the thrill of anticipation turned you on. This pleases me since I don't enjoy inflicting pain."

Evie flinched, probably remembering Master S's demonstration with the whip. He continued to make subtle sounds to keep her focused on the present and him.

"You are a very tactile woman, Evie. Your fingers are always busy touching and exploring. It came as no surprise that you enjoyed the tingling sensation of the violet wand. And while knives frighten you the play of steel over your skin brings pleasure."

Niko moved closer, watched her breathing and the pulse fluttering in her neck as he leaned in and whispered, letting his breath ruffle her hair. "Do you remember what piqued your interest the most? What you saw and described with a great deal of animation?"

Sure enough, Evie's breathing quickened, her pulse raced and she bit her bottom lip.

"Tell me what got you so worked up, *moy kotik*?"

She released her reddened lip and spoke rapidly, as if saying it fast would be easier.

"Hot wax."

For her honesty and courage, Niko rewarded her with a long kiss. They were both panting when he pulled back. "Your mouth is very distracting, Evie. I'll have to see how wonderful those lips are wrapped around my cock...later."

She shuddered, her hands fisted and her skin paled. Interesting. Something about sucking cock scared her. To get her focus back on him, Niko placed the items he had gathered onto a cart and rolled it closer. He continued to use his voice to calm her.

"The hot wax had a big impact on you. I recall you wondering how the wax would feel and if it would turn you on."

As she thought about the scene she'd watched the signs of Evie's arousal returned. Niko remained silent, allowing her anticipation to build. He observed as she struggled to detect any movement or sound, growing more aroused by the minute.

Without warning he let the first drop of wax fall on her clavicle. Evie jerked in her bonds and he rushed to be sure the tender skin of her wrists was not being injured.

"Give me the first impression that pops into your head. Don't analyze it. Tell me what you feel."

"Shocking heat. Not burning but intense—jarring." Her voice quavered with the excitement of discovery. "Like when you step into the shower and don't expect the water to be that hot."

"Does it hurt?"

"It's not really pain. My skin feels tight under the hardening wax but the warmth—When the wax hit a blast of warmth spread from the spot then faded away slowly."

"You are doing so well, *moy kotik*." Niko gave her a brief kiss.

He let several drops of wax fall into her cleavage. Evie hissed and tensed for a moment before relaxing again. Without pause he let two drops fall on a puckered nipple.

"Crap. Oh crap." She bucked in the straps.

"Tell me," he demanded.

"Hot. Hot jolts shot from my nipple straight to my clit."

Niko moved around between her legs to find her pussy drenched with cream. The slick fluids trailed along the shallow groove to cover her anus. Unable to resist, Niko blew a stream of air over the tight pucker, which fluttered in response as she cried out.

"It would appear that my pet enjoys wax play. How delightful."

Moving around her body, he dribbled wax on her other nipple, created a twisting pattern over her belly and anointed the crease of her thighs. He teased her without mercy as her anticipation and arousal surged higher with each hot splatter. She held her breath, waiting for the next.

Her clit had risen from under its hood, waiting for its turn. Ignoring the distended bud, Niko thrust two fingers into her wet channel. He found her G-spot and stroked it relentlessly, pushing her to the edge of orgasm. The second her body tensed in preparation, he dripped a stream of wax onto her clit.

Evie screamed, her body bucked and she soared, her pussy clamping down hard on his fingers.

Niko had never seen anything more beautiful in his life. He had to have her. Evie belonged by his side, wearing his collar. Few things in life were certain, yet this he had no doubts about. And for a confirmed bachelor it was a rather daunting prospect.

He still kicked himself over not taking proper care of Evie earlier. Now he had an opportunity to make up for it. He knew the idea of having a blade used to remove the wax from her pussy bothered her and would spare her the experience. The oil he'd

rubbed into her skin would ensure the wax came off easily, without ripping out her neatly trimmed pubic hair.

With great care, he stripped the wax from her body while she floated, before she touched back down.

* * * * *

Evie became aware of her surroundings gradually, languishing in the gentle care Niko took rubbing lotion into her legs. He had removed the blindfold and she took the opportunity to look around at his private playroom, noting the similarities and differences from the club.

Lighting at the club had been dim and gave the appearance of a medieval dungeon. This room was very different—modern and homey. Yes, she spotted a St. Andrew's Cross but the black lacquered version somehow wasn't as intimidating as the one at the club. The walls were a warm shade of beige. He'd created an inviting seating area with a caramel-colored leather couch and overstuffed chair. The padded table she rested on was comfortable and reminded her of the special tables used for massages at the salon she frequented.

Her attention turned to the ripple of muscles across Niko's broad back as he worked. The man was gorgeous. And from what she'd seen of his home—rich. As evidenced by the harem at the club, he could have any woman he wanted. Which left the question plaguing her mind—why her?

With her generous curves, Evie was far from anyone's idea of beauty. People were more apt to describe her as cute. While she owned and operated a successful business, she was far from wealthy.

It all added up to a glaring truth—Niko was way out of her league. Although he had already wormed his way into her heart, she knew this was a game to him. Nothing more than erotic playtime. The thrill of being the one to pop her BDSM cherry.

She tried to lift her hands and they didn't budge but the slight motion captured his attention.

"Ah, you're awake. How do you feel, Evie?"

"Good. But, um...why am I still tied down?"

"Because we're not done playing yet."

"Oh. We're not?"

"Nope. I haven't had the pleasure of those sweet lips wrapped around my cock."

Crap! Not that. Anything but that.

Eve wouldn't allow the bad memories to surface. She had to focus, find a way to change his mind, talk Niko into accepting something else.

She remembered back to their episode on the stairs. The way he'd kneaded her bottom, pulling the cheeks apart to expose her anus. He had done that caveman

possessive thing, demanding to know if she'd ever had anal sex then declaring ownership of her ass. He wanted to fuck her there and in all honesty the forbidden idea turned her on.

Taking a deep breath, she drew on the feminine power she'd discovered with his help. She had to be brazen and bold for this to work.

"You haven't had my ass wrapped around your cock yet either." Evie fluttered her eyelashes, trying not to laugh over his expression of stunned disbelief.

Unfortunately, her hastily conceived plan backfired.

"Later. I want your mouth first, *moy kotik*."

Well, crap. Now what?

Niko moved around the table and pulled a pin that dropped the head cushion back until she was eye to eye with his crotch. She fought not to let him see her panic, pulling discreetly at her hands to no avail as her mind raced. There had to be a way out of this.

Her next breath rushed into her lungs with the musky scent of male arousal. She blinked and his very large, intimidating cock bobbed before her face, a drop of fluid beaded at the slit.

Firm hands held her head, fingers clenching in her hair as he pressed the tip to her lips.

Evie's lips parted to protest but before she got a word out, he thrust into her mouth. In her head she screamed "red" but with her mouth full she couldn't speak. Her past came rushing back with a vengeance.

Brad's fingers wrapped in her long hair and pressed against her jaw, wrenching it open wide for his use. His cock plunged into her mouth over and over, making her gag each time. Tears streamed down her cheeks and he just pushed in farther, enjoying the vibrations and hard clenching of her throat.

"Suck it, bitch. Damn it, Evie. A child could suck cock better than you."

With Brad sitting on her chest, her arms pinned under his legs, her ability to breathe was limited at best. When his cock blocked her airway with each thrust, breathing became impossible. Acid churned in her stomach and burned at the base of her throat. If she vomited, she'd choke. With his head tossed back as it was he probably wouldn't even notice and she'd die. What a horrible way to go – suffocated by a cock and drowned in cum and vomit.

She tried putting her tongue in the way to keep him from plunging so far down her throat. He just slammed harder, pushing past the barrier with ease. He was so much stronger than she and with the way he held her pinned, she couldn't do anything but take it. Not even letting him feel the sharp edge of her teeth slowed Brad down.

Evie had survived this before and she would again. She'd hang on, struggle to swallow when the moment arrived. He hated it when her violent coughing showered both of them with his semen.

"Jesus, Evie. Breathe!" Niko's hard command penetrated the fog clouding her mind. He shouted her name and slapped her cheek. The slight sting, combined with his voice, pulled her all the way back into the present, breaking the past's painful grip. Realizing her mouth was empty, she drew in a hard breath.

The room spun as he manipulated the table, raising her head and back until she sat upright. He cursed and ripped at the restraints then gathered her into his arms, rocking her as if she were a child.

He held her sheltered against his big body as she calmed. Then he wiped away her tears. Gentle fingers lifted her chin but she refused to make eye contact, not wanting to see the disgust and contempt that had always been in Brad's eyes. Not wanting to hear the words of condemnation.

Why the hell had she thought she could handle bondage and kink?

"Evie." His soothing tone did little to ease her anguish.

"Look at me, Evie."

His lips brushed across her forehead. "Are you all right, *moy kotik*? God, what happened? Please, tell me. Give me a name and I'll let you watch while I gut him."

What was he saying?

She started to tremble and her freed hands flew up to cover her mouth as sobs threatened to break free. Then their eyes met. The love and concern shining in Niko's brown eyes broke the dam. She sobbed and cried, burying her face in the hollow of his shoulder. All the pent-up misery and shame washing away with her tears.

Niko continued to rock her, rubbing his hands over her back and speaking in that soothing velvet voice, muttering endearments that warmed her heart.

"Let it out, pet. I've got you. You're safe with me, Evie."

Chapter Ten

Dangerous rage filled Niko. He fought against it knowing he had to stay calm for Evie. Her hot tears soaked his shirt and the details of what had been done to her ripped his heart out. He would kill the son of a bitch if he ever crossed his path. And he'd make sure it happened, but right now he had to concentrate on Evie. Help her overcome the past.

He wanted to paddle her ass for not telling him about what had happened. Of course, he held as much blame for not questioning her more thoroughly about prior experiences.

An idea formed in his mind, a way to make it better for her, replace the bad memories with a good one. What he had in mind would require a lot from him. Niko knew trust was a two-way street. He'd be wrong to expect her to put her trust in him without being willing to do the same in return. First, he had to swallow his pride and admit his own shortcomings.

"Evie, I should paddle your ass for not telling me —"

"But —"

He placed two fingers over her lips to silence her interruption. "Let me finish. I'm just as much to blame. I should have talked to you more before we ever played together. It's my responsibility as a Dom to make sure I know your background, likes and dislikes. I'm sorry for failing you, *moy kotik*."

"We're both in unfamiliar territory here. I am battling with emotions I've never felt before. Because I feel very possessive of you, I did not want to hear about any other man having touched you so I neglected to ask. If you're willing to give me another chance, I promise to do better."

She threw her arms around his neck, hugging him tight, and Niko's heart soared. Leaning back, she cupped his cheeks and rained kisses all over his face. "Let's just forget it ever happened."

Niko set her back on the bench, held her hands and stared into red-rimmed, puffy eyes. "I've got a better idea."

She immediately tensed. He rubbed his hands up and down her arms, offering warmth and comfort. "Will you at least agree to hear me out?"

"Y-yes."

Her hesitant agreement eased a bit of his trepidation. He was about to propose something he'd never done before. Never imagined doing.

"I want to earn your trust, *moy kotik*. I want to erase the bad memories from your mind and replace them with good, pleasant ones."

A lock of hair had fallen across her face and he tucked it behind her ear. After taking a deep breath, Niko forged ahead. "I'm going to allow you to restrain me. You will have all the power and control, Evie. And then I want you to suck my cock."

She jumped up, pacing, hands fluttering as she spoke. "I can't. I'm no good at it. I can't breathe and I gag—"

"Evie!" His sharp tone stopped her. "Sit down." He waited until she complied before continuing. "You gag and can't breathe because no one has ever taken the time to teach you how to get past those reactions. You haven't learned that when you take a man in your mouth, you are the one with the power and control."

She scoffed and he silenced her with a hard glance. "When a woman wraps her lips around a man's cock, she has the ability to bring him to his knees with the most incredible pleasure. He has to trust in her not to hurt him, because, baby, teeth can rip a man's cock in half." The very idea made him shudder.

"When I am bound, you will control the depth and pace. Even if you only take the head into your mouth it will be complete ecstasy for me. I believe you'll find that you actually enjoy taking control and exploring."

Her expression reflected skepticism but he saw interest flash in her eyes.

"I can't fake it. You'll be able to see the effect you have on me. If you feel yourself starting to gag, swallowing will ease the sensation. Breathe through your nose, and if you can't get enough air or it becomes too much then simply stop."

"I won't lie to you, Evie. There is great satisfaction in this for a man, but it also can be a big turn-on for a lot of women. Hell, why would women suck cock if it was horrible?" He shrugged. "They wouldn't."

She listened close and took the time to carefully consider everything he said.

"And what if I don't like it?"

"Then you stop and I won't ever ask you to try again."

"Yeah, right," she scoffed.

"I'm serious. If you don't enjoy sucking my cock there are plenty of other ways for us to enjoy each other. Think about it though. Being on the receiving end is good but what does it feel like to give?"

"I've explained to you how it is for me to watch a woman overcome with bliss. Can you imagine it? Taking a man to the point where all he knows is the ecstasy you bring to him, the exquisite sensations you wring from his body."

Evie shivered and her eyes sparkled. He decided to put action to words. Niko stood and stripped. He went to the leather chair, pulled the restraints from beneath the cushions and sat down.

Knowing he had to remain calm for Evie, he struggled to slow down his breathing and ignore the ache in his cock. Leaning over, he fastened his ankles to the chair legs and buckled wide straps across the top of his knees and around his chest. All that remained free were his hands.

"Come here, *moy kotik*. You'll have to bind my hands."

Evie hardly believed her own eyes and ears. In some ways she had been very wrong about Niko. She'd mistaken his confidence of arrogance, thought his dominant nature meant he would be domineering. Huge difference. He didn't force control on others or take charge to feel like a bigger man. She'd learned from firsthand experience. Every time she'd permitted him to take command over her, he'd given her so much more in return. Not only the most amazing orgasms, but a sense of comfort, safety and love.

What he wanted now might be beyond her ability to give, but she had trusted him this far and he had opened up a whole new world for her. She would continue to believe in him, follow this path they'd started on and see where it went.

She moved toward him slowly. Niko didn't rush her, he calmly waited, appearing relaxed. She didn't miss the tension in his shoulders or in his clenched jaw though. Taking this step cost him, yet he did so without complaint or hesitation. For her.

Getting his wrists buckled into the leather bands took a while because of the trembling in her hands. She bent over him to perform the task, then stepped back, once again struck by his masculine beauty. His body was a work of art—sculpted perfection. Yet it was more than that. He had the most generous heart and gave of himself freely.

And right now, he's all mine!

A hot flash of anticipation raced through her veins and she licked her dry lips. His cock jerked and his gaze tracked the path of her tongue.

Wow, how cool was that!

She'd never tried to seduce a man before and didn't know what to do. "W-where should I start?"

"Evie." His voice had roughened with need. "Start wherever you want, but do it soon. I'm dying here."

Wherever she wanted?

It really sank in then. She had Niko Kovalenko—extreme Dominant—tied down and at her mercy. She felt it happen, the exchange of power. She could do anything she wanted to him and if he complained all she had to do was gag him.

Oh boy. This is going to be fun!

"Evie," he grumbled. "Do something!"

The words were an order but it was the vulnerability in his expression that got her moving. Something long hidden awakened within her.

"Relax, sugar." She circled around him, running a fingernail over his shoulders as she did. "I'm checking out the goods."

Damn, she felt good. Sexy. Alive.

"Now...what do I want first?" Evie leaned over him and nibbled his bottom lip. Niko opened his mouth but she pulled back, waggled her finger.

"Ah, ah, ah! Bad boy. I'm running this show." And turning herself into one massive hormone while at it. Damn, she'd never been more turned-on in her life. Her breasts were heavy, her nipples hard, needing attention.

She licked her fingertips, palmed her breasts and squeezed her nipples. "Mmmm!" The lips of her sex swelled, dampened with arousal.

"Evie," he groaned.

"Hush. Don't make me gag you."

Fire burned in his dark eyes but he didn't say another word.

She stepped between his wide-spread legs and did something she'd wanted to do since she first saw him. Evie licked the meaty portion of a pectoral muscle then sank her teeth into his flesh. Niko arched as much as the straps allowed while she teased and tasted him. When she kissed his nipple, he sucked in his breath with a hiss.

God help him, Niko had created a monster. And he reveled in every second of sensual torture, along with Evie's rise in confidence. The vixen he'd set free may very well kill him with her smoldering passion but he'd die a happy man.

She tasted him, using her lips, teeth and tongue to drive him wild, everywhere except the place he wanted her most. Those wicked fingers stayed busy too, her soft fingertips testing muscle. Whenever she found a sensitive spot, the minx scraped her fingernails over the area before kissing away the slight burn.

His balls ached, drew close to his body and Niko had to fight back the urge to come.

Evie wasn't unaffected. Her nipples were hard pebbles and juices glistened on her thighs. Catching where his gaze lingered, she ran two fingers through her folds, gathering her cream. Her curious nature kicked in. She lifted the damp fingers to her face and took a deep breath.

"Come here, Evie. Give me a taste."

"Why, you like the way a woman tastes?"

"Let me show you how much." The pleading tone in his voice took them both by surprise.

"Hmm. If it's so good maybe I should give it a try."

Oh God, she wouldn't.

He wanted to close his eyes, knew watching would be the ultimate tease, but was powerless to resist the temptation. He bit the inside of his cheek as she drew her fingers over her lips, coating them with her cream, then licked the slick curves clean, humming as she did.

"Fuck, that's hot!" His mouth salivated as he imagined tasting her, something he had yet to do. One of the many desires he looked forward to indulging. "Climb up here and give me a taste."

"Yeah, right. I'm not an acrobat. And anyway, it's my turn. You're not giving the orders now."

Her wicked grin and the hungry lust oozing from Evie sent a bolt of lightning straight to his cock, electrifying every nerve. She'd gotten a taste of power and timid Evie was long gone. In her place—a confident seductress learning the rush of being the aggressor.

The caress of her fiery gaze sliding down his torso nearly burned him alive. Sweat dripped down his forehead and stung the corner of his eye.

"Oh, I forgot. You need a safe word." She bit her lower lip then smiled. "Blue."

"Blue? Why blue?"

"Because your balls are turning a rather lovely shade of blue."

Yup, he'd created a monster. To prove her point, Evie raked her nails down the center of his chest, over the clenched muscles of his abdomen, avoided his cock and gave his sac a light squeeze.

"Maybe purple."

"Evie," he moaned. "You're going to pay for this torture once I'm free. You know that, right?"

The hand cupping him trembled for a second then she grinned up at him. "Nah, you'll be my devoted love slave by then. And hey, have you forgotten the proper way to address the woman in charge?"

It was his turn to laugh. She had no idea what this torture session would cost. When he got free, Niko would be compelled to reestablish his dominance over her. They were in for a long night. "Yes Ma'am."

By the time her fingers finally wrapped around his cock, Niko feared the fun would end before she got her mouth on him. Her inexperienced touch undid him. Niko's body tensed and his hips bucked, only the straps keeping him in place.

Those tactile fingers were everywhere, learning the different textures, tracing the convoluted path of engorged veins. She seemed fixated on his crown and the prominence dividing it from his shaft. The first hot swipe of her damp tongue circling the ridge had him gritting his teeth. By the time this was over he'd need some serious dental work.

She licked his cock as if it were an ice-cream cone. Not one millimeter got neglected. While her busy tongue drove him out of his mind, she slowly rolled his balls in her palm. He wanted to toss back his head and relish the exquisite sensations, but Niko couldn't look away from the surprised enjoyment reflected in her expression.

Her nose nuzzled the base of his shaft as she breathed him in. Her saliva glistened along his length. He held out as long as possible, resisting the urge to plead until there was no other choice. The anticipation and need were too much. His calm, cool and in-command personality snapped and Niko learned that he wasn't too proud to beg.

"Evie..." he paused. Referring to her as his pet now wasn't going to work. Not when the roles had been reversed. "Ma'am, please. Take me in your mouth. Let me see those gorgeous lips wrap around my cock. I need you."

She glanced up at him from under heavy-lidded eyes. He felt himself falling, hard. The passion and myriad emotions flickering in her eyes got his heart beating way too fast.

Then she smiled. "That's all I was waiting for."

She held him in her fist, parted her lips and took him in slow, first just the head. Her tongue twirled over and around, delving into the slit and driving him out of his mind. Her fist tightened, her firm grip excruciating, but no worse than the agony of her careful, measured pace.

And he realized she wasn't breathing. Hell, he almost couldn't catch his own breath.

"Evie!" Niko barked her name, putting sharp command in his voice. "Breathe through your nose, baby. Don't you dare stop breathing."

Her gaze snapped up to his and he could see the rising panic.

"Do it, Evie. Right now. Breathe nice and easy through your nose."

She did and a crushing weight lifted from his chest. "Nice and easy now."

Evie didn't move for several long moments as she practiced breathing with her mouth filled. Suddenly, her cheeks twitched and excitement sparkled in her eyes.

He was so damn proud of her! "That's it, baby. So good," he groaned. "Your mouth feels amazing. And your tongue...damn!"

On the heels of her accomplishment, a wicked surge of power and arousal lightened her expression. Evie put her all into sucking him, moving her fist in a coordinated effort with each bob of her head, taking more of him.

Until she gagged.

"Swallow, Evie. Right now. Swallow and you'll be okay."

Her throat muscles tugged at his cock briefly then she pulled back until only the crown remained in her mouth.

"You're doing great. You just took too much."

Niko wished his hands were free to caress her cheek. He longed to run his palm over her silky hair and rub her back. He settled for the only means available—verbal stroking.

"It's so good, Evie. Your mouth feels like heaven wrapped around my cock. And your tongue—" He hummed his appreciation. "Your tongue is driving me crazy. I was fighting so hard not to come, wanting to make it last."

She twirled her tongue around him and his hands fisted as his body tightened. "Oh yes. Damn, Evie." He knew she felt his legs shaking where they bracketed her body. "It's a good thing I'm sitting down because there's no way my legs would hold me up."

After several moments she started moving and sucking again, careful not to take him too deep. Her fingers tightened on his balls and Niko moaned. In response she hummed and electricity shot down his spine.

“Evie...stop,” he panted. “Fuck...stop. Gonna come.”

He prayed she understood because his balls tensed and there was no stopping the climax screaming through him.

Her hand flexed around his base and she pulled back but kept sucking on the crown. He groaned as the pleasure took him. At first, she held his cum in her mouth, tasting him. Then she swallowed everything he gave her.

Niko closed his eyes and panted through the most torturous, mind-blowing climax he’d ever had.

Chapter Eleven

"Holy crap! I did it!"

Evie jumped up, both energized and tired at the same time, but mostly stunned. Yes, she forgot to breathe and gagged. So what. The end result had been good. Not only did Niko come, she'd swallowed every drop.

Touching and tasting him got her hot. Teasing him, drawing out those tortured sounds had been fun. Her cheeks were sore and still she couldn't stop grinning.

If Niko had held her head she would have panicked. Instead, she'd been free to do what she wanted, set her own pace, back off when she needed to. As she explored, he remained very patient, kind, encouraging.

And dominant.

She frowned. Even restrained he'd taken over, issuing orders in the imperious tone that grated on her nerves.

Yeah, but if he didn't, I wouldn't have succeeded.

From her reading, she knew how big of a leap it was for him to have let her restrain him and he'd done it anyway. She cherished him for knowing what she needed and trusting her take control.

Evie devoured the sight of him, laid out in the chair, skin damp with perspiration and wearing a sated smile. She'd done that, and now she had to ignore the insatiable need clawing at her body. It was her turn to take care of him, same as he'd done for her. In the small bathroom she filled a basin with warm water and grabbed a washcloth. Then she knelt between his legs, unfastened the restraints and took her time wiping down his body.

It hit her then that Niko had not only taken control of her body during sex. Faster than should be possible, the dark and dangerous man had taken over her heart.

The penetrating heat of his intent focus washed over her right before his gruff words brought an end to her sappy thoughts.

"You look good naked and on your knees, servicing me. All that's missing is my collar around your pretty neck."

Jerk!

"Are you wet, moy kotik?"

And that fast they were back to the mortifying questions. From the heat in his eyes, Niko already knew the answer but expected her to say the words anyway. Well, too bad.

"Answer me."

She managed to hide her scowl behind her hair but her smartass attitude jumped to life, refusing to behave. "Since my hands are in a bucket of water, yeah, I'm wet."

He did the primitive growl thing and she got even wetter between her legs, damn him.

"Ah, and we're back to square one – defiance and disrespect."

Good going, dork!

He'd been all soft and laid-back until she opened her mouth. Quick enough to give a girl whiplash he was Mr. Large-and-in-charge again. Great.

He stood, towering over her. His size and strength didn't intimidate Evie. She knew Niko would never hurt her. Maybe he'd spank her again though. That would be nice.

Her abdomen quivered in anticipation as he moved across the room to the table she'd been restrained to earlier and made adjustments. He removed the headrest and folded the front legs under, angling the head of the table toward the floor. Under the back legs, he pulled out a square block of wood. When finished, the table looked completely different and had taken the shape of a playground slide.

"Come here, Evie."

She hesitated, unsure if she really wanted to know what he had in mind until she studied his expression. Niko had his Dom face on – hard and determined. Resolute. The glimmer of hunger in his dark eyes got to her. She moved to stand on his other side, away from the table.

Niko didn't bark out an order or lose his patience. He stepped behind her, placed his hands on her hips and guided her toward the table, not stopping until she stood with her feet positioned on either side of the block. He knelt behind her and Evie's nerves got the better of her.

"W-what are you doing?"

He didn't answer. Before she realized what he was doing, Niko had both ankles enclosed in Velcro straps.

"Niko?"

Again, no response.

She jerked against the straps but they held tight.

He stood, took a step back, and landed a stinging slap on her bottom. "Have you forgotten the proper way to address your Master, *moy kotik*?"

Wonderful. She'd forgotten to acknowledge the big bad Dominant again. She cursed her body for heating up.

He slapped the other cheek. Her pussy swelled, spilled her cream.

"Oww...Sir," she grumbled.

"Lie down on the table, Evie."

Lie down?

She stared at the angled table trying to figure out how to accomplish the feat. If she complied, she'd be bent over with her ass sticking up and her head hanging upside down.

A whistling sound cut through the air a split second before something snapped across her bottom.

"Hey!" She whipped her head around to find a black riding crop in his hand being pulled back for another swat. As with the paddle he'd used, there was a slight delay between impact and the heated sting racing through her flesh.

Evie squeaked and moved faster than she would have thought herself capable. She dove for the table, coming to a stop with her hands planted on the floor, staring back through a gap at her feet. Her ass was hiked up in the air, positioned to receive her beating. Vulnerable and exposed.

The leather tip of the crop slid from the base of her spine to her nape as Niko moved around the table and secured her arms where they were. Not that she'd move them and risk falling on her head.

"Am I being punished?" She remembered and belatedly tacked on a "Sir" at the end.

"No, *moy kotik*. You're being reminded of your place." He sighed. "I may have made an error in judgment by allowing you to restrain me to allay your fears. I believe that in doing so, I've confused you."

"No Sir. I understand."

"Not yet. You will, *moy kotik*. You will."

She watched his feet move away until he was out of her line of sight. Evie heard a rustle of fabric. When he passed by again, pants covered his legs. She heard the crinkle of a wrapper, the thud of a door closing then silence.

"W-what are you going to do, Sir?"

Nothing.

"Sir?"

Silence.

Oh holy crap!

He'd left her there alone?

Naked.

Hanging upside down.

With her butt on display.

Not good!

The blood rushed to her head, adding dizziness to her list of insults. She panicked, fought the restraints, screamed and flailed until she lacked the strength to continue. Out of breath, she panted and her heart pounded.

Okay, she was all right. She had to trust Niko. So far he had not done anything to hurt her.

Embarrass her – sure.

Teach her things about herself – definitely.

Turn her on and get her off – hell yeah!

Holding the position resulted in her hands cramping. She flexed the fingers of one hand, easing the pain and realized the effort to hold herself up wasn't necessary. The table and straps bore the burden.

The breeze from the fan cooled the wetness between her legs and she shivered. Wiggling only increased the chill spreading deep inside.

The jerk had left more than her big butt exposed.

She thought back on everything that had happened since they'd met, astounded by how much she'd been through in such a brief time. It had to be after midnight now, not yet dawn.

Had it really been less than thirty-six hours? Was that all the time it took to reveal all your fears and weaknesses? Shed light on desires hidden so deep down you weren't even aware they existed. Lay your heart and soul bare. Reshape your entire world.

Damn, Niko was indeed a Master for he sure had mastered her.

Standing outside her line of sight, Niko observed as Evie processed her feelings. When she shivered his first instinct had been to take care of her, provide warmth. Holding back was one of the hardest things he'd ever done.

She needed this chance to sort things out for herself. Hell, so did he. He'd never encountered a sub who affected his control and stirred his emotions to the degree Evie did. She kept him off balance, overwhelmed.

And completely addicted.

All the sexy sounds she made. Each panted breath and sigh. All the intoxicating ways her body responded. She eclipsed everything and everyone else. Together they were magical. The past melted away and he didn't want to contemplate a future without her in his life.

His pet.

Nothing would ever be the same if she walked away, which scared the hell out of him. He couldn't let that happen. Niko had to find a way to show her what they were together. Convince her to give them a chance.

She may be new to D/s, but Evie was a natural submissive.

After a while she settled yet he continued to wait, anticipating the next steps. After working through the emotions, she would be remembering their sexual play and her body's responses, which would rekindle her desire.

He, on the other hand, didn't need the time. Niko remained in a perpetual state of lust, his cock rock-hard from merely being in her presence.

Eventually, he moved over to the oscillating fan, standing within its path, keeping close watch on his pet. The instant his scent reached her, Evie tensed, her lush ass flexed and she called out.

"Master Niko...Sir? Are you there?"

And wrapped her fist around his heart. Did she have any idea how much hearing her call him Master affected him?

"Yes, *moy kotik*. I'm right here."

"W-why did you leave me, Sir?"

"I didn't. I've been here watching over you all along."

"Oh."

She shivered again, only this time not from any chill in the air. Her skin flushed pink, the indication he'd been waiting for.

"I'm getting dizzy."

He lifted the table and repositioned the legs until her upper body was perpendicular to her legs. "Better?"

She nodded then remembered to verbalize without being corrected. "Yes Sir, but..."

He stroked her cheek. "What is it, *moy kotik*?"

"I-I need...um..."

He watched emotions flicker across her expression, frustration winning out. Evie groaned. Either she didn't know exactly what she wanted or she didn't know how to ask.

He rubbed a lock of her soft hair between his fingers. "Tell me what you want and if at all possible, I will provide for you." She had no idea the lengths he'd go to give her anything she wanted.

"I need more."

"You'll have to be specific, Evie. What do you need?"

"Sex," she blurted. "I need to come again."

"Ah." He rewarded her with a teasing kiss. "I believe it's time for a lesson."

He'd given her mind-blowing pleasure and spun her universe on its axis. Now, having adjusted, Evie was ready for more of the same. So was he.

"Anticipation is a powerful aphrodisiac. I am going to train you to control your orgasm. Delaying will make your release more intense. My hope is that with practice, you will be able to orgasm on command."

Her face scrunched up into the most adorable pout. When she didn't voice an objection a wave of pride washed over him. Although, his next words would be a true test of her restraint.

"As my submissive, your primary concern should always be pleasing me. Your own needs are secondary and will be satisfied by first meeting mine."

Yes, he was pushing. Since he had his reasons, he ignored the indignant words muttered under her breath and retrieved the supplies he'd set out earlier. "Because I intend to claim all of you, I am going to prepare this gorgeous ass to take my cock."

Niko stroked her generous curves, pulling the cheeks apart to expose her tight pucker, circling it with one blunt fingertip. "This is mine, Evie. No other has been here and no one else ever will." He landed a sharp smack on a fleshy globe. "Understand?"

"Y-yes Sir," she gasped.

He flipped the lid on a bottle of lube and drizzled the fluid along the top of her cleft. Evie moaned as the cool oil sluiced over her heated flesh and coated her anus. He continued to tease her opening and waited until she pushed back on his finger before moving inside.

"So hot and tight," he praised. "You're going to burn my cock alive when it fills you up. When I claim you."

Was he really claiming her? In truth, no. Preparing Evie disabused him of that misconception. When he got his cock buried balls-deep in her untried ass, she'd own him, not the other way around. And he'd love being hers!

Not rushing nearly broke his restraint but he'd castrate himself with a dull blade before hurting Evie. Erotic pain was very different from harmful pain. He was not a sadist and derived no thrill from watching a sub suffer.

He continued fucking her ass with his finger, stretching her, adding a second then third. All the while his other hand stayed busy, fingers slipping along the drenched folds of her pussy to circle her swollen clit. Perspiration dotted her creamy skin. She whimpered, moving restlessly when he removed his fingers from her ass. Niko generously lubed the plug he'd chosen for her.

"Take a breath, *moy kotik*." He settled the tip at her entrance. "Now bear down. Let me in."

Since he had primed her well the black latex slid in slow and easy until the T-shaped base held it snug. God, she looked sexy. Carnal. And her response proved she enjoyed anal play.

Easing the elastic waist of his sweatpants over his hips, Niko took his throbbing cock in hand. He held the shaft in a firm grip, stroking from root to tip and swiping his thumb over the crown.

He battled against the dark urges rushing to the surface and demanding he charge ahead, claim every inch of his pet. It was a close thing. In the end, his craving for the honeyed cream saturating her pink lips won out.

Chapter Twelve

“You do not have permission to come. Orgasm and you will be punished.”

Evie heard the command and at first she didn't see it as a problem. She was aroused but not close to orgasm. Then the devious bastard's mouth settled over her sex. At the first swipe of his tongue along her slit, she screamed. The next had her testing the limits of the restraints.

His thumbs spread her swollen lips, laid bare her intimate flesh. Every recess was subjected to a thorough tasting before his teeth covered the same territory with stinging little nips. Blazing heat erupted in her core, gathered then flowed outward to encompass her entire body. And the toy in her ass enlivened nerve endings she hadn't known existed.

The sensations bombarding her joined together and reached critical mass. There was no stopping the accumulated force. Evie prepared to crest the wave and face whatever punishment he'd require.

“Ah, ah. Not yet,” he reprimanded and pinched her clit. The pain blended with the pleasure and pulled her back from the edge.

Suddenly, shocking Evie to the very fabric of her being, the toy filling her ass vibrated. She went wild, screaming, thrashing. If not for the restraints she would have had Niko pinned to the ground and impaled herself on his cock so fast he wouldn't be able to stop her.

As if she didn't have enough to stimulate her, the insidious plug started to expand. Evie thought she had to be mistaken but it continued to grow, stretching the sensitive tissues. Soon, coherent thought fled and was replaced by raw need.

Niko's wet slurping and animalistic rumbling sounds registered on some remote level, along with her sobs and keening cries yet no embarrassment penetrated the sexual haze consuming her. She mumbled utter nonsense, creating a new vocabulary because none of the curse words she knew were sufficient.

Niko continued to play her body with expert precision, building her up, holding her on the precipice then snatching ecstasy away at the last possible second. He did it again and again until something fractured inside her. Deprived of release, Evie begged and pleaded without shame or remorse.

The depraved jerk continued to deny her.

And then everything stopped.

The toy deflated, stopped humming and was removed from her body. She whimpered as the thick bulb parted her sphincter. His teeth, tongue, lips and fingers were also withdrawn.

She felt utterly desolate, hollow, abandoned. Beyond desperate.

Lacking words harsh enough for the situation, Evie was stunned mute by his cruelty. Over-sensitized nerve endings howled in protest. Even the light wash of air from the fan stimulated her skin without mercy.

Why the hell had his torturous treatment gotten her this hot and needy?

Tears streamed down her face. Panic set in and she had no control over her mouth. "No! Please, Niko. Don't leave me like this. I can't take it. Please!"

The weight of his palm landed on her bottom. "Settle down, Evie. I'm right here. I've got you."

He grasped her hips and something smooth brushed over her empty ass. Of its own volition, her pelvis pushed back. She needed something, anything, inside her. Fucking her. Now!

An intense burning started where the thick invader stretched her butt wide. Molten lava rolled from her ass and flowed outward to all points of her body. The mixture of pleasure-pain his cock inflicted sparked a stimulating buzz, easily conquering any distress she felt.

His fingers dug into her hips hard enough to leave imprints. As he spoke the words came out between panted breaths, washing over her back in a heated rush. "Easy, Evie. Gotta go slow. Don't fight it."

She'd thought the toy had been huge, filling her body to capacity. Ha! There was no comparison between the trivial device and the monstrous shaft forging into her and splitting her in half. And yet it wasn't enough. She craved more, faster. Deeper. Harder.

The too-slow penetration agonized. More than a need, want or desire. Having his cock skewer her ass had become a necessity—an essential requirement more fundamental than oxygen. More imperative than the rapid beating of her heart.

"Fuck my ass," she screamed. "Do it, damn it!"

"No—"

Calling on the last of his patience and all of his training as a Dom, Niko gritted his teeth against the incandescent heat of her snug channel clamping down on him tighter than a vise.

"Moremoremore..." Evie cried. Not in pain or even a plea but outright demand.

She was possessed—relentless. Fixated on one steadfast imperative—getting her pretty ass reamed. He'd give her what she wanted, but on his terms.

"Stop it." He smacked her rounded bottom to get her attention. She ignored the swat, her body arched and strained against the restraints as she fought to push back against him—take what she wanted.

"I don't want to hurt you, pet." Or himself. But damn, what she did to him. All the warning signs of impending climax ripped through him and he didn't want this to end before it even truly got started.

Her body thrashed, driving him deeper yet leaving him hanging, suspended halfway between heaven and hell. He bit the inside of his cheek so hard the coppery taste of blood flooded his mouth.

Niko had no option other than take a step back before he lost his cool. Her body fought his withdrawal, sucking at his retreating cock. Once free, he braced his hands against his knees and gasped for air.

While Evie was a natural submissive the virulent stream of curses erupting from her sweet mouth almost convinced him otherwise. He chuckled over the threats to his manhood and life but the sight greeting him as he rounded the table froze him cold, ripping the still-beating heart from his chest.

It hurt to see her face. Rivers of tears coursed over her cheeks and blood dribbled from where she'd chewed her bottom lip raw. A thin band of amber circled huge black pupils which dominated her red, puffy eyes.

Fuck, he'd been too rough and had hurt her.

"Jesus, *moy kotik*. Why didn't you use your safe word?"

Her feral gaze narrowed on him. "Get back there and fuck my ass," she ordered.

"No, Evie. Calm down."

Obviously he'd fucked up, pushed her too far. He made quick work of detaching the Velcro straps then moved to wrap her up in his arms and carry Evie upstairs for a long soak in the tub.

Good intentions left his mind faster than the breath was knocked from his lungs as he landed flat on his back.

"Umph." A wild bundle of crazed woman landed on top of him, stunning him beyond the ability to react.

"My turn!"

Her thighs bracketed his hips and a small fist closed around the base of his condom-covered cock, holding him steady. She lined his cockhead up with her anus and slammed down until he was sheathed balls-deep in her ass. All he could do was lie there and let her take what she wanted.

"Fuck yeah!"

Amazing. Breathtaking. *Mine!*

She didn't give her body time to adjust. Her palms landed on his abdomen to brace herself and she rode him hard and fast, looking every inch the champion barrel racer having the ride of her life.

He knew he had to punish her behavior at some point but for the time being he'd accept his weakness and the sudden shift in power. She had him right where she wanted and he had no problem with that.

Niko's biggest desire had been to take away the pain, replace it with pleasure, watch her face light up as she soared. If he were honest with himself, in this instance with his pet, he didn't mind her seizing control. It gave him the liberty to just let go and

feel. Although it wouldn't do to allow her the misconception her behavior was acceptable.

"Someone's anxious to be punished. And it's not going to be anything simple as a paddling this time, *moy kotik*."

She didn't bother to open her eyes. Hell, considering her blissed-out expression, she probably didn't even hear him. His initial impression of her had been right on. Evie would challenge him at every turn. Niko had realized long ago that a docile, obedient sub would never satisfy him. He needed someone willing to test him, keep him on his toes.

He needed Evie!

He fought back a smile. She'd had her moment, now he had to show his insolent sub who was her Master. Holding her firmly in place on his cock, Niko rolled, pinning her beneath him in a move too smooth and fast for her to counteract.

"Niko, don't stop. Fuck me!"

Ah, that got her attention. Good! He pinned her to the floor, bringing an end to her frantic thrusts and shook his head. "Who?"

Evie glared. He knew it grated on her nerves, but to get what she needed Evie have to give him what he wanted. "Sir, please fuck my ass."

"Whose ass?"

She seethed with anger and frustration. "Yours. My ass belongs to you. Please, fuck it, Sir."

He sighed. "We have a lot of work ahead of us, *moy kotik*. You have a great deal to learn. That sassy attitude is trouble. The good news is that I am more than capable of providing the discipline you require."

To prove his point, he allowed more of his weight to rest on her, restricting the flow of oxygen into her lungs. He held her face in his hands and kissed away any thoughts of rebellion. His kiss was not delicate or tentative. With the firm press of lips he forced her acquiescence. She didn't resist, giving him everything he demanded. Her body quivered with arousal, delirious for the release he had yet to permit.

Evie fell into the drugging kiss, relished the authoritative way Niko gained her compliance. With his cock in her ass and her legs pinned by his torso she wasn't able to move. She didn't have to. Niko started rocking his hips, creating glorious friction.

He pulled out entirely, leaving her whimpering for more, then pounded back in, making her sob over the blending of sensations—pleasure and pain. Again and again he pulled out and drilled back into her throbbing ass.

God, it was good. She felt every contour of his cock. Each ridge, varied texture and plump vein covering his length dragged over her sensitive tissues. All the intense sensations fed off the others, building into a wave of outlandish delight far beyond anything she could comprehend or withstand.

She accepted the apparent truth—he owned her. All of her.

Any ideas of self-preservation fled and without hesitation, Evie placed herself—body, mind, soul and heart—in Niko’s capable hands.

Her true Master.

His hand smoothed over her hip, fingers toying with her damp curls before searching out the bundle of nerves. He framed her clit with two fingers, applying pressure and stroking back and forth in a gentle massage. Her entire body tensed as she fought against the wave crushing her, knowing he expected her to hold it back.

“Please!”

“Fly for me now, *moy kotik*. I won’t let you fall.”

And once again, he proved his supremacy. She let go and screamed as the wave crashed over her body. Her ass spasmed and she spiraled out of control. Even though she trusted him to keep her safe, the anal orgasm took her body to unfamiliar and terrifying heights.

“That’s it. Take me with you, Evie.”

She felt the warmth of his cum filling the condom right through the thin barrier. Evie had a moment of regret over the latex separating them but the thought disappeared, replaced by overwhelming rapture.

And then it was all too much. She shoved at him, fighting his hold, gasping and screaming. Her enervated tissues no longer able to handle any touch, she couldn’t take it another second. “Out. Outoutout. Now...hurry.”

As his broad head pulled free of her tight pucker she whimpered then sighed with relief. Wonderfully sated, body limp, she drifted off with dreamy thoughts of making love.

Chapter Thirteen

“Don’t you ever just want to make love, no games, no worrying about who’s on top?”

Evie had asked the drowsy post-coital question as she crawled into his bed, then fell fast asleep without waiting for an answer. While Niko had been exhausted, the idea rattled around in his head and kept him awake. He couldn’t stop thinking about it.

He’d had vanilla sex before. Of course he had. The fact he couldn’t remember when or with whom didn’t mean anything.

Or did it?

Bored with the scene, he’d become rather jaded. There wasn’t much he hadn’t seen or participated in over the years. Maybe a bit of vanilla’s what he’d been missing. Snuggling up with someone for a bit of tender loving....

Nah! He almost burst out laughing. Not him. He was the least vanilla person he knew. Hell, he would be forty on his next birthday. A midlife crisis seemed more probable than an uncharacteristic hankering for vanilla lovemaking.

And yet every time he glanced over at Evie sleeping curled up in his bed with her hands tucked under her chin, looking sweet and innocent, unfamiliar tender emotions tugged at his heart. He imagined waking her with long kisses and warm, delicate touches. Rocking into her body with languid strokes, gentle passionate loving. No restraints, commands or sharp bite of pain to moderate the pleasure. The more he thought about it the more tempting the idea became.

Jesus! What the fuck is wrong with me?

He jumped out of the bed to pace about the room, raking his fingers through his hair. One weekend with Evie and the woman had gotten under his skin, tied him up in knots. Conflicted, questioning his very nature as if he were a submissive after an intense scene.

Part of him wanted to get as far away from her as possible. To run, for crying out loud. He didn’t run or hide from anything. He loved challenges, faced them head on. He mastered life, not the other way around.

Yeah, then why am I pacing like a caged animal wary of something different and unexpected, turning tail the same way I’ve seen frightened subs do?

The way he expected Evie would behave on the morning after, not that he’d let her run scared. He’d make her face her fears. The same as he would confront the perplexing impulses by ascertaining what sparked the foreign compulsion.

Hey, you never know. He might acquire a taste for straightforward and simple fooling around. Stranger things had happened. Hell, just thinking about making love with Evie had him hard and ready. Perhaps a little experiment.

With his mind made up, Niko grabbed a condom out of the nightstand, rolled it on and slid back into bed. As he moved in behind her, Evie snuggled closer, wiggling her round bottom against his pelvis, testing his resolve. He remained determined to not let her distract him.

He placed affectionate kisses along her nape and over the smooth skin of her shoulders, where fine hairs lifted to the touch of his lips. She shifted even closer as his fingertips coasted over each rise and dip from shoulder to thigh and back again. He lingered on her breasts, enjoying how the globes fit within his hands as if made for him, her nipples reacting to the warm caress by ripening against his palms.

Niko had to continually remind himself not to twist, pinch or overwhelm. No demands or orders now, just relaxed worshipping.

She started making those sensual sounds that got him so damn hot. He longed to drive his cock deep into her pussy and fuck her hard, fast, relentless.

Was it possible making love would require even more control than dominating a lover?

Awake now, Evie grabbed his hand from where his fingers played at the flare of her hip, guiding him to the downy curls covering her mound instead.

"Good morning, sweetness."

"Mmm...lower," she mumbled.

"Show me."

She surprised him, not the least bit shy in this. She dragged their fingers down to gather some of the wetness at her slit before pressing them to her clit and arching her hips into their hands.

"Oh yes. Right there."

Her fingers were tangled with his, teaching him the firmness and strokes she preferred. Through her direction he learned lavishing attention over the right side of her clit elicited keening cries and a fresh gush of fluid. His own explorations taught him the lobe of her ear was a trigger point that drove her wild.

Longing to have her slender fingers on him, he repositioned her so they lay facing each other. "Touch me, Evie. I need your hands on me."

The plea in his voice took him back a bit but then her hands were on him, and damn was it good. Her busy fingers played over his torso, testing muscle, delving into grooves. Then her mouth came into play, tasting everywhere she'd touched, only this time without restraints.

"Niko." Her hand closed around his erection and guided him to her slick entrance. "I need you."

Jesus, she was killing him, introducing him to a side of sex he'd been missing out on. It was sweet, wonderful and terrifying all at the same time. And in the process something inside him started to change. For the first time in his life, Niko truly let go and followed Evie straight into paradise.

* * * * *

Monday morning — back to reality.

She had a business to run, which meant Evie's playtime had ended. A glance at the bedside clock had her cringing. After nine already. Damn, she had a lot to do. If she hurried, she could get to the hotel before checkout time and not be charged for another night. If luck were on her side, she wouldn't be late to her lunchtime meeting.

After a quick shower, wrapped in nothing but a towel, she stepped into Niko's bedroom to find a beautiful young blonde woman waiting. She was tall and model slender, Evie hated her on sight. Then she noticed this stranger held her purse and laptop bag.

What the hell is going on here?

"Hello, Evie. I'm Candace, Mr. Kovalenko's *personal* assistant."

She didn't miss the emphasis on the word *personal*. Okay, talk about an uncomfortable situation. Candace was fully dressed in business attire and seemed completely at ease to be in Niko's bedroom chatting with the naked woman her boss had spent the night fucking. Evie, on the other hand, had never felt more awkward or out of her element.

Casual as you please, Candace walked over to the very rumpled bed, gave the linens a knowing glance, and set Evie's things down.

"I've taken the liberty of making a few arrangements. You have been checked out of the hotel." She pointed toward a set of doors. "You'll find your clothes in the closet and I had your car stored in the garage."

She'd done what?

Talk about a nightmare. The bold and brash woman had checked her out of the hotel and been through all her personal things?

This cannot be happening!

But it was. Evie's chest constricted to the point of hurting, making breathing difficult, and her heart beat so fast she had a rather valid fear the overtaxed organ might burst. Her head spun as she considered the frightening implications of her life having been taken over.

Niko's assistant continued on, acting as if this were all an everyday occurrence and perfectly normal.

"Niko is in a meeting right now and cannot be disturbed. He asked me to let you know he'll join you for lunch in the dining room at one." The skinny bitch sauntered over to the door. On her way out she tossed over her shoulder. "Don't be late."

Evie's vision took on a red glow as her anger soared right along with her blood pressure. The presumptuous, domineering bastard thought he could dictate her life because they'd played some D/s games? Thrust her off on his assistant as if she were another simple detail to be dealt with? Well, he had another think coming.

She ripped open the closet doors and sure enough, her clothes hung on the rack. A search of the drawers turned up her undergarments. She refused to consider how many strangers may have touched the intimate clothing. In a flash she was dressed in her best business suit, prepared to do battle.

Now if she only knew where to find the dickhead to tell him off.

She stepped out into the hall and blinked. An army of workers had descended upon the mansion—cooks, housekeepers, gardeners. The place was a beehive of activity, which made her feel even more out of place.

One of the maids pointed her toward a study on the first floor. Before she reached the door, which had been left partly open, she heard an unfamiliar masculine voice. With every intention of knocking and interrupting the meeting, she froze, hand raised before the door. She hadn't meant to eavesdrop but couldn't help overhearing the shocking words.

"You want to collar an untrained sub? Niko, what the hell are you doing? Have you lost your mind? Jesus, man. I didn't even know you were playing with anyone."

"I met Evie Saturday night." In contrast to the other man, Niko's voice held a note of excitement. "She's a natural. I plan to train her myself. Wait until you meet her, Gage. She's amazing."

"She must be something all right. Hell, she cast a spell on you pretty damn quick. I've never seen you this worked up over a woman. It's a little scary."

Niko laughed. "I'm scared shitless but I have no doubt she's the one."

"Uh-huh." The other man sounded doubtful. "So then give it some time. Why rush into a public collaring?"

"Because Evie's mine." That rough growl entered Niko's voice only this time the shivers running down her spine weren't from arousal. "I want everyone to know it. There will be no mistake this time."

This time?

As if she'd spoken the question aloud the man provided an answer.

"Which is exactly my point. Susan didn't understand the rules or what was expected of her. That's why she ran and hooked up with another Dom. Does this woman understand what will be required of her during a public collaring ceremony at the club? Does she know what you'll expect afterward?"

When Niko spoke the anger in his tone had Evie unconsciously taking a step back. "That slut didn't know what she wanted. Evie's not at all like Susan."

"Jesus, Niko! Listen to yourself. You're falling into the same damn trap. How can she know what she wants? From what you've told me, she doesn't understand the D/s

lifestyle. You're rushing her into this. She's going to get scared and run right into someone else's arms—just like Susan did."

"Gage!"

The other man didn't heed the warning in Niko's harsh tone.

"No, you need to wake up, my friend. Before you get your heart ripped out again. How is this brand-new sub going to react when you order her to suck another man's cock?"

Evie jumped as something shattered, took a few more steps back.

"You can't even talk about it but what'll happen when we share her? You know that will happen. We've always shared our subs. How will she handle being gagged and restrained with the entire club watching while I fuck her pussy and you fill her ass?"

Oh holy crap!

Evie kept her eyes on the door and backed up until reaching the intersecting hallway. She didn't hear Niko's response. Didn't want to. Struggling to appear normal, and control her trembling, she walked up the stairs. Her hands shook so bad it took two tries to open the bedroom door. Once it closed behind her, she moved fast.

Ripping open the closet door, she grabbed her clothes and stuffed them in the suitcase, hangers and all. After scribbling a quick note, she placed it on the nightstand. When she left the room, Evie took slow breaths, forcing herself to act calm and in control.

A helpful young man carried her bags and showed her to the garage. She almost cried at the sight of her car but managed to hold it together. She had plenty of time to freak out after she processed it all.

When she stopped at a convenience store with no idea how long she'd been driving, she'd finally broke down. With a million thoughts racing around in her head, she pulled out her cell phone, calling her best friend and manager of her bookstore. Amanda listened to the whole sorry tale before saying anything.

"First of all, you go girl. Catching the eye of a hot, sexy and rich Dom. Woohoo! I knew you had it in you."

Then Amanda switched gears. "Now, let's break this down. Niko knew you'd need your clothes and car so having the assistant get your things and bring them to the house was actually rather thoughtful."

Okay, she'd give him that one.

"Second, you only overheard part of the conversation. Hey, by the way, if this other guy, Gage, turns out to be cute, how about introducing me?"

"Amanda!" Evie chastised.

"Shit, sorry. Got off track. Where was I? Oh yeah, you heard part of their conversation and possibly got the wrong impression. And Niko never said he would do the things Gage suggested, even though a ménage is every woman's biggest fantasy."

No, Niko had not said he'd ask or demand she do anything she didn't want. While a ménage was an interesting fantasy, she didn't want anyone else. Would Niko, as a Dom, try to force her into something she had no interest in?

"Here's my take on things, honey. Your hormones are all wild and excited from breaking your dry spell. The intense sex got your emotions all jumbled up. With the overpowering combo, maybe you overreacted...just a bit."

"Maybe," she conceded.

"So if you don't feel up to the meeting, reschedule. Otherwise, go and have a strong drink. Only one," Amanda cautioned. "Chew on some mints before the meeting. Once it's done—come home. You can take your time, think about everything. You may decide to see Niko again or chalk it up as a fun and wild weekend to be tucked away in your memories for a rainy day."

Amanda was right. Overwhelmed and running on emotion, Evie had freaked out. Feeling much calmer and more clear-headed, she followed her friend's advice. Whether she saw Niko again or not, she had a business to run and had to get down to work.

"Thanks, Amanda. I'll see you when I get home."

She had that drink, a strong dose of tequila, and some of her equilibrium came back. Too bad the man who met her in the restaurant squashed it again. She recognized Mr. Kemper right away, although had no idea where from. He wasted no time cluing her in.

"Ms. Sloan, that was quite the spanking scene you put on at Rendezvous with Master Niko the other night."

Evie groaned, and as she had at the club, wished a sinkhole would open and swallow her. This man had seen her submit and her bare ass getting paddled. Jesus, he'd seen her orgasm on Niko's fingers.

Oh well, she had no choice other than brazen it out and see where he went with the subject. "Thank you, Mr. Kemper. It was a rather interesting evening."

She appreciated the fact he didn't beat around the bush and instead got right to the point.

"Personally, I have no problem conducting business with you. I believe a person's sexual proclivities should not factor into business dealings. But," he cautioned "the majority tend to think differently. Publishing is a small, close-knit world and people like to talk. Be careful."

The rest of the meeting went well and he never mentioned the club again. The more Evie thought about everything Mr. Kemper had said, the less she worried about having been seen or how she now appeared to him. The club and business were two different worlds. Anyone who saw her at the club had been there too, which meant they had their own privacy to think of. And in the end, she really didn't care what anyone thought of her personal life or how she conducted herself outside the business world.

From their lengthy conversation over lunch, it was clear her participation in BDSM would not stop Mr. Kemper from doing business with her. She figured what mattered most was how she felt about herself. With Niko, she had a great sense of confidence, fulfillment and happiness.

In her book, that made him worth taking a personal risk.

* * * * *

"I didn't appreciate the way Candace treated me."

Niko sipped his wine as he considered everything Evie had said. He had to agree. No wonder she'd made a hasty retreat. His assistant was excellent at handling things and making arrangements. At the time, he hadn't given much thought to asking Candace to get Evie's belongings taken care of so she'd be comfortable.

"I'm sorry, *moy kotik*. This is all my fault. I'm used to having Candace handle things for me and didn't consider how uncomfortable the situation would make both of you."

Hell, he'd never invited a woman past the playroom and certainly did not bring them to his bedroom. That was his private space. And even when he took a sub to a hotel or went to her place he didn't stay the night. This was all new territory for him.

Evie chewed on her bottom lip, her gaze locked on the ring she twirled around her finger. Hmm...something other than his intimidating assistant had made her skittish.

"Evie."

Her head snapped up and her fingers stilled.

"Since I don't have the ability to read minds, you're going to have to tell me what's bothering you."

"Nothing."

Her hasty reply and slight squeak in her voice told him it was indeed something. Once again her gaze dropped.

He sighed. "Why did you agree to have dinner with me tonight? Are you interested in seeing where this connection between us can go?"

Staring down at her ring, she nodded. Not good enough. He gently lifted her chin, forcing her to make eye contact.

"Then we need to clear up a few things. If I am going to be your Dom, you will address me as Sir or Master. And when I ask you a question you must reply honestly. Open and honest communication is essential in any relationship, even more so when Dominance and submission are involved."

He gave her a moment to let his statement sink in before continuing. "Now, let's try this again. What's bothering you?"

Evie stared into Niko's dark eyes, considering her response. She wouldn't be here with him if she didn't want to keep seeing him. Even though her emotions were at war over the D/s thing, she had to admit, at least to herself, that she loved it when he used

that commanding tone and took charge. And if they were to continue she had to get the sharing issue out there in the open, let him know how the idea left her cold.

"Before I left your house, I went looking for you. So we could talk...Sir. I-I didn't try to overhear..." God, her tongue twisted into knots while trying to form the words.

He nodded. "And what did you hear that bothered you?"

"One of the maids directed me t-toward your office, Sir." She cringed, praying he'd figure it out and not make her say the words. No such luck. He sat still and waited until her nerves got the better of her and Evie spit it out. "I won't fuck a stranger or give him a blowjob. Not even if you order me to, Sir."

Niko took her wildly fluttering, freezing-cold hands and covered them with his own. His thumb rubbed a tender spot on her wrist making her blood heat and sending electrifying sensations blasting through her body. That quick, regardless of the subject under discussion, she was turned-on and ready for him. Damn, he was dangerous.

"Ah, now I understand. You heard me talking with Gage." Niko leaned back in his chair and studied her for several long moments. "How much of our conversation did you hear, *moy kotik*? Did you happen to catch my response?"

The caress against her wrist was making it difficult to concentrate. Evie shook her head and bit her lip as his brow arched. Shit, he had to stop distracting her if he wanted her to remember how he expected her to respond.

"You must verbalize your responses to ensure there are no misunderstandings, Evie. Now, try again."

"No...Sir. I heard him ask what I'd do if you ordered me to s-suck someone's cock and what would happen when you gagged, restrained and shared me with him while the whole club watched." She shivered.

"And what did I say?"

"I-I don't know. I left, Sir."

"Ah." Niko nodded. "If you had stayed a few minutes longer you would have heard a glass shatter when I threw it at the wall. Then you would have heard me slam Gage against the wall and tell him I had no intention of sharing you, with him or anyone else. Ever."

Oh holy crap!

She remembered one more detail from that conversation and since they were getting everything out in the open, she might as well ask.

"Who's Susan?"

Niko stiffened, the cords in his neck stood out and she noticed a small tic develop in his eyelid. He took several deep breaths before answering.

"Susan was a long time ago. We dated and I introduced her to D/s. Unfortunately, I moved too fast for her. She got scared and ended the relationship."

Instinct told her there was a lot more to the story but she let it go because talking about Susan visibly upset him. She'd rather talk about the two of them. "So where do we go from here, Sir?"

Leaning closer, Niko lifted her hand and kissed her knuckles. A wild thrill raced through Evie. His refined ways would take some getting used to but it certainly wouldn't be a hardship. She rather enjoyed how he made her feel all warm and bubbly. And the way he focused on her so intensely...whoo-damn! No other man had ever given her so much attention.

"If you're interested in continuing, seeing where this could lead, I'd like to get to know you better. There's an explosive chemistry between us but I think there's something stronger too."

Her pulse beat a frantic tattoo and her breathing became erratic as he spoke straight to her heart. They had a strong connection already and she was eager to see what they could make of a relationship.

"Running my family's business interests requires a great deal of travel, often out of the country."

Evie's stomach did a flip and she bit her lip as she waited to hear the rest. She sensed an exception would be tacked on.

"If you are all right with not being together as often as we would both probably prefer—"

She didn't even try to stop a goofy grin from spreading across her lips. He didn't expect her to screw his friends and wanted to keep seeing her. Relief washed over her as the stress of the past few days lifted away.

Sometimes life was good. Very good.

Chapter Fourteen

Damn, sometimes life sucked big fat hairy donkey balls!

Evie sighed. The long and exhausting day had finally come to an end. Juggling several grocery bags, she unlocked her apartment door as her cell phone started ringing.

"Crap, hold on."

After dropping everything on the kitchen counter, she dug the phone out of her purse. With it tucked between her shoulder and ear she gave a curt hello while putting away the food.

"Hey, Evie. You sound tired. Is this a bad time?"

Niko's voice offered a welcome refuge. Clutching the phone tighter, she slumped down into a chair. "No, it's okay. I just got home. Where are you?"

Over the ten months they'd been together she never did know from one day to the next where her jetsetter boyfriend would be or when she'd see him again. In fact, over those months they'd managed being together no more than a dozen times.

"Home."

That one word sent a thrill of anticipation through her. "Finally. So when can I see you?"

"Sorry, *moy kotik*. I only flew in for the day to pacify Barstow and keep the deal on the table. I'll be on another plane out tomorrow."

"Oh." All too-familiar disappointment crashed down on her. Evie loved Niko, more than she'd ever thought she could love another person, but the distance wore her down. She wanted, needed and deserved more than a long-distance, once-in-a-blue-moon boyfriend.

"Have you thought any more about my suggestion? We'd be together more often if you moved in with me."

Yeah, she'd thought about it. But the idea of selling the bookstore she loved held her back. She wasn't the type to be a kept woman and the idea of rattling around his huge mausoleum of a home left her cold. She'd also considered ending things with Niko because the way she currently lived was no life at all – hanging on to hope only to keep having it snatched away.

"I'd be lost in that big house and you're never there anyway."

"You could travel with me."

Another familiar suggestion she'd toyed with and discarded. She loved the idea of traveling under other conditions, not as arm candy. Evie's work gave her a sense of accomplishment and she enjoyed owning the bookstore. "That won't work for me."

He sighed but thankfully dropped the subject.

"We may not be able to see each other tonight, but if you're not too tired..."

Evie's spirits dropped even lower. Early in their relationship they'd started having phone sex to relieve the ache of not being together. At first it had been exciting, naughty and enough to hold her over. The thrill had long since worn off and she'd started faking her orgasms. Her own hand didn't do it for her. God, the entire thing seemed hopeless.

"Not tonight. I'm exhausted and my head is throbbing."

"Okay, Evie. I've got to go anyway. Candace has Barstow on the other line."

The fact that his beautiful assistant traveled with Niko and got more of his time was a constant thorn in her side. As much as Evie wanted to hate the other woman, Candace had been nice to her since it became apparent Evie would be sticking around.

"All right. Call me when you can."

"Sweet dreams, *moy kotik*. Get some rest."

"Night."

She heard him talking to Candace, quickly shifting gears before the phone had even landed in the cradle.

Something had to give. And soon!

* * * * *

A firm hand clapped his back. Niko didn't have to glance over to know it was Gage. After a stressful meeting with the pain in the ass—Barstow—he needed to unwind. Hanging out with his friend at the club and maybe watching a few scenes would help to ease the pressures of the day from hell.

God, he hated the thought of getting on a plane headed for Spain tomorrow without having the chance to see Evie first.

"It's Friday night and the place is full of unclaimed subs ready to play." While dominant, Gage enjoyed kinky play more than serious D/s. "Pick one and have some fun."

Yeah, right. "I'm just observing tonight."

Niko couldn't just pick another sub to play with. He wanted Evie, never stopped thinking about her. There had to be some way to work this out so they could be together. If she'd stop being so stubborn, let him collar her and move in—

He shook off the pointless thought. Evie was right. He knew it wouldn't change anything. She'd be alone in his house and he'd still be running from one place to the next.

The final straw tonight had been Candace getting on his case. Niko couldn't deny that what she'd said made sense.

I know it's in your nature to be in charge of everything but no one can do it all. You have to start trusting your employees to do their jobs if you're ever going to have a life outside of work.

He had no right to expect Evie to give up her bookstore and move away from her friends. Not when he wasn't willing to make changes in his own life. Candace was right. He knew that but letting go of the reins didn't come easy for him.

"Fine," Gage huffed, pulling him out of his thoughts and back to the club. "Be a stick in the mud by yourself."

A cute brunette made eye contact with Gage. The ex-football player, with his sandy hair, clean-cut good looks and muscular body, always drew lots of female attention. Having attracted a partner, he left Niko to brood alone.

The solitude didn't last for long. Master S approached a short while later with a couple.

"Master Niko, may I present Tim and Helen Wentworth. They are new members to the club."

He shook hands with Tim and nodded to Helen, making note of her hopeful expression before she respectfully lowered her gaze. "Nice to meet you."

"Tim is interested in learning to cane his sub. I was hoping you'd be able to assist him." Sebastian leaned in closer so the couple wouldn't overhear. "I just don't have time or the patience for teaching tonight. Tina has been acting out and I have a punishment to dispense."

The anticipation lighting Sebastian's eyes convinced Niko to help his friend even though he wasn't really in the mood to teach either. He'd come here for a distraction and had just been handed one. "Of course. I'd be happy to help."

He ushered the enthusiastic young couple over to a table in the meet-and-greet area and sat down with them. Before attempting to teach them any technique he needed to determine their level of experience, along with Helen's limits. To help them he needed to be comfortable with the couple. And the discussion afforded a brief respite from his jumbled thoughts.

By the time they made it into the dungeon a great deal of Niko's tension had faded. "The stockades are available. Tim, why don't you get Helen restrained while I gather a few different canes for you to try."

When he returned to the couple, Tim had his wife stripped and bound in the wooden device with her pretty ass thrust outward. She was also locked in at the ankle, restricting movement and ensuring the position would keep her uncomfortable. After all, this was a punishment, not a spa treatment.

Niko took his time explaining the different materials used to make canes and the degree of sensation they would provide. He also discussed safety and techniques with Tom. Helen proved she'd been well-trained as she waited without complaint.

"Helen, what is your safe word?"

"Pumpernickel."

"Good, then let's begin."

He delivered a light blow to warm up Helen's pale flesh, preparing her. The pain would not be immediate and he allowed a few seconds between strikes, delivering the next one when the pain of the first white stripe reached its peak. As he instructed Tim it became apparent Helen was made for the cane. She remained quiet for the first dull pain of impact, moaning in ecstasy a few seconds later when the burning built and spread through her firm flesh.

Yet no matter how well the session progressed, Niko derived no pleasure or satisfaction from the caning. In fact, he found himself to be rather numb as his thoughts kept returning to Evie.

* * * * *

This was probably the most insane thing she'd ever done. Evie walked up to the door, lost her nerve, turned around and walked back to her car.

During the hour-long drive, she had rehearsed what she'd say to Niko. When she arrived at his mansion no one had answered the buzzer at the gate. Without really intending to, she'd driven to Rendezvous. Now she debated the stupidity of going into the club alone to look for him.

From what she'd seen on her previous visits, Evie considered the club to be rather tame. There were none of the extremes she'd read about in some of the fictional BDSM stories where just making eye contact was hazardous and not being collared meant you were fair game.

"Going in there alone is still stupid!"

Yeah, and talking to myself in an alley behind a BDSM club in a questionable neighborhood at night is a whole lot smarter.

"Screw it!"

She squared her shoulders, stalked over to the door, grabbed the handle and yanked it open. Once inside, Evie took a deep breath and relaxed when Tina smiled at her from behind the counter.

"Welcome back!" The older woman greeted her with a hug. "Cain and Michelle aren't here tonight but Niko's in the dungeon."

Tina winked and took Evie's money then got distracted by Master S's approach. The other woman rubbed her hands together. "Uh-oh, time for my punishment. I'll catch up with you later, Evie. Don't be such a stranger." Tabitha, who often helped man the desk, took over for Tina.

"Umm...have fun." The comment was rather lame but it made Tina smile.

Okay, stop stalling.

She stared at the archway leading into the dungeon, took a deep breath, and entered the lion's den. She took in the large space, jam-packed with people, but she didn't see Niko among the masses. This forced her to move farther into the dreaded torture chamber unescorted. What she wouldn't give for the reassurance of having Cain at her side.

Various scenes were being played out. Moans of pleasure and cries of pain filled the air. She saw floggers, whips and paddles being used. Someone had been restrained in the grope box and those milling about would reach in occasionally. When she arrived at the stockades, Evie's stomach dropped and she forgot how to breathe.

Held within the wooden stocks, an athletic redhead panted and moaned as her ass was being caned. Stripes in various shades from white to purple lined her bottom. The evidence of what the caning did to her glistened on her thighs.

But it wasn't the aroused sub that made Evie's heart seize and shatter in a million pieces. Wearing a white shirt with billowy sleeves tucked into tight black jeans and leather boots, holding a cane in strong hands. The Dom was magnificent—a modern-day pirate.

Her pirate!

Evie shook her head to dispel the image, knowing it was too late. Niko's betrayal had been burned into her memory and ripped through her chest, turning her heart to ash.

Without a backward glance, she turned and left the club.

The cheating prick!

Had he been stringing her along for the better part of a year? If so, to what end? She couldn't see any advantage to keeping her ready and waiting for him if he'd rather play the field. Lord knows there were plenty of subs eager and willing to receive his attentions.

But was he really cheating?

She tried to look at the situation from a different point of view. Caning another woman—another submissive—technically wasn't cheating. Didn't stop her from feeling as if he'd cheated on her though. And it didn't ease the heavy fist that had tightened around her chest.

She knew the club didn't permit penetration so he wasn't fucking the redhead with the perfect damn body. At least not at Rendezvous. Of course, that didn't mean he wouldn't take her home to his private playroom for some fun and games afterward.

Damn it, she was frustrated and sick of being a screwed-up mass of jumbled, confused emotions. She had to get a grip before she did something completely stupid like seriously entertain the idea of sitting outside his house to see if Niko went home alone.

Once safely in her car behind the locked door, she dropped her forehead onto the steering wheel. Lost in her own private hell, Evie didn't even glance around when the club door slammed and a car peeled out of the parking lot sometime later.

* * * * *

The sub gasped as Gage attached clamps to her nipples. Watching his friend tease the pretty brunette into a sensual frenzy should have turned him on but the erotic scene only left Niko aching for Evie.

Very different from the normal subs he encountered in the scene, his fiery vixen had a profound effect on him. Now she was all he wanted, all the thought of. He had to find a way to work things out between them. Without her, he was lost.

Tina frowned at him as he headed for the door. "Didn't Evie find you, Sir Niko?"

Stopping short, he shifted his entire focus on the older woman. "She was here and you didn't bring her to me?" he growled.

"N-no Sir. Ah, I told her you were in the dungeon." Tina's voice quavered and she watched him warily.

"Why not?" The words came out harsher than he intended.

Having sensed the tension from where he stood close by, Sebastian moved in front of his wife, taking up a protective stance. "Watch how you address my sub, Niko."

Fuck!

He had drawn the attention of the entire room with his uncharacteristic outburst. Niko raked a hand through his hair and took a deep breath. "My apologies, Tina." He struggled for patience. "Where is Evie now?"

Sebastian moved to the side only a fraction and kept his eyes on Niko as he addressed Tina. "Answer him."

"I...uh. I don't know, Sir. Master S called me to the office for my punishment."

"Who watched the desk?" Sebastian asked.

"T-Tabitha did, Master."

Niko struggled to keep his tone calm and even but it still came out gruff. "And where is Tabitha?"

"I'm sorry. She went home when I returned, Sir."

Biting his tongue to keep from saying anything else, Niko left the club, barely refraining from punching the wall on his way out.

She'd been there...at the club...looking for him.

And he'd been disciplining another woman.

She'd never listen to him now.

Chapter Fifteen

"Have you talked to him?"

"Not yet." Evie sighed. She knew Michelle was right but a million different what-ifs echoed around in her head. It had been a week since she'd run out of the club. A full week of hiding from Niko, her friends and her business.

She took a big gulp of her margarita, glad she didn't have to worry about driving since Michelle had come to Orlando to visit her, which she found a bit shocking. It had been a few months since they'd last seen each other yet Michelle had dropped everything when she called. She'd also invited Amanda over for emotional support.

"What the hell are you waiting for?"

"She's chicken." Amanda lifted her glass in a mocking salute.

So much for support.

"He loves you." Michelle spoke the words softly but with conviction.

"I'm not chicken, and love means accepting someone as they are. Niko doesn't love me. How can I accept his feelings as being true when he wants to change me?"

"He doesn't want to change you. He just wants you, Evie, as you are."

"He wants me to give up the bookstore."

"Okay, big difference. You are not the bookstore. He's asking you to make a change in where you live, not who you are," Amanda stated. "You can open up a bookstore anywhere. Or better yet, get with the latest technology and open up an electronic bookstore."

Why did I invite Amanda?

"I've never seen him like this," Michelle said. "Niko is going out of his mind. On a conference call last night, when Cain and Sebastian both refused to intervene, Gage tried to talk him into hiring a PI to come pick you up and deliver you to him in Spain."

She gasped. "He wouldn't!"

"No. It was Gage's suggestion. Niko told them that he would never force you. He said your submission and love had to be freely given, something you wanted, otherwise it would mean nothing."

Michelle placed a warm hand on her arm and stared into Evie's eyes. "What are you so afraid of? Why can't you go and talk to him?"

Amanda laughed. "She's afraid of a broken heart. And she's still hung up about the ménage thing."

Evie gave her friend a light shove. "I saw him...at the club...with another woman." Saying it out loud increased the stabbing pain in her heart.

"I know."

Shocked, she met Michelle's gaze. "You know?"

"We pieced it together. Tina told me that you'd come to the club then disappeared. Sebastian had told her about asking Niko to help out with a new couple. They were interested in caning. Niko taught the Dom how to cane his sub."

Amanda smacked her shoulder. "See, I told you there was an explanation."

Evie's shaky hand darted up to cover her trembling lips. Had she misconstrued the situation? Made false assumptions? Even if she'd been wrong, they still had a shitload of insurmountable problems and no viable solution she could find.

"Tina said the way he looked when he found out you'd been at the club scared the hell out of her." Michelle shivered. "He's one of the calmest, most in-control Doms. He never gets angry or impatient. But he did when he thought you'd been hurt. Even Sebastian was concerned enough to put himself between Niko and Tina."

If he was so damn in control then how come he always lost it when it came to her?

"Why would he be mad at Tina?" Amanda asked.

"He wasn't. He was angry with himself. Tina said that if it were physically possible, he would have kicked his own ass for having hurt Evie."

She sipped her drink and considered what Michelle had said, along with her fears. "Still, he wants me to rearrange my whole life to suit him without being willing to make any sacrifices for our relationship. And he calls me his pet. Keeps talking about putting a collar around my neck."

His pet. Ha!

She'd knew all about submissive women being humiliated, treated like animals—forced to eat from a dish on the floor and be led around on a leash. As if they were a possession.

"Look, I may not have been in the scene prior to this, but I've read plenty of books. I won't crawl around on my hands and knees, pee outside like a dog or sleep on the floor beside the bed. And I won't suck some stranger's dick just because it pleases my 'Master'. No fucking way!"

Michelle laughed so hard that tears streamed down her face. She doubled over, almost fell off the couch. Amanda joined in with her hilarity. For several long minutes neither woman could talk. It started to really irk Evie. Why were they laughing at her? None of this was funny.

Amanda recovered first. "I tried to tell her that crap she reads isn't real."

"Oh my God...Evie. W-what have you been...reading?" Still laughing and panting for breath, Michelle's words came out in fits and starts.

"Why? I know there are bastards out there who treat their submissive worse than they would their dog."

"Jesus, Evie! You're talking about a Master and slave who take things to the extreme, not a Dom and sub."

"There's a difference?"

"Ah, yeah. Big difference. Huge! A Master wants to own a docile slave who requires everything from him. There's no on and off, it's who they are all the time. A slave is a submissive who has voluntarily given up all of her property and rights. All slaves are subs but not all subs are slaves. And not all Masters want to own a slave."

Evie figured her expression probably matched Amanda's confused scowl.

"This is hard to explain." Michelle took a sip of her drink and thought for a moment. "You've seen how Cain is with me outside of the club setting."

Evie snorted. "Yeah, you call the shots."

"Yes, Exactly!"

"But what about subs and slaves?" She still didn't understand the distinction.

"While Niko requires a sub to address him as Master or Sir it is a show of respect for him as a Dominant. He doesn't want to be Master of a slave. His calling you pet is an endearment. It's no different than when Cain calls me sweetheart. Niko doesn't want control over your entire life. He wants you to be able to let go and submit to him in the bedroom—or the club if the two of you were to play there again."

Both Amanda and Evie remained riveted to every word.

"Just like with any relationship, not all D/s couples are the same. There are different degrees of submission. That's why I keep telling you to talk to him. Open and honest communication is essential. It's up to the two of you to decide what works for both of you."

Evie considered for several minutes. Everything Michelle said made sense. Of course each relationship was unique. Niko had told her the same thing but it had never really clicked.

"And what about the sharing if I let him collar me? I have no interest in being with anyone else. Not even if it makes him happy. Fantasies are nice but most are better left to the imagination."

Michelle sighed. "You two have got to talk. Niko already told you he wouldn't share you but I bet you've never mentioned how much the idea of being collared scares you."

"No." And she'd been too afraid to broach the subject since collaring her was so important to him.

"He wouldn't share you unless you'd expressed an interest and agreed. He's different with you—possessive. I don't think he'd even offer it as a possibility."

Michelle seemed confident in her opinion of Niko.

"But what about the collar? I'm not an animal."

"Evie, a collar is a symbol of submission and commitment. It's not meant to degrade or belittle the sub. Ask Niko what wearing his collar means to him and I'm sure he'll say monogamy."

And she'd run from a symbol of commitment? Shit! She and Niko really did need to talk but on the rare occasions when they were together talk took a backseat to physical desires. Whenever they spoke on the phone she tried to keep the conversations light, not wanting to discuss serious issues while they were apart. Unfortunately, she didn't want to waste time on heavy discussions when they were together either.

"So what is involved in a public collaring at the club?"

"You're thinking about it. Good!"

Michelle wore a wicked grin and Amanda clapped. Evie hit them both with throw pillows.

"Stop gloating and tell me."

"Okay. Again, it depends on the couple. With Cain, he allowed me to be dressed because he knew I had no issues with my body or baring myself for him in the club. He did, however, make me kneel, which I did have issues with." Michelle fingered the gold choker she always wore. "My 'collar' isn't really a collar but a necklace symbolizing my submission to Cain."

Wow, Evie never would have known what the jewelry represented. "But I saw subs at Rendezvous wearing thick black leather collars – dog collars."

"That's what their Dom chose for them to wear at the club. Most of us pick something more discreet to wear out in public."

Damn, it was all so complex it made her head spin. When she didn't say anything, Michelle continued.

"A collaring at the club is a special ceremony. No scenes are being played out. The place is decorated fancy for the event, and the couple sends out invitations to the members they would like to be there."

"Like a wedding?" Amanda asked.

"Yes and no. For Cain and me the collaring showed others we were agreeing to be exclusive in our D/s relationship. I looked at it as if Cain gave me a promise ring. We were agreeing to date only each other and see if what we had would develop into something permanent. When it did, we had a formal wedding ceremony."

Oh holy shit!

"So in saying he wanted to collar her, Niko wanted a visible symbol for other Doms to know Evie was taken," Amanda said. "In essence, he wanted to go steady?"

Michelle nodded.

"And I fucked it all up." Evie groaned.

"No, Evie." Michelle scooted over and hugged her. "Niko screwed up by not explaining. Both of you have failed to share your fears and perceptions."

Talking with Michelle and Amanda shed a new light on things. She needed to spend time with him, see if the sexual chemistry and love between them would develop into something more. Something worth rearranging her life for.

"So asking him to collar me would show him that I'm serious about finding a way to work past the obstacles between us?"

"Asking to wear his collar would go a long way toward that goal. Then you'd have to follow through and open yourself up to him."

Evie bit her lip. "Do I stand a chance in hell of him wanting to put his collar on me?"

The neighbors probably heard Michelle's piercing squeal and were calling the cops. Evie couldn't help laughing. She felt light, as if a huge weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

"So what now?"

"Now, honey, you go get your man."

* * * * *

"See, I told you. Now pay up."

Niko glanced up from the velvet jeweler's box he'd stared at for countless hours to find Gage and Cain watching him from his office doorway.

"Fine," Cain muttered. He opened his wallet, counted out some cash and handed it to the other man.

Niko wasn't sure he really wanted to know but asked the question anyway. "What are you two doing?"

"Thanks, buddy." Gage flashed a cheesy grin. "You just won me a hundred bucks."

"What was the bet?"

Cain sighed. "He bet me we'd find you here moping, staring at that damn collar."

Niko slammed the lid shut and stalked over to the bar, pouring a generous serving of bourbon into a glass. He responded without turning to face his friends. "Isn't there someone else you two can go torment?"

"Nope," Gage teased. "We don't know anyone who's half as much fun to irritate."

Wearing a concerned expression, Cain joined Niko at the bar. "How many of those have you had tonight?"

Niko's laughter held no real humor. "Didn't need any until you wannabe comedians showed up. Why?"

Cain nodded. "Come on. We're taking you out."

"Oh, no!" Niko held up his hands. "I just got here and I'm in no mood. I'm staying home. Go screw with someone else."

"I told you he was going to be difficult," Gage said from behind him.

"At least we came prepared." Cain's response gave Niko an uneasy feeling.

The two men moved fast, grabbing his arms and pinning them behind him. Cold steel slapped against his wrists and he heard a soft snick as a locking mechanism engaged. He never saw it coming or had a chance to fight back.

"I'm not a sub. What the fuck are you doing?"

"This would be a kidnapping," Cain said.

"No, a Domnapping," Gage interjected.

They both had a good laugh at Niko's expense, completely ignoring his violent curses as they locked up his ankles and dragged him out the door.

"Oh, wait. Don't forget to grab the collar, Gage."

The collar? Why would Cain want Evie's collar?

Chapter Sixteen

"This is stupid. He's not going to show up. What the hell was I thinking?"

Evie paced the length of the women's changing room beneath Rendezvous. Decorated in warm colors and with its homey appearance, the space would be soothing under different circumstances.

Michelle relaxed on a chaise lounge, her cool and confident demeanor making Evie's nerves even worse.

"Chill out, honey. He'll be here."

Evie spun on her heel to face her friend. "What makes you so sure?"

"Because it's not being left up to him."

Oh, that didn't sound good. "What have you done?"

"Nothing."

Michelle batted her lashes and tried for an innocent expression that fell short. Way short. There was nothing innocent about the petite blonde.

"Tell. Me!"

"I sent Cain and Gage to ensure he makes it here."

"Oh...great." The interfering fools would piss Niko off and she wouldn't have a chance in hell of making this work.

Michelle glanced at her cell phone as it vibrated and she smiled. "Take a deep breath, Evie. They're here."

Curses and violent threats reached them before the men burst through the doorway. Evie startled and held her hand over her heart, which suddenly beat way too fast.

"Hey, at least we brought you in the back way," Cain grumbled.

He and another man carried Niko into the changing rooms.

"Yeah, we could have carried you in through the main entrance, let all the subs get a look at you tied up and helpless."

She had never been introduced to the other man but would recognize his voice anywhere as the man who'd discussed sharing her—Gage. It didn't seem possible, but he actually appeared larger and stronger than Cain, although less intimidating due to his rakish smile.

The two men tossed Niko onto the sofa as if he were a sack of potatoes. He landed facing toward the doorway. Even though she couldn't see his face there was no mistaking his anger as he flopped around in a futile attempt to free himself.

"Hello, ladies." Gage winked at Michelle.

Not missing the blatant flirtation, Cain punched his shoulder. "Knock it off, Romeo." He pulled Michelle into his arms. "Hey, sweetheart."

Gage—the cad—made no attempt to disguise his actions. Cornflower blue eyes heated and the muscle-bound giant took his time looking Evie over from head to toe.

To hell with this mess.

Squaring her shoulders, she stood tall and faced down the two large men. "Give me the keys and get out!" The steel in her voice left no room for argument.

Gage ignored the warning. "Forget about him, beautiful. Come on upstairs with me and I'll show you a real good time."

"Gage!" Niko growled. "You lay one finger on her, I'll rip your balls off and shove them down your throat." The threat didn't hold much weight since he remained immobilized.

Evie held out her hand. "Give me the key. Now!"

Gage sighed. "Can't blame a guy for trying."

He didn't merely drop the key in her palm. Gage's large hand swallowed hers as he lifted it to his mouth. Soft lips brushed her palm and the heat of his wet tongue seared her skin as the beast licked her.

Evie shuddered as warmth spread all the way down to her curled toes. Those pale eyes stayed locked on her, taking in her small gasp with obvious delight.

When he stepped back she stared down at the silver key lying on her trembling hand. Thankfully Gage didn't say anything else.

Michelle gave her a quick hug then headed for the stairs with the two huge men dwarfing her. Evie stayed still, observing Niko's struggles as their footsteps drifted away.

Niko was going crazy. Hearing her husky voice but not seeing Evie would surely drive him insane. No matter how hard he wrenched his neck in any direction, he wasn't able to get a glimpse of her. She was at the club though. He had to take her presence at Rendezvous as a positive sign.

Hope surged, driving his heart rate through the roof, but he tamped it down. For all he knew she wasn't there of her own free will either. He wouldn't put it past his well-meaning friends to have dragged her by force.

They could have saved themselves some effort. By simply telling him Evie was here, waiting for him, he would have broken every land speed record to reach her side.

If she had the key, why wasn't she removing the restraints?

"Evie? Are you still there?"

"Y-yes."

The fear in her voice had him biting back several choice curses. The last thing he wanted was to frighten her even more.

"Would you mind unlocking the cuffs?"

"Oh," her voice wavered. "Sorry!"

Her slender fingers shook as she tried to fit the key in the lock of the shackles binding his ankles together. After a few fumbled attempts, she swore under her breath. "Rat bastard cocksuckers..."

Laughter he couldn't hold back erupted as he saw the humor of the situation.

"Are you laughing at me?" The stern voice she'd used on Gage was back, damn it.

"No. Male stupidity, not you. Cain and Gage could have forgone kidnapping and chaining me. All they had to do is tell me you were waiting for me and not even these chains would have kept me from getting here."

"I-I'm sorry." She stopped working at the lock. "When I asked Michelle to make sure you came, I had no idea they'd go so far."

"Evie. Come here." He put some command into his tone and it worked. Finally, Evie moved to where he could see her. For the space of several heartbeats he stared, drinking her in. God, he'd missed her. The past few weeks had been hell.

The red silk robe she wore gave a fiery glow to her big amber eyes, highlighting the contrast of shiny, midnight black hair and creamy skin. But her clear unease at being in his presence made his chest constrict painfully.

"You are a sight for sore eyes. I missed you so much, Evie! Unchain me so we can sit and talk."

She remained well back from him and her hesitation hurt.

"Would that be all right, Evie?"

"I'd like that." Her genuine smile gave him a warm, fuzzy feeling.

This time her hands were steady. She unlocked the shackles, removed the bar connecting them to the handcuffs at his wrists and unfastened the last restraints. Then she stepped back, a wary look in her eyes as she watched him rise from the couch.

He hated that she was now cagey around him. How had everything gotten so fucked up? "*Moy kotik*, I—"

"Umph." The force of her hitting him knocked Niko back onto the couch with her curvy body wrapped tight around him. She'd shocked him to the point he was speechless, not that he needed to say anything as she straddled his lap and rained kisses all over his face.

"I'm sorry. I misunderstood so much. Never told you what I was feeling." She held his face in her hands and stared at him. "Are you mad at me? I-I didn't tell them to restrain you."

He got lost in her eyes, lacked the words respond.

"If you want me to go—"

"No!"

She flinched at the vehemence in his voice. Niko struggled to get himself under control, realizing that had been the problem all along. With Evie he had no control. When he spoke again, he kept his tone softer.

"No, *moy kotik*. Don't go. Not now that you're exactly where I want you."

Her brilliant smile could have eclipsed the sun.

"I'm sorry for pushing you so hard."

"No, it was me —"

He placed two fingers over her lips to stop her. "We both made mistakes. They're in the past. What I want to know is if we can move forward?"

She chewed on her bottom lip. Niko longed to kiss the abused flesh, soothe away the pain. First he had to make things right.

"Evie, would you do me the honor of going out with me? A real date. Give us a chance to talk and figure things out."

She bit her lip harder. "Um...well, you see..."

His heart sank. Niko grasped her hips and set Evie on her feet.

"It's okay, *moy kotik*. I understand."

Her eyes flashed molten gold before filling with intense heat. Evie tugged at the sash holding her robe closed and shrugged it from her shoulders.

Completely stripped bare with the exception of red crystals hanging from silver nipple clamps, she dropped to her knees and assumed a submissive position—legs spread, hands behind her back, eyes downcast.

His heart lodged in his throat. Afraid to hope, he refused to believe her actions carried the meaning they implied. He wanted to hear the words.

"Explain yourself."

Niko's command eased some of her trepidation and sent a hot shaft of arousal streaking through Evie's body. She glanced up at him from beneath her eyelashes, attempting to gauge his reaction.

"If you still want me, I'd like you to collar me."

"You what?" His expression went blank, his jaw tightened.

"Everyone's here. I sent out invitations. Tina and Michelle decorated. There's food —"

He dropped down in front of her. Gentle fingers lifted her chin and his gaze bore into her.

"Say it again."

The demand, coupled with his gentle touch, brought every nerve ending to tingling awareness.

"If you still want me to, I'd like to wear your collar. To give this...us...a try."

His lips crashed down on hers in a scorching kiss full of possession, consuming her. Niko ate at her lips, swallowed her moans and whimpers as their passion grew. When he finally drew back they were both out of breath.

"Our guests...they're waiting —"

"Let them wait." He gave one of those sexy growls that never failed to dampen her panties — when she wore panties, that is.

"I want you, Evie. Make love with me."

"No."

She gasped as Niko sprung to his feet. His hands trembled as he raked them through his dark hair.

"Fuck! I'm sorry. I'm rushing you again."

"No. I don't want to make love —"

He spoke rapid-fire in a foreign language. Evie rose, tried to get his attention but failed. Frustrated, she fisted her hand in his shirt, stood on her toes and got right in his face.

"I don't want to make love. I want you to take me. Dominate me. Make me burn..."

Uh-oh, she'd gone too far. A storm brewed in his eyes. He looked more than a little scary. Evie released his shirt and attempted to smooth out the wrinkles. She took a step back. "I'll...um, go upstairs —"

"You'll go down on your knees. Now, *moy kotik!*"

The combination of his dominant words and hard expression stole any resistance. Evie dropped into position, struggling to hold still as electricity crackled in the air around them. He moved behind her and before Evie could protest the steel handcuffs snapped shut, binding her wrists. She heard the rustling of material.

When Niko stepped back in front of her he was gloriously nude. She drank in the sight of bronzed skin covering corded muscle. He moved in close, his cock bobbing a mere inch from her lips and saliva pooled in her mouth. She wanted nothing more than to taste the pearly drop of fluid beaded at the slit.

As if reading her desire, Niko said, "Not yet. We have to settle a few details first."

She groaned in exasperation.

"I gave Candace a promotion."

Candace? She knelt before him, naked and horny, and he wanted to talk about his assistant?

"I have a very knowledgeable staff who I pay a great deal of money. Trusting them to do their jobs and letting go some of my control over the business is long overdue."

She struggled to follow the conversation but in her current state the meaning went right over her head. "Um...that's good."

"Doing so means I won't have to travel as much. I'll be home a lot more. So you wouldn't be at the estate alone if you moved in."

Niko dropped to his knees before her and ordered, "Evie, breathe." When had she stopped breathing? She didn't know but now she sucked in big gulps of air.

"W-what are you saying, Sir?"

"We both messed up. I expected you to make big changes and sacrifices, to make your life fit mine. I've spent the past two weeks making some changes of my own."

"Why? Why would you do that?"

"God, Evie. Because you're more important to me than anything else. I'm even willing to move to Orlando if that's what it will take. Or you can commute to the store—"

"I sold the store."

"What?"

She nodded. "I did some research, discovered that electronic books are the future. So I sold the store and started forming a new business plan. An internet bookstore allows me to do what I love and I can work from anywhere."

"I want you with me, Evie. Would you be willing to travel once in a while?"

"I've always wanted to see the world."

His brilliant smile warmed her heart. "And you really want to wear my collar."

"I was afraid, didn't understand. And when you and Gage talking about sharing—" She shook her head. "I don't want to be shared, Niko."

"Never," he growled. "Don't ask me to watch another man touch you, *moy kotik*. I'd tear his arms off."

Right answer. She had one more lingering, important question. "Michelle explained some things but tell me, what does collaring a sub mean to you?"

"It means every other Dominant knows that sub is taken, belongs to me. It's a commitment, an exclusive agreement to submit to only me."

God, that sounded good. Perfect. All this wasted time and hard feelings. What an idiot she'd been. "I didn't know that. From the books I've read, I thought a collar indicated a Master/slave relationship, which I want no part of."

"Oh, Evie." He cupped her cheeks. "You should have told me. And I should have explained. You have to promise me, from here on out, if something frightens you or you don't understand you'll tell me. We'll talk about it."

"I promise. Can we get to the good part now? The make-up sex."

Niko rose before her and with his Dom face back in place. His cock bobbed before her lips and she deeply inhaled, drinking in his masculine scent.

"Kiss my cock. Show me you want it."

Ah, now that was an order she'd gladly comply with. Evie placed a chaste kiss on his crown, only disobeying slightly by gathering the bead of cum on the tip of her tongue before he pulled away.

"Naughty girl," he hissed and moved behind her again. "I'll have to punish you...later."

She shivered in anticipation.

When he spoke again, Niko's warm breath caressed her ear. "Are you wet, Evie?"

Unable to find her voice, she nodded.

"No, tell me." He landed a firm slap on her ass.

"Yes, damn it. I'm dripping wet. Now fuck me!"

He tsked at her. "There's another punishment. Who gives the orders, *moy kotik*?"

"You! Please, Master Niko."

"Good girl."

His praise washed over her. While it was wonderful, she needed more. Needed him.

"Who do you belong to?"

"Myself."

"There's three. And I haven't even added on a punishment for refusing to talk to me for the past two weeks."

"Please..." she cried.

"Damn, Evie, I'm going to die if I don't get my cock in you right now." With a firm touch, he pressed down on her shoulders until they rested on the carpeted floor.

She cried out as one blunt fingertip glided along her slit. She didn't need gentle lovemaking or foreplay. She needed his cock, every luscious inch, pounding into her. Hard and fast and now. "Please, Master Niko. I need you."

"Who do you belong to? Whose sweet pussy is this?"

As if to punctuate the question, Niko stabbed two fingers into her drenched pussy, which clamped down on him.

"Yours, damn it. Always has been, Master Niko. Please."

He slapped her other cheek, then rubbed the heated flesh. "Mmm...you're soaked and those red folds are open, ready to receive your Master's cock."

"Yes, Master," she whimpered hopefully.

He held her hips and thrust, filling her in one fluid motion. Evie stopped worrying about the guests waiting at the top of the stairs, and didn't try to hold back her pleasure-filled screams as Niko claimed her, possessed her, owned her—body, heart, and soul.

"That's it, *moy kotik*. Take it all. Give me everything."

They still had things to work out, lots of talking to do. Evie was confident it would happen. They'd both put in the effort and work at being more open in their relationship. Being together would make a huge difference.

The future looked good. She and Niko had a shot at this. With tender nurturing their love would have every chance at growing into a lasting, lifetime bond.

Chapter Seventeen

"Freshen up and take your time getting ready. I have to talk to Cain before we get started. I'll meet you in the dungeon, okay?"

Niko placed a quick peck on her cheek and didn't wait for her answer. He took the stairs two at a time and disappeared into the club. She moved over to the vanity and groaned. No wonder he'd left her to "freshen up". Her hair looked worse than a rat's nest, she was covered in perspiration and her makeup had all but melted away.

Evie dashed into the shower, ran a comb through her snarled hair then reapplied her lipstick and eye shadow. After donning her robe, she moved to the stairs and took a few calming breaths before making her way into the club.

A small black platform sat at the center of the dungeon. Vibrant red- and champagne-colored decorations were attached to anything and everything, including the stockades and grope box. The festive balloons and streamers were so incongruous with the devices of sensual torture that Evie had to fight back laughter. A fit of the giggles wouldn't be well received on such a serious occasion.

Michelle winked at her as she stepped up onto the platform and turned to face the assembled group of Dominants and submissives, all members of Rendezvous. Instead of the normal leather and varying degrees of nudity they were dressed in their finest clothing. Were it not for the setting they could have been attending a fancy cocktail party.

Nervous energy bubbled up through her and Evie found it difficult not fidgeting as her gaze swept the room. Then she saw him and all the rest melted away.

When they'd first met she'd pegged Niko as a rather arrogant and elegant rake. He put out an aristocratic vibe that simultaneously turned her on and irritated the hell out of her. Even dressed casually as he was in faded jeans and a black T-shirt, he still radiated an air of power and privilege.

Master S stepped forward and spoke to the group about the lifestyle, the honor of being collared and the gift of submission. Captured by Niko's intent dark stare she drifted along as if in a dream, not really hearing the words spoken by the other man.

"Drop your robe."

She didn't hesitate to follow Niko's command, baring her body and soul to him, somewhat apprehensive over her state of nudity in a room where everyone else was fully dressed but trusting in him. This had been his gift to her. He forced Evie to face down her fears, confront her inhibitions and conquer her body-image issues.

"Kneel."

She dropped to her knees, assuming the submissive position he'd taught her. Muscles sore from their recent round of vigorous fucking down in the dressing room made the movement awkward. Evie refused to allow her discomfort to show.

They both spoke about what the collaring ceremony meant to them, made promises of monogamy. Niko stressed his desire that they openly communicate and not hold anything back from each other.

From the beginning she had hated him calling her his pet, refused his claims of her being his sub. Over time the endearment had become special to Evie and she'd come to desire submitting to Niko. Now she longed to wear his collar and was proud to be Niko's submissive pet.

The moment the lock snapped into place around her neck—a lock only Niko could open—Evie felt something shift inside. A strong sense of pride swelled within her as she ran her fingers over the platinum and ruby choker where it rested against her throat. Her heart no longer belonged to her, and she wouldn't have it any other way.

"Rise, sub," Master S commanded. "Take your place at your Master's side."

Niko drew her tight against him and took her lips in the sweetest kiss they ever shared. When they finally pulled apart, he cupped her cheek and stared down into her upturned face.

"Love you, *moy kotik*."

"I love you too."

The club members clapped and cheered as Niko helped Evie into her robe. She scanned the room for Michelle but didn't find her. Sir Cain and Sir Gage were also missing. Strange.

Taking Niko's arm, they made their way around the room, mingling with the guests. Niko was acting odd, distant. And his normal über-confident self started to falter, which left her hesitant and on edge.

At first she chalked his behavior up to the stress of an eventful evening, but the sense of his detachment grew. Suddenly she found herself full of doubt. Did he regret collaring her?

She didn't dare ask until they were alone, which wasn't happening any time soon. Everyone wanted to meet her and congratulate them and linger over casual conversation. She caught Niko staring at his phone, ignoring everything and everyone else until a chime indicated he'd received a text. He read the message then spoke for the first time in more than an hour.

"Go downstairs and get dressed, Evie."

Confused and becoming frightened, she nodded and headed for the locker room. Niko accepted the gesture instead of pushing for a verbal response, confirming her suspicion that something had gone terribly wrong.

Her entire body trembled as she quickly dressed. Niko didn't say a word when they left the club and drove through downtown Tampa. She stared out the car window and

fretted. He didn't tell her where they were going and headed in the opposite direction of the estate.

What the hell is going on?

He pulled up at the familiar entrance of the hotel where she'd stayed last year during the erotica convention and her heart beat double time. Why the hell had he taken her to a hotel?

She didn't get to ask. No sooner had the car come to a stop than the valet was there, opening her door and handing Evie out of the car. Niko joined her, his warm hand at the small of her back as they walked into the lobby having a soothing effect on her frazzled nerves.

The doors slid open with a whoosh and they stepped into the plush entryway. Evie glanced toward the piano bar, and if not for Niko's quick reflexes, would have fallen flat on her face.

Hundreds of calla lilies stood tall and elegant in beautiful crystal vases. Near the gleaming black piano a quartet of musicians played a romantic tune. At the center of the room champagne flowed through a fountain. And gathered around the fountain were a group of people who had become very important to her over the past year.

Sir Cain hovered close to Michelle, just as Master S stood by Tina's side. At the center of the group, Gage flirted with Amanda who held court, probably asking the Doms a million questions.

Niko watched as a variety of emotions flickered across Evie's sweet face—shock, confusion and then her curious nature he so enjoyed kicked in. The questions flowed rapid fire as her slender fingers danced across her collar.

"What is going on? Is this a party? When did you arrange all this? How? Niko, what have you done?"

He guided her into the room, stopping a short distance from their friends and increased her shock by dropping to one knee and taking hold of her fluttering hands.

"W-what are you doing?"

"I fell in love with you right here, Evie. This very spot. And tonight you paid me the honor of agreeing to wear my collar." Rubbing his chest where it ached, he stared up in the bright amber eyes of the woman he loved.

"You are in my heart, part of my soul. I love you with all that I am. And now, on bended knee, I pray you will honor me once again..."

He removed a velvet box from his pocket, opened the lid and placed it in her hand. Inside rested the ring he'd had commissioned along with her collar.

"Evie Sloan, will you marry me?"

Murmurs and a squeal of delight came from their group of friends. Niko hardly noticed. His entire focus remained locked on Evie—his best friend, submissive lover, and hopefully his soon-to-be wife.

"Give the man an answer," Gage called out.

"Say yes, Evie." Amanda encouraged.

Tears streamed down her face and she fell into his open arms holding him so tight Niko had trouble breathing.

"One condition." Her raspy voice made his heart drop down into his stomach.

A condition? What possible bargain would she require to marry him?

"Anything!" The desperation in his tone startled Niko, but he would do whatever it took to make Evie completely his.

"We have to go shopping. For a house. A regular house. No more estate. I want a place that's ours."

Niko didn't have to think about it. "Done. Now give me your answer. Will you marry me?"

"Niko Kovalenko, I love you with all that I am. Yes! I'm all yours, Master. Always have been...always will be."

Their kiss was interrupted by the well wishes of their friends who crowded in around them. He reluctantly released Evie to receive hugs and congratulations.

Earlier, while Evie had gotten ready for the collaring ceremony, Niko had enlisted their friends help to hastily organize this celebration away from the club. He'd intended to spend the evening celebrating with their closest friends but his fiancée kept giving him long speaking glances full of barely restrained fire and passion. He couldn't wait any longer to have her.

Her eyes heated, darkening as he approached. She watched him closely while still talking with their friends. Niko didn't hesitate. Grasping her hips, he tossed her over his shoulder and stalked out of the bar. Their hasty exit was marked by catcalls and wolf whistles, along with her musical laughter.

Once he had her to himself in the relative privacy of the elevator, he allowed Evie's body to slide down his, hissing at the friction along his engorged cock.

"Are we skipping ahead to the honeymoon?" she teased.

"I need you," he growled. The primitive sound had the desired effect—she melted into him. Her soft curves fit the hard planes of his body as if made for him. Only him!

"Then take me...I'm yours!"

He had no idea how they managed to make it to the penthouse. Discarded clothing littered their path from the elevator, through the suite and into the luxurious bedroom. Evie dropped to her knees and assumed her submissive pose.

"No. Not tonight, *moy kotik*. No rules or play, just the two of us, making love."

She was on her feet and launched herself into his arms almost too quick for him to react. Niko held her close as they crashed onto the big bed. Evie wasted no time in putting her hands, lips, teeth and tongue to work. They consumed each other, sharing crazed kisses and fast becoming drunk on passion.

Sliding down his body, she stopped to lick and nip at all his erogenous zones along the way. He understood her intention, but Niko didn't want to lie back and receive. He needed to participate.

"Evie," he gasped as her tongue dipped into his navel. "Turn around. I'm hungry too."

"Mmm." She hummed against the head of his cock and he couldn't prevent his hips from thrusting forward.

"Hurry, *moy kotik*. I want to taste your sweet pussy."

Twisting around, she straddled his chest, never letting go of her prize. Evie stroked his cock with the exact firmness he enjoyed and wiggled her ass in his face as she moved over him.

Grasping her hips, he pulled her down, knowing this first time would be fast. Once they took the hard edge off their desire they would slow down, savor each other.

Evie sucked in a sharp breath as Niko parted her folds with his thumbs and his tongue blazed a path from her anus to her clit. "Damn, I love this position."

As much as she enjoyed being dominated by Niko, she cherished the occasions when they both relaxed and just enjoyed each other. She pumped her fist over his thick shaft and blew a hot stream of air over the head, thrilled as his cock jerked within her grasp. Long and covered by the most wonderful ridges and plump veins, sucking his cock was a treat she craved.

As her fist slid up, twisted then descended, light glinted off the ring now gracing her finger. Shiny platinum, blood-red rubies and sparkling diamonds. A perfect match for the collar she wore. And to think she'd been worried he regretted collaring her.

Idiot! Niko's odd behavior had meant the exact opposite. He offered a lifetime commitment.

Mmm...and one hell of a trip to paradise. Lord, the things he could do with that wicked, sexy mouth. How did he expect her to focus on his cock while he noisily slurped at the cream gushing from her needy pussy? He captured her clit with his teeth and applied the most mind-numbing suction with his lips, making Evie forget everything else.

"Yessssss," she panted. The tension in her body coiled as he took her to the edge. One more swipe of his tongue and he'd send her over. And she didn't have to wait for permission since Niko wasn't being dominant. All she had to wait for was that last push.

The one that never came.

"Niko!"

"I'm dying here, Evie. Suck me!"

Oh, right. She was supposed to be thinking about him, giving him pleasure in return. "Sorry, you distracted me."

Determined, Evie lowered her head. She set out to tease and excite all of his most sensitive spots. Wiggling her tongue around the prominent ridge separating crown and shaft elicited a deep groan. Lapping at the small band of nerves on the underside had his hands clenching on her thighs. Taking him to the back of her throat set his hips in motion.

A rather naughty idea settled into her head as Evie recalled an exciting scene from a book. The restrained submissive receiving a blowjob from another sub had been unimpressed until a finger had been inserted in his rectum. After a few slow thrusts he came so hard that he passed out.

Making such a bold move into uncharted territory was liable to earn her a punishment. In Evie's eyes, that made it a win-win idea. Niko's form of erotic discipline always resulted in incredible pleasure.

She released his cock and sucked a finger into her mouth getting the digit nice and wet. Evie struggled to curb her excitement and take it slow. Cradling his balls in her palm, she glided her damp finger along his perineum to externally massage his prostate. The tensing of his body and increased moans encouraged her to continue.

The first time her fingertip circled his anus Niko mumbled a warning that vibrated through her clit and had her rocking against his mouth. When he settled back in to his task, she circled the puckered hole a few more times.

Oh, he liked that. Niko's tongue whipped over her clit and he held her thighs in an almost painful grip.

Evie sucked him hard, hollowing her cheeks as she drew back on his cock. When only the head remained, she flicked her tongue over the slit, earning her another wicked sound vibration. Taking a deep breath, she simultaneously sucked his cock to the back of her throat and plunged her finger into his ass.

Niko howled and thrashed beneath her but she hadn't even located what she searched for yet. On the next pass she thrust deeper and her fingertip glanced over the small round protrusion—his P-spot. There was no doubt she'd found it. Niko went wild beneath her. He twisted, turned and bucked like a crazed bull as she gently stroked the sensitive bundle of nerves and held on for the ride.

Semen exploded from his cock with none of the normal warning signs. Hard pulses of the hot and salty fluid burst into her mouth and Evie greedily swallowed down every last drop. His violent climax drew her along, sparking her own stunning release.

His body went limp as Niko slowly recovered from the incredible climax. A prickle of jealousy assaulted him. Who the hell had taught his pet to tickle a man's prostate? He'd kill anyone who'd touched her.

The possessiveness surge sparked a brief moment of humor. He trusted Evie and knew she hadn't been playing with another man. The curious wildcat had probably learned the move from one of her books and decided to try it out on him. Damn if it didn't feel good, too.

When he finally gathered the strength to move, he dug into the toy bag he'd had Cain stash in the room. While he'd thrilled in every second of their oral play, the need to dominate Evie rode him hard. And he just so happened to have what had become his favorite implement of disciplining his headstrong and mischievous sub.

"Oh holy crap." Evie cursed when she noticed what he held.

Ah, good. He had her full attention. She only used that particular phrase when she felt shocked or knew she was in hot water. And his feisty sub had a healthy respect for his leather slapper. While the sting was no worse than the crop produced, the three leather bands of the slapper created an amplified smacking sound she found intimidating to the extreme.

He set the toy down on the bed within her field of vision, allowing her anticipation to grow, then returned to the bag and plucked out leather restraints.

"You said we were going to be vanilla tonight."

Her pretty pout made him pause and almost stopped him. "On your knees, *moy kotik*. Face the head of the bed."

She scrambled into position, remembering to keep her knees shoulder width apart and clasping her hands behind her back.

Moving to the side of the bed, he tenderly stroked her cheek. Unable to resist temptation, he tilted her chin and claimed her mouth in a searing kiss that left them both panting for more.

"Give me your hands."

Bold and trusting, she held her hands out to him. Niko wrapped each slender wrist in a leather cuff then ordered her to grasp the headboard, where he secured her arms to the bed.

When he had her in position, shoulders down, ass in the air, he moved to the foot of the bed. Evie waggled her butt enticingly.

God, he loved the way she always challenged him. She was a dream he'd never believed could come true and he intended to spend the rest of his life showering Evie with his complete devotion and undying love.

"Are you ready to have some fun, *moy kotik*?"

"Oh yes, Master. I'll always be ready for you."

About the Author

Nicole Austin lives on the sheltered Gulf Coast of Florida, where inspiration can be readily found sitting under a big shade umbrella on the beach while sipping cold margaritas. A voracious reader, she never goes anywhere without a book. All those delicious romances combined with a vivid imagination naturally created steamy fantasies and characters in her mind.

Discovering Ellora's Cave paved the path to freeing them, as well as manifesting an intoxicating passion for Romantica®. The positive response of family and friends to her stories propelled Nicole into an incredible world where fantasy comes boldly to life. Now she stays busy working as a certified CT scan technologist, finishing her third college degree, reading, writing and keeping up with family. Oh yeah, and did we mention all the hard work involved with research? Well, that's the fun job—certainly a labor of love.

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

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