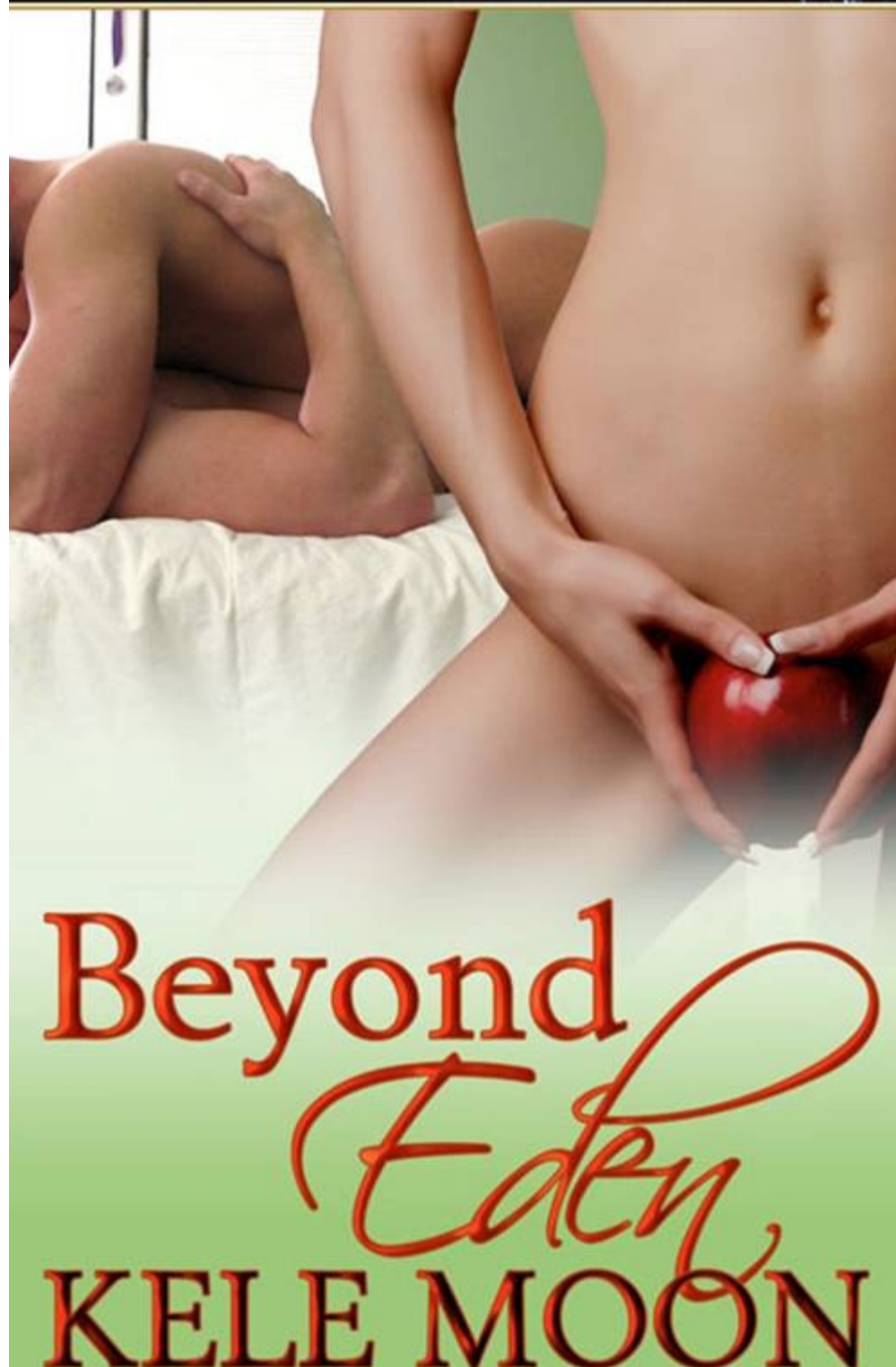


ELLORA'S CAVE TABOO



Beyond Eden

Kele Moon

Three lifelong friends find themselves tangled in a web of love, pain and dangerous secrets in this erotic Garden of Eden tale.

Tall, dark and handsome Danny Carlow has always gotten whatever he wants except for the two he wants more than anything – his best friends, lovers Paul and Eve. Determined, he waits like a snake in the grass, poised for the right moment to offer them a temptation too delicious to resist.

Artist Eve Everton makes the painful decision to leave her true love Paul for the siren call of New York City. Ten years later, with her life in shambles, she returns. When Paul's waiting arms aren't available, Eve falls for Danny's charm and finds herself a willing accomplice in the dangerous games Danny plays.

Former college football star Paul Matting is now a successful attorney with a bright future ahead of him. But behind those brilliant blue eyes are secret desires for a taste of the forbidden. Will he play it safe or give in to Danny and Eve and bite the apple?

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Beyond Eden

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BEYOND EDEN

Kele Moon

Dedication

To my soul mate Johnny Stansel, for solidifying my belief in true love and happily ever afters. I love you – always.

Special thanks to:

Lori Toland for being an awesome critique partner. Thank you for constantly challenging and supporting me. That summer of writing is such a fond memory and now we both have published stories to show for it.

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Saarene for always being there whenever I need a second opinion. I will forever appreciate your honest feedback.

To the late Jack McGeorge, who was so generous with advice and information. It meant a lot. Thank you.

Trademarks Acknowledgement

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Camaro: General Motors Corporation

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Mustang Cobra: Ford Motor Company

NASCAR: National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, Inc.

Sears: Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Prologue

"I'll write you every day."

"Good," Paul said, running his lips over the smooth, flat plane of his girlfriend's stomach as desire and heartache collided inside him. "I'll miss you so much."

His voice caught and he squeezed his eyes shut, willing away the tears that were threatening. He was the son of a military colonel who never tolerated signs of weakness. The ability to cry had been forced out of him at a very young age but this was more than fists could destroy.

He lifted his eyes, staring at the girl who held his heart in her hands. He had loved Eve Everton for as long as he could remember, even when she was nothing but a runt of a girl with long, skinny legs, tangled red hair and bright green eyes that seemed too big for her face. The two of them had grown up together, had run barefoot through the marshes of Tampa side by side as they fished and played tag through the whole of their childhood.

She wasn't a little girl anymore. She was eighteen, an adult who was ready to spread her wings and leave for New York, taking his heart and soul with her. He stared at her face hungrily, studying the freckles standing out on her nose that was peeling from too much Florida sun. Her red hair was braided into pigtails, making her appear both cute and incredibly sexy at the same time. Her green eyes were vibrant in the near darkness of her room, lit up only with the moonlight filtering in past the open window.

He cupped one of her bare breasts that were surprisingly full when she was still long-legged and slim. He leaned down, sucking one taut, pink nipple into his mouth. A shiver of pleasure rolled down his spine when Eve gasped and arched into him, her fingers tangling in his hair.

"Come with me to New York," she pleaded as she tugged at his hair. "Please."

He crawled over her until his face was hovering above hers. "I can't," he choked, feeling the sting of tears once more. "My father —"

"Fuck your father," Eve said passionately, her green eyes flashing in fury. "He's an asshole and you're eighteen. You can do whatever you want now."

He winced, not knowing how to explain the conditioning of his childhood to her, one that brainwashed him into complete obedience of his father. "I got a football scholarship to USF. You don't want me to give that up, do you?"

"You're brilliant," she said with an adoring smile, making deep dimples appear in her cheeks. "You could get a scholarship anywhere. Play football in New York."

"Does the Academy of Art have a football program?"

"Well, no," she said, lowering her eyes, her full eyelashes falling like half-moons over her cheeks. "But you're smart. You could probably get a scholarship without football."

"We've had this discussion a million times. Let's just enjoy each other tonight," he said softly, running his hand over her forehead, brushing at a few stray wisps of hair that had escaped her braids. Her forehead was also peeling. Paul smiled and tapped at her nose. "Sunscreen is your friend, freckles."

"Shut up," she gasped, covering her nose with her hands. "I know I'm hideous."

"You're beautiful," he said, laughing when Eve tried to roll away from him.

"No, look away, look away." Eve managed to turn over on her stomach beneath him. She kicked her feet, trying to squirm out from under him, but his heavy, muscular body made it impossible. "I'm a terrible beast."

"No, you're not," he said, leaning down to run his lips over her bare shoulder. "You're perfect."

She wilted then, her body becoming pliant beneath his. He trailed his lips down the line of her spine and reached beneath her, cupping her breasts with both hands. Eve moaned, pushing her hips back invitingly.

"You're naughty, Evie Girl," he whispered as he moved down her body, now nipping at the dip in her lower back. "You want me to fuck you from behind?"

"Yeah," she said in a breathy sigh. "I like it like that."

They were both naked, their bodies sticky and sweaty from the stagnant, muggy air of the hot August night. They had been doing this all night, fucking and teasing each other, pushing themselves to exhaustion in hopes of building up their stores of love and lust to sustain them for the long separation they were forcing upon themselves.

He grabbed her hips, tugging on them gently until Eve got up on her knees. She moaned and stretched out like a lazy cat with her hands spread wide on the pink comforter and her ass high in the air. He admired the long, sexy line of her back as he leaned into her, cupping her nicely rounded ass.

"You've got the whitest ass ever," he said as he fondled both cheeks in his large hands. "I'm being blinded."

"Shut up, shut up," she whined, pushing her hips back against his. "Fuck me. Do me until I die from the pleasure."

He closed his eyes as amusement and lust collided together inside him from her words. He slid his hand down, following the crack in her ass until he reached her warm, wet pussy. He pushed one finger inside her, savoring her lazy moan.

"Are you sore?" he asked in concern. They had been fucking for hours and he was built as big as Eve was small. He knew from experience he could leave her very uncomfortable for several days if he wasn't careful. "I don't wanna hurt you."

"I want to be sore," she said softly. "I want to feel you when I'm all alone in New York without a friend in the world."

His heart clenched at her words and there were a million responses on his lips, some said he was sorry, others disobeyed his father and told her he would go with her but all he said was, "Okay."

He grabbed her hips and guided himself into her. Eve gasped when the head of his cock entered her. "Slow, Paul Guy. I want it to hurt so good."

He bit his lip as the feeling of her warm, tight pussy around his cock caused every instinct he had to jump alive and urge him to push into her hard and fast. But his life had taught him nothing if not how to follow rules. He moved into her aching slow as she moaned beneath him.

Eve shifted, bringing one hand up to where their bodies were joined, her fingers running around the base of his cock as if she were memorizing the feel of him buried inside her. Then she started rubbing her finger against her clit, doing it harder and faster than he would have. Her moans became low and throaty. Her body started clenching around his and it was driving him insane.

"Can I move?"

"Go crazy."

He started moving slowly but firmly inside her. Each thrust was done with purpose and her moans were getting louder the longer they did this slow, torturous version of mating.

"Your mother," he reminded her when she got too loud for comfort. "Shhh."

She groaned, her head falling forward heavily, her braids flopping down to either side of her face as she buried it in the comforter. Paul felt a fresh surge of desire pulse through him. Eve had been his only lover. They had discovered the joys of sex together, and when she touched herself like that it drove him wild.

"You're hot," he panted, moving in her faster because he couldn't help himself. "I like when you get yourself off."

She moaned, pushing her hips back in a counteraction against his as her fingers moved fast and furious over her clit. Paul felt sweat roll down his back and drip from his temples. His body was tense with the need to come as his balls tightened and his gut clenched. As a distraction, he bit down hard on his lip but it only added to the blinding pleasure that was going to force him to finish before he was ready.

She suddenly threw her head back, choking out, "I'm coming."

He gasped in relief and started fucking her without restraint. Eve climaxed with a muffled scream into her comforter. Her pussy started to spasm around his cock, milking him and forcing him to follow her over the edge.

Paul's head fell back and he bit his lip once more to keep silent as his orgasm slammed into him. Pure, unrestrained bliss pulsed through his body and he shuddered from the force of it. Despite his efforts to avoid it, a small groan burst out of him as his stomach muscles clenched repeatedly from the pleasure radiating through him.

Eve collapsed beneath him, forcing him out of her as she sprawled on the bed. Her neck was flushed, her bare back glimmered with sweat and she appeared completely heedless of the wet stickiness smeared between her thighs.

He sat crouched on his knees between her spread legs and stared down at her in concern. "Do you want a towel?"

"Whatever," she said breathily. "God, I'm sleepy."

She was so carefree, completely different from most of the prissy girls they had gone to school with and he adored that about her. He ran one large hand down her back, tracing the curve of her spine. "I love you, Evie Girl."

"Love you too, Paul Guy," she said softly and then turned her head to look back at him. "Come to New York with me."

"I'll lie down with you instead," he said, crawling over to her. If she could lie in the wet spot, he could too. "I'll hold you until you fall asleep."

"Will you be here when I wake up?" she whispered, resting her cheek on her arm as she stared at him with green eyes shimmering with tears.

He gave her a sad smile. "No, but I'll wait for you while you're in New York. Even if it takes you twenty years to come back home, I'll wait for you."

"You're a liar," she said, her full bottom lip jutting out miserably. "This is it for us, isn't it?"

He felt the truth of her words in his heart. He knew she was right. This was the end of the road for them. Both their childhoods ended at this moment and they were walking into adulthood with broken hearts.

He let his head fall sideways, resting it against her shoulder. "I promise I'll love you forever... Never, ever forget that."

"I won't," she whispered. "I'll love you too. Always."

Chapter One

Ten Years Later

Fresh from the gym, sweaty, with no makeup on and her hair tied into a messy ponytail, Eve walked down the aisles of the grocery store, listening to her mother rant on the cell phone about a recent scandal in the church. It seems the youth pastor had left his wife of thirteen years for a twenty-year-old girl who, until her true colors were revealed, was one of those girls Eve's mother would look at with glowing eyes and wish until her dying breath her only daughter would be more like.

Eve's life had sunk to such levels that she was enjoying the scandal and listened with a curious ear rather than blow her mother off. Eve paused in the aisle, her mother's voice droning on, and realized this was the most interesting thing that had happened to her all day – some twenty-year-old getting it from a youth pastor.

She was getting a buzz off someone else's sex life instead of her own.

"Does the girl not care that the man has children?" her mother asked, her shrill voice pulling Eve back to reality.

"Why are you blaming her?" Eve shook her head to clear her morose thoughts and picked up a box of bran flakes, staring at the label more as a distraction than anything. "He's thirty-something and Sara's just a girl. Why not blame him?"

"You know men can't control themselves," her mother said dismissively. "And twenty is old enough to know better. Her poor mother, she'll never be able to show her face at church again."

"Mom, I gotta go," Eve mumbled, putting the bran flakes back because she found herself appreciating the high fiber content. She was getting boring and old. That was not supposed to happen. "What was I getting you again?"

"Vanilla ice cream. I'm making apple pie for the ladies group. You should come. I'm hosting this week."

"Not likely," Eve said, her eyes widening at the thought. "Your churchwomen's meetings are what my specialized version of hell is going to consist of."

"I wouldn't joke about that."

"Vanilla ice cream, got it," she said, ignoring the rest and hanging up before her mother went off on a rant about Eve's sinful ways.

"Evie Girl?"

Eve gasped in surprise, her heart jolting from the nostalgia caused by a nickname she hadn't heard in a very long time. The smooth male voice was too close for comfort and she moved away instinctively before she spun around. Her jaw fell slack as she stared up at the tall, dark and handsome man standing in front of her.

This was not happening. She was not running into Danny Carlow, one of the sexiest males to walk on two legs, when she was an utter mess from the gym and her life was in shambles. As if that wasn't bad enough, he also happened to have been Paul Matting's best friend since kindergarten. She hadn't seen her ex-boyfriend since she was eighteen and this was *not* how she wanted to be reported about to Paul ten years later.

"Hey, sweetheart," Danny said, a grin tugging at his full lips as his eyes ran over her. "I've been following you from the produce section. I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought you were in New York."

"I was." Eve absentmindedly tried to smooth the wisps of hair escaping her ponytail. How very typical that she should meet Danny when she looked her worst and he was still devastatingly handsome, perhaps more so than she remembered because age suited him. Even in a black t-shirt and jeans, he wore an air of self-confidence in his own attractiveness that left Eve feeling plain. "Things didn't, um—work out like I planned. I'm back home for the time being."

Danny ran a hand through his dark hair that was shorter than she remembered. His eyes ran over her appraisingly and Eve wished they wouldn't because he had her feeling awkward and sixteen again. He was tall and lithe, all hard, cut muscles and tan skin. His mother was Cuban and he inherited all the best her people had to offer. His heritage showed in his full lips, his nicely arched eyebrows and in the smoldering fire of his dark, bedroom eyes.

Life changed nothing. Eve still felt inadequate next to him. She had been a goddess in New York, finally confident in the beauty God had given her, but facing Danny had her feeling like the thin, geeky girl she had convinced herself she was throughout her adolescence. She hated that she was shamefully flattered he had followed her, even though they had once been the best of friends. His handsomeness and raw sexuality left her feeling like she was lucky just to be around him.

"That's a shame," he said, his voice rolling like silk off his tongue. "Because it looks like New York suited you. You look fantastic."

Eve rolled her eyes and laughed self-consciously. "You're still full of shit."

He didn't have a chance to defend himself because she launched herself at him and hugged him. Not because he was beautiful and she wanted an excuse to touch. She had really missed him, more than she ever realized. He had been one of her best friends too once upon a time. She, Danny and Paul had been like the three musketeers from grade school all the way up until they graduated from high school.

She inhaled the alluring scent of cologne mixed with the slight tinge of tobacco clinging to his shirt. His breath was warm on her skin as he buried his face into the curve of her neck, smelling like Cuban coffee and mint. His scent was the best of Tampa and she hated being home a little bit less as she clung to Danny. Cuban coffee, cigars and sexy Latin men, hating Tampa was impossible, even if being back there meant she'd failed at her dash for freedom from an oppressive mother.

"It's great to see you," Eve said, her face hurting from smiling so broadly. "I can't believe you're still in Tampa."

He shrugged, an easy, graceful gesture that caused the strong muscles of his arms and chest to shift subtly. "It's not as exciting as New York, but I like it here. I never felt like leaving."

"Wow." Eve floundered under the weight of her shock at seeing him. Danny was like riding a bike, the feelings she had around him were something her body and mind didn't forget. "Have you seen Paul?"

Eve asked it automatically, because she couldn't see Danny and not think of Paul. Even if she was horrified at being found when she was at such a low point in her life, a part of her heart that was still just for Paul swelled at the thought of seeing him again.

"Seen him?" Danny laughed, pulling back in shock as if the question was ridiculous. "I live with him. He's going to freak when I tell him who I ran into."

Eve's smile turned nostalgic then, thinking of Paul. She had forgotten her reactions to Danny but Paul she thought of often. Eve would be lying if she said she hadn't been attracted to Danny but Paul had been so sweet and open about adoring her. Falling in love with him had been easy. She had become a woman with Paul and her heart had never stopped beating for him.

"I miss him."

"But not me?" Danny asked, feigning hurt.

"I've missed both of you," she admitted. "Walk with me, Danny Boy. My mother is in need of ice cream and there will be hell to pay if I don't get it."

Danny shrugged and followed obediently. "So what happened to New York?"

"Ugh, what didn't happen?" Eve groaned, hating to think of New York, but finding she still had camaraderie with Danny and didn't mind revealing herself. "The studio I worked for got shut down for tax evasion and I lost my job. My fiancé left me for my best friend and my dog died."

Danny winced. "Gosh, I'm sorry."

"Yeah," she said, shaking her head sadly. "I really loved that dog."

Danny smirked. "Dog is man's best friend."

"And woman's."

"You're not a woman, you're Evie." He draped an arm over her shoulders and pulled her close. "You're one of the guys."

"If you try to give me a noogie, I'm going to find my ice cream on my own." Eve tilted her head up to glare at him. "And I got news for you, I am a woman. I got tits and everything."

He cocked his head, boldly eyeing her cleavage that was more than obvious in the tight spandex top she had worn to work out in. "Yeah, you sure do," he agreed. "Did you have those in high school?"

"Okay, get off me," she said, pushing him away and glaring at him.

He guffawed loudly. "I'm just teasing. You've always had nice tits."

She gave him a droll look. "It's a wonder you ever get laid."

"Yet I do," he said, his arrogant, self-confident smile back. "Frequently and often."

"Frequently and often mean the same thing," she said dryly as she pulled open one of the doors to the cooler and randomly picked up a vanilla carton. "Look it up."

"I've missed you. Come over to our place tonight."

Eve arched an eyebrow at him. "I missed you too, but not quite that much."

"Ah, no, Evie Girl," he said, shaking his head and sounding genuine. "Just for dinner. We'll have a few beers and catch up. It'll be nice."

Ordinarily, Eve would try not to be so eager. But hadn't she just been mentally moaning over her lack of social life and also happened to be in desperate need of an excuse to get out of the house before the women's meeting?

"Yeah, sure, great," she said rapidly, reminding herself of sixteen again. She pulled a face of distaste. "But I don't drink beer."

Danny pulled back with a wide, dark-eyed stare. "Sure you do."

"My tastes have evolved."

"Oh well, excuse me, Miss New York," he said, raising his voice and putting on a mock act of being impressed. "I'm sure we have some wine lying around somewhere."

Eve cringed internally at the thought of what sort of wine they had, envisioning something with a screw-off cap and said, "I'll bring the wine."

"Great." Danny grinned broadly enough for Eve to be flattered. "Give me your number."

They exchanged cell numbers and Danny hugged her once more when she made an excuse about melting ice cream. Eve did cave a little then, closing her eyes when his arms wrapped around her. She inhaled the spicy, masculine scent of his expensive cologne and the underlying aroma of Tampa she had smelled before, one he wore effortlessly because it was who he was. His strong arms felt good around her slim frame, comfortable and exciting at the same time. When he released her, Eve realized dinner could be a mistake because she wasn't sixteen anymore. There was a reason Danny Carlow got laid frequently and often—sex bled from his pores and it was a trait, Eve knew just then, that had ripened with age.

* * * * *

Eve had asked Danny if they could make dinner early, because she wanted to escape the house looking decent and avoid the disapproving glares of her mother's friends over her choice of wardrobe.

Not wanting to appear too hopeful or needy, Eve opted for a nice pair of jeans and a tight, V-cut black top. She put on her favorite pair of black boots to match and inspected

herself in the mirror. She looked the way she wanted to, slightly bohemian with her heavy eyeliner and deep red lipstick. Her red hair, hanging long and loose, curled at the bottom, enough to look casual and yet sensual at the same time.

Deciding she was acceptable, Eve winced at the thought of facing her mother before she went out the door. She had never been the daughter her mother wanted her to be. As a child, she had pulled out the ribbons her mother had so painstakingly put in her hair every morning the second she had gotten a chance. She hadn't worn dresses or played with dolls like other little girls. Instead, she fished, played tag football and roughhoused with the boys of the neighborhood until dusk every day and she had very fond memories of all of it. Dolls, even now, seemed like an incredibly boring pastime.

Her mother collected porcelain dolls.

How Eve had come out of her womb was a mystery to both of them.

"Where are you going?"

Eve paused on the stairs, staring down at herself. "To the Queen's ball."

"Your sarcasm is never as funny as you think it is," her mother said as she glared at Eve from her spot at the base of the staircase.

Eve stared back at her, seeing herself in the older woman's features. Her mother was attractive, there was no question of that. Even at sixty, her skin was beautiful, her green eyes bright and stare inducing. Like Eve, she was slim, but still curvy. Though her hair was now bottle red instead of natural, it was still thick and full. Her mother had been prom queen when she'd been in school. Eve had been the editor of the school newspaper, a member of the photographers club and an award-winning artist by the time she had graduated. Not once had her mother complimented her on those achievements, it was only Eve's failures that were noticed.

"Probably not," Eve agreed as she hopped down off the bottom stair, her heavy boots making a resounding thud when they hit the hardwood floor. "To answer your earlier question, I'm going out with friends and it would be unwise for you to wait up for me because with any luck I'll be in very late."

"Aren't you going to stay for the women's meeting?" The sound of hurt and disapproval was thick in her voice.

"Let me think." Eve looked up toward the ceiling, staring at the chandelier in the foyer as she pretended to ponder the question. "No, I'll pass."

"Going out?" Eve's father asked, coming around the corner as though sensing his wife was about to blow a gasket.

"Yeah, I need a little social outing with friends," she said, embracing her father because she loved him and pitied him for tying himself to her mother for the past thirty years. "Don't wait up."

"Good, good," he said, giving Eve a broad grin which made his face warm and welcoming. "I'm glad you're making new friends. You've seemed lonely since you got home."

"I have been lonely. But they aren't new friends. I'm meeting up with Paul and Danny. I ran into Danny at the store and he invited me to dinner."

"That's good news. I always liked them," her father said brightly, still grinning and ignoring his wife's huff. "Paul could throw a ball, couldn't he?"

"He could," she agreed with a wistful smile. "It's been ages since I've seen them, so don't wait up."

"That Danny was a hooligan," her mother sniped, obviously sensing she was being ignored. "I never liked him."

"Good thing I don't care what you think," Eve snapped back, noticing her mother said nothing about Paul. He was one of those guys parents loved. Danny, not so much, but her father had liked him. He liked everyone. It was probably the reason he had tolerated Eve's mother for so long. "Bye, Daddy." She leaned forward to hug her father and place a kiss on his cheek. "I'll call if anything comes up."

Eve dashed out of the house, finely skilled in the art of avoiding her mother after so many years of practice. She was just annoyed she had to put those skills to use. At twenty-eight, she shouldn't have to deal with this level of abuse for a night out.

Eve loved New York because she didn't need to own a car, but in Tampa, where public transportation sucked, a car was a necessity. Her car was a piece of shit. A 1993 Ford Escort with no air and over two hundred thousand miles on it that she had bought for two hundred bucks the week after she had returned home. The thing was going to die soon but she had decided to drive it into the ground because it got great gas mileage.

She never thought to be ashamed of her car because it did its job, albeit a bit loudly, but she was suddenly wishing she had driven her mother's Lexus when she pulled into the driveway of the house Danny had directed her to and saw the Mustang Shelby Cobra parked in the yard. It was a pretty car, black, sleek and masculine. It matched Danny perfectly.

The house itself was beautiful, very picturesque, with its all-wooden construction, standing on stilts over a quiet lake. The driveway wasn't really a driveway but rather a big patch of open land at the end of a long, lonely road. The summer air of Florida was stagnant and muggy. Mosquitoes buzzed around as she got out of the car, the lake making them a bigger nuisance than usual. Swampy and overgrown with trees and exotic flowers, this was the part of Tampa that was still beautiful. Eve liked this setting much better than the rows upon rows of cookie-cutter houses built in neat, perfect subdivisions. As an artist, subdivisions hurt her eyes but older houses like this spoke to her soul.

The house was surrounded on three sides by a wraparound porch. Eve wondered if they had to worry about flooding when it rained too much because most of the house was over the water. This large home, made of well-weathered wood, appeared to have sprung up out of the swampy depths of the lake as if it were meant to be part of the

land. It worked with the landscape, blending in effortlessly and was mystically beautiful because of it.

Fishing poles rested next to deck chairs on the porch, a small boat was hidden in the marshy grass at the shoreline and an overturned red cooler was next to the door. Even from the outside the house reeked of testosterone. It was a place where boys could be boys and fish and drink beer to their hearts' content.

Eve hadn't fished in years. She wasn't sure she remembered how and she felt sort of stupid and awkward being there. As usual, she hadn't really thought this out. She just wanted to be out of her parents' house for an evening. Now she had no idea what to say to these men who had once been close friends. She really didn't revel in the fact that she was going to be seeing them again when her life was in tatters and they were clearly doing well. One didn't buy a car like that Mustang out there without some sort of financial success to back it up.

Despite her insecurities she walked over and fingered one of the fishing poles affectionately, remembering misspent days of her youth fishing and playing with Danny and Paul. It was nice to see they hadn't totally grown up.

"Hey, beautiful."

Eve's breath caught when she heard his voice, so smooth and lulling it caused a shiver to roll down her spine. She took a deep breath as she turned around, finding Danny grinning at her through the screen door. He had changed and now wore a nicer pair of jeans and a blue button-down shirt that was tucked in. He opened the screen and leaned casually against the doorframe, smirking as his gaze ran over her.

Electricity seemed to spark in the air as if the attraction meter between the two of them had been turned up without her realizing it. She had always been drawn to Danny. She'd have to be blind not to be, but the sparks flying now made the air around them thick with sexual tension.

Eve arched an eyebrow at his blunt appraisal of her. "Is this a date?"

He shrugged. "Would it be so bad if it were?"

She studied him thoughtfully. Danny had always been handsome, with a self-confidence that made him easy to be fascinated with, but he had never given an indication the attraction was mutual. Sure, she got to spend time with him. He did things with her he wouldn't do with his flavors of the week. With Eve, he would spend all day in a little boat, steadily getting drunker and catching fewer and fewer fish while he talked about everything from his latest romantic conquest to the comparisons between live bait and artificial bait. Yet even with all the camaraderie he shared with her she had never deluded herself into thinking he was interested in her sexually.

Eve realized now where the sparks were coming from. They were flying off him. She had finally flown within his radar and he was homing in. He put off an air of sexuality so dangerous and powerful it set off every female sense she had.

She tried to ignore the attraction. She wasn't going to be reduced to some giggling, flattered schoolgirl because Danny finally decided to be interested. If she was going to

fall into anyone's arms, it wouldn't be his. Her heart skipped a beat when she realized Paul would be there soon. She would be seeing him again after what seemed like a lifetime apart.

Eve thrust the expensive bottle of chardonnay she could not afford against Danny's chest as she struggled to hide his effect on her, trying to focus her thoughts on Paul instead. "Here's your wine."

He grabbed it, appearing completely oblivious to her internal struggle as his head lolled to the side and he studied the bottle. "Nice," he said appraisingly, his dark eyebrows shooting up. "You got good taste."

She snorted. "Like you know."

"You'd be surprised," he said, still staring at the label. "I've been known to wine and dine some real high-society types."

"Looking for a trophy wife?" she asked cynically.

"Not exactly." He lifted his dark eyes to Eve, giving her a long, lingering look that sent chills up her spine once more. "Ten years changes a lot. My tastes have evolved too."

"That sounds ominous." Eve folded her arms over her chest. "This is the part where you invite me in."

"Right." He leaned back against the door and held out his arm. Welcoming her into the house, he said, "*Mi casa es su casa.*"

She rolled her eyes as she walked past Danny. "Did your mother finally teach you Spanish?" she asked for sake of conversation as she glanced around, finding the place Danny and Paul called home clean and homey feeling in a way she hadn't expected.

He snorted. "Far too late for that. The damage was done in youth. My father was paranoid we'd talk about him behind his back, so she never taught me. Now I'm too old and set in my ways to learn. It's a shame."

"That's sort of dreadful." Eve pulled a face at him when she realized he was being serious. "Your parents are as screwed up as mine."

"Not anymore," he said, looking away for a moment as his voice hitched. "My parents are dead, Evie Girl."

Eve could physically feel the color drain from her face as images of both of Danny's parents flashed through her mind. There had never been any love lost between Danny and his father, a tall, blond-haired man, a redneck by Danny's words, who loved NASCAR and beer. His mother had been gentle and beautiful, with a lulling Cuban accent and a blind love for her only child. Danny's house had been Eve's haven as a child when she longed to escape her mother's oppressive nature. She could clearly remember Danny's mother standing in the kitchen, cooking something Cuban and wonderful-smelling and urging Eve to eat with the claim that she may waste away as she looked at her with concerned, dark brown eyes—Danny's eyes.

"Shit," Eve choked, feeling tears sting her eyes for his mother. She had never cared for his father but his mother she had adored. "I'm sorry."

Danny shrugged. "S'okay. It was five years ago."

"W-what happened?"

"Car accident," he said, shaking his head sadly. "He was drinking too much. He plowed into a tree. Killed my mom instantly. He lingered for a few days but died too. Good thing, I might have killed him if he lived."

"Your mother never learned to drive?"

"No," he said sadly, looking away once more. "I should have pushed the issue more. I knew that asshole was going to kill her eventually." Danny turned back to Eve, giving a wide, false smile. "But the good news is I'm independently wealthy before thirty."

Eve gave him a dark look. "Not funny."

"Likely not," he agreed before he studied her again. His eyes became soft and adoring, reminding Eve of his mother so strongly she had to brush at her cheeks when she lost the battle against the tears. "Mom really loved you. She'd be real pleased to know I found you again. She always thought much more of you than she did of any of the girls I dated."

Eve gave a choked laugh as more tears rolled down her cheeks. "She always had good taste."

"In some things," he said quietly. "I didn't mean to make you cry. Come on, we'll crack open this bottle and get wasted for old time's sake."

Eve jumped forward, unable to hold back for one more moment. She wrapped her arms around Danny's neck, forcing him to lean down to hug her properly as she squeezed him with all her might, hoping to somehow erase the pain in his eyes. The sparks were still there but she pushed down her reaction to them as she kissed his cheek. "I'm so very sorry."

Danny hugged her back, his strong arms squeezing her tightly as if he needed the hug as much as she needed to give it. "Missed you," he whispered into her long hair.

She kissed his clean-shaven cheek once more, her lips lingering for no other reason than the profound need to connect with him. "Missed you too, Danny Boy."

He laughed, sounding only mildly pained. "I made you dinner. Want some?"

"Absolutely."

* * * * *

Shock of all shocks, Danny could cook!

A guy who looked as good as he did and cooked too, after five glasses of wine Eve was starting to entertain the idea that he was the perfect man. She was giggly,

humming off the buzz of too much alcohol and the warm, comforting feeling of a home-cooked Cuban meal.

"I haven't had good *picadillo* in years and years." Eve pushed her plate away from her and slouched lazily in her chair as she rested her hand on her stomach. "So good but I ate too much."

"It's good for you. You need some meat on your bones," Danny said, giving her a sexy grin as he took a long drink out of his wineglass.

She laughed. "You're channeling your mother."

"Mmm, perhaps." Danny tilted his head to study her from across the kitchen table. "You're pretty good as is—do forgive."

Eve cracked up, falling over in her chair. She grabbed a handful of long red hair and studied it with mock interest.

He frowned at her. "What're you doing?"

"Checking to see if it had changed color," she mumbled, still studying it. "Nope, still red. Perhaps all the wine has you seeing blonde."

"Fuck you." He gave her a mock glare, his tone not nearly as fierce as he obviously wanted it to be. "I told you, my tastes have evolved."

"Whatever," Eve droned out, rolling her eyes as she reached for her glass of wine. She took a long drink, savoring it. When she and Danny had gone through the chardonnay, Danny got out a bottle of Tuscan red wine he had purchased in Italy. Eve knew it cost more than she would ever pay for a drink but Danny insisted and since he was loaded Eve figured why not. The two of them didn't have much else to do while they waited for Paul to get home from work. She looked at her watch, seeing it was past nine and frowned. "I thought Paul lived here."

"In theory, yes." Danny considered his own glass for a second, appearing almost sad for unknown reasons. "A lawyer's job is never done. He works overtime—all the time."

"He should be independently wealthy," Eve said as she gave Danny another grin. She knew from their dinner conversation that Danny sold cars part time but it was purely for entertainment and social reasons. He really was loaded and spent most of his time enjoying the fruits of his dead father's labor. "We should all be independently wealthy."

"This is true," Danny sighed, still frowning at his wineglass. "I miss the bastard. He's never home."

"Terrible of him."

"Exceedingly so," Danny agreed, setting his wineglass down and giving her a pointed look. "You want to go fishing?"

"Yes," Eve squealed in excitement. She used to love fishing. She was feeling sixteen again but the wine had a way of erasing the awkward memories. "I would love it!"

"You are the perfect woman." Danny gave her another sexy grin. "I always told Paul that. Any woman who looks as good as you and loves to fish is the perfect woman."

"I can also drive a stick." Eve grinned smugly. "You know what they say about a woman who can handle a stick shift."

"I believe you're flirting with me," Danny said, laughing at her in a way that didn't have her feeling self-conscious for getting caught being obvious. "It's lovely."

Eve frowned at the very odd and un-Danny-like phrase. He'd been doing that all night. His speech and manners had changed, taking on a polished, more refined air. His Southern accent was gone completely. "Lovely?"

"I hang with a bad crowd," he sighed heavily. "They've influenced my vocabulary. I was seeing a Brit for several years."

"Oh, well, nice," she said, pushing away from the table. "Was there a lake with our name on it?"

Danny stood, leaving the wineglasses and dishes where they were. "There sure is."

* * * * *

Eve practically fell over the railing of the back porch as Danny reeled in a fish and she cheered enthusiastically, "You finally caught something!"

"Not exactly," Danny mumbled, putting a cigarette in his mouth as he grabbed the line and pulled the fish closer for inspection. "It's a mudfish."

"Eww, throw it back!" she screeched in horror. "We're not drunk enough to eat that."

"True," Danny agreed, still mumbling past the cigarette. He easily unhooked the fish and threw it back. "You're still ahead. Two bass for you, nothing but shit for me. I'm keeping you around for the fish."

Eve thought that was funny, her mind going to dirty, unholy places. "For the fish," she crackled, dropping her pole and falling back to laugh harder. "That's wrong, wrong, wrong!"

"Evie Girl?"

She gasped, spinning around so quickly she would have lost her footing if someone hadn't surged forward and caught her and it wasn't Danny either. His reflexes were as dimmed as hers.

"Whoa, you're fast." Eve blinked heavily as she looked into stunned, bright blue eyes. Fear, lust, expectation, they all collided together as she stared into the eyes of the boy she had loved her entire childhood. She swallowed hard, forcing her breathing to steady and her voice to remain light. "We didn't hear you get here. Hey, Paul Guy."

"Eve." Paul stared down at her, his eyes wide and stunned as unreadable emotions flashed in them. His face was still tan, his lips lush and delicious looking. He swallowed

hard, blinking several times and then shook his head as if to clear it. "This is a shock. What're you doing here?"

"What?" She frowned, still staring up at him longingly as his big, strong hands held her waist. He was wearing a black suit and a gold silk tie. She would never have guessed Paul was made to wear a suit, but he was. She reached up, running her hands over his large shoulders lovingly because she couldn't resist touching him. Her heartbeat thundered in her ears and what seemed like a whole lifetime of memories that had him in them flashed back at her. His sandy-blond hair was cut short in an expensive, executive-type hairstyle. He was shorter than Danny by several inches but much broader. Even underneath his expensive business suit it was obvious he was extremely muscular, far more so than he was when she had left. Like Danny and fine wine, Paul aged nicely. "I see you're still yummy."

Danny snorted, coughing out smoke as he tried and failed to take another drag of his cigarette. "Look who I found wandering aimlessly down the grocery store aisles looking for vanilla ice cream."

Eve grinned impishly at Paul. "All the better for you to lick."

"I'm jealous," Danny said, frowning at both of them. "I haven't gotten an offer that good all night and I was the one who fed you and diligently refilled your wineglass."

Eve blew a kiss at Danny before she turned back to Paul, whose arms were still around her waist. "Baby, what kinda lawyer are you?" She looked at her wrist, frowning at it for a moment before she reached for her beer resting on the balcony. After two bottles of wine, Eve and Danny's fine tastes had been dimmed considerably. She took a long drink and mumbled against the rim of the bottle, "It's past eleven."

Paul snorted, giving her a handsome, boy-next-door grin that made her heart flutter. "How much have you had?" he asked, frowning at the bottle in her hand. "And I got news for you, Evie, that ain't wine. No matter what this asshole tells you."

Eve pulled back, looking at her bottle of beer with mock indignation. "No shit?"

Paul laughed, the sound warm and masculine, sending a small shiver shimmering down her spine as more memories of him assailed her.

"No shit," he said, his blue eyes dancing in amusement as he looked down at her. Eve didn't miss the way his gaze flitted over her body. "You're a very nice surprise. I thought you were still in New York. When'd you get home?"

"Mmm," Eve hummed, pushing away from Paul to take a deep breath. She wavered and realized she was actually quite drunk. She was unable to deal with the sudden rush of longing caused from hearing Paul's voice and feeling his large, strong hands on her waist. She backed up to get away from the scent of his cologne that was earthy and enticing. "New York sucked." She looked down at her hands when her eyes stung. She thought about the disaster of her last relationship and the fact she was living with her parents once more. Then her inner musings turned to Danny's mother, gone for the past five years without her knowing it. "Why'd you let me go, Paul Guy? You weren't supposed to do that."

Paul sighed, looking away from her, his broad shoulders slumping. "Going to New York was your dream. What kind of friend would I have been to hold you back?"

"Thanks tons," she mumbled, blinking furiously to fight the tears. "I've ruined my life."

"I doubt that."

"That's why I came back." Eve looked back at Paul with hazy eyes. He was so very handsome but in a different way than Danny, whose striking, dark good looks made him seem almost unapproachable. Paul reminded her of a big, strong teddy bear. She looked at those muscular arms, those large shoulders underneath the lines of his well-tailored suit and thought it would be easy to hide from her life with her face buried against the hard muscles of his chest. "Now I'm home and trying to put my life back together," she explained and then reminded herself he was more than a friend, he was also an ex-boyfriend. She couldn't cry on his shoulder over another man. She winced, searching for some stable ground. "My dog died. He was such a sweet dog. You would have loved him."

"Okay," Paul said slowly, raising his eyebrows as he looked down at her. "Do you want me to drive you home?"

"God, no," she insisted, knowing she was in a tough situation. Stumbling back home drunk would create a headache with her mother she didn't need. "I shouldn't have drank so much. I'll just sleep in my car."

"Don't be ridiculous," he said as he cast a long, dark look at Danny. "You can sleep here."

"Is that an invitation?" she couldn't help asking, hating the sound of hope in her voice.

"I've, um—" Paul started, his cheeks flushing. He looked away, his shoulders slumping in what appeared to be genuine disappointment. "I got a girlfriend."

"Good on you," she said, hiding the disappointment easily. Paul was successful, good looking and incredibly sweet and considerate. She wasn't surprised he had found someone. "Do you love her?"

"I suppose," he said distractedly. "I'm going to have to insist you stay here tonight. Do you want me to call your mother?"

"Sure." She shrugged. "Always the boy scout. You never change."

He frowned at her. "You say that like it's a bad thing."

"You're fine," she said tiredly. "You want to fish with us?"

"Not particularly. I've been at work all day. I wanna eat and pass out."

"I got some *picadillo* left over," Danny said, his voice showing concern. "You want me to heat it up for you?"

"Yes, fine," Paul said, his eyes still on Eve. "You look real good, Evie Girl. I've missed you."

She raised her eyebrows thoughtfully and hummed over the long drink she took of her beer. "I've missed you too, Paul Guy. Probably more than I should."

Chapter Two

Danny leaned against the doorway, taking a long drag off his cigarette and watching Paul tuck Eve into bed as if she were a little girl instead of a gorgeous, twenty-eight-year-old woman. Paul's voice was soft and supportive as he reassured Eve he set everything right with her mother when he called, having used the excuse of a broken-down car rather than drunkenness as the reason she couldn't get home. His large hands were gentle as they brushed stray strands of hair off her forehead and the sides of her neck. To Danny, who knew Paul better than anyone, his emotions were plain to see. He looked down at Eve as a man starved for the sight of the girl who had run away with his heart to New York when he was still too young to understand he could lose it so easily.

As Danny silently studied them, white-hot jealousy swirled up from a dormant place inside him where he'd kept the dark, painful feelings of his youth locked away for the past ten years. It seemed like a lifetime ago he felt the crushing weight of envy and hurt but his body and soul remembered it easily. He was older, he was wiser but it made no difference as turbulent emotions swirled inside him.

"Thanks to you, she drank way too much," Paul said as he stood and looked to Danny leaning casually against the doorway. "And the smoke bothers her. It'll make her nauseated."

"No, it doesn't." Eve turned onto her side, giving Danny a bright smile. She had deep dimples in both cheeks. When she smiled, it made her so beautiful and precious Danny actually felt a stab of pain in his chest from the feelings rushing through him. Still smiling, she said in a whimsical voice, "I like the way you smell, Danny Boy. You smell like Tampa."

Danny frowned. "Is that a good thing?"

"Very good." Eve yawned, putting a hand over her mouth. "T-tomorrow, Paul Guy... We'll catch up tomorrow. It's Saturday. You don't work on Saturdays, do you?"

"Sometimes, but not this Saturday." Paul ran a hand through his hair as he looked down at Eve. "We'll catch up tomorrow. That's a good plan."

Danny glared at Paul, knowing he hadn't taken a Saturday off in at least six months but said nothing. Instead he turned to look at Eve, whose eyes were closed. She was humming under her breath, making her seem young and innocent. She looked like a goddess right then with her hair the color of dark copper, falling like a veil around her and standing out starkly against the white sheets in their guestroom. Her eye makeup was smudged, accentuating her long eyelashes resting like twin half-moons on her pale cheeks. Her hand was tucked under her cheek as she relaxed in near sleep. The scene was endearingly sweet, if not full of contradictions, which was something Danny had

missed profoundly about Eve. Once again, he reeled over the level of emotions finding her had caused. There was just something about Eve that made him want to snatch her up and keep her as his own forever.

"Night, Evie Girl," Danny whispered, still staring at her longingly as he walked over and tapped his cigarette against an ashtray on the dresser. "My bedroom is just down the hall if you need anything."

Eve hummed in acknowledgement but didn't say anything.

"If you start feeling sick, come wake one of us up. You're not a bother," Paul said in a tender voice. He turned to walk out the door, pulling at his tie and leaving it hanging loose in his collar. His suit jacket had been discarded the moment he walked into the house but his shirt and tie had stayed on when Paul became distracted with caring for Eve. He walked into the hallway with one final glance back at Eve and then he turned back to Danny, giving him a look that made it obvious he expected Danny to follow him. "We need to talk."

Danny rolled his eyes and grabbed his ashtray as he walked out of the guest bedroom, leaving Eve behind despite his body's protest against it. He smoked his cigarette as he followed behind Paul, who had un-tucked his shirt and unbuttoned it as he walked.

"How was work?" Danny asked in a light, casual manner, hoping to avoid any conversation more serious than the mundane.

"Work was work," Paul said blandly, his voice barely above a whisper as he walked into the kitchen and sat down at the table. He looked around at the dirty dishes still on the table with disdain, then lifted his gaze to Danny, his blue eyes pulsing furiously in the semidarkness of the kitchen. "Do you have a personal vendetta against me?"

"Yes, it's all about you." Danny sat across from Paul, setting his ashtray on the table amidst the dirty dishes and then tapping his cigarette against it. "I brought her home to torment you."

"You succeeded," Paul said as he started to gather up the dishes distractedly. "She does look good, real good, better than I remembered."

"Mmm," Danny hummed his agreement as he took a drag off his cigarette. He tilted his head back, blowing smoke toward the ceiling. "Did you say you wanted dinner?"

"I suppose," Paul said as he continued to work at stacking the dishes in a methodical, precise manner, making it obvious he was hiding from what was really bothering him. "This was a really bad time for Eve to walk back into my life. I think you know what bad timing it is."

"I don't care if she's in your life, bad timing or not." Danny put out his cigarette and then stood. He picked up the neatly stacked dishes and placed them in the sink. "I invited her over because I wanted her back in *my* life. She was my friend too. I've missed her."

"You should've called and warned me."

"You would have panicked," Danny said as he started work on heating up the leftovers from dinner. "I don't know why. She's still Evie. She's not going to go psycho and start boiling bunnies because you've got a girlfriend. She sounded happy for you. Of course, she hasn't *met* Trisha —"

"Don't start," Paul snapped defensively. "You've never given Trisha a fair chance."

"Paul Guy, the only gift I have in this world is my ability to read people and know what they like," Danny said as he put the *picadillo* back into a pan and turned on the stove. "And I am telling you now, if you marry that bitch, she'll make you miserable. Money, power, social standing, those are the only things that get Trisha off. You'll be jacking off to the Sears catalog within a year."

"Not all of us thrive off sex," Paul said with a snort of laughter. "There is more to life than getting laid."

Danny turned around from his spot at the stove and gave Paul a long look, his eyebrows raised as he studied him sitting there at the table defiantly with his arms folded over his chest like a petulant child. He could easily start a fight with him over that, but Danny was buzzing nicely off all the beer and wine and was too tired to bother. He just shook his head and went back to making Paul's dinner.

"I'm putting Eve on my 'to do' list," Danny said nonchalantly after a few minutes, hoping to God she was asleep and not listening to them.

"Jesus," Paul growled. "Why do you have to go after the one girl besides Trisha who means something to me when you have dozens of others who will do whatever you want?"

"Please tell me you did not just put Eve and that bitch in the same category," Danny said in a low voice as his body grew tense in defensiveness.

"I don't want you messing with her," Paul said seriously. "I'm asking you as a personal favor to me to leave her alone."

Danny turned around and glared at Paul. "The last time I left Eve alone as a personal favor to you — you lost her."

"She had a full scholarship waiting for her in New York. What the fuck was I supposed to do? Tell her to stay here?"

"You were supposed to follow her," Danny said, then turned back to cooking to avoid Paul's gaze. "If she had been mine, I would have followed her."

"Okay, fine," Paul said. "I fucked up, but that was ten years ago and there's nothing I can do about it now. Don't hurt Eve because you're mad at me. That's not fair to her."

"This is not about you," Danny said bitterly as he grabbed a plate and put Paul's dinner on it with tight, jerky actions that betrayed his anger. "This is about me. I loved Eve too. Just because I was stupid and young and willing to let you have her rather than hurt you doesn't mean I loved her any less than you did. If I could do it over again, I would have told you to fucking bite me."

Paul laughed in disbelief. "You can't commit to her and she's obviously recovering from a bad breakup. The last thing she needs is your bullshit. I can't let you hurt her because you're angry at me."

"You have an awfully inflated opinion of yourself," Danny said, looking at Paul in disbelief as he put his plate in front of him. "I already said this wasn't about you or Trisha. Marry the bitch, have little yuppie children and be happy—I don't give a fuck."

"You do give a fuck! That's what all this is about. You're trying to ruin everything with Trisha by bringing Eve back."

"I want Eve back in my life, and I think you do too. If your relationship with Trisha can't withstand that, then maybe you need to rethink marrying her," Danny said with narrowed eyes as he towered over Paul. "I'm done arguing with you. I'm going to take a shower."

"Fine," Paul said, turning around to look at his dinner morosely, a riot of emotions showing on his face.

* * * * *

Danny wasn't the sort of guy to jerk off in the shower. Self-pleasure had never appealed to him, perhaps because he had been getting laid since he was thirteen years old. Why get himself off when there was always someone around the corner willing to do it for him?

His mother used to say God gave everyone a gift, something that made them special and unique. Danny wasn't a brain like Paul, who was one of the youngest partners in his law firm. He wasn't talented like Eve, who created beautiful works of art effortlessly. There was nothing extraordinary about Danny except for his ability to find bed partners whenever he wanted them and, often times, even when he didn't.

Danny decided long ago that if sex was going to be his gift to the world, he would do his best with it. In his late teens, he started on a deliberate journey of sexual exploration with the intention of trying as many different things as possible. He had discovered that his only true kink was the high that came from getting his partner off and providing them with the most mind-blowing fuck they had ever had.

Like his mother, he had an inexplicable urge to care for the people around him and he did it the only way he knew how, by being what they desired most and doing it well. Never had someone slept with him once and not come back begging for more.

He had fucked many—but he loved only two.

Danny put his hands on the wall of the shower, dipping his head under the icy stream of water and willed the uncomfortable cold to break the sexual frustration and hurt. He had forgotten what jealousy felt like until he saw Paul fawning over Eve. As it was before, Danny couldn't decide which of the two he was more jealous of.

It brought up uncomfortable feelings from his youth when he had ached for both Eve and Paul with an intensity that had overwhelmed him, all the while watching the

two of them wade through those brilliant inadequacies of first-time love together. He had wanted both of them and had neither. It was one of those cruel life jokes—Danny could have anyone except the ones he really wanted. Instead he had drowned himself in the attentions of teenage girls easily won over by good looks and charm.

And then Eve was gone, off to New York to chase a dream even love couldn't compete with.

Paul was devastated in the wake of Eve's departure from their lives, his heart shattered, his soul injured. Danny spent years being Paul's support as he submerged himself in college and then work, doing both with a drive that would have drained a normal person's body and soul. Danny did what he did best. He cared for his best friend and ignored the hurt caused from being constantly rejected.

Let Trisha have Paul. What did he care?

Paul getting married was probably a good thing. It would finally bring home to Danny that Paul was never really going to be his. Now was as good a time as any for reality to push Danny's dreams away. His eyes were closed as he started to get into the punishment of an icy shower when he heard the bathroom door open. His head jerked up in surprise and he stared at Paul's form through the frosted glass of the shower door.

Danny's breath became trapped in his chest. His mouth went dry as a wave of unexpected lust washed over him. He reached over and turned up the hot water. When steam started billowing up around him, Danny pushed open the door and stood there watching Paul with a predatory gaze.

"She's drunk," Paul started, not meeting Danny's eyes as he pulled his shirt off and then set it neatly on the counter by the sink. "And she's sleeping, I checked. I don't want you bothering her if she's sleeping. I want her to sleep off the wine. She'll be sick if she doesn't."

Danny stood there quietly, his eyes still on Paul. He studied the lines of his broad, well-built back as he leaned over and tugged off his shoes and socks. Paul was more muscular than him, with wide shoulders, strong arms and a large, powerful chest. His eyes fell to the lines of a firm six-pack as Paul unbuttoned his suit pants and pushed them down past his hips, taking his underwear with them.

Danny was silent as his best friend since childhood stood there naked in front of him. He let his eyes take in all of Paul once more, admiring such a tempting display of masculine flesh. Paul worked hard on his body and it showed. He was exceptionally handsome and Danny never got tired of looking at him.

Paul reached out, handing Danny a gold-foiled packet he had obviously taken out of his pocket before he pushed his pants off. Danny took it and tapped his finger against it as his eyes fell lower. He eyed Paul's cock that grew long and thick as he stared at it.

"So, you're sacrificing yourself for Eve?" Danny asked, still standing at the open shower door, heedless of the water splashing out onto the bathroom tiles.

Paul avoided his eyes again and ran a hand through his thick hair rather than look at Danny. "I don't want you to bother her."

"Because I always make a habit of taking advantage of drunk women," Danny said, his voice razor sharp and icy. "How long have you known me?"

Paul winced and closed his eyes as he took a shuddering breath of frustration. "Are you going to let me into the shower or not?"

"I want to know why you want in first," Danny growled at him, his eyes narrowed reprovingly. "Give me an honest reason and I *might* let you in."

Paul's chest rose and fell as he took short pants of breath that betrayed him far more effectively than his hard cock. "S-seeing Eve has me frustrated."

"Then jerk yourself off," Danny snapped, his eyes still narrowed menacingly. "What happened to breaking the addiction? According to you this isn't healthy or normal, so what are you doing here?"

"You want me to admit I've fallen off the wagon?" Paul asked in a soft voice as he looked up at Danny, his blue eyes a storm of arousal. "You want me to beg?"

"Yes," Danny said slowly, his eyes running over Paul once more. He licked his lips and then pushed his wet hair away from his face. He tilted his head and looked pointedly at Paul's cock, now fully hard and standing at attention. "I want you to beg."

Paul squeezed his eyes shut and Danny noticed the little things, like the fine sheen of goose bumps that spread over Paul's body, making all the thin blond hair on his arms stand on end. The tautness in his shoulders was obvious, the anticipation pounding off him palatable. It was those nuances that sent blinding lust spiraling through Danny so forcefully he barely kept his casual composure. He reached up, gripping the bar on the top of the shower to hide his reaction that had his body tensing in arousal, his muscles tightening in anticipation of pouncing.

"Please." Paul swallowed hard and tilted his head back to stare at Danny unwaveringly. "It's been three weeks. I'm getting better."

"It is a record," Danny admitted reluctantly, because he wanted no part in this ridiculous game Paul had been playing with their lives. "Do you want a gold star for it?"

"No, I want you to fuck me."

Now it was Danny's turn to suck in a sharp breath of arousal as icy-hot desire poured over his body, making every nerve stand on end. He reached out and grabbed Paul, jerking him into the shower. He dropped the condom, pulled the shower door closed and then fisted one hand tightly in Paul's hair. Danny forced Paul's head back and looked down at him, seeing the way his pupils had dilated in desire. Paul didn't fight him. He stood there stoically, his breathing rapid with Danny's fingers tangled painfully in his hair. The thrum of the shower beating against the tiles, the raspy breathing of both of them, the way Paul's eyes showed his emotions so clearly, making it obvious he had suffered as badly as Danny had over the past many weeks, it all

collided together inside him and his gut clenched with the force of his lust. He needed a clear head when he was with Paul but it was impossible right then.

Danny crushed his lips against Paul's because he couldn't wait another moment and he'd given up on hope for sanity this time. He kissed him like a man starved, thrusting his tongue past his parted lips and drowning himself in the taste and feel of Paul after three weeks without him.

Paul moaned into his mouth. Danny pulled his hair tighter, making him gasp louder and he knew he was making a mistake. He should never, ever fuck him when he was this out of it but he couldn't resist him. Paul was like a drug and Danny was an addict who would never recover. As long as they both drew breath Paul could come to him and get what he wanted. It was simply impossible for Danny to deny him. Paul could use him forever and they both knew it but right then Danny couldn't even find it in himself to care.

He pushed Paul against the wall of the shower and broke the kiss to run his lips down his jawline. Using his grip on Paul's hair, Danny forced his head to the side, giving him better access. He savored the salty taste to his skin as he dragged his tongue slowly from the sensitive place behind his ear down the line of his neck. He bit hard at the soft spot in the curve of his shoulder, his teeth sinking in and not letting go as Paul's hips jerked against him and a strangled moan burst out of his chest.

"D-don't mark me. I got a date with Trisha," Paul panted, making it obvious he was barely holding on to his sanity as desire pulsed off him. "Please."

Danny ignored him and ran his tongue slowly from the center of Paul's chest up to the curve on the other side of his neck. He bit hard once more, not quite enough to break the skin, but close. Paul's knees buckled and he might have fallen if Danny hadn't wrapped one firm arm around his waist to keep him standing.

"Put your hands behind your head," Danny said in a voice that brooked no argument.

Paul put his hands behind his head obediently, his fingers threading together at the base of his skull as he leaned back against the wall and spread his legs as if he planned to stand there for a long time.

Danny admired him, with the water hitting his tan shoulders and flowing in tiny waterfalls from his chest down to the lines of his abdominal muscles. He stepped closer, so their bodies were close enough to feel the warmth off each other. Paul arched, just a hint of movement that betrayed his need to be closer.

"Your mouth is pissing me off tonight," Danny said, still looking down at Paul without touching him. "I don't want you to talk anymore."

Paul closed his eyes, his tense shoulders slumping. "Fine."

He looked gorgeous right then, with his eyes closed and his strong, beautiful body on display. Trust radiated off him, mixing easily with desire, because he knew Danny would never take advantage of him, never use his desire to be punished and hurt to do more than turn him on. Danny hoped to God Paul never revealed this side of himself to

Trisha. He shuddered to think what she would do with it because Paul was capable of being obedient to a fault. His threshold for pain was terrifying. His ability to absorb abuse and get off on it was so far beyond that of anyone else Danny had dominated it was frightening. But Danny loved him anyway and he could punish him without hurting him. He didn't feel like causing pain tonight, not when the wine and Eve had made his emotions raw. He nipped and bit his way from the soft spot at his neck down to the hard, slick muscles of his chest.

Danny dropped to his knees, making Paul suck in a sharp breath of excitement, but he wasn't going to make it easy on him. He ran both hands up Paul's sides and then wrapped them around his back as he tugged him forward and licked at the lines of his abdominal muscles. Paul groaned, his head falling heavily back against the tiles as he arched more fully into Danny's embrace.

Danny's hands roamed over Paul's body, taking his time to relearn every line and contour. He sucked, touched and bit everywhere except where Paul needed him the most. He was heedless of the unforgiving shower floor beneath his knees. Danny was captivated by the soft sighs Paul made every time he touched him somewhere sensitive. He liked his gasps of pleasure when he bit hard, feeding a fetish Danny worried about but still catered to because it was the only way he knew Paul would come back to him.

The longer Danny teased, the louder and more desperate Paul's moans became. His desire was tangible, hanging heavy in the steam as his breathing fell shallow. His steel will started to splinter as he thrust his hips forward, squirming where he stood in desperation. His fingers were still laced tightly together behind his head and his ability to beg for some sort of relief was silenced by his obedience. It created a building tension that came closer and closer to a precipice the longer Danny tormented him with touches that inflamed rather than soothed.

"Please," Paul finally choked out frantically.

Danny pulled back and studied him. Paul's pulse was beating erratically at the base of his neck as he leaned heavily back against the wall, his legs still spread to keep him balanced and his hands behind his head, showing off beautiful, thickly muscled arms.

"Please what?" Danny asked curiously as he reached out and gripped Paul's hip, tugging him forward. "You want me to suck your dick, is that what you're begging for?"

"Yes," Paul panted, opening his eyes to look down at Danny in surprise. "Will you do it?"

"I shouldn't," Danny mused thoughtfully as he held Paul's hip tightly, noticing his legs were shaking as if they were barely keeping him standing. "I didn't give you permission to beg. I told you to shut up."

"Sorry," he moaned, squeezing his eyes shut as his head jerked violently back against the tiles as if to punish himself, his hands cushioning the impact. "I-it's just been too long. I don't care about playing. I just want to be with you."

Danny tried to hide the shock and desire that washed over him. His scattered thoughts were suddenly anchored by the implications of what that one statement could mean. It was made in desperation when Paul's senses were overrun. Danny knew not to read too much into it but his heart clenched anyway.

He cupped Paul's balls, tight with suppressed desire and licked at the head of his cock without hesitation. He tasted the salty, sweet tang of pre-come and swirled his tongue over the head of Paul's cock once more.

"Fuck," Paul gasped in a low, guttural sound as his back arched.

Danny went down on him with flourish, stroking the thick length of Paul's cock from base to head as he sucked him, his mouth following his hand down, taking him deep into his mouth over and over again.

"Shit, Danny Boy," Paul groaned, his back arching against the wall as his stomach muscles clenched. "I gotta come."

"No," Danny said against his cock, releasing it for a moment to drag his tongue beneath his balls. "Not yet," he whispered against him as he licked underneath Paul's cock, up to the tip once more and then swirled his tongue over the head. "I'm enjoying you."

"I'm not gonna last this time. It's been three weeks."

"You'll last," Danny said happily. He stroked Paul's cock and pulled back to admire how thick and hard he was. Aside from his own, Paul's cock was easily Danny's favorite cock in the whole universe. "I could play with you forever and be a happy man."

"God help me," Paul groaned through clenched teeth, his hands still behind his head as he leaned heavily against the tiles, looking toward the ceiling. He took several deep breaths as Danny stroked him. When Danny took him back into his mouth, Paul groaned and slid partially down the tiles as he lost his footing. "I won't last. Fuck me now. Please, I'm begging you to fuck me now."

Danny would be lying to himself to say those words didn't affect him. His own cock swelled and twitched as a fresh surge of lust washed over him, making his brain feel fuzzy. Everything faded to white noise except for Paul's breathing, his soft moans of desperation, those seemed magnified as Danny finally let go of his cock and looked down to the shower floor for the condom he had dropped.

He snatched up the packet near the drain and stood up with no small protest from his knees that cracked from the effort. Danny ignored the discomfort and leaned into Paul instead, putting his hands on the shower wall on either side of Paul's shoulders.

"You're beautiful," he whispered longingly, admiring the way the muscles of Paul's arms looked with his hands behind his head. "I want to tie you up and keep you as my love slave forever."

"No kidding? I hadn't noticed," Paul said dully, but the rasp in his breath and the way his eyes became dark and stormy showed the effect Danny's words had on him. "Why are you tormenting me when I said I didn't care about playing?"

"Because you love it," Danny said sadly as he ran a hand down Paul's chest. He let his open palm rest against where Paul's heart pounded. He wanted to tell Paul he loved him and he could be sweet and gentle but he knew Paul would freeze and pull away from him both physically and emotionally. He steeled himself, trying to force down his emotions. "Turn around. Put your hands on the wall."

Paul did as told, turning around so his back was facing Danny and placed his open palms against the wall. Danny leaned against him, forcing Paul to bear most of his weight as he wrapped one arm around him, hugging him tightly and burying his face into the curve of his neck. He wanted to kiss and nuzzle him, to whisper endearments but he bit him viciously instead. Paul groaned, his knees buckling under both their combined weights but he was strong and resilient, he didn't trip or fall.

"I don't have any lube," Danny whispered against his neck as he ran his hand lower over his stomach and then gripped Paul's cock, stroking it firmly, torturing him when he was so close, knowing he wouldn't come. "I should go get some."

"That's okay." Paul arched his hips forward into Danny's hand. "We don't need it."

Danny closed his eyes in misery and then tilted his head to the side, resting his cheek against Paul's broad back as he brought the condom up and stared at it. At least it was lubricated, that was something. He ripped open the package with his teeth and pulled out the condom. He pulled away from Paul to put it on and then fell back over him.

"I'm going to prepare you —"

"No!"

"Shut the fuck up," Danny growled at him as he fisted his hand in Paul's wet hair and jerked his head back roughly so he could look into his eyes. "Your mouth is pissing me off again. Bite your tongue if you can't follow the rules."

Danny actually saw Paul do it, biting down on his tongue hard enough to draw blood and he pushed his head down rather than watch it. Fucking him drunk was a bad idea, because his emotions were all over the place. He couldn't rationalize with himself that it was better Paul did this with him than someone else who didn't love and care about him.

He draped himself over Paul's broad, bare back once more and brought his hand up, rubbing his fingers against Paul's lips. "Suck them."

Danny groaned when Paul did as told, taking two of his fingers into his mouth and sucking on them. He fisted his other hand in his hair once more, jerking his head back to watch him suck on his fingers. The sight made him forget his turbulent emotions as dark, deviant desire coiled in his gut, making his balls tighten painfully. His cock twitched in jealousy as Paul sucked his fingers thoroughly, his tongue swirling over the tips of them.

Danny wasn't going to last either. He needed to be in Paul as badly as Paul wanted him there. He pulled his fingers out of Paul's mouth and reached down to his firm, muscular ass, pushing both fingers inside him roughly. Danny spread him, trying to

loosen his tight hole, but with no lube and Paul clenching around him, he could only do so much.

Danny still had Paul's head wrenched back and he watched his face as he curved his fingers, rubbing them against his prostate. Paul's eyes rolled back in pleasure and his knees buckled. He would have fallen to the floor if it weren't for his hands on the wall.

Danny had fucked him enough times to know he was close, but Paul held out as Danny continued to torture him by toying with his prostate. Any other man would have given in and come all over the shower tiles from the onslaught but Paul was stronger than most. He had amazing amounts of willpower and was able to withstand the torment long enough for Danny's fingers to start to cramp from the effort.

"You want me to let you beg for my cock?" Danny finally relented when Paul's breathing had become so erratic it scared him.

"Yes!"

"Do it."

"Please, Danny Boy," he groaned, his legs and arms shaking, his breath a low, gravelly rumble. "Fuck me. Do it now. Please."

Danny pulled his fingers out of him and grabbed his hips. They had no lube and Paul was always impossibly tight no matter how many times they did this, but Danny pushed into him, feeling him stretch around him as he was enveloped in his warmth. He worked his cock in slowly rather than hurt him, his fingers digging roughly into Paul's hips to hold him still when he started pushing back impatiently to take all of Danny in him. With a growl of anger, Danny leaned forward, biting at Paul's shoulder hard in warning and Paul finally gave up the fight. His body became languid and submissive as he let Danny take him how he wanted. Paul's head jerked back against his shoulder when the bliss of being taken slowly finally outweighed his desire to be hurt and punished, causing a strangled moan of pleasure to burst out of him. The sound was Danny's undoing, shattering his last bit of civility. He gripped Paul's hips tighter and surged forward without warning, burying himself in Paul savagely.

Being inside Paul was always Danny's utopia and this time was no different. The pleasure slammed into him with such a velocity he thought he might pass out. The waves rolled over him, making his thoughts hazy as the steam of the shower left him feeling weighted.

"Fuck," Paul gasped out, pushing back against him. "That's good. Harder. Please, Danny Boy."

The sound of his name on Paul's lips had him pulling out and thrusting forward. He savored Paul's low, rumbling groan of pleasure. Danny moved hard and fast, slamming into him over and over again. Their fucking was rough and animalistic. They were both young and strong. They could handle it where others couldn't. Danny knew Paul's limits and he tested them, forcing him to bear most of his weight as he fucked him recklessly.

Danny was so focused on the pleasure pooling in his stomach, working its way into his limbs the longer he fucked him, he didn't bother to jerk Paul off. He didn't have to, Paul was moaning, his breathing labored and desperate.

"Gonna come," Paul panted as he arched back against Danny, spreading his legs wider and taking him deeper. "Right – r-right there."

Danny bent his knees a little more and angled himself in a way he knew he would hit the right spot. When he surged forward once more Paul cried out and Danny had to wrap an arm around him to keep him standing when his knees buckled. Paul's whole body shuddered from the force of his climax. He gasped out Danny's name once more as he started clenching around his cock and that was all it took to pull him down with him.

Danny felt as if he were sucker punched by the orgasm, because he wasn't ready to come yet. He wanted to enjoy being inside Paul a lot longer. Stars burst behind his closed eyes as he fucked Paul to the raging, pulsing rhythm of the pleasure pouring over him in liquid waves. The bliss throbbed outwards from his cock and radiated through his whole body, making his arms and legs tingle. He hadn't wanted it yet, but the orgasm was all encompassing and he had no choice but to collapse under the force of it. He wasn't sure if it lasted for ten hours, or ten seconds but he felt as if every ounce of energy was pulled out of him when it started to subside.

"Shit," Paul gasped out in a shaky whisper. "I think I'm gonna pass out."

Danny realized Paul was bearing most of his weight when he blinked against the shower spray and opened his eyes to find himself draped over Paul, his cheek resting against his shoulder and his arm wrapped tightly around his waist. He was also close to passing out, the heat from the shower, too much alcohol and Paul combined would easily do the job if he wasn't careful.

The two of them slid down to the shower floor, a messy tangle of hard, wet limbs. Finally Danny found himself sitting next to Paul, who had his head hanging between his knees as he took long, steadying breaths. That seemed like a good plan, so Danny followed suit, bringing up his long legs and resting his forehead against his knees as he also focused on breathing while his heart beat the hell out of his ribs.

It felt as if the shower stall was spinning even with his eyes closed. It seemed the alcohol was choosing now to rear its ugly head and point out he may have had too much to drink. He needed an anchor, something to focus his mind on as a distraction before he got past dizzy and to the actual sick part of being drunk.

"Are you okay?" he whispered once his breathing had calmed.

"I'm fine," Paul said tensely. "You know I'm durable."

That didn't make Danny feel better. He brushed his wet hair out of his eyes and turned to look at Paul in concern. "Did you eat? I know you don't eat well at work. Did you finish your dinner?"

Paul's shoulders grew tense and he turned his head, resting his cheek on his knee as he glared at Danny. "You're not my mother – or my wife."

Danny turned away from him because he knew the pain was showing on his face. "Boy scout, my ass," he whispered bitterly as he stood. "You're a dick."

"Danny –"

"Bite me," Danny growled as he opened the shower door. He stepped out and then just to be vindictive, reached over and turned the shower to ice cold. Paul gasped and jumped to his feet so fast he wavered where he stood. When he reached over to turn the shower back to hot, Danny lurched forward, pushing his hand away. "Leave it. Get used to it. Learn to love it, because you're going to be taking a lot of showers like this once you marry that bitch."

Danny shut the door harder than needed. He noticed Paul left the water cold as he pulled off the condom, threw it away and then washed his hands. No steam rose out of the shower stall and Paul didn't say anything. Knowing he was probably waiting for him to leave before he got out, Danny left.

He crawled into his bed naked, hoping Paul would join him but knowing he probably wouldn't. His heart ached and Danny realized how lonely he was. What was going to happen once Paul got married and left? Who would Danny have to take care of?

He closed his eyes. An image of Eve swam up in his mind with her long, beautiful red hair, pale skin and a soft, feminine figure that made her so nice to hug. She was as lost as Danny, stuck at a crossroads in life, and he couldn't help but wonder if their paths had crossed at just the right time. It could be destiny, but Danny preferred the idea that his mother was watching over him from somewhere and had sent Eve back to him right when he needed her.

One thing was certain—Eve Everton was at the top of his "to do" list and no one stayed there for long. Danny had made up his mind he wanted her and he always got what he wanted.

Chapter Three

Eve woke to the dull throb of a headache at her temples. She groaned, rolling over in bed, clutching at a pillow she realized with dreadful certainty wasn't her own. She blinked awake against her head's profound protest against it and found herself in a strange room. The bright sunlight filtering in through the window nearly blinded her and she moaned out loud as she looked around. The room was sparsely decorated and she frowned at the simplicity of it.

Memories surged at her then, putting her mind on fast forward. She groaned again, putting a hand to her head and rolling over to lie sprawled across the bed in Paul and Danny's guestroom.

Would she ever stop making a mockery of her life?

As if returning home with nothing to show for ten long years away wasn't enough, she had gotten herself completely trashed and hung all over Paul—who had a girlfriend.

She vaguely remembered Paul calling her mother and making up excuses for her, which made it even worse. Way to make a good impression. She had envisioned seeing Paul a million times over the years but her fantasies had never played out so horribly. She couldn't have made up a more humiliating situation if she had tried.

Someone give her a gun and let her put herself out of her misery.

"Evie Girl?"

"Lemme alone," she moaned, putting the pillow over her head. "I'm plotting my demise."

"Oh, don't do that," Danny called from the other side of the door. "Can I come in?"

"I don't care."

Eve was still sprawled out over the bed, wearing only Paul's enormous shirt for modesty. She felt Danny's eyes on her as she hid under the pillow, pushing it closer to her face, deciding suffocation would work if she couldn't locate a gun.

"You're adorable," Danny said, his voice soft and strangely full of longing. "I thought of you all night."

"Are you still drunk?" Eve asked accusingly into the pillow.

Danny laughed and the sound was endearing enough to force Eve to move the pillow aside and blink up at him. Danny stood over her, wearing a pair of faded blue jeans—and nothing else.

"Want some coffee?" he asked, raising dark eyebrows as he stared down at her. "I just made it."

"What?" Eve mumbled, her eyes wide as she took in Danny's strong, cut arms and muscular chest. He was built more lithely than Paul, reminding her of a panther rather than a bear. Her eyes ran down to his flat stomach that was defined with the lines of a very nice six-pack. His hips were narrow, his legs impossibly long. His hair was mussed from sleeping, his dark eyes sated and heavy. He was beautiful enough to make her breathless and she decided right then any world that had a man that handsome in it was worth living in. "Maybe suicide is over the top."

"I think so," he said with a sexy grin. "What about the coffee?"

"Sure," she said, pushing the pillow aside and rolling out of bed. She raised her eyebrows hopefully. "Cuban coffee?"

Danny turned around to walk out of the room, showing off a nice, firm backside that looked divine in jeans. "Is there any other kind?"

"Bonus," she said, pushing her hair behind her ears, knowing it was probably a ratted mess. "I feel like absolute hell. Hide all the mirrors. I know I'll faint if I see myself looking dreadful when you're such a nice sight first thing in the morning."

"You think so?" Danny asked casually as he walked down the long, narrow hallway.

"Oh, yeah," Eve said, very aware it was her hormones and nothing else that had her padding barefoot behind Danny in nothing but an overlarge football jersey. "I'm not awake enough to put my Danny barriers up. Cuban coffee is a necessity."

"If that's the case, you can't have any."

"Stop it," Eve said, following him into their kitchen that was spotlessly clean this morning. "Who did the dishes?"

He turned around and frowned at her. "Does it matter?"

"Not really." Eve shrugged, staring around the house again, taking in its clean, homey atmosphere. "Just trying to figure out which of you is the neat freak."

"We're both neat freaks," Danny said, pointing to a chair at the kitchen table. "Sit."

Eve sat obediently, staring bleary eyed at Danny as he poured her a cup of Cuban coffee. "Two men being so neat, I find that suspicious."

"Paul's a military brat. He was raised to be neat. Do you want cream and sugar?"

"Lots." Eve rubbed at her eyes, trying to find the will to wake up more fully. "What happened to you, then?"

"I suppose Paul was a bad influence," Danny said as he doctored her coffee for her with cream and sugar.

Eve frowned at Danny, her sleep-clogged mind doing a very poor job of figuring out why she felt as if she were clearly missing something important. "There's something different about you. I'm trying to figure out what it is."

Danny set the cup of coffee down in front of her as he sat across from her. "Let me know when you do."

"I have my eye on you," Eve said as she picked up her coffee. She took a long drink, ignoring the burn to the roof of her mouth because it tasted like heaven. She had forgotten what really good *café con leche* tasted like. "The coffee is awesome."

"Thank you," Danny said, leaning his elbow against the table and staring at her with those dark, smoldering eyes that made desire shimmer over her whenever he focused them on her. "When are you going to let me take you out on a real date?"

"Danny barriers," Eve reminded him as she took another sip of coffee. "You're not allowed to flirt until I get my defenses back."

He rested his chin on his open palm as he continued to stare at her as if he didn't have anything else to do in the world except look at her. Eve drank her coffee, arching an un-amused eyebrow at him as his look started to affect her. She didn't know if it made her want to run away or throw herself at him, but either way she was uncomfortable. She looked toward the ceiling as a distraction, seeing there wasn't a speck of dust on the fan.

Why did she feel like she had just fallen into the twilight zone?

"Where's Paul?" she asked when the silence and his staring started to cause a small, insistent throb between her legs she didn't want to have to satisfy.

"Fixing your car."

Eve frowned over the rim of her cup of coffee. "What's wrong with it?"

"It's a piece of shit." His eyes still smoldered as they ran over her face and then down to the line of cleavage that was revealed by the deep dip in Paul's football jersey. "I think it's sexy you'll walk around in only a shirt before we've done it. You're bold, I like that."

Eve gave him a look. "We're not going to do it, Danny Boy."

"Sure we are," he said, raising his eyebrows as his eyes bored into hers. "It turns me on when you call me Danny Boy. It's been only Paul calling me that for way too long. Do you think you'll scream it when I make you come?"

"I'm done with you," Eve said, setting her coffee down and standing. "My mother is probably freaking out about last night. I need to get dressed and go home."

"Oh, don't," Danny said, reaching out to grab her arm when she moved to walk off. "I'm sorry for being forward."

Eve looked down at him dully. "No, you're not."

"Okay, I'm not," he admitted with a wince as he stared up at her, his eyes reflecting a longing that surprised her. "Is it so bad that I want to make love to you?"

Eve rolled her eyes, tugging at her hand halfheartedly. "What a load of bullshit. You'll have to be a lot more creative than that to get into my panties."

Danny stood in front of her. Eve gasped when he leaned into her, trapping her against the table, his hands resting on either side of her. She could feel the warmth of his body through the thin material of the football jersey. She stared at his bare chest rather than meet his eyes because lust surged through her bloodstream, waking her up

far more efficiently than Cuban coffee could. Moisture pooled between her legs and she realized with a sinking heart it had been a very long time since she had gotten laid. Her defenses were at an all-time low.

"Okay," Danny said in a low, compelling voice that rolled off his tongue like butter as he leaned down to whisper in her ear. Eve turned her head away, but it was more to feel his warm breath against her skin that was suddenly hypersensitive and tingling. "You want me to cut the bullshit?"

"Yes," Eve said, her voice weak and breathy sounding. "Cut the bullshit so I can go home and deal with my psycho mother."

"I want to fucking drown myself in you," Danny rasped against her ear. His breathing was suddenly ragged, which sent a fresh surge of want through Eve as her pussy started throbbing to the rhythm of her rapid heartbeat. "I want to lick you until you go hoarse from screaming. I want to pass out in your arms completely exhausted from fucking you as thoroughly as you deserve and I want to wake up in the morning next to you and make you breakfast and Cuban coffee for as long as you'll let me."

Eve's eyes grew wide and she slouched against the table, tilting her head to look up at Danny for a sign he was joking. What she saw was a look so deadly serious it left her momentarily speechless.

She would be lying to herself if she didn't admit his words had washed over her like fire, making her skin hum in arousal. She felt like an insect being trapped in a spider's web, falling prey to him willingly without even a semblance of a fight. It had been a very long time since a man had made her literally breathless and if the situation were different, she'd already be naked instead of taking deep, steady breaths to keep her ardor under control.

"That's quite a proposal," she mumbled as she blinked up at him, waiting for him to say "gotcha!"

The icy-hot waves of need were washing over her, pulsing through her body with alarming urgency. She finally turned her head away because Danny was too gorgeous. He made thinking clearly impossible. Every breath she took was filled with him. Spicy aftershave, tobacco, Cuban coffee, the combination was starting to smell less like Tampa and more like pure, unadulterated sex accentuated with a face that was intoxicating to look at and a body that was completely sinful in its masculine beauty.

"I'm lonely," he whispered, his voice raw and unrestrained.

She turned back to him, trying to look past his beauty and sex appeal she knew was blocking her ability to think with anything other than her aching body. She swallowed hard as she stared into eyes that were as dark as the devil's but glowed with a kindness that was impossible to ignore. She remembered his mother again, aching anew over him losing her when he was still so young.

"What about Paul?" Eve whispered, half worrying he'd walk in and find them in the compromising situation. "Is this fair to him?"

"He's getting married," Danny said, choking on the words as he said it, making it obvious he wasn't pleased. "Trust me, he's dedicated to the bitch. He won't leave her, not after all this time. He's determined to create some sort of stereotypical, perfect American life for himself—one that will make his father proud of him."

"His father is an asshole," Eve said bitterly, remembering Paul's father, a brutish bull of a man who ruled his family with fists and pain instead of love. "Why does he still give a shit what that bastard thinks?"

"I dunno," Danny said, sounding tired. "I just know I'm lonely and finding you feels like the best thing that's happened to me in a very long time."

"You're sweet." Eve reached up to cup his cheek as a surge of caring mingled with the lust, making her chest ache. "But I just got out of a bad relationship. My life is a mess. I'm living with my parents. I got no job, no money—"

"Give me a shot," Danny said pleadingly. "I'll only hang around until you're sick of me. There're no strings, Evie Girl. You can tell me to get lost at any time and I will."

For some reason, Eve knew he was telling the truth. Danny was a lot of things but a liar wasn't one of them.

Her body throbbed with pent-up frustration so profound she could taste it. It had been a miserable year for her. She was depressed over her life, her mother was driving her insane and what else did she have to do? Sex with a charming man, one of her oldest friends, someone she was comfortable with, who also happened to bleed raw sensuality so potently she could taste it.

She would be a certifiable idiot to turn down an offer like that.

"I want to talk to Paul about it," Eve said, placing a hand against his bare chest and closing her eyes when she felt a rush of longing to caress him. "It'll be awkward if I don't. You two live together. I want to make sure he's all right with it."

"He might be an asshole about it."

"I'm going to honor his wishes," Eve said warningly. "We were in love once. I owe him that much. I think you know that."

"Fine," Danny said, his eyes flaring with something unrecognizable as he let them run over her longingly. "But let me handle him. I'll talk to him about it and if he says yes, I'll have him let you know."

Eve smiled. "Sounds good to me. That wasn't a conversation I was looking forward to."

She pushed away from him, having to forcibly move his arm from where he held her trapped against the table. She grabbed her coffee, taking a long sip of it, savoring it once more.

"This is one awesome cup of coffee," she said as she turned to leave, taking another sip because she was in dire need of it. "If the sex isn't worth it, the coffee may be."

"Eve."

She turned around, raising her eyebrows curiously when she saw Danny was following her down the hallway. He leaned against the wall, his eyes running hungrily over her body, scorching her from across the hall.

"The sex'll be worth it," he said in that low, silky voice of his that sent tingles dancing across her already sensitive skin. "I'll make sure of it."

"Make sure you do," Eve said in a low, taunting voice of her own. "I have high expectations and in my life expectation almost always leads to disappointment."

"Not this time, Evie Girl," Danny said with a sly smile. "I'm gonna rock your world."

She nodded as she pushed open the door to the guest bedroom. Her heart was pounding wildly out of control. She closed the door and sucked in an unsteady breath now that she was safely out of sight. Her body pulsed and throbbed from the images running rampant through her mind. Danny was handsome, wealthy and had the golden ability to make everything he did seem effortlessly cool. He had been easily the most popular boy in high school, one of those guys girls idolized like a rock star. He was supposed to be nothing more than fantasy material, not a man that women who lived in the real world had any chance of fucking, let alone landing for more than a one-night stand. The fact that he was suddenly realistically within arm's reach, not just available, but desperate and hungry for her to the point of begging had Eve wondering, with no small amount of hope, if her luck was changing.

* * * * *

Eve's car had to be the biggest piece of shit on four wheels. It was a miracle it was still running, though running was probably an overstatement. There were so many things wrong with it Paul felt like fixing it was the equivalent to putting a bandage on a dead man.

But he stood there anyway, with the sun shining on his bare back, causing sweat to roll down the line of his spine as he worked under the hood. The car was a hazard. If Eve had to drive it, he'd attempt to make it as safe as possible.

In truth, he was hiding from her because looking at Eve, who was every bit as radiant at twenty-eight as she was when she was eighteen, felt as if a knife were being driven into his heart. He had forgotten how much he loved her, how all encompassing his adoration of her was. Every word out of her mouth, every smile, every laugh that left her lips, it enchanted and enslaved him. Time and separation hadn't loosened her hold on him, it just made it easier to hide.

Why did she have to come back now?

He had reached the point in his life where he felt as if he were going to achieve something worthwhile. He had a law degree, a job with a successful and reputable law firm and a fiancée he was ready to marry. His parents liked Trisha. His father thought she was the woman who could keep Paul in line. She was a military brat like him. Her

father had retired a general in the Marine Corps. She came from a family that had wealth and esteem his father could appreciate.

If he married Trisha, his father might forgive him for being a pansy lawyer instead of a Marine because a linebacker with too much enthusiasm had broken his knee.

Like loving Eve enough to let her go, playing college ball had been a mistake.

Paul could have been a good soldier like his brothers. He could be fighting in Iraq instead of sitting in fancy boardrooms mediating business mergers. But he had loved football and what had that love given him in return? He was a disappointment to his family who lived and breathed for the honor to fight for their country. His brothers had medals marking them as heroes. Paul had a stupid law degree, a bum knee and a heart that beat for a girl his best friend had just put on his "to do" list.

Love of any kind had always been a bad investment for Paul.

It mattered little to him that he didn't love Trisha. He was brought up to love pain and discipline. No one ever had to know Paul still had a flame in his heart that burned brightly for Eve. Only he knew that when he had told a beautiful eighteen-year-old girl with a sunburned nose he would love her forever—he had meant it.

Trisha was what he needed, someone who shared his ideals and wanted what he wanted out of life. Success, children, social standing and parents who were proud of what the two of them could achieve together. Trisha didn't require love notes and flowers. She required a man who understood the rigors of life and was willing to endure them with her in a way that served both of them well. Trisha may not be as cuddly as Eve, but she had honor, integrity and a steel spine that had made her one of the youngest prosecuting attorneys in Tampa.

With the right planning, one or both of them could go into politics. Once they got married and had a few good-looking, well-behaved children they would have all the right ingredients to be a powerful political couple.

Paul could still serve his country and make his father proud.

"Paul Guy."

He sighed in frustration and then rested his hand on the hood of Eve's car and turned to look back toward the house to see Danny step off the porch. Paul closed his eyes as a ripple of lust washed over him. Danny was beautiful in the sunlight, wearing only a faded pair of jeans. His hair was still mussed, his eyes heavy lidded, reminding Paul of the way he looked after fucking when he was sated and lazy.

The weak link in the chain of Paul's life had the name Danny Boy etched all over it. He was his liability, his Achilles' heel. Every politician had a skeleton in their closet. Paul's would be Danny until the day he died. He wanted to hate him for carving his own niche in Paul's already Eve-scarred heart, but Danny was a hard person to hate.

Every day without Danny was a test of resistance. Every step back from him was a trial of endurance. Paul was getting better. He was slowly and efficiently building up the barriers around his heart against him. He and Trisha planned to announce their engagement next month. They planned to get married on New Year's Day. That gave

Paul six months to clear his head of Danny and all the tempting, deviant sexual activities that came with him.

Paul really doubted his country or his father would appreciate what he was planning on sacrificing for them. Once he married Trisha he planned to close off his mind and body to the fetishes he enjoyed more than anything. His one escape from the world would be gone and he was going to have to spend the rest of his days being a servant in a way that most certainly didn't get his dick hard.

That thought was almost as depressing as the knowledge that his Achilles' heel was about to fuck the love of his life senseless.

He really had to give it up for his father. When he had yelled and screamed at Paul that he could fuck up his life better than anyone, he sure had pegged it. Life didn't get much more fucked up than this.

"I need to talk to you," Danny said as he walked up to Eve's car.

Paul looked back to the engine rather than stare at Danny with the morning sun shining off his shoulders. "So talk."

"I want permission to do Eve," Danny said in a rush of breathless excitement. "She said she needs your approval. You'd do that for me, right? You won't be an asshole."

Paul looked at his watch. "Wow, that took you less than an hour."

"Will you give her permission to date me?" Danny asked pleadingly, sounding like a child begging for a new toy. "Please."

"No," Paul said, not meeting his eyes as he leaned farther under the hood and used a wrench to tighten a loose nut. "Giving Eve permission to fuck you would be the equivalent of throwing her to the wolves. I'm not doing that to her."

"I knew you'd be an asshole," Danny growled under his breath. "Why can't you do this for me? You're marrying Trisha. You can't have Eve even if you wanted her – which you don't."

Paul turned around to glare at Danny. "Wanting and having are two different things. Just because I can't have her doesn't mean I don't still want her."

"I need her," Danny whispered in anguish. "I'll die without her."

"You won't die."

"What am I going to do when you move out? I don't want to be alone. I get mean when I'm lonely. I don't want to be mean."

"You are mean, lonely or not," Paul said simply as he reached down and rubbed one hand against his shorts to get the dirt and sweat off his suddenly clammy palms. "Anyone with a pain fetish and the means to pay you two thousand dollars an hour knows that."

"That's not nice," Danny whispered behind him. "You know I'm retired. I haven't had a client in ten months."

"Are you gonna tell Eve you used to rent yourself out to kinky politicians and millionaires? Will you key her into the fact that there are rich men and women all over the world who masturbate to the memory of calling you Master?"

"No," Danny said softly. "She's not into the scene. I don't see a reason to tell her about that."

"You expect me to believe you're gonna have vanilla sex with one woman and be happy with that?" Paul asked, laughing incredulously. "I'd sooner believe you'd hang up your whip and become a priest than be convinced for one minute that you could commit yourself to Eve. You forget, Danny Boy, I know you better than you know yourself."

"I could commit to her," Danny said as his voice became wispy and enthralled. "She's beautiful and adorable. I want to spoil her rotten. She's so unhappy right now. I could take care of her."

Paul turned around to lean against the car as he considered his best friend thoughtfully. He folded his arms over his bare chest and then looked up into Danny's eyes that were unfocused in desire.

"She needs a new car. You should buy her one."

"I will," Danny said instantly as he turned around to stare at Eve's car with a look of disdain on his face. He reached out and ran his fingers over the hood of the car and then pulled back to stare at the pad of his finger that was black with dirt. "Wash this car for her. It's disgusting."

"I planned on it."

"Yes, good," Danny said, lifting his eyes back to Paul. "Are you going to say yes?"

"I might be convinced if I thought you could care for her properly," Paul went on in his best lawyer's voice. "What other things are you going to spoil her with? Are you going to buy her nice clothes?"

"Yes," Danny said, his gaze becoming unfocused once more. "Lots of them."

"Leather would look good on her," Paul said lightly, lifting his eyebrows as though considering it. "Eve hates dresses, she always has. But I bet she would enjoy wearing a nice pair of tight leather pants for you. With all that pretty, red hair hanging down her back she would look incredible in a corset and a really expensive rhinestone collar around her neck."

"She would," Danny rasped, his breath hitching.

"And you could cook for her every day."

"Yeah, I would. I'd feed her every day."

"Like a pet," Paul offered.

"Yeah," Danny said wistfully. "She's so cute. I just want to pet her and play with her forever."

"Get the fuck out of here," Paul growled, reaching out to shove Danny's chest roughly. "I'm not saying yes!"

"I'm still drunk," Danny said as he stumbled back from the force of Paul's shove. "You tricked me and you knew I was still drunk."

"You're not drunk, you twisted motherfucker," Paul snapped at him. "You are the biggest fetish whore ever and you don't even know it. I will never agree to let Eve fuck you."

"Okay, I confess I have a mild kink with domination. But that doesn't mean I don't like other things," Danny admitted with a reluctant shrug.

"A mild kink?" Paul repeated in amazement. "You did it as a profession for the last five years when your parents left you a fucking millionaire. You charged two thousand dollars because it got your dick hard to know they were paying homage to their lord and Master for the privilege of serving you. In the faraway land of leather, slaves and dog collars you are a god and you like it that way."

"I played as a submissive while I was training," Danny said as he folded his arms over his chest sullenly. "I can still bottom. You want me to bottom for you?"

"No, I don't," Paul growled at him. "The thought of you bottoming for anyone is horrifying to me."

A smile tugged at Danny's lips as he looked Paul over. "Really?"

"Yes, really."

"Why?" Danny rasped, his voice breathy. "Tell me why, Paul Guy."

"Is this the part where I admit I don't want my Master to bottom for anyone?" Paul asked in a low, husky voice as he gave Danny a sultry look. "Can I tell you that in my eyes not even God would be good enough to command you?"

"You can admit it if you want," Danny said with a grin, his eyebrows raising as he looked down at him, his eyes running over his body in a way that made Paul's cock swell. "I liked that. You said it nicely."

"You're fucked up, Danny Boy," Paul said dully, falling out of character easily. "Your mother dying made you angry at the world. The only reason you want Eve as badly as you do is because you know you're going to lose your favorite plaything and you want a new one."

"That's not true."

"It is true," Paul said as his heart clenched for Danny who was much more unhappy than Paul or Eve could ever be. "Go to the clubs. You're the best at what you do and everyone knows it. You'll have your pick of pretty pets. Find one of them to amuse you, find a whole harem because you can't have Eve. I'll never agree to that."

Paul closed the hood of Eve's car and wiped his hands on his shorts once more. The car was completely worthless. Paul couldn't believe her father allowed her to drive it. But he was planning on washing it like Danny had asked if for no other reason than it gave him something to do rather than face Eve knowing she had agreed to fuck Danny. It felt like a betrayal he would never recover from.

"I'll tell her," Danny cut into the silence. "If you don't say yes and be enthusiastic about it I'll tell her about us."

Paul felt as if an ice-cold bucket of water had been dumped over his head as fear slammed into him so violently his back went stiff from the force of it. He turned around, looking at Danny in shock, expecting to see the bluff in his features. What he saw was cold determination and a glint of defiance in Danny's eyes that told him he would actually do what he threatened.

"You do that and you'll ruin my trust," Paul said as the back of his neck burned and his cheeks flushed in hurt and anger.

"Then don't make me do it," Danny countered. "Your trust means more to me than anything in the world but you have to know I would never, ever let you hold this over me. I'm your Master. Everything you have belongs to me because you are *mine*."

"Don't do this, Danny Boy," Paul whispered as a collision of emotions shook him to his core. He was beyond furious with Danny and completely incredulous that he wanted Eve to the point he was willing to break one of the most cardinal rules of their world. But his cock was hard and throbbing anyway, because Danny hadn't been this dominating, this sadistically cruel for what seemed like ages and it made Paul hotter than he could remember being for a very long time. He pulled from years of conditioning to hide the impact from Danny because he had a genuine desire to protect Eve. "You don't wanna do this to me. You don't wanna hurt me this badly."

"Oh, but I do," Danny taunted, his voice velvety. "Are you going to cry when you hand your Evie Girl over to me? You never cry for me. I think I'd like to see it."

"Oh my God," Paul rasped, looking away from Danny when the taunt of his voice caused white-hot desire to roll down his spine. "You're not doing this."

"I am doing it," Danny said as he pushed away from the car and invaded Paul's personal space so their bare chests could feel the heat from each other. "Look at your Master, Paul Guy. I want you to look at me."

Paul's mind was screaming at him not to do it, but his head tilted back to stare into Danny's dark eyes that were glowing with malice. It was a mistake. He should have never done it because that glint of evil had his knees weak and his cock throbbing. The intoxicating clash of fear and desire burst inside him, slipping through his veins like a drug.

"You're mine—I want you to say it."

"No, I don't wanna say it," Paul choked, finding it was one of the hardest things he had done since he let Eve go to New York without him. "I'm not saying it."

"You're going to be punished for that," Danny growled in a low, furious voice. "After Eve leaves, I'm going to whip you until you bleed. The marks are going to run so deep you won't be able to fuck Trisha for a month."

Paul closed his eyes, wavering where he stood as his breath became rapid and shallow with pants of desire and fear. He had forgotten what an aphrodisiac real pain was, how badly he could ache for punishment. And he had forgotten how good Danny

really was at it. The two of them had become domesticated and vanilla since Danny had retired. Their sex life bordered on mundane. God, if Danny had been like this, Paul wouldn't have been able to stay away from him for three minutes, let alone three weeks. This was like ambrosia to his fetish. The nectar of the gods spiraled through him, making him ache and yearn in a way he hadn't thought possible again as the darkest, most deviant sides of his soul started blooming for Danny as if they had never wilted.

Paul was an idiot for thinking he could deny him anything. This was Danny he was dealing with and Paul had openly defied him. He was going to be punished within an inch of his life. He was going to bleed when it had been so long since Danny had hit him anywhere near hard enough to actually break the skin.

Paul thought he might actually come in his pants right there thinking about it.

"You want a chance to say sorry?" Danny asked in a soft, coaxing voice as he reached over and ran a finger down the curve of Paul's neck, making him shudder against his will. "Of course, I'll still have to punish you. You wouldn't trust me if I didn't keep my word. Slaves are punished when they disobey their Masters. Even beautiful, special slaves like you."

Paul looked around the yard of the house he had shared with Danny for the past four years frantically, his eyesight going hazy in desire, his mind shutting down under the waves of longing.

"You want to say sorry to your Master for disobeying?"

Paul nodded silently, still blinking frantically to keep his eyesight focused.

"Go ahead," Danny said and then suddenly reached up, fisting his hand in Paul's hair and tugging his head back viciously. Paul blinked up at Danny in shock as the pain from the grip he had on his hair made his balls tighten in the agony of denial. Danny smiled down at him when Paul's knees gave out slightly, his bad knee cracking painfully, making it hard to stay on his feet. "Tell me you're sorry before sweet Evie walks out here and finds out you're my bitch!"

"I'm sorry," Paul said instantly as the fear of Eve finding him at Danny's mercy made the desire inside him unbearable. "I'm very sorry."

"I'm so disappointed in you," Danny whispered sadly, still holding Paul's hair in a vise grip. "You were my shining star, my most cherished slave. Now you're worthless to me. I might as well go get some bubblegum twink who thinks getting a hard dick from a spanking means he's got a fetish."

"I'm sorry," Paul choked out again, feeling a fresh surge of panic rush through his bloodstream as waves of fury at himself crashed over him, making his stomach lurch to the point that he was nauseated. "I don't know what I was thinking. I made a mistake."

"Yeah, you did," Danny said with an evil laugh. "I don't think you'll ever earn back the privileges I've been giving you. I may just toss you aside and look for someone a bit tougher than you because you disgust me. I don't even want to look at you."

"No," Paul rasped, feeling a wild, frantic panic clench his heart. "I can do it. I'll make it up to you, Danny Boy. I'll do anything."

"What do you cherish most in the world?" Danny asked curiously, as if he didn't already know the answer. "What can you give your Master that will appease him and make him believe you're worthy of serving him?"

His heart clenched for a different reason and he closed his eyes, hiding from Danny rather than answer him. Giving Eve to Danny would be like turning her over to the devil. And what if she somehow fell into his good graces, what if he started caring about her more than him?

What if Eve became Danny's favorite slave?

Nausea washed over him at the thought of Eve being tied up and abused by Danny, of him hurting her the way he hurt Paul. It wasn't even the jealousy that gave him the strength to look back at Danny defiantly. It was the idea of Eve bleeding the way Paul loved to bleed.

"Promise you won't hurt her," Paul whispered in anguish. "You can't ever make her bleed."

"I would never make Eve bleed," Danny said instantly. "I hate when you force me to make you bleed. I'm so mad at you for making me punish you. I'm going to have to hurt you so badly, Paul Guy. That makes me sad. Say sorry for making your Master sad."

"I'm sorry."

"Now give me your Evie Girl," Danny said in a soft, coaxing voice. "You know you don't deserve her."

"You can't ever hurt her. No whip can touch her skin, not ever," Paul whispered, closing his eyes in misery. "If you agree to that, then she's yours."

"I won't whip her," Danny assured him. "I'll save that for you."

"Thank you," Paul choked out, feeling a surge of gratitude.

"Okay," Danny said, letting go of Paul's hair and stepping away from him. He leaned down, rubbing his hands against his jeans as he turned to look at Eve's car once more. "I want you to wash her car. It looks horrible. She's my first real girlfriend. She can't be driving around in a filthy car. Clean it inside and out today."

"I will," Paul said, shaking his head to clear it and fight the ache in his groin that was nice and excruciating.

"I'll let you tell Eve the good news." Danny said brightly, as if Paul was reporting to Eve on the state of the weather. Then he turned around to walk back toward the house with the predatory, long-legged swagger of a man completely in control of his universe. Paul's pulse raced as he admired him, his body tight with desire. "Don't jerk yourself off, Paul Guy," he called out as he stepped onto the porch. "You've lost the privilege for a very long time."

* * * * *

Wearing the jeans she had worn the night before and Paul's old football jersey she had slept in, Eve walked outside barefoot. She tried to ignore Paul's scent that still lingered on the material and the memories that came from walking around without a bra in only Paul's shirt.

The truth was, her feelings were hurt that Paul had agreed to her dating Danny. That meant he really had moved on when she hadn't. There was a reason why her fiancé in New York had been sleeping with her first and only female best friend. Eve's heart had always belonged to someone else and she had never been capable of loving anyone like she loved Paul. Even if she never admitted it, the detachment still showed.

She found Paul washing her car, which seemed like a pointless task. Washing a car that old and ugly was a complete waste of time. But she didn't complain because Paul was standing there with the hose in his hand, wearing nothing but a pair of running shorts. Her eyes grew wide as she stared at him. She took in the lines of hard muscles on display, the broad set of his shoulders, the defined six-pack of his stomach and the small line of light brown hair that dipped beneath his shorts, pointing to something Eve had spent ten years missing and fantasizing about. He was really something to look at with his wet, sandy-blond hair pushed away from his face, showing off strangely angelic features as his warm, tawny skin glistened with sweat. The rainbows of water spray from the hose made him seem surreal and Eve found herself gaping at the beauty of it.

"Hey, Evie," Paul said, casting her a sideways glance. "Nice shirt."

She smiled, but couldn't find anything witty to say as she stared at Paul, her entire body tight with need for him. "How much do you weigh, Paul Guy?"

He frowned, dropping the hose to the ground, churning up sand and mud as he walked over to turn it off. "That's off topic."

"I was just curious," she mumbled, still staring at him, watching the way the muscles on his back shifted when he leaned down to turn off the hose.

Paul grabbed a bucket near the hose that he had already filled and walked back to the car. When Eve continued to wait silently for an answer he finally said, "Two-thirty give or take."

"You look like a professional bodybuilder," she said, still staring at him in shock because he was far more muscularly defined than he had been before she left. The suit had hidden a lot. Like this, it was hard to imagine him as the clean-cut lawyer from last night. He looked like he should be paid for being gorgeous. Hiding all that male beauty behind a suit was a crime against nature. "You could be. Did you know that?"

"Oh, no," he said distractedly as he started washing her car. "I hate that vain shit, but I do the Ironman every year. It's based on endurance and skill, not looks."

"Those insane competitions where you run a hundred miles and swim open ocean?" Eve asked in horror.

"Not a hundred miles, only twenty-six. It's like running a marathon. Only the biking part is over a hundred miles."

Eve gaped at him. "That's insane. Really insane—I thought you hurt your knee. Danny told me last night you hurt your knee playing football. That's why you never became a Marine like you planned."

Paul's entire body stiffened but his voice was soft as he continued washing the car. "When you've got a permanent knee injury, there's no point worrying over it. No amount of babying it will make it go away."

"Doesn't all that make it hurt more?"

Paul lifted his eyes to her, a blush staining his cheeks. "Danny said you wanted to date him."

Eve sighed, looking away from him as his change of topic had her forgetting that he looked good enough to eat.

"He told *me* that you said you were totally fine with it," she said in a voice sharp with hurt. "The idea of me fucking your best friend doesn't bother you?"

Paul swallowed hard, looking away from her once more as he rubbed at the back of his neck. "I'm, um—" he started, his voice cracking as he squeezed his eyes shut in pain that Eve didn't miss. "Trisha really isn't my girlfriend, she's my fiancée. We're getting married New Year's Day. It would be unfair for me to tell you who to date."

Eve considered that, quietly watching Paul when he started washing the car again, obviously needing something to do as an uncomfortable silence hung in the air.

"Do you love her?" Eve finally asked. "As much as you used to love me?"

Paul's body stiffened once more, his back muscles flexing as he let go of the sponge and rested his hands on the hood of the car as he took a shuddering breath.

"That's a bold question," he rasped, shock evident in his voice. "I think it's inappropriate."

"When did I ever give a fuck what was appropriate?" Eve countered darkly, her eyes narrowed at his broad back. "And when did you ever expect it from me? You used to like me being bold."

"I can't play this game with you," Paul whispered, sounding as if the words were killing him. "I can't offer you anything other than friendship. So if fucking Danny makes you happy—go for it."

"Fine, I will," Eve said, feeling hurt and angry.

"Great," Paul said, his body still stiff in obvious resentment. "Have fun."

Eve folded her arms over her chest, feeling indignant that he couldn't even be bothered to turn and look at her as he remained where he was, leaning over the hood of her car. "You can lose your anger. If you had said no, I would have walked away. If me fucking him pisses you off, it's your fault."

Paul's shoulders slumped as he stood back up and ran both hands through his hair, leaving it spiked with soap and bubbles that sparkled in the sunshine. "You're right," he whispered, turning around to look at her with bright blue eyes that shone with hurt.

"It is my fault. I'm sorry for being an asshole. I want you to be happy. That's all I have ever wanted."

"Okay," she said, looking down at the ground and wiping at the tears that showed up without warning and rolled down her cheeks. "Did you mean it when you said you could offer me friendship?"

"You can't offer something that already exists without condition," he said in a soft, sincere voice. "I'm your friend – always."

Eve squeezed her eyes shut. His words made her heart feel like it was cracking in two because the last time he had promised her always, it was something much more than friendship. But that was a long time ago, made in the naïveté of youth and it was unfair to hold him to it. Just because she had never stopped loving him and had a hard time moving on didn't mean he had and it was unreasonable to have expected it.

"Friends then," she said in defeat, feeling like a part of her had died by forcing Paul to admit he was fine with her dating Danny. "I suppose it's better than nothing."

"I suppose it is," Paul said, sounding every bit as disappointed as Eve felt.

Eve sighed and pointed back toward the house. "I'm going to gather my things and take off. Don't worry about the car. It's not worth washing but I appreciate the thought."

"It won't take me long," Paul argued. "I was going to wash the other cars anyway. Go have a cup of coffee with Danny and I'll be done in no time."

Eve turned around to look at Danny's black Shelby Cobra, and Paul's white Camaro SS now parked next to it. Both of them gleaming and sleek in the sunshine, looking like an oddly matching pair of masculine cars. "Why would you wash clean cars? That's as pointless as washing my worthless piece of shit."

"They're clean because we wash them," Paul said, giving her an indulgent smile. "It usually works like that."

She arched an eyebrow at Paul, knowing he had no intention of washing the other two cars. "You haven't changed at all, have you? You really are a boy scout."

Paul shrugged and turned back around to start washing her old, ugly car once more. "If you say so."

Eve watched him for a few more seconds. Paul washing a car reminded her of a male revue show, because he looked really sexy doing it. If things were different, she would have said he could wash her car anytime. Even if it was pointless, the eye candy made Eve want to grab a tub of popcorn and a lawn chair to set up camp and watch. Instead, she shook her head and headed back inside, deciding he could wash her car if he really wanted to.

"Evie Girl."

She turned back to Paul, raising her eyebrows curiously. "Yeah?"

"Be careful," he said, his cheeks flushing as he stared at her seriously. "Don't get hurt and never let him talk you into anything you don't want to do."

Eve laughed, her eyes growing wide as she stared at Paul in disbelief. "Is that your boy scout tip of the month?"

"It's actually a really good tip," Paul said warningly, his face showing absolute honesty and a flash of something that almost resembled actual fear. "You should follow it."

"I'm not sixteen anymore. I'm a big girl who has been surviving for a long time without you around to protect me," Eve told him softly, feeling oddly touched that Paul was trying to protect her, even if it was a bit silly and old fashioned. "I know how to take care of myself."

Paul ran a hand through his hair, his voice strangely haunted as he said, "I hope so."

Chapter Four

Danny stared at the large glass refrigerator hidden in the back of the small flower shop. His eyes scanned the dozens of expensive bouquets as he realized he had never bought flowers for anyone save his mother. In high school, they had never been required to get laid. He hadn't been out of high school for long before unrequited love had led him into a world where the people he had sex with would have considered flowers a major turn-off. If he did buy gifts, it was usually something that required a padlock to be any fun.

Danny realized with a sinking heart that he hadn't dated outside the scene for a very long time. Somehow, he had ended up being a person he was never meant to be for a man who would never love him and now he was lost when he had to do something as normal as buying flowers for a woman he adored.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes, you can," Danny said, turning his attention to the young man as he walked around the counter, knowing instantly he was gay. He was handsome, in a slim, blond, pretty-boy type of way Paul would have been if his pain fetish hadn't made him huge. He looked like a bottom, but was probably one of those secret tops that could surprise someone unobservant. "Top or bottom?" he asked curiously as a distraction from deeper problems.

The florist laughed, a look of sheer incredulity showing on his face. When Danny just arched an eyebrow at him, he shrugged and said nonchalantly, "Top."

"I knew it," Danny said, giving him a sly smile. "Secret top. I can always spot them. Okay, help me pick out some flowers. I got a date. She's an artist and she's eccentric. Find me something that will get me laid. Price isn't an object. Do what you do, impress me."

The florist gaped at Danny in disbelief. "Are you for real?"

"What did I say that indicated I wasn't real?" Danny asked in irritation.

The florist studied him for one long moment before he shook his head and waved off the flowers Danny was staring at. "Are you sure price isn't an object? If you're hoping to hide the fact that you're gay from an eccentric artist, you need something custom and even that makes it a long shot."

"Something custom, good plan," Danny said simply, ignoring the rest. "And when I say price isn't an object, I mean it. This woman is important to me. There's no price limit on pleasing her."

"Fine. Lots of colors and variety? Sound good?"

"Yes," Danny said, pleased with his insight. "That's perfect. Bigger isn't necessarily better. I want it to be classy, not tacky and overstated."

"Don't use the word tacky on your date," the florist said, his eyes running over Danny hotly. His cheeks flushed pink, making him look younger than he probably was. "And don't wear those jeans."

"I appreciate the advice," Danny said dryly. "But I actually got this. I can get pussy just as easily as I can get cock."

"I doubt that," the salesman said in a husky voice, his eyes lingering in a way that made his interest blatantly obvious. "You wouldn't have to buy me flowers to get laid."

Danny laughed, giving the florist an unimpressed look. "Thanks for the offer but I don't bottom for twinks, sweet pea. Go play with your flowers and stop hitting on your customers."

The florist shook his head again, shock showing on his face. "You think a chick is going to put up with that?"

"I'm working on it," Danny said in frustration, running a hand through his hair distractedly. "I'm stressed out. I get mean when I'm stressed. Ignore me. It won't be held against you."

"That's sort of impossible," the salesman said in that same husky voice, looking Danny over once more, his blue eyes wide as he stared. "You're very unusual. I don't do this often but go out with me. Forget the chick."

Danny let his eyes run over the florist the same as he had done to him, only his gaze was hard and leering. He was attractive, but he carried himself in a manner that told the world he knew he was good-looking and enjoyed the novelty of it. Which was one of the more annoying, handsome, college-boy traits Danny instinctively wanted to offer a cure for. "What're you, twenty-one?"

"Twenty-two," the florist said hesitantly, wilting under Danny's intense stare.

"You're out of your league. I could break you as easily as blink," he told him warningly, wanting the kid to understand Danny was actually doing him a huge favor by rejecting him. Taking the cocky strut out of this pretty boy's walk was very tempting. If he hadn't just told Paul he could be faithful to Eve, he would have seized the opportunity. "You can't handle my games, pretty boy. You need to stop thinking with your dick and go do your job."

He swallowed hard, looking up at Danny with wide, stunned blue eyes, his voice losing its confidence as he whispered, "I'd bottom."

"I bet you would," Danny said smugly, his eyes running over the younger man once more as he silently mourned the loss of such a tempting amusement. "Flowers, that's all I want from you and be quick about it. Waiting makes me angry."

"Right, I'm s-sorry, sir," he said in dejection. His shoulders slumped and he turned to walk back around the counter with a violent blush of embarrassment staining his cheeks. "I was probably out of line. I'll give you a discount."

"Sure, whatever," Danny said, putting his hands in his pockets as he walked to the front of the store and stared out the window impatiently, deciding that looking at the distraction of Ybor City in the day time was a better use of his time than toying with cute, innocent college boys who blushed nicely when embarrassed. "I'm going outside for a smoke, pretty boy. I'm not leaving."

"Okay, sir."

Danny laughed as he pulled his cigarettes out of his pocket and walked out the door. He stood in the open air, soaking in the hum of Ybor City, which was rich with Tampa culture. Danny loved the old Spanish feel and the flair that came from being the cigar-making hub of the United States. His mother used to take him there all the time when he was young to shop at the Cuban bakeries and wander around and reconnect with her culture when his father's oppressive, good ol' boy behavior became a little too much to handle. Thinking of his mother had him feeling melancholy and he found himself calling Paul without thought as he stood there sweating in stagnant summer air.

"You need a real job, Danny Boy," Paul answered on the second ring. "You call me ten times a day."

"I'm bored," Danny said. "What kind of flowers would you buy Evie?"

"I'm not helping you fuck her. I'm still pissed off about this. I don't care how hard you whipped me, what you did will never be okay."

"I already bought the flowers. I'm just curious if I made the right choice."

Paul sighed in defeat. "Wildflowers, something different and colorful."

"I did make the right choice," Danny said proudly. "I told you I could be vanilla."

"I find that very hard to believe. No way did you pick out wildflowers."

"The florist helped me," Danny admitted and then turned around to stare back into the shop with a dark smile on his face. "He was so cute. He asked me out. I feel sixteen."

"How cute was he?"

"Precious," Danny said slowly in a lascivious voice. "A pretty little college boy who wanted me to bottom for him. You want me to do it, Paul Guy? I will just to prove I can."

"Is he socially challenged? You scream top in every sense of the word. He'd have to be the worst gay man in the world not to know it," Paul barked out in amazement. "And no, I don't want you to do it. The idea of you bottoming for some twink just made me nauseated."

Danny laughed in amusement as he took a long drag off his cigarette. "Where are you? I know you're not at work if you're talking about twinks and bottoming."

"In the car. I've got a few errands to run."

"I'm in Ybor, come meet me for lunch. I'll buy you a Cuban sandwich."

"You're kissing my ass because you know you were an asshole about Evie," Paul said knowingly. "You're going to have to think of something better than that to make it up to me."

"I'll buy you flowers," Danny said in a singsong voice. "You want me to buy you flowers, Paul Guy?"

"Yeah, right after you bottom for the twink," Paul said in annoyance. "I suppose I could meet you for lunch."

"Good," Danny said with a pleased smile. He dropped his voice and whispered into the phone, "What do you want to make it better about Eve?"

There was a long pause on the other end of the phone before Paul spoke again, his voice suddenly soft and breathy, "I know my back's off-limits for a while but you're a professional. You can probably think of something while it heals."

"Yeah?" Danny asked curiously as he felt himself get hard at the notion of Paul wanting him again when they had spent the entire weekend playing and fucking after Eve had left. It was a very abrupt change after months and months of being pushed away. "What happened to breaking the addiction?"

"Maybe—" Paul started in a way that told Danny he was choosing his words wisely. "Maybe I was going about it wrong. Instead of breaking the addiction, I think I should try to exhaust it. Just totally wear myself out on it over the next six months until I'm sick of the notion."

"You're the biggest fetish whore I know and I know many," Danny said in surprise, aching for Paul when he realized what he was suggesting. "It would take a lot to exhaust that addiction."

"I realize that," Paul's voice was low and hesitant. "Are you willing to help me?"

Danny laughed sardonically. "I was born willing for you. It's fucked me up completely. I can't even buy flowers without making the florist stutter and blush because I scared him."

"How'd you scare him?"

"I told him I could break him as easily as blink," Danny said blandly. "I wanted to and he knew it—asking me to bottom, I would love to get that little fucker on his knees."

"That's hot. You should do it and give me the details. I like living vicariously through the innocent. That's what you can get me."

"Asking me to be an asshole to unsuspecting college boys isn't nice, Paul Guy," Danny taunted. "That makes you guilty by association."

"Not if he loves it," Paul shot back. "And you know he would. They all do."

"I'm being loyal to Evie. I can't fuck with the florist. I'd love to, but I can't. I have to get you something else."

"Danny Boy," Paul said with a broken laugh. "What about me?"

"What about you?" Danny asked, taking another drag off his cigarette. "You're sexy. I want to get you on your knees instead of the florist. You know how to behave."

"I hate to ruin this little vanilla fantasy you have going, but getting me on my knees makes you very disloyal to Evie. Any judge would convict you. Possession is nine-tenths of the law."

"You're exempt from the rules," Danny said, feeling his heart hurt as he thought about Paul and the fact he was getting married in six months. "I breathe air just to make you happy. Nothing changes that, not even Evie."

"Where are you?"

"On Seventh. I'm waiting outside the florist for my flowers."

"I'm parking. Don't leave until I get there," Paul said, amusement thick in his voice. "I wanna see the twink. I like to watch 'em sweat around you. It turns me on to watch you work."

"You're a twisted bastard," he said, raising his eyebrows as he looked down the street expectantly, his body humming with the need to see Paul. "But sure, he'll die when he sees you and realizes what he was competing with. That's fun for all concerned."

* * * * *

"For you."

Eve stood at the open door to Danny and Paul's house, looking at the beautiful bouquet of wildflowers in Danny's hand that was filled with every color in the rainbow. She raised her eyebrows in surprise. "I love them."

"I saw them and had to get them," he said, pushing the door open with his back, inviting her to walk in. "They fill the world with beauty and color, just like you."

Eve rolled her eyes and took the bouquet as she walked into the house. "They're quite unique. Where'd you get them?"

"I was in Ybor this afternoon," Danny tilted his head to look at her as he stood with his back still against the door. "I thought I'd cook for you instead of going out. I picked up some fresh Cuban bread. It'd go well with *ropa vieja*. Sound good?"

"Sounds great," Eve said, staring at the bouquet of flowers that were beautifully arranged in a wild, untamed way that appealed to her. "When's Paul getting home?"

"He's working late tonight," Danny said, closing the door and avoiding her eyes suspiciously. "He'll probably be gone until midnight."

"Convenient," Eve said skeptically as she eyed Danny in his tight black jeans and fitted black shirt, making him look dark and tempting in a way very few could achieve. She admired his long, lithely muscular body and then lifted her gaze to his face that was as gorgeous as any male model. Yet the way he stared at her, his eyes running over her body the same as she had done to him left her feeling exposed and nervous in a way she hadn't in a very long time. "This is probably a mistake."

"You're thinking too much," he said, taking the flowers back from her and walking into the kitchen, leaving Eve standing there with her eyebrows raised as she admired the way he walked with a predatory grace that both scared and thrilled her. He grabbed a vase out of the cabinet under the sink and started filling it with water. "We're friends. We'll eat dinner and hang out. If you don't feel like doing anything else, that's fine by me. I just like being with you."

Eve heard the sincerity in his voice and felt a warm hum of happiness roll over her. She considered the empty house and the fact that Paul worked late most nights. Danny really was lonely. Eve was lonely too. Finding him again was a nice treat she hadn't counted on because his company had always been enjoyable to her.

"Okay." Eve kicked off her sandals by the front door and followed him into the kitchen. She sat down at the table as Danny set the flowers in the center of it. "Does that mean you don't want to see my report card like you asked?"

He smirked as his gaze ran over her hotly once more. "You're looking pretty sexy this evening. You should probably show them to me just in case."

"You're really something," Eve said with a shake of her head as she set her purse on the table and pulled out an envelope she had brought with her. She handed it to him. "Here you go."

"Thank you," he said as he walked over to the counter and grabbed his own envelope and handed it to her. "Here's mine."

Eve took it and tossed it on the counter as Danny sat down across from her and pulled his cigarettes out of his pocket. He lit one casually and then actually pulled the papers out of her envelope and started reading them. Eve watched him in amazement as he sat there smoking and reading her blood tests with actual interest he didn't bother to hide.

"These are eight months old," Danny mused, a dark look passing over his face. "You don't have any more recent?"

"No, I don't," Eve snapped at him. "The only reason I got those was because I found out that my fiancé was fucking around on me. I've never had a man actually ask to look at my blood tests. My word should be good enough for you."

"The circles I swing in have made me cautious. I can't risk getting anything, even for you," he said, lifting his eyes to her. "How do you know you're clean if you haven't had tests in eight months?"

"Oh my God," Eve said, gaping at his audacity. "I'm about to tell you to fuck off."

Danny just arched a dark eyebrow, taking a long drag off his cigarette and blowing out the smoke slowly as if he had all the time in the world to wait for her to get over her irritation at him.

"Why don't you go back to the circles you swing in if you're not satisfied?" Eve said smartly, still very unimpressed. "What circles are they, exactly?"

"Let's just say I have a lot of very sexually liberated friends who discovered the hard way that not being careful has terrible repercussions and I have learned well from their mistakes," Danny said, his voice stern and serious. He looked at his envelope she had dropped on the counter pointedly. "I'm not trying to be a dick. I offered you my tests too. You should look at them."

Eve studied the somber look on his face and realized he could have known someone who had gotten HIV and she supposed that could make him cautious. She reached over and grabbed his envelope, opening it with her eyes downcast as she sighed in defeat, "Mine are accurate. I took them about three months after my fiancé and I broke up. I haven't been with anyone since him."

"Three months after you broke up," Danny repeated, gaping at her in surprise, his cigarette held halfway to his mouth as he studied her intently. "You haven't been with anyone in eleven months?"

"When you put it like that, it makes it sound so pathetic. First I was angry with him and busy with work, and then the gallery closed down and I moved back home. I just haven't—" Eve huffed in defeat as she saw Danny's tests were only three weeks old, making it obvious he got laid constantly. "I guess it is pathetic."

"Are you hungry?"

"Not really," Eve mumbled, still staring at his tests, seeing that he was clean, which wasn't a big surprise when he was obviously very cautious. "I ate a late lunch."

"Good," Danny said, putting out his cigarette in the ashtray. "Even waiting through dinner to fix this problem is too long."

Danny suddenly stood and walked around the table. Eve's entire body tensed as a plethora of emotions surged through her bloodstream. "W-what happened to hanging out?"

"Change of plans." Danny reached down and used considerable strength to pull her reluctantly to her feet. Eve's heart jolted in fear when she felt that surge of sexual magnetism Danny always pulsed with suddenly wash over her. She still fought him, resisting his tug on her hands as he tried to pull her closer, his voice smooth in a way that sent shivers down her spine as he said, "Eleven months of celibacy ends now."

"Danny Boy," Eve whispered as she placed her hands on his chest to hold him back, not knowing how to convey that it was more than having gone so long without a lover. It was the fact this was with Danny, a man who should have never been interested in her and was so far out of her league she felt as if she were caught in a dream. More than that, it was about Paul, who still owned a large portion of her heart. Becoming involved with his best friend was asking for heartache. "I'm scared."

"Fear can be a potent aphrodisiac."

Danny grabbed both her hands, pulling her closer until Eve suddenly found herself flattened against his hard chest. When she sucked in a gasp of surprise he leaned down and kissed her. It was the shock of it that had her yielding to him, her lips parting to his

simply because she had never had a man kiss her like that, his tongue sliding into her mouth as if it belonged to him.

It was his scent, expensive cologne and tobacco. It was the feel of a hard male body against hers when it had been so long. It was his beauty and magnetism that had her melting into him, heedless of his mouth conquering hers or his hard grip on her wrists. Her moan was breathy, stifled by Danny's powerful kiss as she arched into him. The fire of desire sparked through her veins and flowed through her body in a dizzying rush she hadn't felt since she was a teenager when the naïveté of youth and the pulse of the forbidden made everything much more exciting.

With a jolt she realized Danny was making her ache like Paul used to make her ache. She had searched for ten years for some way to capture the essence of something so surreally transcendent she would literally smolder for a taste of it. She had sworn to herself if she could find another man who made her burn like Paul made her burn she would seize him and never let go – not again.

Eve kissed Danny back, swallowing his groan as her tongue followed his, sweeping into his mouth hungrily as she wrenched her hands out of his and tangled her fingers into his dark hair. She held tightly, pulling the silky strands roughly as her body leapt ahead of her mind and soul and sought to hold on to a taste of the divine.

Danny held on just as tightly, his arms wrapping around her, his hands sliding underneath her t-shirt to run up her back. The feeling of his fingers on her bare skin made her languid in his arms. Her head fell back as she broke the kiss with a breathy moan of desire. Danny's lips fell to the line of her neck, nipping and kissing their way down to the curve of her shoulder as he effortlessly unhooked her bra.

Her body was aching, her pussy wet and throbbing for attention. Her fingers tightened in his hair, tugging impatiently. "Need you," she gasped out urgently, hoping to convey her desperation with those few words because she was suddenly breathless. "Please."

"Since you asked sweetly," Danny breathed against the sensitive skin behind her ear. "Sure, sweetheart."

Eve groaned when Danny suddenly let go, her body mourning his loss instantly. He reached behind him and tugged at the neck of his shirt, pulling it off in one fluid motion and tossing it aside.

"Oh, wow," Eve rasped, staring at Danny's bare chest with wide eyes. After eleven months of celibacy was the wrong time to be with a man as handsome and sexually potent as Danny. She leaned back against the table to keep from falling to her knees as her eyes ran over him hungrily, taking in the beautiful lines of his defined chest. "You're gorgeous, Danny Boy."

"So are you," Danny whispered, his gaze running over her in a hot, possessive sweep that made her feel as if he were touching her with a look. He stepped closer and Eve was so desperate she arched into him before he touched her. "I've wanted you

forever—you're the only woman I ever really wanted, Evie Girl. This feels too good to be true."

She felt herself get weak, tilting her head to stare at him in disbelief. "Is that true?"

Danny leaned into her, one hand resting against the table, trapping her against the wood. He bent down, capturing her lips again as he pushed her palm against him, forcing her to feel the long, hard outline of his cock through the rough material of his jeans.

Eve could taste his pain then, the longing that came from a lifetime of waiting. She would never figure out how he managed to convey that much love and agony in a simple kiss, but he did. That was all it took for a love she had never expected to burst to life inside her heart, resting beside the blossom that had never wilted for his best friend. Eve was too far gone to ponder the ramifications of what he had done by dividing her heart in two because her body responded to the feel of his cock against the palm of her hand, making her throb for more than what he was giving her.

For the first time in her life, a kiss made her weak in the knees. She would have fallen if Danny's arm hadn't wrapped around her, anchoring her to him as his tongue pushed deeper into her mouth, as if knowing it was suddenly his to plunder.

The two of them lacked grace as they fell heavily to their knees on the hardwood floor. Their lips parted when Danny wrenched her shirt over her head. He tossed it aside and then tugged at her unhooked bra, pulling it off easily. Despite her body that was pulsing with need and Danny's declarations, Eve still felt her nakedness self-consciously, being very aware of how beautiful Danny was and remembering the pristine girls he had dated in high school.

"If you'd been mine, I never would've let you go to New York without me," Danny said in a raspy whisper. "I would have followed you."

Eve closed her eyes, her heart jolting for a different reason. "Don't talk about him. Not now, not like this."

"You still love him," Danny said knowingly, the pain evident in his voice.

It wasn't in Eve to deny that, so she leaned into him instead, gripping at his shoulders and dipping her head down to lick at the curve of his neck. She savored the low groan of defeat from Danny as he ran his fingers through her long hair.

"Come here," Danny said in a silken voice, using his grip on her hair to tilt her head back. Eve found herself looking into dark eyes swirling with lust and something darker, a wild possessiveness that had Eve suddenly thankful she hadn't admitted she was still hopelessly in love with Paul. She leaned in closer to him impatiently and a smile tugged at his lips in response, making him look almost evil. "Love me or not, I'm going to make you mine."

Eve shuddered, her eyes drifting closed. "If you say so," she whispered and then parted her lips in a silent plea for more.

"I do," he breathed against her lips.

Eve moaned into his mouth, his tongue sliding past her lips in a way that stole her breath. Her bare breasts felt so good pressed against his hard chest. She wrapped her arms around him, needing him closer, wanting to feel as much of him against her as possible. She realized a part of her had always ached for Danny. Loving Paul like she did had distracted her from it when she was younger. Now kneeling with him on the kitchen floor, the two of them kissing as if they needed the connection to stay sane, she knew this could have easily happened at any time, with or without Paul's permission.

It was with a heavy heart that Eve fell back against the floor with Danny over her. It felt like a betrayal when she knew a part of her had always wanted this. Even still, she was burning for more, her back arching up in a silent offering as her fingers tangled in Danny's hair. His lips trailed down the curve of her neck, his tongue dragging slowly over the line of her collarbone, making her moan from the sensual, possessive way he did it.

His hands slid beneath her, forcing her to curve into his embrace. His eyes met hers over the curve of her breast, the dark orbs swirling with something decadent and overwhelming. Eve felt herself being held captive by his look as she watched his tongue drag slowly over one aching nipple, making it bead in pleasure. She had to fight against closing her eyes in bliss when he took the pink tip into his mouth, sucking on it hard, his teeth scraping against it in a way that had her hips jerking up against him. When his lips trailed over to her other breast, she finally gave in, the ecstasy forcing her eyes closed.

Her fingers tightened in Danny's hair when he abandoned the torture of toying with her breasts, his mouth moving lower as his hands slid down her back. Eve's entire body clenched in anticipation when he pulled at the button on her jeans and slowly undid the zipper.

"Lift your hips."

Eve did as told, opening her eyes to find Danny still studying her face. His gaze was sharp and penetrating as he tugged at her jeans roughly, making her gasp out loud because her skin was already sensitive.

"You're aching, aren't you?" Danny asked her as he pulled her jeans down her thighs, pushing them past her knees. "Your pussy is wet and throbbing for me, isn't it?"

"Yes," Eve admitted softly, his words making her body clench tightly in pent-up need.

"Tell me what you want, Evie Girl," Danny said in a low, compelling voice that made Eve want to do whatever he asked. "What makes you hot?"

Eve kicked off her jeans, using her foot to push them aside as she lay there on the kitchen floor with her chest heaving. "What do you think makes me hot?" Eve asked, feeling exposed and naked wearing only a pair of black panties for modesty.

Danny's hand trailed over the flat plane of her stomach, his fingers dancing over her skin teasingly. "Does my mouth make you hot?" He lifted his eyes to hers and licked his lips, his tongue running over his full bottom lip. Eve's stomach clenched in

anticipation and she knew he felt it because he gave her a knowing smile. "Do you want to know what it can do?"

Eve nodded frantically. "Yes, I want that."

"Where?" Danny asked, his voice still seductive as his hand moved lower, his fingers teasing her through the thin silk between her thighs. Eve moaned and arched into his hand instinctively. "Do you want my mouth here? Is that what you're begging for?"

Her eyes rolled back in desire as she arched into his hand once more. "That's it," she admitted, her cheeks flaming from his words and the knowledge that her body was betraying her so completely. "Lick me, Danny Boy. Please."

"Gladly."

That one word set her on fire. Her body was tight and throbbing as Danny's hand slid underneath the lining of her panties, pushing them slowly down her thighs. He was moving too leisurely. It didn't matter how sexy he looked when he moved in that slow, deliberate way of his, like a cat stalking prey. She pushed his hand aside and took over the task of ridding herself of the most expensive pair of underwear she owned, its presence nothing but a hindrance that she kicked off impatiently.

"Open to me." Danny stared at the small triangle of red hair between her thighs intently, making her shiver with both anticipation and fear of revealing herself to him. There was no privacy with him, no soft lighting and concessions for modesty. He wanted her stark and exposed. But she was too desperate to deny him. She opened to him like he asked, draping her leg over the other side of him, leaving herself completely bare to his penetrating gaze. His fingers reached up to trace the line of her sex that was swollen and aching for him. Eve whimpered from his teasing, making an evil smirk tug at his lips. "You are wet for me. I knew you would be."

"Please, Danny Boy," Eve sobbed in complaint, her hips pushing up against his hand in a silent plea for attention. "Stop torturing me."

"You're right, that's not nice," Danny admitted with a wince as he glanced up at her, a strange uncertainty showing on his face. "It's a bad habit I have—I'll work on it."

"Whatever," Eve moaned, her eyes falling closed under the weight of her need. Danny lowered his mouth to her, his fingers parting her to the hot feel of his mouth. She cried out as he ran his tongue over her in a broad, open sweep that made it obvious he was one of those men who actually enjoyed the taste of a woman. That shook her, because she had only been with one other man like that and she actually fought the pleasure to open her eyes and remind herself it wasn't Paul licking up the taste of her desire as if it was the sweetest thing he had ever tasted. Danny had a similar look of ecstasy on his face, his long eyelashes lying like dark, half-moons on his smooth, tan cheeks and she found herself gaping at his beauty, her pussy clenching in a way she knew he could feel. "That's good, Danny Boy," she moaned, her eyes closing again on their own accord as he licked her once more, dragging his tongue slowly over the entire

length of her pussy. He pushed his fingers inside her unexpectedly as he sucked on her clit and Eve gasped from the sudden stab of dual pleasure. "Oh, fuck!"

Eve went wild then, her inhibitions evaporating completely. Her head tossed on the floor as he fucked her with his fingers while he licked and sucked at her clit. Her hands tangled in his hair, pulling at the dark strands as the bliss built into a raging inferno eleven months in the making. She wrapped her legs around him shamelessly, her feet hooking together at the soft spot between his shoulder blades, holding him to her when she started shaking from the pleasure that sprung loose embarrassingly fast.

She screamed when she came, her back scraping against the floor as she bowed beneath him from the tidal wave of ecstasy crashing over her. It pulsed through her body to the rapid thump of her heartbeat and she didn't loosen her hold on him until it subsided to tiny vibrations of tingling pleasure.

"Oh, Evie Girl," Danny groaned in a low, husky voice that betrayed his desperation for her. "Tell me you're on the Pill."

"I am," Eve whispered breathlessly, her body tightening with a fresh surge of yearning that stunned her after the orgasm she just had. "After that I'm all yours. Come fuck me, Danny Boy."

Danny didn't need to be told twice. He crawled over her, pulling at the button to his jeans with shaking fingers. Eve stared up at him, taking in the tense line of his shoulders and the way he seemed to vibrate with suppressed desire. She got the impression he didn't usually reveal himself this blatantly. Very few could make him vulnerable to the point that he shook with need he couldn't hide and that was the most potent aphrodisiac of all.

"Let me." Eve pushed his hand aside and pulled down his zipper. She arched an eyebrow up at him when she found no other barrier between her hand and his cock. She stroked the length of him, finding that his confidence was well placed. "Commando. That's naughty. You really are the original bad boy, aren't you?"

"You have no idea," Danny groaned, his eyes squeezing shut when Eve caressed the long, thick length of him, savoring the smooth slide of his cock against her palm. Still enjoying the novelty of Danny Carlow, the most desired boy in her high school quivering for her, Eve let go of him. When he opened his eyes she brought her hand to her mouth and licked her palm, making a show of wetting it thoroughly. Danny's dark eyes grew wide, his body jerking forward as it clenched from the image. "Fuck," Danny growled at her. "And you call me naughty?"

Eve smiled at him tauntingly, speaking against her palm as she licked it once more. "Were you expecting one of your cheerleaders who hates getting their hands dirty? I like it sloppy. Didn't Paul Guy tell you?"

"No, he didn't tell me," Danny mumbled, watching her lick her palm with a dark, lustful gaze. "He kept that to himself."

"Then, surprise," Eve said as she reached down, stroking him again, his cock sliding through her spit-slicked grip easily. Her other hand tangled in his hair once

more and she tugged his head down until his lips were a breath away from hers. "I'm a dirty bitch."

She captured Danny's lips in a hot, open-mouthed kiss and thrust her tongue into his mouth, savoring her taste on him. She swallowed his groan, his cock growing larger in her hand as she continued to stroke him in hard, slick movements that betrayed her knowledge that a man's cock wouldn't break in her hand. Being a tomboy did have some benefits. She had never been afraid of cock. Quite the opposite, playing with one had always been one of her favorite things.

"You are a dirty bitch," Danny rasped, his chest heaving as he took sharp, hard breaths of desire. "Thank God."

Danny captured her lips once more, his teeth tugging at her bottom lip roughly. Eve realized he had been holding himself back the whole time, trying to be someone he wasn't because he had mistakenly assumed it was what she wanted. He had been shaking because he was fighting his nature that was hard, rough and forceful. Eve wrapped her arms around him, releasing her hold on his cock and offering him something much more tempting than her hand. She dug her nails into his bare shoulders as she thrust her hips up in invitation.

"I like it rough," Eve moaned into his mouth. "I can take it as hard as you can give it."

"Rough I know how to do," Danny groaned as he pushed his jeans past his hips. "I can give it pretty hard."

"Go for it," Eve panted, her chest heaving as desire rushed over her in a surge of adrenaline that had her writhing beneath him. "Fuck me raw, Danny Boy."

"Christ," Danny gasped, his eyes rolling back as he fell over Eve, causing the air to rush out of her when she was flattened against the unforgiving floor with all of Danny's weight over her. "I'm going bareback. I don't want anything between us, not ever again."

Eve moaned, her eyes squeezing shut as Danny reached down, hooking his arm under her knee, opening her wide to him. She didn't even have a chance to catch her breath when his hips thrust forward, burying his cock to the hilt inside her. Eve screamed from the sharp stab of pleasure, her entire body bowing beneath him. She shuddered from the drugging feeling of being stretched almost painfully. Her fingernails dug deeper into his shoulders. She would have given him encouragement if she could find her voice, but he pulled out and thrust back into her before she could.

A fine sheen of sweat broke out on both their bodies from the exertion of wild, carnal fucking. A part of Eve that wasn't drowning in pleasure savored the slap of skin against skin, and the sharp gasps that burst out of both of them with every hard thrust of his body into hers. They suddenly became one deviant person and Eve found herself falling hard for Danny as he took more than her body. He somehow managed to take her soul with every ripple of pleasure that shimmered over her body, bringing her closer and closer to a destiny there was no escaping from now. As insane as it was,

Danny had forced her to fall in love with him by fucking her like a dirty bitch on the unforgiving floor of the house he shared with Paul.

When the pleasure became too much, Eve slipped one hand between their straining bodies, her fingers finding her clit. She started rubbing eagerly, making Danny groan louder. "Come for me, Evie Girl," he gasped in a voice gravelly with the need for release. "Do it and I'll come with you."

"Mmm," she hummed in agreement because words were beyond her.

She turned her head and Danny took the invitation, leaning down to drag his tongue up the line of her neck in the same way he had first lapped at her pussy. The reminder of it had Eve suddenly clenching around him without warning.

The orgasm slammed into her more forcefully than the first one. Her entire body stiffened from the impact of it as the pleasure washed over her once more. Eve choked back a scream as her body continued to tighten around Danny's cock, making him tense above her. A low, rumbling groan burst out of him as he started fucking her to the rhythm of his own climax, drawing out hers for what seemed like an eternity while she shuddered and gasped in ecstasy beneath him.

The hot gush of him coming made the slide of his cock in her easier as his movements slowed to a more languid rhythm. Their lips met in lazy kisses, Danny's tongue pushing into her mouth in time with the thrust of his cock as they both rode out the aftermath of their climaxes.

"Let's do that again," Eve moaned desperately when she was finally able to find her voice. "And again and again."

"Let's," Danny agreed, his voice low and sated. Eve's eyes blinked open to admire the way his face glistened with sweat and his dark eyes pulsed with satisfaction. He gave her an indulgent smile as he thrust his hips against hers once more. "I've got a bed. Want to see it?"

She returned his lazy smile with one of her own. "Sure."

Eve moaned when Danny rolled off her, falling heavily to his back next to her on the floor. He tossed an arm over his eyes as he fought to get his breath back. She admired the way his chest rose and fell with each breath as his smooth, olive skin glimmered with sweat. When his breathing started to even out he reached down and pushed at his jeans, kicking them off impatiently.

"Nice," Eve said as she admired Danny fully naked. "I don't think you're going to get dinner tonight. It's been a long eleven months."

"It's been a long twenty-three years. I've wanted to be your boyfriend since kindergarten," Danny said with a look of adoration. "You're all the dinner I need. I want to taste you again—that was divine."

"Really?" Eve asked in surprise. "After you came in me?"

"You're not the only one who's dirty," Danny assured her with a naughty smirk. "I like it sloppy too."

"Bonus," Eve said in excitement, her eyes wide as a tingle of fresh desire washed over her. "You're a real catch, Danny Boy. I'm keeping you."

"That's the plan," he said warmly. "I'm yours for as long as you'll take me."

It was on the tip of Eve's tongue to say it could possibly be forever, but that word made a different image appear without warning. She recalled lying sated and sweaty next to another man, one who would be home in a few short hours.

"Show me your bed," Eve said rather than dwell on the past. "And then we'll discuss your dinner."

Chapter Five

Paul sat in his car, the radio blaring angry rap music as he stared at Eve's Ford Escort still parked in front of the house. He closed his eyes, hoping to God the two of them hadn't fallen asleep, because he would rather stay in his car until morning than go into the house with Eve there sleeping naked next to Danny.

It was past midnight. Danny was definitely going to owe him for this. Even Paul wasn't submissive enough to put up with Danny fucking his ex-girlfriend while he sat there in his car and waited for him to get done. He was tired. He had a long day tomorrow and he needed to get some sleep. If he didn't get to bed soon, he would have to skip the gym in the morning and that was something he couldn't afford to do. He was too tense. He needed the punishment of working out until his muscles burned in agony. It was one of the few socially acceptable things he could do that catered to his pain fetish. Giving it up was more than he was willing to do.

He pulled out his phone to text Danny. The letters blurred from his exhaustion and he had to squint at the screen to keep it in focus.

I'm home, motherfucker.

Paul tossed his phone onto the seat. He glared at the porch, waiting to see how long it took Danny to get Eve out of the house when Paul had made his annoyance blatantly obvious. They had evidently been doing something other than sleeping, because the outside light flipped on within a few minutes.

Paul knew that meant he was free to walk in but he still made slow work of putting his cell phone in his briefcase and turning off the car. He wavered when he got out of the car, pushing the button on his key to lock it as a wave of depression washed over him. He stood there in the grass as his emotions went wild and he reeled over the onslaught of jealousy. He wanted to be the one fucking Eve until past midnight. If this punishment didn't rid him of his fetish that had him longing to be abused, he didn't know what would because this was agony.

Eve appeared then and Paul growled under his breath as he studied the relaxed lines of her shoulders and the mussed look to her long red hair. She waved to Danny before she turned to look at Paul. Time seemed to pause as the two of them stood there separated by the long yard. The light from the porch illuminated Eve in the darkness, making an eerie glow surround her that wasn't helped by his exhaustion. Paul studied her, fuming at her for looking so beautiful and appealing when he wanted to hate her.

She had done more than betray him — she was stealing Danny from him.

That was the real agony. He was hurting twice as badly because he couldn't bear the thought of Danny falling for Eve in a way that had him forgetting Paul when they only had a few more months together.

Eve stiffened as he stood there fighting his fury. Paul realized she could read his anger as easily as he could read her sated relaxation. Even from a distance they still knew each other from subtle nuances—a gift that came from loving someone so completely you memorized everything about them.

Eve actually shook her head, as if trying to rid herself of the guilt as she stepped off the porch and walked out to the yard. "I'm sorry," she said as she tucked her hair behind her ears and avoided his eyes. "We got caught up watching a movie."

"Sure you did," Paul snorted as he willed his feet to move, wanting to get past her and into the house as quickly as possible.

Eve stopped, pushing her purse higher on her shoulder as she glared at him, her green eyes glowing furiously in the darkness. "We already had this discussion. You told me it was fine."

"I'm having second thoughts," he admitted before he could stop himself, because like everything else, being honest with Eve was a habit that was hard to break. "This fucking sucks, Evie Girl."

"Christ." Eve groaned, putting a hand to her eyes and wavering where she stood. Her voice cracked in anguish as she whispered, "I wish you would have said something before."

"Why?" Paul growled at her, his eyes narrowing as he studied her closely. "No, lemme guess. You tasted the Danny drug and you want more. You'll do anything for it. You're standing there shaking because you know you'll have to have him again even if it hurts me. Is that it?"

"You're an asshole," Eve snapped as she took a menacing step toward him. She reached out and actually hit his chest, shoving him hard enough to make him take a step back because Eve had always been much stronger than she looked. "I asked, Paul Guy. I gave you the courtesy and you said it was fine. Now you're standing there angry when you've got a fiancée and absolutely nothing to offer me. How dare you!"

Paul took a shuddering breath, looking away from her with wide eyes as he tried to push away the sudden tidal wave of lust that surged through him without warning. "I'm sorry," he whispered frantically, trying to fight down the deep-seated instinct in him that made him hard and desperate when a woman he wanted as badly as Eve was that domineering and angry at him. He realized with a shock Eve had never been genuinely mad at him before. If he had known it was going to do this to him he would have avoided it at all costs because his knees were actually shaking from the effort it took not to drop down in front of her on the dirt. He rubbed at the back of his neck, searching anxiously for sanity. "I'm really—" he choked on the apology, knowing that repeating himself was going to give him away.

"He's tired," Danny's voice cut through the tension. "Ignore him. He wakes up at five every morning to go to the gym before work and he's dead on his feet."

"I didn't know that," Eve mumbled. "You should've come home sooner. We don't want to put you out."

"It's fine," Paul whispered, still staring at the ground with wide eyes. "You can put me out. I don't mind."

"What?" Eve asked, her voice suddenly mystified. "But you just —"

"Did you eat?" Danny asked Paul in a sharp voice that helped anchor him to reality in way Eve couldn't, not when he could still feel the force of her push against his chest. "He's got low blood sugar. He gets irrational when he doesn't eat."

"Is that true?"

Paul nodded, not really certain what he was agreeing to, but knowing Danny wouldn't steer him down the wrong road when he had suddenly lost touch with reality.

"Go ahead and take off. I'm going to heat him up something. I'll call you tomorrow. He's fine."

"He doesn't look fine."

"Tell Evie you're fine," Danny said, his voice low in warning.

"I'm fine," Paul repeated obediently. He turned to look at Eve, seeing that her eyes were still narrowed at him in both anger and suspicion. He wilted, his voice taking on a completely different tone as his eyes ran over her longingly, "I'm so sorry, Evie Girl. I didn't mean to —"

"Dinner," Danny cut him off abruptly.

Danny's interruption was disappointing because Paul had seen the way Eve's eyes had glazed over from that simple apology. She would be so easy to seduce into dominating him and then she could take out her anger in a much more productive way. He raised his eyebrows as he considered her wearing leather for him instead of Danny.

"Paul Guy —" Eve started, her voice seductively raspy. "Do you want me to come inside? We can talk while you eat?"

"No way," Danny growled, obviously losing his patience with both of them. "It's late. You leave any later and the drunks will be on the road."

"Oh, Danny Boy," Eve said, wincing as she turned to look up at Danny with pity, obviously thinking about his parents who had died from his father drinking and driving. "You can't be paranoid like that."

"That's not paranoia, that's a legitimate fact," Danny said softly, giving Eve a pleading look. "Please go, drive carefully and let me feed this asshole. I promise you he's fine."

"Okay." Eve's shoulders slumped as she turned to look at Paul once more, her cheeks flushing. "Apology accepted," she said softly, giving him a guilty smile. "I didn't mean to lose my temper."

It was on the tip of Paul's tongue to say something along the lines of it being understandable when he was worthless and out of line but Danny's foot connected with his shin in a lightning-fast move Eve didn't see. Paul jerked from the impact, choking back the words that would have probably gotten Eve hot for him in a way he had been fantasizing about for ten long years.

Eve sucked in a surprised gasp, looking up at him in concern. "Are you okay?"

"Bad knee," Paul choked out, his eyes wide as he fought the desire pulsing through him to the point that he was about to give away both of them to Eve. "Long day."

"Go inside," Danny said slowly in a voice that was clearly a warning. "You need to get off it if it's hurting you."

"Right," Paul said, walking toward the house, being too far gone to pretend that having a bad knee was an imposition. "Night, Evie."

"Night," Eve mumbled, her voice still mystified. "He shouldn't be doing the Iron Man and working out like he does if it bothers him."

"I tell him that," Danny said, his voice still sharp in irritation. "But he doesn't listen."

Paul rubbed at the back of his neck, walking toward the house without looking back. He abandoned his briefcase the moment he was behind the safety of the door and walked straight to the kitchen. He got a beer out with shaking hands. It was a small miracle he didn't shatter the glass from the force he used to twist the cap off. He leaned back against the counter, taking a long drink with the thought that he should have opted for whisky instead.

Paul was nearly finished with the beer, his body still physically shaking, when Danny walked in, closing the door harder than needed and flipping the lock. Paul tossed his empty beer bottle in the sink and wiped at his forehead that was beaded with sweat.

"Is she gone?" he asked frantically.

"Yes," Danny said in a dark, furious voice. "What were you thinking?"

"I'm sorry," he moaned, burying his face in his hands and fighting to stay on his feet. "I didn't know she'd hit me. It blindsided me."

"What were you going to do?" Danny growled as he walked into the kitchen. "Drop to your knees and beg her to punish you?"

Paul sucked in a sharp gasp of pleasure as Danny's words made dark, decadent images blossom in his mind. "Maybe."

Danny stood there silently. Paul's body grew tense while he waited, not knowing if he had somehow pissed him off. He had fallen completely into submissive mode when Eve had hit him and that side of him never wanted to disappoint his Master.

"You wouldn't want to do this to her. Evie's sweet. You don't want her to sacrifice her humanity for you," Danny finally whispered solemnly. "Don't use that voice on her again."

Paul squeezed his eyes shut, disappointment washing over him. He sagged back against the sink, hating his life, wishing he had some way to fix everything. But it was all such a tangled web of love, friendship and pain. If Eve hadn't left, Paul would have never ended up being with Danny. That was as painful a thought as never having loved Eve to begin with.

"I need a woman," Paul mumbled into his hands, his body tightening in anticipation of Danny's anger.

"You have a woman. Her name is Trisha."

"I want a Domme," Paul corrected himself, knowing he was walking into hell by starting this now. "If I can't have Evie—I deserve a Domme, a really cruel one."

"You don't deserve shit," Danny growled at him, his fury causing a shimmer of lust to roll down Paul's spine. "You're a slave."

"True," Paul agreed and then lowered his hands to look at Danny in challenge. "But she wanted it. You're not the only one who knows how to make someone ache. I could take her back from you and you know it. That's why you're angry."

"I already told you no," Danny said, his handsome face a mask of shock from Paul's audacity. "What has gotten into you?"

Paul wasn't really certain what had gotten into him. Denying Danny was something he had never had the ability or the desire to do before now. He realized with a start it was Eve who was giving him the strength to fight him, because she had owned him first, even if she hadn't known it. His loyalties were split for the first time. The slave side of him was capable of defying Danny because it was screaming out for his mistress who had just driven away without punishing him and he was angry about it. That wasn't how the game was played. She needed someone to tell her the rules and Paul was literally aching to do it.

"Get me a Domme. I want to play with one without your hovering," Paul reiterated, his voice shaking from the war between loyalties. "Do it or I will have your girlfriend wearing leather for me instead of you."

Danny laughed at his impudence. "No, you can't have one. You're going to have to suffer. Good thing you love it."

Paul groaned, knowing he was already defeated. "You're an asshole."

"Whose fault is that?" Danny asked, taking another step toward Paul menacingly as he invaded his personal space. He reached out and unbuttoned Paul's suit jacket, pushing it off his shoulders. Paul looked down at his jacket when it fell to the floor, his eyes narrowed as his body stiffened in defensiveness. "Stop looking at the jacket. I'm your Master. I'm allowed to disrespect your possessions."

Paul's eyes drifted closed as another rush of desire washed over him. He rested his hands on the sink to keep himself on his feet when Danny reached up and undid his tie, pulling the knot undone in sharp, angry motions. His breathing became uneven as excitement coiled in him and he groaned out loud when Danny suddenly grabbed both ends of his tie now hanging loose in his collar and jerked Paul forward. He arched into

Danny obediently, his head falling back under the weight of desire when their chests touched and he could feel the heat from Danny's bare skin through the thin material of his shirt.

Danny's breath burst out of him in angry pants Paul could feel against his cheek when he leaned into him and growled in a purely evil voice, "You want to taste pussy, fine."

Danny captured Paul's lips in a hard, furious kiss. His tongue pushed into his mouth when he gasped from the wave of desire that crashed over him. He instantly surrendered to him. His lips parted farther, letting Danny conquer his mouth as his cock became painfully hard.

"Taste good?" Danny asked when he pulled away, his breath still warm against Paul's lips.

Paul moaned, his body tightening when the meaning of what he did made its way past the lustful fog in his mind. Paul licked his lips unconsciously, his entire body throbbing for just a hint of what Danny was offering him.

Eve's taste was still on him and he was literally starving for it.

He licked his lips once more, doing it slowly as he lifted his eyes, giving Danny a long, lustful look. "Again," he whispered in a seductive voice.

Danny sucked in a sharp breath, his body tensing from just that small effort on Paul's part. "You're a whore, Paul Guy. Really, this is unbelievable, even for you."

"I'm sorry," he rasped, his breathing still harsh in yearning.

"It's fine," Danny said, his eyes falling to Paul's lips as his eyes became heavy with desire. "I'm your Master, you can be a whore for me. You're supposed to be." Danny tugged on his tie once more, pulling him tighter against him. "Only for me. You're mine. I don't like to share."

Danny kissed Paul again before he could complain, his tongue pushing past his lips when they parted to him. Needing to feel Danny's skin against his, Paul tugged at the buttons to his shirt with shaking fingers while the two of them continued to kiss in hot, open-mouthed desperation. It wasn't until Paul pulled his shirt out of the waistband of his pants that Danny released his lips, his hands still on his tie as he looked down at Paul's chest with his eyebrows raised. He tilted his head, studying him closer, making Paul feel as if Danny were actually touching him with his eyes.

"You're gorgeous," Danny said, his voice harsh with desire. "Trisha doesn't deserve you."

"I'm not that great," Paul said, closing his eyes as he felt Danny's look burn him in a way that would never lose its appeal. "I think you're biased."

"Bullshit. Any Domme who sees you aches for you and you know it," Danny said as he tugged Paul's tie out of his collar. He spread his hands over Paul's chest, opening his shirt to his greedy gaze, the silk tie running against Paul's bare skin sensually. "They all want you, but they can't have you. I like that."

"I don't like that," Paul countered. "Didn't you ever learn to share your toys when you were a kid?"

"Nope." Danny draped the tie around the bare skin of Paul's neck and then reached down to undo the buttons at his wrist as if unwrapping a present. "I was an only child. I never had to share my toys."

Paul snorted, rolling his eyes as he let Danny undress him. "Sucks for me."

"Doesn't it?" Danny asked as he pushed Paul's shirt off his shoulders, letting it fall to the floor on top of his jacket. His eyes ran over Paul's bare chest longingly, and then he reached out and grabbed the tie still draped around his neck, tugging him closer once more. Paul's head fell back as he leaned into Danny, who took the invitation and bent down to lick at the line of his throat that was exposed, whispering against his skin, "I barebacked her."

"Fuck," Paul groaned, squeezing his eyes shut as his entire body clenched in need. "Please."

"Fine," Danny said, his voice choked in anguish. "If you need to taste her that badly, I suppose I'm game. I owe you that much."

Paul fell to his knees, the tie whispering past his skin as he did so. Pain radiated up his thigh from the impact on his bad knee. He groaned in pleasure from the sensation as he wrapped his arms around Danny, his open palms splaying over his back and pulling him closer. Paul kissed the curve of his waist as he trailed his fingers over his stomach muscles, admiring the way they clenched from his touch.

As a general rule Paul wasn't attracted to men, but Danny was different for him. He didn't know if it was his submissiveness that had caused him to lust after Danny, or if it was Danny himself who was so wholly sexual and beautiful Paul would never stop craving him. He could stare at him for the rest of his life and never get tired of it.

Danny got off on having a slave who was beautiful and obedient, making Paul the very best of what the game had to offer. But Paul got off on nearly the exact same thing. He loved having a Master who was gorgeous and expertly evil. Together, the two of them had perfected playing a game they both enjoyed and it had been a brilliant ride Paul would savor forever. He had been a complete fool for trying to ruin the last few months they had to play together by pushing Danny away.

He reached out to the button on his jeans, tugging it undone as he lifted his eyes to Danny. "Thank you."

Danny groaned, looking away from him as his eyes closed in anguish. "Don't thank me."

"But I appreciate you," Paul said in the same soft, seductive voice he had used on Eve outside. "You're my Master. I need you to know I appreciate you."

"Just shut up," Danny said, pulling Paul's tie 'round his own neck and holding on to it the way he would hold on to a whip as if doing it out of habit as he glared down at Paul. "Stop rambling like an idiot and put your mouth to better use."

He kept his eyes on Danny as he leaned in, dragging his tongue over the lines of his stomach muscles slowly and pulled his zipper down. His cock was already hard. Paul raised surprised eyebrows as he reached out and touched him. "She didn't tap you out?"

Danny leaned forward, gripping at the sink with one hand. He ran the other through his hair, pushing it away from his face and looking down at Paul with dark, anguished eyes. "Not for you."

Paul considered that, his eyes still soft as he stared up at Danny. "Thank you," he repeated in a way he hoped conveyed how much he really did adore him. "I'm gonna miss you, Danny Boy."

"Oh my God—shut up!" Danny growled at him as he squeezed his eyes shut, his face contorting in fury that betrayed his own suffering over Paul getting married. He reached down, fisting his hand in Paul's hair, making him groan and arch into him. "Suck it, you whore, before I change my mind."

Paul sucked in a gasp of desire, his eyes rolling back from Danny's cruelty. He used his grip on Danny's back to pull him closer and did as told, taking Danny into his mouth slowly as his own cock jerked from the lingering flavor of Eve still on him. He sucked on him greedily, wanting to taste as much of Danny and Eve combined as possible and he didn't give a shit how much of a whore that made him.

Danny groaned as he did it, his hips thrusting forward as he became languid in Paul's arms. "I'm going to miss you too," he whispered as his fingers drifted down to the back of his neck, holding Paul to him, his fingers biting into his skin as if he couldn't bear to let him go.

Chapter Six

Danny put a hand behind his head as he took a long drag off his cigarette and blew the smoke upward, watching it billow around the wooden beams connecting the four posts of his bed together. For the past two weeks he had spent all day goofing off and doing the sweet, vanilla-flavored things Eve liked and all night doing the dark, exotic-flavored things Paul did. It was enough to make him long for a nap that lasted at least three days, but he found himself not wanting to blink in fear of missing any of it.

His eyelids were heavy with exhaustion, his body sore and aching in a way it never had before. Paul and Eve were beating the hell out of him. From that first night when Eve had walked out of the house sated, only to be replaced by Paul who was just as needy, Danny had been a sexual ping-pong ball going back and forth between the two of them. If something seemed too good to be true, it usually was. Both Paul and Eve wanting him to the point that they were sexually draining a well Danny had originally thought was fathomless had to be a cruel joke just waiting for the right moment to hit him with the agonizing punch line.

"What're you thinking about?"

"The fact that I'm tired."

"You should work out. It'd give you more energy."

Danny snorted, blowing another plume of smoke toward the beams of his bed. "I do work out—constantly."

"You should quit smoking," Paul said, eyeing the cigarette in Danny's hand as he pulled the towel from around his waist and rubbed at his wet hair. "It's a bad habit."

"You love it," Danny said lasciviously, drawing out the words pointedly. "Admit it."

"I shouldn't love it, no matter how sexy you look doing it," Paul said as he stood at the foot of the bed, completely uncaring that he was naked.

Being comfortable naked was something any good submissive was capable of and Paul was nothing if not a talented submissive who didn't mind being vulnerable. Danny raised his eyebrows as he admired his beautiful, muscular body. He took another drag and blew the smoke toward Paul just to be an asshole, and then reached over and tapped his cigarette against the ashtray on his nightstand.

"Are you sleeping with me?" Danny asked, trying to keep the hope out of his voice.

Paul tossed the towel over the edge of the bed. A smirk tugged at his lips as he eyed Danny boldly. "You want me to sleep at the foot of your bed like a dog?"

"Get the fuck out of here," Danny growled, grabbing a pillow off the bed and launching it at Paul, who caught it easily and laughed at Danny's annoyance. "Keep laughing and I'll make you do it!"

"Awesome," Paul said with wide, deceptively innocent eyes. "Sounds hot."

Danny rolled his eyes, knowing Paul was being serious. "You try to sleep at the foot of my bed and I will kick you to the floor."

"Yeah, good plan." Paul got onto the bed slowly, his eyes becoming soft and seductive as he crawled on his hands and knees over Danny. "Slaves should sleep on the floor."

"I'm not playing anymore," Danny said, his eyes narrowed at Paul. "I'm tired. You and Eve both have too much energy to be human."

"I'll play with Eve if you can't handle her," Paul said, leaning down to drag his tongue over Danny's stomach when he reached it. "I've got plenty of stamina."

"Yes, I realize this," Danny said, closing his eyes as he took another drag off his cigarette. "Cut me some slack. You're not exactly neglected. I spent hours torturing you tonight."

"You should start running," Paul said as he straddled Danny. He leaned forward, grabbing his cigarette from him and putting it out in the ashtray with a look of distaste. "Tomorrow's a running day. You can come with me."

"Getting up at five in the morning to run twenty miles is not fun for me," Danny said with a laugh. "You're a freak."

"Yes, I know." Paul rested his hands on either side of Danny's shoulders as he looked down at him with sultry eyes. "You want me to give you a massage? It'll help you sleep."

"I don't need help sleeping. I just need the opportunity," Danny mumbled as he reached up and gripped at Paul's chin, tilting his head to stare into his eyes more fully. "I want you to sleep with me."

Paul rolled his eyes, but didn't fight Danny's hold on his chin. "Faggots sleep together."

"Yeah, that's what makes you a fag," Danny said dryly, pulling a face at Paul. "I wish you'd get over this bigoted, redneck attitude. You sound like my father every time you say faggot and that's *not* sexy."

"I am a redneck," Paul said, a smirk tugging at his lips. "I got the accent to prove it."

"You're not a redneck, Southern accent or not," Danny argued, his eyes narrowed as he trailed his hand up Paul's cheek that was rough with the first signs of stubble. "You just pretend to be one for your father. And I'll have you know there's nothing wrong with being a fag. I'm a part-time fag and I'm perfect."

"Does Evie know you're a part-time fag?" Paul asked with a laugh.

"No," he said, closing his eyes tiredly as he shoved Paul off him, making him fall down to lie next to him on the bed. "But I'm thinking I should tell her."

"Not funny," Paul said, sobering instantly. "You can't tell her. If you tell her she'll figure us out."

Danny rolled onto his side and propped his cheek on his hand as he stared at Paul. "I hate lying to her. Aren't you supposed to tell your girlfriend everything? Lay it all out on the table and see if she still puts up with you. That's how it works, isn't it?"

"No," Paul said slowly, his eyes narrowed at Danny. "Honesty is overrated."

"Vanilla people are honest," Danny said thoughtfully. "Telling her would be the right course of action for a real relationship with her."

"Kinky people are honest," Paul argued. "Vanilla people are anything but. I'm a part-time vanilla person and trust me when I tell you that I would never be fully honest with Trisha. That's a catastrophe I can't even bear to think about."

"Forgive me if I don't want to base my relationship with Eve on you and Trisha," Danny said darkly. "You don't even love her."

"I love her," Paul said, avoiding his eyes as he stared up at the top of the bed.

"Liar."

"Don't tell Evie," Paul said rather than argue with him. "Trust me on this."

"I want you to sleep with me tonight," Danny said firmly, deciding to drop the vanilla debate. "Your eyes are still dilated. That's why you're bouncing around this bedroom at one in the morning. I know you're still buzzing whether you admit it or not."

Paul smirked, his eyes darting back to Danny. "Fire play does work nicely. It's a decent substitute for your whip."

"Mmm," Danny hummed in agreement, knowing Paul was still on an endorphin high that made him exhilarated for hours. "Skip running tomorrow."

"Fuck you," Paul snorted, giving him a look of annoyance. "I like running days."

Danny sighed in defeat as he dropped his arm, letting his head fall heavily to the pillow. "Fine, go running in four hours. I'm too tired to care."

"Roll over," Paul said, pushing at his shoulder. "I'll rub your neck. It's the least I can do. The fire play was nice. That was thoughtful of you."

"You're a freak," Danny groaned, rolling over like Paul asked so his back was facing him. "Only you would consider being set on fire thoughtful."

Paul rubbed his shoulders, his strong hands digging into the tense muscles at the curves of Danny's neck in a way that made him groan out loud. It was nice, certainly something Danny could get into because Paul gave amazing massages, but he pushed his hands away after a few short minutes.

"Go to sleep," Danny said softly. "If you're really going running I want you to go to sleep."

"Fine," Paul said, making a move to roll out of bed.

"Don't even think about it," Danny growled at him. "You're sleeping with me. We already decided on it."

"Christ," Paul said, flopping back down beside him in defeat. "This is ridiculous. I'm fine."

Danny considered that as he reached over to turn off the light on his nightstand, plunging them into total darkness. "Are you sure I didn't get you? Don't lie to me."

"I'm sure," Paul said in annoyance. "You're a professional. There's not a scorch mark on me—unfortunately."

"I'm impressed with myself," Danny said with a smug grin as he rolled over and wrapped his arms around Paul, resting his cheek against his hard chest and savoring the novelty of lying there with him without having to work. "If I weren't retired, we could do some fire demonstrations. We used to do amazing whip demonstrations that made everyone breathless. Imagine what we could do with fire. It could be really flashy and dramatic. That's fun," Danny said longingly, wishing he had thought about little things like that before he retired impulsively. There was so much he missed about him and Paul being actively involved in the scene. "I could teach fire play to all those idiots scarring up their slaves."

"You could," Paul agreed, his fingers running through Danny's hair softly. "It's a nice skill in your repertoire. You should be proud of it. You're an excellent Master—very talented."

Danny smiled, his arms tightening around Paul as he buried his face in his chest, inhaling his scent and savoring it. "You're feeding my vanity. That's a nice submissive skill you have. It's always been one of my favorites."

"That one's easy, especially with you," Paul snorted, his fingers still light in Danny's hair as his other hand ran up the line of his back. "I told Trisha about Eve. She wants to double date."

"Oh, fun," Danny said, pulling a face of distaste. "Did you tell her you used to date?"

"Yeah, but I sorta played down how involved we were. We got to do the double date thing or she'll get suspicious."

"You've been avoiding Eve like the plague ever since your little issue in the yard," Danny reminded him. "You really want to go out with her and Trisha? Isn't that just asking for a drama?"

"No, it'll be fine. I got it under control," Paul said, his voice suddenly pained. "I don't know what I was thinking that night. Can you imagine if Eve found out about my problem? That would be horrible. Thank you for stopping me. I owe you for that."

"It wouldn't be so bad if she found out," Danny said, testing the waters curiously. "She'd probably be fine with it."

"No," Paul said firmly. "I don't ever want her to find out. Promise me you won't tell her. I'd rather she just think of me as a boy scout. Let her believe it. That makes me happy."

Danny fell silent, not wanting to commit to that particular promise. He was hoping Paul would drop it, but he nudged him instead. Danny was too tired to argue and just sighed in defeat. "Fine."

"Thank you," Paul said softly in a voice so genuinely relieved Danny couldn't help but feel guilty. "Really, I love you, Danny Boy."

Danny closed his eyes in exhaustion, unable to keep the bitterness out of his voice as he whispered, "You always love me when you're buzzing on endorphins."

"I do feel good," Paul said, not bothering to deny the accusation. "You're a wonderful Master, you really are."

Danny winced and held on to Paul tighter, even if it was agonizing to know the only way he loved him was as his tormenter. He willed the exhaustion to take him into sleep as he tried to pretend Paul was sleeping with him because he loved him, not because he had ordered him to.

* * * * *

"My mother hates you."

"Most mothers do," Danny snorted, lacing a hand behind his head as he took a long drag off his cigarette and blew smoke up to the top of his bed. "Has she figured out you do more than paint when you come over here every day?"

"I told her we were officially dating," Eve said as she rolled over, draping her naked body over his and trailing her fingernails over his abdominal muscles teasingly. "She wasn't pleased, but my dad was fine with it. He likes you."

"Hmm," Danny hummed, frowning thoughtfully as he took another drag off his cigarette and then reached over to tap it against the ashtray on his nightstand. "He shouldn't like me. I'm bad news for sweet, innocent girls like his daughter."

"Oh my God," Eve said with a laugh, tilting her head on his chest to smile up at him, showing off deep dimples in both cheeks, making her look adorable with the rosy glow from their lovemaking still showing on her face. "I'm not that innocent, Danny Boy."

"You are innocent," Danny said, licking his lips as he admired the beauty of Eve's open, honest face. "I could prove it."

"Do it."

"No," Danny said as he took another drag off his cigarette and tilted his head back to blow the smoke up. "I don't want to. I'm still enjoying the novelty of being with someone sweet and naïve. I'm not ready to corrupt you yet."

Eve laughed at him, her green eyes sparkling in amusement. Her voice was gravelly with the sated sound of sex in it as she said, "You've already corrupted me. You do it on a daily basis."

"No, I don't," Danny argued, his eyes growing wide as he stared ahead unseeing and considered what he could do to corrupt her. "When I decide to corrupt you, trust me, you'll know it."

"Are you going to?" Eve asked teasingly, her eyebrows rising in obvious curiosity.

"I might." Danny let his eyes run over Eve longingly as he considered the notion of enslaving her. That thought was more than alluring, a temptation Danny would be hopeless to resist once he was tired of her innocence that was still a charming novelty to him. "You should run now. I'm dangerous."

"I know, but I love it," Eve said as she reached up and ran her fingers over his lips. Danny kissed her finger and then sucked it into his mouth, flicking his tongue over it the way he would usually use to lick her clit. Eve's eyes became glazed as she tilted her head and stared at him longingly. "I love you."

Danny closed his eyes and pulled her hand away from his mouth. Eve was too open and trusting. She leapt into things impulsively without thinking and that concerned him. His love for her made him protective. In the past few weeks he had discovered it was so all encompassing he often found himself irritated at her for falling for him so easily when he was the most dangerous temptation of all.

"We've been together two weeks. You don't even know me," Danny said warningly. "You shouldn't be telling me you love me."

"I do know you," Eve argued, her eyes still soft and adoring. "I've known you my whole life and I like who you are. I love you – deal with it."

Danny rolled his eyes as he leaned over and put out his cigarette. "That right there should tell you how naïve you still are. You don't know me, Evie Girl. You just think you do."

"So tell me what I don't know," Eve countered, her eyes wide and inquisitive. "I'm open-minded. I won't judge you."

"Paul Guy wants to go on a double date with us," Danny said, deciding to change the subject. "The cunt wants to meet you."

"Why do you call his fiancée a cunt?" Eve asked, frowning up at him in disappointment. "If he loves her enough to marry her, she can't be that bad."

Danny pulled a disgusted face as he looked away from Eve. "She is that bad. I hate that bitch."

"Paul has been avoiding me like crazy. He thinks he's being slick about it, but he's really not," Eve said, her voice aching all of a sudden. "Now he wants to double with us. What is up with him, Danny Boy? Be honest. Is he still mad at me?"

"Nothing's up with him. He's not mad at you," Danny said, turning back to meet Eve's eyes because he knew from a lifetime of watching Paul that hiding when you lied was a dead giveaway. "He's fine."

"I don't believe it."

Danny laughed. "Well, I can't help you with that. Do you want to double or not? I have no problem telling him no. I don't care if the cunt gets mad or suspicious. She's not my girlfriend."

"I don't mind doubling with them," Eve said softly, closing her eyes as pain showed on her beautiful face. "I want to meet the woman who stole his heart. She can't be a cunt, not if she's his soul mate."

"Okay," Danny said slowly as disgust rolled over him so potently he couldn't hide it. "She's not Paul Guy's soul mate. Not even close. You are romanticizing something that is anything but romantic."

Eve frowned at him. "Why else would he marry her?"

"Political gain," Danny offered cynically. "Being a glutton for punishment. Blind obedience of his father – shall I go on?"

"No," Eve said with a roll of her eyes. "You're jaded and jealous. You don't want to lose your best friend and you think Paul getting married will somehow ruin your friendship. It won't."

"Yes, it will," Danny said bitterly. "It'll ruin everything."

Eve sighed and then got on her hands and knees, crawling over him. She leaned down until her lips were a breath away from his. "I feel your pain," she said softly, her eyes swimming with tears. "But if you love Paul Guy, you should be happy for him, no matter how painful it is."

"Let's double," Danny countered, his eyes narrowed at Eve. "You meet her and then decide how happy you are for him."

"Fine," Eve said softly and then leaned down and captured his lips.

Danny reached up, tangling his fingers in her hair, pulling her closer to him as he pushed his tongue past her lips and tasted her in an indulgent sweep of her mouth. He swallowed Eve's moan as she wilted into him.

"I need you," Eve rasped when they parted for air. "Please."

"You're insatiable," Danny said with a pained laugh, knowing he couldn't tell her Paul was just as voracious. It was little wonder the two of them were constantly disappearing as teenagers when they both had sex drives that put even Danny to shame. "I'm tired, Evie Girl. You wear me out."

"You're fine," Eve said with a smile as she reached down and stroked him, making his head fall back against the pillow. "What do you want?"

"Go down on me," Danny said as he laced his hands behind his head. "I like seeing those pretty lips wrapped around my cock. Do it for a bit and then I'll fuck you again."

"Sure," Eve said seductively as she slithered down his body, her lips pressing soft, teasing kisses over his skin. "I like sucking your cock. It's beautiful."

"True," Danny agreed as his eyes drifted close.

He moaned when Eve took him in her mouth, her lips and tongue working enthusiastically at making him fully hard. He reached down, tangling one hand in her hair to control her movements, forcing her to slow down as he started moving his hips in the rhythm he wanted. He stared down at her with heavy-lidded eyes, admiring the way his cock looked in her mouth as he fucked it.

"Come here," he groaned after a few minutes, tugging at her hair and forcing her to release him. "Ride me."

Eve grinned impishly, her lips still shiny and wet as she crawled back over him in a slow, seductive manner that had his body tightening. Eve was truly breathtaking straddled naked over him, with her dark red hair hanging wild and loose down her back. Like Paul, she had an inhuman obsession with working out and it showed. She wasn't unnaturally muscular. She still had deep curves in her waist and beautifully rounded breasts that were surprisingly full considering her thin frame, but the exercise showed in the defined lines in her arms and thighs and over the flat plane of her stomach.

And also like Paul, Eve didn't realize how truly breathtaking she was. She knew she was pretty, but she had never realized she was gorgeous. It had left her wide open to be hurt by assholes like her ex-fiancé because she never valued herself like she should.

"I love you too," Danny said as he let his eyes run over Eve adoringly. "I don't deserve you."

"Yes, you do," Eve said gently, leaning down and cupping his face with both palms and pressing her lips to his. "Your eyes are so haunted. That hurts me. Let me make you feel better."

"Okay," he breathed against her lips as he reached out, grabbing her hips and guiding them to him. "Go slow. I want to savor you."

"Slow sucks," Eve whined, reaching between them to wrap her fingers around him and wiggling her hips impatiently to speed up the slide of his cock into her. "Fast is better."

"Patience is better. We need to work on that with you," he groaned, stretching out lazily beneath her as the pleasure of sliding into her tight pussy wrapped around him like a warm blanket. Once he was fully sheathed inside her Danny pulled Eve forward so she was draped over him, her soft breasts crushing against his chest. He traced the line of her spine, his hand tangling in her wild hair. "Slow, Evie."

Eve surged forward, capturing his mouth hungrily, pushing her tongue past his lips greedily as she started moving over him. He grabbed her hips, trying to hold back her hard, impatient movements over him, but the sound of her breathy moans, the feel of her tight pussy and the decadent slide of skin against skin was fracturing his control.

With a growl of annoyance, he wrapped his arms around her and flipped their positions. Danny grinned down at Eve triumphantly when she gasped in shock, looking up at him with stunned green eyes. He captured her hands, pinning her against the mattress as he slid out of her slowly and pushed back in with a lazy thrust of his hips.

"Relax," he said, feeling her body tense around him, her hips shifting impatiently for more than what he was giving her. "Just feel me in you."

Eve moaned, her back arching off the mattress as she tugged at the hold he had on her hands. "I like the friction."

"There's plenty of friction, sweetheart," he said with a laugh as he pushed into her once more. "Calm down. I want to take you slow. Now just lie there and let me."

"Bossy," Eve huffed in defeat, her body finally relaxing beneath him. "Fine."

He leaned down, a devious smile tugging at his lips. He pressed a kiss to the exposed line of her throat as he enjoyed having her pinned beneath him. "Good girl," he whispered, dragging his tongue over the length of her neck in reward.

"Mmm," she hummed, her hips pushing against his with the next slow thrust.

Danny fucked her slowly, savoring the leisurely build of pleasure as they both became sweaty and breathless. Eve started writhing against him, her hands fighting his hold on her, but he was unrelenting in his determination to enjoy her for as long as possible. He knew it was cruel to force her to just feel him without allowing her to climax, but it was that part of it that was getting him off. More than even the feel of Eve clenched tightly around him and the slick slide of their bodies joining over and over again in torturously slow thrusts.

"Please," she finally gasped out when he wouldn't speed his movements. "I want to come."

"I like that," he said as a flash of pleasure rolled over him. "You beg nicely."

"Help me, please," she sobbed, her body shifting beneath him, her hips pushing against his anxiously. "Touch me."

He licked at her neck once more and let go of her hands to reach between their bodies and rub his fingers against her clit. Eve gasped, her hips arching into his hand, forcing his cock deeper in her.

"God, that's good," she panted as she used her free hand to cup her breast, her fingers rubbing against the tight nipple. "I'm gonna come, Danny Boy."

"Go for it."

Eve bowed beneath him quickly, her moans loud and unrestrained as her body started milking his cock in a way that made his balls tighten in need for his own release. When her gasps of pleasure subsided, he stopped touching her and captured her hands once more. He held her to the bed, her hands trapped high above her head as he started fucking her harder.

Slow lost its novelty as he finally gave in to the addictive feeling of Eve trapped beneath him. Fucking her roughly while she lay there pinned down and helpless had

him coming in her faster than he would have liked, his hips slamming against hers to the rhythm of his release. The pleasure speared through his body, making him groan out her name as he licked and bit at her skin more forcefully than he probably should. His exhaustion and constantly jumping from one bed partner to the next forced him to blend the two worlds in his blissful haze. When he was finally spent, he rolled off Eve, realizing too late she wasn't the big hulk of muscle Paul was and probably didn't appreciate the hard, domineering side of his nature.

"Sorry," he choked, throwing his arm over his eyes as he fought to get his breath back. "I didn't mean to be rough like that."

"Love it," Eve whispered breathlessly next to him. "The rougher the better, Danny Boy. You're sexy."

He snorted. "Don't tell me that."

"I love you," she said as she rolled over, draping herself over him once more. She leaned down, placing a reverent kiss to the center of his chest. "You don't have to hold yourself back. I hate that you think you have to hide from me. I love you as you are. I wish you'd believe me."

"Maybe." Danny raised his eyebrows as he considered her words while he ran his fingers through her long hair lovingly. "One way or the other, we'll probably find out."

Chapter Seven

"Do you wanna dance?"

Trisha frowned at Paul, arching one blonde eyebrow as she took a sip of her Coke. "What?"

"Dance," he repeated, speaking louder over the pounding music. "Do you want to?"

Trisha considered that, a perplexed look on her face as she stared out to the dance floor filled with people, the music pulsing as lights flashed above them. She turned back to him, looking surprised. "Do you dance?"

He took a drink of his beer and then smiled. "Yeah. You didn't know that?"

"No," she said with a chuckle, looking amused as her blue eyes sparkled from the flashing lights. "Go dance. I want to see you."

Paul laughed, studying Trisha who was dressed casually in khaki pants and a silk green top. She looked very pressed and put together, even if she was casual. As usual, her makeup was perfect. Her short, bobbed blonde hair framed her face in a very sensible, stylish hairstyle. She looked out of place in the Ybor City dance club. Double dating with Danny and Eve meant they had all ended up doing what Eve wanted because Danny would bend the world to her will if he could. Paul only caught flashes of Eve and Danny through the throngs of dancers. Saturday night was the worst possible time to come to Ybor City. Once the sun set, the historic city became one big party zone, but after three beers Paul found himself not caring about the crowd as he sat at the bar with Trisha who seemed perfectly content to be there. She was always agreeable, which was something that was nice about her. Paul really didn't understand why Danny hated her as passionately as he did.

"I can't dance without a partner," he said as he finished his beer and set it on the bar behind him. He reached out, grabbing Trisha's hand. "You wanna dance with me?"

"No," Trisha said, tugging her hand out of his as she gave him a look that clearly said she thought he was insane. "I can't dance. I'm not coordinated and I'll make a fool of myself."

"Most of the people on that dance floor are making fools of themselves," Paul said loudly over the music. "That's part of the fun. You can be a fool with me, sweetheart."

"No, thank you," Trisha said with a laugh. "But I want to see you dance. Go ahead. I'll cheer from the sidelines."

Paul just shook his head and was turning around to order another beer when Danny suddenly showed up, looking breathless as sweat glimmered on his forehead. He ran both hands through his hair, slicking it away from his face, showing off dark,

sensual features Paul found himself fighting not to stare at when three beers had him mildly buzzed.

"Order me a water," Danny said as he reached into the back pocket of his black jeans, pulling out his wallet. "Give my credit card to the bartender. You all can just put your drinks on my tab. If I can't drink, you should."

"I can drive your car back," Trisha offered, taking another sip of Coke. "I'm not drinking. Order a beer if you want one."

Danny considered that, making it obvious he wanted to drink, but was loath to accept any help from Trisha. He finally shook his head, tossing his wallet at Paul. "A water is fine."

Paul rolled his eyes as he opened Danny's wallet, trying to decide which card to use. "Order a fucking beer. Trisha doesn't drink. She'll drive us home. Her car is there anyway. I have no idea why you insisted on driving."

"Actually, Evie's wearing me out," Danny said breathlessly, sitting down on the barstool next to Paul. "She's got too much energy. She needs to get a job instead of working out all the time. I need the water."

"Oh, Paul, give him a break and go dance with Eve," Trisha suggested, looking out to the dance floor. "That way I can watch you dance."

Danny arched an eyebrow, turning around on his barstool to give Paul a long look. "Yeah, Paul Guy, give me a break. Go bust a move."

Trisha laughed, her eyes sparkling. "I do not believe he can dance. I've got to see this."

"You've been dating him for two years and you've never seen him dance?" Danny asked in amazement as he gave Trisha a dark smile. "This should be fun."

Paul closed his eyes in annoyance, knowing Danny was setting him up on purpose. "I'm not dancing with Eve. If Trisha won't dance with me, then I can sit here and watch. The beer's cold. I'm easy to please."

"Eve's sweet. You can have one dance with her," Trisha said with a smile. "I really like her, Danny. She's very cute. It's nice to see you with a real girlfriend. I think she's good for you."

"Glad you approve," Danny said dryly.

Paul spotted Eve break away from the crowd. She walked up to them, jumping in front of Danny at the bar, her heavy black boots making a thud. She was dressed head to toe in black, making her pale skin stand out starkly, with her long hair tied into a ponytail. She was wearing clubbing clothes and unlike Trisha, she looked born to party in Ybor City. Like most of the other guys at the club, Paul found himself staring at her because she was so beautiful it was impossible not to.

"You need to quit smoking, Danny Boy," Eve said loudly over the music as she brushed the sweat and fine red hairs off her forehead in exasperation. "Without you, all the weirdos start hanging on me. Sweaty, strange men—yuck!"

Danny laughed, his eyes running over Eve leeringly. "That's 'cause you're so sexy. They can't resist."

"Okay, come on," she said, tugging on his hand impatiently. "You're young and healthy. You can dance with me."

"Paul will dance with you," Trisha offered with a smirk at Paul. "Danny wants to order a water. Let Paul take his place for one dance."

"Really?" Eve squeaked excitedly as she turned to look at Paul with wide green eyes. "You'd dance with me?"

"Yeah, I guess," Paul said with another dark look at Danny. "If you need someone to keep the weirdos off you while Danny catches his breath I can give you one dance."

"Awesome!" Eve abandoned Danny without a backward glance as she reached over and grabbed Paul's hand. "Come on, Paul Guy. This will be fun, one dance for old times' sake."

"Trisha doesn't believe he can dance," Danny offered as he took his wallet back from Paul. "She thinks lawyers don't dance."

"They don't," Trisha put in with a laugh as she looked at Paul in amusement. "Not well, anyway. You've had quite a few beers. Are you going to make a fool of yourself?"

"Not in the way you're thinking," Paul got off the barstool, savoring the feeling of Eve's hand in his as she tugged him impatiently toward the dance floor, excitement pulsing off her so potently he could taste it. "I'm practically married. You gotta behave."

"That's no fun. We're dancing for old times' sake." Eve pulled back with a frown and then called out to Trisha, "Can I molest your fiancé for one dance?"

Trisha laughed. "If you want."

"Permission and everything," Eve said in a taunting voice as she turned around, dragging him toward the dance floor. She used her grip on his hand to force Paul to wrap his arm around her waist from behind as she pressed back against him invitingly. "Fuck me on the dance floor. I know you haven't forgotten."

Paul felt his eyes grow wide. He tightened his arm around Eve and leaned down to speak into her ear when they reached the edge of the dance floor. "Trisha's watching. I can't fuck you on the dance floor, Evie Girl."

"She said you could," Eve argued, moving against him seductively. "I asked."

"She's never seen us dance before," he breathed into her ear as his body started moving with Eve's on its own accord because ten years didn't change the fact that they were still tuned in to each other. When she pushed her hips back against his, Paul gripped them instinctively, holding her tightly to him and then fighting a shudder of pleasure when he realized how good it felt to hold her hips again. "Don't get me in trouble."

"I live to get you in trouble." Eve reached behind her, wrapping her arms around his neck as she moved against him, her back still flush against his chest. "Okay, stop dancing like a stick in the mud. Move what your mama gave you."

He laughed, the music, beer and Eve making him forget to behave. He forced her to turn around in his arms, running one hand up her back, tracing the line of her spine through the tight black top she wore. Eve looked up at him with stunned green eyes and wrapped her arms around his neck, moving her shoulders to the rhythm of the music as a seductive smile tugged at her lips, silently daring him to be bold.

Paul arched an eyebrow at her as he lightly tugged at her ponytail. Eve reacted immediately, arching her back, showing off beautiful, lush breasts straining against the tight tank top. He gripped at her hips tighter when she bent back far enough that her hair brushed the floor and then came back up in a slow, sensual move that had his mouth watering for her.

Finally losing the battle, Paul ran both hands up her waist, wrapping them around her back and forcing her tightly against him, her breasts pressing against his chest to the point he could feel her heat through their clothes. She wrapped one arm around his neck as they started moving together. The rhythm of the music and feeling Eve pressed tightly against him made his cock swell. Eve's eyes became molten as she stared up at him. She could feel his reaction to her and it was obvious it affected her because he knew that look, had once lived to see it shining in her eyes. It took more strength than he knew he had not to lean down and bury his face into the curve of her neck to kiss and lick at her skin that glimmered with a fine sheen of sweat.

It didn't occur to him that the reason he was suddenly craving the taste of her was because he was fucking her on the dance floor. He forgot about Trisha and Danny and was suddenly a teenager again, clubbing with Eve who had always adored dancing. He had gone out with her every Saturday once he had gotten a driver's license. Dance clubs had been their favorite outing. He had looked forward to it all week—when the two of them would spend hours pressed tightly together, getting lost in the music. They could have done it until morning if their parents would have allowed it, but they always headed home before midnight, leaving early enough to have time to drive some place secluded and fuck in his car. They'd leave the car radio blaring as Eve rode him to the same rhythm she danced with.

The music, her scent, the feel of her slim body moving against his, it all triggered so many memory sensors he found himself being pissed Danny had driven them. Dancing with Eve meant fucking her afterwards. Eve seemed to be suffering from the same problem because he had seen her dancing with Danny earlier and she hadn't done it like this.

When the song switched, it jerked him back to reality enough to have him pulling away and shaking his head to find sanity. It was just unfortunate the next song was older, something they had actually danced to ten years ago. It was a Latin song, one that fit so perfectly with the Spanish atmosphere of Ybor City it was easy for the edges of reality to blur and suck him deeper into the fantasy. It had a distinct rhythm, making

it a showing-off song that usually left one or two couples who really knew how to dance getting a large berth as others just stopped to watch.

"Don't even think about it!" Eve grabbed his hand when he went to walk back to the bar. She jerked him back to her with surprising strength as she raised her arm in a pose that clearly said she wanted to show off and couldn't do it with Danny. "Make me look hot!"

"You don't need help with that." He eyed her as she grabbed his hand tightly at the curve of her waist, making it obvious what she wanted. "But go for it."

Eve spun away from him, her hand still tightly in his, making others gasp in surprise. When she rolled back to him, her back now pressed against chest and his arm wrapped around her waist, they suddenly had much more room to dance. Paul found himself awed they could still do it this well. Ten years was a very long time and though Eve obviously still went dancing on a regular basis, Paul didn't. He was really impressed at how easy it was to dance with her in a way that got them that much attention. Dancing with Eve was like riding a bike—he could do it ten years later as if he had never stopped.

Football players weren't supposed to know how to dance, but Eve loved it and Paul never cared if his friends had made fun of him for it. Making her happy had always been his first priority and because of that he was one of the few lawyers who knew how to dance really well. When the next song ended, people actually shouted in complaint when Paul and Eve walked off the dance floor, breathless and sweaty.

Paul let go of Eve's hand, stepping away from her when he saw the way Trisha was staring at them, her blue eyes wide and stunned, her pink lips parted in shock as she sat there frozen next to Danny.

"I'm returning your date," Paul said, pushing Eve lightly toward Danny, whose eyes were dark and devious as he smirked against the rim of his water bottle. "Take over."

"Gimme." Eve snatched Danny's water bottle from him. She gulped down a large portion of his water as her chest heaved, making it hard not to stare at the edges of her breasts exposed from her low-cut tank top. She was still breathless as she said, "You're Cuban. Why can't you dance like him, Danny Boy?"

"'Cause I was doing other things in high school, not catering to you," Danny said as his eyes darted from Eve to Paul. "That was impressive. I had forgotten how good you two were together."

"I told you I didn't want to dance," Paul said, feeling the back of his neck flush as he sat down next to Trisha, who was still stunned speechless. He was longing for something stronger than beer when he realized he was still hard, a part of his mind wondering when they got to drive home and fuck in the car with the radio blaring. He leaned in closer to Trisha, raising his eyebrows when he couldn't read the astonished expression on her face. "I asked you first."

"I—" Trisha started, shaking her head in stunned amazement. "I couldn't do that. You think I could dance like that?"

"Maybe," Paul said with a shrug. "It's just like—"

"Fucking?" Danny offered, arching a dark eyebrow at Paul.

Paul turned around rather than respond to Danny. He raised his hand, trying to get the bartender's attention. "I need another beer."

"Did you guys do a routine or something in high school?" Trisha asked curiously, her voice now surprisingly excited. "You must have danced to that song before. That's why Danny requested it."

Paul stiffened in anger and turned around to stare at Danny in disbelief. It *was* his fault they had let loose like that, having requested a song he knew they couldn't resist showing off to.

Danny didn't even look abashed. He just shrugged casually. "I like that song. It never gets old. People always prefer the music they listened to in high school. Have you ever noticed that?"

"I like that song too," Trisha said, surprising Paul by leaning into him and wrapping an arm around his waist. "But I've never seen someone dance like that to it. I can't believe it, but you're an amazing dancer. It makes you look sort of—"

Paul tilted his head, looking at Trisha curiously. Her cheeks were flushed pink and her blue eyes were shining in a way he hadn't seen before. "Sort of?" he pressed curiously.

Trisha shrugged, her cheeks growing pinker. "I don't know—you looked really—"

"Sexy. That's the word you're looking for," Danny put in with a dark, disbelieving look at Trisha. "You think he looked sexy, anyone with eyes would."

Paul stared at Danny in horror, trying to convey that saying Paul looked sexy was not something typical between two male friends. Danny being such a player had everyone including Trisha assuming he was straight, but he was going to ruin that illusion if he kept saying things like that. Danny was completely bisexual. His reality was different from other people. He was entirely confident in his sex appeal and he never gave a shit what others thought, even knowing Paul's father would go insane if he knew Paul was living with a man who went both ways and actually fucked other men. It wouldn't make a difference that Danny had been his best friend since kindergarten. Paul living with him would make him guilty by association.

"What's in your water bottle?" Paul asked him slowly, his voice clearly warning Danny to shut up. "Did you leave it sitting on the bar?"

"I was just stating the obvious. That's what she was thinking," Danny said with a shrug, taking his water bottle back from Eve, who was frozen there, her eyes darting back and forth between Danny and Paul. He took a long drink, mumbling against the rim, "At least now we know she has an actual pulse."

Paul felt himself pale as he continued to give him a look he knew Danny understood but was choosing to ignore. Double dating with Danny and Eve had been a mistake. He was cursing himself for telling Trisha to just leave her car at their house to save ten bucks on parking because now would be a good time to leave.

"You did look—" Trisha started, reminding Paul she was still there as he turned around to look at her hesitantly. She shrugged, a smile tugging at her lips. "Sexy. He's right, that's the word I was looking for."

Paul raised his eyebrows, forgetting Danny for the moment because he didn't think he'd ever heard Trisha say the word sexy before. "I'll dance with you if you want. We can be sexy together."

"No," she said slowly as her blush grew deeper. "But maybe you can stay at my place tonight—if you want. I'll drive you back in the morning."

"Sure," Paul said with a smile, feeling genuine shock that Trisha wasn't mad at him for dancing with Eve like he had. She was turned-on, which was surprising because sex had never been exciting for her no matter what Paul tried. "Staying at your place is always nice. Tomorrow's Sunday. We can sleep in."

"Unbelievable," Danny said in disgust as he set the water bottle on the bar and stood up with Eve's hand in his. "You owe me fifty bucks for the song, Paul Guy. I'm not forking out that much for someone to get laid unless I'm involved."

"What an asshole," Paul growled under his breath, his eyes wide once more as he watched Danny and Eve walk back to the dance floor. "Seriously, did he put his drink down on the bar?"

"No," Trisha said with a laugh, her eyes still swirling with something that was as close to lust as Paul had ever seen in them. "He obviously knew I'd enjoy seeing you dance. Who wouldn't?"

"Yeah, that's why he did it," Paul said and then ordered another beer, putting it on Danny's tab just because he was pissed at him. Danny was lashing out because he had wanted Trisha to end up angry, not flushed and inviting Paul over to her place. Danny was a control freak. When things didn't work out like he planned he got vicious. Paul sat back down, a fresh beer in his hand. He took a long drink of it as he reached out, wrapping an arm around Trisha's waist casually. "I wish we'd brought your car. We could leave now. Doubling with them is misery."

"It's not so bad," Trisha said, leaning into him, her cheek resting on his chest. "How long did you date Eve in high school?"

Paul had to physically restrain himself from stiffening in reaction to her question. He forced his body to remain relaxed as he took another long drink of his beer. "A few years. It was one of those kid things. You know, when it doesn't matter how totally different you are from the other person because you feel like the world will always stay the same."

"You two are very different. I couldn't imagine you dating Eve when I first met her, but after seeing you dancing together..." Trisha started pensively, as if pondering it

more. "I could picture you as a couple. I bet you two were really cute together in high school."

"It would've never worked out. She and Danny are much better together," Paul said, finding that just saying the words made his chest hurt because he knew he could have spent the rest of his life with Eve and been extremely happy. Letting Danny have her was never going to stop hurting him. He was extremely relieved Trisha wanted to spend the night together because he found himself needing the soft feel of a woman. "You're more my type. I'm seriously disappointed we have to wait until Eve wears herself out before we can leave. She does need to get a job, because all she has to do with her time is paint, work out and fuck Danny. She'll be dancing forever and you got me wanting to be in bed with you, not sitting here waiting for them."

Trisha laughed, the sound of it huskier than usual. "Me too." She tilted her head up to stare at him. "I'll give Danny the fifty bucks, because I just realized I've got one good-looking fiancé. That's worth the price of the song."

Paul was silently thankful Danny hadn't heard Trisha say she had just realized he was good-looking. Paul would have had to punch him to keep him from saying something even more suspicious than he already had and punching Danny was something that would end badly. He moved his shoulder, feeling the slight sting of lash marks on his back. He was going to have to do it with Trisha in the dark, which wasn't a problem since she preferred it that way. The real issue was Danny had whipped him until he bled for refusing to give up Eve and the wounds weren't fully healed. If Trisha touched his back she'd feel the marks Danny had left on him. Paul mentally started working on a plan that would keep her hands from getting near his back, distracting himself from the much deeper problem of Danny because Paul found himself wanting him just as badly as Eve, perhaps more so, because Danny being an asshole got him hotter than anything.

"Maybe we should catch a cab?" Paul mused as he ran his fingers through Trisha's short blonde hair softly. "You wanna take off? We'll catch a cab to my place, pick up your car and then spend the rest of the night doing something much more fun than watching Danny and Eve."

"Okay," Trisha said with a laugh as she pulled away from him and let her bright blue eyes run over Paul appraisingly. "We'll be rebels and leave early. That's sort of exciting."

Paul wondered for a moment what it would be like to find something as ordinary as leaving early from a club rebellious. He had to figure out a way to keep Trisha from touching his back to hide the fact that Danny had whipped the shit out of him and then fucked him senseless afterwards because Paul always got so hot after a beating he needed Danny more than air. Leaving early to have vanilla sex with a woman he planned to marry in five months was not something Paul would categorize as rebellious.

"Yeah, we'll be rebels," Paul said with a laugh he knew Danny or Eve would have known was purely sarcastic. "We're really living on the edge now."

"You're wonderful," Trisha said, reaching out to touch his cheek when she jumped off the barstool and stood in front of him. "I know Eve is incredibly beautiful. I can't believe you want to leave with me instead of stay here and dance with her. I'm so lucky."

Paul closed his eyes as the guilt knifed through him, because he knew he was going to be picturing Eve when he fucked Trisha later. He always pictured Eve whenever he fucked a woman. The dancing was just going to make the images more vivid.

"You're beautiful too," he said as he opened his eyes to study Trisha who was pretty by anyone's standards, but not in the wild, uninhibited way Eve was. Instead, Trisha was polished and put together. Most importantly, she was a good person despite what Danny thought. He reached out, fingering her hair as he tried for what had to be the millionth time to feel something deeper than friendship for Trisha. "Any man would be lucky to marry you. I know you're the best thing that could have happened to me. I appreciate you."

Trisha beamed at him, her eyes still swirling with hunger that seemed totally misplaced on her. "I think I'm looking forward to the honeymoon."

Paul felt a pulse of excitement over Trisha being this frisky. He knew marrying her was the best thing for him, but he couldn't deny he was dreading a lifetime of sex with her when she never liked anything more than the absolute basics. If he could somehow find a way to spice up their sex life, leaving Danny would be a thousand times easier for him.

"If you let me go downtown," Paul ran his eyes lower, staring at her pointedly in a way he knew she'd understand. "You would definitely look forward to our honeymoon."

"No," Trisha said, the lustful glaze to her eyes disappearing as suddenly as it appeared. She gave him one of her icy lawyer looks that had helped convict many criminals. "You know I don't like that. Why do you keep pressing the issue?"

Paul took another drink of his beer, rolling his eyes in irritation. "You've never tried it. If you did, you wouldn't hate it."

"Yes, I would."

Paul raised his gaze to hers, giving her a long look he knew was dangerous. It was a look slave Paul would use, which was decidedly out of character from the lawyer Trisha fell in love with. "You get me on my knees and you'll wanna keep me there," he said in a soft, sensual voice he knew for a fact could get just about anyone hot for him. "All you would have to do is ask and you would receive for as long as you want. I'd be a slave to you."

Trisha's eyes grew wide, her cheeks flushing red as her breath rushed out of her. For several heartbeats, Paul thought he had actually hooked her and found a way to get her interested in sex beyond the mundane. But then Trisha reached out and grabbed the beer out of his hand and put it on the bar.

"Don't drink any more. You've clearly had more than enough," she said dismissively as she tucked strands of hair behind her ears and then looked out toward the dance floor, obviously trying to spot Danny and Eve. "We need to tell them that we're leaving. If we go now, I can show you a new pro-bono case I found for you. She works at the shelter I volunteer at and she was thrilled when I told her my fiancé was a business attorney. You don't mind helping her with small business, do you? I know you're used to corporate problems."

"No, I don't mind," Paul said, shaking his head to clear his mind from darker things, knowing it was the beers that had him trying for something he knew was impossible. "I do more pro-bono work than firm work and all my pro-bono projects are small business. I prefer it, actually. I'd do it all the time if I wouldn't starve to death."

"It'll pay off," Trisha assured him with a smile. "Volunteering and doing pro-bono work makes you a valuable member of society."

"And politicians need to be valuable members of society, I know," Paul said in a bored voice. "I actually do the work because I love it, not because I'm trying to make a name for myself. Helping people makes me feel good."

"Me too," Trisha said, sounding completely genuine. "I wish I could do pro-bono work, but I couldn't ever be a defense attorney. Getting criminals off the street is how I help society. But I won't say I'm not jealous of your pro-bono projects. They make you a shoo-in for whatever local office you want to run for. Men always have the advantage. That's why intelligent women pick good ones."

Paul shrugged tiredly, the beer making it impossible for him to be too excited about the idea of being in politics when his dick was hard. He was thankful he had worn looser jeans and left his shirt un-tucked because he was aching for both Danny and Eve to the point even lawyer talk wasn't cooling his ardor. He really wanted to get on his knees for Danny, not do pro-bono work for Trisha, but he knew that was impossible when Eve would surely be spending the night. Trisha sex was better than nothing.

"Let me tell Danny we're taking off," he said as he stood, rubbing at the back of his neck as he reeled over how desperate he was. Even vanilla sex was exciting. "Then we'll catch a cab. I'm over Ybor City."

Chapter Eight

Paul always hated when Trisha followed him into the house rather than just dropping him off and leaving. He just didn't get enough opportunities to actually relax and have a few beers to let one pass by, even if it meant he was dependent on her for a ride. He had left his keys at home on purpose so he had to knock in the morning because with Danny, one never knew what they'd find. He couldn't risk walking into the house with Trisha behind him without being certain the way was clear.

"Did you forget your keys?" Trisha asked, looking in her purse when Danny still hadn't opened the door. "Don't I have your key? You should give me a spare as a safety measure."

Paul tried not to laugh. Giving Trisha a key to his house was just asking for a drama. No one had a key to their house. Even Eve was refused a key, which had upset Danny, but he knew giving Eve free access to their house without warning was something that would cut him off from Paul's cock very quickly.

Paul knocked at the door again, his fist pounding against the wood impatiently and the door was suddenly jerked open in response. Danny stood in the doorway wearing only a pair of tight black jeans, a cigarette between his lips as he arched a dark, annoyed eyebrow at Paul.

"It was open," he mumbled, taking a long drag off his cigarette and tilting his head away from them to blow out the smoke. "I don't lock the door when you're gone."

"I forgot to check," Paul lied as he walked into the house, pushing past Danny. "Did Evie take off?"

"She left a few minutes ago," Danny said, closing the door when Trisha walked in behind him. "She had things to do. Are you staying for a while, Trisha?"

"A bit," Trisha said as her eyes lingered on Danny, running over his bare chest in a way that wasn't sexual. She had to be the only woman in the world who could look at Danny bare-chested and remain completely unaffected. It was more annoyance that had her asking, "Why don't you ever wear a shirt? Paul never walks around with his shirt off."

"I wonder why that is?" Danny snorted as he walked toward the kitchen. "Coffee?"

"No, thank you. Paul and I are just going to go over a pro-bono case I found for him."

"Great. 'Cause he doesn't have enough of those. Why get paid when he can work for free?"

"You need to have another cup of coffee," Paul said as he grabbed his briefcase by the front door and brought it into the kitchen.

"I have no idea how you two are friends," Trisha said as she sat down at the kitchen table and dropped the file under her arm in front her. "I've never met two more opposite men in my entire life. I bet you're a Democrat, Danny."

"I don't vote. But if I did I wouldn't vote Republican."

"You should vote," Paul put in, knowing he was saying exactly what Danny wanted him to because he was obviously in a wicked mood this morning and felt like pissing off whoever showed up at the door. "I don't give a shit what you vote for, but not utilizing your say in a democratic government is an insult to all the men who died to make this country what it is."

"Well said," Trisha said with a proud smile at Paul, before she turned and glared at Danny who sat down at the table across from them, tapping his cigarette against the ashtray casually, making it obvious he couldn't care less Trisha was irritated with him. "I can't believe you don't vote. Give me one good reason for not voting. I want to hear this."

"I think the system is flawed." Danny shrugged as he took another drag off his cigarette and blew out the smoke slowly as he gave Trisha a dark, malicious look that said he was toying with her on purpose. "Politicians are power-hungry, greedy individuals by nature. They only care about serving themselves, not this country. Choosing one corrupt asshole over the other is pointless."

Trisha gasped but Paul just shook his head. "He's baiting you. Just ignore him. He needs lots more coffee. He must've been out until dawn."

"Paul's going to be a politician," Trisha said, ignoring Paul's advice as she gave Danny an icy stare across the table. "Do you think he's corrupt?"

"No," Danny said as he studied Paul pensively. "But I think he would be a horrible politician. He will never be self-serving enough to survive a political career."

"Danny Boy," Paul growled, knowing Danny was talking about his kinks and the fact that he sometimes had a hard time separating them from his professional life. "You're being an asshole this morning."

"Yeah, I bet you hate that," Danny said sarcastically as he put out his cigarette, giving Paul a look that said he knew Paul didn't hate it at all. Then he turned to study Trisha, his dark eyes running over her in a calculating manner. "However, you, Trisha, could be an amazing politician. I'm a very good judge of character and I'm dead-on with this. Stop prepping Paul and work on yourself. You don't need him to grab the power you want. You're perfectly capable of doing it all on your own."

Trisha laughed, her eyes wide at Danny's audacity. "You're insulting me by saying I'd be good at serving my country. It won't work. I find that a compliment."

"I thought you might," Danny said with another long look at Paul, his dark eyes swirling with mischief and something darker and more tempting. "I bought some ice cream, want some?"

Paul's breath caught as he stared back at Danny for one long moment, suddenly aching for him with every ounce of his being. He rubbed at the back of his neck as he

turned away from Trisha, because he knew what Danny was suggesting. Just the mention of it caused a rocket fire of lust to shoot straight to his cock and he knew it showed on his face.

"What flavor?" he couldn't resist asking in a soft, sensual voice he knew got Danny hard and desperate. It was a small blessing Trisha was largely oblivious to sexual tension because it was suddenly choking the air out of the kitchen as he turned back to stare at Danny hungrily. "Not vanilla? I'm not in the mood for it."

"Sick of it?" Danny asked curiously, his voice light. "Already?"

"I'm never in the mood for it," Paul admitted distantly, his eyes lowering to stare at Danny's bare chest as need shimmered over his skin. "I hate it."

"I didn't know you hated vanilla ice cream," Trisha said distractedly as she worked at sorting out the papers in the file. "You've eaten it at my place."

"I have never *eaten* vanilla at your place," Paul said, casting a dark look at Trisha. "Maybe if I did, I wouldn't hate it so much."

"Please tell me you're joking," Danny whispered in disbelief, clearly understanding the true meaning of Paul's complaint and staring at him in shock because of it. "That can't be true."

Paul raised his eyebrows at Danny, making it clear he was not joking. Danny shook his head, his eyes wide as he pushed away from the table. "I'll leave you two alone to work on your case."

"Thank you," Paul said and then took a deep breath to clear his head from the lust pulsing through his veins. He got Danny's message loud and clear, the sooner he got rid of Trisha the better. He ran both his hands through his hair, his fingers lacing together at the back of his neck as he stared down at the file Trisha was organizing for him, trying to find a way to concentrate. "I think I need some coffee, Danny Boy. Can you get me some?"

"Sure," Danny said in a low, rasping voice as he stood there staring at Paul who still had his hands behind his head. His thoughts were written all over his face as his breathing fell shallow. "Cream?"

Paul had to bite his tongue rather than laugh. "Please," he said teasingly, leaving his hands behind his head on purpose. He let his eyes run over Danny seductively, finding that he was every bit as hard as Paul was. He raised his gaze to his bare chest once more, admiring his smooth, tan skin. "I like *café con leche*."

Danny's smile got broader as he shook his head slowly, his eyes darting to Trisha who was still completely ignorant of the two of them practically fucking each other with words and looks across the kitchen. "Unbelievable, Paul Guy," he said with a sigh as he went to make the coffee. "Talk about opposites. Worst pairing in the universe."

Paul sent a glance at Trisha for that one. She was still oblivious as she worked at highlighting sections of black print with long, sensual strokes that betrayed her passion for law and organization above all things.

"I can actually read it myself and find the pertinent information," Paul said with a frown as he watched her flip the page and start highlighting with the same level of zeal. "Is there anything in that file that pertains to criminal law?"

"No," Trisha said with a laugh. "But I like helping. If I can't do my own pro-bono cases the least I can do is help with yours. They're fun, much lighter than what I usually do. No crime photos for one."

"You adore being a prosecutor, crime photos and all," Paul said, wincing when she covered half the page with strips of blinding yellow. "The only reason you're decorating my file is because you have a love affair going on with highlighters. Please stop doing that. I hate highlighters. I made my assistant throw all hers away."

"Really?" Trisha gasped in horror, raising her head to stare at him with wide eyes. "How do you keep track of all the key points?"

"I *remember* them," Paul said slowly, his hands still behind his head as he gave Trisha a smile. "I had a professor who insisted that highlighting and underlining was a crutch. It lets you skip over paying attention to what you're reading. Since then I stopped using them and just trained myself to retain what I was reading."

Trisha lifted her eyebrows as she stared ahead unseeing for a moment and then shook her head. "I don't agree."

"That was actually the most pertinent information you got from that file," Danny said as he put a cup of coffee in front of Paul. "He trained himself to do something because his professor told him to."

"Fuck off, Danny Boy," Paul said with a scowl at Danny. "Let us finish this project."

"Fine," Danny said with a frown, looking down at Trisha when she went back to highlighting the file Paul had to work with once she got done making it blinding. "Have lots of fun."

Danny headed outside, making it obvious he needed to distance himself and go fishing rather than lash out at Trisha for completely ignoring Paul's polite request to stop highlighting the file he was going to work on as a favor to her.

Paul took a long drink of coffee, savoring the taste of it and thinking of Danny rather than ugly yellow ruining a perfectly good file. He would just copy the pages at work on Monday, getting rid of the yellow and leaving it a difficult gray instead.

"Please don't highlight it," Paul surprised himself by saying as he thought of having to read over all of it with faded gray clouding the writing. "I really do hate highlighters. They bother me."

"But I thought we were working on this together."

Paul closed his eyes in annoyance. After she was done coloring, her help would be pointless because that stupid yellow highlighter was all she was bringing to the table. He was the business attorney. Unless someone was getting murdered over the partnership he was helping her friend set up, Trisha's input was useless.

"Fine, highlight it," Paul said, deciding the sooner she was done, the sooner he could get laid in a way that was actually exciting.

True to form, once Trisha was done highlighting, she really didn't have much else to offer. But Paul discussed the case with her anyway, going over the details of the business that needed to be set up so she could relay the information to her friend. He couldn't meet with her friend or the other business partner until next Saturday, which was the only day he had to meet with the clients he did free work for but he assured Trisha she could give both partners his cell number if they had any questions before then.

"You're brilliant," Trisha said as she put her pens and highlighters in her purse. "I know this is a tedious project and I do appreciate you for it."

"It's not that tedious," Paul said as he took another long drink of coffee. "In comparison to what I deal with at the firm, it's practically mindless it's so easy. I should have everything done by Saturday."

"So very efficient," Trisha said, leaning over to place a kiss on his lips. "And Danny thinks you won't be a good politician. He doesn't even vote. What does he know about it?"

Paul smiled to himself, taking another drink of coffee rather than answer her. Most of Danny's clients had been politicians. Powerful people from all over the world had paid to have him flown in to abuse them when they needed an escape from their reality and that gave Danny a very different view of politics.

"He should vote," Paul finally said when it was obvious Trisha was waiting for a response. "If you don't vote, you don't get to have an opinion. I've told him that."

"Oh, well." Trisha shrugged as she stood and headed to the front door, stopping in front of it to give Paul a smile when he got up to walk her out. "Thanks again for working on the case for me. We can do lunch tomorrow. My treat."

"Call me later." Paul leaned down to kiss her again as he reached around Trisha and opened the door for her. "Drive safely."

"Always," Trisha said as she walked out the door. "Catch anything?"

"Why, do you like fish?" Danny asked dryly. Paul leaned out the door to see him smirk up at Trisha from where he was reclined in a chair, a cigarette between his fingers and his fishing pole resting unattended against the railing. "Say the word and I'll hook you up."

"I'm good," Trisha said tightly as she walked toward her car.

She hadn't even started the car when Danny said, "I call lesbian. Any woman who takes two years to figure out you're sexy and tells me to put my shirt on has to be a lesbian."

"She would've caught the fish joke," Paul pointed out with a laugh. "Besides, she would be a *horrible* lesbian."

"I guess," Danny said, turning around to arch an eyebrow at Paul. "Are you shitting me about that? You lick pussy better than I do and I lick pussy *really* well. That has to be the most horrific waste of perfectly good talent I have ever heard of. If women on the scene heard about that they'd start a riot. Do you know how many of them have offered thousands for the chance to feel your tongue on them?"

Paul leaned against the doorframe as a fresh surge of lust rolled over him. "Forget charging them. I'll pay you for the chance to lick some pussy. I miss it."

"I know," Danny whispered softly as he took a long drag off his cigarette and tilted his head back to blow smoke upward. "You like corsets and lipstick. You want a woman to make you kneel all night and lick her until your tongue goes numb."

Paul groaned, rubbing his hand against the back of his neck as he leaned more heavily against the door. "That's exactly what I want. Please, Danny Boy. I'll do anything you want."

"I can't trust them with you," Danny said sadly. "I'm sorry."

Paul put a hand over his eyes, his body tight in pent-up frustration. "I won't let them hurt me. I'll safe word if they start using pain."

"Did Trisha stop highlighting your file after I left?"

Paul looked away from him, staring out toward the lake, silently cursing himself for letting Trisha go over the case with him here instead of at her apartment.

"Paul Guy?"

"I can just copy it. That gets rid of the yellow," Paul whispered. "I do it all the time."

"You hate highlighters and you still let her do it, but you expect me to believe you're going to stop some gorgeous Domme from abusing you when you love it more than anything in this world?" Danny asked, turning around to look at him cynically. "The only way you get to play with a Domme is if I supervise. Those are the rules, you know that."

Paul gaped at Danny's head. "You're one of the best Doms on the scene. You scare them to death. An intimidated, nervous Domme defeats the whole purpose of having one."

Danny shrugged. "Then you're fucked, Paul Guy."

"Am I?" Paul asked hopefully as he looked down at Danny.

Danny took another drag of his cigarette and then parted his lips, letting the smoke waft past them in a way that indicated he was feeling vicious and evil. Paul wondered if he realized he did that, started smoking so distinctly when he suddenly stopped being his friend and started being his Master. Seeing it made Paul bite his tongue rather than groan out loud, because his body was trained to react to that image. He got painfully hard while he waited, tasting the copper tang of blood in his mouth. He bit his tongue harder because seeing Danny smoke like that had him longing for pain.

"How'd you keep her hands off your back?"

"She rode me," Paul said, rubbing at the back of his neck once more. "I pressed my back against the headboard. I've done it before."

"She never sees the marks?"

"She likes doing it in the dark."

"You're gorgeous, with a body to die for," Danny said in a disgusted voice. "And she's fucking you in the dark?"

"Maybe what's gorgeous to you isn't to someone else," Paul mused thoughtfully. "Have you ever considered that?"

"Don't give me that shit. Like it or not, you know you're gorgeous," Danny said sternly. "Yet you found the only woman who has never noticed. Too bad she hates having her pussy licked, because anyone who genuinely thought you were ugly could really get your dick hard. Do you want me to think you're ugly?"

"Sure, ugly slaves are easier to degrade," Paul said, raising his eyebrows at the thought. "And you'd stop crying about scars."

"Your back belongs to me," Danny said in a possessive voice. "I don't want it permanently scarred. The scars you got before I took over still piss me off. Do I look like a Master who deserves an ugly slave?"

"No," Paul whispered in a breathy voice, his body tightening in anticipation. "You deserve a gorgeous slave, one who will do whatever you want for as long as you want him to."

"Yes, I do," Danny said, taking another drag off his cigarette, and parting his lips once more. He gestured to Paul and then pointed to the spot in front of the chair he was sitting in as he let the smoke waft past his full lips. "I want you to take your shirt off for me. I like looking at you."

Paul walked over and leaned against the railing in front of Danny. He reached for the top button on his shirt, pulling it undone slowly as he looked down at Danny, whose dark eyes were burning with hunger. It was Sunday, both their girlfriends were gone and he could take his time seducing which was something Paul knew he was *very* good at.

By the time he undid the second one, Danny sucked in a small breath of anticipation, his eyes trained on Paul's chest as he slowly revealed more skin to him. The third button had Danny running his hand over the bulge in his jeans and Paul smiled in response.

"You want it?" Danny asked, his hand still cupping his hard cock through his jeans.

"Yes," Paul sighed, staring at him longingly as he licked his lips and pulled the next button undone. "Very much."

"You may have to have some vanilla, because I can't spend two hours tormenting you today," Danny said, raising his eyebrows as he eyed the line of flesh Paul had revealed by unbuttoning his shirt. "I didn't get in until dawn and I'm feeling very lazy this morning."

"You've got a cock." Paul pushed his shirt open once he had it undone and leaned more fully against the balcony, his arms resting on the ledge as he put himself on display for Danny. "It's never vanilla with you."

"Lucky me," Danny hummed as he flicked his cigarette into the lake and then slouched lower in the chair, his long legs stretching out lazily in front of him. The sun shone off his olive skin and his dark eyes were heavy as he stared up at Paul. "I'm not a woman. You can't make me come fifty times in one night, but I am the Master of my domain. If you need someone you can pleasure until your knees are killing you and your tongue is numb, then be my guest. I won't come."

Paul stared at Danny, feeling his chest constrict when he realized in a few months he was going to have to give him up. It was like reliving letting Eve go to New York all over again and he had never recovered from losing her. What was going to happen when he was suddenly trapped in a world completely devoid of the two people who held the two halves of his heart? He had survived losing Eve because he had Danny, but this time there was nothing to fall back on. The idea was too horrifying to think about let alone come to terms with the fact that it was going to be a reality very soon.

"I don't want you to be uncomfortable," he said softly, still staring down at Danny with wide, unfocused eyes. "That's not sexy."

"You think I'd let a slave make me uncomfortable?" Danny snorted as if the idea was ridiculous. He reached behind the chair, gripping at the back of it, showing off his strong arms and beautiful chest in a decidedly different way than Paul would have. When Danny put himself on display it was to torment with the temptation of being able to touch something so gorgeous, yet anyone who looked at him knew they would have to beg and grovel for just the hope of servicing him. "It's Sunday. I'm tired and lazy and the sunshine feels good on my skin. I like the idea of having you worship me. When I get sick of you, I'll fuck you and go to sleep. What part of that proposal makes me uncomfortable?"

"No part." Paul reached over and rubbed at the back of his neck, his elbow leaning against the balcony as he considered Danny, trying to decide where he wanted to start first. "I can make you come a couple of times. I don't mind."

"What none of you submissives understand is that real Doms don't need to beg for pleasure. We take it when we want it, but we don't need it. We're better than that. Seeing you on your knees worshiping me will always be more satisfying than coming. I'm fucking your soul by doing that. It's like a cosmic orgasm."

Paul raised his eyes, seeing that Danny's dark gaze was swirling with lust that made him a liar. Danny was offering Paul this because he cared about him and knew he needed someone to worship. That made it more potent than actually believing what Danny said.

"Now, that was sexy," Paul said with a smile.

"Don't sound so surprised," Danny said in a bored voice, giving Paul a look of irritation. "Now stop being worthless and come here and make yourself useful."

Chapter Nine

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure," Eve said, rubbing her brush against her palette. "I'm an open book."

Danny leaned on the balcony next to her, a cigarette between his fingers as he stared at her rather than the lake that sparkled like a million diamonds in the fading light of sunset. "Why do you always touch yourself when we're fucking?"

Eve looked over from her painting to stare at Danny with a bemused smile. "Because I have this little thing about wanting to come when I have a nice, big cock in me. And I don't always touch myself. If you're being useful, you do it for me."

"You can't come without clitoral stimulation, can you?"

"No," Eve said as she went back to working on her painting, trying to capture the rustic beauty of the lake, surrounded with wild, overgrown, marshy grasses and tall, thin cypress trees decorated with gray, lacy Spanish moss. "The Sex Gods didn't bless me. I can't come from penetration alone."

"Maybe you just haven't learned how," Danny mused thoughtfully as he tilted his head back, blowing smoke upward.

"I'm almost thirty. I've been around the block a time or two. Trust me, it can't be done. I've tried."

"I bet I could make you do it."

Eve looked to Danny, who had one dark eyebrow arched at her challengingly, but she forgot the challenge as she stared at him. He looked beautiful standing there barefoot and bare-chested with the lake behind him. The dying sun glimmered in his dark hair and reflected off his smooth, tanned shoulders. He matched the rugged beauty of the house and lake. He belonged here in this small haven of wild, untamed magnificence that had remained unscathed by supercenters and subdivisions.

"I want to paint you," Eve said softly. "Would you let me?"

He lifted his eyes lazily to her, appearing to consider that as he took another drag off his cigarette. "I thought you were working on wildlife and scenery. You said that's what sells in Florida."

"I don't care," she said as she continued to study him. He was so nice on her artist eyes. It was making her muse go crazy. "I need to paint you. Please say you'll let me."

"I'll make you a deal," he said with one of his devious smirks that Eve had come to learn meant he was up to something. "You turn your body over to me for an entire afternoon and I'll let you paint me."

Eve laughed. "Sounds like a deal to me. I turn my body over to you every afternoon."

"Oh, no," Danny said in a low, taunting voice. "I'm talking total submission. I want to use your body as my own personal playground without an ounce of complaint from you. You'll be my slave."

"Kinky," Eve said as she felt a hot rush of desire. The back of her neck burned and the hair on her arms stood on end. She enjoyed games as much as anyone but she had her reservations. "Are we talking bondage?"

"Bondage is a definite possibility." Danny let his eyes run over her in a hot, possessive sweep as he gave her a dark smile. "Among other things."

Eve felt her breathing fall shallow because she had never been opposed to a little bondage, quite the opposite in fact. It had been a very long time since she had found the right partner to play naughty games with. Eve liked things dark and kinky and Danny had proven to be a mind-blowing fuck no matter what they tried. There was no reason why this would be any different. The idea of adding something new to a menu that was already very satisfying was turning her on like crazy but she held herself back, wanting to make sure she knew what she was getting herself into.

"What's your instrument of torture? I need to know before I agree."

"Pleasure," he said slowly as he licked his lips and let his eyes run over her once more.

"That's it?"

"That's it."

"You're on," Eve said with a smile. A surge of adrenaline shot through her as she reacted to the idea of putting herself completely in Danny's hands, of letting him own her body for the afternoon and toy with it however he saw fit. Her boring lake painting was forgotten as her pussy throbbed. She was already wet for whatever pleasurable torture he had planned. "Let's start now."

"No," Danny said in a hard, demanding voice that both shocked and thrilled her. "I'll decide when and I'll let you know."

* * * * *

Eve's mind had run wild with anticipation for their little exchange of favors. She wanted to capture Danny's essence with paint and he wanted to capture her body with pleasure. Sounded like fun to her and she found herself pining for the moment when Danny would deem them ready.

He must have known how excited she was, how much she was yearning and anticipating being at the mercy of Danny's talented, capable hands because four full days went by without a mention of their agreement. Eve got the distinct impression he was making her wait on purpose, torturing her with the anticipation. Sure, they fucked and it was awesome as usual, but it wasn't what she had secretly been fantasizing about

ever since he had asked for permission to use her body as a playground. Even with the fucking, she still masturbated every night, rubbing her fingers against her clit and coming with her lip between her teeth to keep from crying out as she imagined it was Danny's fingers tormenting her.

What she really needed was a vibrator. She was going to get early arthritis if she kept fingering herself as much as she had been. She used to have a whole closet full of fun things to play with, but that was back in New York, when she lived like a real grown-up without an overbearing mother who hovered and checked under her bed for anything that would give her a one-way ticket to hell.

"I need a vibrator," Eve moaned over a late breakfast Danny had cooked for her. The food was good, but she wasn't hungry. She gave in to the frustration that had been mounting all week and complained, "My fingers are sore. How can I paint if my fingers are sore?"

She stuck her bottom lip out to pout and looked up at Danny who had turned around from his work at washing the dishes.

"Why are you masturbating?" he asked, his voice ringing with disappointment as he grabbed a towel to dry his hands. "Don't I fuck you enough?"

Eve nodded, her bottom lip still pouting in misery. "You do, but I'm still frustrated. I have to sleep alone and I miss you. I need a Danny replacement for when you're not around."

He snorted and shook his head sadly. "You are a dirty girl. You want it all the time, don't you?"

"Yeah," she said slowly, giving him a lazy, indulgent smile. "You want to give it to me now?"

He looked down at her plate. She had only eaten a few bites of her Spanish omelet and her home fries were untouched. "I might—if you eat your breakfast like a good girl."

"You're gonna make me fat," Eve said as she picked up her fork and took a bite. She chewed quickly and then grinned. "Good enough?"

"You work out six days a week. You won't get fat. Eat at least half," he said as he sat down next to her and reached under the table, caressing her thigh. "Then I'll give you a surprise."

"Really?" she asked, giving him a wide, excited smile. "You bought me something?"

"I did," he said, his fingers trailing underneath the line of her shorts and rubbing back and forth against her bare thigh teasingly. "I wish you'd let me buy you a car."

"No," Eve said with a roll of her eyes as she stabbed at her potatoes. "You're not my sugar daddy."

"Your car is a piece of shit. I don't think it's safe. It worries me that you drive it," Danny said imploringly. "Really, it bothers me. I don't want to lose someone else I love like that."

Eve looked up from her breakfast, giving him a soft look as her heart clenched in both happiness and sorrow. Danny really did love her. He cared and worried over her and she adored him for it. She hated that life had been cruel to him by taking away his mother so brutally. He didn't deserve that.

She reached over, cupping his cheeks in her hands softly. "I love you too."

He smiled, his dark eyes glowing. "Let me buy you a car."

"Kiss," Eve said, putting her finger to his full, soft lips.

He kissed her finger and then grabbed her hand, tugging it closer and kissing the inside of her wrist. "You're avoiding the question."

"Kiss, kiss," she said, pulling her hand out of his grasp and tapping her finger against his lips.

He kissed the tip of her finger twice and spoke against it, "You do that when you're trying to shut me up."

"Kiss."

Danny growled against her finger but kissed it one more time and then stood. He went back to the dishes while Eve finished her food. Once she set her mind to it, she ate well, enjoying Danny's cooking as always. Her plate was almost clean when she finally groaned in defeat and pushed it away from her.

"Now I'm full and lazy," she complained. "I was supposed to get some painting done today."

"You don't feel like painting?"

"Not really, no," she said, brushing the fine hairs that had escaped her braids away from her forehead. It was hot out and she usually braided her hair into pigtails when she planned to be outside and painting because it kept her long, heavy hair off her neck. "I know I'm finally making some money here, but I am so bored with scenic paintings. One can only paint so many sunsets and oceans and trees. Maybe I'll do something cutesy, paint some sandals or something. Floridians love those beachy, sandal paintings. God, what I wouldn't give to paint something really dark and erotic."

"Like me?" Danny suggested with an evil smirk.

"Yeah, like you." Eve stared longingly at Danny from across the table. "When are you going to let me paint you?"

"When you fulfill your end of the bargain."

"I'm ready and waiting, big boy," Eve said, holding up her hands expectantly.

Danny crossed his arms over his chest as he regarded her. There was something in his eyes suddenly, a sobering darkness she had never seen in him before. He looked sinister, like he was the god of his universe, one who got whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted it.

He seemed more arrogant and cocky than usual and Eve felt a rush of fiery desire pool inside her and she had to fight the urge to shift in her seat. She was bold by nature, but she found herself lowering her eyes after a moment because the way he was looking at her felt positively sinful.

"Stand up, let me look at you," he said in a voice that made it clear he expected her to obey him.

Eve pushed away from the table and stood. Danny crooked his finger to beckon her as he used his foot to push his chair back from the table. Eve walked around the table to stand directly in front of him. She tilted her head and gave him a look of annoyance.

"Like what you see?" she asked, her voice sharp with the edge of desire she was trying to hide from him. "Do I pass inspection?"

Eve wasn't dressed in anything spectacular, just an old pair of rolled-up khaki shorts and one of Danny's old t-shirts she used to paint in. She felt conspicuous under Danny's intense stare, with his body slouched low in the chair, those long legs stretched out casually in front of him as if the whole world was supposed to bow at his feet.

"You look very cute today, Evie Girl," Danny finally said in voice that was extra silky smooth, even for him. "Would you like to amuse me rather than paint?"

"Sure," she said, her shoulders slumping under the heavy weight of desire washing over her. It was coiling in her now, tightening in pent-up frustration and again she had to fight the urge to shift in excitement. She wanted to rip her clothes off and jump Danny right then. She suddenly felt as if she'd die if she didn't have him in her immediately because the throb between her legs had become insistent and demanding. "I'm all yours."

He nodded, still staring at her as he slouched lower in the chair, his arms still crossed over his chest. "Sometimes you remind me of a puppy, so sweet and cuddly and full of energy. But your mind is all over the place. You lack patience and you have absolutely no concept of obedience," he mused quietly, almost to himself. Then he lifted his eyes to her. That sinister aura was pulsing off him now, making a small chasm of fear open up inside her. "Am I going to have to break you to get your obedience?"

Eve shook her head as fear swelled up in her more, melding with desire and boiling up inside her, making all her nerves stand on end. She felt as if the threads of fear and desire were wrapping around her, making her want to shift and move to shake them off. Part of her wanted to flee, to brush him off and say she had painting to do, but she stood rooted to the spot because she had never felt such a rush of pure, unadulterated longing.

"Your cheeks are pink," Danny said softly. "Are you scared?"

"Yes," Eve said, feeling her cheeks burn hotter. "A little."

"Dogs trust their owners. Slaves trust their Masters," Danny went on as he continued to hold her to the floor with his penetrating gaze. "Do you trust me?"

"Yes," she rasped, finding that her breathing was shallow in fear and excitement.

He smiled, looking pleased. "Good. This will be a fun little adventure."

"Do I need a safe word or something?" she asked curiously.

"Nope," he said, his eyes narrowed. "If you trusted me, you wouldn't have asked for it. I'm disappointed."

She lowered her eyes, finding herself genuinely hurt by disappointing him when this was only a game. Confusion welled up in her because this all felt shockingly real. This was more than role-playing. This wasn't college kids tying each other up with silk stockings and blindfolds and fumbling their way through some bubblegum version of dungeon play. This was the real deal. Eve had been fucking Danny for almost two months and had no idea he had the ability to dominate like this. He was a master at this game and Eve was more than a novice, she was completely virginal.

"I'm sorry," she whispered, her eyes still downcast. "I won't do it again."

"Undress," he said in a low, angry voice. "Slaves who don't trust their Masters don't deserve clothes."

Eve reached down, grabbing the hem of her shirt and tugging it over her head, happy to be moving and doing something rather than stand there being scrutinized.

"Slow down," he said when Eve tossed her shirt to the floor. "Don't just rip your clothes off. Take them off slowly, like you're unwrapping something important. You're supposed to tantalize me with your beautiful body. It belongs to me. I want you to treat it with reverence."

"O-okay," Eve said, blinking at him and then looking down at herself in her old bra and her painting shorts. "But there isn't much left to unwrap. I should be wearing something different."

"I *own* you, Evie. You don't just blurt out whatever you're thinking," Danny growled at her, his eyes narrowed as if she had just slapped him in the face. "Did you or did you not sell yourself to me for the privilege of painting me?"

"I did," she whispered as her heart thundered against her ribs and her breathing became ragged. "I do want to paint you."

"Do slaves just rattle off to their Masters whatever nonsense is rolling around in their heads?"

Eve shook her head furiously. "No."

"No, Master," he corrected her. "You better learn very quickly to respect and obey me. If you don't, I'm going to be forced to teach it to you."

"You won't hurt me?" she squeaked out more as a question than a statement.

Eve realized instantly she had made a mistake, because Danny's dark eyes grew wide in outrage and his nostrils flared in anger. "You're not allowed to speak without permission," he said in a low, tense voice. "You've now lost that privilege for yourself and you won't get it back until you've proven you know your place."

Eve felt her neck flush hot for an entirely different reason. Anger surged through her because he was taking this way too far. Who the fuck did he think he was? This was

a man who had begged her to be with him, who made it obvious he was lonely and miserable without her around. Her heartbeat thundered in her ears, making her deaf to the outside world as she huffed in fury.

"Don't screw this up, because if you do I will never do this with you again," Danny broke in seriously as if he could read her fury as easily as a children's book. "I understand you don't trust me, that you need to be broken, but a good Master doesn't have to bruise to do that. You have to know I wouldn't do this if I weren't certain you would like it. The forbidden tastes good to you, it always has. Bite the apple, Evie, it'll blow your mind."

An inner battle broke out inside Eve. Lust and temptation fought viciously with fear and anger. She wavered where she stood under the weight of it as her heartbeat thundered. Her breathing burst out of her in shallow pants and her pussy throbbed to the point of pain with the desire to see this game through.

She lifted her eyes to Danny, seeing not just the boy who had been her friend since kindergarten but the man she had fallen in love with over the past few months. He was sweet and caring to a fault. He loved her. She knew it with all her heart and soul. He would never hurt her, not even close.

True to her name, Eve gave in to temptation and nodded silently.

A slow, pleased smile spread over Danny's face, making it obvious he knew he had won. He had shot down her defenses with the promise of the forbidden. Eve sucked in a sharp breath when she realized he was able to break her as easily as breathe.

"I'm sorry you lost your privilege to speak. You're innocent. You didn't know you were being careless with the gifts your Master bestowed on you. If you behave, you can earn it back," Danny said softly, sounding genuinely conflicted. "But for now, you have to learn that disobedience and disrespect will always be punished. Until you've earned the right to speak freely you can't utter a word without my permission. You can't beg. You can't ask questions. You can't do anything but answer the questions your Master asks you and when you do answer them, you are to do it using absolute honesty and you are to always end any statement with homage to me as your Master. If you fail to do so you will be punished. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Eve said in a small voice. Danny surged forward in his chair, resting his arms on his knees and giving her a pointed look, with his eyebrows raised expectantly. She closed her eyes, realizing what he was demanding. "M-Master."

"Better," he said, his eyes running lazily up her body. "You can continue to undress. You lost your privilege for clothing as well. Remember to be slow and sweet about it. I like my property well taken care of."

Eve decided she could play along if this was what turned him on. She pushed her bra straps down her shoulders first for effect. Danny raised his eyebrows, his gaze hot as he stared at her intently, watching her work with what she had on. She reached behind her and unclasped her bra, then pushed it off to land on the floor. The air felt nice on her breasts, it eased some of the heat of desire, but she felt exposed as well. She

mourned over her discarded clothes only because he told her she had lost her right to them.

She lowered her eyes when she had to unzip her shorts, feeling shamed and stupid for having to be punished but also weighted with desire for the exact same reason. She closed her eyes, feeling her cheeks flame hotter as she pushed them past her hips to land on the floor. She knew her panties were next and they were soaked with the juices from her pussy that was still throbbing and aching, refusing to be ignored or suppressed.

She wasn't certain she wanted to be found out, if she wanted to give Danny that much power over her. She kicked her shorts aside, taking her frustration out on them.

"Don't do that," Danny snapped at her. "If you disrespect your possessions, you don't deserve any. And I believe that is *my* shirt you so carelessly tossed on the floor earlier."

Eve looked down, seeing his shirt she had been wearing pooled on the floor next to her shorts. She would have said sorry. It was on the tip of her tongue, but she bit her lip instead when she realized she couldn't speak.

"Get down on your knees," Danny said impatiently as he slouched back in his chair and reached into his pocket for his pack of cigarettes. "Pick up the clothes, fold them nicely and then sit there until I decide you're allowed to get up and hand them to me."

Eve fell down like she was told, feeling the hardwood floor on her knees. She picked up his shirt first and folded it neatly, while internally her body went crazy. She reeled as she folded her shorts next, because she was really getting off on this. She was going to be completely exposed when she had to take her underwear off. Even with them on, she could feel stickiness on her thighs. Her body had never responded like this to anything. He hadn't even touched her and she was wetter than she had been in her entire life.

She folded her bra next, setting it on top of the stack of clothes she had rested near the table leg as she silently prayed he would leave her kneeling there long enough to get her body under control.

She kept her eyes downcast now that she had nothing to do as a riot of emotions and feelings ran rampant inside her. It wasn't until she heard the click of his lighter that she lifted her eyes back to Danny.

He tilted her head, staring at her with a dark, smoldering gaze that touched her better than most men could on their best days. She thought she could come just from him looking at her as he took a long, slow drag off his cigarette and then let the smoke waft past his full, sensuous lips by just parting them softly. Eve was mesmerized by him. How could she ever capture that much sex appeal on canvas? Forget painting, she was suddenly seized with the wild need to photograph him.

"Get on your hands and knees for me," Danny said as if the idea were just a whim of his, something he thought of to amuse himself while he sat there smoking his cigarette. "If you're going to act like a puppy, you can sit there like one."

Eve closed her eyes, feeling a fresh surge of shame as she fell down to her hands and knees in front of him. She let her head hang low, because she couldn't bear to look at him. Danny was definitely going to let her photograph him for this. She wanted to capture him naked in black and white. She wanted to see that image of smoke slowly rolling past his lips on tangible paper, as if she had captured the devil himself and kept him harnessed for all time to be stared at whenever she wanted.

"What are you thinking about?"

Eve swallowed hard and lifted her eyes to him once more. She breathed deeply as she watched him smoke his cigarette like a movie star from days gone past when men had class. "I'm thinking about photographing you, Master. I want to see you in black and white."

He raised his eyebrows. "You haven't even worked off this bargain and you're already plotting another. Is that wise?"

"Probably not, Master," Eve said, lowering her eyes again.

"Are you enjoying yourself?" he asked curiously. "Are you having fun on your hands and knees at my feet like a pretty little pet?"

Eve stared at the lines in the floor, seeing the dents and scratches as his words sent a fresh surge of lust pulsing through her. She liked the wood floors, they showed the life they had endured. They bore the evidence of every heavy footfall, every piece of furniture moved. Every aspect of the life the people who walked on it lived could be found in a hardwood floor if one knew how to look for it. It was a recording, something history couldn't forget, just like paintings and photographs.

"I asked you a question," Danny said impatiently. "When your Master asks you a question, you answer him honestly and instantly or you get punished for impertinence."

"I d-don't know," Eve choked out as she continued to stare at the floor beneath her hands and knees. "I'm feeling confused, Master. I don't know if I like it or not."

"What does your body tell you?"

Eve closed her eyes once more, wondering if the hardwood floor would show her shame for all time, because her thighs were wet from the desire, her pussy was throbbing more insistently than ever, pulsing to the rhythm of her rapid heartbeat.

"I don't want to punish you."

Eve sighed and lifted her head to glare at him. Her eyes were narrowed in anger she couldn't hide or suppress. "My body is aching, Master. It wants to stop kneeling on this floor and be forced to climax instead."

"Have you considered that your impatience is the reason you never learned how to come with a nice, hard cock inside you?" Danny asked and then took another long drag off his cigarette. "Clitoral orgasms are for amateurs, Evie. You shouldn't have to rub yourself raw every time you want to come. You are reckless and impatient. You lack focus and discipline, just like a sweet little puppy. You look so cute at my feet."

Eve's breathing became shallower, her heartbeat thundered in her ears and palpitated relentlessly between her thighs. Her nipples were aching and extra-sensitive. They were beaded tight, aching for some sort of relief from this torture. She was overcome with the sudden urge to beg, to plead with Danny that she didn't care what sort of orgasm she had as long as she had one quickly.

"You will never, ever take the time to discover what your body is really capable of, will you?"

"No, probably not, Master."

"I thought not," Danny said as he leaned over and put out his cigarette in the ashtray on the table. "But since your body belongs to me now, you're going to be forced to learn to control and manipulate it whether you like it or not."

Eve closed her eyes in frustration when she realized she was kneeling on the floor at Danny's feet because she couldn't come from penetration. If she had known it was going to cause such an issue she would have just faked it.

"You look like an angry puppy. Not that I mind, you can sit there and be angry. It's no less cute to me," Danny hummed as he stretched out one leg and pushed at Eve's arm with the ball of his bare foot. "Tell me what you're thinking about?"

Eve growled under her breath and lifted her head to glare at him. "I'm thinking about faking orgasms, Master."

"You growl at me like that again and I'll make you bark," Danny snapped back at her as his eyes narrowed threateningly. "Does that sound like fun to you? Do you want to bark for me, Evie?"

"No, Master, I don't," Eve whispered as she tried to choke back the anger raging through her.

"Good, then sit there and be cute instead," he said simply, settling back in his chair, his shoulders relaxing as if he were sated once more. "Have you faked orgasms before?"

"Yes, Master," Eve said instantly, deciding right then that she would sooner paint sunsets for the rest of her life than bark. "Many, many times."

"Why?"

"Because, Master, sometimes I get sick of sweaty men with tender male egos rutting on me to achieve something I know is impossible," Eve said simply. "If you had a pussy, you'd fake 'em too."

"Oh, no, I wouldn't," Danny countered. "If I had a pussy, I'd know how to use it. Any man who was let into my *inner sanctum* would either worship it or be extremely sorry that he didn't."

It took more restraint than Eve knew she had not to roll her eyes at him.

"The large majority of your gender has no idea the power it holds in its hands. Entire kingdoms have fallen for pussy. Don't you think that's something, Evie?"

"If you say so, Master," Eve said tiredly. "Perhaps you should study philosophy instead of selling cars for amusement."

Danny leaned his elbow against the table and rubbed his hand against the back of his neck. "You must *really* want to bark for me."

Eve closed her eyes in frustration.

"You want a chance to say sorry?" Danny asked in a sweet, singsong voice. "You're so cute. I'll let you say sorry if you beg for the privilege. Go ahead, beg me. I'll let you."

Eve squeezed her eyes shut tighter, knowing without a doubt that if she didn't beg for permission to say sorry he was going to make her bark like a fucking dog.

"Please, Master," Eve said through clenched teeth as she kept her eyes lowered rather than glare at him. "Let me say sorry."

"I'm really not impressed with that," Danny said in a bored voice. "I expected more flair from a woman with six years of artistic education."

Eve gritted her teeth harder, knowing if she said anything now, she'd be punished, but if she didn't, she was going to be barking like a dog.

"Should I give you one more shot?" Danny tapped her arm once more with his bare foot. "Fine, one more shot for you because you look so sweet sulking there. Impress me."

Eve took a deep breath and then lifted her head to look at him. "Please, Master, let me say sorry," she said in her sweetest voice, the one she reserved for special favors from maître d's and police officers. "I really do want to please you. Let me say sorry and I'll be a good puppy for you."

Danny smirked and his eyebrows rose as a look of genuine surprise showed on his face. "You did that very, very well. You can say sorry to me for being a nasty, yappy puppy who growls when she is not supposed to."

"I am truly sorry, Master. You are a wonderful, extremely sexy Master and I should have never, ever growled at you."

Eve lowered her eyelashes demurely and looked back down at the wood floor, deciding she could stare at scratches and scuff marks all day.

"Oh, Evie Girl," Danny hummed, his voice heavy with arousal. "You beg really nicely. I liked that a lot. Would you like to hand me your clothes you folded because you are learning to appreciate your things?"

"Yes, please, Master."

"Then hand me your clothes."

Eve crawled over and picked up her clothes. She handed them to Danny with the realization that his habit of being annoyingly neat had nothing to do with him being metrosexual and everything to do with him being a kinky pervert. She made sure her smile at that epiphany was a sweet one instead of the smart-ass one she was more inclined to.

"Stand up," he said as he took her clothes and set them on the table.

Eve stood in front of him, her knees protesting the sudden change in positions. She tilted her head, her eyelashes hiding her eyes, the same small, sweet smile curving on her lips as she stood patiently in front of him.

"I want you to take off those cotton panties you're wearing," Danny said, tilting his head toward her hips. "And then I want you to hand them to me."

Eve squeezed her eyes closed and lowered her head as her breathing became rampant and she lost control of her small triumph over Danny due to her seductive, womanly wiles. She was back to being a quivering mess. Lust, anger and huge doses of actual fear surged through her. Eve's body betrayed her again, clenching at being empty, weeping over it to the point it was going to be painfully obvious.

She would lose every ounce of her power if he knew how badly she wanted him. Danny would know this was turning her on. Even if it was infuriating and frustrating, she was aching in a way she hadn't before this afternoon.

"Take them off – now!"

She huffed as she pushed them down her hips and stepped out of them, feeling the stickiness of longing linger on her thighs. He could see it without inspecting her panties, which he was probably going to do anyway – the sick pervert.

She held them out to Danny without looking at him.

"My, my, my," Danny said in husky voice. Eve gave in to temptation and looked up to see him rubbing his thumb over the crotch of the panties she had handed him. He stared at her unwaveringly as a smug smile tugged at his lips. "These panties are telling me you enjoy being my slave."

Eve groaned and lowered her head again as a blush as hot as fire burned her cheeks and neck. Her embarrassment was so profound, she was seriously considering breaking up with Danny rather than be forced to face him every day knowing he was aware she had been turned-on by being forced to kneel at his feet like a dog.

She felt as if every ounce of self-respect had just been stripped from her. She was more than naked, she was exposed clear down to her soul and she wanted to cover her face with her hands, but she didn't dare. His control over her was absolute. She didn't want to move without permission.

She heard Danny stand up, but she didn't look at him. He was even more imposing when standing. She could feel his energy without touching him. The strange sexual power he wielded so easily radiated off him so potently she was completely weak to it. Even as she stood there broken and humiliated, she ached for him. She wanted to please him, craved the notion of being the slave of his dreams.

"Walk to my bedroom," Danny whispered in front of her, his voice rolling over her in sensuous waves. "Keep your eyes down when you do it and don't stop until you are standing at the foot of my bed. When you get there, I want you to kneel and wait for your Master."

Eve turned around and walked away, mourning his loss rather than enjoying the reprieve from the torture of his domination. She walked deliberately, with a smooth

sway to her hips and her back straighter than usual because she wanted to be beautiful to him. She wanted to lure him back to her.

She walked into his room, which was neat as usual and kneeled at the foot of his bed. She was left waiting, the hardwood painful on her knees, with only the sound of her heartbeat in her ears and her heavy breathing to keep her company. Her sense of time had to have been off, because she felt like she kneeled there forever. The fear of not knowing was agony. She kept her eyes closed as she focused on steadying her heartbeat. She tried to calm herself down but the more she thought about the fear, the worse it got.

Chapter Ten

When she heard Danny walk into his room, her heart slammed against her chest and her breathing became noticeably ragged like that of a trapped, wild animal, which was exactly what she felt like. She had the image of a terrified rabbit, one that cowered in fear from a deadly panther. Her instincts had her longing to flee but her mind told her to remain still because cats liked to toy with prey that ran from them. It was a game to them and panther games were dangerous for terrified little rabbits that didn't know how to sit still and try to meld into their environment.

She kept her head down, watching only his bare feet. She followed them with her eyes as he walked to the side of the bed. There was a jingle of keys, which made her body clench in dread and anticipation. He was leaning down, unlocking a drawer that was built into the bottom of his strange bed.

Her breathing became more ragged as she thought about the large bed behind her with its oak frame that was thick and sturdy. It had four posts with wooden beams running along the top that connected the posts at the head of the bed and two more on each side. There was no beam connecting the posts at the foot of the bed but there were rings hanging at each of the posts. Eve had thought they were to hang curtains from, imagining a shimmering white material laced through each of the rings to hide the bed from view, making it a secret, mysterious haven for lovers.

But she had been wrong. The rings weren't to hang curtains. They were to attach shackles to. The bed behind her was built for torment. She knew it with absolute certainty. She had been fucking a man who was deeply submerged in a dark world of sexual torment and domination enough to sleep in a bed designed to keep slaves bound and submissive.

Other women had kneeled at the foot of his bed as his slave.

She had known Danny had other lovers, many of them. The man bled sex—of course he had slept with women over the years. Knowing he had fucked other women didn't bother her, but knowing he had dominated others, that he had slaves before her that he had cherished and kept for his own personal amusement, that had her burning in anger and jealousy. A fresh riot of emotions washed over her, leaving her more confused as he pushed the drawer closed and then walked around to stand in front of her.

"Look at your Master."

Eve tilted her head back and looked up at Danny. She felt her mouth go dry as her eyes widened and her pussy clenched involuntarily. He stood there wearing only a pair of black leather pants clinging to his gorgeous, long legs like a second skin. They hung

low on his narrow hips, lacing up the front, making them appear natural and organic rather than sharp edged and barbaric with metal zippers and buttons.

Her artistic mind went wild. Forget photographing him naked, she wanted to capture him in black and white wearing those leather pants that clung to his body as if they had been designed just for him. His beautiful, sleekly muscular body was designed to entice. His darkly angelic face with his nicely arched, inky eyebrows and his sinful eyes that were as sinister as the devil's cried out to the artist in her, begging to be captured for all time.

He stood there casually, the master of his domain, holding a set of leather cuffs in each hand and had four long tethers that looked like flexible belts hanging around his neck. Eve stared hard at the bondage cuffs decorated with silver buckles and lined with fleece. He was beautiful like that, with the bondage gear in his hands, appearing to be the perfect Master. She liked the way the tethers looked draped around his neck, with the silver buckles gleaming against the tan skin of his chest.

"These restraints are an embarrassment," Danny said in a firm, dark voice that bled disappointment as he held up the pair of cuffs in his right hand. "It means you are a weak slave that lacks the ability to obey her Master. You need to be tied down and forced into submission. You don't trust me enough to obey without leather cuffs that mark you as the undisciplined puppy you are."

Eve wavered where she kneeled in front of him, the fear and lust making her vision foggy as she stared at Danny unwaveringly. Her breath was still bursting out of her chest in ragged pants and she quivered like the frightened rabbit she was.

"Hold out your hands, Evie," Danny said as he tossed one set of cuffs on his neatly made bed. "I want you to willingly accept the marks of your station as a disobedient slave who has to endure the embarrassment of being tied down like a puppy that can't even follow the simple commands of its owner without leashes and collars."

Eve held her hands in front of her. Danny fell to his knees next to her and placed a cuff on her right wrist, fastening it securely by pulling the leather tight and lacing it through the buckle on the side of her wrist. The fleece it was lined with made it comfortable, even if it was pulled tight enough to make it impossible to bend her wrist properly. He treated her left wrist with the same rough treatment, tugging the cuff tightly and securing it with annoyed, jerky motions as if he were disgusted she needed to wear the leather cuffs. He leaned past her, giving her an enticing whiff of expensive cologne and tobacco as he grabbed the ankle restraints.

He surprised her by handing them to her. "Put those on, pull them tight enough to mark and then secure them. You're going to help me with this punishment because you know you deserve it, don't you?"

"Yes, Master," Eve said as she leaned down and grabbed the ankle cuffs and then fell down to sit on the floor with her feet in front of her.

She worked at putting them on, pulling the leather tight enough that the edges of the cuffs not covered with fleece dug into her ankles. Then she sat there, with her knees

bent in front of her, spread apart so that she was exposed to him. Knowing he would, Danny tilted his head, staring at her pussy glistening with desire. She was still turned-on, her pulse pounding in fear. She was learning quickly there was a special high to be found from fear when desire was mingled with it.

"Get up and pull the comforter and sheets off my bed," Danny demanded, still kneeling next to her on the floor. "Like you, they belong to me. How do I expect my possessions to be treated?"

"With reverence, Master."

"Very good. Now go do what I told you, obey me and be happy about it."

Eve made quick work of pulling the deep blue comforter and sheets off his bed. She took the time to fold them and then walked over to set them on a chair in the corner of his room. Walking around with silver-buckled leather cuffs on her wrists and ankles left her feeling exposed in the bright light of day coming in through the open window.

She *did* feel like a slave as she worked in front of him wearing nothing but leather cuffs that marked her as disobedient. The bindings felt heavier than they actually were and she was acutely aware of them, the way the fleece soothed and the leather cut and marked.

When she was done, she didn't know what to do, so she went back to stand at the foot of the bed. She floundered when she didn't have him telling her what to do. She felt lost and scared without his words to guide her. With commands she knew what to do, without them she was left frightened.

"Crawl on the bed," Danny said as he walked over to stand next to her, invading her personal space as he leaned down to whisper in her ear. "And then lie down with your head near the headboard. You're a slave. You get no pillow, push that away and lie flat."

Eve did it immediately, her breathing still shallow and ragged as she crawled onto the bed, pushed his pillows to the side rather than onto the floor and then lay flat on her back, with her chest rising and falling and her body pulsing with pent-up frustration. The sheets felt cool against her fevered skin and she tried to focus on the feel of them against her bare back rather than the tightrope of desire that was pulled taut as Danny walked around the bed and reached for her left wrist.

She closed her eyes as he laced the tether through the ring on the side of her cuff. He pulled her arm by the tether, making her feel as if she were leashed as he leaned down and attached her binding to something below the bottom of the mattress, a ring of some sort that was attached to the post of his headboard.

A choked gasp burst out of her when she felt how tightly he pulled her leash, forcing her arm to jerk back against the mattress and stretching it to the point that he forced her body to shift to that side of the bed. She wasn't prepared for the lightning strike of lust that shot through her with the rasp of leather and the clinking of metal as he secured her arm.

When Danny stood, she looked into his eyes and saw his desire there. A wild, carnal lust was suddenly swirling in his gaze because he knew her body was going insane. He had heard her gasp of pleasure, had known being tied down was turning her on to the point she couldn't control herself enough to keep quiet.

Eve's eyes followed him as he walked around to the other side of the bed. She licked her dry lips as she watched him slowly pull the next tether from around his neck as if he knew he was captivating her. His grip on her right wrist was harder, more forceful and Eve was panting as he laced the tether through the ring on the cuff. She watched him lean down to secure her other arm, leaving her completely defenseless against him. The wrench of the second leash was harder, more violent as he laced it through the ring at the bottom of the post and pulled with a strong, fast motion that forced her arm to spread wide. The lightning bolt was more violent this time, striking at her with white-hot lust that had a small scream bursting out of her chest. He pulled even harder at the sound of her scream, forcing her arms as far apart as they could go. Her arms were pulled so tautly against the bed she couldn't even struggle. She was completely immobile and defenseless, her hands splayed palm open at the edges of the mattress. When she tugged them experimentally, Danny pulled the binding tighter as punishment and then secured the second buckle.

Eve was panting now, unable to hold back her response to him as Danny stood and looked down at her with smoldering eyes that burned her body as they touched her with his gaze. She saw that his breathing was shallow too. His bare chest rose and fell with short pants of breath rather than the long, slow steady ones of before.

He got off on tying her down as much as she got off on having him do it.

Danny pulled her legs as far apart as her arms and with every tug of her leashes that secured her down, gasps of pleasure burst out of her. It was without a doubt the most erotic thing she had ever experienced in her life. She was a wild, untamed mess of nerves when Danny finally had her spread-eagle on the bed, her bindings pulled so tight she could barely struggle against them. She was completely vulnerable and immobile and she loved it with a vigor that was all encompassing. She wanted to be tied down forever, to be his slave for all time. He could be her sugar daddy if it meant she didn't have to do anything in life except be a naughty puppy that deserved to be tied down for disobedience. If he thought this little punishment was going to make her subservient, he was mistaken. She would have been impertinent a lot sooner if this was the reward.

Barking like a dog was not her kink but being bound with pretty fleece-lined leather cuffs and long leashes with silver buckles most certainly was.

Danny joined her on the bed, crawling over her with graceful, predatory movement that left him on his hands and knees above her. His hands rested beneath her spread arms, his legs straddled her so she felt the brush of his leather pants against her thighs. She writhed beneath him, arching her hips up as much as her bound body would allow as she stared up into his eyes, seeing the lust she felt mirrored in them as they ran over her body as if admiring his handiwork.

"Do you love your Master?" Danny asked as his eyes continued to lazily run over her body.

"Yes," Eve panted, still arching and writhing beneath him. "I love you more than anything, Master."

He cocked his head, a smirk tugging at his lips as she fought against her bindings, yet moved very little because she was secured so tightly to his bed. "Do you want to beg for my cock?"

"Yes," she gasped out desperately. "Let me beg for your cock, Master. Please!"

"No," he said, his smile growing broader. "You don't deserve it."

She moaned, her head falling heavily back against the bed. She squeezed her eyes shut as feral, desperate desire caused her pussy to pulsate and clench over and over again as if reaching out for a cock it couldn't have.

"Look at me, Evie."

Eve blinked her eyes open, Danny's face swimming in her clouded vision.

"I am going to play with your body now because it amuses me," he said in a smooth voice that sent a wildfire of desire surging through her veins. "But I'm not going to let you come."

Eve gasped out loud, her eyes growing wide as horror surged through her. She had never been so desperate in her life. She needed a climax like she needed air. She would die if she didn't come immediately.

"For one full hour, I'm going to toy with you and keep you writhing and straining against those leather bindings you love so much," he whispered, his voice rolling over her in liquid waves, torturing her with the smooth cadence of it. "And after that hour, if you are completely obedient, I will give you the most mind-blowing orgasm of your life. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she sobbed, closing her eyes against the pain of being forced to suppress her body when she was so completely desperate.

"You just got another fifteen minutes added to your sentence. Now you have to wait for an hour and fifteen minutes for your release because you forgot to respect your Master."

Eve's eyes shot open, her mouth falling open in horror. He was not going to punish and torment her with that. "What?" she gasped. "You're holding my orgasm for ransom!"

Danny's eyes grew wide above her. "An hour and a half now. You spoke without permission. Do you need me to explain the rules again?"

Eve was panting beneath him in panic and she shook her head in denial that he could be this cruel.

"You lost your right to speak without permission, Evie," Danny growled at her in an unforgiving voice of a Master who expected absolute obedience. "You can't beg. You

can't cry out with words as I torment you. You can only lie there and gasp and moan like the naughty puppy you are. If you speak, you will be punished."

Eve's gaze moved over his face frantically, looking for some sign he was joking but all she saw was absolute sincerity. He was going to leave her tied and desperate for an hour and a half while he toyed with her body that was so sensitive even the brush of air from the air conditioner left her reeling.

"No," she sobbed, closing her eyes in misery and feeling genuine tears stinging behind her eyelids.

"It's an hour and forty-five minutes now," Danny said, his eyes wide in disbelief. "You keep this up and you're going to be tied down and squirming until Paul gets home. Do you want him to find you tied up as my slave, sobbing and crying out for pleasure you don't deserve?"

She shook her head, her eyes still squeezed shut. "N-no, Master."

"You're nowhere near disciplined enough to stay silent for almost two hours," Danny said, his voice strangely soft all of a sudden. "Do you want to beg your Master to gag you so you don't make any more mistakes? Tied down, with a gag stuffed in that pretty mouth of yours, you can't disobey me anymore. You can just lie there and accept your punishment. Are you that weak? Do you need me to gag you?"

Eve opened her eyes, her vision foggy once more as she stared up at Danny and seeing with dreadful certainty that he really was going to torment her for an hour and forty-five minutes. There was no way she could keep silent that long. She was already desperate to beg for relief and he hadn't even started. "Yes," she whispered, closing her eyes as embarrassment burned hotly on her cheeks. "Let me beg for a gag, Master. I need it desperately."

"Beg me for it," Danny relented, his voice a soft caress as if he were granting her the world. "But do it well. I am only giving you this chance once. If you're too weak to keep silent on your own, I need to know you're learning humility."

"Please," Eve said in a desperate whisper as she looked up at him with absolute pleading in her eyes. "Let me have a gag, Master. I know I'm weak. Let me have it. Please, please let me have it. I will die if I have to wait any longer than I have to. Please have mercy on me."

Danny stared down at her and then nodded.

When he rolled off the bed, Eve moaned from the loss of him. She needed him over her. It felt as if she were dying a slow death by being away from him. She followed him with her eyes, turning her head to watch him walk toward his closet and pull the doors open. She stared at him, having the off thought that Danny's closet had to be the cleanest in the whole world.

"I bought this for you," he said, pulling a folded silk scarf out of his closet. He let it roll out of his hand, holding the edge of it up. He tilted his head to look at the scarf that was dyed in a multitude of vibrant, natural colors. "I thought it was bright and radiant like sunshine and puppies and naughty Evie."

Eve bit her lip to choke back a laugh as she stared at Danny, who really looked impressed with the silk scarf he was holding in his hand. It was natural silk, colored with natural dyes. Eve did think it was pretty. Like Danny, she was easily distracted by shiny or colorful things. The two of them could spend all day at street markets or craft shows looking for pretty trinkets.

"I could see it tied up in your long, pretty, red hair, making you look like a little gypsy." Danny walked back to the bed with a smile on his face. He crawled back over her and then grinned down at her. "But since you're naughty, I suppose I'll have to use it to keep you quiet instead."

Eve bit her lip harder, trying to choke back a laugh. She did not, for one minute, believe he bought that scarf for her hair. If she weren't being forced to be quiet, she would have called him a lying pervert. She was sure her face said it all as she looked up at him, biting her lip to hide her laughter.

"Say sorry to your Master for making him use this beautiful scarf to keep you quiet when he wanted to use it to dress you up as a pretty little gypsy instead," Danny said with a smirk, his eyes running over her face.

"Um—" Eve started, trying to hold back her laughter. "I'm sorry I buzz-killed your gypsy fetish by being naughty, Master. That's a bummer."

"That was impertinent," Danny said, trying and failing to frown at her. He was choking back his own laughter, ruining his big, bad Master act horribly. "Really, say sorry, Evie. You're pissing me off. I'm mad at you."

"S-sorry, Master," Eve choked, staring up at Danny and laughing hilariously. "It does suck, 'cause it's very pretty. You should've bought two."

He smiled smugly. "I did."

Eve cracked up, her head falling sideways as her body shook with laughter because she knew he had every intention of having her tie the other scarf in her hair as a gypsy later.

Danny nudged her side as he choked back his own laughter. "Okay, stop it. Be sweet and open your mouth for me. Do it slow and sexy, like you're about to eat the most delicious strawberry you have ever seen," he said in a low voice as he stretched out his body over her, the scarf still held up in one hand. Eve moaned at the feeling of his hard chest against her bare breasts. She arched her hips instinctively from his weight on her and his long, leather-clad legs stretched out between her bare thighs. His eyes got molten as he studied her lips while she struggled to feel more of him against her bare skin. "Or my cock, that works too. Open your mouth like you're going to suck my cock."

Eve smiled at him and then licked her lips slowly, her tongue darting out to brush against her bottom lip as Danny stared at her mouth as if captivated. His breathing was shallow, making it obvious he really was getting off on this slave and Master game. She decided then that if he liked it that much, she didn't mind playing with him—even if she had to wait two hours for an orgasm.

She made a show of opening her mouth, her eyes drifting closed lazily as if she really were going to suck his cock. Danny let out a soft groan as he rubbed his thumb against her bottom lip softly and then leaned down to gag her with the scarf, surprising her because he didn't tie it too tight, it wasn't really uncomfortable except for the fact that she couldn't talk.

Her eyes were still closed and she arched into him, getting lost in the fantasy. She savored that wonderful, lazy feeling of making love in the light of day, with filtered beams of sparkling sunshine drifting into the room, making her feel warm and comfortable. Just like the cool sheets against her back and the fleece against her wrists and the wonderful, beautiful man draped over her in the sexiest pair of leather pants she had ever seen.

Danny's lips moved softly down her neck first and she moaned against the silk gag because it felt heavenly. He ran a hand slowly up her side, tracing the curve of her hip up to her waist and then higher. He cupped one of her breasts, his thumb rubbing softly over the rosy nipple beaded with desire and then leaned down to suck it into his mouth. Eve gasped against the gag and her arms jerked at the bindings as she arched up into him.

Eve felt as if she had fallen into paradise. She could lie there in sunshine all day and let Danny's lips dance over her body, his hands roaming it with slow, tender caresses, making it obvious he was perfectly fine with spending two hours touching and tormenting her.

Torture was fine if it felt like this. She had the thought that they should do this every day and twice on Sundays, just to be extra naughty. The desire was pulsing in her, making her ache desperately, but it ached so good. She was getting into suppressing the orgasm because knowing it was so far away let her enjoy all the other wonderful things about being with a man. Like feeling his weight on her and the tingling rush that came from having goose bumps spread over her skin in the wake of a long, sensual caress.

Danny kissed her everywhere except where she was aching, the need building like a furious volcano. On the outside all seemed well. She could barely struggle, her hands were tied down and her moans were muffled but beneath the surface she felt the ache build. Her body clenched the more she strained against Danny, silently begging for more. Usually she would have tangled her fingers in his hair and pushed his head impatiently lower, desperately seeking release, but being tied down meant all she could do was moan and writhe. With hooded eyes hazy with desire, she watched this magnificent man lick and worship her body, his tongue trailing softly across the inside of her arm and up the smooth line of her thigh that was open and exposed for him. She repeatedly arched her hips instinctively, needing his mouth where she was aching most, but she was never too disappointed when she didn't get what she wanted because Danny told her she wouldn't—not yet.

She was dazed, feeling sated and drugged, stuck in that place where time had no meaning. Her skin became extra-sensitive. She was more aware of her body than she had ever been in her entire life. Patience wasn't nearly as overrated as she thought.

It wasn't until Danny moved higher, shifting his body until his face was hovering over hers once more that Eve realized he had been moving fluidly with her. She had never felt the nuance of his weight over her. Eve stared up at him, knowing absolute adoration showed in her eyes. He brushed the back of his palm over her cheek, his dark eyes boring into hers, making her feel as if he were looking into her soul. His other hand ran up the inside of one of her thighs, tracing the line of it, his fingertips soft and gentle.

When his fingers breached her, two of them pushing inside her pussy that was wet and throbbing from the long period of stimulation, her entire body jerked. Her scream from the bone-shaking shock of pleasure was muffled behind the silk gag. Even with her eyes squeezed shut, she knew Danny was smiling from her response but she didn't care as she tried to arch her hips into his hand, not realizing until just then how completely desperate her body was for release.

"Relax," Danny said in a coaxing, hypnotic voice. "Stop fighting and just feel."

Her breathing became labored. She fought back the urge to go insane from the feeling of his fingers fucking her as they curved upward to rub against the spot inside her that caused jolts of bliss to radiate through her body.

"Slow breaths," Danny coaxed her, his fingers still rubbing against her in a way that had her fighting the restraints instinctively. Her entire body was tight with the need to push his hand aside and touch herself to cause a quick climax, but Danny wouldn't be distracted from what he was doing as he leaned down to kiss her neck softly. "Just focus on where I'm touching you."

With no other choice but to obey, she tried to do as told, taking deep breaths and forcing her body to relax as she focused her mind on the slow, warm feeling Danny was creating by touching her like that. It had never felt that good before, not with a cock in her, and certainly not with fingers that caressed her expertly in a way Eve was surprised a man was capable of.

The idea of being able to come without clitoral stimulation started exciting her when she realized it may actually be a reality. That was one part of sex she had always missed out on. If she could learn to do it that would be a gift the likes of which she could hardly fathom. She moaned behind the gag, arching her hips into his hand for a different reason, encouraging his touch as she felt the release start to build in the pit of her stomach. Once she focused her mind on what his fingers were doing, feeling only the pleasurable pressure building inside her, she found that the pinnacle of gratification blossomed in her easily.

Her body tensed without warning, the pleasure springing free and flowing over her in waves of bliss a thousand times more incredible than anything she had felt before. So potent was the pleasure so long in the making, her entire body shook in relief and her

pussy clenched around Danny's fingers tightly, the contractions drawing out the climax for what seemed like forever.

"Good girl," Danny whispered in a low, gravelly voice as he leaned down and placed kisses over her throat and then lower to her collarbone. "I knew you could do it."

She was panting, her body still shuddering from the pleasure as his fingers continued to caress her, his touch becoming gentler and less insistent. She felt as if every ounce of stress and tension had just drained from her body. She went limp beneath him when he finally pulled his fingers out of her.

Eve's eyes blinked open to watch Danny suck on his glistening fingers, making her moan and arch into him from the sensual sight. She was suddenly tired, her eyes fighting to stay open when she was forced to bear more of Danny's weight. His hands trailed down the curves of her side and then slipped beneath her to cup her ass possessively.

"Now we're going to do it while I fuck you," he groaned against her ear as he shifted his hips and pulled at the ties that held his leather pants closed with one hand. "I'm not letting you free until you learn how to use my cock for what it was made for."

She would have screamed at him that he was insane. There was no way she could do it again. The first time had nearly killed her. Every muscle in her body had just lost its ability to work. She felt drugged to the point of passing out but she was powerless to stop him.

Her eyes rolled back from the rush of pleasure that came from the first hard thrust of his body into her. She was so wet he didn't even have to work his cock in. He buried himself to the base with a loud groan of relief that betrayed his own agony over having to wait so long.

He never gave her a chance to catch her breath and surprised her by fucking her savagely, taking advantage of her vulnerability by being tied down. That sort of carnal mating had always been Eve's favorite. She was stunned to find that her body was actually bowing beneath him as a fresh surge of desire started to build a second climax.

Knowing he wouldn't touch her, she focused her mind on the feeling of his body sliding into her, angling her hips to force his cock to brush against that soft spot inside her he had touched with his fingers before. Almost instantly, she was choking back sobs of pleasure with every hard thrust of his cock into hers, her body tensing in the desperate need for release that promised unbelievable pleasure if she could just seize it.

"Do it, Evie Girl," he growled against her neck as he gripped her ass tighter, forcing her to take him deeper with the next hard thrust of his hips against hers. "Come for your Master. I want you to come for me."

Eve fought to do as she was told, her entire body battling to find release rather than disobey him and it was that thought, the fear of letting Danny down that finally pushed her over the edge. She tensed a second time, her body clenching repeatedly from the pulses of pleasure washing over her in decadent waves. Her mind went hazy from the

wild onslaught of bliss that flooded into her limbs to the rhythm of her rapid heartbeat and she choked on the gag from the force of her screams.

"Fuck," Danny groaned, his fingers digging painfully into the sensitive skin of her ass as he followed her into oblivion. His thrusts became erratic, his body strung tight as the contractions of her pussy clenched tightly at his cock over and over.

Eve thought she might pass out. She was fighting desperately to breathe when she started coming down from the high and realized the need for oxygen didn't stop for pleasure. The gag made it much more difficult and she sobbed in relief when Danny untied it. He pulled it out of her mouth, tossing it aside as he rolled off her, obviously knowing Eve needed the relief after such a brutal orgasm she still wasn't used to.

They both lay there, trying to gain their breath back, their bodies sweaty and sated. Eve's eyes fell closed in exhaustion and she was nearly asleep when Danny rolled over, wrapping his arms around her gently. He leaned down and sucked on the tip of one breast, making Eve jerk violently when her skin was still hypersensitive.

"No," she groaned in complaint. "Not yet. Not for a long time. Too sensitive."

"You did good," he said, his breath warm against her skin. "I'm proud of you."

"Oh God, I love you," she panted, her breath still harsh and erratic as her heart hammered against her ribs. "That was amazing. You're incredible."

Danny just nodded breathlessly as he leaned over and worked at freeing one of her cuffs from the straps restraining her. Her arm fell heavily to the bed when he did. She watched him crawl over to work on the other one, his movements heavy in a way that filled her with a strange sort of feminine pride because she knew she had done that for him. Her learning to come from just penetration had made the sex better for him too.

"That was fun," she said excitedly as he worked at the straps on her ankles, freeing one easily and then working on the other. "You're really, really good at the big, bad Master routine. You're working that leather, Danny Boy. What else are you hiding in that closet?"

"You don't want to know the answer to that," Danny told her, lifting his head to give her a penetrating look from his spot at the foot of the bed as he freed her other ankle. "My closet is a dark and scary place."

She laughed, feeling completely giddy in the aftermath of not one, but two orgasms she had previously thought were impossible to achieve. "I love you."

Danny rolled his eyes. "You can keep those cuffs. I bought them for you."

"You're saying you want to do this again?"

"Yes," Danny said in a sultry voice. "Don't you?"

"Yeah," she said instantly, nodding her head vigorously as anticipation pulsed through her. "I do want to do it again—lots."

"You want to see what else I bought you?"

"Sure," Eve rasped, still grinning like a fool.

Danny rolled off his bed, tucking himself into his leather pants and tying them closed as he walked to his closet. Eve was still feeling very languid and lazy. Moving felt like too much work. She just let her head loll to the side to watch him dig in his closet and pull out a medium-sized black velvet box.

She frowned at him when he walked back to the bed and then crawled back onto it. Curiosity gave Eve the strength to sit up. She wrapped her arms around her legs, staring at the box as he stopped to sit next to her and held it out with an odd look of uncertainty on his face.

Eve took it, her eyes darting to his in trepidation. "What is it?"

"Open it."

Eve opened the lid and stared down at the treasure it held. It was a choker of sorts, with dozens of brightly colored rhinestones set into black leather. It looked expensive, even if the box hadn't given away the luxury of the gift, she would have known it cost a mint. She picked it up by the silver buckle and raised her eyebrows in surprise. "It's a necklace."

"No," Danny said with a laugh and then gave her a devious smile as he reached out and grabbed the silver ring hanging from the front of it. Eve had thought the D-shaped silver ring was for hanging charms or pendants from, but the way Danny held it made it obvious the ring was for attaching something else entirely different. "It's not a necklace."

"Oh my God," Eve gasped, putting a hand to her mouth and laughing when she realized what it was. He was holding up a collar, one fully equipped to attach a leash to. "You twisted bastard!"

"It's symbolic," Danny explained as he opened it. "Wearing it for me means you trust me. Do you trust me, Evie Girl?"

"I do," she said, her body wilting when she considered what he had done for her. "I trust you completely."

"Then you'll wear it?" he asked, leaning forward and putting it around her neck without waiting for confirmation.

"I suppose," she said with another laugh as he buckled the collar on her. "If that's what gets your rocks off."

"Oh, no," he said, pulling back to frown at her. "Only agree if it's something you really want to do. Otherwise, we can go back to the ordinary. It won't bother me. I want you to be happy."

Eve considered what they had done this afternoon and what she had achieved by trusting him with her body. She gave Danny a long look, studying his beautiful features that were relaxed and adoring as he stared back at her with that same look of hesitance, as if waiting for her to deny him. She shrugged, deciding that wearing a dog collar for him was the least she could do to pay him back for what he'd given her. "I want to wear it for you."

"You're sure?" he asked as he arched one dark eyebrow. "This collar means you trust me body and soul. To many, including me, they're considered more binding than a marriage certificate. It's a big deal."

She smiled, feeling her heart warm when she realized what he was really trying to say by giving her this gift. To Danny, this collar meant they were truly committed, maybe not conventionally but in a way that was important to him. She reached out, cupping his cheek lovingly and leaned in to kiss him. "I'm sure," she whispered against his lips. "Own me, Danny Boy. I'm all yours."

Chapter Eleven

Paul was tired.

Being the youngest lawyer at his firm meant he got all the most tiring, shit cases and dealt with all the biggest assholes. Today had been one asshole too many and Paul wanted a stiff drink, a good fuck and then bed – in that order.

"I'm in a bad mood, Danny Boy," he called out as he walked in and kicked the door shut with his foot. "I need –"

"Dinner," Danny cut in instantly from the living room.

"No, that wasn't on the list," Paul said as he dropped his briefcase by the front door.

"Evie's here," Danny called back, his voice light, but the warning was clear.

Paul groaned, closing his eyes in misery as he mentally scratched fucking off his list. This was really great. A perfect end to a perfect day. Instead of a good fuck he was going to get to watch Eve and Danny cuddle on the couch while he sat there with a hard-on for both of them. At this point, it would take a real trick to make his night and attitude much worse.

"Why's Evie here?" Paul asked, unable to hide the annoyance in his voice as he pulled at his tie.

"Her car's in the shop again."

"That's money well spent," he grumbled under his breath as he kicked off his shoes. He leaned down to pick them up and then said loud enough for them to hear, "Does she need me to drive her home?"

"No, she's spending the night. We already called her mother and she's appropriately pissed. I think I'm starting to develop a complex where Mrs. Everton is concerned."

"Sure, you are," Paul said bitterly, walking into the living room.

Danny and Eve were predictably curled up on the couch together watching television. He stood next to the coffee table, looking down at Eve, who wore nothing but one of his football jerseys, her long, pale legs intertwined with Danny's as she rested her head against his bare chest. So they were cuddling and half naked. Paul actually growled under his breath as he glared at both of them.

"What're you growling about?" Danny asked lazily, making it obvious he had spent most of the day fucking Eve and was now sated and content.

Must be nice to be a millionaire with no real responsibilities and a pretty girl to fuck whenever you wanted.

"Is it moot to point out the market value on that piece of shit car is less than the cost of fixing it? He could buy you a new car for less money than he pays to constantly have it in the shop," Paul said to Eve, arching an eyebrow at her lying there in his shirt, cuddling with his fuck buddy and looking very pleased with both of them. "Let Danny buy you a new car – please."

"No." Eve tilted her head back from where it rested on Danny's chest to grin up at Paul impishly, showing off cute dimples on both rosy cheeks. "If he bought me a car, he'd be my sugar daddy."

"Yeah, we can't have that. It'd be a real social crime," Paul snorted, shaking his head at the absurdity of the situation. He decided to ignore Eve, because he was irritated with her for being so cute and appealing to him when she had just ruined his night with a broken car that was rapidly becoming the bane of Paul's existence. He looked to Danny instead. "Did you get my voice mail?"

"Yeah, I got it," Danny said without looking away from the television.

Paul stared at Danny for a few more seconds, getting the message loud and clear. Television and Eve were more interesting than playing with him when he had left him a message saying he had a horrible day and needed an escape from the shit hole that was his life this week.

"Thanks a lot, motherfucker," Paul growled under his breath as he turned away from both of them.

"You need to eat. Your blood sugar's probably low," Danny called out as Paul stormed off. "You know what you get like when your blood sugar's low. You want me to make you something?"

"I don't want you to make me something. The story of my life is getting everything I don't want and nothing that I do," Paul said to himself in the hallway, knowing Danny couldn't hear him now. He kicked open his door and threw his shoes, sending them sliding across the wooden floor. "I could have gorgeous Dommies who wear leather skirts, red lipstick and high heels but instead I'm fucking Donna Reed with a dick and a God complex."

Paul wrenched his suit jacket off, tossing it carelessly on the bed, telling himself he'd hang it up later. Then he pulled the knot in his tie loose, tugged it out of his collar and let it drop to the floor just to be rebellious. He sat down heavily on his bed and leaned down to pull off his socks.

"This is not my life," Paul moaned, resting his forehead in his hands as he sat there on his bed feeling sorry for himself when that had never been his style.

He considered calling Trisha and going to her place for vanilla sex, which seemed better than no sex at all, but he knew that would probably just leave him more frustrated than anything. He wavered then, knowing at least a dozen Dommies who would drop whatever they were doing to play with him, Dommies with a legitimate sadistic kink. They would get off on hurting him as much as he would get off on letting them.

Fuck Danny's holier-than-thou shit about true Masters only gaining pleasure from seeing their slaves satisfied and happy.

Paul wasn't satisfied. Game over.

He could find another partner for tonight and deal with Danny's rage tomorrow. Right then, it seemed like a two-for-one deal to him.

He got off his bed, walked over to the desk and turned on his computer. He took a shuddering breath and then scrubbed both hands over his face as he listened to the chime of his computer starting up. He took several more deep breaths and the short wait for his computer was enough to have Paul realizing he was probably letting his fetish rule him a little more than it should. It wasn't supposed to start bleeding into other aspects of his life. It was a lifestyle choice, sure, but it was ultimately just a game. Some people played checkers when they got bored, others played slave and Master.

Calling a Domme would put a lifelong friendship into jeopardy.

Danny was a pain in the ass sometimes but he wasn't quite ready to throw away his friendship over a little sexual frustration. Paul had a girlfriend too. If Trisha had a piece of shit car, he would make sure it was fixed. Of course, Trisha would never have a car like Eve's because Trisha was responsible and practical instead of spontaneous and adorable.

Paul felt a smile tug at his lips thinking of Eve lying there in his football jersey and remembering a time, very long ago when she used to lie in *his* arms wearing the same thing.

Paul sighed in defeat, turning away from his computer and running a hand through his hair. He paused, his fingers still tangled in his hair when he spotted a set of leather cuffs on the floor, partially hidden beneath his bed. They were attached, a small lock holding them together as if they had been packed up and then dropped without realizing it.

A rage unlike anything he had ever experienced rushed through him as he walked over and picked them up. These were fleece-lined cuffs, ones that sure as shit weren't his. Paul would quite literally eat dirt before he would let anyone put fleece-lined cuffs on him.

He turned around slowly, as if caught in a nightmare and stared at his bed. He had made his bed that morning, just as he did every morning. When Paul made a bed, someone could bounce a quarter off it, that's how well the job was done. He was reared knowing how to make a bed well. If it wasn't, not only would he get the shit kicked out of him, but his older brothers would too because they were his superiors and were supposed to make sure Paul didn't do stupid shit like make a lumpy bed similar to the one he was looking at now. There wasn't a crease in sight, just his comforter draped sloppily over it. The pillows were crooked beneath it and he tilted his head, looking to the bottom of the mattress and finding the sheets weren't even tucked in.

Paul's gaze went hazy in fury as he stood there staring at his messy bed and held the most pansy-ass pair of leather cuffs he had ever seen in his shaking hand.

"I'm gonna kick his ass," he whispered in a low, furious voice he didn't even recognize as his own. "And then I'm gonna *kill* him."

* * * * *

Eve was tired.

Since she and Danny had spiced up their sex life Eve had discovered she was usually satisfied enough to want nothing more than sleep when the day came to an end. She hadn't masturbated in weeks. Danny was more than enough to keep her sated and tonight was no different. She had a long, fun day with Danny and she yawned from the effect of it as she lay sprawled out on the couch, her pillow gone to make dinner for Paul. Eve flexed her feet as she stretched like a cat. Her eyes closed in happy exhaustion as she hummed under her breath.

"Tired?"

"Mmm, much." Eve smiled, blinking her eyes open to find Paul standing over her. Her smile faltered as she stared up at him. His face was flushed so badly that mottled, rosy splotches marked his cheeks and neck. His eyes were wild, his nostrils flaring angrily. "What's wrong?" Eve rasped quickly as horrible dread washed over her. He had the look of someone who had just found out their mother had died. "Did something happen?"

Paul laughed manically as he reached up, pushing his hair off his forehead and then leaning heavily into his palm. "Yeah, Evie, something happened – you."

"What?" Eve gasped, jumping off the couch as she stared at Paul in disbelief. "What did I do?"

"You fucked Danny on my bed," Paul said, his forehead still resting in his palm as he stared at her unwaveringly. His eyes were a furious storm of blue as he looked at her in hurt. "Call your mother and tell her to come pick you up."

"I will not," Eve said sharply, even as her face burned in embarrassment and her heart thundered in fear. She had fucked Danny on Paul's bed and the guilt had to be written all over her face because it was throbbing through her veins to the rhythm of the horrible dread that came with being caught doing something atrocious. "You can't just push me away because you're mad at me. At least let us explain."

"Okay." Paul threw up his hand and turned around to stare at Danny who stood in the kitchen with a stoic look on his face as he met Paul's eyes evenly. "Explain, Danny Boy. Let's hear this, I'm really curious to know."

"We fucked on your bed," Danny said, appearing undisturbed by the fact that Paul was positively shaking in fury. "That's it."

"That's it," Paul repeated in a low, dangerous voice, his eyes narrowed back at Danny. They stared at each other across the house as the air pulsed with tension so thick it was palatable. "Did she wear the dog collar we talked about when you fucked her on my bed? The one with the rhinestones?"

Eve gasped as dread and fury washed over her. Her hands flew to her mouth as she pivoted on the spot and looked at Danny in horror. She had never felt more betrayed in her life. The idea that he had talked about her, told anyone about what they did was mind-numbingly embarrassing and horrifying, but it was worse than that.

"You told Paul!" Eve screeched at Danny as fury welled up in her so forcefully she wanted to scream and break something. "You told boy scout Paul Guy!"

"It's just a little collar. It looks just like a necklace," Paul said tauntingly with a wild, furious glare of disappointment as he stared down at her. "Except for the fact that you can attach a *leash* to it! Do you like being his pet? Do you like calling him Master and kneeling at his feet?"

"Oh...my...God," Eve panted in wild panic as waves of horror and embarrassment crashed over. Her hands started shaking and she shook her head frantically. "I'm never forgiving him for this. My trust is ruined forever."

"Yeah, I know how you feel," Paul growled as he threw Eve's leather cuffs down to the floor. She stared at them in horror, having not seen them before now and the evidence of what she had done, of what Danny had done to her was horrifying. She was still staring at them as Paul kicked them with his bare foot. "Go fetch, Evie Girl. I'm sure your Master taught you how."

Eve stood there in shock as her eyes remained glued to the leather cuffs Paul had thrown at her. He could never understand. He was a sweet, beautiful boy scout who always did everything by the book. He was a rule follower, not a rule breaker like Danny and Eve. To Paul, she must seem like a complete whore.

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she stood there shaking in humiliation next to her first love, her first kiss, her first lover, the boy she had sworn to love forever and every single beautiful memory felt shattered with the knowledge that he saw her as someone to kneel and beg to his best friend.

"I was gonna kick your ass," Paul said in a low voice that was actually shaking in fury. "But I didn't think you deserved it. Game over, Danny Boy. It doesn't work when you're the only player."

Eve felt like she needed about a million of her mother's tranquilizers as Paul turned around and walked out of the living room, heading toward the front door.

"Paul Guy," Danny growled in a suddenly loud and terrifying voice. It made Eve jump because she had forgotten he was still there. She turned around to watch Danny run out of the kitchen and storm after Paul. Her heartbeat was thundering, because she realized Paul was actually angry enough to fight Danny. She felt as if she were standing witness to a horrible car accident. She was watching it happen, but she could do nothing but stand there and gape in horror as Danny ran past Paul and flattened himself against the door. "You can't leave," he said in a low, angry voice. "You know I'll never let you leave like this."

"Bite me, motherfucker." Paul stopped in front of Danny, his body still shaking in fury. Danny may be taller but Paul had at least fifty pounds of pure muscle over him. If

he was so inclined, Paul could kill Danny with his bare hands and he looked like he wanted to as he glowered at him. "There is a woman with a ponytail and a leather skirt ready and willing to write her name all over me. There are several of them, dozens who want me. Fuck your harem. I'm getting one of my own. I got four months of freedom left in this world and I'm not gonna spend one more second of it with you. Now step aside before I crush you."

"Fine," Danny said as he reached behind his back and turned the doorknob. "This will be a fun challenge. Let's see how far you get before I make you come crawling back."

"Not anymore, you're fired," Paul said, pushing Danny aside as he grabbed his car keys off the table by the door and stormed outside. "Have fun with your pet. See if you can get her to fetch now that she knows you're a shitty Master."

Eve stood there silently, unable to stop herself from staring at the dark smile on Danny's face as he looked out into the darkness. It was less than twenty seconds before his voice cut into the night.

"I'm gonna tell," he called out in a singsongy, childish taunt, leaning against the door and looking out toward the yard with the same evil smile tugging at his lips.

"Go for it!" Paul shouted back, his voice growing distant, making it obvious he was walking barefoot to his car. "You've already ruined her. I don't give a fuck anymore."

Eve let out another sob at Paul's words, her hands cupping back to her mouth as more tears pooled in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"I wasn't talking about Evie," Danny said in a low, evil voice that sent ice cubes sliding down Eve's spine. "I know your secrets are safe with her. Telling her wouldn't be a threat."

There was a long, deafening silence and Eve got the impression once again of watching a car accident, as she stood rooted to the spot staring at Danny who was leaning against the door. She forgot her own personal crisis in the wake of what was unfolding. She wasn't really sure what it was, but there was a ripple of danger in the air that nearly choked her. She actually found herself making a mental check for her cell phone in case she had to call for help.

"You're breaking the rules, Danny Boy," Paul said in a shaky voice, splintering the tense silence with fear. "No one breaks the rules. I got friends too. I will tell everyone I know you're doing this. Your only form of control is blackmail. That's not even amateur, that's enough to get you banned from the game forever. This will ruin you. You won't be able to show your face anywhere even remotely interesting. I'll make sure of it."

"Ask me if I give a fuck," Danny shot back in a low, deadly voice that rang with a taunting danger so overwhelming Eve was scared of him. "I'm retired. Vanilla ice cream tastes fine to me."

"I hate you," Paul said, his voice cracking with anger. "You've ruined our friendship because you had to hurt her. I told you not to hurt her and you did it

anyway—*on my bed*. You're fucked up. You couldn't eat vanilla ice cream if it was the last food on earth!"

"I'm done shouting our issues to the world," Danny said in a voice that rang with paternal disapproval. "Get in this house right now or I am calling your father and telling him all about your ice cream preferences."

"Fine, why the hell not," Paul said as he suddenly walked past Danny and threw his keys on the table by the door.

Eve stared at Paul in anguish because his whole body was shaking, but it wasn't in anger. It was in something much worse than that as he rubbed at his forehead repeatedly with the pads of his fingers in a nervous, twitchy action that made it obvious he was near tears.

She had never seen Paul cry, not once in all her lifetime and Eve had known him since kindergarten. He had to have been the only child in the whole world who made it through his entire childhood without crying.

If he cried now, Eve felt as if the earth would open up and swallow her whole. Paul crying went against nature. It went against everything she had ever known. Big, perfect boy scouts didn't cry. It wasn't possible.

Danny pulled the door closed and then leaned back against it. He reached behind him, clicking the lock as his eyes rested on Paul, who was still standing there rubbing his forehead, his bare foot tapping rhythmically against the wooden floor.

"I never hurt Eve," Danny said slowly, his voice punctuating each word. "You are creating this enormous drama for all of us over something that never happened."

"What were the cuffs for then?" Paul asked, looking everywhere but where Eve still stood frozen to her spot watching a scene unfold that was hurting her mind for so many different reasons. "I wanna know what you do to her when you tie her down."

"I was going to show you," Danny said in a taunting voice and Eve couldn't believe what she was hearing. She wasn't as stupid as they thought she was, because she saw the way Paul's head had snapped around. His eyes grew wide and she saw the smug smile tugging at Danny's lips when he said, "When did I give you the impression that I don't know how to make a bed or pick up after myself? You asked me if I got your voice mail and I said yes. Game on."

"If you think—" Eve started, her face flushing in fury when she realized what the two of them were talking about. "There is no way I am going to let you tie me down for Paul. No, no, no—you're both fucked!"

"No, you wouldn't," Danny said sadly, turning to look at Eve with an expression of genuine sadness. "Because you think I ruined your trust."

"You did," Eve growled at him furiously. "You said you'd only stick around for as long as I wanted you. Well, I don't want you anymore and I most certainly am not going to let you tie me down for Paul Guy's amusement."

"He didn't tell me about the collar," Paul suddenly broke in, his voice cracking with emotion and something darker. There was a breathless catch that seemed misplaced. "I guessed."

"There is no way you could have guessed what it looked like," Eve said furiously, knowing what boyhood friends would do to protect each other. "You're covering for him. I am not even going to pretend to know what you two are fighting about, but don't think I'm going to just do whatever you want to stop a fight that obviously has nothing to do with me. I don't know what vanilla ice cream really means and I don't care."

"You don't know what vanilla means?" Paul asked her curiously. "You've never heard that term?"

"No, I've never heard that term," Eve said in a sharp voice as she glared at Paul. "Do you have a problem with that?"

"No, I don't have a problem with that." Paul folded his arms over his chest and gave her a sidelong glance. "But quite honestly, Evie, it takes real balls for you to call me a boy scout when you don't even know what vanilla means."

"What does vanilla mean?" Eve asked in a high-and-mighty voice. "That seems like the real important topic at hand, so let's talk about it. We'll just skip past you giving yourself whiplash over the suggestion that Danny was going to show you what he does to me when he ties me down."

"Vanilla means normal," Danny broke in, ignoring the other issues as if he had missed the sarcasm in Eve's voice. "It's a term people who are into BDSM and other kinks use to refer to normal, boring sex. For example, before you were sweet enough to trust me to be your Master, we had only vanilla sex. Now what we do is much more flavorful. Do you get it?"

Eve looked back and forth between Danny and Paul. "So, you two were talking in code because you're into the same stuff? You're friends. It would make sense that you had the same interests. Do you have girls who kneel at your feet, Paul Guy? Is that what you're afraid he's going to tell your father?"

Paul glanced away from her. "Not exactly."

"You might as well get it all out now," Danny said, his voice suddenly icy. "Because you know I'm going to have to make you pay for what you did. You made Eve think I had betrayed her trust. That's unforgivable. It's only because of her that I'm not dealing with the issue right this minute."

Paul gasped and Eve saw his eyes roll back before he put a palm to his eyes and rested his face there as he took sharp, hard breaths of air as if he were trying to gain his composure.

"You know Eve's secrets now. You forced her into revealing things about her sex life that were none of your business and you did it in a way that made her think I was the one who had told you those things," Danny said in a steely voice that rumbled with fury so potent it made the hair at the back of Eve's neck stand on end. "Do you want me to tell you what you owe her for that?"

"W-what do I owe her?" Paul choked, his breathing still irregular, his palm still over his eyes as he leaned heavily into his hand. "Please tell me what I owe her."

"First, you're going to take your shirt off for her."

"No, really, you don't have to do that," Eve put in frantically, because the ripple in the air was making her skin tingle and she firmly believed Paul taking his shirt off would be a very bad thing. "I've seen what's under that shirt and I don't—"

"Shut up, Evie Girl!" Danny growled at her, focusing his attention and anger on her instead, which actually caused her to shrink back in fear as he glared at her. "Be silent and kneel right where you're standing."

Eve wavered where she stood, staring at Danny defiantly. She wasn't even certain she wanted to still be in a relationship with him, let alone kneel for him. But she realized, with a stab of lust, she was actually conditioned now because she wanted to kneel for him. Her knees were practically jerking her down on their own accord.

"Someone is going to get punished here tonight," Danny said sharply. "If you don't kneel right now it's going to be you. Do you want Paul to watch me punishing you?"

Eve dropped to her knees, because the risk wasn't worth taking. She had too much on the line. She didn't want to lose Danny, not until she understood more of what was happening, but she couldn't chance being forced into being tied down and punished in front of Paul. She would die if he knew what happened to her body when she was in that situation. He could never know how much it turned her on to be tied up.

"There you go, Paul Guy," Danny said in a smooth, taunting voice. "Doesn't she look pretty on her knees?"

Eve sucked in a sharp gasp of embarrassment and squeezed her eyes shut when she realized Paul seeing her drop to her knees for him was every bit as bad as him watching her being punished.

"Don't play the game with her," Paul said in a soft voice that shook violently. "Don't do it if she doesn't understand the rules yet. Play it with me. At least I know what I'm doing."

"Do you?" Danny asked darkly. "I hadn't noticed."

"I probably shouldn't have left you a voice mail. That's always a bad plan. Shit."

"Surprise," Danny said in a voice so darkly evil Eve lifted her head to stare at him in shock. "You really think red lipstick and corsets can do what I do? Don't you think you owe me an apology for that?"

"I'm sorry," Paul whispered in a breathless rush of panic. "I'm really sorry, Danny Boy. I wouldn't have really done it."

"I think you would have," Danny said in that same dark, evil voice. "I think you like red lipstick and corsets a lot. Do you?"

"All men like red lipstick and corsets."

"Yes, but you more than most. You know Eve's secrets but she doesn't know yours. I want you to tell her them right now—full disclosure."

"Is there anything—" Paul started, choking on the words as if they were sheer anguish to him. "There's nothing, is there? You're not going to let me do something else to get out of it."

"Nope," Danny said simply. "Either you start this game on your terms or I'm going to start it on mine—you really don't want that."

"They're your secrets too." Paul dropped his hand to stare at Danny imploringly with eyes that glowed with wild, desperate panic. "She's your girlfriend. Are you really sure about this?"

"Would I have started the game if I wasn't sure?" Danny asked as if it were obvious, making Paul's shoulders slump in profound defeat. "I'm not the one with issues about everything."

"Evie," Paul whispered as he fell back against the wall as if he needed it to stay on his feet. His breath was still ragged but he looked down at her with soft, anguished eyes as his cheeks burned red under his tan. "I am into BDSM and I am most certainly not a boy scout. I've been playing in the scene since just after you left for New York. Danny got involved because I was involved, but I found it first. The reason you're there kneeling on the floor is because I'm kind of a fetish whore and I'm *really* sorry about that."

"Kind of?" Danny repeated in amazement. "What part of full disclosure are you missing?"

"Fine." Paul shrugged his shoulders, looking away from Eve. "I'm a *hardcore* fetish whore."

"Lots of emphasis on hardcore," Danny said slowly to Eve, raising his eyebrows as if trying to prepare her. "In comparison to Paul, everything you and I have done, all that Master and slave play, that was all very soft play."

Eve sucked in a sharp breath and turned to Paul. "What is it? It can't be that bad."

"It's pretty bad," Paul said miserably, his eyes wide and unfocused. "Especially to a girl who doesn't know what vanilla means. What were you doing with her? If I'm gonna bare my soul, I wanna know details."

"Bondage, obviously," Danny said with a shrug. "Basic obedience, which she's not very good at—she's horrible at it, actually. She likes to be tied down but she hates being dominated with anything other than pleasure. It is a miracle I got her to kneel for you. I'm actually really impressed with myself over that."

"I'm right here," Eve growled at both of them. "And I'm about to get up if I don't hear something really interesting."

Danny snorted. "There you go."

"Oh, that's nice," Paul sighed out of the blue, his voice wispy as he stared down at Eve with a hot gaze she hadn't felt from him in a very long time. It sent shivers over her body and the hairs on her arms stood on end as Paul sucked in a sharp gasp that was clearly caused by sexual desire. "You don't wanna be Danny's pet. You want someone

to boss around, someone you can force to pleasure you all day without stopping. That's what you want, Evie Girl, right? Please tell me that's what you want."

Eve had to admit that idea sounded like a good one to her. "Sure, that sounds great. Who wouldn't want that? Anyone would want someone they could boss around and force to pleasure them all day."

"This is the best wedding present ever," Paul whispered, still staring at Eve with an enthralled gaze that had her neck feeling warm and her body throbbing.

"Not everyone wants the same things," Danny said softly with a sidelong glance at Paul. "The BDSM world is sort of a playground for people who have unique tastes. If someone had a fetish others thought wasn't quite normal, they could probably make friends in BDSM. Paul has a fetish that has allowed him to make many friends in the BDSM world. He's extremely popular, actually. The sadists of the world will cry in unison when he gets married."

"Sadists?" Eve repeated in horror. "Paul doesn't hurt people, I don't believe that."

"No, he doesn't, you're right. He's actually very nice," Danny said, casting another look at Paul, traces of guilt showing on his face before he turned back to Eve and met her eyes evenly. "Paul is a submissive. If you asked him to, he would get on his knees and lick you for five hours and he would love it. I mean, seriously, he would love you for it. If you hit him for not doing it well enough, he would love you even more. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"Oh," Eve said, cupping her hands to her mouth as she stared at Paul. "Oh, no."

Paul closed his eyes and looked away from her as he rubbed at the back of his neck. "Don't get too depressed, Evie. I'm going to be having nice, plain, vanilla sex for the rest of my life once I get married. All the fun will be done. Game over."

"You don't like regular sex?" Eve asked sadly. "Not at all?"

"I like it sometimes. I liked it with you," Paul put in as he looked at her softly. "But I dunno, if two kinky people have vanilla sex, is it still vanilla? If you're wearing dog collars for Danny, then you're not any more different than I am. I've got leather cuffs too. Only I don't do fleece."

"Yeah, that's putting it mildly," Danny said with a laugh. "Some submissives have pain fetishes. They like their Masters to hurt them."

"Like spanking?"

"What do you think about spanking, Paul Guy?" Danny asked him.

"I think it's for pussies. I would fire any Master who tried that."

"What about fleece-lined cuffs?"

"For pussies."

"How about whipping? Do you enjoy being whipped?"

"If it's done right," Paul said with a small gasp of longing, which shocked Eve because he was obviously being serious. "But I don't think you do it right."

"I'll have to do it right tonight. You just screamed to the world that we hate vanilla ice cream. That was unbelievable. You know how intensely I'm going to have to hurt you for what you did to Evie?"

"Yeah, I know," Paul whispered, his eyes wide as if he were hypnotized with desire. "Are you really gonna do it right? A real edge game?"

"You bet your ass I'm going to rip you to shreds," Danny said, looking down at Eve and giving her a pointed look. "I'm going to whip you until you bleed and Eve's going to watch. How does that make you feel?"

"Hot," Paul rasped as he looked away from Eve, his eyes dazed and unfocused. "It's hot, really hot."

"You're his Master," Eve said accusingly as she stared at Paul and felt her heart wrench inside her chest over what he was saying. She thought back to growing up with him, the fact that he would never cry, no matter how badly he had hurt himself and Danny was taking advantage of that. "You're hurting him."

Danny looked to Paul, his gaze softening as his eyes ran over him. He turned back to Eve, his stance stiff and defiant as if daring her to complain as he said, "Yes, I hurt him, and I dominate him, and I do just about anything in between to get him off because I love him and I don't want him to be in the hands of someone who doesn't absolutely adore him. You'll see why when I have to punish him for his little fit."

"You're lovers?" Eve gasped in surprise, looking back and forth between them and wanting to smack her forehead. She was an artist. She had lived in New York for ten years. She had worked and hung out with more gay men than straight for most of her adulthood. The only reason she had missed the obvious was because of her friendship with both of them. The two of them lived, bickered and needed each other like an old married couple. "I'm so stupid. The clean house. The fact that you can spend all day shopping. You two are *not* lovers. This is not happening. How long have you been together?"

"I wouldn't call us lovers," Paul said with a wince. "That's— not sexy."

"But you fuck?"

Paul nodded as he huffed in defeat, "Yeah, we like fucking. We don't get sick of each other."

"And we are going to miss each other very much when he gets married," Danny said with a sigh. "Honestly, Evie, if I didn't have you, I think I'd die."

"You won't die," Paul said softly.

"I will," Danny whispered in anguish, his dark eyes shining. "I'm not as strong as you. No human on earth is as strong as you. You're a freak of nature. If you weren't so fucked up, you wouldn't agree to marry a woman you don't love. The pain fetish doesn't make you fucked, the inability to separate your fetish from your real life does. You're letting your father's expectations punish you forever. I'm really, really pissed off at you. I am going to have to hurt you so badly, Paul Guy. Do you know how badly I'm going hurt you?"

"I know," Paul sighed. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have even considered leaving you for corsets and lipstick."

"I had everything beautifully laid out," Danny said, shaking his head in recrimination. "You could have had Evie tied down with me commanding you to pleasure her—but you fucked it all up. You always fuck it up. You're worthless. Get down on your knees right now and tell me you're worthless. I want you to do it in front of Evie."

Eve sucked in a sharp breath when Paul did as he was told, falling to his knees instantly and looking up at Danny. "I'm worthless."

"Yes, you are," Danny agreed as he flattened himself against the door and looked down at Paul with a gaze of sheer malice. "Take your shirt off. Slaves who don't appreciate their Masters don't get shirts."

Paul tilted his head, staring at Eve as he unbuttoned the top button to his pressed, white collared shirt. She suddenly understood what Danny had been talking about when he said slaves take off their clothes slowly, sensually to impress their Masters. Only Paul wasn't looking at Danny, he was looking at Eve with stormy blue eyes of arousal that caused a jolt of lust to shoot through her. She found herself watching his fingers work on each button with bated breath as a slow, beautiful line of masculine flesh was revealed. The longer it took him to take off his shirt, the more she ached for him. Even the buttons at his wrists, the way he undid them was completely captivating to her. She could sit there and watch him do this all day.

If slaves could do this to their Masters, who was the one really enslaved?

She knew she was starry eyed by the time he shrugged those impossibly large shoulders and slipped his shirt off in a smooth, masculine gesture Eve was certain Danny could have never achieved. He was beautiful, but people existed to seduce him, not the other way around.

Eve suddenly saw Paul for what he was—the most sensual, beautiful man she had ever laid eyes on. His entire being was focused on serving and pleasing others, it was all he knew and that was something that could quite easily captivate her for the rest of her life.

Eve didn't feel the tears until they were rolling down her cheeks. It didn't matter that Danny glared at her, she couldn't help herself as she stared with her lips parted in awe. She wanted to paint Paul, to take his picture in black and white kneeling there, capturing the perfect moment when he shifted his shoulders to push his shirt off.

"Stand up and turn around," Danny said and then leaned into Paul when he did so, blocking Eve's view of his back.

He rested his cheek against Paul's shoulder as his arm wrapped around his waist. Danny was bare-chested too, wearing jeans instead of black suit pants and together the two of them made Eve gape at their beauty.

With enough paint, canvas and film, Eve could use Paul and Danny to feed her muse for all time. That's how beautiful they were together to her. Her mind stopped

seeing beauty in the world outside the two of them standing there together and neither of them realized they had just ruined Eve's art for the rest of her life. Nothing she ever created would be beautiful unless it had one or both of them in it somehow and it occurred to her that she was going to be selling her body to Danny an awful lot. She couldn't bear the thought of not creating art and any art that didn't capture the dark magnificence of two beautiful men who were slave and Master to each other seemed pointless and dull. She'd sooner die than paint anything less than what her artist eyes were seeing in front of her.

"You don't want Evie to see these marks on your back, do you, Paul Guy?" Danny asked softly, whispering the words into the curve of Paul's neck. "I want you to tell her why you don't want her to see these."

"Because I got them for refusing to give Eve to you," Paul whispered in misery. "And now they're useless."

"Why are they useless?"

"Because I can't feel them. I wanted to feel them forever."

"Why?"

"Because I love her."

"What?" Eve gasped, sucking in such a sharp breath of air she thought her lungs would burst.

"You knew that," Paul said, turning around to glance at her over his other shoulder with a look on his face that told her he had assumed she had known it all along.

"I did?" Eve squeaked and her face scrunched up in a fight against completely breaking down in front of both of them.

"Yeah, I told you I'd love you forever."

Eve jumped up on unsteady feet. "I need to go to the bathroom."

She ran away from both of them and tripped when she jumped into the bathroom, landing painfully on her knees, but she didn't care. She kicked her leg back to shut the door and crumpled onto the floor with the most bone-shaking sobs she had ever cried in her entire life. They shook her entire body and she felt as if she might just die on the floor from the force of the pain in her heart.

Why did she leave him? Why didn't she force him to come with her?

"You can't fall apart like this," Danny said as he opened the bathroom door. "If you do then I will and I can't be an emotional wreck when I'm punishing him."

"Then don't punish him!" Eve shouted at him. "I don't want you to punish him!"

"But that's what he likes and if I don't keep my word his trust in me will be ruined," Danny said slowly. "Do you understand that he wants to be hurt? He wants to be treated like shit. If I didn't do it and do it well then he'd go get it from someone else. He was being serious when he said he was going to go collect himself a whole harem of Dommies to abuse him because he was pissed off I was lying down with you instead of fucking with him. Paul has an extreme pain fetish. He cannot be with any Master who

isn't highly trained. The ones he wants aren't safe. They're feeding their own fetishes and that is a really bad combination because then no one is in control. Paul is too beautiful and obedient and he literally drives them insane. I've never seen anyone withstand what he can and I've been heavily into the BDSM world since I was nineteen. They can beat on him like he's a monster and he will love them for it."

"He's not a monster, he's a teddy bear," Eve said defiantly. "He's my teddy bear. I don't want you to hurt him. I want you to fix him."

"There's nothing to fix. He's not broken. He's just different. It's not that bad, you know? When Paul gets hot and bothered, he's really something. He's beautiful to me when he's like that and I don't care how mean I have to be to him because when he gets hot, it makes me hot. It doesn't matter how, as long as it happens."

"You like taking care of him?" Eve choked, because just saying the words made her body ache with desire. "You like making him hot and bothered?"

"I love it more than air."

"I want to watch," Eve rasped as white-hot desire raced through her body at the thought of seeing them together, of being able to witness dark, deviant art as it happened. They were both so surreally beautiful to her, to be able to see them together, that was mind-blowing. She actually wavered where she knelt on the bathroom floor under the force of the lust suddenly washing over her as images assailed her mind, causing a clash of art, sex and desire that was more intoxicating than any drug could be. It was all her favorite things in the world combined into one and she would have never guessed it would come to her this way but now that she'd found it, she felt like she would literally die if she didn't have it. "I'll sell myself to you if I can watch."

"What do you want to watch, Evie?" Danny asked with a catch in his voice. "Tell me what you want to watch and I might consider it."

"Do you kiss?" she asked as her breath rushed out of her in a gush of desire at the thought of them kissing, of seeing the slow movement of tongues sliding into each other's mouths. She needed that on film too, in black and white, with nothing but white in the background, only the image of the two of them with nothing else to detract from it. "I want to see you kiss. If I can take a picture, I'll do anything you want. I'll bark for you, Danny Boy. I'll bark for you right now."

"Call me Master," Danny said in a dark, seductive tone that sent tingles over her skin. But she didn't want to hear it directed at her, she wanted to hear him use it on Paul. She wanted to watch Paul fall under Danny's sexual spell that enslaved anyone who amused him.

"Can I watch you kiss him, Master?" Eve whispered, looking up at Danny imploring, hoping he could see the wild, rampant desire in her eyes, her absolute desperation to be able to witness perfect art as it happened. "Would you let me do that?"

"I might," Danny said slowly, his eyes running over Eve as she knelt there on the floor at his feet. "Do you want to watch us fuck? Does that sound exciting to you?"

Eve sucked in a sharp breath as a lightning bolt of unadulterated desire struck her a thousand times stronger than it had when she was being tied down. Pleasure shimmered over her skin, making her waver where she stood and she thought she might actually climax right there at the thought of seeing them together. The contradictions turned her on as much as the similarities, slave and Master, dark and blond hair, olive and golden skin, dark, devil eyes staring into blue, angelic ones. A devil enslaving an angel with both love and pain and all of it mixed together with hard, smooth muscles coming together in perfect, beautiful lines of art and magnificence. Danny and Paul had bodies made for nudes and Eve loved to photograph nudes, she loved to paint them more. She felt like she had just fallen into her own personal artistic paradise.

"Yes," Eve said in a soft voice that was hypnotized with lust as she stared ahead unseeing, lost in her own world of art and fantasy. "I want to see that. I'll do anything to see that." Eve forced herself to come back to earth long enough to convey her need as she lifted her eyes to Danny. "Anything, Danny Boy. I'll sell you my body for eternity to see you fuck him. I'll sell you my soul if you let me paint and photograph it."

Danny stared down at her, a dark smile curving at his lips. "I believe we have just discovered a very interesting fetish. You've surprised me."

"Do you think it's terrible?" Eve asked in concern, feeling tears sting her eyes once more because she felt like she would die if Danny denied her, or worse, thought it was disgusting. He didn't have artist eyes; he didn't see what she saw. "Do you think I'm terrible?"

"No, I think you're adorable," Danny said, his voice soft and affectionate. "I want to play with you forever."

"I'll let you," Eve whispered, her voice seductive on purpose because she would do anything to see what she needed to see. "If you let me watch I'll let you play with me forever."

"I want to play with you tonight," Danny said in a husky voice. "I want to own you tonight and I want your complete obedience. Will you be a real slave to me tonight?"

"Will you let me watch you fuck him?" Eve countered. "Will you kiss and touch him and let me watch you do it? Will you do it slowly, so I can memorize every detail?"

"You give me your complete obedience," Danny started with his eyebrows raised. "And be a perfect slave for me tonight and I won't only let you watch, I'll let you take a picture."

Eve sucked in a sharp breath as her pussy pulsed with desire. "Yes," she breathed instantly. "I need to take a picture. I have my camera in my bag, I have black-and-white film."

"Destiny," Danny said with a smile. "Say, 'Yes, Master.'"

"Yes, Master," Eve rasped breathlessly as she thought longingly of her camera. "Can I get my camera now? I need it. I want to hold it. I need it in my hands."

"No," Danny said, a dark smile still tugging on his lips. "Right now you are going to go get dressed for me. I want you to make yourself beautiful, with your prettiest slave clothes on."

"Okay," Eve said, her mind still off in the faraway land of art and perfect, nude male bodies that belonged to the two men she adored the most in the world.

"Good girl," Danny said in the silky, smooth voice of the devil. "Do you have your red lipstick?"

"I do," Eve said, blinking as she kneeled there to bring herself back to reality. Danny could have asked her for the air she breathed and she would have given it to him without thought. "I'll wear it for you, Master. I'll get dressed now. I need my camera."

"Not yet. Go get yourself ready. We are going to blow Paul's mind tonight."

"That's good, I need to capture that," Eve said more to herself than him. "I want to capture the beauty of desire on film. I can do it. I know it. Then I can paint it. If I can get the right picture, I'll be able to paint the emotions. I love paintings that show emotions, that make you feel love and pain."

"Oh, you're going to see both of those," Danny assured her. "And I want you to remember this feeling. The feeling of finding something that drives you insane. Of having one fetish button that when it's pushed will make you completely euphoric. It's better than any drug. It's the sweetest thing on earth."

"It is," Eve said instantly, because she felt like she had just fallen into heaven.

"Paul gets that same feeling," Danny said softly. "And just like how you don't want me to think badly of you for having the most extreme voyeur fetish I have *ever* seen, Paul doesn't want you to think badly of him for having the most mind-numbingly, hardcore pain fetish you've ever seen."

That caused a flash of ice to cool her ardor and she looked up at Danny in fear. "How bad is it?"

"Bad, Evie," Danny said sadly. "He would let me beat him to death and get off on it until his last breath."

"Oh, Paul," she whispered as she fought back a fresh surge of tears. "Did I do this to him? Did my leaving cause this?"

"He had to have been born with it. No one can get a pain fetish like this from anyone other than the Divine. Can you find beauty in darkness?"

She nodded. "Yes."

"Then look for it," Danny said softly. "Use artist eyes and look for lust and desire, not horror or pain. The devil was the most beautiful angel. Remember that and I think we'll all be fine. Perfect mates complement each other. It makes no difference if it's in heaven or hell, as long as they are together. You are a perfect mate to Paul and me, Evie Girl. I think we always knew that. It was the reason the three of us became friends

before we were old enough to understand anything other than recognizing another part of ourselves in someone else."

Eve stared ahead, her eyesight unfocused as she thought back to her childhood that had always been beautiful and perfect to her because Paul and Danny had been in it. "You're a poet," Eve whispered as a smile tugged at her lips and tears ran down her cheeks. "You're an artist and I never knew it."

"If I'm an artist it's only because we share a soul," Danny whispered, his dark eyes glassy. "I love you, Evie Girl. Will you be good to Paul? Will you be everything he needs and nothing he doesn't?"

"Absolutely," Eve said with a passion that burned through her like the fires of hell. "I promised to love him forever. He's perfect to me."

"Then go get dressed for your Master," Danny said with a slow, dark smile. "The snake and Eve worked together, you and I will too. We'll make sure our Adam enjoys Eden before he leaves. We'll give him four months of strawberry so sweet it will sustain him through a whole, miserable lifetime of bland vanilla."

Chapter Twelve

Shirtless and barefoot, Paul sat on the edge of his bed. He had changed into an expensive pair of black, laced-up leather pants Danny bought him years ago for public games. He wore his own leather collar and wrist cuffs because he was half terrified Danny would try to put the fleece cuffs on him in front of Eve just to fuck with him.

His fingers laced together at the back of his head, his elbows resting on his knees, he tried to take slow, steady breaths to still his racing heart. Everything in him wanted to flee, to run out the door and get out of the house that seemed to pulse with an air of unavoidable change. He knew everything was going to be drastically altered and there wasn't anything he could do about it. He just had to sit there and endure it, watching helplessly as his life pulled him down a path he found terrifying.

He was powerless, a slave to Danny who had decided this was what he was going to take from Paul next, his last bit of dignity. He didn't just steal Eve, he was going to make her watch Paul be shamed and humiliated. The fear was incredible, all consuming, enough to shut his mind down from the ability to think and his skin hummed from the thrill of it. His cock ached in a way he hadn't thought possible. The pain of knowing he was exposed to Eve was enough to have Paul completely mindless with need.

The breaths he was taking were for sanity, for some way to block the desire for pain and submission that took over his body and mind when it was triggered the right way. He knew if he could think past the lust, he would see this was a mistake. If he could find lawyer Paul instead of slave Paul he could stop the collision of worlds that would injure him for the rest of his life and ruin the one thing that was perfect and beautiful to him.

Paul stiffened when he felt Danny's presence at his door. He was silent, but Paul could always feel him without seeing him, could sense him under his skin, could get hard from his scent and the sound of his slow, confident breathing.

"I need a safe word," Paul whispered without looking up. "I need a safe word for this one."

"Yeah, you probably do."

Paul sucked in a sharp breath, his body shaking under a fresh tidal wave of desire. They hadn't played with safe words in years. Danny hadn't pushed him to the outer limits of his tolerance in what seemed like forever. Safe words between a Master and slave who knew each other completely were pointless unless they really planned to teeter on the edge of a chasm that would leave a slave broken beyond repair.

Paul asked for an edge game in his voice mail and Danny had delivered.

He had to have known there was no limit to the physical pain. He would have never been able to hit the edge with Paul on that. Pain was always fun to him, no matter how intense or excruciating. He had to hit Paul somewhere that could actually break him and he'd found it with Eve. This was a way to cut into his soul and leave him bleeding for eternity.

"Y-you pick it," Paul rasped as his breathing became sharp and irregular. "Pick it and I'll remember."

"How about Trisha?" Danny mused thoughtfully. "Hearing you scream her name would most certainly disgust me to the point that even punishing you would be revolting."

Paul shook his head sadly, reeling at just how much of an asshole Danny could be. "Fine."

"Now I want you to say that I'm a god."

Paul snorted incredulously and tilted his head to look at Danny standing in the doorway to his room wearing a pair of tight, laced-up black leather pants similar to Paul's. He was barefoot and bare-chested, showing off a lithe, muscular body anyone would find appealing. His face was darkly beautiful, his eyes compelling enough to have Paul wanting to stare into them forever, no matter what sinister things he saw.

Paul squeezed his eyes shut against the rush of longing for a man who could make evil look good any day of the week. "Are you being serious?" he asked in amazement, because that was taking it a little far, even for Danny. "You want me to call you a *god*?"

"Do you really want to fuck with me on an edge game?" Danny growled at him. "Do you want Eve to hear you screaming Trisha before we get to anything interesting? I was hoping to impress her with my biggest, strongest slave and all she is going to remember is you caving from just the thought of a little pain."

Paul took a shuddering breath because he realized Eve was listening. She was in the hallway and could hear everything. The addicting feeling of icy-hot pleasure shimmered over his body and he squeezed his eyes shut tighter and whispered, "You're a god."

"You don't sound enthusiastic about that, you really don't," Danny said in disappointment. "This smart-ass attitude is something more suited to Evie. Maybe she's been giving you bad habits. Maybe I ought to break her instead of you as punishment for corrupting a slave who's supposed to know how to behave."

"You're a god," Paul said louder and more confidently because he knew without a doubt if he had to watch Danny break Eve he would be saying Trisha faster than he could blink. "Really, Danny Boy, I live to worship at your feet."

"I suppose that pleases me," Danny sighed, not sounding overly impressed. "I want you to get on your knees. You look pretty at my feet."

Paul felt the hair on the back of his neck rise in defensiveness. Danny knew that being called pretty would get at him faster than anything. He slid off the bed, falling heavily to the floor, purposely landing hard on his bad knee just for the jolt of pain it

would cause as a distraction against the anger that would probably have him saying something that would get him into more trouble.

Paul just knelt there, his breath ragged with fear and desire, his mind a riot of emotions as he stared at the floor and tried to focus on his bad knee that was humming from the impact instead of the implications of what was really happening.

He heard her first, that soft, graceful way Eve had of walking he knew instinctively. He lifted his head slightly, staring at slim, bare feet and perfect toenails painted with black nail polish and decorated with colored flowers. Eve had always done that. Her toenails had never been just one color. They had always been decorated with whatever design had appealed to her that week.

He couldn't do this while looking at pretty, flower-decorated toenails that reminded him of crawling through windows under moonlight just to be with Eve because being away from her felt like he had lost the ability to breathe. The game was about rules and Paul had once broken them all for Eve. Loving her had given him the ability to defy both of their parents and do things that would have gotten Paul beaten and both of them grounded for life if they'd been caught.

To him, Eve was the opposite of the game. She was the one pillar of defiance in his life that had been made up with nothing but discipline and blind obedience to the point that he got off on it. Merging her with the game meant killing his last grasp on something that had been sweet enough to risk everything.

"You're not going to look?" Danny asked.

Paul shook his head silently.

"Why, Paul Guy?" Eve whispered in a soft voice that created a fresh pulse of desire that stunned him because it was a different one than what he was used to, a feeling he had forgotten. It tasted sweeter, felt purer and was no less intoxicating because of it. "Are you ashamed of me?"

He heard the anxiety in her voice and realized she probably thought he was hiding from seeing her as the woman he had taunted with being broken by Danny. She didn't know that Paul knew it was impossible for anyone to resist being enslaved by Danny if it was something he really felt like doing.

"Never," he said, tilting his head back to stare at her.

He had expected to find Eve in his old football jersey, but was left sucking in a sharp breath of desperate desire, his mind going hazy to the point that Lawyer Paul completely slipped out of reality. Eve's hair was tied into pigtails with vibrant, multicolored silk scarves tied into each one. They blended with wild rivers of thick red hair that flowed over her shoulders and down slender arms. Her eye makeup was dark, making her eyes glitter like brilliant emeralds in the dim lighting of his bedroom. The contrast between pale skin, red hair and redder lips was jaw dropping. He'd never seen a woman achieve that mysterious, forbidden look to anywhere near the degree Eve had. It was made more intense by the black leather pants and matching corset she wore, laced tight, showing off a small waist and full breasts that spilled over the top of it.

There was no lace or silver zippers and her feet were adorned with nail polish, instead of dangerous high heels. It was leather with no adornments save corset laces, colorful, silk scarves hanging loose in her hair and a beautiful collar around her neck that was all black and glittered with multicolored rhinestones.

Paul had played the game since he was eighteen. He had honestly thought he had seen women in every combination of leather, corsets and red lipstick possible. He had never counted on Eve walking into a game that should have never been hers and obliterating the others effortlessly. She was gorgeous and sexy but she was also adorable and sweet. She was every happy, bright color of the rainbow, mixed with the dark, compelling beauty of black leather that was an instant mark of forbidden, sensual things. She had joined the game without surrendering any of the quirky, adorable traits that made her so wonderfully unique. It took Eve twenty minutes to create something that had just ruined miniskirts and high heels forever and Paul's breathing fell shallow as he knelt there by her feet and stared up at her feeling completely captivated.

"Tell me why I'm a god, Paul Guy," Danny demanded knowingly as he looked down at Paul over Eve's shoulder.

"Cause you own a goddess," Paul rasped in a low, husky voice as he felt himself melt under the waves of longing he had for a woman he had given away twice. The first time he had let her go to New York by herself, without anyone to protect her from a city that had nearly crushed the beauty out of her and the second time he had sold her to the devil for something as worthless as desire. He looked away from her, staring back at the floor. "I could never be ashamed of you, Evie Girl. You're radiant to me."

Eve sucked in a quivering breath. "Paul—"

He glanced back up at the abrupt sound of Eve's voice being cut off and found Danny with a long arm wrapped around her waist and a hand clapped over her mouth as he glared down at her furiously. Eve was glaring back at him, her eyes narrowed to dangerous slits of green as she defied Danny with every ounce of her being without saying anything.

"Don't do that to her," Paul growled at him, feeling a surge of anger flow through him.

"What are you going to do about it?" Danny taunted, arching an eyebrow challengingly at him. "I own you. I know you inside and out. I can bring you to your knees anytime I want and you know it. Having a fetish is such a pesky thing."

Paul's body flushed with fear that gave him the rush of desire that was only possible when his fetish was triggered the right way. Danny did own him. He knew how to push Paul's buttons in the right way and literally bring him to his knees. He took a deep breath, glaring at Danny as he whispered, "Don't pick on her. I left the voice mail. Pick on me. I'm begging you."

"Oh, this is sweet," Danny said with a smile as he held on to Eve, who wasn't struggling, but was still glaring up at him furiously. "You would do anything to save Evie, wouldn't you? Too bad for you she belongs to me."

Paul wavered again, searching for sanity though the haze of desire caused by Danny's viciousness that already had him hard and aching. "What do you want?"

"Quite honestly, I want to break Evie," Danny said in a dark voice. "She's the one standing here struggling in my arms while you're on your knees like a good slave. What do you think, Paul Guy, can I come up with something? Pain is out of the question but humiliation works just as well. Maybe I'll make her suck my dick while you watch. That could be fun. Really make her feel like a whore in front of her first love."

"Don't do it," Paul said instantly as he saw the way Eve's eyes widened in horror. "I'll save word before I let you do that to her."

"Safe words are a pain in the ass," Danny said, sounding frustrated as he tightened his arm around Eve. "Then again, you have one, but *she* doesn't. I could just send you to bed and spend the rest of the evening tormenting her to take out my frustration. You've gotten me in a playful mood. I could turn your game into hers."

"What do you want?" Paul repeated. "Tell me what you want and I'll do it."

"Make me an offer."

Paul closed his eyes and rubbed at the back of his neck as the dark, deviant pleasure he loved so much flowed through him. He just hated that he had let it get to the point that it was hurting Eve. Danny became a Dominant because of Paul, now he was using skills he had mastered to control Eve. That was never supposed to happen. It wouldn't have if he hadn't given her up. Danny was as naturally a Dominant as Paul was a submissive. Paul had known when he had given his permission for them to date that eventually he would enslave her—it was part of his nature.

"You can go to the edge when you hurt me. I'll bleed for her," Paul said, looking up at him earnestly. "Really, you can whip the fuck out of me and I promise I won't save word."

"I'm already doing that. Did you forget the little episode in the yard?" Danny asked as his eyebrows rose dubiously. "I want something else. You're taking Evie's punishment, which means you've got to play her game for her. You were the one who made the rule that she can't be hurt, so any sort of pain idea you come up with is pointless. You better be more creative and I'm telling you now, if the next offer doesn't impress me, I'm going to think of something and you do not want to know what I come up with."

"Oh my God," Paul rasped, his eyes rolling back when he realized what Danny was insinuating. It was unbelievable, the clash of desire that rolled over him from the level of Danny's cruelty, yet even still there was a side of him that tried to hold on to sanity because he still had to look at Eve in the morning. "You're not going to do this to me. You cannot be this big of an asshole."

"I don't really take kindly to slaves calling me an asshole," Danny said in a sharp, deadly voice. "You're about to make this game really interesting for all three of us."

"I'll suck your dick," Paul whispered, looking away from Eve. "I'll do it so she doesn't have to."

"You're going to be a whore for her?"

Paul swallowed hard and nodded as he stared at the floor. He knew he had to seize this chance or Danny would come up with something much more humiliating. "Yes, I'll be a whore for her. If you agree, I won't only do it, I'll do it enthusiastically."

"I suppose that works for me. You do suck cock nicely," Danny said, letting go of Eve, who slid weakly out of his arms and fell heavily to her knees. Her breathing was ragged, her eyes glazed as she looked up at Danny in shock. "Don't say a word, Evie Girl. You just sit there and watch like a good pet. If even one word passes those pretty lips your camera is going to stay in your bag permanently."

Paul frowned as he watched Eve's eyes grow wide in alarm. Her breathing became more ragged and Paul got the distinct impression he was being left out of something. Danny was playing them against each other, he knew it for certain, he just couldn't figure out how exactly.

"I don't want you to look at her," Danny said as he took long, swaggering steps over to Paul like a predator. "You're my whore, remember? The only one I want you looking at is me."

His breath rasped out of him when Danny stopped directly in front of him and ran his fingers slowly through his hair in a soft, sensual move that suddenly went from sweet to cruel as his fingers tightened viciously. He jerked Paul's head back painfully so that he was staring up into dark, menacing eyes.

"Fuck," he groaned as his stomach muscles clenched and the tingle of raw desire shimmered over his skin like fire more potently than ever.

"Oh, yeah, I'm going to push all your buttons. I'm going to make sure she sees how much being on your knees for me gets you off," Danny said in a dark voice. "That's the point, right? To make you a whore in front of your first love and whores love cocks. I want you to beg me for it."

The safe word was on the tip of his tongue because he felt himself unraveling. His cock was already hard and aching, his breathing shallow as Danny's unforgiving grip on his hair left him completely exposed. The lust shooting through him had him fighting against letting his eyes close in ecstasy. It was one thing for Eve to see him suck Danny's cock, it was another for her to see how much Paul loved being forced to do it. But it was that very fear making him hard, it was the fact that Danny had him to the point of quitting that was making him ache.

"Please," he whispered instead of Trisha's name, staring up at Danny unwaveringly as his breathing gave away his desperation far more effectively than his pleading. "I need it."

Danny seemed to consider that, his eyes dark and calculating as he stared down at Paul. The pause had him holding his breath and his body tightening. He was going to have to move out of the house tomorrow, because Eve already knew he was a whore.

Even someone with only basic observation skills would be able to tell he was desperate and aching for the high of being forced to pleasure Danny.

A small moan slipped past his lips when Danny reached down and pulled the tie undone to his leather pants. Paul couldn't watch, his head was still forced back so that he was staring into dark, sinister eyes but the crisp sound of leather being untied and the movement of Danny's arm as he undid his pants caused bolts of pleasure to go straight to his own cock.

Paul fell back on his haunches and let his eyes drift closed when Danny used his grip on his hair to force his mouth to him. He was already defeated, completely captive to Danny. He had been broken long ago. To Paul leather cuffs were an indulgence, not a necessity. Even still, knowing Eve was watching had him feeling nineteen again, reminding him of the first time Danny had gotten him on his knees and forced him to do something that was completely horrifying and got him hotter than he thought possible because of it. He had climaxed before Danny that first time, getting off on nothing but the dark, deviant thrill that came from being pushed past his limits of what he considered acceptable when he was forced to do something just because he was a slave. He still entertained that memory as the greatest edge game of his life, one that could have never been repeated once it was over. They could pretend, Danny was as good at a mind fuck as just about anyone, but the real pulse of complete domination that really broke him was gone. Nine years had done away with just about any real edginess between the two of them, they'd done it all, pushed all limits – until now.

Paul moaned as he took him into his mouth, the grip Danny had on his hair forcing him to take him whether he wanted to or not. Paul opened his eyes to look up at Danny whose dark gaze had grown heavy. He reached up and grasped his ass tightly, forcing him forward, swallowing all of Danny's cock in a way only a true masochist could. Paul watched with satisfaction when he groaned loudly, his head jerking back as his entire body clenched in bliss. Danny became suddenly pliant in his hands, his fingers in Paul's hair loosening as he immediately gave in to the rush of pleasure. Their relationship was a two-way street. Paul wasn't the only one with buttons. He knew exactly how to get Danny off. If he was going to be this big of an asshole, that he would actually use Paul's fetish against him while Eve watched, then Paul was going to make damn sure he came quick enough to be embarrassing.

Danny seemed to know it – that Paul was about to push him over the edge as fast as possible. His hand tightened in his hair warningly, taking dominance back easily as he controlled the hard, unrelenting stroke of his cock in and out of his mouth. Paul had to use his own willpower to hide the reaction that being forced and controlled caused. His mind went hazy around the edges as he sucked Danny off. His reaction was every bit as potent as the first time Danny had done this to him and that experience had an ending he didn't want to repeat this time with Eve sitting there watching.

If Danny didn't come quickly, Paul would because his cock was straining against his leather pants, his balls tightening in the desperate need for release and that would

make the issue of him having to move out of the house moot. If Eve saw him coming from sucking Danny off like a whore in front of her—he'd literally die.

Knowing Danny wasn't going to cede dominance, Paul wilted into him, letting his hands run lovingly up Danny's back, tracing the curve of his spine in a soft, sensual caress. For just a moment, he touched Danny like he would touch Eve, worshiping him as a lover instead of a slave.

Danny's response was immediate, his body tensed as a low, surprised gasp slipped past his lips. He opened his eyes to stare down at Paul, his dark eyes swirling with awe and something deeper, an emotion that should never show when one man looks at another. Rather than stiffen in defensiveness, Paul forced his eyes to remain soft and open, seducing Danny with a look as well as a touch.

"Shit," Danny moaned as his hands slipped from Paul's hair to grip at his bare shoulders. His fingers weren't biting. They were soft and gentle. When one hand did come back to his hair it was to run his fingers lightly over the fine hairs at the back of his neck. "Paul Guy," he whispered in anguish, his voice choked as his eyes drifted closed. "Please."

If Paul could have smiled, he would have. Just because he rarely topped from the bottom didn't mean he didn't know how. He had been playing the game longer than Danny. He knew tricks too. Paul was a true submissive, topping from the bottom was pointless for the rush he got from domination, but this was an extenuating circumstance.

He gave Danny what he wanted, what Paul knew he craved with every ounce of his being. He sucked him like a *real* lover instead of a straight man with a hardcore submissive fetish that had allowed him to be a slave to a man only because it created its own special form of humiliation that never went away.

Danny coming in his mouth tasted sweeter than he had ever remembered just because he had won and for once it was something he enjoyed doing. When he finally released him he looked up at Danny, who was wilted in front of him, his fingers clutching at his shoulders. He waited until Danny blinked sated, lazy eyes open. Paul licked his lips pointedly as he smiled. "Enthusiastic enough?"

Danny's sated, love-clouded gaze darkened as he stared down at Paul, making it obvious he understood what he had done. Paul had used him and that was something no Dominant took kindly to.

"Much," Danny said menacingly, returning Paul's dark smile with one of his own. "You performed nicely. Now I want you to crawl over to Evie like a good slave and kiss her."

Paul felt himself pale as he stared up at Danny in disbelief. "What?"

"Having her see that you're my whore isn't enough," Danny said as his dark smile broadened. "I want her to *taste* it."

Paul's eyes drifted closed as he reeled over the fresh onslaught of desire. He was going to make Eve taste him on Paul. That was so appalling, he could barely think

against the rush of something so cruel. He would have been better off just being a whore and coming from Danny's cock in his mouth than having to kiss Eve for the first time since the day she had left with the taste of Danny on his tongue.

Danny must have sensed his hesitance, his horror that had him wanting to safe word no matter how hard the cruelty made his dick because he tilted his head, looking to where Eve was sitting. "Do you want to taste me on him?"

"Yes," Eve whispered in a breathless rush.

"Beg me, Evie Girl. Beg for the privilege of tasting me."

"Please, Master," Eve said instantly, her voice low and raspy in a way that sent shivers down Paul's spine. "Let me taste you. I'll do anything."

Paul frowned, forgetting his fear of Danny and leaned over to stare at Eve in shock. Her eyes were wide and glazed, her cheeks flushed as she met Paul's eyes in wild desperation, silently begging him to agree. Her chest was heaving, causing her breasts to strain against her leather corset with each raspy breath and Paul could only gape at her in amazement.

"Please," she whispered again, her gaze still trained on Paul as they stared at each other across his bedroom from their positions on their knees making it obvious she was speaking to him instead of Danny. "I feel like I'm dying."

Danny snorted. "Then you crawl to him if you need it that badly."

Paul watched in stunned astonishment as Eve crawled over to him, doing it in a way that caused his whole body to tighten in anticipation. Eve could crawl across the floor in a way that made it obvious she would never be a real submissive. She did it like a greedy seductress instead of a broken slave trained to obey. She may follow the rules, but only if they suited her. Eve was made to top from the bottom, so much so that Paul got the feeling even Danny had no way of handling her.

Paul was hot and aching before she got to him, feeling like he was dying with her. His own breathing became harsh and labored as Eve stopped in front of him and then leaned forward, tangling her slim fingers into Paul's hair and pulling him to her. His lips parted in a silent sigh of surprise as his cock jerked in reaction to her seduction.

He was lost even before their lips met with a breathy moan that he had no way of knowing was his or hers because they suddenly became one person after so many years apart. Eve's full lips conquered his, her tongue sliding sensually into his mouth, sweeping in hungrily. The way she melted into him, her arms wrapping around his neck, her chest arching into his as she forced him to swallow her strangled moan of desire told him she wasn't just accepting of Danny's taste on him, she loved it in a way that someone with truly dark desires would recognize instantly.

"You're a voyeur," he gasped against her lips as he fought against the lust that had him wanting to do much more than kiss her. "You like to watch men...*fucking*, are you kidding me?"

"Shut up, Paul Guy." Eve tangled her fingers in his hair, jerking his head back in a way that had him groaning and arching into her obediently. "I want you to let me taste."

Paul parted to her again, their moans mingling when her tongue swept into his mouth in a soft, feminine gesture he had missed so profoundly he found himself falling forward under the force of it. He cupped her face, his tongue following Eve's until he was suddenly drowning in her. His large body draped over hers at Danny's feet on the wooden floor and he gasped from the sensation of having Eve beneath him again. Her legs wrapped around his waist and he ground himself into her, craving her in a way he had never experienced before. Loving her and losing her had made the want between them a thousand times more intense. He wanted to fuck her right there. He was completely heedless of Danny's ominous presence over them he burned for her that badly.

"I'm dying." Eve moaned, her head lolling to the side on the wooden floor so that her face was hidden in rainbow-colored silk and thick red hair. "Help me."

Paul buried his face into the soft curve of her neck as he searched for sanity, licking at smooth, pale skin and inhaling the intoxicating scent of flower shampoo and dark, forbidden perfume. He reminded himself of Danny and all it did was make him ache more, the knowledge that he and Eve were probably trapping themselves in their own web without realizing it.

Eve arched into him desperately. "Please."

"Okay." Paul forgot Danny as he placed a soft kiss against the base of her throat where her heartbeat was thumping erratically. He turned away from the addicting taste of Eve's skin just long enough to suck on two of his fingers. He got them wet, then slid his hand past the waistline of her leather pants and got the first feel of what had her thrashing beneath him. "Oh, fuck, Evie," he groaned as he crumpled into her.

He had never felt a woman this wet, never had one so needy and desperate that she was literally mindless beneath him. The fact that it was Eve had him forcing his hips firmly against hers, leaving little room for his hand to move, but he pushed two fingers into her anyway. He groaned when Eve screamed, her whole body jerking from just his hand on her. He let his fingers fuck her tight, hot pussy in a way that had his cock throbbing in jealousy, curving them upward to touch the spot inside her he wished he had known about the last time they'd done this.

Eve started gasping and moaning as she pushed her hips into his hand spastically, rutting into him as she helped him get her off. Her whole body was wound up so tightly she was literally quivering beneath him as his fingers moved inside her. Paul felt like he was feeling it with her because he knew from experience the insane high that came from mixing pleasure with a fetish that shut down your brain to the point one would do anything to trigger it.

What the hell was vanilla sex next to this?

Paul leaned down and kissed her again, his tongue sliding past her lips that had parted in a low, breathy moan. Eve reacted immediately, her whole body tensing around him. Her head jerked back, breaking the kiss with a scream as he felt her start to spasm around his fingers. Paul groaned, biting his tongue as he leaned down and hid in her hair, fighting his body that wanted to come with her. He was literally shaking over her, his body clenching to the sounds of her long, surrendering moans. If he didn't love pain as much as he did, he would have given in and just completely lost it, because he had never been so painfully hard.

When the wave finally passed, Eve became languid, her arms slipping from around his neck to fall limply at her sides, her legs fell to the floor heavily. She was sprawled out wantonly beneath him as her body shook from little aftershocks of bliss. Paul still stroked her softly, focusing on the small moans of pleasure Eve made rather than his body that was tight with the agony of his own need for release.

"Wow," Danny said lazily as the click of a lighter sounded above them. "You made her a much bigger whore than I would have. That was impressive, Paul Guy."

Paul's body actually jerked from the force of how quickly his muscles tensed in fury. "Call her a whore again and I'll safe word you, motherfucker," he growled at him.

"Go ahead," Danny said carelessly over the sound of him blowing out smoke. "I just got two whores for the price of one. I'm really pleased with myself. I could go to bed happy."

Paul's breath became shallow in an odd combination of fury and desire as he fought a horrible battle with himself. When Eve's hand came up to stroke the back of his neck lovingly he lifted his eyes to her, expecting to see horror at the realization that Danny had manipulated her into being exactly what Paul had tried to prevent. Instead he found her eyes glazed in adoration.

"You gave me what was *by far* the best orgasm of my life," she said in a soft, sated voice as she gave him a lazy smile that showed dimples in both flushed cheeks. "Making me a whore was a compliment. Don't safe word. Let him torment you some more – maybe he'll learn something."

Paul's eyes grew wide as he stared down at her, a smile tugging at his lips as he admired her. "Do you know what topping from the bottom means?"

She shook her head, her smile becoming bemused. "No, what does it mean?"

"It means you're incredible," he said in awe as waves of desire for her washed over him. He reeled over the fact that she had not only swept away any insult from Danny that should have had her feeling completely degraded and dirty, but had done it in a way that knocked him to his knees. "I mean, really, that's a special talent."

"Does it turn you on?"

"Fuck, yes," Paul moaned as he stared down at her longingly. "I have never wanted *anyone* like I want you right now."

"Don't even think about," Danny growled above them, his voice razor sharp and icy in a way that meant he was not playing a role or acting. "You still owe me blood—lots of it."

Paul groaned, finding for the first time since he had discovered the special thrill that was the BDSM world, the idea of being abused wasn't that appealing. He wanted to stay there on the floor and make love to Eve, not bleed for Danny. If she saw what happened to him when Danny whipped him, she could easily lose the adoring, soft-eyed look of admiration she was giving him now.

Very few could handle a full-fledged masochist and Danny was truly pissed, which usually allowed him to tap his inner sadist that was hard to get to most days. If it weren't for Eve, Paul would be positively thrilled with his good luck. Not safe wording was going to leave the two of them giving her a crash course in some of the more hardcore sides of BDSM and Paul wasn't sure if she could handle it.

Paul closed his eyes in misery. "I should probably safe word."

"Do it," Danny taunted in a low, furious voice. "I won't be surprised. Your father is right. You're a pansy that could have never been a Marine. You just don't have what it takes."

Icy-hot fury rolled over Paul and he pushed up off Eve, resting all his body weight on his arms as he tilted his head to stare back at Danny in shock. He was actually stunned speechless, unable to believe he had struck that far below the belt.

"I've always wanted to know," Danny started as he took a long, slow drag off his cigarette and let the smoke waft slowly past his lips, making him look wholly evil. "Did you play college ball hoping something like that knee injury would happen? Did you use football glory and books to hide your fear of having to put your life on the line for our country? You can tell me. I won't judge you. I know we can't all be heroes like your brothers. Safe word and neither Evie nor I will tell your father that you're a pussy who never learned how to take the pain."

Paul's breath rasped out of him and even the rush of desire Danny's cruelty caused faded to the red haze of fury that washed through him. "You know I can take the pain."

"No, I don't," Danny argued, sounding completely genuine. "All I know is that you suck cock sweetly and look like a pretty submissive when you're on your knees."

"You win. I won't safe word," Paul said as he got to his feet, leaving Eve lying there gaping up at both of them in horror. "You want to be an asshole, that works for me. You whip me and I'll take it and we'll see which one of us Evie gets wetter for because of it."

"I'm changing the rules," Danny said, his eyes still narrowed at Paul challengingly. "You don't deserve restraints. I'm making you stand on your feet without any help from those leather cuffs you love so much."

Paul snorted. "Fine."

"You fall and it's game over permanently. I will never let you stick your dick in Evie and I will never let her watch us fucking," Danny said as his breathing became low and furious, like that of a deadly animal stalking prey. "She offered to sell me her soul

to see you beneath me. That's how much it means to her. You fall and you will be killing her voyeurism fetish faster than you can scream vanilla ice cream and I'm sure you know how addicting these fetishes can be."

"That's not fair!" Eve gasped, sitting up on the floor to glare up at Danny. "Why are you hurting me just because you two are playing some sort of cockfight, 'who can make Evie wetter' game?"

"I won't fall," Paul said, not taking his eyes off Danny as they stood there in a battle of wills Paul had no intention of losing. Eve had always been the one to make him break the rules and this time was no different. He could top from the bottom and get off on it just as easily as being dominated completely. "There is no way he is bringing me to my knees."

"What if he does?" Eve whispered breathlessly. "He *usually* keeps his promises."

"I won't fall," Paul repeated as he turned to stare down at Eve. He gave her a slow, confident smile he knew would get his point across. "I promise that he can't bring me to my knees and there is no usually for me. When I make you a promise, I will never break it."

Eve sucked in a quivering breath as she stared up at him with eyes that were suddenly swimming pools of green. "I believe you," she whispered, her eyes glazed in a way that told him she was thinking back to the last time he made her a promise he had yet to break. "Always."

Chapter Thirteen

"Why is he making you tie me up?" Eve asked as she stared up at Paul, who was on his hands and knees above her on Danny's bed. He stared at the headboard as he tied down her arms that were attached together with fleece-lined cuffs connected with a single heart-shaped lock Danny held the key to. She noticed Paul's hands were shaking as he secured her arms above her head in a way that would be impossible for her to break free. "Paul Guy."

"Are you comfortable?" Paul asked rather than answer her question as he worked at arranging the pillows behind her head.

"Sure," Eve said, completely heedless of her hands tied above her head as she glared at Paul. "I want you to answer my question."

Paul ran a hand through his hair and looked away from her, staring over his shoulder at Danny who was standing at the foot of the bed with a long, black bullwhip draped around his neck. "Why don't you ask him?"

"Cause I'm asking you."

Paul shrugged. "If you moved or got too close because you couldn't take it, he could hit you instead of me."

"And a single-tailed whip hurts like a motherfucker," Danny added, looking down at her stretched out on his bed with her hands high above her. His gaze ran over her body, making it obvious he enjoyed her being tied up. "You do not *ever* want to find out what bleeding from it feels like. Pretty pets aren't supposed to bleed for their Masters, only worthless slaves that deserve to be beaten like animals get that."

Eve felt all the hair on the back of her neck stand on end and she would have lashed out at him if she hadn't seen the way Paul's eyes rolled back as he tilted his head away from her with a shuddering breath. He was trying to hide how much it excited him, the idea of being beaten and while a side of Eve recoiled at him actually getting off on that, she kept it to herself.

"Fine," she said tiredly as she brought one foot up, brushing it against Paul's thigh softly as she glared at Danny, who she was certain had fallen out of character and was being a legitimate asshole rather than a mock one playing a role in a game Paul enjoyed. "Then let's get this game over with, because mine is next. Evie games have happy endings, not pain and bloodshed." Eve saw Paul smile at that but she turned to look at Danny challengingly. "Do you promise me that if Paul stays on his feet we'll have a happy ending?"

Danny nodded. "I promise if he somehow manages to stay on his feet, we'll have a happy ending, but there is quite a big 'if' there. Topping from the bottom doesn't

impress me like it does Paul Guy. It actually pisses me off and both of you are going to learn that pissing your Master off is a bad plan."

"Don't worry about it," Paul put in instantly. "His arm will tire out before he knocks me off my feet."

"I've spent hundreds and hundreds of hours practicing with a single-tailed whip," Danny said warningly. "It takes a *really* long time for my arm to tire out."

"Why is that, Danny Boy?" Paul asked, raising his eyebrows curiously. "Anyone who spent that much time practicing, you'd almost have to wonder if they cracked a whip professionally."

"Okay, come here," Danny said, cocking his finger toward Paul and then gesturing to the spot in front of him. "Come stand in front of me before your mouth pisses me off any more than it already has."

"Fine." Paul crawled off the bed and stood at the foot of it in front of Danny. He turned to face Eve, his back proud and straight. "Go crazy."

"You do realize you're going to have to wait until your wedding night to do Trisha again."

"Awesome," Paul said with a smile that appeared genuine. "I was born to live on the edge. Break every rule, I'll only love you for it."

Danny shook his head as he reached into his pocket, pulling out two small locks and asked Eve offhandedly, "What do you think of your boy scout now?"

"I think he's a stud," Eve whispered in a dazed voice as she looked up at Paul. Her eyes grew wider as she took in two hundred and thirty pounds of pure muscle wearing only a pair of black leather pants, thick leather cuffs on his wrists and a silver spiked dog collar around his neck. Combined they put what was quite possibly the world's finest specimen of male beauty on display. "Really, Paul Guy, you can be my slave any day of the week."

Paul smiled, his blue eyes molten, making her shiver in anticipation. "Use me and abuse me, Evie Girl, for you I'll behave."

"Shut up," Danny said as he reached over and grabbed one of Paul's wrists. "You're not allowed to talk anymore. Your mouth has already done enough damage. I'm seriously pissed off at you now. That was really stupid on an edge game. I have no idea how you got a law degree."

"I thought you weren't going to restrain him?" Eve asked when she saw Danny put a lock on one of his cuffs.

"Not in a way that's helpful to him." Danny brought Paul's right arm up and locked the cuff on his wrist to a large silver ring on the side of his dog collar. He grabbed Paul's left wrist next, attaching it to the matching ring on the other side of his collar with another lock and then pocketed the keys to his restraints the same as he'd done with Eve's. "You try staying on your feet when you got no leverage."

Eve gasped as she studied Paul standing there, showing off enormous, muscular arms that were beautiful when on display like that. He laced his fingers together behind his head, looking completely content with being restrained in such a barbaric way. She half wanted to get her camera, because Paul really was gorgeous with his wrists chained to his dog collar. Artistically, it was a beautiful sight. She would have never thought it, but he made being a slave look really good. Yet even such artistic beauty faded into the background when she realized how hard it would be to stay on his feet when he didn't have his arms to balance him.

"You're really going to try to knock him off his feet," Eve whispered in horror. "This isn't a game to you anymore."

"I'm the Master," Danny said darkly as he pulled the whip from behind his neck slowly, making it look strangely alive. "I always win."

"Not always," Paul said as he arched an eyebrow at Eve. "So don't freak out or panic, just know that I wouldn't promise you something unless I knew I could do it."

"I told you to shut up," Danny growled at him. "That goes for both of you. Since you two are intent on playing as a team, we'll make it all for one. The next word out of either of you will mean you're both getting gagged. Paul bites his tongue to keep quiet. I don't know what you're going to do, Evie, but you better figure it out, because it'll be real hard for Paul to safe word if your smart mouth gets something harsher than my cock shoved down his throat."

Eve gasped in horror, jerking at her arms that were tied to the headboard and realized with sinking dread that they were both powerless to Danny. She couldn't even speak for Paul. If she did, they'd really be at Danny's mercy. He could hurt Paul as badly as he wanted without even the comfort of a safe word. She felt tears sting her eyes and looked helplessly to Paul, knowing he would see she was panicked. The two of them had spent their entire childhood in love, they could communicate for hours without talking. Just because it had been ten years since they'd done it didn't mean they had forgotten how. Her eyes widened in a silent plea. Forget her game, she wanted him to safe word now.

Paul stared back at her unwaveringly. His face was relaxed and confident, his angelic eyes clouded with desire in a way that told her he was very intent on making sure they had a happy ending.

He glanced sideways when Danny stepped away from him and then stared intently at Eve once more as he mouthed, *I promise*.

Eve swallowed hard past the urge to cry and nodded in acceptance. Somehow, she was going to have to watch this and keep quiet. Danny must have sensed they were communicating without talking because he lashed out, a deafening crack sounding the air as Paul sucked in a surprised gasp and lurched forward from the strike. That was terrifying and had Eve locking her jaw against screaming at Danny to stop. Paul was huge, if a single lash had forced him forward, it had to have been agonizing. His eyes widened in genuine shock and he turned sideways to look back at Danny.

"Did you think I was going to wait to make you bleed?" Danny asked in a low, evil voice that told Eve he really was the devil. "That's what you real masochists like, right? Just jumping right into hell rather than building up to it."

Paul raised his eyebrows as he straightened back around and then widened his stance. Eve found herself gaping at him, because the look he had on his face was like a child who had just found out Christmas had come early. Danny's viciousness had surprised him, but rather than the bubbling terror Eve felt building inside her, Paul looked thrilled. Excitement and delight pulsed off him so potently Eve almost found herself being happy for him.

When the second violent crack broke the silence in the room, Paul's right shoulder twitched in reaction and his eyes rolled back in pleasure. He was suddenly like a brick wall, making it obvious he had lost his footing the first time because he had been surprised, but now he was unmovable. He appeared almost superhuman when another crack rent the air and this time his left shoulder twitched from the cutting impact.

Danny lashed out again, his arm muscles straining from the effort of flipping the whip forward and all he got for the effort was a low, raspy gasp of pleasure from Paul when the biting lash actually forced him to lean forward. A lesser man might have lost his footing with his arms tied behind his head, but Paul just righted himself effortlessly as he lifted his left shoulder invitingly as if urging Danny to hit him there next. Taking the silent suggestion, Danny sent the whip lashing out against his left shoulder. Paul moaned before his jaw locked in a way that told Eve he had bitten his tongue rather than beg for more.

Danny shook his head as he stared at him with dark, menacing eyes. "Even you have to get tired eventually. If I have to get you high on endorphins to do it, then fine."

Eve felt her body jerk in shock when Danny lashed out once more, using every bit of his strength to send the whip crashing against Paul's back. He was a devil with a vendetta, his eyes pulsing in fury, his arm straining with every furious lash against Paul's back. In the dim lighting of the room, the whip really did look alive in his hands, striking out like a black viper that was unforgiving and wholly evil. There was a dark magnificence to the way Danny moved. He was an artist with the whip and it was obvious he hadn't been lying when he said he had spent hundreds of hours practicing. His body wasn't the solid wall of muscle Paul's was but there was no question that Danny was beautifully fit. Eve often wondered how he had gotten those cut arms and ripped abs when he never exercised, but now she realized he did exercise. He got gorgeous being the devil and learning to master an instrument of pain.

There wasn't one lash that wasn't sent at Paul with anything less than sheer determination to knock him off his feet, but he never lost his footing. No matter how far forward the impact forced his upper body, his feet remained where they were planted. Eve found herself getting breathless as she watched, her eyes running hungrily over Paul, with those beautiful arms tied behind his head, putting them nicely on display. The broad expanse of his chest started heaving after a while, but it was only because he had become winded with profound pleasure. The sweat made his body glisten under

the dim lighting in Danny's room. His tan skin was so beautiful when it shined like that and she was wet and aching to feel his slick, hard body moving over her. She could see the long, thick outline of his hard cock through his leather pants and her mouth watered for it. It took a special breed of man to get a hard-on from pain and Eve wanted one.

Time ceased to matter to her, she was sucked into the game as easily as Danny and Paul had been. She got more desperate the longer she watched the dark, surreal beauty of a devil punishing an angel and both of them getting hard and turned-on by it. Forget her camera, she didn't want to watch this through a lens. She didn't even want to blink for a moment. Even the terrible things, like the specks of blood decorating Paul's sides and splattered onto Danny's chest, only added to the beauty of it. She tried to memorize the image of Paul's face etched in ecstasy as a deadly viper lashed out at him because that was an image that needed to be painted.

Even when Paul started wavering under the onslaught she was hypnotized by the way his breathing grew more labored as the powerful lashes started forcing him to put one foot forward to stay on his feet. Danny was breaking down the unmovable wall of Paul, but Eve could tell he was suffering for it. He was breathing heavily too. His dark, olive skin was glimmering with sweat far more so than Paul's was. It ran down from his temples, leaving his hair slicked back with it when he ran a hand through the dark strands distractedly. The muscles of his arm were flexing more violently, making it obvious he was getting tired. Paul was wavering, but Danny was the one working and Eve realized Paul may have very likely been right—Danny's arm was going to tire out before Paul fell to his knees.

Eve stared at the clock in the corner, seeing that Danny had been lashing at Paul for nearly an hour. She turned back to stare at Danny over Paul's shoulders with wide eyes as she found a sliver of clarity to pull her out of the dream, his words ringing in her mind that Paul would let him beat him to death and get off on it until his last breath.

Danny actually stumbled forward when he met her eyes, the whip catching Paul's shoulder, tearing skin before Eve's eyes. Danny growled, dropping the whip as he strode over to Paul and fisted his hand in his hair, jerking his head back, which had to be painful when his arms were tied like they were and his shoulder was bleeding right in the crease where it was bent at the awkward angle.

"Safe word," Danny growled furiously. "Do it!"

"Bite me," Paul said, his voice heavy with desire and lazy exhaustion most people only got after really good sex. "You're the sadist I never knew I loved. I would have topped from the bottom every time if I knew I got this."

"You're not going to quit, are you?" Danny whispered in disbelief. "You're going to stand there until you bleed to death."

"I promised Evie."

"Fucking freak," Danny said, his voice cracking in anguish as he tightened his hold on Paul's hair. "Open your eyes and look at me."

Paul's eyes blinked open and Eve watched the shadow of horror wash over Danny's features as he stared into Paul's eyes. His dark eyes shimmered in the dim light of his bedroom and Eve watched tears roll down his cheek when he closed his eyes in agony.

"You win," he whispered as he wiped at his cheeks hastily and then stuck his hand into his pocket. "Are you happy?"

"Ecstatic," Paul said as Danny reached up and unlocked his right arm. It fell to Paul's side heavily the moment it was free and he turned to look at Danny as he worked on his other arm. "Really, I love you, Danny Boy. This was the best edge game ever and now you have to give Evie her happy ending."

"Unbelievable, I've got to beat the shit out of you to get you to love me." Danny shook his head as he unlocked Paul's other cuff. "Come here." He stepped forward and wrapped one long arm around Paul's chest. "I need you to get on your knees. Rest your forehead against the bed until I can get the medical kit."

Eve watched both Paul and Danny fall weakly to their knees. When Danny pushed Paul's forehead against the bed Paul mumbled, "Please tell me I need stitches."

"Lots of them," Danny said in disgust. "Lucky you."

"Wow," Paul said in the same sated voice. "This is the best wedding present you could have come up with. I love you."

"You mentioned that," Danny said bitterly as he stood.

Eve screamed when she saw him and her whole body lurched forward, straining against the restraints on her arms. Danny's entire chest was now covered in Paul's blood.

Danny winced at the sound of it and he stopped for a moment to squeeze his eyes shut in anguish. "Please don't choose now to freak out," he whispered pleadingly. "I need you to help me."

"Help you what?" Eve panted as Danny crawled onto the bed, reaching into his pocket as he did so. "Take him to the hospital? What are we going to tell them? That it's okay, he made a promise he would stay on his feet?"

"We don't need to take him to the hospital," Danny said in a soft voice as he reached up and unlocked the cuffs holding Eve's arms together. "I know how to do stitches. I can patch him up now and he'll go to the doctor tomorrow."

"What is he going to tell the doctor tomorrow?" Eve asked in a panic as her own arms fell down heavily, aching from the strain on them. "I can't think of a single excuse that won't land you in jail."

"He won't go to jail," Paul said from his spot kneeling at the foot of the bed. "Jason will just admire his handiwork. Really, Danny Boy, he's going to be impressed, I can tell. He'll be calling you for a date when he finds out you're this frisky."

"We have a doctor who's BDSM friendly," Danny said as a blush stained his cheeks.

"Yeah, really friendly," Paul said with a laugh. "I'm going to hear it again about you retiring."

"Shut up," Danny said as he rolled off the bed and looked down at himself in revulsion. "Eve, can you go into my bathroom? I have a large medical kit in the cabinet. Grab that, some towels and alcohol."

"Oh, I love alcohol," Paul whispered breathlessly.

Eve paused, sitting on the edge of the bed to look up at Danny with wide eyes.

Danny winced, shooting her an embarrassed look. "This is sort of the bonus round of the game for Paul Guy."

"I guess I don't need to ask where you learned how to do stitches," Eve said as she shook her head and walked toward his bathroom, making a deliberate attempt not to look at Paul's back. "Why can't I fall in love with normal men?" she mumbled to herself as she found the medical kit Danny was talking about, one far larger than a normal person would have. She grabbed the alcohol and several towels and walked back out into the bedroom to find Danny leaning over Paul, running fingers through his hair that was wet with sweat. He was whispering in his ear lovingly and only glanced up when Eve stopped in front of them. "Your supplies, Doctor."

"Lay out the towel," Danny said as he went back to stroking Paul's hair. "I don't want to let him go. He's buzzing on endorphins."

"What does that mean?" Eve asked as she fell down to her knees next to them and spread out a towel. "You said that before, what do endorphins do?"

"They're released from massive amounts of pain. They work on his brain just like morphine and make him euphoric," Danny explained clinically. When Eve's head shot up, her eyebrows raised curiously, he huffed in exasperation. "He's stoned."

"Legitimately stoned?"

"Legitimately stoned," Danny agreed as he ran his fingers through Paul's hair and tugged his head back. "Look at your girlfriend."

Eve leaned in, staring at Paul's eyes, finding that they were dilated and glazed in a way that until that moment she thought could only happen from really good drugs. She gave a tight nod as she went back to spread out the towel and arrange the medical kit and alcohol next to it.

"So, he's addicted to pain?" Eve asked in a low, panicked voice. "This is a problem."

"I suppose," Danny admitted reluctantly. "I mean, anyone can get an endorphin high from pain, but it's usually pointless because the agony makes us too miserable to enjoy it."

"But if you enjoyed pain—"

"Then it makes an endorphin high the highlight of a really fun game," Danny finished for her as he ran his arm up Paul's arm. "Okay, lie down and I'll fix your back."

Eve stood and watched Paul stretch out lazily on the towel, resting his cheek on his folded arms contentedly. She stared down at his back then, finding it covered in bleeding lashes that were hard to see from all the blood.

"I can see why you wouldn't want him to do this with strangers," Eve mumbled as Danny finally got up to go the bathroom. He wet a towel and used it to clean off his chest and arms, seeming unconcerned with the blood. "He doesn't let other people make him bleed, does he? He doesn't end up on a towel with his back torn up for someone else?"

"God, no," Danny said, still working on getting the blood off him with harsh motions that made it seem as if he was punishing himself now. "He hasn't been with any other Master but me since he was twenty-two and I've been there for any bad punishment since he was nineteen. I never let anyone provide aftercare, even the best-trained Dommies weren't allowed to touch him if they'd broken the skin. He threatens on a regular basis, but I'd beat the shit out of him before I let him expose himself to HIV or something else. He's not a boy scout, Evie. He'd take the risk. He just has an asshole Master who won't let him. I showed you my tests and Paul gets them every six months with me, so don't freak. He's clean. The only other one he messes with is Trisha and she hadn't had a lover in three years before they hooked up."

Eve felt tears roll down her cheeks when Danny started washing his shaking hands with harsh, furious movement that betrayed self-loathing. "I don't think you're an asshole."

"You should," Danny said as he left the sink running and brushed past Eve. "Turn that off for me, please."

Eve walked into the bathroom and flipped off the sink, knowing Danny didn't want to touch it because he had to stitch up Paul's back. His obsession with cleanliness suddenly made much more sense. Someone who had to take responsibility for a person with Paul's condition had to be exceedingly clean. Eve realized Danny had been doing this since he was nineteen when the most Eve had to worry about was her next big test in college.

"Shit," Danny whispered in anguish as he got down on his knees and stared at Paul's back with wide, horrified eyes. "Why didn't I just let you safe word and fuck Evie?"

"Cause you're awesome," Paul offered with a sated smile. "Don't forget, you promised a happy ending. I heard you. You said if I stayed on my feet we'd make Evie happy."

"It's okay if we don't," Eve said as she got down on her knees next to Danny and opened the alcohol bottle for him, knowing he wouldn't want to touch the lid. "Do you want me to do it?"

Danny nodded, still staring at Paul's back with dark, horrified eyes as if not knowing where to start. "Yes, please."

Eve winced as she stared down at his back that was covered with deep, open wounds and then looked at the bottle of alcohol in her hand with trepidation. "Paul Guy, this might—"

"Don't even waste your breath," Danny said with a shake of his head. "That's pointless."

Eve realized he was right and went ahead and poured the alcohol over Paul's back. He moaned in pleasure, his hips arching against the towel, making Eve feel like she had just given him the world as she poured alcohol over his back, being careful to spread it evenly so that all the wounds were cleaned. Blood and alcohol rolled off his back onto the towel and Eve had the off thought that it was a very good thing they had hardwood floors. With the alcohol washing away the blood, Eve saw that most of the injuries were on the broad expanse of his shoulders. The curves in his waist, his neck and most of his lower back were free of injury.

"Why not spread the love a little?" Eve asked curiously as she leaned in closer, trying to get the cut on his shoulder clean. "Wouldn't it be easier if you didn't just pick on these spots?"

"You don't want to hit his kidneys or anything internal that's sensitive to injury," Danny said, reaching into the medical box Eve had opened for him and pulling on rubber gloves. "That's bad form. Only an amateur would do that."

"And you're not an amateur," Eve mumbled, still staring at Paul's back. It took real skill to whip him in a way that didn't cause anything but superficial wounds. "You're a professional."

"Yes," Danny said as he worked at threading a large, curved metal needle. "When I was young, I thought it would be fun to grow up and be a professional asshole. It worked out nicely."

"You always do that," Eve said darkly. "Whenever you have to talk about something that upsets you, you get sarcastic."

"What do you want me to say, Evie?" Danny asked as he leaned over Paul, tilting his head once more and studying his back as if deciding what to stitch up first. "You want me to tell you that Paul Guy is so famous in the BDSM world for being a complete freak of nature that other submissives would literally beg his Master to dominate them in hopes of getting their pain tolerance to the point that they could just lie on a towel happily while someone poured alcohol over their back that had just been torn to shreds? This is going to scar, I just know it. I don't think I can fix it this time, Paul Guy."

"You'll fix it," Paul said confidently.

"This is pretty bad," Danny said in anguish. "Maybe we should call Jason now."

"Happy ending," Paul reminded him. "You promised."

"And when you promise something you have to keep it," Eve said softly realizing now why Paul kept reminding him. "Or his trust will be ruined."

"That's the ticket," Danny said as he started stitching one of the largest wounds on Paul's back. "Hopefully stitches aren't a buzzkill for you. That'd be very inconvenient."

Actually, they were a huge buzzkill. Eve thought she might get ill if she had to keep watching Danny threading that needle in and out of Paul's flesh. So she stopped watching and stretched out next to Paul instead, reaching over to stroke his hair as she studied his face a breath away from hers. He was sighing contently, his eyes closed lazily and it was obvious he was enjoying the stitches as much as her fingers in his hair.

"I love you," she whispered after several long, quiet minutes while Danny worked diligently at fixing the damage he caused.

Paul's eyes blinked open. They were darker than usual, his pupils still extremely dilated. "I love you too," he said with a soft, adoring smile. "I've missed you."

She smiled back at him as tears pooled in her eyes, making him a watery blur. "Ditto."

"You don't hate me?" he asked curiously. "You don't think I'm a freak?"

"Oh, I think you're a freak," Eve said with a broken laugh. "But I could never hate you."

"That works," he said, his eyes drifting closed again.

Chapter Fourteen

Eve let her eyes close with him as she continued to stroke his hair, savoring the feeling of it against her fingers again. As Danny worked on stitching his back up, Eve lay there in the hazy realm between consciousness and sleep and replayed the romance that had taken up her entire childhood. There had never been anyone other than Paul. He had been her entire love life from the point in seventh grade when he first kissed her, until her pestering after over two years of fooling around got him to agree to actually fuck her. That had left her with a sweet, beautiful football player for a lover from ninth grade all the way until she had left for New York.

Eve was fairly certain Paul had never known how Eve had suffered for having him to herself through their high school career. Pretty cheerleaders and rich, spoiled socialites never understood why the most handsome, most talented player on their football team wanted an eccentric artist instead of one of them. They had done everything in their power to get Eve to give him up, using sheer malice and cruelty only teenage girls were capable of and Eve had never told Paul. It would have upset him terribly.

Paul had never noticed he was popular in high school, never bothered to pay attention to the fact that he had been every bit as desired as Danny. Eve thought it was because he was down to earth, which made him sweet and endearing, but she realized now it had been something much deeper than that. He had always thought he was worthless. Even when his good looks and popularity were in front of his face, he never appeared interested in other girls who lavished attention on him. Paul was loyal to a fault. All the elements that made Paul long to be a slave to others had always been there, she had just never noticed. Just like his strangely stoic acceptance of pain. Whenever Eve found bruises on him from his father or football, he had blown off her concern in such a way that made it obvious he really hadn't minded. She thought that meant he was tough. That assumption was probably the grandest understatement she had ever made in her life. The Marines had really missed the chance of a lifetime by refusing him, even with a permanent knee injury.

Eve didn't blink awake until Danny startled both of them by getting up and pulling the rubber gloves he was wearing off. He went to wash his hands and Eve saw Paul's body tighten. His breathing fell shallow and he opened his eyes to stare at Eve. They were stormy with arousal, but she could see hesitation in them too.

"How much of a voyeur are you?" he whispered as he studied Eve intently.

Eve felt a blush stain her cheeks. "I didn't know I was voyeur until I saw you two. You're both beautiful. Putting you together appeals to my artist mind, the similarities and the contradictions. It's magnificent."

Paul frowned, making it obvious he was still out of it and having a hard time putting what she was saying together.

"She's a hardcore voyeur," Danny put in as he came out of the bathroom. "Worst I've ever seen."

"That's a convenient development," Paul said, his voice wispy as he raised his eyebrows.

"I'm going to put more alcohol on your back," Danny said as he fell down on his knees on the other side of Paul. "You can take a shower later."

Eve rolled onto her side, resting her cheek on her hand as she watched Danny use a fresh bottle of alcohol to clean off Paul's back. She had to admit, it looked much better with the stitches. It wasn't as big of a tragedy as she had originally suspected. Most of the marks were angry red welts, but Eve realized Paul had already desensitized her. If she had looked at anyone else's back decorated with strips of stitched-up wounds and deep, red welts she would have been horrified.

"You guys must buy lots of alcohol," Eve mumbled as she watched Danny work at cleaning off Paul's back to the point that any trace of blood was gone.

"We don't do this that much," Danny admitted in a curt voice. "I very rarely make him bleed and never like this."

"He's not a sadist," Paul said, his voice heavy with arousal, making it obvious he was enjoying the alcohol. "The one fatal flaw in our relationship."

"Shut up, Paul Guy. Only a sadist could have done this, so stop bitching about that."

"True," Paul agreed softly. "My back will hurt for a month. It's the gift that keeps on giving. I love you, Danny Boy."

Eve watched Danny close his eyes in anguish as he set the alcohol bottle down. He pushed his hair off his forehead and Eve could see the pain written all over his features as he took a shuddering breath.

"He's stoned," Eve reminded him. "His eyes are still dilated."

Danny shrugged and turned around to put the cap back on the alcohol bottle. Then he leaned down and draped himself partially over Paul, his lips pressing to the nape of his neck. "I love you too. More than anything."

"Mmm," Paul hummed, burying his face into the curves of his arms as his hips pushed against the towel. "Need you. Please."

"I know," Danny said, trailing a hand down the curve of Paul's waist. "Go get your camera, Evie."

"Fuck my camera," Eve rasped breathlessly. "I'll remember."

"Suit yourself," Danny said as he reached beneath Paul, his fingers trailing over his stomach. "Go sit on the bed."

Eve did as told, crawling up on the bed and watching as Danny pulled at the laces of Paul's pants. He pulled them off, tugging roughly at the leather to get them past his hips as Paul lifted his hips to help him.

He tossed them aside when he was done and then trailed his hand down the curve of Paul's waist once more. "I'm worried about your back," he whispered as he leaned down and pressed a kiss into the curve of Paul's neck. "It's pretty bad this time. We need to be careful with it."

Paul groaned, pressing his face into the curve of his arms and mumbling, "You worry too much."

Danny seemed to consider that and then glanced up at Eve. "You want to help me?"

Eve stared down at Paul stretched out on the towel fully naked, with that beautiful body on display and nodded without hesitation. "What do you need me to do?"

"You'll see," Danny said and then leaned down and spoke into the curve of Paul's neck. "I want you to go to her."

"That's a bad idea," Paul whispered with a catch in his voice.

"Why?"

"Both of you is too much," Paul said, his voice choked with desire. "I won't last."

"You'll last," Danny said confidently. "Now stop arguing with me. I want you to seduce her. Make her ache. You said you could, so prove it."

Eve wanted to tell Paul that she was already aching, because her body had tightened in anticipation, but her voice trapped in her throat as Paul lifted his head and stared at her. She'd never seen his eyes so stormy as they ran over her. A longing she could hardly fathom showed on his angelically beautiful face.

"Okay," he said softly in a voice that caused pleasure to shoot through Eve's body.

Eve's breathing became uneven and shallow when Paul suddenly got on his hands and knees on the floor next to Danny, his eyes still holding her immobile as he crawled to the bed. Like his voice that was strangely seductive when he wanted it to be, he had somehow mastered the ability to move in a slow, seductive manner that made her hungry in a way she had never experienced before.

"May I undress you?" he asked as he moved over her on the bed, forcing Eve to fall back ungracefully against the mattress as she stared up at him with wide eyes. "You can say no."

"Why would I do that?" Eve choked, still gaping up at him as he hovered over her on his hands and knees, straddling her hips, providing her with the divine view of his perfect upper body.

"Maybe you don't think I deserve it," he offered as he tilted his head, his eyes resting on the curves of her breasts straining against the tight corset.

"I—" Eve started, her voice failing her once more as she looked up at Paul, watching the desire play over his features as he looked down at her as if she were the

most beautiful woman on earth. It was probably one of the most erotic moments of her life and she couldn't even place why exactly. Perhaps it was in the sound of his voice, his seductive movements and the way his blue eyes softened as he looked at her. He entranced her in a way that blocked out all sense of reasoning aside from the instinctual need to have him. She reached up, cupping his chin with her open palm and sighed, "Undress me. I want your hands on me."

He studied her face intently, apprehension swirling in his eyes and it hit Eve then what she was suddenly in the middle of. Somehow, Danny had steered her into the deepest, most dangerous waters and she had followed him blindly because her trust in him had become absolute. This was going to change all of them. It was a blind leap of faith that was going to test the friendship and love she shared with both of them. She hadn't stopped to consider the ramifications, but Paul had already considered them for her. The look on his face was concern for her and her alone.

"I'm sure," she whispered, answering his unspoken question, knowing Paul would use his safe word without hesitation if he weren't positive she was really okay with everything. She gave him a smile, feeling her heart swell with a fresh surge of love for him. "I want this."

Paul swallowed hard and nodded, his gaze falling to her breasts once more as he reached out and tugged on the laces that tied her corset together, pulling the bow undone in a way that seemed to seal their fate. Then he leaned down, burying his face in the curve of her neck, dragging his tongue slowly up to her ear and whispered, "Thank you."

"Mmm," she hummed because anything else was beyond her.

Eve's fingers tangled in his hair, holding him to her as he worked at pulling the laces free of her corset while he licked and kissed her skin reverently. When he tossed the laces aside, he pushed her corset apart, letting it fall to her arms and revealing her breasts. He moved lower, his lips trailing down her chest, his tongue running between the valley of her breasts before he sucked one hardened tip into his mouth.

Eve moaned, her back arching off the bed as her fingers tightened in his hair. The two of them forgot Danny for the moment and became teenagers again, falling back to a time when every touch and subtle nuance between them made the pleasure a thousand times more powerful because they loved and wanted each other in a way only first time lovers could. Doing this in front of Danny was easily the most deviant thing Eve had ever done, but she didn't notice. Being with Paul felt effortless and pure, as if the heavens had designed them to be together like this, with his hard, muscular bare chest pressed against her soft breasts as he leaned up and captured her lips with a groan that told her he was as lost as she was.

She wrapped her legs around his waist as he arched into her, his hard cock sliding against the smooth skin of her stomach as his tongue swept into her mouth when her lips parted to his. Their kiss was hot and fevered, somewhat sloppy as they both relived the enthusiasm of youth. Their bodies started coming together in an erotic prequel to mating where they strained against each other, moving on pure instinct. Eve felt herself

teetering on edge from just that because they had perfected the art of dry fucking each other a long time ago.

"Watch his back," Danny cut in, dragging Eve back to reality.

She realized her fingers were digging into Paul's shoulders and she groaned, letting go of him to reach behind her and grip at the blanket to keep from losing track of herself. "Shit," she rasped, arching fully into Paul, who had buried his face into the curve of her neck and was worshiping her with soft, breathless kisses. "I'm gonna come."

"God, me too," Paul groaned, grinding harder against her, forcing her leather pants to rub against her clit in a way that had her choking back a scream. "You're hot, Evie Girl. So fucking hot. I want to be in you. I need it."

"Then do it," she choked out, wondering why they were doing this when he could be fucking her legitimately, with that thick, hard cock that had always made her ache so good sliding into her body that was aching for him. She reached between them, pulling at the ties of her pants frantically. "Get 'em off."

Paul took over the task. Gone was his slow seduction as he worked at the laces with practiced ease and then tugged at her pants, pulling them past her hips. He moved down her body, his lips running over her breasts, sucking on her nipples before he fell to his knees on the floor. He pulled her pants and underwear fully off as he kissed and licked her stomach in a way that had her writhing for more.

Eve pulled off her corset and tossed it aside and then lay sprawled out and wantonly naked on the bed, knowing both men were staring at her hotly as she reached down and touched herself. She felt as if she would die if she didn't find a release from the building pressure of desire that was raging inside her. Eve pushed two fingers deep into her wet pussy, desperate to feel some sort of penetration.

"Fuck," Paul groaned as he pulled away from where he was kissing her stomach. Eve lifted her head, looking down at Paul with heavy eyes to see him staring at what her fingers were doing with a look of rabid hunger. His voice because wispy and enthralled as he said, "I like when you touch yourself. That's hot. I've always thought that was hot. I wanna taste you."

Eve scooted lower on the bed, so that her hips rested at the edge of it. She sat up, her weight resting on her forearm. She tilted her head to watch the desire and hunger play over Paul's face as he stared down at her with the look of a man enthralled.

Eve pulled her fingers out of her, holding them up to him. "So taste."

Paul groaned, grabbing her hand and sucking her fingers into his mouth with a low, sated groan as his eyes drifted close. Eve's pussy clenched in jealousy that had her shifting against the edge of the bed as his tongue ran over each of her fingers sensually and then sucked harder, reminding her of what he looked like sucking Danny's cock. He had that same rapt expression on his face, as if he were tasting the divine and Eve found herself in awe of such a sexually potent man kneeling in front of her, sucking on her fingers just for the taste of her.

When he released her, he pushed her legs apart and then dipped down to run his tongue over her, doing it just for the taste rather than to cause pleasure, but it made no difference, Eve fell back against the bed as bliss washed over her. She arched into him, her fingers finding their way back into his hair as his low groan rumbled against the most sensitive part of her.

"We're not doing this," Danny snapped, reminding both of them he was still there as he dropped down to his knees next to Paul on the floor in front of Eve. He reached out, grabbing Paul's chin and forcing him away from Eve. "You start licking her and you'll be there all night. I'm not waiting that long."

"Are you kidding?" Eve gasped out in disbelief as her entire body mourned the loss of Paul's mouth. "You cannot be this cruel."

"I can, actually," Danny lifted dark eyes to her. An evil smirk tugged at his full lips as he said, "I'm very cruel when I want to be, so behave before you find out what I'm really capable of. I want to taste too, Evie."

Eve glared at him, but didn't argue as he used his grip on Paul's chin to pull him forward. She suddenly forgot her anger when Danny leaned down and captured Paul's lips in a hard, unforgiving kiss, his tongue pushing past his lips that parted with a breathy moan.

Paul arched into him when Danny's fingers tangled into his hair, fisting it tightly and jerking his head back viciously. He kissed him deeper, easily conquering what was his. Eve watched his tongue plunge in and out of his mouth as he angled Paul's head to the side, forcing him to take what he was giving. Danny reached around with his other hand and gripped at Paul's hard ass, forcing their bodies tightly together and grinding into him.

"I think I'm going to toy with you before I fuck you," Danny whispered in a wicked voice against Paul's mouth. "I still owe you for that cock-sucking trick. That made me angry."

"I'm sorry," Paul choked, his eyes rolling back as he leaned more deeply into Danny. "I'm so sorry, Danny Boy. I should have never done that. I appreciate you. I—"

"Save the submissive bullshit," Danny growled at him as he tugged his head back farther and stared down at Paul with malice shining in his dark eyes. "When I say I want to toy with you what should your response be?"

Paul groaned, his body becoming languid in obvious arousal as he became fully captive to Danny. "Yes, Master," he whispered in a voice that was gravelly with desire. "M-my response is supposed to be 'Yes, Master'."

"Very good," Danny said, a pleased smile tugging at his lips as he stared down at Paul as if admiring how easily he could control him. "Now go sit on the bed in front of Eve. I'm making you both wait until I'm ready."

"Oh God," Eve groaned, but reached down to grab Paul when he made a move to crawl back onto the bed. "Talk about cock blocked."

"Be silent, Evie," Danny snapped at her as he moved over to run his hands up the curves of Paul's waist.

Evie wrapped her arms around Paul, letting him lean back against her as they both sat at the edge of the bed. If Danny was going to be an asshole, the least she could do is offer Paul comfort while he tortured him. She ran her hands over the hand muscles of his chest as Danny leaned down to kiss the flat plane of Paul's stomach.

"Be careful of his back," Danny said warningly and then lifted his head to look up at Paul. "Put your arms around her neck. I don't want you touching me while I do this."

Paul did as told, reaching behind him to wrap his arms around Eve's neck, pulling her closer to him. His head lolled to the side and Eve took the invitation, running her lips softly over the curve of his neck.

"Bite him."

"What?" Eve gasped, glaring down at Danny over Paul's shoulder. "I'm not biting him."

"I'm your Master," Danny growled in a low, furious voice. "Do what I tell you."

Eve continued to glare at Danny, but she had to notice that Paul's breathing had become labored. Time hadn't change that much; she still knew when something excited him. Feeling Danny's eyes on her, she licked her lips and then bit Paul before she could think better of it, sinking her teeth sharply into the soft spot in the curve of his neck.

Paul's reaction was automatic, his entire body tightened and he arched into Danny. "Fuck," he ground out through clenched teeth.

Danny took the head of Paul's cock into his mouth in the next second, swirling his tongue over it. His eyes lifted knowingly to Eve, his gaze silently conveying the reminder that the snake and Eve were supposed to work together.

"Oh, fuck," Paul groaned when Danny took him deeper. His hips thrust forward in a silent plea for more. "I c-can't take it. I won't last."

"You'll last," Danny said as he released him only to reach out and stroke the length of him, his eyes falling to Paul's cock with the look of a child playing with his favorite toy. "I don't want you to talk anymore. Your rambling is an annoyance. Be silent or you're going to be sitting there a very long time."

"Shit," Paul choked out, his body became weak and heavy in Eve's arms as he leaned more fully back against her, his thumbs rubbing over the curve of her neck softly despite the situation he found himself in. When the last of the resistance fell out of him, his head lolled to the side on Eve's shoulder and he whispered in defeat, "I'll be silent."

Danny smiled up at Eve, his eyes meeting hers once more as he continued to stroke Paul's cock. "You promised."

"Fine," she said, her voice not nearly as fierce as she'd like it because Paul's desire was potent enough to be catching. She pushed her hips more tightly against his lower back to still the ache between her legs as she leaned down and kissed Paul's neck once more. "We'll work together."

Danny sucked and teased Paul's cock while Eve kissed and bit him, her teeth leaving marks over his shoulders and down the curves of his neck. Together the two of them had him completely breathless and desperate in minutes. His entire being pulsed with longing, but amazingly he stayed silent save his low moans whenever Eve bit him hard enough or Danny sucked him deeply. She had never seen anyone more desperate for release. Doing this to Paul felt crueler than the whipping, forcing him to endure this level of pleasure, both of them playing into his fetish to the point that his breathing became so ragged she was afraid he may actually pass out under the force of the onslaught. But Eve found herself moving and shifting with him on the edge of the bed as she watched Danny torment him with pleasure. She was every bit as desperate as Paul, rubbing herself against his lower back shamelessly, knowing he could feel how wet she was. She told herself it was her newly discovered voyeurism fetish making her so wantonly desperate. Her own labored breathing had the images she was fighting to keep her eyes open to watch going fuzzy around the edges.

But it was more than that.

She was turned-on because Paul was turned-on. Like Danny, she found that when Paul got hot, it made her hot. He really was something as he moaned and writhed in her arms but remained completely obedient to Danny by holding back words of pleading for the torment to end.

Eve felt as if she would self-combust if she didn't find a release to the need pumping in white-hot pulses through her bloodstream. She wasn't as strong or disciplined as Paul, not even close.

"Please, Danny Boy," she gasped out. "I'm dying. I need to come. One of you fuck me. I don't even care which one. I just need a cock in me – now."

Danny released Paul leisurely, his tongue swirling over the head of his cock before he lifted his head and arched an eyebrow at Eve. "Are you serious? You're caving before him?"

"I'm dead serious," she said frantically. "Call me weak, I don't give a fuck. I need to come."

"Fine," Danny said, falling back on his haunches and running a hand through his hair as a hint of an amused smile tugged at his lips. "Be useful, Paul Guy – fuck her."

Eve gasped at how quickly Paul turned in her arms, cupping her face with both his large hands and kissing her. Eve moaned into his mouth, falling back against the bed with him. Her legs wrapped around him and she had to fight to reach between their straining bodies to grab his cock that was slick with Danny's spit.

She guided him to her, arching her hips up to receive him. "Fuck me," she whispered breathlessly against his lips. "Do it hard and fast. That's how I want it. Give it to me."

"Yeah, okay," Paul panted, his voice lower than she had ever heard it. His hips surged forward, taking Eve in one hard thrust that made her scream from the rippling pleasure it caused. Paul choked back a gasp with her, his head falling forward as he

rested his hands on either side of her shoulders, fisting the blanket as he used the leverage to bury himself deeper inside her. "Shit, Evie Girl. I'm gonna come."

"Not yet," she gasped, her eyes growing wide when she realized they might have pushed him too far. "Please, not yet, Paul Guy. It's been too long. I need to feel you. Let me feel you."

He grunted in response as he pulled out and took her harder the second time. Eve reached behind her once more, gripping at the blanket to keep herself from clawing at his back when he had her so completely mindless. She tilted her hips, forcing Paul's cock to brush against that sensitive place inside her with every hard thrust. She was already teetering on edge with a climax that would surely jerk Paul down with her when Danny grabbed her legs, pulling them from where they were wrapped tightly around Paul. She thought he was doing it to save his back, but then realized he had a completely different idea when Paul's entire body stiffened and a low, gravelly moan burst out of him.

"Fuck, no," Paul whispered desperately, tilting his head back to look at Danny. "No way."

"I told you to shut up," Danny snapped at him. "Now be still for a moment."

"Oh my God." Eve leaned up on one arm to look over Paul's shoulder. Her eyes grew wide as a shimmer of icy-hot desire rolled over, making her clench tightly around Paul. She watched in awe as Danny pushed his fingers deeper into Paul, moving them in a way that had Paul's entire body tensing and his cock jerking inside her. Eve's breath gushed out of her in a rush of desire as she whispered, "Yes, fuck him. Fuck him into me. I like that."

"Yes, I realize this," Danny said with a smirk. "You really are a dirty bitch."

"I won't last," Paul panted, his body still taut over Eve, his hips rocking against hers as if trying to get more of what Danny was giving. "If you're gonna do it, do it now, Danny Boy. You can't fuck with me anymore. I'm serious, this time."

"Okay," Danny said with a sigh of defeat as he pulled away from Paul.

Danny had to be the only man in the world that could make opening a condom package sexy, tearing it open with his teeth. He held Eve captive with his dark, knowing gaze, making her body tighten in anticipation. She was as tightly strung as Paul as she watched him roll it onto his cock, his leather pants hanging low on his hips, making him look both dangerous and sexy at the same time.

Once he had the condom on, he leaned over Paul, being cautious of his back as he wrapped both arms under his shoulders and then tugged him back, so that they were both standing in front of her. Eve moved to the very edge of the bed, forcing Paul's cock into her once more as she stared up at them, feeling completely entranced.

Danny grasped Paul's chin roughly, forcing him to turn back to him. "I'm going to fuck you now," he whispered as he leaned in until the two of them were sharing the same breath. "We're both going to use you for as long as we feel like it and I want you to stop whining about coming. You'll come when I tell you, right?"

Paul stared up at him, his chest heaving as his body became noticeably weak with desire. It was astounding that Paul had managed to stay on his feet the entire time Danny had whipped him, but this was what had him losing his footing. Danny tightened his other arm around his waist, holding him on his feet with an amazing amount of strength considering Paul's large size.

Paul was lost in his submission to Danny, not fighting his hold on his chin or looking away from those dark, penetrating eyes. "Okay," he whispered in soft, compelling voice that caused a shiver of desire to roll over Eve. "I won't come until you tell me."

"I didn't think you would," Danny said, his voice endearing as he smiled at Paul. "You know how to behave."

"Most days," Paul said, a look of self-loathing flashing on his face. "I'm sorry about earlier. I don't know what got into me."

"I do," Danny whispered, pain flashing over his features for one moment before he pulled Paul's face closer and kissed him.

Eve took a shuddering breath, wondering if she could come just from watching as Danny let go of Paul's chin, their lips still meeting in lazy, open-mouthed kisses, with tongues brushing erotically. Though Eve couldn't see it, she knew what Danny was doing, could imagine his hand wrapped around his beautiful, large cock as he guided it into Paul.

Paul's head fell back against Danny's shoulder, his chest still heaving and gleaming with sweat as Danny finally tightened his hold around his waist, jerking him back against him in one hard motion. Paul's body jerked in pleasure as Danny's head also fell back, a look of extreme gratification showing on his handsome face.

Danny's hand tangled in Paul's hair once more, jerking his head back and kissing him again as he started moving, using his hold around Paul's waist to pull him hard against him with every thrust of his hips. Their moans started mingling as Danny lost himself in the moment as easily as Paul had.

Eve's entire body was tight with need as she watched the two of them with wide-eyed fascination. Danny wasn't fucking Paul near hard or fast enough to get her off, but she didn't complain. They were too surreally gorgeous kissing and fucking each other. She didn't want to do anything to interrupt. She could wait to come all night to watch such an erotic display of art and beauty. She placed a hand on her chest that was rising and falling heavily, feeling her heart thumping rapidly against her ribs as she tried to commit every detail to memory.

Finally giving in to temptation, Eve fell to old habits. She reached down to touch herself, her fingers rubbing against her clit slowly because they had pulled her completely into the fantasy and anything faster than what Danny was giving Paul seemed out of place.

Danny pulled away after a few more strokes, glaring down at Eve in disappointment. She knew what he was frowning about but she didn't give a fuck and she didn't stop touching herself.

"You're too pretty," she said by way of explanation. "I could watch you forever."

Danny just shook his head and then let go of Paul, pushing him forward so that Eve was suddenly wrapping her arms around him, her hands resting at his lower back where the injuries were at a minimum. The feeling of his large, heavy body pushing her into the mattress was too much. She moaned, arching her hips up to take him into her fully once more.

"Evie Girl," Paul moaned, his breath warm against her neck as he buried his face there. "I love you."

"Love you too," she whispered, reaching up to cup his chin, forcing him to lift his head. Paul's eyes blinked open and he stared down at her with angelic eyes completely hazed with desire. Out of the blue, tears stung her eyes as she became overwhelmed with love for both Danny and Paul. Being connected to both of them like felt like more than her heart could take. "Kiss me," she pleaded, needing a distraction against her raging emotions.

Obedient as always, Paul leaned in and kissed her, his tongue sliding into her mouth reverently. Danny leaned into them as they got lost in the kiss, gripping at Paul's shoulder with one hand, while the other gripped at his hip. He used the leverage to thrust into him harder, forcing Paul's cock deeper into Eve, sending them all adrift on a sea of pleasure that was all encompassing and beautiful in a way Eve could have never imagined before now.

The sound of their combined moans washed over Eve and she savored them as she reached around Paul, digging her short fingernails into the curve of Danny's waist just to be connected to him as every hard thrust of his hips pushed Paul deeply into her. The pleasure was too overwhelming for Eve and her head fell back with a choked gasp as she broke the kiss with Paul and was left just feeling what was happening. Paul was the same, his head falling heavily to her shoulder, his warm breath brushing against Eve's neck with every moan that burst out of him.

Her fingers dug into Danny's side roughly, her nails breaking sensitive skin when her climax suddenly burst inside her without warning. She bowed beneath both men, her entire body convulsing from the force of bliss washing over her in a tidal wave of pleasure. Broken sobs burst out of her as she felt wave after wave crash over her, forcing her pussy to clench around Paul to the pulsing rhythm of her release.

"Danny Boy," Paul choked out as he buried his face deeper into Eve's neck and his fists tightened in the blanket. "Please."

"Okay," Danny panted, fucking Paul harder, his hips forcing Paul into Eve over and over again in a way that seemed to prolong her orgasm for an entirety. A groan of defeat burst out of him as he leaned more fully into Paul. "Oh, fuck."

Paul mirrored his sentiment as he also tensed, his body shaking from the force of his climax as Eve felt the warmth of his seed spilling in her. Sharp moans burst out of both men as Danny's hips started jerking against Paul's while they rode out their orgasms together, making it obvious they were completely in tune with each other.

Eve came down first, Danny shortly afterwards. It was Paul who was left shaking between them the longest, his body clenching repeatedly, leaving both Eve and Danny gasping softly with tiny aftershocks of pleasure. Eve stroked Paul's hair when his moans started to subside. Danny was leaning heavily into him and neither man was a lightweight. Their combined bulk was making it hard for Eve to breathe when she was coming down from her own exquisite high, but she choked back a complaint, deciding she didn't need air as she tilted her head and stared at Paul's face still resting on her shoulder. Sweat was beaded on his forehead and his cheeks were flushed red from the exertion, but his features were more beautiful than she had ever seen them as they became relaxed in sated exhaustion. It made it obvious how much Paul really did bear on his shoulders, how tense he usually was, because the contrast was startling. Like this, he truly was angelic in appearance.

"We're crushing her," Danny said, falling off Paul to land heavily on the bed next to Eve. He threw an arm over his eyes as he fought to gain his breath back. "Come on, Paul Guy. You weigh a ton."

"You're fine," Eve said, wrapping her legs around Paul when he made a move to roll off her, holding him to her. "Just lay here with me. I like laying with you."

Eve stroked his hair once more, listening to his breathing fall into a more steady rhythm. Her head lolled to the side as she held him. She stared at Danny, who was watching the two of them with an expression of extreme longing swirling in his dark eyes.

"Thank you," she whispered. She knew Danny well enough to see the pain lingering in his gaze and she felt her heart ache for him. She wasn't certain if it was Paul that was causing it, or if she was the guilty one. Perhaps it was both of them, but whatever the reason it was obvious that setting up the train wreck that had led to this wonderful experience for them had been difficult for him. "I love you, Danny Boy."

Danny considered her for a moment, before he reached out and placed a finger softly on her lips. "Kiss."

She smiled against the tip of his finger, and then kissed it softly. "Are you hiding?"

"Kiss, kiss," he said, a smile tugging at his lips as he tapped his finger twice against her lips.

Eve rolled her eyes, but kissed his finger twice. "Fine," she said against his finger. "I'll shut up."

"Miracles do happen," he said, a grin still tugging at his lips as his eyebrows rose in surprise.

"You're not nice," she said with a mock frown.

"Not usually, no," he agreed as he sat up and ran a hand through his dark hair that was wet with sweat, slicking it away from his face. "This has been real, but I'm tired. I'm sleeping in your bed tonight, Paul Guy. You two can use my bed. It's bigger."

Paul lifted his head, resting his other cheek against Eve's shoulder as he stared at Danny. "Why are you leaving? There's plenty of room. You can sleep with us."

"Yeah," Danny said slowly and then shrugged. "But faggots sleep together. Isn't that right?"

Paul was silent for a moment and swallowed hard as he continued to look up at Danny. "So we'll be faggots," he finally offered quietly. "Evie won't tell."

"Not tonight," Danny said, his voice sounding pained as if walking away from them was physically hurting him. "I need some space."

"Did we do something to push you away?" Eve asked in concern as Danny scooted off the bed and stood.

"Nope," he said as he walked into the bathroom, leaving the rest unsaid.

Eve listened to the sound of running water and went back to running her fingers through Paul's hair more to soothe herself than him.

"He's moody," Paul said, wrapping his arms around Eve, holding her tightly to him as he placed a kiss in the curve of her neck. "A real pain in the ass."

"We're hurting him," Eve breathed quietly, keeping her voice low so only Paul heard her. "I don't want to hurt him."

"I don't either," he whispered against her neck. "But if he needs space we should give it to him."

"No more fucking," Danny said as he came out of the bathroom and stood at the foot of the bed, tying his pants closed. His eyes ran over Paul's back, a look of disgust showing on his face. "I'm serious. You can take a shower if you're careful with his back, but no fucking around of any kind. I want you both to go to bed. It's been a very long night."

"Fine," Paul said in agreement.

"Evie," Danny said warningly. "You're not allowed to mess with him."

"I'm not going to molest your toy," Eve said bitterly, still feeling angry that he was walking away from them after what they had all just shared. "We'll go to sleep—lonely."

"I doubt that," Danny said as he bent down and started picking up Eve's and Paul's leather pants and then leaned over and grabbed the corset off the bed, making methodical work of straightening it and then draping it over his arm. "Sleep well."

Eve opened her mouth to protest, but Paul's large hand suddenly fell over her mouth, silencing the argument she was about to start.

"Let him go," Paul said softly. "He needs space tonight. We'll argue with him tomorrow when he's had a chance to unwind. He's in Master mode, arguing with him is pointless."

Eve just arched an eyebrow up at Paul, but Danny was already long gone and she finally relaxed beneath him in defeat. Paul removed his hand and then leaned down to give her a chaste kiss.

"I do need a shower," she said against his lips, needing to change the subject before she started crying. "Wash my back?"

"Sure," Paul said with an adoring smile. "Love to."

Chapter Fifteen

"Did you know when we were together?"

Paul considered that, sitting across from Eve on the shower floor. Eve's arms were wrapped around her legs that were pulled up close to her body and she looked at him with wide green eyes as her chin rested on her knees. Paul's legs were stretched out and he rubbed his bare feet against her thighs as he stared at her through the mist from shower spray falling between them.

"Yeah, I knew," he said with a shrug, looking away from her and staring at the bottle of shampoo on the shower floor in the corner. "You don't just wake up one day and think, 'Hey, I'm gonna start getting off on pain.' It always felt good to me. I used to live to get tackled in football. Just really, you know, slammed to the ground with my face in the grass and about four linebackers crushing the air out of me. That was awesome. Breaking my knee was awesome except for the doctors telling my parents they suspected I was a masochist."

"How'd the doctors know?"

"I wanted to stay awake for the surgery," Paul said, shaking his head sadly as he thought about it. "I'm still pissed about that. The ultimate edge game and I missed it. Why do they give a shit if I'm awake or not? I could have done it. I wouldn't have moved. I hate doctors."

"That is pretty telling. Not very many people want to stay awake for surgery," Eve said with a wince. "What did your parents say?"

"Nothing really, my father just said his sons were Marines," Paul said and then sighed sadly. "Except that didn't work out. I'm a pansy lawyer instead. I should have been able to stay awake for the surgery. That was the least they could have done for me."

"I would have helped you," she whispered softly. "If you had told me, I would have done things for you. I would have stayed here. I could have learned how. I could have been Danny for you."

"You really think you can be like Danny?" Paul asked, raising his eyebrows at her.

"Well, no," Eve said, shaking her head sadly. "He has a special *gift*."

"It's a nice gift," Paul said firmly, feeling his heart ache at the thought of living the rest of his life without Danny. "People outside the scene don't understand. They just think one person is abusing another. But it's deeper than that. It's not abusing, it's catering to them. Most of the time, we're stuck in this world that doesn't understand us and then you go to a BDSM club or a party and find someone who won't judge you and has no problem giving you exactly what you need no matter how fucked up it seems."

Good Masters like Danny are awesome, they ask you what you like and they provide it. I'd never want to be a Master, it's too much work. It's the only fun part of my life, why would I want it to feel like a job. I got enough responsibility. I let Danny be responsible and he loves it."

"You two are like a very twisted version of the odd couple," Eve said with a soft smile. "It's sweet."

"Sweet's not sexy," Paul said with a roll of his eyes.

"It's sexy to me," Eve whispered in a low, sensual voice. "You're beautiful together. I want to watch you two forever."

"I want to let you," he said, feeling his heart clench and his eyes sting. "I wish I could let you watch us forever. Destiny has been very cruel to us, Evie Girl. It feels like more than I can take."

"Don't marry her," Eve said imploringly. "Stay with Danny. Stay with me. I don't want to lose you twice. That's not fair."

"So, what?" Paul asked with a pained laugh as he looked away from her and stared unseeing at the shower floor. "I'll just tell my father that I'm living as a slave to Danny, but don't worry, 'cause Eve gets hot watching? I'm still getting pussy, I'm not a total faggot. That's his favorite insult, faggot. To him it's the absolute lowest thing he can think of. My family would rather me be dead than queer. I'm serious, they would literally take out a hit on me if they found out about my problem."

"I don't like any of those words you just said," Eve growled at him as her eyes narrowed. "I want you to say sorry."

"Sorry," he said instantly, feeling lust shimmer through him as he stared at Eve, with her long hair flowing like red waterfalls over her shoulders and clinging to her legs that were still pulled up tight against her chest. He knew his eyes had to seem glazed in adoration as he whispered, "You're hot, Evie Girl. I'll say sorry to you forever."

"No, you won't. You're leaving me," she said, her voice choked as tears rolled down her cheeks, mingling with the shower spray that was misting around her. "And it's not a problem. Having two people who love you more than air is not a problem."

"It is a problem. I was getting better. I was breaking my Danny addiction. But then you came along and I felt like I'd die if you stole him from me just like I died when I had to give you up. It was like dying twice," Paul said, looking away from her because the sight of her tears was literally killing him. "Two men aren't supposed to need each other like Danny and I do, that's against nature and God and everything. And now you're back and I feel like my heart can't even beat without both of you. This is fucked-up shit. Three people don't fall in love in the real world."

"Yes, they do," Eve said in a quivering voice. "It's not fucked up, it's beautiful. Why can't you see that? Why can't you see that you are going to kill us when you leave us?"

Paul shrugged. "I dunno, 'cause I'm worthless?"

"Say sorry," Eve growled at him. "Say sorry for hurting me by saying the man I love is worthless."

"That's not hot," Paul whispered defiantly.

"We're not playing the hot game right now. That game is over for tonight," Eve snapped at him. "Now we're playing the make Evie happy game and I don't give a shit if it's hot to you or not."

Paul sucked in a sharp breath, because her anger caused a spike of lust to shoot through him and he turned back to her. "Fine," he said softly. "I'm sorry."

"I want you to say that there is nothing wrong with being a lawyer instead of a Marine," Eve said in a low, demanding voice.

"I'm not saying that," Paul said as he tried to push down the rocket fire of lust that had him wanting to submit to her. "Marines are heroes. Ask anyone if they like lawyers and they will all tell you that lawyers are worthless bastards. Nobody likes lawyers, everyone likes Marines."

"Danny's right, Paul Guy," Eve said, her voice cracking with pain. "You have let your fetish rule your entire life. You spent years getting a fucking law degree so everyone could hate you. That's some seriously demented shit."

"I am demented," Paul said as he looked at Eve pointedly. "Did you miss what happened tonight?"

"Getting off on pain is not demented. Being big and strong enough to do that is sexy," Eve said, raising her eyebrows as her voice became husky. "Really sexy. I like seeing how much you can take. It turns me on. It makes me want to keep you forever."

"Really?" Paul whispered, staring at Eve as the slow, warm feeling of being enthralled rolled over him. "I can take a lot more, you know? Danny's a pussy about punishing me."

"I don't like when you say pussy like it's a bad thing," Eve said sharply, her eyes narrowed in disappointment. "I have a pussy. Is there anything about me that strikes you as weak or spineless?"

Paul sucked in a sharp breath, feeling that incredible pulse that came from being turned-on mingled with the haze that always came after enough pain. It was an adrenaline rush that made him feel completely euphoric. Why would he take drugs when he had this amazing high instead? He wished every day had an edge game at the end of it. Paul stared at Eve through the misty rainbows in the shower and felt as if he had fallen into heaven because she was that beautiful to him.

"You're not weak. I don't think that. I'd never think that," he said quickly, feeling like he'd die if he disappointed her. "You're a goddess. I'm not playing the game right now. You're really a goddess to me. You've always been a goddess."

Eve took a shaking breath and looked at him sadly. "You'd hate it if I said you were a god to me, wouldn't you?"

"I would, I'd hate that. It'd be like you were insulting the most precious thing in the world to me," he whispered in horror, wincing at just the thought of her saying that. "I know who I am and I don't want to be in the same category with you. You're radiant. I just want to worship at your feet. That's what I want, that makes me happy."

Eve smiled at him and whispered softly, "Okay."

"What?" Paul blinked in surprise, his eyes feeling heavy in desire and hazy exhaustion. "You'd let me?"

"Sure," she said, her smile growing broader. "Goddesses like their servants to be happy. I want you to be happy. Anything it takes to make you happy, you tell me."

"Danny —"

"Danny's sleeping," Eve whispered with a mischievous smile, showing off cute dimples in her cheeks. "When the Master's away, the servants play. You want to play with me, Paul Guy?"

Paul nodded quickly. "Yes, I do, more than anything."

"And what if he finds out in the morning that I broke the rules?" Eve asked, her smile becoming lazy and devious. "Would you take my punishment for me?"

"Oh, I would," Paul rasped, his vision going hazy as lust and desire rolled over him in a hot rush of exhilaration at the idea of doing something completely selfless for Eve. "Would that make you happy?"

"A big, strong slave taking a punishment for me?" Eve repeated, her smile still bright. "That would make me ecstatic. You do that for me and I will let you worship at my feet whenever you want."

"We should do this," Paul said instantly. "We should break the rules. You're a goddess. It's okay if it's with you. I'll do anything for you."

"That works," Eve said as she stood up in the shower and then took the one small step that brought her directly in front of him. She leaned into him, placing her hands on the wall and dropping her head to look down at him with emerald eyes that sparkled in desire. "Go crazy, Paul Guy. Impress me."

Paul groaned as he let his eyes run over Eve, her pale skin slick and wet, her long hair clinging to her body. He loved her long legs, the curve in her waist, the way her breasts looked when he leaned back against the wall and tilted his head up. Seeing her above him felt like he had the whole world in that shower stall.

It felt strange to touch her again without Danny there, but he found that once he reached out and trailed a hand up one smooth, pale thigh, being with Eve was something that couldn't be forgotten. She moaned, her head falling back heavily as her hair tangled around her, clinging to bare shoulders and full, firm breasts. Paul was completely lost to her and he kissed her hipbone reverently, both his hands running up her thighs to grip at her hips.

"Can I taste you?" he asked hopefully.

"Sure," Eve said seductively. "We'll conduct an experiment to see who does it better, slaves or Masters."

"Depends on what you like," Paul offered as he felt a fresh onslaught of desire roll over him and he stared up at Eve longingly. "Masters do it to torment, slaves do it to please."

Eve arched an eyebrow. "You think you can please me?"

"I know I can," he said confidently. "If you let me, I'd sit here and please you until morning."

"That sounds like a party," Eve said, pushing her hips forward. "Put your mouth on me. If you do it well, I might even let you fuck me."

Paul groaned, pulling her to him as his body tightened in desire. He let his tongue slide between her folds and then sucked on her clit softly. Eve gasped, her head falling back heavily as his tongue darted out, lapping at her softly.

"Put your leg over my shoulder," he whispered against her and then licked teasingly once more. "I want you to be comfortable."

"Your back," Eve whispered in complaint.

"It's fine," he said, running his hand up one silky thigh encouragingly. "Do it and I'll hold on to you. I won't let you fall."

"I know you won't. I trust you," Eve said with a smile, draping one leg over his shoulder. She put most of her weight on him, and he groaned at the feel of it, moving his hands around to her back to pull her forward. Eve took her hands off the wall, melting into him, with one hand on his shoulder and the other tangled in his wet hair. He swirled his tongue over her with intent and she gasped, "God, Paul Guy, that's good. Make me come, baby."

He smiled at the jolt of nostalgia that shot through him as he licked her, savoring her taste, having the off thought that vanilla tasted sweet with her. If Eve had never left, he could have eaten it forever. It wasn't until she was suddenly gone from his life that the deviant side of him that had loved being hurt and abused had surged to the forefront of his consciousness. Letting Eve go had him seeking out someone to punish him for the sin and he uncovered a side of himself that would have been better undiscovered, but he would never tell her that. He'd take the secret to the grave with him. She could never know that giving her up had made him desperate to be humiliated and abused.

And now, ten years later, combining two worlds had him euphoric. He felt as if he had found his own deviant Eden with Eve forcing him to pleasure her, her weight heavy on his shoulder, her foot brushing against his abused back. He licked and sucked her clit, her moans causing darts of pleasure to shoot directly to his cock that was hard and aching for her. He could lick her forever just for the hope of sliding into her again.

Eve's hips suddenly pushed forward, her fingers tightening in his hair as she screamed in pleasure, completely heedless of Danny sleeping in the other room. Her

whole body shuddered from her climax, her pussy pulsing against his lips from the force of it as her moans echoed in the shower.

"Holy shit," Eve panted, her fingers still holding his hair in a vise grip. "Don't tell Danny, but I think slaves do it better."

Paul smiled up at Eve when her eyes blinked open to reveal sated green orbs of desire. This was what he had craved from a Domme, the endless playing field of pleasure that never had time-outs. Danny was probably the most virile man Paul could ever hope to serve, but he was still a man. Even Danny needed recovery time and despite being capable and willing, Paul didn't get off on tormenting by making him endure worship that caused painful blue balls instead of pleasure. Trisha tolerated sex at best, and had never been able to offer Paul the counterbalance he needed. But Eve was wholly carnal and capable of receiving pleasure for as long as she could fight off passing out in exhaustion. She was probably one of the fittest women he knew and was always filled with energy that let her dance until dawn and work out for hours. To a true submissive like Paul, Eve was a gold mine, the fact that he had loved her since grade school just made it that much sweeter.

"We just got started, Evie Girl." He let go of her hip and ran his fingers over her still-quivering pussy, wanting to make sure he sealed the deal with Eve because he needed this if he had to endure a lifetime of boring sex with Trisha. "I want to make sure you know what I can do for you. I want to worship at your feet every day. Maybe you won't let me if I don't prove to you that the only pleasure that matters to me is yours."

"Yeah, okay, that works," Eve moaned, her body arching into him when he blew gently against her. "But give me a moment. Too sensitive."

"I know your clit is off-limits," he said, pushing two fingers into her, causing her to jerk and scream again. "But that feels good, doesn't it?"

"God, yes," she moaned, forcing her hips against his hand as he curved his fingers up, rubbing against that sensitive place inside her. "That's good. Fuck me with your fingers."

"I notice you can get off like this. You never did that when we were younger." Paul used his grip on her lower back to force her against his fingers. He rubbed them against the pulsing spot inside her in a way that made her gasp and moan. "Do you like it now?"

"Yeah," she panted, letting him move her hips as she became heavy and languid over him. "Danny taught me."

"If I knew then what I know now I could have taught you," he whispered, fighting down the pang of jealousy. "And I wouldn't have had to tie you up like your mean Master did. I could have done it serving you. You could have forced me to fuck you with my fingers until your body learned how or you could have used my cock. I'm well trained, Evie, I won't come until you let me."

"Fuck." Eve's hips surged forward as she let out a low, throaty moan and her pussy started quivering around his fingers. Her moans weren't as loud as before but her body shook more forcefully, making it obvious the second orgasm was more violent. When she opened her eyes once more, her breathing was labored as she tried to recover from her second orgasm. "Is this part of being a slave, pleasuring your Mistress with your words as well as your tongue and fingers?"

"Of course," he said as if it were obvious. "Women aren't like men, they need their minds stimulated as well as their bodies. I used to spend lots of time with Dommies before Danny got mean and stopped sharing. I love pussy, worshiping it is one of my favorite things. I was a very good slave to them. They miss me."

"I bet they do," Eve panted breathlessly as she stared down at him with heavy-lidded eyes. "I think I'm starting to love this game."

"By the time you go to sleep," Paul murmured as he leaned forward, breathing against her hot, wet pussy that was still throbbing around his fingers. "You won't think, you'll *know* you love this game. I got four months left, I want to make sure you'll use me for every moment of it even if I have to sit here for the next five hours to prove I'm good enough to serve you."

Eve moaned when he licked her again, her hips thrusting forward in a way that told him she was still really sensitive. He licked her softly, being mindful of what would be too intense as he gripped her hips with both hands once more. Eve was so tightly strung and her body so in tune to him that making her come again was easy. He had somehow forgotten just how responsive Eve was to pleasure. It was little wonder Danny had enslaved her if he was using sexual bliss to do it. Eve had always been just as sexually needy as a man, her being a tomboy when she was little had just been the start of a lifetime of male tendencies that applied to everything from her hating dresses to needing sex like most women needed air.

Paul kneeled there for a long time pleasuring her, alternating between licking her and touching her, making her come enough times that he lost count. Eve grew heavier over him, her arms weak and her legs shaking to the point that if it weren't for his hold on her, she would have fallen and hurt herself. But she trusted him, she let him support her and it was such a nice feeling. He would have kneeled there forever if Eve hadn't finally untangled herself from him, sliding down his body until she was straddled over him, his hard cock trapped between their wet bodies. She tangled her fingers in his hair and brought his mouth to hers to kiss him. Their lips met in lazy, open-mouthed desperation, with tongues brushing and soft moans mingling. Paul let his hands trail down her back, savoring the soft feel of her wet skin and the intoxicating taste of drowning himself in Eve after missing her for so long.

"The water's cold," she whispered in a sated voice when they finally broke apart because it was obvious even breathing was hard for her. "It's been cold for a long time. We've been in here forever."

"I don't care," he said softly as he reached up and brushed long strands of wet hair off her neck, pushing it behind her. "But if it bothers you we can get out."

"No." She leaned forward and wrapped her arms around his waist, holding him close enough to feel the hard thumping of her heart against his chest. "I need you in me."

"Are you on the Pill?" he asked in concern, realizing he hadn't used any protection with Eve earlier.

"You know Danny wouldn't let you fuck me if I wasn't. We don't use condoms when we're alone. I didn't even know he owned them," she said, pulling a face of confusion. "Why does he insist on them if you're bleeding all over him when he whips you? That makes no sense to me."

Paul laughed. "I hate lube and condoms fix that for him. He's never that pissed at me. He loves his dick too much to risk injury. Vain asshole, a little rug burn wouldn't kill him."

"You hate lube," Eve repeated in amazement. "Dry anal gets you off?"

"Yeah," he said, staring at her in bafflement, thinking it was obvious. "That makes it hurt more. Why do you think I love it so much? It's pleasure and pain mixed together. That's hot."

"Okay, you're fucked up," Eve said with a broken laugh, resting her cheek against his hard chest as she hugged him tightly. "Dry anal. Jesus Christ, Paul Guy, what am I going to do with you?"

"What do you know about anal?" he asked curiously, his cock twitching between them. "Do you and Danny –"

"Why do you want to know?" she asked teasingly. "Do you think an Evie sandwich sounds yummy?"

"Yeah, I'm a twisted bastard," he admitted without remorse. "I wouldn't mind being a slice of bread for an Evie sandwich."

She considered that with a devious smile as she pulled back to look at him. "Top or bottom?"

"Bottom," he put in instantly, wincing at just the idea of being the top in that situation. "I'm bigger than Danny and hurting you would not work for me. That's not sexy. He can top. He's got lots of practice. With you he can use lube to his heart's content."

"You want to bottom for me right now?" she asked with an arch of one dark red eyebrow. "You want a chance to prove you're worthy of being bread for a very delicious Evie sandwich?"

"Yes, please," he said, the longing heavy in his voice. "Use me, Evie Girl. I won't come until you tell me."

"I don't believe you." She reached between them and stroked his hard cock, rubbing her thumb over the head of it teasingly. Paul let his head fall back against the shower wall and bit his tongue as a distraction from the pleasure. "I don't like when

you do that," Eve said in a low, concerned voice as she leaned in closer to him. "Stick your tongue out. Let me see it."

He winced, the coppery taste of blood in his mouth telling him she would see he was bleeding. He wanted to deny her, but he stuck his tongue out obediently.

She studied his tongue with dark emerald eyes swirled with concern. "I like your tongue, Paul Guy. I want you to stop biting it."

"That's lame," he moaned in complaint as he stared at her in disappointment. "Danny Boy doesn't complain."

"Yeah, well, Danny Boy doesn't have a pussy," Eve countered, her voice still sharp and reprimanding. "If he did, he'd want to make sure that your tongue was always capable of licking it."

"I can still lick you," he said with a laugh. "Stand up and I'll prove it."

"Don't argue with me," Eve growled at him. "I see you bite it again and I'm going to be angry. You better find another way to keep quiet and obedient. Do you understand?"

He sucked in a sharp breath of pleasure as his eyes became heavy in mounting desire. "I'm sorry."

"I want you to promise. You're supposed to be well trained. You don't need to bite your tongue to behave."

"I don't need to bite my tongue to behave," he repeated obediently as his breathing became low and shallow. "I promise."

"Okay," Eve said softly as she started stroking him again, watching his face closely. "I believe you."

"Thank you," he whispered gratefully. "Really, I don't even deserve to pleasure you. I love you, Evie."

"I love you too," she said softly, her eyes glazed with adoration and hunger as she moved over him and guided his cock into her. "More than anything."

Eve's head lolled to the side as she slowly took all of him in her, making it obvious that climaxing so many times had made her relaxed and lazy. Paul moaned, his head falling back against the tiles, his eyes closing in ecstasy, robbing him of the image of Eve riding him. The pleasure washed over his body with unexpected velocity, flooding into his limbs treacherously. A pulse of fear went through him, making him realize he could have been lying to Eve because he didn't know if he was going to be able to stop himself from coming in her before she was ready.

He used his foot to push them both backward so that his back was flush against the wall. The impact caused jolts of pain to shimmer over his body nicely and he used that to remind himself to behave as Eve started moving over him in the slow, sensual movements of a goddess. He discovered that if he slid with her, thrusting upward in a firm, sharp action that had him holding her hips harder than he normally would, not only did Eve gasp louder when his cock was forced into her as far as it would go, but

the friction on his back got more intense. He felt himself slipping as he began moaning with her while they moved together as if they had never been apart. A fresh high started pulsing through him, mixing with desire nicely. He forgot to remind himself to behave, losing himself in the hazy dream of pain, pleasure and Eve mixed together.

"I'm losing it," he whispered after several long minutes of torture that he wanted to last forever if only his body would agree.

"Not yet." She leaned forward, burying her face in the curve of his neck as she arched into him once more, forcing him deeper in her and making the friction almost unbearably pleasurable. "Wait for me, Paul Guy. I like when we do it together. I'll tell you when."

He nodded silently, fighting the urge to bite his tongue as Eve started fucking him faster, forcing his back harder against the wall as she licked and nipped at the sensitive skin in the curve of his neck. Her moans were hot against his skin, making him completely mindless for her. Paul needed her more with every raspy breath, aching for her with every rapid thump of his heart against his ribs.

Eve wrapped her arms around him, her nails digging into stitched-up cuts on his shoulders. "Fuck," he groaned, arching into her completely. "Harder, Evie Girl. Please."

Her nails dug in deeper as she latched on to him brutally, her breathing sharp and ragged, making it obvious she was as mindless as him. "Now," she screamed when her body suddenly seized over him, her pussy pulsing and milking his cock in a way that was impossible to deny.

Eve's teeth sunk into the curve of his neck and Paul's body jerked and obeyed her instantly as pleasure slammed into him so forcefully everything went white from the potency of the bliss pulsing through him. He fought it, knowing what happened at the end of an orgasm like that, but he was more exhausted then he realized and he lost the battle when Eve stopped riding out her own climax. The rush of going from tense to satisfied made the pleasure fade to black from one raspy breath to the next.

"Paul Guy!"

He felt like his body weighed a million pounds and he would have ignored the panicked shout if he hadn't known on some level that it was Eve. It took more strength than he knew he had to blink his eyes open. She was fuzzy around the edges at first, but he saw her eyes wide and horrified as she cupped his face with both hands and he used that as an anchor to force himself awake.

"Are you okay?" she whispered as he continued to blink at her heavily.

"Yeah," he mumbled, still fighting against the exhaustion that had him wanting to black out again. "I just passed out."

"Just passed out," she repeated in disbelief. "Does this happen often? Is this an important safety tip Danny Boy forgot to mention?"

Paul fought the white haze that had him wanting to bite his tongue rather than point out that Danny hadn't mentioned it because he had assumed the two of them would behave and not end up playing around and fucking. The shower had been cold

way past the time Danny would have allowed him to indulge in his fetish after such a brutal beating.

"Sometimes, but not often," he mumbled distractedly, willing the cold spray to wake him up more. "It's been a really long time. That means you're awesome."

Eve laughed. "I want an orgasm that makes me pass out. That's a neat trick."

"Danny doesn't think so," he said, pushing at her lightly and then looking at his watch, finding that they had been in the shower longer than he realized. "Let's go to bed before he shows up. He will be seriously pissed if he finds out we've been sitting in this shower for over two hours and I'm way too sleepy to be punished anymore."

"Yeah, you're not allowed to get into any more trouble," Eve said as she started to untangle herself from him. "Your back needs lots of healing time."

Paul considered that and tilted his head to look behind him. A sinking dread washed over him as he stared down at the threads of blood running from dark red to pink the closer they got to the drain. Knowing Eve would probably wake up Danny and start a drama that would ruin a perfect moment, Paul reached up and helped Eve get shakily to her feet. She wavered where she stood and he had to hold on to her in fear of her falling.

"Go to bed," he whispered, standing up behind her, being careful to keep his back out of her line of sight. "I'll meet you."

"I can't leave you alone in the shower." Eve looked up at him as if he were crazy. "You just passed out."

"Right," Paul said, reaching forward and pushing the shower door open. "Get out. I'm right behind you. We'll go to bed. I'm dead tired. There is no way I am going to work tomorrow. Thank God it's Saturday—people getting free work don't usually complain when I call in sick."

Eve stepped out and grabbed a towel, holding it to her as she stared up at him in concern. "You want a towel?"

"Nope, I like the cold water on my skin," he said, reaching over and turning off the light in Danny's bathroom.

"Whoa," Eve said, leaning into him and grabbing his arm. "I'm dizzy too. This room gets so dark."

Paul wrapped his arms around her as they walked out of the bedroom and toward Danny's bed. "I'm sure you know the way."

"Do you hate me for falling in love with Danny?" Eve asked in a soft voice as she crawled into bed and rolled over to the other side, making plenty of room for him. "I wouldn't have if you had said no."

"I could never hate you," he said as he got into bed next to her. "I love him too. If being with you will help him once I get married, then I'm happy."

"You're sweet," Eve said softly, reaching out to him, tugging on his shoulders and forcing him to lie over her so his cheek was resting in the valley between her breasts.

She stroked his wet hair softly, lulling him into sleep with every loving touch. "I think you're an angel."

He laughed even as his eyes drifted closed from the weight of his exhaustion. "Angels don't wear dog collars."

"Sure, they do," she argued, sounding as tired as he felt. "Studly, silver-spiked ones at that."

"Kinky bitch," he said with a smile against her wet skin.

"Fetish whore," she countered. "This is nice. It'll be the first time you've ever slept with me until morning. I'll get to wake up with you. I always wanted to be able to do that."

Paul thought about his back and winced in reaction to what Danny was going to be like in the morning, but he was suddenly too tired to say anything. The exhaustion caught up with him and he wasn't certain if he passed out or just fell asleep. The last conscious thought he had was to savor the lingering scent of flowers and dark, seductive perfume that seemed to cling to Eve no matter how long she stayed in the shower.

Chapter Sixteen

If there was such a thing as a sexual hangover, Eve had one. She wasn't even sure why she was fighting the heaviness of sleep that had her feeling weighted and paralyzed. Opening her eyes was a challenge she had to work up to. She became aware of other things first, like the feel of Paul sleeping over her and the soft, warm puffs of his breath against the curve of her breast that made her feel like all was right in her world.

The two of them were in the exact same position as when they had fallen asleep. Even her fingers were still tangled in his now-dry hair. The gleam behind her closed eyelids told her it was morning and she pondered when she had ever managed to sleep that deeply without the help of lots of alcohol.

She sighed contently, but a strangely misplaced scent made its way into her clouded senses. Tobacco, Cuban coffee, expensive cologne, Paul never had that refined scent to him. Danny smelled like the city, but Paul smelled of the forest, like sandalwood and all things pure and masculine.

"You two better work faster at waking up," a sharp, furious voice cut through the silence. "Because the longer I stand here, the most pissed off I become."

"Like hell, it's Saturday," Paul moaned, his breath warm against her chest. His exhaustion made his Southern accent more pronounced as he mumbled, "I can't even move and you expect me to wake up. You're fucked."

"Maybe the reason you can't move is because you spent all night bleeding all over my bed," Danny growled in a voice barely containing violence.

Eve felt as if she had just been doused with a hundred gallons of cold water, that's how quickly she jerked from under Paul and blinked up at Danny. "Is he bleeding?"

"Um, yeah," Danny said, his dark eyes swirling in fury. "Big surprise considering his stitches are all fucked up!"

Eve felt her breath rasp out of her in fear and she tried to roll away from Paul but a strong arm suddenly tightened around her waist, holding her in place. Paul lifted his head and stared at Danny. "She didn't know I fucked them up," he said evenly. "Don't take it out on her."

"She didn't know," Danny repeated skeptically as he reached out and grabbed Eve's arm. He held her hand up as evidence. "Look at that, Paul Guy. Tell me she didn't know when she was the one ripping them all apart!"

Eve stared at her hand in horror, seeing blood caked under her fingernails. She felt herself pale the longer she studied her hand while Danny held her wrist in a vise grip. "Oh my God. I hurt him."

"That was maybe one or two stitches at the most," Paul said reasonably. "She was just holding on to me. She didn't know, I swear it, Danny Boy. She had no idea I'd busted the stitches. I didn't tell her. I knew she would have told you."

"What happened to the rest?" Danny whispered, his breath bursting out of him in shallow pants of panic as he looked toward the ceiling. "Please make it good, make it something I won't want to kill him for."

"Shower wall," Paul said with a wince.

"Great," Danny said, making it obvious he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. "The only thing that has more germs than fingernails—a fucking shower wall. Both of you get up."

Danny stormed out of the bedroom to his bathroom and Eve froze in fear as Paul rolled off her. "One night with you and I feel fifteen again," she whispered in panic. "Why didn't you tell me you'd hurt your back? I want to see it."

"No, you don't want to see it," Paul said, rolling onto his back to hide from her. "Stop panicking. Danny's overreacting. He always overreacts."

Eve's eyes grew wide as she stared at the stains of blood on Danny's sheets. How had she missed Paul bleeding that badly? She felt the guilt make its way past the horror and she realized there was a very good reason Danny hadn't wanted them to do anything other than take a quick shower and go to bed. Paul's need for pain made him a danger to himself and he really did need to be with a Master who was trained like Danny was. She had just ended up in the same category as all those Dommes who abused him because they couldn't resist. Eve hadn't resisted last night; she'd never thought to try. Danny's words echoed in her mind, that Paul was too beautiful and obedient. He drove them insane. She realized now why—it had nothing to do with wanting to hurt him and everything to do with him being so very good at what he did that he made thinking about anything other than having him impossible. She had been so enthralled with him, she hadn't even noticed he was bleeding.

Eve rolled out of bed, staring down at Paul in concern as the night before flashed back at her in bright, poignant images that were easier to sort through when she wasn't under the spell of a beautiful angel. "Danny Boy," she called out in alarm. "He passed out while we were doing it."

Paul's eyes grew wide in horror as he gaped up at Eve. "That's not a good plan."

Eve ignored him and turned around to stare at Danny who was glowering in the doorway to the bathroom. "Did you hear me?"

"Oh, I heard you," Danny said in a low, furious voice. "He passed out while you were doing it and you didn't think to wake me up? It never occurred to you that knocking him out might be the makings of an emergency?"

"He said it happens sometimes," Eve mumbled, still staring at Danny with wide, horrified eyes. "Does it?"

"When was the last time you passed out, Paul Guy?"

"I dunno." Paul stretched lazily and rolled over to sit on the edge of the bed. "Six, maybe seven years ago. I still love Circe for that. It was nothing like last night, but that was still a good edge game. Tell me that wasn't a good game."

"For you, yes," Danny said as he walked out of the bathroom and came to stand next to Eve by the bed as he glared down at Paul. "For Circe and me, not so much. Unlike Evie, I freak out when the person I'm fucking passes out. Most sane people do."

"Who's Circe?" Eve asked as she watched Paul get to his feet in a way that made it hard to understand why Danny was so upset.

Paul looked relaxed and comfortable, as if he didn't have a single ache in his body as he said in a bored voice, "Circe in the bane of my existence. Danny was interesting before she got a hold of him."

"Don't say that," Danny growled at him as he gave Paul a disappointed look. "I don't like that. Circe took care of us for a lot of years. Don't disrespect her."

"Yeah, if you like her so much, you go lick her and leave Evie to me," Paul said sullenly. "Just put some alcohol on it and I'll call Jason."

Eve stared at his back in horror when he walked past her, seeing blood caked over the broad expanse of it. Most of the stitches were ripped open, leaving it looking worse than before Danny had fixed it. She covered her mouth with her hands, watching Paul walk to the bathroom as if all was right with the world. "How's he ever going to marry Trisha without her knowing about this?"

"I've been wondering that myself," Danny said darkly as he turned to glare at Eve. "I just realized there's *no one* I can trust him with—no matter how much they claim to love him."

"I'm sorry," she whispered in anguish as tears stung her eyes. "I won't do it again."

Danny stared at her, his eyes still narrowed. Then his shoulders slumped and he shook his head in self-recrimination. "I shouldn't have left you two alone. The mistake was mine. I'm the one who's sorry."

Eve bowed her head, wiping at the tears rolling down her cheeks as Danny followed Paul into the bathroom. She stood there shaking, trying to get a hold of herself as she reeled over everything. In twenty-four hours, her life had just been turned completely upside down and she didn't know how to make sense of it all.

By the time she gathered herself together, she found Danny and Paul in the shower. Danny was pouring alcohol over Paul's back as Paul held on to the silver frame at the top of the open shower door, putting beautiful, muscular arms on display. She stood there, staring at Paul's gorgeous, naked body as she reeled again over what she had discovered about both the men she loved. There was a look of profound pleasure on Paul's face as Danny slowly poured alcohol on his back, making careful work of covering each wound thoroughly. It would seem like a sweet scene if it wasn't for the fact that the light of morning had her realizing how completely bizarre all of this was.

"Who's Circe?" she asked again.

"Bite your tongue, Paul Guy," Danny growled as if sensing something smart-ass from him.

Paul raised his eyebrows as he gave Eve a look that said he had no intention of biting his tongue. He didn't say anything, but he smiled at her in a way that told her he was in a very good mood this morning despite Danny's irritation.

"Circe is the Domme who trained me," Danny went on when he was obviously certain Paul would be quiet. "I realized I had my hands full with him, so I searched for the best Domme I could find and I got her to work with us. She helped me with Paul until she moved to New York six years ago."

"Did you have to pay her?" Eve asked in amazement. "Is there a Domme service you can call up and order like pizza?"

"That's an interesting question," Paul mused thoughtfully. "I wonder if someone could make a living being a professional Dominant."

"Most of her clients paid her," Danny went on with a dark scowl at the back of Paul's head. "But we never did."

"We paid her," Paul said with a laugh as he winked at Eve. "But not with money."

"I see," Eve said, staring at Paul and Danny standing in the shower. Individually, they would make any woman wet and needy, combined they were awe inspiring in their beauty. She could only imagine how they paid her. "Does she teach neat tricks, Paul Guy?"

"Yeah," Paul said with another laugh, his eyes glowing as he stared at Eve. "She taught lots of neat tricks. I spent many, many hours on my knees for Circey."

"As did I," Danny said with wide eyes. "Dear God, that woman's pussy is tattooed into my brain. I think I went straight cock for at least a year after she got married."

"But you miss her," Eve said softly, feeling a rush of jealousy. "You both love her."

"Not like you're thinking," Danny said, leaning down to pour alcohol on one of the cuts on Paul's lower back. "I'd liken her to a mother if that didn't sound totally fucked up. She took care of us and I appreciate her for it. Before her, I'd do stupid things like this because I hadn't learned how to control myself. With Circe as your Mistress, learning to control yourself is *always* the better option. She can be very creative with punishments."

"She really is the bane of my existence. I don't care how many neat tricks she teaches. You used to be interesting, Danny Boy," Paul said sullenly. "You bottoming for Circe was a terrible thing. She broke a perfectly fine Master and turned him into a male version of her. That's so depressing."

"What part of bite your tongue aren't you getting?"

"I told him I didn't want him to bite his tongue anymore," Eve whispered, staring at Danny defiantly when his head jerked up to gape at her over Paul's shoulder. "It does lots of nice things. Biting it is a sin against nature."

"I see," Danny said slowly, looking back down at Paul's back. "Putting old skills to good use, Paul Guy?"

"Yeah," Paul said softly, staring at Eve longingly, causing a shiver of desire to roll over her skin. "Keep Circe away from Evie. I want her to remain interesting."

Danny rolled his eyes and then looked over Paul's shoulder at Eve. "Open the medical kit for me. I can't send him to Jason like this. He's still bleeding." He looked back to Paul's back with a look of absolute disdain. "What a mess, Paul Guy. This pisses me off. I can't believe you fucked up all these stitches for an orgasm."

"It was a really good orgasm," Paul said with a devious smile as he stared at Eve once more. "You can do whatever you want and it'll still have been worth it. It was right up there, in the top three for sure. I'm gonna remember it forever."

Danny got out of the shower and Eve turned on the sink so he could wash his hands and then turned back to stare at Paul inquisitively. The idea of Paul and Danny living a secret life would never stop being intriguing even if it was more than a little twisted.

"What were the other two?" Eve asked curiously as she grabbed the medical kit off the counter and opened it for Danny.

Paul shrugged, his body still relaxed and casual, making it obvious he was in an extremely good mood this morning. "Well, I suppose I'll have to tie our first time and my first time with Danny as number two. Those were both awesome. I can't put one in front of the other."

Eve watched the way Danny stopped washing his hands as his entire body tensed. She could see the shock on his face and the shimmer of hope swirling in his dark eyes, but it was obvious he didn't want to give himself away to Paul as he asked casually, "What was number one?"

"Last night," Paul said as if it were obvious. "Being with the two people I love more than anything. It doesn't get better than that. Two of the best orgasms of my life in the same night, no wonder I passed out. I'm still tired. I think I need coffee this morning."

Eve studied Danny, knowing Paul was oblivious to the internal struggle going on right before his eyes. Danny was frozen there, his hands held motionless under the running water as his dark eyes glimmered, making Eve realize Danny had never known Paul truly loved him. Somehow, with all the years they had spent together, that one admission had been missing in a way that had Danny believing what seemed blatantly obvious to Eve.

"Do you want some coffee?" Danny finally asked, his hands still unmoving under the running water. "I can make you some."

"Don't worry about it. You've already washed your hands," Paul said, looking at the sink pointedly as his arms still rested against the top of the shower. "I can just pick some up on the way to the doctor."

"No," Danny said as he flipped off the water. "Washing my hands is easy and you'll pick up something dreadful from a gas station or something. I'll make you some good coffee and then I can fix your back in the kitchen while you're drinking it."

"Okay," Paul said with a frown at Danny. "But that was sort of a one-eighty. I thought you were pissed at me."

"I am," Danny said, sounding unconvincing. "But I'll deal with it later. I don't want to be an asshole this morning. I need coffee too."

"So, you're going to hit me when I least expect it? That's exciting."

"Sure, we'll go with that," Danny said distantly as he closed the medical kit. He turned to look from Paul to Eve, his eyes dazed and shining, making him seem near tears. "You guys need to put clothes on. You're distracting. I can't stitch up his back if you're both walking around naked."

"You think we're sexy," Paul said in a smooth, sensual voice Eve had learned from experience was the promise of wonderful things. "You want us on our knees."

"Yeah, Paul Guy," Danny said, turning around to eye Paul still holding on to the top of the shower, showing off his muscular, naked body without an ounce of inhibition. "I think you're sexy." He turned to look at Eve, his eyes running over her, sending shivers down her spine. "You too, Evie. Both of you are sexy. You need to put clothes on before I forget everything Circe taught me."

"That's not a good way to talk me into getting dressed. You forget everything Circe taught you and I'll stay naked for you all day," Paul hummed in the same husky voice as he stepped out of the shower. "We think you're sexy too, Danny Boy, very sexy – too sexy. You are trouble with a capital T for straight guys like me."

"Right," Danny whispered as Paul walked past him with a spring in his step. "I'm the one who's trouble."

* * * * *

"Have you really dominated other people besides Paul Guy?"

Danny stopped washing the dishes and turned to frown at Eve, who was eating breakfast, making far slower work of it than Paul had before he left for the doctor. Danny was wishing he had told Eve to go with Paul rather than keeping her there with him because without Paul around things were suddenly awkward with a lot of difficult questions hanging in the air.

"I dominate you," he said, turning back around and scrubbing the pan in the sink rather than look at her. "What did you think I was doing when I had you on your knees calling me Master?"

"That's not what I was asking," Eve said softly and Danny could feel her glare even with his back turned. "And don't even think about being a smart-ass when you answer. Making Paul reveal his secrets and keeping yours quiet when you know it's your fault he went apeshit over those cuffs is fucked up."

"I made him reveal those secrets for his own good," Danny said as he set the pan aside, finding that he had finished the dishes and had to just stand there with the water running to hide from Eve. "It worked out nicely for him. I haven't seen him in this good of a mood in years."

"Fine, you're going to be difficult," Eve said, making it obvious she was irritated with him. "Let's try something easier – gay, straight or bi?"

"Bi—I like sex, it doesn't make a difference to me if it's with cock or pussy."

"Did you fuck around with guys in high school?"

"Yes," Danny said with a smile to himself he was glad Eve couldn't see. "Football players are such suckers, with all that tackling and ass smacking they were halfway there. Straight guys are such fun, broadening their minds is my specialty."

"Paul Guy was on the football team."

"Was he? I hadn't noticed."

"Did you fuck around with my boyfriend in high school?"

"Nope." Danny turned off the water rather than leave it running for no reason. "I tormented other straight football players because it was easier to pretend they were your boyfriend when they were dressed up like him."

"That makes you sort of an asshole, Danny Boy."

"I'm not denying that. You're the one having a hard time grasping it." Danny turned around to lean against the sink, folding his arms over his bare chest as he stared down at Eve, who sitting at the kitchen table in one of Paul's football jerseys with a barely touched plate of food in front of her. "Ask me why I didn't fuck with your boyfriend in high school."

She raised her eyebrows, meeting his eyes evenly with a serious expression that looked misplaced on her face. "Why?"

"Because I loved you too much to hurt you like that," Danny admitted with a pain in his chest that had him wanting to start drinking before noon. Between Eve and Paul, he was emotionally drained. "I loved both of you enough to let you have each other and just watch from the sidelines. I hated high school."

"You were a god in high school. I mean, really, no one should be that popular. You were a fucking rock star."

"Being popular just made it worse. Being able to have anyone but the two people I really wanted was horrible," Danny said in anguish, the pain in his chest getting worse as he found himself admitting things to Eve he had kept hidden from everyone. "I thought loving someone and not having them was the worst feeling in the world for a lot of years, but even that misery wasn't enough. Having someone you love and then losing them is a thousand times more painful. First my mom, just one day she's dead, no closure, no chance to tell her how much I loved her. Now Paul Guy is getting married and leaving me after nine years of living and breathing for him. Beauty is

overrated and God knows it. He's been playing jokes on me my entire life, being good looking is just one of many. Popular or not, high school sucked for me."

Eve stared at Danny pensively as he pulled his cigarettes out of his pocket. He lit one, needing to calm his nerves. He took a long drag off his cigarette and tilted his head back to blow smoke toward the ceiling, staring at the plumes of it billow around the fan rather than see the look of disappointment in Eve's eyes.

"The devil is the most beautiful angel," Eve mused quietly, repeating his words from the night before. "Do you really think you've fallen?"

"Sure," he said with an incredulous laugh, wondering what it would be like to be sweet and kind like Eve to the point that she failed to see the obvious. "Did you think I decorated Paul Guy's back because he loves it?"

"Yes, actually."

"I never planned for that to happen, not even close. What you saw last night was done because I was angry," he admitted, taking another long drag off his cigarette and blowing smoke at her pointedly. "I was jealous because getting you to love me didn't change things any more than spending nine years catering to him did. I wasn't prepared for how desperate you two got for each other and it had me seeing red. I wanted to knock him off his feet. I wanted to have a reason to keep you away from each other. I literally ripped the man I love to shreds because I couldn't bear the idea of you two loving each other more than you love me."

"Well, you were wrong to think that," Eve whispered, looking at him sadly. "He loves you as much as he loves me—but I think you've realized that this morning."

"Yeah, after the fact was a perfect time to tell me. Nine years and he chooses now to tell me and he doesn't even realize that I would literally die inside when I had to stare at his back and see what I did," Danny said with a sad shake of his head. "We'll just add that to the list of jokes God has played on me. Too little, too late has to be right up there."

"I don't know how to help you, Danny Boy," Eve said with wide eyes as she pushed her plate away distractedly. "I love you, I want to help you—but I don't know how."

"Don't let him marry her," he barked at her, thinking it was obvious. He looked away from Eve and took another long drag off his cigarette when he felt his eyes sting. He blew out the smoke shakily and closed his eyes to fight the tears. "Talk him out of it now because once he marries her it'll be too late. If he swears to love and honor her in a church, with his father as witness to it, he will be the most loyal and faithful husband in the entire world. He will never cheat, he will never do *anything* to betray Trisha. Him getting married will make him untouchable to both of us forever. He's not leaving Eden in four months—we are."

"How am I supposed to do that?" Eve gave a mirthless laugh, her green eyes shimmering with tears as she looked around the kitchen in a daze. "He let me go to

New York alone when I was eighteen years old rather than piss off his father. What makes you think I can do now what I couldn't do ten years ago?"

"Because this time it's forever. He gets married and you lose him for the rest of your life," Danny said as he walked over to the table and tapped his cigarette against his ashtray. "I've never seen him rebel like he did last night. I didn't know he could. If you can get him to do it with me, then maybe you can get him to do it with his father. He's Paul's real Master."

"Yeah, that's easy," Eve snorted. "You're not asking much at all."

"You'll never know unless you try," he said as he sat down next to her and then reached out, grabbing one of her small hands in his. "I'm asking you to do this for me, Evie Girl. Please."

Eve stared at him, her eyes still swimming pools of green. "Have you been using me to manipulate Paul Guy into breaking up with Trisha? Are you that much of a devil? Did you plan this all along? Was everything you did part of the grand design?"

He met her eyes evenly, knowing she would be able to see his honesty. "I seduced you because I love you. No matter what, I want to spend the rest of my life with you. But if you're asking me if I dropped a pair of leather cuffs in Paul Guy's room with the slim hope that bringing you into the game would convince him that Eden is as overrated as beauty—I sure did. I knew he wanted you because I had to whip the fuck out of him so he'd let you go."

Eve took a shuddering breath and pulled her hand out of his to cover her eyes. She rested her elbows on the table and took several deep breaths before she whispered. "I want to know how much you made for dominating people. This is fucked-up shit. I need to know what you got paid to do it."

"Two thousand dollars an hour," he said with a bitter smile she couldn't see as she placed both hands over her face to hide from him. "Plus expenses."

"Are you joking?" Eve whispered in amazement.

"No," he said simply as he took another long drag off his cigarette and tapped it against the ashtray. "Why would that be a joke? Time, sweat, money, they're all easy to give up. That's why people like Paul Guy work for free whenever someone comes crying to them that they can't pay a lawyer. Try sacrificing your humanity for something, that's much more difficult. Hiring a devil will always be expensive, it's supposed to be."

"Did you sleep with them?" Eve asked, her body tense as she continued to speak into her hands over her face. "Did you fuck people who were paying you?"

"That's what bothers you? Not that I was mentally and physically abusing people, the fucking is the issue?"

"I just want to know," Eve whispered in anguish.

"If a slave appealed to me I might consider fucking them. Most didn't appeal to me and never got the chance to work for the privilege of sucking my cock, let alone getting

off on it. I very rarely fucked a client. I had Paul Guy at home. He's fucking gorgeous. He'll do anything I tell him and do it better than any of those other slaves could ever hope to. He's completely obedient unless he's playing a game with Evie on his team. Do you think they could compete with him?"

"Did they enjoy being dominated and abused by you?"

"You offered to sell me your soul last night to cater to your fetish," Danny said with a smug smile. "In comparison, two thousand dollars an hour is a steal. I could have charged ten thousand dollars and still had clients knocking down my door. Paying me an outrageous amount was part of the high. I was making them suffer just by handing them a bill and they loved it."

"Oh my God, that makes sense," Eve whispered softly as she lowered her hands and stared at him in shock. "This twisted shit makes sense to me. What have you done to me?"

"I've corrupted you," he said with a bitter laugh as he put out his cigarette. "It's what I do."

"You didn't make regular people pay you that much, did you?" Eve asked pleadingly, making it obvious she was searching for some scrap of decency in him. "Please tell me people weren't mortgaging their houses to see you in leather pants. You're not that evil."

"No, I'm not that evil," he admitted reluctantly because he almost preferred her seeing him as evil. Sometimes he battled with the strange urge to protect Eve from everything dangerous, even him. "My clients could all easily afford what I charged. I catered to the very wealthy. Good male Dominants are hard to find, especially ones who swing both ways and are handsome enough to appear worthy to serve. Circe really is the best Domme in this country. Anyone who swings in upper scale circles knows her. Being trained by Circe and then being Paul's Master when everyone knows Paul Guy because he's not just beautiful, he's got this insane pain tolerance any other slave would die for made me a valuable commodity. I had to start taking clients because they wouldn't leave me alone. I wanted to abuse them just to get them to shut up. I still get emails. None of them seem to understand the meaning of retired."

"Did you retire because of me?"

"I should say yes." Danny studied Eve, seeing signs of hope in her eyes and knowing it would be easy to prey on it, but he loved her and couldn't be anything less than honest. "But no, I retired almost a year ago. I knew Paul was going to get married and I didn't want to miss one moment of being with him. It didn't work out well. I was trying to be with him while I still could and Paul was trying to break the addiction. I was miserable and I didn't even have clients to take it out on. Then out of the blue you came back and not only did I get to fall in love all over again, but I got Paul Guy's attention. He's been all over me since the first night you showed up. I still can't believe my luck. This will probably end up being God's cruelest joke. That's the only possible explanation."

"I won't let it be a joke," Eve whispered as tears rolled down her cheeks. "I can't promise you I can talk Paul Guy into breaking up with Trisha, but I will promise you I won't leave you lonely. Thanks to my mother, I know the Bible. I knew when you told me to bite the apple it was a make-or-break deal. You won't leave Eden alone—it's impossible. Like it or not, you're stuck with me forever."

He nodded as he finally lost his own battle against tears. "Okay," he whispered and then wrapped his arms around Eve when she suddenly leaned into him, her tears warm against the curve of his neck as she buried her face there. He leaned down, inhaling the scent of flowery shampoo as he tried to find peace with the fact that holding on to half of his soul was better than losing all of it. "So we'll give Paul Guy the time of his life and then we'll be miserable together if it ends up being over. That's much more than I expected."

Danny sat there with Eve at the kitchen table, holding on to her and feeling some of the tension drain out of him when he realized she still loved him despite what he told her. It was little wonder Paul was in such a good mood. It was a freeing feeling to come out of a very dark closet without retribution. He understood it now after getting his own secrets off his chest without fury or hatred from Eve. They had both exposed themselves to her and she had accepted them unconditionally. Combined with the fact that Paul had made it blatantly obvious he did love Danny had him wondering if there was really hope for fallen angels.

"What happened to your accent? How come you're so refined when you're the only one out of us who never went to college?" Eve asked, making it obvious the conversation got too intense and she was searching for a change of topic. "I will never understand that, I go away for ten years and suddenly you're this classy guy that likes wine and Beethoven. High school Danny Boy would die at the idea of listening to classical music and now your iPod is full of it. Don't think I haven't noticed. I saw opera on there too."

"I've been servicing rich, spoiled fetish whores for years," Danny said in annoyance as he wiped at the tears on his cheeks hastily and took a deep breath to clear his head. "You think they're going to pay some fool with a hick accent to dominate them? When in Rome, Evie, and I'll have you know there is nothing wrong with opera. My life is a fucking opera. The agony of it speaks to me."

Eve suddenly laughed, her whole body shaking against him. "I think I just figured out what's different about you."

He surprised himself by laughing with her despite the riot of emotions he was still dealing with. He wrapped his arms more tightly around Eve, clinging to her because she always exuded happiness and comfort that would never stop being addicting. "That makes you brilliant."

"Shut up, don't make fun of me," she said, still laughing against him. "You'll make me angry."

"Be angry," he said, laughing harder. "I don't give a shit. Angry puppies are still cute puppies. Growl at me all day if you feel like it, but don't start crying when I make you suffer for it."

"Am I messing with the wrong angel?"

"Yes," he said warningly. "For this particular angel, making you angry is the goal, not the punishment. Don't get too angry, I'll start charging."

"Then forget it, you're forgiven," Eve said, pulling back to stare at him with dancing eyes still shimmering with tears. "'Cause I don't have two thousand dollars."

"Yeah, you do," he said with a warm smile as he studied Eve's beautiful face. "What's mine is yours, Evie Girl. You're loaded. It still makes my mind reel that a beer-drinking redneck like my father was able to make as much as he did in real estate. That's what I've been trying to tell you, people are such suckers."

"You really have a hard time believing your father was able to manipulate people and make a fortune in real estate?" Eve asked, staring at him in disbelief. "You don't see yourself in him at all?"

Danny bristled, gazing at her in horror for one long moment to see if she was being serious. Seeing Eve was being completely honest, he looked down at his bare chest, admiring his smooth, tan skin from his Cuban mother as a reminder that he would never be his father. "Are you calling me a redneck?"

"I'm calling you half a redneck," Eve said with another laugh. "There's beer in the fridge and fishing poles on the porch to prove it and no amount of opera on your iPod will let you deny it."

Danny had to give her that as he considered both the beer and the fishing pole. "Actually, it's Saturday and the dishes are done. Both of those sound really appealing."

"If you want to fish and drink beer before noon, I won't tell anyone," Eve said with a mischievous smile. "I'll even go redneck with you. I believe there are three poles on that porch, one of which has my name on it."

"There *are* three poles on the porch," he said decisively, knowing Paul would be back soon from the doctor. "Paul Guy's fishing with us today when he gets home. It's been ages since he's fished and he's the real redneck. He loves beer and fishing more than we ever could. We're going to get trashed and fish until it gets dark and he'll love it."

"That sounds like a plan," Eve said, her voice becoming soft and nostalgic. "It's been way too long since the three of us have fished together. I think we'd all enjoy it."

"You're absolutely right." Danny smiled as he also became nostalgic, remembering a time when happiness was as simple as having two best friends to fish with on a Saturday afternoon. "We would enjoy it."

Chapter Seventeen

"Are you sure you can't make dinner? Daddy wanted to discuss wedding details."

Paul winced, thankful Trisha couldn't see him as he held his cell phone closer to his ear. "I want to," he started, feeling his face flush because lying this blatantly never got easier. "I've just got so much work. Can you discuss the details without me? I like what you like. Whatever you decide will be perfect."

"You're sweet," Trisha said softly, disappointment lingering in her voice. "I worry about you working so much. It's been really insane these last few months for you. I don't know how you do it."

"Yeah," he said, looking around as he stopped at a stop sign. "I feel terrible for letting you down again. Maybe you should marry someone else."

Trisha laughed. "You're being too hard on yourself."

"No, I don't think I am," he admitted, closing his eyes in misery for one long moment.

"Your work is important," she said firmly. "Don't worry about dinner. We can just go over everything at lunch tomorrow. Are we still on for that?"

"Absolutely," he said quickly, shifting gears as he balanced his cell phone between his ear and shoulder with practiced ease. "Let's go somewhere nice. Can you get an extra half an hour off?"

"Sure," she said, a smile in her voice. "Lunch is the only time we see each other anymore. Where'd you want to go?"

"You pick it and I'll pay for it."

She laughed again. "Could be expensive."

"I think I can handle it," Paul said, still completely unable to shake the guilt overwhelming him. "Maybe we can do something Sunday. Would you like that?"

"I thought Sundays were Danny days," Trisha said in irritation. "He's so childish, Paul. Does he really think us getting married is going to ruin your friendship? Why is he clinging to you like this?"

"He has separation issues," Paul explained evenly. "His mother dying fucked him up. He's always waiting for the world to end."

"I don't think he likes me."

"As a general rule, Danny doesn't like anyone," Paul said with a grimace. "He's sort of an asshole."

"Sort of?"

"Fine, he's a full-fledged asshole," Paul admitted reluctantly. "But he has his good points."

"He hasn't gone to be fitted for his tux," Trisha said in irritation. "I don't know why he's procrastinating. He's your best man. He can't show up to our wedding in jeans."

"The wedding is two months away. He has plenty of time. He'll do it."

"You know how I feel about leaving things to the last minute."

"It'll all be fine," Paul said soothingly as he turned down the long road that led to his house. "Listen, I'm almost home. I'm going to eat dinner and start on all this work. Call me when you get home from your parents, okay?"

Paul parked his car and hung up after one final goodbye. He stared at the house surrounded by a setting sun that had turned everything fiery red. As usual the trees were still. Breezes very rarely blew this far inland and there was eeriness in the crisp November air. Paul used to love autumn in Florida, when the air got cooler and the bugs were less of an annoyance, but this autumn an air of impending doom hung over him. He found himself missing the hot, muggy heat of summer that had swept Eve back into their lives. Every day that ticked by brought him closer to a lifetime devoid of the two people he could profess love to without having to pretend. Planning his wedding felt like making funeral arrangements and it was that more than anything that had him avoiding it.

Paul looked from Danny's shiny black Shelby Cobra, to Eve's beat-up blue Escort she continued to cling to despite both Paul and Danny begging her to scrap it. It was always in the driveway when he got home, because somewhere along the way Eve had managed to move in. It wasn't anything they had discussed, it had just happened. After that first game the three of them had played together, Eve had never really gone home. Slowly but surely all her belongings had been moved over to the house as she packed one overnight bag after the other and never bothered to bring the things back to her parents' place.

Paul had been trying to find a way to break it to Trisha that he had a new roommate, but nothing he had come up with sounded convincing. No matter that everyone knew Danny and Eve were a couple, it was still strange Eve was living with Paul when the two of them had a history. Danny would seem like the biggest idiot in the world to bring his girlfriend into a house with her ex-boyfriend. Trisha had a lot of negative opinions about Danny, but being an idiot wasn't one of them.

Paul grabbed his briefcase and got out of the car slowly, his body tightening in anticipation. No amount of guilt could stop him from yearning for what was on the inside of that house bathed in a blood-red, autumn sunset. He looked forward to getting home all day. Quite the opposite of what Trisha believed, Paul had cut his pro-bono work in half just to have more time in the haven of his house that left him feeling as if nothing could touch him. Behind closed doors, happiness was eternal, a perpetual Eden that he didn't want to slip through his fingers.

The leaves from the oak trees in the front yard crunched under his designer shoes and he kicked at them, hating them for their reminder that New Year's was rushing at him quickly. He knew he'd have to clean them up because Danny would never do it. Danny hated working in the yard. Paul was fairly certain he didn't even know how a lawnmower worked and he had to wonder what the yard would look like once he moved out, but he refused to dwell on that thought too much. He'd probably have a mental breakdown if he did.

"Hey," he called out when he opened the door and kicked it closed as he set his briefcase near the door. "What's going on?"

"Nothing," Danny said from the kitchen. "Eve's painting—as usual."

"Dear God," Paul groaned, rubbing a hand over his face as he walked into the kitchen. "If my family ever sees those pictures I'm a dead man. This house is a disaster waiting to happen. It's a vipers' nest."

"I put a lock on the door to her room," Danny said with a shrug. "No one's going to see them. Want a beer?"

"Yes," Paul said as he sat down at the table. "I've got anxiety. I have to tell Trisha Eve's living here because if she finds out without my telling her I'll look guilty."

"You *are* guilty," Danny said as he set a cold beer in front of Paul. "You fuck Eve every chance you can get."

"I know that," Paul snapped at him as he opened his beer on the edge of the table, using more force than necessary to pop the cap off. "You've got to go get fitted for that tux, Danny Boy. I'm sick of hearing her bitch about it."

"I'm not going to that wedding, let alone participating in it," Danny said with a snort. "I never agreed to be your best man, she just assumed."

"Talk about looking guilty," Paul growled, turning around to glare at Danny. "You're my best friend. You've got to be my best man. It'll look like you're sulking if you don't."

"I will be sulking."

"Oh my God," Paul whispered, looking toward the ceiling and then taking a long drink of his beer. "You skip my wedding and the two of us will scream queer. You have to go, I'm begging you."

"I'm not going," Danny said simply as he grabbed his cigarettes off the kitchen table and lit one. He flopped down next to Paul, taking a long drag off his cigarette and blowing the smoke at him. "You might as well stop arguing because I will never stand there and watch you marry that cunt. I'd kill myself first."

"I need something stronger than beer," Paul moaned, setting the bottle down. He leaned his elbows against the table and hid his face in his hands. He had no idea what to do about Danny. Once he made up his mind about something it was nearly impossible to change it. He was legitimately fucked over the best man issue because there was not a single excuse he could come up with that logically explained why his

best friend since kindergarten was refusing to go to his wedding. Danny was going to appear to be just what he was—an angry, scorned lover. “You really are a full-fledged asshole.”

“I don’t like that,” Danny said in a singsong voice as the scent of smoke wafted over Paul, making it obvious he had blown it at him on purpose. “Slaves who call their Masters assholes get punished.”

Paul peeked through the small gap in his fingers, watching Danny as he took another long drag off his cigarette and then parted his lips, letting the smoke waft past them slowly. His body tightened and his cock got hard without warning, pushing away the anxiety that had become his constant companion.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered softly, letting his hands fall against the table as he let his eyes run over Danny, who was bare-chested and barefoot as usual, wearing only a pair of well-worn jeans. Paul took a shuddering breath as he admired him with a dazed, hungry gaze he couldn’t hide. “I’m *really* sorry.”

“Yeah?” Danny asked, a smirk tugging at his lips as he stared back at Paul just as boldly. “What’re you going to do about it?”

“What do you want?” Paul countered.

Danny slouched lower in the chair, stretching out his long legs in front of him as his dark eyes swirled with mischief. “Why don’t you get naked and then we’ll discuss it?”

Paul reached up, tugging at his tie, his eyes never leaving Danny as he smiled. “Sure.”

* * * * *

An hour later, Paul tugged on his own pair of jeans and made his way to Eve’s bedroom that hadn’t been slept in since the first night she had crashed back into their lives in a way only Eve could. He opened the door without knocking, leaning back against it as he glanced around the room with a look of disdain he couldn’t hide.

Both Paul and Danny had given up on trying to bring order to the chaos surrounding Eve. They picked up after her when it came to the rest of the house, with Danny bitching every time he found Eve’s clothes on the floor and Paul snatching up whatever he found just to save her from Danny’s wrath. Combined, they managed to somewhat subdue Hurricane Eve, but in this room there was nothing to be done. Paul was secretly convinced Danny had put a lock on the door to hide the mess, not the artwork.

Paul stared at the floor, seeing paint stains on the hardwood that were new. He walked in without invitation and silently picked up a discarded shirt, one of Danny’s older ones. He turned it right side out as Eve stood there painting with white earphones in her ears. The shirt was covered in paint and Paul winced internally, wondering if Danny would notice if he just threw it away before he discovered Eve had ruined yet another one of his shirts.

"You need to start wearing my shirts to paint in," Paul mumbled as he bent down and worked at picking up the rest of the room out of instinct. Paper towels covered in paint, discarded pieces of papers with sketches and notes on them and several glasses were littered around the room, some were filled with half-empty drinks Eve had gotten and then forgotten, but most glasses were filled with water dyed murky brown from the merging of various paint colors when Eve rinsed her brushes. "Did you hear me, Evie Girl? He is going to freak when he sees this shirt. Not to mention the floor. Why is there paper everywhere but underneath where you're painting?"

"What?" Eve shouted, speaking loudly over the music only she could hear as she turned around from her easel and gave him a beaming smile. "Hey, Paul Guy!"

Paul returned her smile as he studied her standing there in another one of Danny's shirts covered with paint and rolled-up khaki shorts. Her long hair hung in a thick braid down her back, with red wisps framing her face and neck. He couldn't deny that she looked adorably disheveled. Unable to resist, he reached out and rubbed at a streak of black paint on her forehead with his thumb. "You've got paint on your face."

She brushed his hand away, unconcerned with the paint and then turned back around to the painting she was working on. This one was of Danny, which was a small relief, because Paul had been her favorite subject for the previous four and the two before those had featured both Danny and Paul. He turned around, looking to the stacks of large canvases against the wall. They were covered, but Paul knew what each one looked like, having watched them slowly bloom to life.

Eve's voyeur fetish had developed into a strangely impassioned drive to encapsulate with her art all of what she found so compelling about watching the two of them. She was somehow capable of capturing the most beautiful and seductive parts of the games Paul and Danny played with paint and photographs. Even with the panic caused from knowing that the paintings captured him in full slave mode doing things he never wanted evidence of, Paul had to admit he had never seen more raw artistic genius.

He wrapped his arms around Eve, leaning down to rest his chin on her shoulder as he admired her painting. Danny was standing in the grass, surrounded by trees and a lake, the backdrop clearly their backyard. Minus the house, the scenery was exotic and untamed with the marshy grass rising out of the lake and the tall cypress trees hanging with silvery Spanish moss. But that wasn't what was so majestic about the painting. It was Danny, barefoot, and bare-chested, wearing only his leather pants and a whip draped around his neck. Somehow, she was capable of illustrating Danny's dark, sexual presence in a way that made the painting captivating.

Paul leaned in closer, staring at the whip and seeing it was actually a long, deadly black snake on closer inspection. It was strange illusions like that, which made Eve's art so incredible. Things were never as they really appeared and it made her paintings fascinating for more than just the sheer scale of her talent. She captured images and brought them to life in a way that was almost eerie. Paul knew Danny better than anyone and he was getting mental whiplash staring at the picture, because she captured

more than his image, she had harnessed the dark essence of his soul that made him such an amazing Master.

"You ought to ask Danny for a list of his clients," Paul mumbled, still awestruck with the painting because she was nearly done with it despite having started it only a few days ago. "I know one of them would buy this."

"What?" Eve shouted, her voice still unnaturally loud as she spoke over her earphones.

Paul laughed and reached up to tug one of her earphones out of her ear. "I bet one of Danny's clients would buy this painting," he repeated. "They'd probably pay a mint for it?"

"I can't sell it," she said, turning around to frown at Paul. "It'd be like selling my soul."

Paul rolled his eyes. "This is why artists starve to death. What's the use of having talent like this if you can't profit off it?"

"These are just hobby paintings."

"Hell of a hobby," Paul snorted. "You haven't painted anything but leather and bondage for two months. You're broke. Ask Danny for a list of his clients, sell the painting and use the money to buy a new car."

"My car runs. I don't know why you two have such a problem with it," Eve said, turning around to frown at him once more. "You're in jeans. Did you do it without me?"

"Yes," Paul said with a smirk, arching an eyebrow at her. "You and Danny did it without me while I was at work. You always do."

"True," Eve said without remorse, turning back around to her painting. She swiped her brush against her paint palette and then leaned over and started working on a tree standing in the distance. This was one that was different, with the look of a fruit tree despite the fact she had yet to add the fruit. It appeared oddly out of place in the wild, swampy landscape. "Tree of Life," she explained, obviously reading his confusion without seeing his face. "It's supposed to be different. That's what makes it compelling. A temptation."

"I get it," he mumbled, standing behind her and watching her work on the tree with a small brush, using painstaking detail, making it obvious that though it was in the distance, this was a key part of the painting. "When are you going to get tired of all this Garden of Eden stuff?"

"Whenever I'm done with the series. Eve's Temptation. That's what I'm calling it."

"Why call it anything if you're not going to sell it?"

"Do you want me to sell your paintings, Paul Guy?" Eve asked blandly. "You want paintings with you dressed up as a slave out there hanging on people's walls?"

"I wouldn't mind," he surprised himself by admitting. "It's better than having them lying around this house. Besides, they're just paintings. There's nothing to prove I

actually posed for them. I could play dumb if my family ever found out. You should sell them, all of them, including the ones of me. Good fetish art is hard to find and demands high prices. There are lots of collectors who would go insane over these paintings. Make money for your genius. As a business attorney, I'm advising you that not selling them is a very poor financial decision."

"What about the photographs?" Eve asked, looking to the long laundry lines strung over one side of the room. Rows upon rows of pictures were clipped to them, some were color, most were black and white and all were enough to have Paul longing for something much stronger than beer to drink away the anxiety they caused. Eve, however, sighed as she stared at them, "You're both beautiful. Surely fetish art collectors would love them. You want me to sell those too? Is that your advice as a business attorney?"

"No," he said firmly. "I can't believe we let you take them. I have a very strong urge to burn them."

"Hey," Eve growled, turning around to glare at him. "That's my art!"

"It's photographic evidence of Danny and me playing the game and fucking," Paul countered, staring at her incredulously as he pointed to the pictures decorating Eve's room. Each one was more damning than the next, capturing all the darkest sides of their relationship without an ounce of censorship. "I need to have my head examined for letting you take them. These could ruin me. I'm supposed to be a politician. Trisha would leave me in two seconds if she saw them."

"If that's the case, I'll mail her the whole collection," Eve mumbled under her breath as she turned back around, dismissing him as she started working on her painting. "She can have the paintings too. Forget selling them, they'll be parting gifts to Trisha for releasing you from your personal version of hell."

"That's not funny," Paul said, folding his arms over his bare chest as he glared down at her. "Please don't joke about that."

"You'll never be happy with her. You should come out of the closet to end it," Eve sighed. "Come clean, live your life without secrets. If people don't love you for who you are, then fuck 'em."

"That's really easy for you to say," Paul said bitterly. "I'm not you. I can't just tell my parents to kiss my ass."

"You could."

"No, I can't," he said, rubbing a hand over his face as the anxiety that had been held back by playing with Danny returned with a vengeance. "My father would kill me if he saw these pictures. I'm really not exaggerating. He would shoot me without even blinking."

Eve was silent for a moment before she turned around and looked at him with sad eyes. "I won't show them to anyone, you know that. I don't even want to sell the paintings. I just want you to leave her. We could tell your family we got back together. They don't have to know Danny's involved too. Would your father kill you for breaking

up with Trisha? I don't think so. People break up all the time. I broke up with my fiancé and the world didn't end. Why can't you marry me if you need someone to play normal with?"

"Evie," Paul said, resting a hand on his forehead as he looked down at her in anguish. "I have to marry her. I'm committed to it. Can't we just enjoy each other while we still can?"

Eve looked away from him and dropped her paintbrush into a glass jar filled with water. She covered her face with her hands, her shoulders wilting as she hunched down in front of him, looking broken.

"He wouldn't kill you," she mumbled into her hands. "That's an exaggeration, you know it."

"He'd disown me. I'd never speak to anyone in my family again, not my brothers, not even my mother. You know she sides with him on everything. She never stood up for us, not even when we were babies. I'd be a total outcast."

"Your family is completely dysfunctional. You're better off without them. Danny and I are your real family. You don't have to hide with us."

"Please don't," he whispered softly, making his voice seductive on purpose as he wrapped his arms around her once more. He leaned down, placing a kiss in the curve of her neck. "You can take as many pictures as you want. Just don't be upset. I hate when you're upset."

"I am upset," she choked, tears sounding in her voice. "I'm always upset. I'm going to lose you again. It's not fair."

"I know it's not," he breathed against her neck as he trailed his lips up to her ear. He slid his hands under her shirt, running them over the smooth plane of her stomach as he pulled her closer to him. "Tell me what you want."

"I want you to marry me instead of her," Eve said, her head falling back against his shoulder. She reached behind her, threading her fingers into his hair and holding his face to the curve of her neck as he continued to kiss and lick her soft skin. "I want you to stay with me—always."

"What else?" he asked, feeling as if his heart was shattering inside his chest. "What can I give you now?"

"Just make it go away," she choked, making it obvious she was crying. "Find a way to make the pain go away. Make me forget I'm going to die in two months."

"Okay," he said as he reached down and tugged at her shirt. Eve lifted her arms, letting him pull it off her and tossed it on the floor. He leaned back and unhooked her bra, pushing it off her arms as Eve tossed her iPod in the tray of her easel. Then he turned her around, wrapping his arms around her waist and pulling her close to him. Pleasure shimmered down his spine from feeling her bare breasts pressed against his chest. He leaned down, his lips a breath away from hers and whispered, "I'm sorry."

Her eyes closed, making tears roll down her cheeks. "I know."

He kissed the tears off her cheeks, groaning from the terrible combination of love, desire and pain that came from hurting the girl he had loved for as long as he could remember. He hated his life, hated that this was happening to the two of them all over again. He was as desperate to erase his pain as hers. He kissed her in wild desperation to have the lust wash away the agony.

Eve moaned, her fingers lacing into his hair as her lips parted to his hotly, making it obvious she was searching for the same release from nostalgic heartache that was a thousand times worse the second time. His tongue swept into her mouth as he let his hands roam over her body, cupping her breasts, his thumbs brushing against her rosy nipples that tightened from his touch.

Eve's head fell back, breaking the kiss as she tugged at his hair. "Get on your knees — now."

Paul did as told, falling to his knees in front of Eve. He ran his hands up the curve of her hips, pulling her closer as he captured the tip of one breast in his mouth, laving his tongue over it reverently. He savored Eve's surrendering moan and the way her fingers tightened painfully in his hair.

Despite just coming while playing with Danny, he was already hard for her, his jeans biting into his cock as he worshiped Eve. His lips and hands ran over her beautiful body, touching and teasing her, waiting for the moment when she would ask for more. Her breathing became low and shallow, her moans throaty in a way that caused blinding lust to shoot through his bloodstream. Without warning, she used her grip on his hair to jerk his head back. Paul found himself staring into brilliant green eyes narrowed in fury that would have looked off on Eve if she hadn't been learning quickly from Danny.

"You want to lick me?"

He stared up at her longingly. "Very much."

"Why should I let you?" she countered, her eyes still narrowed in disappointment. "Why should I let you get from me what you can't even get from the woman you're marrying?"

"You probably shouldn't." He closed his eyes as a fresh wave of misery washed over him. "I don't deserve it."

"I want to hate you. It'd be so much easier than loving you," Eve said, her voice suddenly choked as her eyes became watery. "Only you can hurt me this badly."

"I'm sorry," he whispered genuinely as his own eyes stung painfully. "That's not the game. I'm really am sorry, Evie Girl. I don't want to hurt you again. That's the last thing in the world I wanted. I love being with you, but a part of me wishes Danny had never done this to us."

She pushed away from him and walked over to her bed rather than answer him. She fell back against it, throwing her arm over her eyes as she spread her legs, resting her bare feet on the frame. "Do it."

Paul stared at her for one long moment, wondering if he should say something else. A part of him wanted to admit that hurting her made him feel as if he was slowly dying inside. It had been bad enough when it was just Danny, now it felt as if every day that brought him closer to his wedding was driving a knife deeper into his chest. Then he decided that telling her would just make her hurt more. Maybe it was better if she didn't know just how much letting her go again was damaging his soul.

He crawled over to her, reaching up to the button on her shorts. He tugged them off, pulling her underwear with them and then leaned down to kiss her stomach softly, trying to convey how much he loved her into actions instead of words. Eve gave a soft sigh, arching her back as her fingers found their way into his hair again. She gently pushed his head lower as she draped her legs over his shoulders, her feet hooking together between his shoulder blades.

He took the silent suggestion and leaned down to lick her, savoring her taste and the sound of her choked gasp. Despite her anger and heartache, she was as responsive as always. It never took much to bring her to climax. She was sobbing and gasping with pleasure in less than a minute, her body quivering from the force of her orgasm. Paul rode it out with her, running his hands over her thighs and gripping at her hips gently when she started to come down.

"Again," she panted, tightening her grip in his hair once more. "Do it until I forget."

Paul wasn't really sure if it worked like that, but he was determined to try for her sake as much as his.

* * * * *

Dinner was solemn for the three of them. They ate silently, with Danny drinking several more beers than usual and Paul one-upping him by downing two full glasses of whisky.

Sex, work and booze made Paul more tired than usual and he fell into bed early without a care that they didn't stick to routine by fucking around for a while before they went to sleep. They had all started sleeping together, but there was never any order to how they slept. They usually just passed out in whatever position sex had left them in when they finally wore themselves out. Sometimes Eve was in the middle, sometimes Danny, most of the time Paul was, with Eve and Danny both clinging to him in a way that left him hot and suffocated but he never complained about it. He knew there was going to be a time in the very near future when he would lie in bed next to Trisha, longing for Danny and Eve draped over him, hanging on to him tightly as if afraid he would evaporate if they loosened their hold on him.

That night Paul was in the middle simply because he had fallen asleep first. Danny and Eve had both crawled into bed much later, forcing Paul into that hazy place between dreams and reality with their shuffling around and quiet good nights. Danny shoved him over to make room and then wrapped his arms around him in his usual,

tight-gripped way as Paul reached out for Eve on instinct and fell back to sleep with his face buried in her hair.

It was in the darkest part of the night that voices filtered into his dreams. With a father like his, one who could get violent at the oddest times, Paul had been bred to be a light sleeper, but like most things he never complained or mentioned it to others. The whisky had worn off to the point that he wasn't nearly as dazed as he had been when they'd first come to bed and their whispers woke him up fully within a few seconds.

Eve must have crawled over him and now rested on the edge of the bed in Danny's arms. Paul lay still, feeling the heat off Danny's bare back, knowing he would notice any subtle movement from him. He forced his breathing to remain even as he listened with no small amount of guilt to Danny and Eve speaking in hushed tones next to him.

"I hate you," Eve choked, making it obvious she was crying. "I hate you for doing this to me."

"Please don't," Danny said, his voice catching in a way that made it obvious he was close to tears. "I hate when you cry."

"Maybe I should start drinking heavily like you two. Is it helping?"

"Not really."

"He's going to marry her. I can't talk him out of it. I've tried everything. It's killing me. I can't do it anymore."

"Then don't do it. Stop torturing yourself. It's hurting him too. He's been drinking a lot more than I have. It worries me," Danny said, heaving a sigh of defeat. "It's two months away. Her father has already dumped a small fortune into this wedding. He'll never back out now. It's too late."

"I tried," Eve repeated. "I did, Danny Boy, I swear."

"I know you did," Danny said, his body shifting as if he were rubbing Eve's arm to soothe her. "I think we both knew that talking him out of it was hopeless. I'm sorry for asking it of you. Please don't hate me. I couldn't bear it. You're all I'm going to have left."

"My heart feels like it's been broken in two," Eve sobbed. "I'm dying."

"Shhh," Danny whispered, his body shifting as he rubbed her arm again. "Please, don't. I'm going to start too. We're going to wake him up."

Eve didn't heed his words as choked, broken sobs burst out of her and each one washed over Paul along with an agonizing feeling of complete despair. The pain was more than he felt he could bear, but he remained stoically still, enduring this pain like he did all others, without complaint.

"What if—" Danny started, his voice cracking. "What if we just let it be? No fighting, no arguing. It's happening, we know it. We can either be miserable for the last bit of time we have left or we can have a blast. I want the memories to be sweet for all of us. I don't want him drinking and miserable. I want him happy, don't you?"

"Y-yes," Eve rasped and then took a shuddering breath as if trying to gain back her composure. "Of course, I want that for him. I love him – always."

"Me too," Danny said, his voice still choked with tears. "So let's stop tormenting him, okay?"

"Okay," Eve agreed, before she started crying again.

Paul lay there, his eyes stinging behind his closed eyelids and realized he was never going to be able to cry. He would never find that emotional outlet normal people had, even when he needed it more than anything. He just feigned sleep listening to Eve and Danny crying together, deciding they would have to cry enough for him, because if this didn't make him break down nothing would.

Chapter Eighteen

Eve felt as if she had been hit by a Mack truck driven by a blind driver. Her head throbbed and her face was swollen to the point she wanted to hide under the covers for the rest of the day.

Paul was long gone, having taken off sometime before dawn for a run. Danny was also gone, leaving her lonely when she was used to male bodies keeping her warm. She rolled out of bed, shivering from the early morning cold and padded barefoot to the bathroom complaining under her breath about the crappy heater in the house. It made no difference that they were in Florida, fifty degrees was still way too cold to wake up to when she had a night like the previous one.

She winced when she looked herself in the mirror. The horrible thing about being a redhead was that crying showed on her face long after it subsided. Her eyes were swollen, her nose unattractively red and she finally looked away rather than dwell on it.

She brushed her teeth as she continued to avoid the mirror and then headed out of the bedroom, running her fingers through her long hair, trying to work out the tangles that came from falling asleep with it wet from a late-night shower she had taken when she hadn't been able to stop crying. She had sat on the floor of the shower, her arms wrapped around her legs as great sobs of misery burst out of her long after Danny had passed out.

"You look like hell."

Eve lifted blurry eyes to Danny as she walked into the kitchen, seeing he also looked worse for the wear this morning. "Right back at you."

"You're supposed to be in a good mood. Paul's going to be back soon."

"Fuck you," Eve said in response as she sat down at the table, still working her fingers through her hair, wincing over the tangles that seemed to be everywhere. "I need coffee."

"I guess," Danny said as he turned around to pour her a cup. "I'm serious. I need you to perk up. You look like you've been crying all night."

"I have been crying all night," Eve said bitterly. "What the fuck am I supposed to do about it, Danny Boy? I don't have pretty olive skin that hides all manner of sins. Talk to my parents if you're pissed off about it."

"Okay," Danny said passively as he set her coffee down in front of her. "You do need coffee."

Eve didn't respond, she just drank her coffee and worked on her hair silently. The knots were worse than usual and she was kicking herself for not braiding it before she fell asleep. She'd just been too exhausted by the time she had cried herself out to do

anything other than crawl into bed next to Paul and hold on to him as she fell to sleep to the warm, comforting scent of sandalwood that always surrounded him.

"Oh, come on, Evie," Danny moaned, bringing her out of her thoughts.

"What?" Eve said, shaking her hand to get more long red hairs off her fingers.

Danny stared to the floor, a look of disgust on his face. "Your hair is everywhere. Why can't you do this in the bathroom?"

"You're worse than my mother," Eve said, pulling a face at Danny as she took a long drink of her coffee. "I think you have a disorder."

"Not wanting hair that's three feet long scattered all over the place where I cook and eat is not a disorder," he said, rubbing a hand over his face tiredly.

Eve rolled her eyes at him but left her hair alone because Danny looked as if he were about to have a minor breakdown. Despite his olive skin that hid his tears from the night before, he did look exhausted and broken in a way that tugged at her heartstrings. She could overlook him being an obsessive neat freak because she loved him and hated to see him so miserable.

Eve went back to drinking her coffee while Danny started sweeping the floor. Working on cleaning up the few strands of hair Eve had shed got him started on a full-out project of scouring the floor. Eve just watched as he went from sweeping to vacuuming, working on the corners and underneath the lining of the refrigerator with a raw determination that she was certain there was special medication for.

She was still watching Danny with heavy-lidded eyes, one eyebrow arched in concern for his mental well-being when Paul walked into the house. She turned around, desperate for a distraction against Danny taking his stress out on hardwood flooring. She admired Paul wearing nothing but a pair of running shorts. His face was flushed, his muscular body glistening in sweat, making him look too delicious for words as he held his fingers to his neck and looked at his watch.

"Don't sweat in my kitchen," Danny growled, pointing down the hallway. "Go take a shower."

Paul frowned at him as he stood at the edge of the kitchen. He stopped taking his pulse and ran both his hands through his hair that was drenched in sweat. "Why are you vacuuming at seven in the morning?"

"He's having a moment," Eve offered blandly. "I shed in his kitchen and it triggered an episode."

"Look at this," Danny said, gesturing to where Paul was standing. "Why do you have to work out until you're dripping wet? No one needs to exercise that intensely."

"Yeah, 'cause he's not obsessive about anything," Eve said dryly as she took another drink of coffee.

Paul stared at Danny in concern and then turned to Eve in confusion. "How much did you shed?"

"Go look at my vacuum cleaner," Danny said, pointing toward where he set it down. He grabbed a towel and dropped it at Paul's feet, using his foot to clean up the sweat with a look of disgust. "It's filled with her hair. Living with her is like owning a dog."

"I'm not touching that," Paul said, shaking his head as he turned to walk toward the shower.

Eve waited until Paul was down the hallway before she turned back to Danny, watching him as he fell to his hands and knees and worked at cleaning the floor where Paul had been standing.

"I thought we were going to be perky," Eve said, raising her eyebrows at him when he lifted his head to glare at her. "Savor the moment and all that jazz."

"I'm working on it," Danny growled as he went back to cleaning the floor. "You really do shed worse than a dog. I'm not kidding. I find your hair everywhere."

"This is a disorder," Eve said in concern. "You've been getting worse and worse. I think Paul leaving is making you more obsessive than usual."

"Maybe," Danny admitted as he stood, holding out the towel and then walking toward the laundry room. When he returned, he looked to Eve hesitantly. "I didn't mean to call you a dog. I like your hair, even if you shed worse than a golden retriever."

"You call me a dog all the time," Eve said over the rim of her cup. "Doesn't faze me anymore."

"I call you a puppy," he corrected her with an endearing smile. "A cute puppy."

"Save it," Eve said in annoyance. "Lay your charm on Paul Guy."

"Fine," Danny said as he walked to the sink and started washing his hands. "You want breakfast?"

"Sure, why not?"

When he was showering alone Paul took very quick, efficient showers. Danny wasn't even done with breakfast before Paul was back in the kitchen, dressed for work in an expensive black suit and blue tie that brought out his eyes. His hair was wet, pushed away from his face that was clean shaven and handsome this morning despite his newly developed habit of drinking himself to sleep.

"You look sexy," Eve said, looking up at him when he walked into the kitchen and poured himself a cup of coffee. "I like that tie."

"Thank you," Paul said and then turned back around and eyed the cup in her hands. "Need a refill?"

"Sure," Eve said, holding out her cup gratefully. "I had a bad night last night."

"Did you?" Paul asked as he filled up her cup.

Eve pointed to her face. "Obviously."

"Evie," Danny growled, turning around from the stove to glare at her.

"What?" Eve snapped at him. "He'd have to be blind not to notice. I look like total shit."

"I don't think you look like shit. You're beautiful." Paul grabbed the sugar off the counter and placed in front of her on the table. Eve rolled her eyes as she started putting sugar in her coffee, while Paul sat down next to her. He tapped at her foot lightly with his shoe to get her attention. "Why'd you have a bad night?"

"Hangnail," Eve said without looking at him. "They're so annoying. Kept me up all night."

Paul sighed, running a hand through his wet hair as he took a long drink of coffee. "I don't want you to have bad nights," he whispered softly, looking at her intently as she continued to add more sugar to her coffee. "I want you to be happy."

"I want you to be happy too," she said, dropping the spoon back in the sugar bowl and giving him a strained smile. "Don't worry about it."

"I am worried."

"Don't be."

"I've decided we're going to New Orleans," Danny cut in as he put a plate in front of Paul. "You need to talk to your boss and get the time off."

"Forget it," Paul snorted as he reached over and picked up a piece of bacon off his plate. "I can't get the time off. I'm already taking two weeks for my honeymoon. That's all my vacation time."

"It wasn't a question," Danny snapped at him. "Take a four-day weekend, all you need is Friday and Monday off. I know you have sick time. Make it happen."

Paul took a bite of his bacon and then turned around to look at Danny who was putting food on a plate for Eve. "What am I gonna tell Trisha?"

"Fishing trip," Danny said simply.

"We live on a lake. We fish whenever we want."

Danny walked over and put a plate in front of Eve and then turned back to Paul. "Deep sea fishing. I'm renting a boat. We're going out for four days. She's a military brat, surely she understands that we need a boys' weekend before Armageddon. Don't all Marines love male bonding?"

"I'm not a Marine, but I'm all for male bonding," Eve offered as she picked up her own piece of bacon, biting it with a show of her teeth at Paul.

Paul laughed. "Only if you get to watch."

"Guilty," Eve said with a mischievous smirk. "New Orleans could be fun. How hard is it to get a few days off?"

"I dunno." Paul picked up his fork and pushed at his scrambled eggs. "Lying to her is just asking to get caught."

"She'll think we're on a boat in the middle of the ocean," Danny said as he sat down across from Paul with his own plate. "That means no cell service. We'll have four days just to ourselves. It'll be great, I promise."

"I do love New Orleans," Paul said, still pushing at his eggs as he stared at his plate with wide, unseeing eyes. "It's a deviant's paradise. We haven't gone in years."

"It's already decided, we're going," Danny said firmly. "I want to go, I want you two to go with me and I always get what I want."

* * * * *

"I think the employees knew there's something up with us," Paul said as he sat down on the large bed in the penthouse suite Danny had gotten for them in New Orleans. "Why else would three people share a room with only one bed? They think we're queer."

"Nah, they don't think you're queer," Eve offered as she tossed her purse on the dresser and then jumped onto the bed next to Paul, bouncing on it in a way an excited child would do. "They just think I'm a whore."

Danny laughed, staring down at her as she kept bouncing up and down. "You are a whore."

"I wish you wouldn't call her a whore," Paul said, giving Danny a look of irritation. "I hate when you do that."

"I am a whore. Any chick that gets it from two guys whenever she can is officially a whore, get over it." Eve fell back against the bed, her long hair fanning around her as she stared up at the ceiling. "This place is posh. I don't even want to go to Bourbon Street. I just want to stay here and fuck you two until I'm raw."

Danny raised his eyebrows at Paul. "That's pretty whorey."

"She's not a whore," Paul said as he leaned over Eve, stroking her hair softly, pushing it away from her face as his eyes ran over her longingly. "She's just—affectionate."

Eve giggled, covering her face with her hands. "That's creative. I like that."

"Yeah, she's affectionate, all right," Danny said with a laugh. "She's also drunk off her ass. Those Hurricanes went straight to her head."

"Free Hurricanes," Eve reminded both of them. "They're so nice to you when you're paying a thousand dollars a night. I felt bad for them, though. You're such a bully, Danny Boy."

"I paid way too much for this room to have to wait for them to get it ready," Danny said, looking around the room with a critical eye. "They should have given us more than a few free drinks. That's bullshit. I'm still pissed. I'm getting a free night, wait and see."

"You are a bully," Paul said as he reached behind his neck and tugged his shirt off with one fluid motion. He set it on the edge of the bed and then draped himself over

Eve, leaning down to kiss the curve of her neck as Eve sighed contently, her fingers threading into his hair. "Come bully me, Danny Boy."

Danny snorted as Eve used her grip on Paul's hair to bring his lips to hers. They kissed hotly, in a way unique to them, as if they needed the connection like others needed air. He arched an eyebrow as Eve wrapped her legs around Paul's waist, her feet hooking together in the small of his back as she ground herself into him. Desire washed over Danny, his cock growing hard as he admired the two of them. Somewhere along the way he had developed his own voyeur fetish. Once he had gotten past the jealousy he had discovered that watching Eve and Paul together was extremely erotic. There was a beauty to the way they connected. An odd purity pulsed from their mating that had become almost sacred to Danny. He would do anything to preserve it if only he could.

Danny reached into the pocket of his leather jacket and pulled out his cigarettes. He lit one and then shrugged out of his jacket and draped it over the chair by the desk in the corner. Deciding that watching was more fun than playing for the moment, he sat down, stretching out his legs and taking a long drag off his cigarette as he found an ashtray on the desk and pulled it closer.

"Aren't you coming to play?" Eve asked, her voice already heavy with desire as she sat up long enough to pull off her jacket, tossing it on the floor and then tugging her shirt off with Paul's help. "I thought you were going to take your anger out on him?"

"No," Danny said as he took another long drag off his cigarette. "I like watching."

"Suit yourself," Eve said carelessly as she struggled with her bra.

Paul took his cue from Eve and soon they were both stripping off all their clothes, shoes, socks, pants and underwear—it was all tossed aside between kisses and sighs. Then they fell back against the bed fully naked with Paul trailing kisses over Eve's beautiful, slim body with a look of reverence and adoration on his handsome face. He licked and teased at her breasts, sucking on them until her pale skin became flushed with desire.

"Why haven't you painted yourself with him?" Danny asked with his eyebrows raised as Paul fell to his knees on the floor with a groan and tugged Eve to the edge of the bed.

"W-what?" Eve rasped, her head tossing on the bed as Paul pressed his lips to the inside of her thigh, licking and kissing his way slowly to Eve's pussy. "Use your fingers too, Paul Guy. I like that."

"I want a painting with the two of you," Danny said firmly, wondering why he hadn't thought of it before now. "You got a whole series of Garden of Eden paintings, but none of them have Adam and Eve together. That's wrong."

"It's called Eve's Temptation. What's tempting about seeing herself? I hate self-portraits." Eve spread her legs wider and Paul took the invitation, dragging his tongue over her pussy, making Eve gasp out loud. "Shit, yes. Lick me, baby. Do it good and I'll let you fuck me."

"I want a painting with both of you," Danny said, not distracted from the point. "And you're going to paint it for me."

"Whatever," Eve said dismissively, her fingers tightening in Paul's hair as he licked her.

Danny wasn't even done with his cigarette before Eve was crying out in pleasure, her back arching off the bed as her body shuddered from the pleasure caused by Paul licking her and fucking her with his fingers. He really did have a special talent when it came to providing oral pleasure. Like everything else he did in life, once Paul set his mind to learning something, he almost always mastered it. Danny was going to have his hands full with Eve once Paul left, because he spoiled her completely rotten.

"Again?" Paul asked softly, running his hands up Eve's thighs as he stared up at her with a look of absolute adoration.

"No." Eve reached down to grab Paul, tugging on his shoulders impatiently and forcing him to crawl back onto the bed. "In me—right now. I need your cock."

Paul fell over Eve, capturing her lips and pushing his tongue into her mouth with raw, unrestrained desire as the two of them shared her taste in a decadent kiss that had Danny running his hand over the length of his hard cock through his jeans.

"Evie in the middle," she panted, using surprising strength as she wrapped her arms tightly around Paul and flipped their positions. She sat up, tossing her long hair behind her as she looked down at Paul, who was sprawled out beneath her. She stroked Paul's cock, running her hand up the length of it and then brushed her thumb over the head in a way that had Paul arching into her as his eyes closed under the weight of pleasure. "I'm going to use your cock for my amusement. What do you have to say about that?"

"Hot," Paul rasped, arching into her hand once more.

Eve giggled, betraying the two Hurricanes she drank while they waited for the room to get ready. A smile tugged at Paul's lips, his face relaxed in a way that was nice to see, making it obvious he was also buzzing off his own free drinks. He laced his hands behind his head, lying there passively as Eve guided his cock into her, sliding down the long, thick length of it. Her head fell back with a moan, her long hair falling around her like a veil. Paul moaned too, arching his hips up to take her deeply with a look of intense pleasure etched on his handsome face.

When Paul was fully sheathed inside her, Eve looked over her shoulder at Danny. Her green eyes glowed with seduction and playfulness as she arched one amber eyebrow at him in challenge.

Danny just stared back at her, arching his own eyebrow as he put his cigarette in the ashtray, realizing it had burned out while he had sat there entranced with the two of them. He knew what Eve was silently asking for and it was too much to deny. He tugged at his shirt, pulling it over his head as Eve squeaked in excitement. She turned her attention back to Paul, falling forward, her hands resting on his broad shoulders as she moved over him seductively.

Paul was drunk, his self-control was probably limited when Eve was fucking him like she was. Danny made quick work of searching through his bag for the bottle of lube and then walked over to the bed in slow, stalking steps that had both Paul and Eve tensing in anticipation. He tossed the lube on the bed and then wrapped his arm around Eve, inhaling her scent as he buried his face into the curve of her neck.

"You want me to make you a whore?" Danny ran his hand down the valley between her breasts possessively, losing himself to his desire to dominate that had gotten a thousand times worse when he had both Eve and Paul willing to let him control them whenever he wanted. "Is that what you're asking for?"

Eve leaned back against him with a breathy moan. "Yes."

"Beg me."

"Please," she pleaded in a soft, seductive voice, making all the hairs on his body stand on end. She had learned a lot from him over the past few months, but she had also picked up a lot of things from Paul and that voice was one of them. Danny actually had to bite his lip to hide the groan of pleasure her sensual begging caused as her head fell back against his shoulder, lolling to the side so that her breath was warm against his neck. "Make me a whore, Danny Boy – *your* whore."

A dark smile tugged at Danny's lips and he leaned down, placing kisses over the soft line of her shoulder as he pulled down his zipper and took out his cock, pushing his jeans just low enough to accommodate. He reached for the bottle of lube and flipped the cap open. He felt Eve's body tighten in expectation as he coated his fingers and then stuck the small bottle into his back pocket.

"Keep her relaxed," Danny told Paul as he worked one slick finger into Eve's ass, making her jerk forward from just that small touch.

He groaned, his body clenching in a hot rush of desire as he felt of how tight she was with Paul buried deeply inside her. He kissed the curve of her neck once more, his other hand cupping one full breast, his thumb rubbing over a rosy nipple beaded tight with desire. Paul sat up, trapping her between the two of them as he kissed the other side of her neck, and reached down, rubbing his fingers against her clit while Danny worked a second finger into her ass.

Eve was completely lost, moaning and shifting between them as she wrapped her arms tightly around Paul, clinging to him as she ground herself onto his cock. Her breath was already bursting out of her in sharp pants, making it obvious she was going to come.

"She's already pretty relaxed," Paul groaned, his head falling back as Eve kept grinding against him. His weight was resting on one arm behind him. His fist tightened in the sheets as he arched up into Eve. "You gotta do it, Danny Boy. Please."

Danny heard the plea. Eve and Paul were going to fall over the edge without him if he didn't hurry. He grabbed the lube out of his pocket and covered his cock, biting back his own groan at the feeling of it sliding through slick fingers. He reached around Eve, his fingers digging into Paul's back as he guided himself into Eve, being gentle not to

hurt her because no amount of liquor could change the fact that both he and Paul had been built nicely.

Paul stopped touching her, his fingers threading through Eve's long hair instead. He brought her lips to his when she squeaked as Danny started pushing into her. Eve's lips parted to the slide of Paul's tongue and he swallowed her low moan. Their kissing was frantic, their mouths open, their tongues brushing in way that had Danny leaning over to watch as he used his grip on Paul's back to sheathe himself fully inside Eve. Both Paul and Eve moaned, their bodies becoming languid with pleasure.

"I can feel you in her," Paul groaned, falling back against the bed, pulling Eve down with him as his hands ran over her bare back, holding her tightly to him. "Makes her so tight."

"Fuck us," Eve rasped, pushing her ass back against Danny. "Please."

Danny rested one knee on the bed and gripped at Eve's hips as he started fucking her slowly, pulling out and pushing back in as he fought for control. He kept his strokes short, forcing her against Paul with small, gentle movements that had both of them panting and writhing beneath him. They were passive, neither one of them fighting for more than what he was giving and Danny enjoyed the novelty as much as the desire caused from knowing he was holding them both on the brink of oblivion without pushing them over by fucking her harder.

Drawing out the pleasure had all three of their bodies glistening with sweat, making the slide of skin against skin slick and erotic. As much as Danny loved being with Paul and Eve individually, it was when he had both of them under him that he felt like there was a heaven for fallen angels.

They stayed like that for a while, moving slowly and erotically together, until Eve broke first and started begging for more. Her impatience caught up with her as it always did and she became desperate for release. When Paul was in the middle, Danny would toy with him longer, but with Eve, he usually gave in without argument. His strokes became harder and longer as he lost his battle for control, making the pleasure coil in his stomach just waiting for the moment to spring free. He had to grit his teeth against the urge to lose himself as Eve started moaning loudly. Her body started grinding between them, her fingers digging into Paul's shoulders. Finally she pushed forward and bit at the curve of Paul's neck hard enough to break the skin.

Paul jerked in reaction, his hips forcing his cock deeply into Eve. That one hard movement was enough to push all three of them over the edge without warning. Danny squeezed his eyes shut as bliss spiraled through his body without his permission, forcing him to fuck Eve harder. The sounds of Paul and Eve coming with him filtered in and out of dazed consciousness. The way Eve clenched rhythmically, her body moving instinctively between him and Paul made Danny feel as if every ounce of energy had been pulled out of him as he came deeply inside her with a burst of raging pleasure.

When Danny fell over her in sated exhaustion, Eve was still moaning softly, her body clenching around both him and Paul, leaving both of them shaking and groaning

with her. He was so dazed he forgot to be considerate. It was Paul's shove as he reached around Eve and gripped at Danny's hip that pulled him back to reality.

"She can't breathe," Paul groaned, shoving him once more. "Get off."

Danny did as told, falling off Eve and landing painfully on the bottle of lube. With a curse, he reached beneath him and grabbed it, tossing it to the floor with a huff as he tried to gain his breath back. With one hand on his chest, feeling the rapid pounding of his heart, Danny turned to watch Paul stroke Eve's hair as she panted breathlessly over him.

"You want a bath?" Danny asked in concern once Eve's breathing had evened out. "I can run it for you."

"Yeah." Eve rubbed her cheek against Paul's hard chest. Her face was flushed bright pink. Sweaty tendrils of hair clung to her temples and the sides of her neck, making her look thoroughly debauched as she groaned, "I'm sore—really sore."

"Shit." Danny rubbed a hand over his face as he tried to wake himself up from the sex-hazed dreaminess that came from fucking both of them. "Why didn't you tell me before I hurt you? I would have been gentler."

"Oh, it's okay," she said, her eyes blinking open to reveal sated green orbs dancing with happiness despite her discomfort. "Totally worth it."

Danny rolled his eyes as he got up. He kicked his jeans off rather than pull them back on and walked naked to the bathroom, knowing Paul's fawning over her would bring her down better than his could. He found a large garden tub in the bathroom along with a shower that was big enough for the three of them. Danny decided those two features alone would be worth the outrageous amount he was paying for the suite.

He fell to his knees on the tiled floor, turning on the faucet of the large tub and holding his hand under the water to make sure it was warm enough. He was still kneeling there when Eve's squeals and giggling had him frowning toward the open door. Paul walked into the bathroom, Eve in his arms as her body shook in laughter.

"Don't drop her," Danny snapped when he saw the way Eve was squirming in Paul's arms. "You're drunk too."

"Not that drunk," Paul said with a wide grin that made him a bald-faced liar. "Back up, Danny Boy."

Danny backed up and winced when Paul dropped Eve into the bathtub none too gently, making water splash all over the tiles. Eve slid down in the water, her hair floating like red silk around her slim body. Her hands flew to her face as peals of giggles burst out of her.

"I don't want you carrying her when you've been drinking," Danny growled at Paul, not nearly as amused as the two of them, having been the only one who refused the free drinks the hotel had offered because he'd been too irritated by having to wait for the room to bother. "That pisses me off."

"What're you gonna do about it?" Paul hummed invitingly as he pushed at Eve's shoulder and then crawled into the tub behind her. "Did you bring your whip?"

"He did. I saw him pack it," Eve said, falling back against Paul contently, her eyes drifting closed. "I want to live in this bathroom. This bathtub is huge. I can't believe we both fit. You don't even fit in the tub at home by yourself."

"True," Paul agreed and then turned to look at Danny, his blue eyes swirling with a fresh surge of desire. "Did you really pack your whip?"

"Yeah," Danny said as he admired them. The two of them looked so beautiful together in the garden tub with Paul's large, muscular arms wrapped around Eve's slim body protectively. He felt a twinge of pain in his heart that had never gone away when he and Eve had made the decision to try to enjoy their last bit of time with Paul. He gave Paul a weak smile. "Your back healed nicely. I figured we could get a little edgy while we were here—maybe even go to a club."

"Oh?" Paul said, his eyebrows shooting up in surprise. "You wanna play publicly? It's been a long time."

"I want to show you and Eve off," Danny admitted, looking away from them as the stab in his heart got worse. "You two make a nice pair. I want to flaunt it while I still can."

"Naughty," Paul said, obviously choosing to ignore the other implications because he had also been working hard at ignoring the heartache and just enjoying their time together. A laugh burst out of him as he pulled a face at Danny. "You think Eve is ready for a club? Especially one here?"

Danny shrugged. "It may require a Hurricane or two."

"Or ten," Paul laughed again.

"Oh, please," Eve said, rolling her eyes at the two of them. "What could be worse than what I see every day with the two of you?"

"A lot," Danny said, wincing at the thought. "You have no idea the kinky shit out there."

"We're such a bad influence," Paul groaned, his eyes closing as his arms tightened around Eve.

"I guess," Danny said, rubbing a hand over his face tiredly and then staring at Eve, who had threaded her fingers through Paul's and was holding up both their hands, admiring the way her small hand looked in his large one. "I'll make you a deal, Evie Girl."

"That's always ominous," Eve said, still staring at her hand with her fingers laced tightly with Paul's. "What's the deal?"

"Make me a painting of the two of you and I'll take you to a club."

"Make him pay you," Paul countered, his eyes narrowed at Danny. "He was going to take us to a club anyway. If he wants to commission a painting make him pay for it."

Eve turned around to look at Paul and then glanced back to Danny. "What sort of painting?"

"An erotic one," Danny said as if it were obvious. "Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve fucking."

"I'd need pictures," Eve said, looking away from him and staring ahead unseeing. "I can't paint myself without pictures. I don't know what I look like when I'm fucking."

"You look hot when you're fucking," Paul said with a seductive smile as he tilted his head and brushed some of the wet hair off her neck. "Really hot."

Eve lifted her eyes to Danny, considering him for one long moment before she shrugged. "I suppose I could do it if you took some pictures of Paul and me."

"No problem," Danny said, the idea of taking pictures of Eve and Paul fucking having its own unique appeal. "You brought your camera, right? We'll take them while we're here."

"Fine." Eve continued to stare at Danny, a smile tugging at her lips. "How much are you going to pay me?"

"How much do you want?"

"Ten thousand," Paul said firmly, suddenly sounding like the lawyer he was. "Nothing less than that."

"What?" Eve tilted her head on Paul's chest, looking up at him as if he were crazy. "For one painting?"

"Your art is worth at least that much and Danny knows it."

"Fine," Danny agreed, knowing Paul was right. He'd pay twice that, because not only was Eve's art incredible, she was going to capture something for him he wanted preserved forever. He was too selfish to be satisfied with just memories that could fade with time. He wanted physical evidence of the magic Paul and Eve could make together. Not only would he get a painting out of the deal, but pictures as well. "I'll pay that. No problem."

"You're both insane," Eve said, her eyes wide and stunned. "But fine, if you want to pay that much who am I to stop you?"

Danny snorted, because he had been trying to give Eve money and buy her a new car for months. She was extremely proud when it came to finances. She would even leave envelopes on the kitchen table with RENT written on the front of it. Inside he'd always find a few hundred dollars he knew Eve couldn't afford to part with, but she was unbending in her determination he keep it. To stop the fighting, Paul suggested to Danny in private setting up a mutual fund in which to invest the money. That had been enough to make Danny just take the damn rent money without complaint because he knew she had no savings. She just lived off what she could make selling her landscape and still-life paintings at craft shows.

"I'll help you invest it," Paul said softly, rubbing a hand up Eve's arm, obviously seeing this as the opportunity to make her secret mutual fund known. "I could set up a portfolio for you."

"Fuck that," Eve said with a laugh. "I'm spending it."

Paul rolled his eyes, giving Danny a look, silently conveying that Danny needed to make sure Eve was taken care of in the long term, because if they left her to it she would die broke.

"You got to let Paul invest half," Danny said, giving Eve a stern look. "That's part of the deal."

Eve huffed in irritation, but then gave in and sighed, "I guess that works. Five grand is still much more than I would have charged. You're way overestimating my talent."

Danny shook his head, wondering how Eve could be so blind to the value of her artistic genius. "No, I'm not."

Chapter Nineteen

The one horrible side effect that came from the decision to enjoy every moment they could was time started flying past them at an alarming speed.

New Orleans had been a colorful blur of dancing, parties and darkly decorated erotic clubs. When they had gotten back Eve's muse had been in full throttle and she spent a lot of time in her room painting not just the picture Danny had commissioned but other erotic images that captured their relationship with majestic backdrops and romantic flair that was unique for fetish art.

It wasn't until November gave way to December and the air went from crisp to chilly that depression seemed to seize Eve again. It started with a painting of the three of them, one she had managed by using a mirror to take photographs of them tangled together. She used those pictures to create her largest, most darkly sensual painting to date. The three of them were naked and sweaty with desire, with Eve between Danny and Paul at the base of the Tree of Life. She had painted it with a fervor that had kept her up to all hours of the night, but once it was done and resting in the corner with the rest of her art she had suddenly stopped painting.

Paul stared out the window, studying Eve in concern as she sat by herself on the porch. Her arms were wrapped around her, her breath bursting out of her in white puffs as she stoically watched the sun set over the lake. She was silent and unmoving, which was all wrong for Eve who was always bursting with life and energy.

"She's not painting anymore."

"I know," Danny said from his seat on the couch. The remote was in his hands but he didn't appear to be giving the television any interest. "She says her muse is dead."

"Dead?" Paul repeated, turning to look at Danny in concern. "You mean sleeping."

"No, she clearly said dead," Danny said, turning around to look up at Paul. "She doesn't want to paint anymore—or *can't* paint anymore."

"She told you that?"

"Yeah." Danny ran a hand through his hair as pain flashed on his face. "I actually needed to talk to you about that. I just—haven't been able to find the right way to say it."

Paul turned away from the window as the icy feeling of dread washed over him with a sickening shiver and settled in his stomach. He stared at Danny, whose body had grown tense. "Just say it."

Danny turned off the television and turned back to Paul, his dark eyes shining. "We're moving."

"Moving?" Paul repeated in shock, his jaw falling slack as he stared at Danny in disbelief. "Moving where?"

"New York," Danny whispered softly, his arm resting on the back of the couch as he stared up at Paul unwaveringly despite the hesitation on his face. "She loves it there. Getting away is what she needs. Plus, it'll give you the excuse you've been looking for about the wedding. We're not coming because we'll already be gone. We're leaving before Christmas."

Paul turned away from Danny, staring out the window at Eve once more. He had to physically force his lungs to take in air to fight the crushing feeling of horror and despair that had fallen over him from Danny's words. "Moving is a pretty drastic excuse to miss the wedding."

"It's more than that," Danny said, his voice cracking with anguish. "None of us are going to be able to pretend this didn't happen. That'll make it so much more painful. We need to go, Paul Guy."

"Christmas is a few weeks away," Paul growled as anger made its way past the heartache. "When were you going to tell me—or were you?"

"Don't be like that," Danny snapped at him, his voice becoming low and angry. "I will not let Eve sit in this house and mourn you while you're off playing family man with Trisha. I can't do that to her. She needs to get away and start over—I do too."

"Typical," Paul said, shaking his head as the anger continued to well up inside him. "You don't get what you want, so you're taking your ball and going home. We're still friends. Getting married wasn't supposed to change that."

"But it will," Danny said with a snort of incredulousness. "You think we can just start being platonic friends after all this? You will have to avoid us like the plague to stay faithful to Trisha and that will hurt Evie worse than anything. Being pushed aside, being avoided by you because you'd rather hurt her than betray Trisha. I'm not doing that to us. I'm ending it before I break her heart worse than I already have. I should have never brought her into the game."

Paul wavered under the onslaught of pain when he realized Danny was right. He would just hurt them worse by asking them to stay here rather than run away to New York. How could he ever be around them and hide what he felt? It was impossible. Paul would have to avoid them to stay faithful. It would be the only way.

"What're you going to do with the house?" he asked, falling into the old habit of hiding behind superficial issues when his emotions got too much to handle. "Market sucks right now. You shouldn't sell it."

"I'm not worried about the house," Danny said dismissively. "It can rot to the ground for all I care."

"Where are you going to live in New York? Do have a place?"

"Circe owns a loft in Soho. She's renting it to us," Danny said, giving Paul a guilty look when he turned to him in surprise. "I called her when we got back from New

Orleans. She says it's real nice, big and open, perfect for an artist like Evie. She's giving me a good deal."

"Okay," Paul said, turning away from Danny because the grief was washing over him in waves, sinking into his heart that felt as if it were freezing with rejection and pain as he stood there. "You know what's best, I guess."

"Paul Guy," Danny whispered, his dark eyes glimmering with concern as he stood up and walked around the couch.

Paul shook his head, backing away from Danny. "I need space."

Danny surprised him by letting him go. Paul grabbed his keys off the table, and walked out the door without a jacket, feeling the cold air hit him when he opened the door. This winter was colder than usual for Florida, the orange growers and strawberry farmers had been battling freezes for the past week and tonight wasn't going to be any different. He'd have to cover the plants before he went to bed, but then he realized it was pointless. In a few weeks none of them would be living in this house. It didn't matter if the plants died.

He didn't say anything to Eve, just walked to his car, his teeth chattering and his body shivering, though if it was from the cold air or the coldness that had settled over his heart, he didn't know. He peeled out of the driveway, knowing Danny was probably watching him take his anger out on his car. He drove down the long road, going far faster than what was legal and switched gears when he made the turn, completely heedless of the stop sign as he tried to drive away from the pain rather than face it.

It was pitch black by the time he had made it home but the porch light was on, welcoming him back despite his three-hour temper tantrum. He wasn't surprised to see Danny hadn't bothered to cover the plants and it was out of habit more than anything that Paul walked to the shed and got out the sheets he used to cover them. His breath came out in puffs of icy white, hazed from the distant porch light. The temperature had already dropped below thirty and he was wearing only a thin t-shirt, but he used the discomfort to his advantage against a deeper pain than a little cold.

When he got the plants covered, he walked back to the house, feeling a strange urgency to see both Danny and Eve. The sands of the hourglass were nearing their end and with only a few weeks left he needed to be with them, so much so he wasn't sure what possessed him to run away in the first place.

He locked the door when he walked in and tossed his keys on the table by the door. "Hey."

"In here," Danny called from the living room. "Did you eat while you were out?"

"I'm not hungry," Paul said as he walked into the living room, finding Eve stretched out on the couch in Danny's arms. She had a blanket pulled up around her as if trying to hide from the world. Her eyes were dull and lifeless as she lifted them to him. He sighed, hating to see the life fading out of her like this. "I'm sorry for running away."

Eve closed her eyes tiredly. "We can't really give you shit about that, can we? We're running away too."

There wasn't anything Paul could say to that, so he pulled his shirt off instead, draping it over the edge of the couch. He reached down and pulled back the blanket, falling over Eve because he couldn't stand not being close to her for one more second. He groaned from the feeling of Eve's warmth when he had been cold all night. She wrapped her arms around him, her fingers trailing down his back as Paul leaned past her and kissed Danny, pushing his tongue past his lips when they parted in surprise.

"No," Danny said after a moment, turning his head away with a look of pain. "I can't play tonight. I can't be mean. I don't feel like it."

"I don't want you to be mean to me." Paul reached up and ran his fingers through Danny's hair softly, making him turn back to him with a look of shock. He gave him a sad smile and whispered, "Love me instead."

"What?" Danny choked, his dark eyes growing wide. "You want me to be a lover instead of a Master?"

"That's exactly what I want," Paul said, his smile growing broader when he saw the way Danny's eyes shined with love in a way he usually had to hide. "Okay?"

Danny swallowed hard and looked away from him, his eyes darting up at the ceiling as he took several long breaths as if trying to get his emotions under control. "Okay," he agreed, his voice cracking with emotion. "I can do that."

"Oh, Paul Guy," Eve said as she laced her fingers into his hair, tugging him down until his face was hovering over hers. Tears welled in her eyes, making them sparkle like brilliant emeralds from the dim light flickering off the television. She smiled at him, showing off deep dimples in both of her cheeks. "Thank you."

He knew she was thanking him for Danny's sake, but he shook his head rather than acknowledge it. "I need it for me," he admitted softly. "Fuck the game, I just want to be with you – both of you."

"I need it too," Eve whispered as tears rolled down her cheeks.

"I'm gonna miss you guys so much," Paul rasped, his voice cracking with emotion. "You have no idea."

"Yeah, we do." Danny reached down and cupped Paul's face with both hands, bringing his lips back to his. "Let's try it again."

Paul kissed Danny a second time, his tongue sliding past his lips that parted with a breathy sigh, doing it with every ounce of the reverence he would use to kiss Eve.

For the first time in nine years, Paul kissed Danny as a lover instead of a slave and it wasn't nearly as terrible as he thought it was going to be. If he were being honest with himself, it was actually sort of wonderful and made him realize there was already too much time that had been wasted.

Two weeks wasn't near long enough to make up for it.

* * * * *

"I put snow tires on the car when I took it in for you."

"I'll give you the money for them," Danny said, giving Paul a grateful look because he hadn't thought of that. "How much were they?"

"Don't worry about it," Paul said over the rim of his coffee cup as he sat at the kitchen table reading the Sunday newspaper. "Early Christmas present."

Danny gave Paul a hesitant look. "I've never driven in snow."

"It's not that hard. Just drive slow and you'll be fine."

Danny turned to Eve, wondering why he hadn't considered the snow before now. "Have you driven in snow?"

"Duh," Eve said, sitting next to Paul, drinking her own cup of coffee. "I lived in New York for ten years. Just 'cause I didn't own a car doesn't mean I never drove. I spent half my life in the gallery van running errands. I can drive once we get into it."

"There's a cold front all the way up the coast. You'd have to do a lot of driving," Paul said with a wince. "Do you want me to look at the car again? I should make sure they did everything."

"It's fine." Danny avoided Paul's eyes, taking a drink of his own coffee and then picking up his pack of cigarettes. He lit one, blowing out the smoke shakily as he glanced around their house that was barren save the few pieces of furniture they were leaving behind, the kitchen table being one of them. He turned to Eve in confusion. "Why didn't the movers take the table?"

"I kinda wanted to keep it," Paul said tentatively. "If that's okay?"

"Yeah, sure, sorry," Danny said, taking another drink of coffee. "I forgot."

"You don't look up to driving, Danny Boy. Maybe Eve should drive first."

"I'm fine," Danny said, blinking away the strange shock that came from the knowledge this was all really happening. Their time was up. They would have to leave today if they wanted to make it to New York before Christmas. "I'll just have another cup of coffee."

"Are your parents stopping by?" Paul asked Eve curiously. "Aren't they coming to say goodbye?"

"I said goodbye last night at dinner," Eve mumbled as she stared at the table with wide, unseeing eyes. "They gave me money for Christmas. I must scream starving artist."

"Don't they know Danny's loaded?"

Eve lifted her eyes to Paul, giving him a baffled look. "Why would I tell them that?"

"Ease their minds," Paul offered with a smirk. "Your mother might take to him more if you told her. She hasn't changed that much, has she?"

"If she doesn't like him for who he is, then fuck her," Eve said bitterly. "She barely spoke to me at dinner. She's pissed off about this move. I felt bad about my daddy, though. He was really torn up."

"They can come visit," Danny said as he reached out and grabbed Eve's hand, squeezing it softly. "We'll have plenty of room."

Eve pulled a face of distaste. "He brings *her* with him."

"Okay," Danny said, letting go of Eve's hand to stand up and grab the coffeepot.

He walked to the table and refilled all their cups, and then set the pot down in the middle of the table, knowing it was the last pot he was going to make. Paul and Eve seemed to be thinking the same thing, because they both stared at the pot sitting there nearly empty, with sadness swirling in both of their eyes.

"I need to go to the bathroom," Eve squeaked as she pushed away from the table.

Danny and Paul both watched her run down the hallway in a way that betrayed her need to hide and cry one last time. Danny closed his eyes, resting his elbow against the table and letting his head fall to his hand as he took another shaky drag off his cigarette.

"Maybe you guys should wait one more day," Paul whispered. "The weather is shit. It's raining here and it'll be snowing from Georgia on."

"I don't want her to be on the road for Christmas," Danny said, tapping his cigarette against his ashtray.

"Yeah," Paul said softly, his voice cracking. "Danny Boy —"

Danny shook his head frantically, fighting his own tears. "No, no — don't do that."

Paul was silent for a moment before he pushed away from the table. "I'm gonna go check on her."

"Yeah, good," Danny said, breathing a sigh of relief when Paul stood.

Danny waited until he was down the hallway before he threw his cigarette in the ashtray and collapsed against the table. He buried his face in his arms as he took in choking gasps of air, his chest heaving from the effort it was taking to hold back the sobs threatening beneath the surface. He hadn't needed to cry this hard since the day he had found out his mother had been killed in a brutal car accident.

A part of Danny was angry with Paul for giving him two weeks of them being nothing more than lovers to each other rather than slave and Master. Maybe a time would come when he would appreciate the sweeter memories for what they were, but right now they just felt like a knife that had been twisted into an already painful wound. Tasting what could have been — what should have been — didn't make it easier. It made it a thousand times worse.

He tried to find a way to cling to anger because it was the only thing that kept him sane. If he focused on anything else, he'd be sitting on the floor sobbing like Eve probably was and he couldn't handle being that emotionally bare at this point in the game. Paul was getting married in ten days. The deed was already done and he had bled enough over it.

When he felt the anger bloom in his soul, the rolling fury of injustice that was taking Paul away from both he and Eve, Danny finally pushed away from the table. He left Eve to Paul and made quick work of gathering the last of their things. The rain outside was bothersome, but not torrential, and Danny got the rest of the car packed up with the thought that Mustangs were not made for cross-country travel. Even with most of their belongings going with the movers, the car was packed tightly and it was with no small amount of regret that he decided to leave his coffeemaker behind. Paul could have it to match with the kitchen table. Danny just tried not to imagine Trisha making coffee with it.

With one last inspection of the house, Danny realized he was done. They had everything they were going to take. Strangely, he couldn't care less about the house itself. How could he give a shit about a stupid house when he was willingly leaving a man he had loved for as long as he could remember without even a fight?

In the end, Danny was doing exactly what Paul had accused him of. He was taking his ball and running away, acting like an angry, hurt child who didn't understand why he couldn't get his way.

He found Paul and Eve on the bathroom floor naked. Eve was draped over Paul, her head buried in the curve of his neck as her body shook with the sobs bursting out of her. Paul's hands were running up and down her back soothingly as he stared at the ceiling with wide blue eyes that glimmered strangely for him.

"We gotta go," Danny said in a flat, dead voice as he looked down at the two of them.

Paul lifted his head, his eyes running over Danny with a knowing look that left him uncomfortable. He realized he would never be able to hide his pain from Paul. It made no difference that Danny had stopped short of breaking down in front of him, Paul could see through his anger and knew he was broken on the inside. But Danny couldn't get too angry about being exposed because he saw the pain in his soul reflected in Paul's blue eyes and written all over his handsome face. For the second time in a little over ten years, Paul had finally found a pain that could actually hurt him.

"Five minutes," Paul said softly. "Please."

"Five minutes," Danny agreed, his voice still dead and harsh in a way that had Eve stiffening over Paul. "I'll wait in the car."

They took longer than five minutes and Danny looked at his watch for the tenth time as he sat in his car, the rain beating against the windshield. The heater had long since warmed up the car, and he was contemplating going back in and losing his temper when the passenger side door was suddenly opened.

"Get in," Paul said, pushing Eve into the passenger's seat. When Eve crawled in, Paul fell to his knees in the wet grass next to the door and reached out to her. "I love you."

"I love you too," Eve said, her fingers tightening around Paul, the two of them uncaring about the rain that was getting both the car and them wet. "Be happy."

"You too, both of you," Paul whispered into the curve of her neck as he placed one final kiss there. Then he lifted his head, staring past Eve to Danny, his eyes still shiny as they ran over him. "Please be happy."

Danny turned to stare out the window once more. He had to close his eyes after a second, because he could feel Paul's eyes on him. There was a part of him that wanted to jump out of the car, call Trisha and tell her everything just to stop what was happening. The thought had crossed his mind more than once. Eve's room had been filled with photographs that could have ended Paul's marriage before it started but Danny could never bring himself to betray Paul that profoundly, even if it would have been in his best interest.

Paul's trust, it seemed, was more important than his well-being in Danny's mind and he found himself cursing the game for ruining him that badly.

"I'm sorry," Eve said softly after a long moment of silence from Danny. "He doesn't mean it."

"I know he doesn't," Paul whispered in a way that Danny knew meant he was talking to him instead of Eve. "I've loved him for a long time. I know him better than anyone."

"We gotta go," Danny snapped, his face scrunching up in fury and sorrow when the tears started threatening again. "Eve'll text you when we get there."

"Do that," Paul said and then leaned over and kissed Eve once more, speaking softly against her lips. "Merry Christmas, Evie Girl. Go ice-skating for me. I always wanted to do that, skate under that big Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center."

"Yeah," Eve said, a smile sounding in her voice despite the anguish. "I'll do it—just for you."

"Good," Paul said as he stood up and held the car door. "Drive safely."

"Sure," Danny said, turning his windshield wipers up when the rain started falling harder. "You better get inside before you catch something. It's too cold to be standing in the rain. I don't want you to get sick."

Paul laughed and Danny turned to him with a frown, one eyebrow arched in irritation. He was surprised to see Paul smiling as he stood there in the cold rain, his breath puffing into the morning air in silvery wisps.

Eve sighed, putting a hand to her mouth. She looked from Paul to Danny as more tears rolled down her cheeks. "What're you going to do when you don't have him around to fuss over you?"

"I don't know," Paul said, his angelic blue eyes resting on Danny. "I really don't."

"You'll probably be all right," Danny said, rubbing his hand over the leather of his steering wheel as he looked away from Paul once more, finding that he really did want his last memory of him to be him standing there smiling in the rain. "Go inside—now."

"Fine," Paul said in a soft voice and then used his hold on the door to close it.

Danny drove away before he could change his mind, looking into the rearview mirror to see Paul standing there watching them leave. When they reached the end of their road, Eve crumpled next to him, her forehead resting on her knees as great, racking sobs burst out of her.

"I'm dying," she choked out as if begging Danny to ease her pain. "I'm really dying."

"Yeah," Danny sighed as the road became a watery blur that had nothing to do with the rain. "Me too."

Chapter Twenty

"You're not very festive."

"I'm festive," Paul argued as he worked at packing up the kitchen supplies Danny had left behind, which were sparse considering how much he loved to cook. He had taken most everything from the kitchen with him to New York. "Just, you know, I wish they hadn't left before Christmas. That's sorta depressing."

"Mmm." Trisha abandoned her work on helping him pack up and wrapped her arms around him from behind. "But Eve's got that new job. She can make real money instead of selling pictures on street corners. Aren't you happy for her?"

"Sure," Paul said, staring down at the kitchen sink unseeing, having forgotten in his misery he had told that lie to Trisha, using the excuse of a new job for Eve as the reason Danny wouldn't be at the wedding. "It's for the best."

"He can still come back and visit," Trisha went on, squeezing him tighter. "And it had to have been awkward living with both of them. That was really inconsiderate of him, bringing her in here without even asking."

Paul shrugged. "It's his house. I just rented a room from him. Who was I to tell him who could live here?"

"I suppose," Trisha said, grabbing his arm and turning him to her. She gave him a smile as her blue eyes swirled with concern. "You want me to stay here with you tonight?"

"Oh, no," Paul said with a shake of his head. "The place is almost completely empty. You'll be uncomfortable."

"I don't mind."

"Yeah, but I do," Paul said, forcing a smile as he looked down at Trisha. "I'll work on packing up everything tonight and I'll just bring it over to your place tomorrow after work. Are you sure your father doesn't mind us moving in together early?"

"He's not that old-fashioned," Trisha said with a laugh.

Paul arched an eyebrow, a smirk tugging at his lips. "He isn't?"

"Okay, well, he is," Trisha admitted grudgingly. "But what can he do—we're getting married in ten days. I want you at my place. It'll be great. What's Danny going to do with the house?"

"I dunno," Paul said, looking back around the empty house once more and frowning. "He never told me. I'll call him after the honeymoon and discuss it. Maybe I could find someone to rent it or something. Seems a shame to just leave it empty."

"It does," Trisha agreed and then reached out and grabbed his hand. "I'm going to go work on the bathrooms while you finish up in here."

Paul squeezed Trisha's hand before she turned and walked away and then went back to working on the kitchen. He couldn't believe Danny actually left his coffeemaker behind. There were still the last bits of coffee in the pot from that morning. Paul stared down at it, swirling the coffee in the bottom around a few times before he sighed and went to the sink, washing out the last pot of coffee the three of them had shared together. He watched the coffee swirl down the drain and closed his eyes against the despair just that one image caused.

He set the pot in the sink, the water still running and covered his face with his hands as he took several long, cooling breaths and tried to find the strength to hide his pain from Trisha. He hadn't known she was going to show up to help him pack up. It was thoughtful of her, but inconvenient when he needed more time to build up his façade. They'd only left a few hours ago and Paul thought he'd have the rest of the day to wallow in his grief before he had to hide the misery that was crushing the air out of his chest.

Nothing could have prepared him for this kind of pain. He was so overwhelmed he felt as if his brain were shutting down under the weight of his agony. Losing Eve the first time had been bad enough, but losing both of them was more than he could bear. He didn't think he was strong enough to endure it this time.

"Why does Danny have five bottles of alcohol in this bathroom?" Trisha called out. "You'd think he was preparing for the end of the world with all this."

"Neat freak," Paul shouted back, wincing over Trisha going through their bathroom. "Eve thinks he has a disorder."

"I think she's right," Trisha said, amusement thick in her voice as she walked into the kitchen, a large box in her hands. She set it down on the table and then reached inside it, pulling out Danny's large medical kit. "Look at this emergency kit. My father doesn't even have supplies like this and you know how he is about emergency preparation."

"I actually can't believe he left that," Paul said, staring at the medical kit in surprise. He raised his eyebrows after a moment, realizing Danny would have no need for it without Paul around. "Or maybe I can."

"He's so weird," Trisha said with a laugh, tossing the kit back into the box.

"Mmm," Paul hummed as he turned around and went back to washing the coffeepot.

"You're not going to keep that old thing, are you?"

"The coffeepot?" Paul asked, turning around to frown at Trisha. "Why wouldn't I?"

"We put one of those espresso/coffeemaker combos on our registry," Trisha said with a look of distaste at the coffeepot. "Someone already bought it. I've been checking the list online."

"Oh," Paul mumbled. "Well, I dunno then. Maybe we can return it and get something else."

"We'll donate this one. You need to start a donation box." Trisha reached down to grab another box in the corner and then seized a pen off the counter to label the box as donations with intricate care that came from her passion for organization. "There you go—most of this kitchen stuff can go."

"Right," Paul said, picking up the coffeepot and staring at it for a long moment. "But I actually wanna keep this."

"Why do we need two?"

"Just—it's sentimental. I wanna keep it."

"That's silly," Trisha said, frowning at him with irritation. "Why keep it when there are others in need?"

"I want to keep it," Paul repeated slowly, narrowing his eyes at Trisha with the realization there was no way he was going to let her donate Danny's coffeepot to charity. "So stop arguing with me about it."

Trisha pulled back, a look of shock playing over her face before she shrugged. "Fine, keep it if it's that important."

"It is."

"If you say so," Trisha said dismissively.

Paul stared at the coffeepot once more, a smile tugging at his lips before he put the whole thing into the box of kitchen supplies he was keeping with great care.

Both he and Trisha were efficient workers and they had the entire house packed up within a few hours. He could have gone to her apartment that night, but he used the excuse of wanting to clean the house in case Danny decided he wanted to rent it out as an excuse to stay one more night.

It was dark by the time Trisha left. Paul found himself sitting at the kitchen table after she was gone simply because there was nowhere else to sit aside from his bed that he was leaving behind for now because there was nowhere to put it in Trisha's apartment.

He had a stress headache that had been building all day and it left him feeling dazed under the weight of it. The house was already pretty clean and the televisions had both gone to New York. He really didn't have anything to do but sit there and wallow in self-pity that was making the headache behind his eyes worse. He actually considered taking some sort of pain reliever despite having never taken one before, even when he was recovering from his knee surgery. Something about the pain of this particular headache had him wanting to hide from it.

He searched through the boxes for something, anything to get rid of the throbbing, but came up with nothing. Danny and Eve wouldn't have left anything like that behind. What use did a masochist have for aspirin?

Finally giving up, he grabbed his briefcase with the intention to do some of the work he had fallen behind on over the past few weeks when being with Danny and Eve had been more important than his job. He opened it on the kitchen table and rubbed at his temples, wondering why now was the time he chose to get annoyed with a headache when usually something like that was a welcome surprise.

He frowned down at his briefcase, blinking against the pain that was making his vision blur when he saw an envelope lying on top of his other files. He picked it up, recognizing Danny's neat handwriting on the front in big letters that said—*Merry Christmas*.

He opened the envelope, his eyes widening when he recognized a deed instantly. Unfolding it, he stared down at the deed to the house he was sitting in seeing that Danny had signed it over to him. Shock washed over him as his lawyer mind reeled over the fact that Danny would give him a lakefront property easily worth several hundred thousand dollars even with the real-estate market suffering as it was.

That was one hell of a Christmas present—one Paul would have never accepted if he'd known.

He looked into the envelope for an explanation and found a small note sitting in the corner of it. He pulled it out, finding that the words were blurred from some odd reason and he had squint to read it.

Look us up if you ever decide to bite the apple. Until then – enjoy Eden.

Danny Boy

Paul stared down at the note, the headache throbbing worse than ever as the words became too blurry to see any more. He closed his eyes and dropped both the note and the deed into his briefcase.

He covered his face with his hands, his shoulders shaking under his grief. The very last place in the world he wanted to be was Eden if he had to live there alone. All the real beauty of it had left early that morning in a sleek black Mustang driven by a devil who had never been as cruel as the world thought he was.

Sitting at the breakfast table by himself in the semidarkness of a cold winter night Paul did something he had thought was impossible for him—he cried.

Chapter Twenty-One

"She's precious, Daniel."

Danny looked at Circe, who was dressed in normal clothing—as normal as Circe got in any case.

She still wore the long, ankle-length red leather coat she breezed into the loft with. Underneath she sported a black turtleneck sweater and tight leather pants, both of which clung to her body, leaving little to the imagination. She wore boots instead of high heels, but even those were spiked and deadly instead of heavy and bulky like something Eve would choose.

Her makeup was as dark and forbidding as Danny remembered, but her white-blond hair was much longer than it had been the last time he had seen her. She let it flow down her back in loose, long curls rather than tying it back as she did when she was playing mistress. It seemed nothing caught up with Circe without her permission, because she aged nicely. She was nearing fifty but her face was smooth and flawless, making her look much younger.

"Thanks," Danny said dryly, taking a long drink of coffee. "She likes the loft. You were right, it's perfect for her. She was so surprised when we got here. It's magnificent. I love it too."

"Why wouldn't you?" Circe said loftily as she glanced around the large Soho loft from her seat next to Danny at the bar on the side of the kitchen, admiring the red stonework with a critical eye. "It's mine, of course it's fabulous. Everything I own is fabulous."

"Right, of course," Danny agreed, rubbing a hand over his face tiredly. "Why are you here, Circey?"

"Do I need a reason?" Circe asked, narrowing steely gray eyes at him. "When I grace you with my presence what're you supposed to say?"

"I'm not playing," Danny said in a bored voice. "Eve's in the other room and even if she wasn't, you're not my mistress. That game ended years ago."

"You're no fun."

"No, I'm really not."

Danny grabbed his cigarettes off the bar and lit one with a tilt of his head, avoiding Circe's eyes as he did it. Taking his cue, Circe reached into her purse on the bar and pulled out her own cigarettes, ones she carried in a silver holder. She smoked expensive French cigarettes she had gotten hooked on when she had a client in Paris who had fetish for silver screen starlets and Circe had never stopped smoking them like a diva. She tapped one cigarette against the silver case when she closed it and then held it

between her fingers expectantly. Danny rolled his eyes but leaned forward to light her cigarette obediently.

"You need a real lighter," she said and took a long puff off her cigarette, blowing the smoke out of the side of her mouth with dramatic flair. "Those plastic lighters are so tacky. You're supposed to smoke like James Dean, not Billy Bob from the trailer park. I hate plastic lighters. I should beat you for owning one."

Danny snorted. "Now you know what to get me for Christmas."

"I'm not buying you anything for Christmas," Circe said, her eyes narrowing at him once more as she puffed on her cigarette like a starlet of days gone past. "If you fail to amuse me, you'll get nothing and like it."

Danny looked away from her, taking a drag off his own cigarette and tilting his head up to blow the smoke toward the high ceiling of the loft. "You never told me why you were here."

"I came to make sure you liked the loft," Circe said, studying his face intently. "And I'm worried about you."

"I'm fine," Danny lied, still not meeting her eyes.

"I don't think you are," she argued as she tapped her cigarette on the ashtray and then leaned forward, grabbing his chin and forcing his face to hers. Her long fingernails dug into his cheeks in a way that told him he would be dense to fight her hold. "You look like you did when your mother died."

"I feel like I did when my mother died," Danny admitted with a sigh of misery. Circe had flown back to Tampa the night after his mother's death and stayed with him and Paul for two full months when Danny was battling his darkest moments of despair. This was a woman who knew him very well. He couldn't hide from her even if he wanted to. "I think I feel worse."

Circe didn't release her hold on him as her eyes ran over his face keenly. "Guard your heart, didn't I teach you that? You're in charge. Never let them own you when you're the one with the whip in your hand. You broke the rules."

"I loved him before I knew the rules," Danny countered.

"Yes, I know," Circe said, letting go of his face and taking another puff of her cigarette. She blew the smoke at him in a haughty way, but her eyes told a different story. They swirled with concern she couldn't hide. "Love is a fool's game, but it catches up with all of us eventually. At least you've got your pretty little pet to amuse you. Give it time, the pain will fade."

"She's more than a pet to me," Danny snapped at Circe as his skin prickled with defensiveness. "I love her."

"Why have one weakness when you can have two instead?" Circe asked, shaking her head sadly at him. "She is precious, though. Does she behave?"

"I'm not loaning my girlfriend to you," Danny said with his eyes narrowed at Circe.

"Afraid she'll like what I have to offer?" Circe asked, arching one blonde eyebrow challengingly. "Playing a game with Circey could cheer you both up."

"What would your husband have to say about that?"

"My husband has nothing to say about anything when it comes to my amusements," Circe said, pulling back as if affronted. "He exists to serve me."

"If you say so," Danny said with a roll of his eyes, knowing for a fact Circe adored her husband. True, he was exceedingly wealthy, but it was love more than anything that finally had her agreeing to marry him. All her clients had been insanely wealthy like her husband was and he wasn't the first to beg for marriage, he was just the first to break past the steel around Circe's heart and win her over. "Where is he?"

"Working," Circe pouted, a full, red bottom lip sticking out in misery. "On Christmas Eve. I'm beating him later."

Danny smirked. Circe's husband could possibly give Paul a run for his money as far as pain fetishes were concerned. "Early Christmas present."

"Truly is," Circe admitted with a sly smile. "I got this new burgundy corset he is going to love. I can't wait to put it on for him. Precious will die when he sees me." She cupped at her large breasts through her sweater, pushing them up higher than they already were, the cigarette dangling between her fingers as she admired herself. "They're going to look great in it. He's so lucky."

"Come on, Circe," Danny growled, looking behind him to see if Eve was still upstairs sorting through her paintings the movers had delivered earlier that day. "Tone yourself down a little. Take a tranquilizer if you have to."

Circe giggled and tapped her cigarette against the ashtray. "You want to come over to our place for dinner?"

Danny gave Circe a look of distaste. "You just told me you're going to beat your husband dressed up as a twisted version of Mrs. Claus. I'll pass."

"Oh, I should get a hat," Circe said, her eyes lighting up. "A leather Santa hat. They make those, don't they?"

"Do I know?" Danny asked, wincing at the visual. "I wouldn't be caught dead in a Santa hat. I hate Christmas."

Circe stared at him, concern swirling in her eyes once more. "What can I do to cheer you up?"

"Snap your fingers and make Paul come back to me."

Circe's face fell. "I would if I could, sweetie."

"Yeah, I know," Danny said as he took another long drag off his cigarette.

"What's your precious doing?" Circe asked curiously, turning around to look for Eve as she put out her cigarette. "She hardly said two words to me. I don't like that. Doesn't she know who I am?"

"She's depressed." Danny shook his head sadly as he thought of Eve. The car drive from Tampa to New York had been hideous. With the bad weather and Eve crying most

of the way, Danny was still trying to recover from it. "Really depressed. She loves him as much as I do and she's not handling it well. I'm such an asshole for doing this to her all over again."

"Come," Circe said as she jumped off the barstool and grabbed Danny's hand, tugging on it in a way that brooked no argument. She grabbed Danny's cigarette out of his fingers, mashing it out in the ashtray next to hers. "Let's go talk to your precious. I've heard about her for years, the majestic Eve—Paul was moony over her."

"Not moony enough," Danny complained, but followed after Circe rather than argue.

The spiral wrought iron staircase that led upstairs echoed with the clank of Circe's high-heeled boots as she pulled Danny up them with a tug on his hand, betraying a surprising amount of strength. For a woman who could strike fear into the heart of anyone she wanted, Circe was actually built in a slim, willowy way that made it impossible for her large breasts to be real. Not that Danny would ever admit to that observation.

Eve squeaked when Danny and Circe suddenly showed up in the open area that made up the upstairs of the loft. The only thing the second floor had to offer was one large, open room decorated with a wrought iron railing that matched the stairs and overlooked the bottom floor on one side. The other side was covered in large, curved windows overlooking Soho. It was an ideal studio for Eve and she had been up there constantly since they had arrived the day before. It made Danny hopeful that perhaps her muse would return with this new, beautiful area for her to work in.

She had most of her paintings leaning against the wall, but there were a few she had set up between the windows. Eve had her paints out and had been working with them, touching up the paintings as she sat cross-legged on the floor in front of them.

"Oh, my," Circe whispered, her eyes on the painting Eve had been working on. "It's Paul."

"These are private," Eve said, glaring at Danny from her spot on the floor, her paintbrush held halfway to the painting. "You should have told me you were coming up."

"She knows what Paul looks like in slave gear," Danny said by way of explanation. "Don't worry about it."

Eve still looked defensive as she put her paintbrush into a glass of water resting near her leg. Her jaw was set, her green eyes blazing as she worked at rinsing it off with more force than necessary.

"Sweetie," Circe said in a husky voice as she leaned down to stare at the picture more closely. "This is incredible."

"Thank you," Eve said, still not looking at her as she worked on cleaning her brushes.

"They're all incredible," Circe rasped, her voice stunned as she walked over to the next picture, staring at it with the same critical eyes. "I collect fetish art, I know what I'm talking about. Daniel, these are—"

"I know," Danny said, unable to hide a proud smile. "She's a genius. Paul was always telling her to sell them, but so far the only one she's sold was to me."

Circe turned around, raising her curious eyebrows at Danny. "Can I see it?"

"No," Danny said instantly, seeing Eve's wide-eyed look of panic as her head snapped around to stare at him. "That one *is* private."

"What's the point of buying art you can't display?" Circe walked back to the picture Eve was sitting in front of and tilted her head to admire it. "How much?"

"Excuse me?" Eve asked, turning around to look at Circe incredulously.

"For the painting," Circe said, pointing to the painting in front of Eve. "I want it—how much?"

Eve gaped at her. "It's not for sale."

"You sold one to Daniel."

"I live with him," Eve countered, her green eyes still narrowed as if Circe had insulted her on a cellular level. "My soul is in this painting."

Circe tilted her head, the gleam of raw determination shining in her eyes as she stared at the painting. "I see that."

It was actually one of Eve's darker paintings, one that for once did not have a Garden of Eden theme. This time she had painted Paul as an angel, with massive white wings behind him, but that wasn't what was so disturbing, it was the way his arms were tied above him with large, glowing, golden chains. Blood was splattered on his brilliantly white wings and over the foggy floor, as if he were chained to clouds that were supposed to harbor goodness, but instead showed him nothing but unforgiving misery. His face was angelic as always, because Eve always captured his likeness with eerie realism, but his beautiful features showed agony instead of pleasure that usually came from being punished. It wasn't until right then that Danny truly understood this painting. She had painted God tormenting him instead of the devil and his God was doing it in a way that left him miserable instead of euphoric. Eve had captured with her art all the pain Paul's father had caused him by forcing him to endure a reality that would never make him happy.

This was a punishment there was no escape from—one that destroyed him body and soul.

"Twenty thousand," Circe finally whispered when she pulled herself out of her trance with Eve's dark artwork. "I'll write you a check right now."

"No," Danny said, shaking his head at that. "She said her soul's in it. There's no price for that."

"Thirty thousand."

Danny glared at Circe. "I said no. She doesn't want to sell it. You don't always get what you want."

Circe huffed, turning around to look at Danny reprovingly as she put her hand on her hip. "Fifty thousand."

"No way," Danny said, returning Circe's reproving look with one of his own. "She's not selling her soul to you for fifty grand."

"So stubborn," Circe said, rolling her eyes as she turned back to Eve. "Eighty thousand, Precious. I'll put it up in my club for all to see. I'm not the only fetish art collector in New York. When others see this they'll be begging you for your work. Sell me this painting and I'll make you rich. Take or leave the offer, because it will only come once."

Eve stared up at Circe, her eyes wide and dazed, her jaw falling slack, betraying total astonishment. "Eighty thousand dollars?" Eve whispered. "Are you serious?"

"What is wrong with her? Is she dim?" Circe asked in irritation as she turned back to Danny. "I thought she was artistically educated? Why am I the one to tell her the value of something she should be able to determine on her own?"

"Um—" Danny mumbled, looking from Eve to Circe, feeling his own fair share of shock. Eighty thousand was an enormous amount of money for Eve. More than that, he knew for a fact that if this piece was displayed in Circe's club Eve would likely get legitimately rich off her art if she could learn to part with it. In the six years since it opened Circe's club had become one of the most popular upper-class BDSM clubs in all of New York City thanks to Circe's sharp mind and her husband's large bank accounts that had him investing millions for the startup. Danny blinked, realizing that if Circe's husband had enough money to invest millions in a club just to keep Circe amused, then she could afford more than eighty grand for a painting that had Eve's soul and Paul's suffering encapsulated in it. "A hundred thousand."

"What?" Circe barked at him, giving Danny a look of disbelief. "Your precious seems happy with eighty! Why are you getting involved?"

"Because she belongs to me," Danny said simply, giving Eve a look that firmly told her to shut up. "What's hers is mine, that includes her art. If you want it you'll pay a hundred grand and you'll display it in a place that is sure to garner maximum attention. I want a fucking spotlight on it."

Circe narrowed her eyes at Danny. "I'm not paying a hundred grand to a no-name fetish artist."

Danny shrugged. "So we'll keep it here, doesn't bother me. It has emotional value for both of us and I'm rich too, Circey. We don't need your money."

Eve was still gaping at them, but panic flashed in her eyes, making it obvious that eighty grand had been enough to have her considering parting with a small piece of her soul. Danny narrowed his eyes at her, silently telling her to play along when Circe turned around to stare at the painting once more.

"What is he chained to?" Circe asked curiously. "Why are the chains golden?"

"God," Eve said simply, her eyes still wide and panicked as she stared at Danny, but she managed to keep her voice even. "He's the tormentor. Angels have no free will. They have to do what they're told or they're punished. They can't go to hell, but heaven can be just as bad when their destinies are never their own."

"Huh," Circe said, her eyes still on the painting. "That's an intriguing idea. I rather like that."

"Yes, you would," Danny said with a smirk at Circe. "Any devil would enjoy seeing God cast as the villain for a change."

"Indeed," Circe agreed. "Fine, a hundred grand. Your precious can come to the club and choose whatever spot she sees fit for it and the lighting will be set up as requested. Go fetch my purse, Daniel. I want to look at the rest of her work."

Chapter Twenty-Two

Danny stopped folding the towel in his hands, lifting his head in surprise when a knock sounded on the door. He frowned, because he and Eve's list of visitors was extremely limited in New York when they had barely left the apartment to do any socializing. They both had many friends in New York, but neither of them had advertised their arrival.

He would have thought it was Circe, but Eve had left to meet with her at the club to find the proper place to display the painting of Paul and discuss some other projects. Eve was touring it in the light of day without the distractions of a club full of kinky people who would make discussing business impossible.

With Circe out of the picture, Danny walked to the door, assuming Eve had gotten done early and forgotten her key – again.

He unlocked door and opened it with a smile of amusement. "I swear, Evie –"

Danny stopped abruptly, his jaw falling slack when he saw it wasn't Eve. He was left standing there at the open door, his hand tightening on the doorknob as raw shock rolled over him so potently he couldn't speak.

"Did you know fast food sucks?" Paul whispered, looking away from him as he rubbed at the back of his neck. "I don't remember it sucking. I'm pretty sure I used to like it. Didn't we like French fries and cheeseburgers when we were kids?"

"I guess," Danny mumbled as he studied Paul as if he were a mirage. He would have thought he was dreaming if it weren't for the fact that Paul looked terrible. His hair was a mess, his eyes bloodshot and rimmed with dark circles of exhaustion. Danny saw healing scrapes on his forehead and right cheek. His instinct was to help, but he was too stunned to move. "What –"

"It's just, you eat something every day for years," Paul went on, still not meeting Danny's eyes. "And you never stop to notice how much you love it, 'cause it's always there. But when it's gone, you realize everything else is ruined because of it. You just can't eat anything else. It all tastes horrible and bland."

"Why do you look like hell?" Danny asked in a low, deadly voice as the fear that pulsed through him helped clear the shocked haze from his mind. He tilted his head, studying Paul closer and finding bruises along his jawline. "Did you get into a fight? You look like you've been in a fight."

"I just didn't like Trisha's cooking and a lifetime of fast food wouldn't work for me," Paul sighed heavily, looking exhausted on a bone-weary level as he stared at the floor.

Danny's grew wide in astonishment. "What did you do, Paul Guy?"

"I broke up with her. My hating her cooking wasn't any more fair to her than it was to me. She was actually pretty cool about it. That part was easy."

"You told your family you were leaving Trisha for Eve?" Danny whispered as hope surged through him so blindingly he felt faint.

"No," Paul said as he finally lifted his eyes and met Danny's gaze evenly. "I told my family I was leaving Trisha for *you* and Eve."

Danny sucked in a sharp gasp as tears stung his eyes. "You didn't."

"I did," Paul said with a broken laugh. "It was pretty bad. My brothers had come home for the wedding and they were both more than happy to do my father's bidding. I was right, they *all* would have rather me be dead than queer."

Danny gasped as a strange collision of sheer joy and horror burst inside him. "How bad was it?"

"Let's just say that I am most certainly not allowed back into Eden — ever."

"Are you hurt?"

"Nope." Paul shook his head as a smile tugged at his lips. "It turns out pansy lawyers can actually kick the shit out of bad-ass Marines. They can take the pain, but I can get off on it. It was a really unfair fight and that wasn't nice of me. If I wasn't quite so pissed off, I might have warned them. As it was, they were left with a very different impression of faggots than what they started with."

Danny couldn't help it, he laughed as he shook his head. "You bit the apple."

"I bit the apple," Paul agreed. His eyes glimmered bright blue as tears welled up in them and he gave Danny a soft smile. "Can I come in?"

"*Mi casa es su casa.*" Danny leaned back against the door to let him in. When Paul brushed past him Danny couldn't resist, not when he realized Paul had really done it. He gave up everything to be with him and Eve. He grabbed Paul's hand and jerked him forward, kissing him before he could complain. Paul surprised him by kissing him back, his fingers tangling in Danny's hair. It wasn't the most passionate kiss they had shared, but it was probably the most heartfelt. When it was over Danny took a shuddering breath to fight the urge to break down and cry in the doorway. Looking for a distraction, he breathed against Paul's lips, "You want me to make you something?"

Paul ran his hand through Danny's hair, stroking it lovingly and smiled once more. "I would love it."

Epilogue

"Say yes, you rotten boy."

"I'm not saying, yes," Danny said, rolling his eyes at Circe as he took a long drink of wine. "Red lipstick and corsets don't scare me."

"I'm gonna beat you," Circe said with a laugh as she hit his chest lightly with a riding crop. "Paul, be a sweetie and tell him you are dying to please me."

Paul took a sip of his own glass of wine as he stood next to Danny in the large art gallery that was having a showing of Eve's work. He wore a three-piece business suit, looking extremely out of place in a darkly decorated room full of people dressed in every form of leather possible as they walked around looking at erotic paintings. He had come straight from work. Being there for Eve's big evening was more important than dressing appropriately.

He eyed Circe, who was dressed to impress, looking extra dangerous this evening wearing a red corset and black leather miniskirt. Her long blonde hair was pulled back into a ponytail, her makeup dark and forbidding. Her high heels put her almost eye level with him and she used that to her advantage as she turned to look at Paul reprovingly.

"I'm not dying to please you, Circey." Paul laughed in amusement, shaking off her look of disappointment easily. "But I will say that you look lovely this evening."

Circe pouted, sticking out a full, red bottom lip. "Rebellion doesn't suit you," she said sullenly. "But you look sweet. The suit makes me want to corrupt you."

"Okay," Paul said, reaching out to push Circe away. "Aren't there other slaves to torment in this gallery?"

"You're more fun," Circe said, letting her eyes roll lazily to one of the paintings hanging on the wall behind them. "Look at all the people here. Thanks to Eve you two are like little deviant celebrities. If I can get you to do a demonstration at the club, I'll be independently wealthy."

"You're already independently wealthy," Danny said as he arched a dark eyebrow at her. "All this money has made you greedy."

"It'll be fabulous. I'll advertise for weeks. Sinners everywhere will come to see you."

"Others exist to amuse me, not the other way around," Danny said dryly. "I'm not performing for you. Find someone else to do a single-tailed whip presentation. I'm not the only one who knows how to use one."

"Yes, but you're the prettiest," Circe said huskily, eyeing Danny, who was wearing a pair of tight leather pants and a long, black poet's shirt. "If I advertise you two being

there the whipping will just be the icing on the cake." She turned to Paul, letting her eyes run over him appraisingly once more. "Of course, the suit has to go."

Paul laughed. "Of course."

"I know you want to make me happy," Circe said in a husky voice as she stared at Paul keenly. "You'd show off all those pretty muscles for me, wouldn't you? Tell Danny you're dying to be beaten for my pleasure."

"Don't you have a slave of your own?" Danny asked, turning around to scan the room. "Where's your husband? I'm going to tell him you're getting into trouble."

"He married me because I'm trouble," she said with a laugh. "He loves it. He lives to please me."

"That's a job that's never done," Danny said tiredly. "I'm not saying yes—go find trouble somewhere else."

"Where's Eve?" Circe pouted and then raised her eyebrows when she spotted Eve talking with a large group of admirers across the room. "Ah, lovely, pets are sweeter than slaves. I'm done with you, Paul, you're dead to me."

"Sure I am," Paul said with a shake of his head as he watched Circe glide across the room in four-inch heels. "We need to try and find some normal friends."

"Normal is overrated," Danny said with a shrug. "You know she's going to pester Evie into making us do that stupid demonstration."

Paul considered that and then admitted, "I really don't mind doing the demonstration."

"I don't either, actually," Danny said, but turned to give Paul a devious smile. "But I figure a few more glasses of wine and I can get Circe on her knees."

"That'd be terrible. Everyone who is anyone is here. They'll talk about it for weeks."

"I'm definitely doing it now," Danny said with an evil laugh. "Watch me."

Paul gave him a mischievous smile. "I'll look forward to it. Watching you be evil is one of my favorite things."

Danny reached out, cupping Paul's chin possessively, and then stared down at him with dark eyes that swirled with hunger. He leaned down and kissed him lightly and then whispered against his lips, "I love you."

"Okay, whatever, I love you too," Paul said, pushing him away playfully. He didn't really care about Danny kissing him. They were standing in a gallery featuring art of the two of them doing worse things than kissing, but he could tell when Danny had had one too many. "But no more wine or *you're* going to be on your knees."

"Nah, I'm just buzzing nicely." Danny took another drink of wine pointedly, and then raised his eyebrows as Eve made a beeline toward them. "Told ya."

Paul snorted as he watched Eve walk across the marble floor of the art gallery. She was wearing her black leather with her rainbow scarves tied into her long, thick pigtails. The only difference in her attire from the first time he'd seen her wear leather was that the collar around her neck was decorated with genuine rubies, sapphires and

emeralds. It was a three-year anniversary gift Danny had bought her and she rarely took it off. It made no difference if she was going to the movies, a club or an art exhibit, she wore it proudly. Eve had turned out to be far more deviant and rebellious than Danny or Paul could ever be.

"Please do the damn demonstration for Circe." Eve stopped in front of them and brushed at the fine red hairs that had escaped her pigtails off her forehead in annoyance. "She is driving me crazy."

"No, I'm not agreeing to that," Danny said lazily as he stared down at Eve with a glowing look of possessiveness and love. "Not even if she begs me."

"You're being a pain in the ass," Eve said with a frown as she stared up at Danny. "Are you drunk?"

"Yes," Paul said with a laugh. "He wants to make her drop to her knees."

Eve winced. "Oh, Danny Boy, that's awful. She'll never live that down. Don't do that to her."

"Sometimes I'm awful," Danny said with a dark smile. "All work and no play makes Danny a dull boy. Allow me my amusements where I find them."

"All work and no play?" Eve repeated skeptically. "You work at a coffeehouse two days a week. You don't exactly have your nose to the grindstone."

"True," Danny admitted with a reluctant shrug. "Like Circe, I've found handsome slaves and pretty pets who keep me in the style to which I've become accustomed."

Eve laughed. "You like being a kept man?"

"Sure," Danny said as he gave her a smile. "I do laundry and everything."

"That's true," she admitted as she turned to Paul and eyed him. "Are you going to keep him out of trouble? I need to get back to what I was doing."

"Easier said than done," Paul said as he smiled at Eve endearingly. "But for you, I'll find a way."

"Thank you." Eve leaned up on her toes, putting her hands on Paul's shoulders and placing a long, lingering kiss on his lips. "I love you."

"Love you too," he whispered against her lips. "Are you selling anything?"

"Why, yes, I am," Eve said with a naughty smile as she pulled away from him. "Keep this one out of trouble for a few more hours and I'll be taking both of you to Paris to perform for my amusement in a penthouse suite."

Paul raised his eyebrows in surprise. "That good?"

"That good," she said with a wide, excited smile. "I'm being serious, you know, I really want to take you to Paris. You know I love it there."

"Sounds fun to me," Paul said softly as he admired the way Eve's face glowed in excitement. "Maybe you can bat eyelashes at my boss to get me the time off."

"No problem, your boss loves me," Eve said, her eyes wide as she stared up at him in amusement, making it obvious she was harboring a secret. She put her hands to her mouth and giggled, "Carl bought one of the paintings."

Paul gaped at her in horror when he realized she was being serious, his boss really had bought one of Eve's paintings. "Tell me it wasn't one of me."

"No, it was one of Danny," she said with a laugh. "You really can tell which way someone swings by what painting they buy. You are most certainly not the only slave who ended up a lawyer."

"Very true," Paul agreed with a sigh. "Carl is not going to own a picture of Danny Boy, that is horrifying. This is what I get for using Circe as a connection to get a job. Does it really make a difference that I'm making three times more money than I did in Tampa if I have to look at my boss every day and know he owns a half-naked picture of my boyfriend?"

"You really can't blame Carl." Danny shrugged lazily. "I am dead sexy. What slave wouldn't want to own a picture of me?"

"Oh God," Eve said with another laugh. "Really, Danny Boy, don't drink any more. I wanted to celebrate tonight."

"I'll be fine," Danny assured her as his gaze ran over her hungrily. "We'll celebrate."

"He won't drink any more," Paul assured her. "I'm proud of you. I want to celebrate too. I'll keep him in line. I promise."

Eve smiled, her green eyes full of adoration as she stared up at Paul lovingly. "I believe you – always."

About the Author

A freckle-faced redhead born and raised in Hawaii, Kele Moon has always been a bit of a sore thumb and has come to enjoy the novelty of it. She thrives on pushing the envelope and finding ways to make the impossible work in her story telling. With a mad passion for romance, she adores the art of falling in love. The only rules she believes in is that, in love, there are no rules and true love knows no bounds.

So obsessed is she with the beauty of romance and the novelty of creating it, she's lost in her own wonder world most of the time. Thankfully she married her own dark, handsome, brooding hero who has infinite patience for her airy ways and attempts to keep her grounded. When she leaves her keys in the refrigerator or her cell phone in the oven, he's usually there to save her from herself. The two of them now reside in Florida with their three beautiful children, who make their lives both fun and challenging in equal parts – they wouldn't have it any other way.

Kele 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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