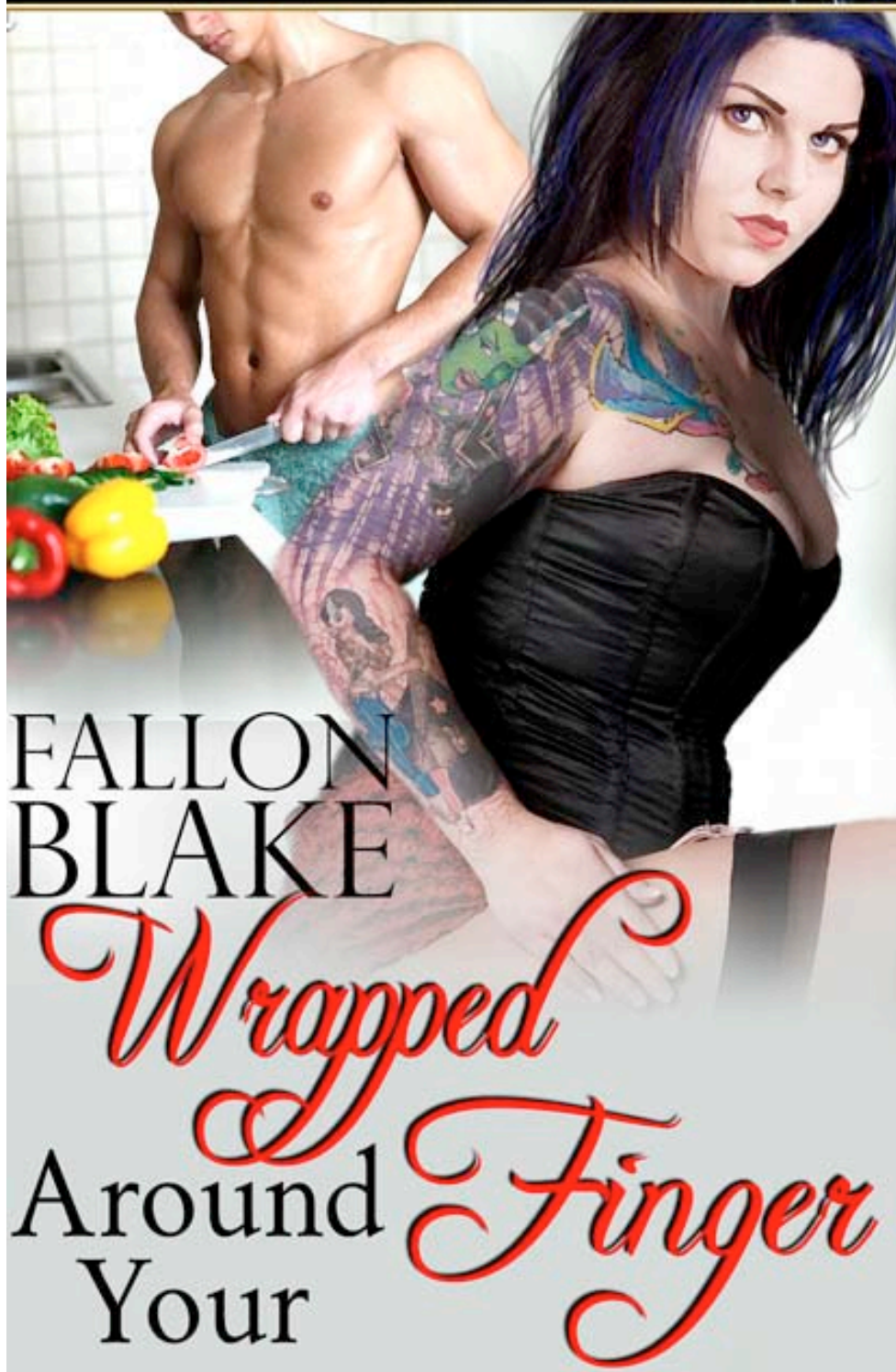


ELLORA'S CAVE TABOO



FALLON  
BLAKE

*Wrapped*  
Around Your *Finger*

## Wrapped Around Your Finger

Fallon Blake

Plus-sized fetish model and aspiring chef Indigo Hartley has plenty of tattoos and a fiery attitude to match. When she's offered a job as a sushi model for one of Miami's trendiest restaurants, she jumps at the chance. Little does this country-mouse-turned-city-vixen know that what starts out as a modeling job will end up the answer to all of her kinkiest fantasies. Three days serving as a sub to this hot chef is too tempting an offer to refuse.

Banner Faust has worked his ass off and sacrificed his love life to become a rock star in the culinary world. On what should be the biggest night of his career, he realizes something is missing from his life—the submissive woman he's always craved. The curvy new model with the blue-streaked hair and innate submissive nature just might be the one he's been waiting for. And when he gets her home—and in his bed—he soon realizes three days will never be enough.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Wrapped Around Your Finger

ISBN 9781419931314

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Edited by Grace Bradley

Cover art by Dar Albert

Electronic book publication November 2010

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# *WRAPPED AROUND YOUR FINGER*

**Fallon Blake**

## Dedication

For my husband who loves me, flaws and all.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Rose of CompassRose Creations, who shared her craft and knowledge of exotic woods with me. I'd also like to thank Ms. Madeline, who graciously answered all my questions about *nyotaimori*. And last but never least, a huge thank you to Lissa who suffered through this one with me, every step of the way. Love you!

## Trademarks Acknowledgement

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California Culinary Academy: California Culinary Academy, Inc.

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Volkswagen: Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft

## **Chapter One**

Anxiety nagged the edges of Indie's already frayed nerves as she waited in the dressing area with the other models. The haughty, judgmental glares from the younger, skinnier Barbie types had her desperately itching to offer a sarcastic smile and a middle finger. So what if she wasn't even close to a size two? She did okay working as a model for the alternative fetish agency Exquisite Flesh. It wouldn't make her rich, but it paid the bills and her tuition at culinary school.

Usually she did pinup shoots and ads for alternative clothing. Very rarely did she take assignments that required nudity. She wasn't actually naked for this, but damn close to it. Who was she to pass up the opportunity to be a sushi model at a trendy restaurant like Crave?

"Indigo Hartley!"

Indie walked through the curtain and into the dining room with pride. Well, about as much pride as one can muster while wearing a flesh-colored thong and paper booties.

The manager, Elaine, stood waiting in her drab suit and looked rather alarmed. "Oh no, this is the new model? Lance, I thought I told you that she had to fit the type!" She whirled to face the man who prepared the display table before them.

"Exquisite Flesh was the only agency that had a girl available on such short notice. I'm an assistant, I don't do miracles," Lance said with a smirk.

"Chef is not going to be happy. At all. She's covered in tattoos and," she fingered a lock of Indie's hair, "are those blue streaks in her hair?"

Torn between mortification and annoyance, all Indie could do was stand there. The last thing she wanted to do was piss off Chef Faust. He was the culinary world's version of a rock star. He was known for being demanding, flashy and prone to excess, but his

talent with food was undeniable. The chance to catch a glimpse of him in action was the main thing that motivated her to accept the job.

Her agent hadn't mentioned they'd wanted to book a specific type. *Just fucking great.*

"I'm sorry that I'm not what you were expecting. I'll just gather my things and be on my way," Indie offered with a polite nod, but was met with the manager's sigh of irritation.

"No, no, no. It's too late to find a proper replacement. You've already been prepped. We'll just have to make it work."

Prepped meant she'd been shaved baby smooth and washed thoroughly with an organic unscented soap. It had been an odd experience, having unknown people scrub and shave her so completely. Actually she'd found the whole thing rather arousing. Maybe she should be embarrassed about that, but right now she was too nervous to put much thought into it.

The manager turned back to Lance. "Take her to pastry and have them airbrush over her tattoos. When they are finished let Chef know he will not be able to put the food directly on her skin. Then get her into place on the table in the corner, the one that's out of the way."

"You got it," Lance responded as he held out a robe for Indie.

She thankfully wrapped herself in the silk and followed him into the kitchen. She stopped and stared for a second. She couldn't help it. It was as if she'd just died and gone to culinary heaven. There was so much space. The polished stainless steel and top-of-the-line equipment almost had her drooling. Everything you ever needed to be a kick-ass chef was in this kitchen. She could just imagine the high-end, exotic ingredients it would be stocked with. This wasn't a place for cooking. No, nothing as ordinary and mundane as that. This was a place to create art.

"Indigo?" Lance's voice snapped her out of her trance.

"Sorry, it's just...this kitchen," she murmured.

“Come on, sweetheart. Shame really, but we have to cover those gorgeous tattoos of yours,” he said with a sympathetic smile. “If it were up to me I would —”

“What is she doing in here?” Chef Faust made a beeline for them, toweling off his hands as he approached.

*It's him.* Indie's heart did a little dance. Okay, so she could admit she was a little star struck.

Meticulously he scrutinized her as he stood waiting for an answer. He had the kind of intense features that made him appear almost angry — perfectly straight nose, hard, square jaw, brooding and stormy blue eyes. The man was chest-achingly beautiful. She knew from the articles she'd read about him that he was thirty-four, just six years older than her. To have achieved all of this so quickly, he had to have hunger and drive, two qualities no top chef could succeed without. She bet arrogance and superiority belonged on that list too.

“Chef, this is the replacement model. I was just taking her to pastry to have them airbrush over her tattoos,” Lance replied with an audible level of anxiety and eyes so huge it seemed as though he was braced for nuclear fallout.

“May I see?” Chef Faust addressed Indie.

Showing her personal bits to the executive chef of one of the most acclaimed restaurants in the area was not high on her list of fun things to do. *This is what you signed up for so suck it up.* She was not ashamed of her body and Chef Faust could go *sous-vide* himself if he didn't like what he saw.

She nodded and let the robe slip off her shoulders to pool at her elbows. The way he drank her in made it seem as if everyone else in the room had vanished. Her already hardened nipples stood out like beacons. She felt the blush creep into her cheeks as she imagined him pinching, tugging, sucking on them. Where had that come from? Her unexpected arousal unbalanced her. She hadn't reacted this way to a man in a very long time. Disconcerted by the need and lust he'd so effortlessly invoked in her, she averted her gaze before tentatively settling it on his once more. He ran a hand through his



shaggy, walnut-brown hair as he studied her. "No. No airbrushing. She's absolutely perfect," he exclaimed, circling her.

Lance let out a sound that was halfway between a sigh and a laugh.

Had Chef Faust just said she was perfect? Indie with the extra padding around the hips, a bit of roundness to her belly and lily-white skin? She followed him with her gaze, watching as he continued to peruse her body. It should have felt cold and dispassionate. He was contemplating whether or not he wanted to use her as a display for raw fish after all. But the way he moved made her feel as if he were a predator and she his prey. It was somehow sensual, and she was incredibly embarrassed that she was turned on by it. Attempting to regain her composure, she straightened her spine and lifted her chin, praying he hadn't noticed the way he affected her.

"Place her on the center table next to my station. She'll be the perfect centerpiece for tonight," he spoke to Lance as he pulled her robe up around her shoulders. "Lance will help you onto the table. Rest your head on the pillow and lie completely still, arms at your sides. You should be reasonably comfortable. I assume your agent went over what this entails, am I correct?"

"Yes sir." Maybe it was her culinary training or the fact that his presence commanded it, but the formal address rolled so easily from her tongue.

She couldn't believe she would be the centerpiece tonight. Nervous excitement bubbled in her stomach. Her agent had gone over what would be expected of her. She would essentially be a human sushi platter. This assignment was on the tame side compared to some of the jobs the models at Exquisite Flesh were booked for. Unfortunately that didn't make her any less nervous about it. Posing for a photographer was altogether different than displaying your nearly nude body for a room full of diners, but that was only the half of it. How was she supposed to work so closely with Banner Faust when she couldn't stop fantasizing about the body hiding underneath that starched, white chef's coat?

"Good. But just in case, allow me to go over a few points with you. Tonight is the last night of Craving for Death, the event featuring deadly delicacies. I'll actually be preparing *fugu* for your display. I can assure you that I am a licensed *fugu* chef and you'll be in good hands. The blowfish will not be placed directly on your skin being that this sashimi isn't benefited by the warmth of the body. You are to lie still and remain silent unless you are spoken to. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir." Craving for Death had been all the culinary community could talk about for weeks. Chef Faust had received special permission from the FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to have live Tiger Blowfish flown in from Japan. A bit over the top, and beyond expensive, but a huge ordeal considering less than twenty restaurants in the country had been approved to serve the toxic fish. And they were only allowed to import blowfish that had already been cleaned and had the toxin removed. Only a chef with a lot of clout and a lot of ambition could pull off something like this.

"Excellent," he affirmed. "The main dining room will open in fifteen minutes. Go ahead and follow Lance out to your table. Thank you, Miss...?"

"Indigo Hartley, but everyone calls me Indie."

"Indigo," he said thoughtfully. "It suits you and those stunning violet eyes of yours. I'm Banner Faust, executive chef and owner of Crave."

Oh God, had she just blushed again? "Thank you," she managed softly as she watched him walk away.

\* \* \* \* \*

Indie nervously fidgeted with the lapels of her robe as she stood by her table. Chef Faust had not been kidding. She would be the centerpiece. The table meant for her was placed at the head of the dining room next to a small station used for preparing fresh sushi. She'd be lying on a thin silk pad that ran the length of the pale wood. There was a small cylinder-shaped pillow at one end for her head. The other three models had been

placed on the outskirts of the room amid the black high-top tables and chairs. She watched as they were decorated with greenery and orchids; seashells strategically placed over their nipples.

The dining room itself was a juxtaposition of simplicity and opulence. Dozens of clear glass spheres that contained soft lights seemed to float from the ceiling. The back wall was a garden of live bamboo. The slate stone floor actually contained a narrow, shallow stream that ran the length of the outside glass wall that overlooked the terrace bar. And being sixteen floors up, the twinkling lights of downtown Miami created the perfect backdrop. The entire effect was breathtaking. She couldn't imagine the kind of funds it had taken to make this a reality.

Lance came out of the kitchen at warp speed, carrying a stepstool. "We're about to open. You ready gorgeous?" He was very attractive in a manicured, high-maintenance sort of way. She happened to like her men a little rough around the edges with a take-charge personality. Tragically most men seemed to think asshole was included somewhere in that description.

"Let's do this," she replied. She steeled herself as she shed her robe and got into place on the table. Surprised by how comfortable it was, she settled herself in and took a deep breath as she heard the patrons start to wander in from the terrace bar. God, what she wouldn't give for a shot of something right now to dull her prickly nerves.

"Just imagine yourself some place relaxing, but whatever you do, don't fall asleep. We had a girl do that last season and can you believe the bitch was actually snoring?" Lance snorted, making Indie laugh.

"Yeah, I don't think I'll have that problem." As if she could sleep while people plucked bits of sashimi off her body with chopsticks.

"Hey, at least you'll have Chef Faust's damn fine self for eye candy. Sadly, he's straight." Lance sighed dramatically. "But don't get your hopes up. He doesn't date the models either."

"Oh I'm not—"

"Save it, sweetie. I saw the way you looked at him. You'd have eaten that man up with a fork and knife if someone had served him to you on a platter," Lance said with a smirk. "I'll be back to help you down when your shift is over."

She watched him walk away and suddenly felt very alone even though the room was full of people. The sound of a cart being wheeled toward her had her wanting to sit up to see who it was, but she stayed still. Chef Faust came into her field of vision, a small porcelain cup in his hand.

"I don't usually allow the models to drink alcohol while they're posing, but since this is your first time, I thought I'd make an exception. It's *sake*," he offered.

She tried to sit up, but he shook his head.

"Here, let me," he murmured as he placed his other hand behind her head. His touch was gentle, almost caring, or was she reading into it? He brought the cup to her mouth and she leaned forward to drink. The dry, earthy flavors of the chilled *sake* washed over her tongue, letting her know that it was aged and expensive, definitely not the cheap stuff. She welcomed the bite and instant warmth that flared in her stomach from the alcohol. He was so close. When she looked up into those gorgeous blue eyes, she wondered what he'd taste like. God, she needed to get her mind off how insanely sexy he was and on the job she'd been hired to do.

"Thank you." *For not noticing that I'm drooling over you.*

"I should be thanking you for taking the job on short notice. You're the perfect accompaniment to this evening's delicacy."

Her face filled with heat. What on earth was it about this man that made her blush? She never blushed. She was a fetish model, damn it. It annoyed her even more to know that every blush would show vividly on her fair skin. Since she was nearly naked, there would be no hiding it.

Banner couldn't help but smile at the adorable flush that spread across her skin or the fact she seemed pretty irritated by it. She was beautiful, every inch of her delectable

porcelain skin. And so unlike the brown-eyed, brown-haired models he hired during these seasonal events. He'd chosen the specific type to provide a blank canvas to decorate with sushi and sashimi. They were nothing more than pretty plates. Sounded horribly objectifying, but it was the truth.

Indigo Hartley was not a blank canvas. The moment he'd seen her, she became the quintessential complement to the blowfish he would be serving. This delicious little siren was every bit as exotic as the food she would display. She had coal black hair accented with dark blue streaks. They weren't glaring, but just enough to pick up the intense and unusual violet of her eyes. Detailed tattoos in both black and gray and brilliant color decorated her arms. She was sexy in a way that made him a little crazy, but he couldn't think about that right now. He needed to focus on the arrangement he would create or his apron wouldn't just be keeping his pants clean. It would also be hiding a hard-on.

He picked up the first of several chrysanthemums. "In Japan, *fugu* is traditionally sliced paper thin and plated in a chrysanthemum pattern before it's served. It's the imperial emblem there, but in Europe, where it's used for funerals, it's known as the death flower. Apropos for a delicacy that could potentially kill you, don't you think?"

Her expressive eyes widened a bit.

"Not to worry though." He winked at her. "I trained for years and had to go through some very extensive testing before they would give me my license."

"Wow, school in Japan. I bet that was an experience."

"After studying at the California Culinary Academy, yes." He placed the first flower at the hollow of her throat. For a brief second he wondered what that slender column would look like with a collar around it. He needed to employ some force to get his thoughts under control or it would be damn near impossible to concentrate on the task at hand.

Continuing to add chrysanthemums, he placed the largest blue one at the apex of her thighs and she flinched with a small gasp.

"I'm sorry," she said, sounding frustrated. "I'll try to stay still."

The submissive downcast of her eyes combined with the self-deprecating tone in her voice woke something in him that had been dormant for a while. It was the same something that had stirred when she'd called him Sir earlier. His need to dominate. He could just imagine what this beauty would be like trembling under his control. After that little display—something she probably hadn't even been aware of—he knew he had to have her.

The world of dominance and submission had always appealed to him. He couldn't remember when it had started or why. He'd embraced it long ago, exploring the scene in Japan and here in Miami. He'd never played with a sub he'd wanted to keep, and never anything outside a scene or play party. None had ever appealed to him beyond that. Of course the demands of his job didn't help matters. Working his ass off had done wonders for his career. For his love life...not so much.

He placed an oyster shell over each of her pale nipples, admiring the full curve of her breasts. She had a natural hourglass figure. He loved that she wasn't starvation thin with a pair of silicone tits. Her curvy, feminine body was exactly the type that made him want to do very bad things. He was not a sadist, but he did take pleasure in more subtle forms of torment. Something told him that this woman would respond in ways that would have him craving more and more.

He stood back and admired his work. It was even better than he'd imagined. A modern pinup girl lavished with white and blue flowers. "It's not every day I have such a lovely model for my food presentation," he said, smiling at her.

Her pale skin blushed a deep rose and she gave an exasperated sigh. "If she would only stop blushing," she muttered.

He leaned down to tuck one last blue chrysanthemum behind her ear. "That small display of vulnerability is one of the things that make her so beautiful," he whispered. "I'm going to clean and prepare the *fugu* in a moment. Just relax until then. You'll do fine," he assured her before he pushed the empty cart back into the kitchen.

This evening was supposed to have been the culminating moment of his culinary career. But it felt hollow. Yes, it was a tremendous achievement. No other chef had been honored with permission to import and prepare live *fugu*. Regulations were extremely strict. It had been a long, uphill battle. He'd been so young and ambitious when he'd set that goal. Not to mention narcissistic. Now that he'd reached it, he realized how little it really meant to him. It would no doubt skyrocket his career and he'd have the kind of notoriety he'd once dreamed about. But it was getting damn lonely at the top.

He pulled the *ponzu* sauce he'd made earlier from the reach-in cooler. He took a quick taste to make sure it was still up to his standard after chilling. It was not quite right and needed a bit more flavor. *Kind of like your life.*

## Chapter Two

*I've reduced myself to a human plate.* She should feel some sort of moral feministic outrage over the entire thing. She just couldn't find where she'd buried it. It must be somewhere under the huge throbbing amount of sexual tension. Good God, Chef Faust had nearly driven her insane. Here she had a job to do and all she could think was *don't stop touching me*. Each time he placed a flower, the sensitivity of her skin increased. It was just a brush here and there, a contrast of strong fingers and delicate petals, but so very erotic. When he finished, her pussy was wet and her entire body ached for more.

If she had guessed that this would turn her on so much, she'd have skipped this assignment. Now she had to lie here for an hour and a half before she could even think about relief. It was a damn good thing she had fresh batteries at home. Her vibrator would get a serious work out later.

Chef Faust returned and went straight to work at the sushi station. She could hear the sounds of the knife against the cutting board. It wasn't every day she had the chance to witness a chef of Banner Faust's caliber preparing food and she couldn't see a damn thing. She swept her culinary curiosity aside and closed her eyes, trying to still her mind. Working herself into a frustrated and tense state wouldn't help her. She needed to loosen up. She took a few slow, deep breaths and felt the muscles in her body ease a bit. Her senses began to sharpen as she relaxed.

The hum of the crowd became a strange comfort as she listened to bits and pieces of conversations. A man with a smooth tenor drove home the finer points of his legal case with two others. The raspy, smoke-roughened voice of an older woman flirted with someone who must have been one of the wait staff. Dishes clanked together and a cork popped as a bottle was opened.



"How are we doing, Indigo?" Chef Faust inquired. His words reverberated through her like a low rumble of thunder. It was a completely harmless question, but he had the kind of voice that had been made for talking dirty.

She could feel the dampness between her thighs and silently thanked the powers that be for the large blue flower covering her nether region. This was ridiculous. It was obscene that she was this aroused. He'd barely touched her and they were in a room full of people.

Funny, her body didn't seem to care about any of that.

She didn't trust her voice to keep her heightened sexual state a secret so when she opened her eyes, she merely smiled and nodded.

When he leaned over to place the first green banana leaf covered in a beautiful arrangement of *fugu*, his scent invaded her nose. She inhaled deeply, savoring the smell of soap and the barest hint of spices he'd been using to cook with.

His brow raised in question.

Damn. He'd just caught her sniffing him. "I...um...the *fugu*...it doesn't have much of a smell." *Quick thinking there, Indie.*

"Very observant of you. *Fugu* is rather delicate in aroma and flavor," he offered, but the amused grin he gave her told her he knew exactly what she'd just done.

After he finished placing the last of the banana leaves across her stomach, he stood back and assessed his work.

"Does it meet with your approval?" she asked him in a small voice.

His gaze captured hers and her eyes widened. The amount of heat visible in his eyes took her by complete surprise. He *wanted* her.

"Oh yes," he answered, his gaze still locked on hers. "I'd like you to do something for me."

"Sir?" She could think of a million things at that moment and not one of them had anything to do with modeling sashimi.

"I'd like you to be my submissive for the next three days. I want to know you inside and out, make you come in more ways than you can count, and own every inch of that beautiful body of yours. You don't have to answer me now. Just think about it and let me know at the end of your shift."

Forcefully she exhaled, releasing the breath she'd held as she watched him walk away. Holy shit. Had he really just said that? How in the hell could he drop a bomb like that and expect her to just lie there?

Submissive. She turned the word over in her mind. He wanted her to be *his* submissive for three days. She knew about BDSM. A few of the friends she had at the agency were involved in the lifestyle. They'd tried to get her to go to play parties, even invited her to one of the local dungeons. But she had absolutely no desire to troll the clubs in search of a Dom. Secretly she got off on the idea of being controlled and dominated, but never had the guts to explore it in reality. Instead, she filed it away as fantasy and kept her cravings well fed with every erotic BDSM book she could get her hands on.

Banner Faust wanted to make her kinky fantasies a reality, not to mention give her more orgasms than she could count. Was there a downside to this? She barely knew him so there was a possibility she could find herself tied down and at the mercy of some psycho. She didn't think that was the case, but risk was all part of the appeal, wasn't it?

She'd been so wrapped up in her thoughts she hadn't noticed the first couple approach her table.

"*Fugu*, do we dare?" the man taunted.

"She's so very still. You don't suppose she ate the *fugu* and she's paralyzed do you?" the woman murmured in a teasing tone.

Indie sneaked a look at the first diners. Oh God.

"Indigo Hartley," Matt said with a smirk.

*Why me?*

Of course. Since this event held an element of danger her dickhead, adrenaline junky ex-boyfriend Matt would be a guest. She'd fallen for him a few years ago. She had a serious weak spot for guys with tattoos and piercings in interesting places. It had been fun for a while, but that wore thin when she realized how selfish and manipulative he was beneath the gorgeous exterior. When she'd caught him cheating, he'd actually convinced her it wouldn't happen again. But it had, and more than once. Her luck with men just plain sucked.

"You're looking...healthy." He plucked the first paper-thin morsels of fish from her abdomen.

And Matt just couldn't resist making a veiled insult about her weight. The fucker. He used to tell her that she could have a *real* modeling career – if she'd just lose twenty pounds. He'd always been such a supportive guy. Even still, it bothered her to see him. Sort of the way a really nasty scar would itch and throb from time to time although it had completely healed. She knew it wasn't because she missed him. Not really. It was more the idea of him she missed.

"Good evening, Matthew." Indie gave him her best plastic smile.

"Getting a little bolder with your modeling assignments I see. Maybe you've warmed up a little since the last time we got together. You know, Amber here is into threesomes," Matt said.

Good to see that he was still a Class A asshole. "Um, tempting, but no thanks."

"You'll come back," Matt whispered as he ran the edge of a chopstick along the curve of Indie's breast. "You always do."

Indie fought to keep her face blank and stared at the ceiling. She wanted to give him a piece of her mind. She really did, but this was a job and making a scene while working a high-profile event wouldn't be a good move on her part. Avoidance had always been her best tactic whenever Matt had wanted to ooze his way back into her life, but it was damn hard to do that when she was confined to a table.

Like magic, Banner suddenly appeared at her side. His mouth was set in a grim line and he looked far from happy. He folded his arms over his chest as he glowered at Matt. "Chopsticks can be a bit tricky can't they?"

Matt looked confused. "What?"

"I figured you must be having trouble using your chopsticks, right? Because I just can't imagine you would be stupid enough to harass my model."

Indie pursed her lips to hide her smile and kept silent. Her heart skipped a beat over the fact he'd been watching closely enough to have noticed Matt and his wandering chopstick. That Banner would address the situation in such a direct manner told her a lot about his character. She was just the hired help and Matt was a paying customer. It was rare to find someone in this business who would risk offending an influential patron for the sake of a temporary employee. Obviously there was much more to Banner Faust than flash and fame.

The slick smile that spread across Matt's face made Indie want to vomit.

"Oh Indie and I know each other rather well, wouldn't you say, lover?" Matt shot her a look of warning.

Banner glanced at her and mouthed *your call*. She could have kissed him.

"Actually, no, I'd say you don't know me at all, Matt. And if you touch me with that chopstick again, I'm going to shove it up your ass. *Sideways*." Indie kept her voice saccharine sweet.

Amber blanched. Matt, on the other hand, looked as if he'd just swallowed a mouthful of sour milk. "As crass as always."

"I'm terribly sorry. Matt is very clumsy sometimes. I'll make sure he keeps his chopsticks to himself," Amber said as she dragged Matt away from Indie's table.

Indie watched them go, pitying the poor girl. She knew firsthand what Amber was in for.

"I'm sorry about that," Banner said.

"Don't be, I'm used to it," she told him casually.

"No, I can't accept that. You should never compromise who you are because someone chooses to cross the line, no matter who they are. Value yourself more than that. Understood?"

"Perfectly," she said and felt her lips curl into a soft smile.

"That's my girl. Now if anyone else touches you or makes an inappropriate comment, please call one of the staff over and we'll handle it. Also, if you discreetly want to tell them to fuck off, you have my permission. But try to refrain from shoving chopsticks into unpleasant orifices. It would be an insurance nightmare for me," he told her.

She laughed. "Yes sir."

She caught a hint of something in his expression, but he quickly shuttered it away before she could figure out what it was. Would she get a better glimpse of what went on in that head of his if she agreed to his proposition? She suddenly needed to know – the man, the chef...the dominant. The last part made her throb with needy anticipation.

"Chef Faust?" she asked. God, even she could hear the eagerness in her voice.

He answered her with a knowing smile. "Come to my office when your shift is over. We have a few things to talk about."

She bit her lip and let her gaze linger on that tight ass of his as he walked away. Lance was so right about the eye candy. This was going to be a very long night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Banner heard a soft knock on his office door. "Come in."

Indie stepped into the office and closed the door behind her. The vulnerable girl he'd so carefully decorated had transformed into a sex kitten. The black halter top she wore shoved her cleavage front and center and her tight faded blue jeans flaunted her every curve.

"Indigo, please have a seat," he said gesturing to the chair across from his desk.

She sat down and crossed one spiked heel over the other. At first glance she seemed confident, in control and he would have believed it had she not had her bag clutched against her middle as if it were a life preserver.

"First, put your bag on the floor at your feet," he said with soft authority.

She looked confused but did as he requested.

"Now ease back into the chair, relax your shoulders and take a deep breath." He waited for her to comply before he continued. She did and he could see the tension leave her as she exhaled. "That's my girl. Better?"

"Yes. I'm sorry. I'm just...I'm a little nervous," she murmured then pursed her cherry red lips.

"I'd be worried if you weren't. Before we begin, you want to tell me about what happened this evening?" he asked, watching carefully for her reaction. The sheer audacity of that prick fondling Indigo in plain view made Banner's blood turn to ice in his veins. Already he was possessive of her and she wasn't even his yet. He couldn't decide if that was good or bad. Instinctively, he'd marched over to protect her, but she'd done a damn good job of showing him that she could handle it just fine on her own.

She grimaced and let out a deep sigh. "Matt is my ex. It didn't end well," she stated, not going any further.

"I'm sorry." Matt must have been a real piece of work. It appeared that it still bothered her on some level, but Banner wouldn't press her about it. Not right now anyway.

"Yeah, me too. I'm sorry it took me so long to see what an asshole he was. Well, still is." She paused, probing him with her violet stare. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Anything."

"Why me? You could have anyone you want."

“What you really want to know is why I chose you over one of the other models, right?”

Her eyes narrowed skeptically as she looked at him. “That’s part of it.”

She was intelligent and a little suspicious. Had she blindly accepted his proposal, he’d have known immediately he’d pegged her all wrong. If he wanted a real shot at making her his submissive, he’d have to play this nice and easy at first, which was exactly why he’d told her three days. Three days made it seem casual, as if it were nothing serious. But he had a very distinct feeling that this would be anything but casual between them.

“It’s not because I thought you might be easier, so erase that thought if it’s there. Aside from you being the most beautiful woman in the room, it’s rare to find a natural submissive who isn’t a doormat. I have a few days off since it’s the end of the season and I can’t think of anyone I’d rather spend them with. It’s as simple as that, Indigo. Now let’s talk about your limits.”

Her brow creased. “Um, I don’t know what my limits are.”

Either she was into hardcore BDSM and had no real limits or she’d yet to have them tested. He’d bet his share of the restaurant it was the latter. She didn’t strike him as a pain-hungry submissive. He’d played with a few who fell into that category and heavy pain play wasn’t his kink. “Don’t know or don’t have any?” he inquired.

“I’ve—I’ve never... God, by the way I’m stuttering you’d think I was one of the brainless boob jobs out there.” She sighed as if she were disgusted with herself then looked him directly in the eyes and continued. “I know of the BDSM lifestyle, but haven’t had the chance to explore it for myself. I’ve always been curious. I’ve just never met anyone I wanted to take me there...until you.” She uttered the last words so quietly he almost missed them.

The fact she wanted him to be the first to dominate her made his dick swell. It was archaic and primitive, but he couldn’t help the satisfaction that spread through him

knowing he'd be the first to venture into that territory with her. "You have no idea how much that pleases me."

Her cheeks warmed to a soft pink. "I'm blushing again aren't I? I am so not the girl who blushes. I'm not shy. I mean I model for a fetish agency. I'm happy with my body. I'm not embarrassed by it and it's not like I'm some virginal innocent. I should *not* be blushing now, but for some reason I just can't seem to help myself around you. And I should really just shut up." She forced out a breath, expanding her cheeks.

"No, you shouldn't. Your candor is one of the reasons you're here. No pretenses, Indigo. There's no need for that. If you feel like saying something, please say it. I don't think you're the disrespectful or disobedient type. It'll be very nice not having vocal restrictions in place."

Her brow creased again. "Vocal restrictions?"

"Yes. There are submissives who need strict rules about speaking or they tend to say things for the sole purpose of receiving punishment," he informed her.

Indie looked positively appalled. "You're joking."

"Afraid not. I happen to like conversation so I tend to stay away from bratty, masochistic submissives. You're not a brat are you?"

A loud bawdy laugh burst out of her—the kind of laugh that made him want to laugh right along with her. He was really going to enjoy this woman. Three days might not be nearly enough, especially if she turned out to be as natural and responsive as he thought she'd be.

"Maybe when I was a kid. Yeah sure. Trouble was kind of my middle name. But I'm a big girl now and my bratty days are behind me."

"We'll see. Let's talk about the rules. You're to follow my orders at all times. I'll give you two safe words. You can use yellow for slow down and red for stop. If there is something that you don't think you're capable of, tell me. We'll discuss it. Dom and dickhead are not synonymous with me. Trust takes time and we're sort of skipping



ahead here so being open with each other will be crucial. Do you think you can do that?"

"I can do that, but I haven't been trained or anything. How will I know...?"

"Don't worry about protocols. I've never been big on them. Just go with your instincts."

"And you're telling me that because you think I'm already submissive by nature," she stated.

"Yes, I do and saying that I'm eager to show you that side of yourself would be the understatement of the century."

The way she bit and worried that full lower lip of hers made his dick twitch and demand attention. Innocence and intelligence wrapped up in a beautiful lush package, and a submissive one at that. It was all he could do to keep his ass in the chair when he really wanted to bend her over the desk and fuck her right there in his office.

"I already have your medical history since it's a requirement here for *nyotaimori*. You're on birth control, correct?"

She nodded.

"Good. I can tell you that I'm clean and have recently been tested, but if you'd like to see for yourself my file is on the desk. I keep a copy here at the office in case I'm ever injured on the job."

"How do I know you're not some deranged psychopath?" she asked as she opened his file and began to go over the paperwork.

"It doesn't say that in the file does it?" he asked with mock horror and she answered with a smirk. "Incidentally I'm not a *deranged psychopath*. But I wouldn't want you to do anything that you don't feel safe about. Do you have someone you trust that you could leave my information with?" he asked her.

Indie nodded. "My roommate, Aimee."

He took an index card from one of the desk drawers and wrote down his name, address and phone numbers. "When you go home to collect your things, give this to Aimee. Tell her about our arrangement and that you'll be calling her the first night to check in. It'll give you a safety net if you feel like you need one."

She seemed a bit puzzled as she took the card from him. "How thorough of you and controlling, and strangely considerate."

"I'll take that as a compliment. Now before we finalize our arrangement, are you able to take off work?"

"I don't have anything scheduled for the next few days. I'll call my agent and tell her that I won't be available to take any new assignments."

"Perfect. I'll expect you at eight in the morning." He gave her a wicked grin. "And, Indie, pack light. You won't be wearing clothing for much of your stay."

## Chapter Three

Indie double checked the address as she pulled her old beat-up VW Rabbit onto 55th Street. It was 7:49 a.m. Good. She'd be on time, a near miracle for her since she'd overslept this morning. When she'd gone home last night, she'd been so stirred up she couldn't sleep. She hated to admit it, but Banner had been right. She needed someone to talk to and who better than Aimee?

Aimee, who had worse taste in lovers than she did, thought Indie had been pulling some sort of prank when she'd told her about the arrangement she'd made with Chef Faust. Together, they'd gone through many boxes of tissues and dozens of cupcakes during the five years they'd lived together. She'd given Indie exactly the push she'd needed last night when second thoughts had her considering backing out.

God, she couldn't believe she was really going to do this. She was out of her mind. But as Aimee always said, *life is too short for regrets*, and Indie had a feeling she'd regret not knowing this man. She turned her car onto the drive of the address Banner had given her. The tires crunched along the pebbled path as she drove slowly to the house. Just beyond the entrance to the drive there was a forest of dense tropical foliage. Tall bamboo grew in clumps, a variety of palm trees shaded the area and exotic flowers grew everywhere.

Indie absolutely loved that the man kept surprising her. His home was nothing short of breathtaking, but not in the way she'd expected at all. She was so sure he'd have a huge waterfront mansion somewhere on South Beach. Not a modest home in a quaint little neighborhood a stone's throw from Little Haiti. She felt a little guilty for judging him so harshly.

The Key West-style home sat hidden deep in the center of what had to have been at least a double lot. It was a bright Caribbean blue complete with a wraparound porch,

white trim and a metal roof. It was as if she'd entered a small slice of paradise instead of a property on the Upper East Side of Miami.

Indie shut off the Rabbit's engine and took a deep breath. "You can do this, Indie. Just get your butt out of the car." She leaned forward and adjusted her cleavage, checked her lipstick in the mirror and smoothed her hair down. She got out and brushed herself off.

Maybe the retro-style dress with its black piping and plunging neckline was a bit much with the four-inch black patent leather pumps. But she'd wanted to deliver the first punch when she walked in the door this morning.

The heels were a little precarious on the loose pebbles, but she managed to walk to the back of the car and retrieve her bags from the trunk. He'd said not to worry too much about clothes, but it's not as if she would listen to that. Better to have and not need, than to need and not have. She tried for a deep breath, but it was difficult with the brocade under-the-bust corset she'd worn beneath her dress.

Indie loved the look and feel of a corset. A well-fitting one flattened, molded and enhanced a figure that was less than perfect—like hers for instance. Would Banner think the same way about how she looked in one? Would he love her curves? He'd already seen her practically naked and on display, but this was different. A shot of doubt raced through her. Why had he chosen her? She couldn't figure it out. This man...there was something about him that made her feel vulnerable. Made her want to please him. Made her afraid to disappoint him. And for some reason, all of that really got under her skin.

She heard a low whistle from the front porch.

"Nice dress you got there."

"I like to think so." She closed the hatch then turned to see Banner standing in the doorway. She paused for a second. Hunger burned bright in his blue eyes and she didn't think it was because he was looking at her car. The head to toe treatment he gave

her made her stomach do a little dance. Funny how all her doubts flew straight out of her head with just one look from him.

He was a sight standing there shirtless in a pair of striped pajama pants worn low on his narrow hips. Holy hell, a girl could do a week's worth of laundry on those abs of his. A light dusting of dark hair curled between his sculpted pecs and trailed from his navel down below the waist of his pants. She so wanted to see where that trail ended.

"Enjoying the view?"

Her gaze flew to his face as heat flooded hers. Great, there she went with the blushing again. She really had to stop doing that. "Actually yes. Good morning, Banner."

"I'm rather enjoying the view myself. You look beautiful this morning. Let's get you inside and settled." He loped off the porch and over to where she stood. When he bent down to pick up her bags she saw that his back was covered in traditional Japanese tattoos. He was just one surprise after another.

"After you," he said with a nod toward the door.

She headed into the house with Banner behind her. The interior was no less impressive than the outside. Her heels clicked on the pale hardwood floor as she walked into the living room. Everything was so open. At first glance there didn't appear to be a back wall, but she noticed tracks for what must have been quite a few sections of a sliding glass door that disappeared into the wall to the left.

He had an eclectic mix of furnishings. Looking at it piece by piece, they didn't seem to go together. The bone-colored, retro-style sofa and loveseat didn't quite fit with the jade antique Chinese cabinet that stood against the far wall. The rustic scarred wood of the heavy square coffee table didn't match the more modern glass end tables. Splashes of colors could be seen in the large embroidered throw pillows and flowering plants that were scattered about the room.

Floor to ceiling bookcases filled one entire wall and a plasma television took up a decent portion of the other. An old paddle fan spun lazily as it hung from its perch high

on the ceiling. All of these things shouldn't have fit together, but somehow they were perfect. It struck her that nothing was here by mistake. Everything had been carefully collected.

Wow. She really had no idea who this man was at all.

"The bedroom is to the left," he told her.

"Oh, okay." Would she be staying with him? She felt...decidedly okay about that. It had been a long time since she'd slept next to a man. A big part of her looked forward to that, which was probably why she wasn't as freaked out about this as she should have been. That and there were no relational expectations with this arrangement. Three days to fulfill her submissive fantasies then she'd be back to her regularly scheduled life. No heart risks. That was a good thing too, because she was done with that.

She turned left and headed down a short hallway to a set of double doors. When she placed her hands on the levers she stopped cold, seized by a rush of anxiety. She was very aware of Banner's presence right behind her and of the fact they were about to walk into his bedroom. Had he planned to show her around or was this where their torrid kinky affair would begin?

"Open the doors, Indie," Banner ordered.

One soft command and her panic eased. She obeyed him just like that, flinging the doors wide. He was right. There was a submissive inside her. The idea of being dominated had created a longing she'd never known what to do with. The anticipation of learning firsthand what it would be like was its own special form of torture. It suddenly became clear in that moment that the world would be different for her after this. There would be no going back. Already she'd begun to see things differently and they hadn't even started.

Banner's hands grasped her shoulders from behind. The second he touched her, she automatically relaxed against him and his strong arms wrapped around her. His strength and warmth, caging her in like that, felt safe. It felt right. It felt so damn good. She hadn't realized how starved she'd been for human touch.

"That's my girl," he said, kissing the top of her head. "You okay?"

"Yeah, I think I am," she replied as she looked around. So this was Banner Faust's bedroom. Beautiful, but it seemed a little sparse compared to the living area. Why was that?

The two far walls of the room were made entirely of glass and so seamlessly put together she had to strain to see where they met in the corner. A large pond with water lilies, koi fish and a small fountain bubbled just outside. The huge platform bed sitting in the middle of the room was understated yet elegant. The wall across from it held a long mirror that reflected not only the furniture but the view of the outside. It gave the illusion that the bed was in the middle of the outdoors, not inside a house. Though she couldn't see a hint of the neighborhood beyond the rainforest he called a backyard, she felt incredibly exposed.

"Is the whole house this open?" she asked.

"Pretty much. I like my privacy, but I need to feel like I'm not shut in."

In a strange way it made sense.

He let her go then hefted her luggage over to the huge walk-in closet. Indie peered down the little hallway next to it. From what she could see, it was a huge bathroom with a large sunken tub. She would kill for a bath like that.

"These are awfully heavy," he said, setting her bags down.

"You didn't really expect me not to bring any clothes. Did you?"

"I expected you to pack light, not your entire wardrobe," he said, his tone casual.

"Oh that there? Not even close to my wardrobe. I have a serious weakness for pretty things." Flirtatiously using every curve, she sauntered over to him. They didn't call it a wiggle dress for nothing.

"Mmm, I suppose we'll have to remedy that." He held out a hand. "Dress."

She deflated. "What?"

"Take off your dress, Indigo."

No. She and Aimee had spent hours last night planning the perfect outfit for this morning. She wouldn't even get to wear it for thirty minutes? She itched to glare at him and stomp her foot, but remarkably kept it in check. Following orders was a bit harder when it involved something she didn't want to do.

Her resistance must have shown on her face because he frowned as he looked at her.

"You look lovely and I appreciate the effort, but you still need to hand me the dress. Not all punishments involve spankings, Indigo," he said with a smug grin.

He was enjoying this! Her clothes, makeup, high heels, they were her armor. She felt like a goddess when she was made up. She felt in control. And Banner knew it. Damn him. She'd almost rather be spanked.

With a huff, she took of the gorgeous blue dress and handed it to him. The look on his face when he saw what she wore underneath had been worth the cost of her dress. She knew she looked damn good in her corset.

"Because you and I are just learning about each other, I'll overlook the attitude for now. I'll need your undergarments and shoes as well," he said, his gaze a narrow blend of heat and hunger.

Attitude? She'd give him —

Oh God, she was acting like a total brat. Some submissive she was.

"I'm sorry," she said as she began to unlace her corset. Submitting to someone else's will wasn't as easy as she'd originally thought.

The corset nearly did Banner in. It took every ounce of his control to keep from fucking her right there in the closet. She was so damn beautiful he didn't know whether to stare at her or kiss her. Excitement colored her porcelain skin and glittered in her violet eyes as she unfastened her corset. Her ebony, blue-streaked hair had been curled



and shined like satin about her shoulders. She finished undressing and handed him the rest of her things with a mournful sigh.

“Good girl,” he said as he placed them on a shelf in the closet. He knew she thought he had punished her for not listening to him about packing. And partially he had. But stripping her down also served to allow him what he really wanted; to recapture the vulnerable, responsive woman from last night.

Her fiery attitude concerning her dress had been very interesting and very telling. She had a specific style with her retro dress, heavy makeup and high heels. Combine that with her modeling career and he’d say she used her image to create a wall between herself and everyone else. After he’d realized she’d packed for three weeks instead of three days, he knew he’d get to the genuine Indigo much faster if she didn’t have her clothes to hide behind.

“Is there a hair tie somewhere in all this?” He gestured to her things.

“Yes.” She bent down and rummaged through her cosmetics bag then stood and presented him with an elastic.

“Good. The bathroom is that way. Put your hair up and use the washcloth next to the sink to clean your face. You can come back out here when you’re finished.”

She stared at him as if he’d just sprouted horns and a tail. “You want me to wash the makeup off my face?”

“Yes, I do. Now go on,” he said, directing her with a little pat on the ass.

He hadn’t wanted to bruise her feelings, but it was inevitable when breaking through someone’s defenses. He rounded the doorframe and leaned against it to watch her. Hurt and confusion clouded her eyes as she peered at herself in the mirror. She twisted her hair into a knot and secured it with the elastic. Slowly she washed the makeup from her face, revealing the woman beneath the façade she’d created. There was a moment where he thought she might cry, but he watched her swallow it down and straighten herself before returning to him.

She'd been sexy in the tightly laced corset with the way it hugged her curves and put her breasts on display, but she was damn near perfect without all the trimmings. She had a vulnerable innocence to her that was staggering now that it was no longer masked. Her violet eyes brimmed with raw emotion as she lifted her gaze to his.

Gently he rubbed her upper arms. "That's my girl."

"I feel so plain without my makeup. And I thought you'd like the outfit. I spent —"

He pulled her to him and kissed her to shut her up. Her lips were soft and timid beneath his as he licked the seam of her mouth. The small moan she gave as she opened for him made his already stiff cock impossibly harder. For all the sweetness he tasted, as she grew bolder sliding her tongue along his, there was an undercurrent of hunger, of darkness. He did not want to stop, but he had to present something that resembled self-discipline.

With a groan, he reluctantly broke the kiss. "Damn if you don't test my control, Indigo Hartley."

"Yeah?" she whispered with a grin.

"You have no idea." He lifted her chin using his thumb and forefinger so he could look into her eyes. "And for the record, there is absolutely nothing plain about you. I love that you dressed up for me, but you don't need all that for me to think you're beautiful. You're perfect just as you are." He brushed one of her nipples with the pad of his thumb.

She gasped, her eyes widening.

"So responsive," he murmured. Her nipple hardened as he continued to tease her. "Sit on the bed, keep your feet on the floor and spread your legs."

A hint of apprehension flickered across her face, but she did as he asked.

"Now lie back," he told her.

She lay down obediently, but kept her gaze on him.

He stood directly in front of her and studied her, taking his sweet time, appreciating every curve and valley of her body. Minutes went by and she began to fidget, but he didn't touch her or say anything.

He waited.

The sexual tension intensified. Indie's body almost hummed with it. Her feet shifted nervously. Her breathing became faster, shallower. Uncertainty showed in the way her brows were knit together. He'd pay a pretty penny to know her thoughts at that moment, but he didn't want to break the spell.

"What—"

"Shh. Close your eyes. Don't move unless I tell you to."

He could have restrained her, and planned to before long, but there was something about controlling a submissive using nothing but his voice. She would have to consciously think about not moving. Her obedience would be at the forefront of her mind. It would keep her mentally present, not floating off somewhere in subspace. It was his way of cultivating the connection between them. His dominance. Her submission. Some Doms used protocol and punishment to instill the bond. Banner preferred to use a submissive's emotions and senses.

She blinked a few times as she searched his face then slowly closed her eyes.

"Listen to the sounds around you." He paused for a moment. "What do you hear?"

She cocked her head a fraction to one side. "I hear the fan above me. It creaks a little... Your breathing. It's calm, deep... My heartbeat."

"And what does it sound like?"

"Like a jackhammer," she blurted with a small laugh.

"Good girl. Now I want you to tell me what you feel. Keep your eyes closed."

"Okay."

He put his knee between her legs right up against her pussy, placed a hand on either side of her shoulders then leaned down inches from her face. "What do you feel?" he whispered.

"Your breath... The weight of you on the bed and between my legs."

"What do you *feel*?"

"Anticipation." Her answer came out in a rush.

"Good. What else?" He leaned down and brushed his unshaven chin over one of her nipples.

"Need," she gasped.

"What do you need, Indie?"

"I need you to touch me."

And he wanted to touch her. With his tongue he caught the tip of her nipple and flicked it back and forth. She moaned behind pursed lips as she shifted slightly on the bed.

"Is it difficult for you to lie still?" He knew the answer, but wanted to hear her say it.

"I'm having a hard time keeping my hands to myself. God, I want to touch you," she breathed.

He couldn't wait to feel her hands on him, but if he allowed that, he could kiss his control goodbye. He wanted to take it slow with her. The buildup, the fist-clenching anticipation, it wasn't just for her. Banner loved it, *craved it*.

"Thank you for being honest, but this isn't about what you want. It's about what I want." He could see the disappointment in her face as he pushed off the bed and stood. "I'm going to move you, but I want you to keep your eyes closed until I tell you to open them."

"Yes Sir."

He grabbed her hands and pulled her up so that she sat on the edge of the bed. "You don't have to call me Sir, Indie."

"It just feels...right. Does it bother you?"

"Actually, I love it."

A huge smile lit up her face.

"Like I said, I'm not much for protocol. But since it feels right to you, by all means, call me Sir." He sat behind her, scooting her toward him. Her soft curves fit perfectly between his legs and against his body. He had to bite back a groan when she wiggled her ass against his hard cock as she settled into him.

"Uh-uh. No moving unless I tell you to." Or that chain he used to hold back his desire to fuck her would snap like a twig.

He had positioned them in front of the mirror so he could watch the way she responded to his touch, his voice. The image they created together was highly erotic. Her skin was flushed from desire and there was a vulnerable trust behind her unguarded facial expressions.

"Sorry, Sir," she murmured.

"If you hadn't done that on purpose, I'd believe that little apology. But we both know that you grinding your luscious ass against my dick wasn't an accident, was it?"

The mirror reflected a sly little smile on her lips. "No, it wasn't."

He placed each of her hands on the bed along the outside of his thighs. "Keep them there. Are you going to be a good girl and hold still?"

"Yes Sir."

She flinched when he reached around and palmed her full breasts. The soft weight of them felt incredible in his hands. As he squeezed gently, he rubbed the hardened nubs of her nipples with his thumbs and she blew out a small breath. He tugged them outward, stretching the sensitive tips, causing her to moan.

"I love the way you respond to my touch."

Slowly he moved one hand up and rested it on her throat. Indie tensed. He would never choke her, but the implication that he could if he wanted to, was more than enough to heighten her awareness. Her pulse raced beneath his fingertips. Tilting her head back, he licked the shell of her ear then ran his tongue down the side of her slender neck. When he reached the curve of her shoulder he bit down and she shuddered.

"Are you wet yet, Indie?"

"I'm fucking soaked." The words burst from her.

Playfully, he bit down on her shoulder again.

"Ow!" She laughed. "Well, I am."

"Maybe I should check for myself." Keeping one hand on her throat, he slid the other down the curve of her belly to the warm folds of her pussy. Careful not to touch her clit, he slipped a finger inside her. "Yup, fucking soaked." He withdrew, smearing her wetness along the smooth outer skin of her mound. "And I love that you're hairless here. Nothing to block my view or get in the way, just a pretty, pink cunt."

He caressed her inner thighs, barely brushing the outside of her labia as he moved from right to left. He watched her in the mirror. Her eyebrows were drawn together, giving her an almost pained appearance. When he slipped a finger back through her slick folds, still avoiding her clit, her expression softened. He withdrew and her face hardened again. Back and forth, he gave her the promise of pleasure, but didn't deliver. For long minutes, he drew out her torment, touching, but not touching.

"Banner," she pleaded, her breath coming in quick pants.

"Is there something you want to ask me?"

"Please."

"Please what?"

"Touch me."

"I am touching you," he said as he swirled his finger close to her clit, then moved away.

"Oh God. Touch my clit." She whimpered. "Make me come. Please."

He feathered a finger over the small, fleshy nub. A tremor ran through her body. She was exquisite, hovering on the edge of orgasm. He'd barely touched her clit, but he knew that it wouldn't take much more to make her come.

"Open your eyes, Indie," he commanded as he gently stroked upward on her clit.

Her violet eyes flew open as she moaned. He captured her gaze in the mirror.

"Do you see what I see?" he asked, nuzzling her neck as he stroked her again. He could feel her body tensing beneath his touch. "You're perfect, just like this...natural, wild, about to come. Don't close your eyes. I want you to see how beautiful you are." He held her gaze and strummed her clit in an unhurried and steady rhythm.

She nodded, her eyes hooded with desire.

He kept his pace slow but increased the pressure of his touch. She began to mewl with each stroke, her body rigid from the orgasm building in her.

He waited for exactly the right moment, reading her body's signals.

She inhaled sharply then released the breath with a groan as she started to come. He pinched her clit hard between his thumb and forefinger. Her eyes widened and she screamed, bucking as he held it for a few seconds. He released the little bundle of nerves then lazily stroked it through the rest of her climax, prolonging it as she shuddered.

Her eyes were bright and her chest heaved as she looked at their reflection. "Holy shit."

"You have such a way with words," he teased.

"I'm sorry. It's just that it's never been like that before," she said between gasps.

"Explain," he urged as he wrapped his arms around her.

"I can't believe I'm going to tell you this. I...um...don't come easily. Well, unless I'm by myself and battery-operated equipment is involved," she admitted.

This would be an experience for both of them then because he planned to give her more orgasms than she could handle. "Oh, I think that's all about to change."

"Really?" She slid from his grasp and knelt before him on the floor, reaching for the waist of his pajama pants.

He intercepted her hand before she had the chance to touch him and shook his head.

The confused, hurt look was back again. "But what about you?"

He sighed. It would be damn good to show her that there was a world beyond the one she knew, but breakfast would come first. "I don't expect you to get me off just because I made you come. That's not the way this works. Don't for one second think that was anything other than a purely selfish act. I made you come because it pleased me to do so. Like I told you before, this is about what I want. And right now I want to make breakfast," he declared with a wink as he stood and pulled her to her feet.

She frowned as she eyed his erection. It's not as if she could miss the huge fucking tent in the front of his pants.

"It's a sight you should get used to. I have a feeling it's going to be a constant with you around." He gave her a wicked grin and led her out to the kitchen.



## **Chapter Four**

"Mmm," Indie moaned sleepily as she felt soft lips brush her shoulder. It was really nice to wake up with the feel of his body spooning hers from behind.

"You awake, sleepy head?" Banner asked, his lips still against her skin.

"Do I have to be?" She snuggled deeper into the pillow. His bed was so comfy and she liked being surrounded by his smell. She'd been tired after he'd fed her a big breakfast. The food acted much like a sedative. She'd asked him for a cup of coffee to help wake her up and instead received an order to take a nap. At first she'd been irritated about being sent to bed like a child, until she realized that he was right. She hadn't been able to sleep the night before and was exhausted because of it.

Now that she'd been pleased, fed and rested, she was content. A girl could get used to being spoiled like this.

She could stay in this bed all day. To her disappointment, Banner moved away from her. Instantly, she missed the warmth at her back.

"It's really too bad you don't want to get up. I have a steaming mug of this really yummy coffee. It's a medium roast flavored with coconut. I think I remember someone saying they wanted coffee," he coaxed in a rough voice.

She stretched and let out a blissful groan. Clutching the sheet to her breasts with her elbows, she sat up and stopped short of rubbing her eyes. Then she remembered she wasn't wearing any makeup to smear and happily rubbed the sleep from her face. "Did you just use the word yummy?"

"What? A grown man can't say things like yummy?" He arched a brow, his hazy blue eyes full of amusement. "Because you look really yummy in my bed."

She grinned, taking the warm mug from him. "I do?"

"I knew you would when I saw you posing on the table last night. I said to myself, 'Now that would look delicious in my bed.'"

"I bet you say that about all the girls."

His face darkened at her implication. "No, Indie, I don't. You're the first woman I've brought to my home, submissive or otherwise. This isn't a regular occurrence. And I can tell you it will likely be the only time I do something like this."

"Why?"

"Because I don't think I'll ever come across another woman like you."

Awkwardly, she took a sip of her coffee. His words, too close to real sentiment, made her uncomfortable. She didn't want to hear things like that. Okay so there was a part of her that definitely wanted to hear it, but she was over being manipulated by flattery. It was best for both of them if they kept things casual. After all, it was only three days. That wasn't long enough for her to fall for him, right?

"It bothers you that I said that doesn't it?" he asked lightly.

*Man, nothing gets by him.* Was she really that transparent? "It's just that I don't want us to make this into anything more than it really is."

"And what would that be, Indigo?"

"Two people having fun. Nothing more than that, right?"

"You know what I think? I think you should stop trying to analyze everything and just let yourself live in the moment."

"How very Zen of you."

"Smart ass. You'll get yourself spanked if you keep it up."

"Maybe I want to be spanked." Oh my God, had she really just said that out loud? What the hell was in this coffee?

"Do you, Indigo? Because if that's true all you have to do is ask. I'm not one for playing rebellion games just so you can earn a spanking. You want one, ask for it. I'd love to see my handprint on that lovely pale skin of yours."

Her pussy clenched at the visual of being draped across Banner's lap, her bare ass glowing pink under his hand. How often had she fantasized about being spanked? Not the little slap on the butt some guys gave during sex, but a real spanking...a stinging, hot, pussy-drenching, barehanded spanking.

"Indigo?" Banner's voice jerked her right out of her fantasy.

She narrowed her eyes at him. "I'm on to you and your little tactics."

"Oh yeah?" His grin was downright mischievous. God, he was so sexy.

"Yeah. You're trying to distract me with promises of spankings." And damn if it hadn't worked.

He laughed as he stood. "Come on. Eat now, spank later. I have some things I need to do for dinner. You can help."

"Is it that late already?" Careful not to spill her coffee, she moved to the edge of the bed and glanced down at her nakedness.

"Yes, and don't even think about asking to put on clothes." He took the mug from her, helped her to her feet, but didn't let go of her hand. He pulled her in for a soft yet hungry kiss, leaving her breathless when he pulled away. "I want you exactly like this in case I feel the need to touch you...or lick you...or make you come again."

As if she would argue with that.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Where do you want me?" she asked as she stood next to the stainless steel sink. There was a brief moment of giddiness about preparing a meal with Banner Faust in his kitchen, but she kept it under wraps, trying to appear professional. Professional what, she had no idea because it was really hard to appear professional anything when she was buck-ass-nekkid.

"Hop up on the counter and just keep me company until I'm done with the ginger. Are you comfortable in the kitchen?" he asked as he set a hand of fresh ginger on the cutting board.

She did as instructed, the granite cold beneath her bare flesh. She'd forgotten she hadn't told him about culinary school. She hadn't wanted him to think she was trying to use him to push her career forward. She realized now that he wasn't one to make snap judgments. That department had her name written all over it. It seemed stupid she hadn't told him since it was something they both clearly had passion for.

"I happen to be really good in the kitchen. I'm a student at Le Cordon Bleu," she said confidently.

A big smile lit up his face. She was amazed by how much it changed him from brooding and serious to heart-stopping.

"Why didn't you tell me? That's great, Indie." Delicately he began peeling the ginger.

"I have to confess something... I kind of made all of these horrible assumptions about you."

"What kind of assumptions?" His eyes held a gleam of amusement.

Indie groaned and looked at the floor. "Um...I thought you were a pretentious, arrogant show-off."

He laughed.

"I know, I know. Look at me, who am I to judge, right? Well...I'm sorry. You couldn't be further from who I thought you were."

"Mmm, do I feel a compliment coming my way? Go on, go on."

"You're just completely unexpected and I like that you keep surprising me, that's all." She shrugged.

"Ah, you like surprises, good to know. I have to admit the *fugu* was a bit flashy. I'll tell you a little secret. It wasn't the big moment I thought it would be."

"You're kidding right?" She watched as he pared down the fingers of the root, leaving the longest still intact, then began to shape it.

"No, I'm not. I was young and arrogant when I decided to conquer that mountain. I'd wanted to make a name for myself. It's an expensive, exotic fish that has a huge mystique because it's toxic. I fought to bring it to the States for what? To feed wealthy people who get off on being able to boast that they dared to eat deadly blowfish? I'd say pretentious fits. So in a sense, your assumptions were spot on." He continued to carve the long root until it was smooth and tapered.

She'd never seen ginger prepared that way before.

"I spend a lot of time around models. Trust me, I know arrogant and pretentious when I see it and you are neither of those things. Color me curious, what's with the ginger?"

His lips curled in a devilish little smile. "Have you heard of figging?"

"Excuse me?"

"You've worked with fresh ginger before. I'm sure you are aware that it can be rather...warming."

She nodded.

"Do you like anal play?"

Okay, now she was worried. "Um, what does that have to do with the ginger?"

"Answer the question, Indie."

"Yes Sir, I like anal play." And just like that they'd gone from normal conversation to Dominant and submissive.

"I'm going to give you a small taste of what will happen later tonight so that you know what to expect," he told her as he sliced a small, thin piece off the root. "Spread your legs."

She hesitated. Ginger was a potent spice and the juices from it had the potential to burn if you, say, rubbed your eyes or put it somewhere *really* sensitive.

He stood in front of her and placed his hands on the counter, caging her in. His gaze held hers for a breath. "You have to trust me, Indie. I'm not going to push you beyond what you're capable of handling. Now open your legs."

She suddenly felt silly for being afraid. It was only a tiny piece of ginger, not a burning hot coal. Okay, trust. She spread her thighs apart, exposing her pussy.

"That's my girl," he said, placing the small sliver between her folds and directly on her clit. "I want you to close your legs and hold it there for a bit. If it gets to be too much, just tell me."

"Okay." The piece of ginger was cold at first then the skin around it began to tingle. Warmth flared to life and spread from her clit down. The feeling was unlike anything she'd ever experienced. It was sort of like those warming lubes that sex shops sold, but that comparison wasn't quite right. This was more potent, vivid. The heat grew, building steadily. Indie's breathing increased as the burning did. She shifted a little and wow, it intensified quite —

"So what were we talking about?" Banner asked.

Indie blew out a breath. "What?" She couldn't concentrate with all this warmth...heat. It was hot...and God, she was fucking horny all of the sudden.

Banner rinsed the carved root, which looked remarkably phallic, and put it in the freezer. He planned to put that root in her ass? Holy shit. That would be —

"Warm yet?" he asked her with a hitch of one eyebrow.

"Yes," she groaned as she watched him turn and pull a container from the fridge. He set it on the counter and approached her.

"Open," he commanded and she automatically obeyed, spreading her thighs. He removed the little piece of ginger and popped it in his mouth. "Nice and spicy," he said, giving her a wicked grin. Good Lord the man was trying to drive her crazy.

The heat had abated some, but the throbbing in her clit had not. She squirmed on the counter. She *really* wanted to come right now.

"All in good time, my girl. All in good time. Are you hungry?"

"Oh I have a voracious appetite." She knew he wouldn't miss her double entendre.

"I'm betting on it."

## Chapter Five

It was a beautiful evening. Too beautiful to spend it indoors so Banner had set them up to have a casual dinner on the back deck while she'd made a phone call to check in with Aimee. He was glad she had someone she trusted enough to be open with about something like this. It was rare to find that outside the lifestyle. Aimee must be a hell of a friend.

It was sunset. He was seated on one of the plush, all-weather sofas. Indie sat naked on a huge throw pillow at his feet. Life was good.

"Aimee says hello."

"Did you tell her what a sadistic pervert I am?"

She burst out laughing. "No. But I did say that your creative use of food isn't limited to what we're eating. That was all I told her. She'll be foaming at the mouth for details tomorrow."

"You were supposed to say, *no, honey you're not a sadistic pervert,*" he teased.

"That actually remains to be seen, but lucky for you I like sadistic perverts."

"You might come to regret those words later."

"Promises, promises."

She shifted from her spot between his legs and opened her mouth to accept the grilled prawn he offered her. She not so subtly licked his fingers as she took it from him. He almost groaned aloud. He knew feeding her would be nothing short of an erotic experience. How long would he last before he picked her up and carried her into his bedroom? At this rate, not long. His cock had been rock hard all damn day as the image of her coming replayed over and over in his head.

"Mmm, that's really good, Banner."



"Glad you like it. The recipe is simple—"

"Wait, don't tell me," she said as she licked her lips, a look of concentration straining her pretty features. "Garlic, lime, cilantro...a bit of cayenne, and...soy?"

"Very good. My girl has an impressive palate."

Her grin was all teeth and dimples. "Why thank you."

He dangled a prawn in front of her and she eagerly took a bite, nipping his fingers with her teeth this time. They sat there in comfortable silence as he fed her bits of seafood and spears of grilled asparagus, all of which she ate with relish. He loved that she wasn't afraid to eat. He loved that her boldness had grown as she'd become more at ease around him. And he loved watching her unfold before his eyes. "Can I have some wine please?" she asked.

He grabbed the glass of chardonnay from the table next to them and held it to her lips. Tilting it back, he gave her a sip. Taking care of her in this way—giving her wine, feeding her, sharing conversation while she looked up at him—had been exactly what he never knew he'd wanted. Something warm and content settled into his chest. He couldn't already be falling for her, could he?

"Oh I could really get used to this," Indie said, leaning back against him.

"You took the words right out of my mouth."

A pained, anxious expression flashed across her features for a mere second and then it was gone. Well, she hadn't looked as if he'd threatened to kidnap her this time. That was an improvement.

"So tell me, now that you've done what you set out to do with your career, what's next for Banner Faust?"

"This is all hush, hush—would ruin my reputation for being arrogant and pretentious—but I decided to donate the profits from *Craving for Death* to a local autism charity. One of our staff has a son who was diagnosed this year and it's been a rough road for his family. It felt like the right thing to do."

"Why didn't you advertise that for the event? It would have been great publicity for you."

"It had more than enough allure to be profitable on its own. Our sales were higher last night than they've ever been. Honestly, I wanted to do something meaningful for once and making it about me just didn't seem right."

"See, there you go proving me wrong again. I'll keep quiet about your closet altruism, but," she arched a brow at him, "it'll cost you."

"I don't think you're in any position to make demands," he murmured, reaching down and caressing her breast.

"Oh, you're going to make the demands then?" she asked with a flirtatious smirk.

"Yes, and right now I'm going to demand that you unzip my pants and take out my cock."

He watched her eyes sober then darken with lust.

She did as he ordered, slowly undoing his fly then pulling his boxer briefs down over his fully erect cock.

"Touch me, Indie."

She wrapped a firm hand around his cock.

"Light...slow. I like to be teased."

With the tips of her fingers, she caressed his shaft just as he'd ordered. She brushed the crown with her thumb then drew light circles just below the ridge on the sensitive underside. She looked as though she were studying every ridge, vein and curve of his anatomy. Damn, it was incredibly sexy. A small drop of pre-come formed at the tip. Indie looked up at him with questioning eyes.

"Use your tongue," he ordered.

Her tongue darted out and licked the little bead away. He sucked in a quick breath as she swirled her tongue around the head. Some women plowed on, rough, fast and abrasive, but not Indie. She licked him as if she were savoring a decadent piece of

candy. The gentle, delicate way she handled him made him a little bit crazy, which was exactly what he wanted. Agonizing anticipation made for the best orgasms.

When she suddenly took the entire shaft to the root, he moaned, feeling himself hit the back of her throat. She held him there for a moment before she began to suck him in and out, going from base to tip at a slow, torturous pace. She showed no signs of gagging, or stopping for that matter. His balls tightened and goddamn, he was almost ready to come.

"Stop," he barked out the order.

She froze with his cock at the back of her throat and looked up at him. She was a fucking sight with her lips still wrapped around him. It was nearly enough to push him over the edge. Fuck, he needed to get it under control. He wasn't going to orgasm after only a few minutes of head as if he were some horny teenager.

He took a deep breath and when he was sure the danger of climax had passed, he grabbed a handful of her hair at her nape and gently forced her to release him. He pulled her up to meet his lips in a bruising, hungry kiss. She kissed him back just as hard, shoving her tongue into his mouth, matching him with her own desire.

"You...are bad girl," he whispered against her mouth. He stood and gently helped her to her feet. He tucked his dick back into his briefs and zipped his pants then picked her up, cradling her to his chest.

She squealed in protest. "Oh you don't have to carry me. I'm not that light."

"Shut up, Indie. One derogatory word about that gorgeous body of yours and I'm going to take it as a personal insult since I think you're fucking perfect."

She slipped her arms around his neck and sighed almost as if she didn't believe a word he'd just said. He couldn't quite figure it out. She was a model and seemed comfortable, even confident, in her own skin. That dickhead ex-boyfriend of hers must have done a serious number on her self-esteem. Hopefully he would get what was coming to him.

Indie knew she wasn't perfect, but hearing Banner say he thought she was, more than once now, should have made her smile. Instead it made her wary. Why couldn't she just live in the moment? She desperately wanted to trust and believe him, but it was damn hard when she was terrified he would work his way into her heart only to break it. Like Matt had.

"Stop thinking so much," he told her as he carried her through the house and into his bedroom.

"Spank me, Banner," she blurted out.

He set her down and studied her for a long moment. "I won't go easy on you. Make sure it's really what you want."

"Please?" Her need made her voice sound thready.

"I have to get something from the freezer. When I return I want you to tell me why you think you need to be spanked." He turned and left her sitting on the edge of the bed in disbelief.

Inwardly she groaned. How the hell was she supposed to tell him? She'd agreed to be open with him, but she hadn't thought she would have to be *this* open, *this* naked. He wanted to strip away all her defenses. He wouldn't let her hide from him.

She felt her eyes widen as he came through the door. He held the carved ginger. Her heart beat like a hummingbird in her chest. *That* was going in her ass. Had he planned to plug her then spank her? The thought thrilled and unnerved her.

He stood before her and waited.

"Okay," she sighed. "I need it...because you're right. I over think everything and for once I just...why is this so hard?" She rubbed her hands over her face.

"Revealing parts of yourself you've never showed to anyone is never easy. I need to know what you're looking to get out of this before we begin. If I'd thought you just wanted kinky sex, I wouldn't have asked. But I think what you're looking for goes beyond a slap and tickle. Doesn't it?"

What he'd said was true. Very true. It was scary how well he saw her. Her need to explore submission went much deeper than the thrill of taboo sex. Finally giving voice to her secret desires should have sent her into a panic. It didn't. Instead she was relieved.

She took a deep breath. *Here goes nothing.* "You're right. I want more than just kinky sex. I want to be free of all that crap that constantly runs through my head...the doubts...the what-ifs. More than anything, I want to feel safe enough to just let go for once. I want to be able to live in the moment." She shrugged. "I just...don't know how to do that."

"Thank you," he whispered then gently kissed her forehead.

Silently she thanked him for not pressing her to say more or trying to wrap up the moment with some form of sentiment or sage advice. He'd just let her say what she'd needed to say. It felt damn good to let it out. Now she was ready for whatever he had in mind, greedy for it actually.

"You know, I almost forgot about that," she said nervously eyeing the root he held. The size of the plug he'd carved wasn't the cause for her nervousness. It was thin, only slightly wider than a finger and tapered. It was the heat it would create in that intimate place. Her cheeks warmed at the thought.

He grinned. "You're blushing."

"You're about to stick a ginger root up my ass, I think I have a right to blush."

He laughed. "What am I going to do with you and that mouth of yours?"

"Kissing would be good," she said with a nod.

He leaned down and tenderly kissed her. She opened, sliding her tongue along his. She wanted more, craved more, but he pulled back.

"On your hands and knees."

The authority in his voice made her shiver. She'd waited too long for this, to be dominated, ruled, owned. At that very moment, that's exactly how she felt.

She climbed onto all fours in the middle of the bed.

"Back up until your knees are close to the edge," he ordered.

She obeyed. When she turned, she lost sight of him. Where had — *oh*.

A warm, wet tongue licked her slit. His hands slid up the backs of her thighs then spread her cheeks. The stubble from his chin prickled her plump lips as he pressed his face between her thighs and lightly sucked on her clit. A finger slid inside her pussy and she whimpered. The small sound became a loud moan as he began to lap and lick her with his tongue and fuck her with his finger.

"Is this for me? This beautiful wet cunt?"

"Yes," she managed.

He inserted another finger, filling her, caressing her G-spot. She rocked back, fucking herself on his hand. A quick, harsh slap on her left ass cheek brought blood rushing to the surface of her sensitive skin. She yelped.

"Don't move unless I tell you to."

"Yes Sir."

Slowly he withdrew his fingers, wet from her pussy, and brushed the puckered hole above it. Her body tensed as he eased a fingertip into her ass. The small twinge was over before it really registered.

"Relax, Indie."

She buried her face in the soft duvet and tried not to tense as he probed deeper.

He licked the rim of her ass around his inserted finger, leaving her wet with saliva. She trembled as he inserted a second finger and quickly adjusted to the additional width. He gently stretched her as he moved and shifted. She knew the ginger would replace those fingers soon. She couldn't believe she was anxious for it.

"Fuck, you're tight."

She smiled into the mattress at the lust in his voice.

He pulled out and something cold pressed against her entrance. "Push out."

She did as she was told and felt the tapered end of the root as it passed the little ring of muscle. Damn, it was cold. He kept up the steady pressure until the length of it was seated firmly in her ass, leaving the thick base to rest between her cheeks. The full feeling of having the plug in her ass was delicious and naughty and she loved it.

The bed dipped as he sat down beside her. "I want you face down on my lap."

He'd spread his legs wide to give her plenty of support and she draped herself across his thighs. Her hair brushed the hardwood floor as she lay head down, ass exposed, staring at his feet. He ran a rough palm over her lower back and down the curve of her buttocks. The way he touched her, lovingly as if he cherished her, made more than her pussy ache.

The chill from the ginger was gone and a small tingle began deep within her. Banner's hand came down with sharp crack on her flesh. Not too hard, but enough to leave a good sting. Again, another slap to the same cheek. He rained down a series of blows in the same place until that entire side of her ass was heated, inflamed.

The warmth from the ginger grew steadily and the heat from his hand mingled with the heat inside her. She let out a shaky breath as he ran his hand softly over her tender skin.

"That's it. Breathe, Indie."

She took in a few big gulps of air before his palm came down on her neglected cheek. It received exactly the same punishment as the first. All the while, the burn from the ginger flared outward. The last two blows sent a shock of fire through her as she tried to clench around the plug. Again he caressed her sore skin when he was finished. The sensuous warmth from the sound spanking she'd received was overshadowed by the insane heat in her ass.

Maybe it was her imagination, but she felt tingly all over as if the effects of the ginger had spread along the nerve endings throughout her body.

"Now that you're good and warmed up, are you ready for your spanking?"

That was just a warm up? He had said that he wouldn't take it easy on her and if she was honest, she didn't want him to.

"Yes Sir," she said, hoping he didn't hear the distress in her voice. Damn, she was on fire from the inside out.

The first hard smack made her head come up. The pain was so immediate and intense it stole her breath. She throbbed around the plug as he caressed her softly. Just when she'd had a chance to catch her breath, he slapped her other cheek just as hard.

Fuck, it *really* hurt.

He followed the blow with another gentle brush of his palm. The next round of strikes, four on each cheek, had her crying out as tears came to her eyes. Close to her limit and unsure if she could continue, it took her a second to realize he'd finished.

"You still with me?" he asked, gently massaging her sore butt.

She didn't really know at that moment. The burn from the ginger had reached a fever pitch and she could feel sweat under her arms. She couldn't concentrate on anything other than the crazy need that swelled inside her and the tingling heat in her ass. "I need... Fuck, I'm on fire. I need... God, what the hell do I need?" she gasped.

He dislodged the plug from her ass and the heat dissipated a few degrees. She took a deep, relieving breath. That was better. She could think again. Now all she needed was to be fucked good and hard. Yes, that's exactly what she needed.

He helped her up so she sat on his lap, facing him. One of his large hands cupped her cheek and he kissed her so softly she trembled. Such tenderness after such pain made her feel like her emotions were swinging on a pendulum.

"What do you need, Indie?" His voice was low and rough like gravel.

"I need to be fucked." She'd really just blurted that, hadn't she?

"Like I said before, you do have a way with words. Can you stand?"

She nodded, eased off his lap and stood in front of him on shaky legs. He got to his feet then shed his pants and underwear. After kicking them to the side he sat down at



the bottom of the bed and leaned back on his elbows. Naked, hard cock jutting out, every muscle cut and defined, he was glorious. The way he looked at her, as if he wanted to devour her, made her feel as if she were the sexiest woman alive.

“Ride my cock until you come. Ride it hard, Indie. This may be the only time I allow you to be in control.”

She didn’t have to be told twice.

Banner couldn’t believe this beautiful submissive woman was all his. Indie had taken everything he’d given her and more. The lust, the emotion, the powerful need that had been all over her face when he’d pulled her into his lap after he’d spanked her had been it for him. He fell for her right then and there. There’d been no fear in her, no animosity, no anger, just desire and honesty. Yeah, he was a goner and they hadn’t even had sex yet.

God, she was fucking beautiful. She’d sucked her bottom lip between her teeth as she straddled him. Grabbing his dick with one hand, she spread her lips with the other and guided him into her slick pussy. They groaned together when she slid down onto him.

He watched her with hooded eyes as she began to rock back and forth, slowly working him deep inside her. His need was every bit as great as she’d conveyed hers to be, if not more since he’d walked around half-cocked all damn day.

“Fuck me, Indie,” he growled.

“I thought you said I was the one in control now?” She arched an eyebrow at him as she leaned back and rolled her hips.

He let out a harsh breath and gave her a look of warning. She had the nerve to smile. Naughty girl. He’d see how well she performed under pressure. He pushed himself up, wrapping his arms around her and latched his lips onto one of her nipples.

She moaned, picking up her pace.

He took his hands and pressed her tits together so that he could tongue both her nipples at the same time.

"I love that," she told him as she sank her fingers into the hard muscles of his shoulders.

He smiled, still licking and sucking her until she writhed and fucked him faster. He moved both hands down and grasped that beautiful full ass of hers, forcing her to fuck him harder. He was relentless, allowing her no mercy, no kindness now.

"I'm going to come," she gasped almost as if she couldn't believe it.

"Well come then. Come with me, Indie." He pulled her down hard and ground his dick so deep she cried out. Her pussy clenched and pulsed around him as she came, bringing his own climax. Hard and fast his orgasm rushed through him. He shot his seed deep inside, filling her. She wrapped her arms around him, pulling them together tightly and let out a ragged breath against his neck as she shook one last time.

*Mine. I have to make her mine.*

## **Chapter Six**

"I know you didn't learn to cook like this at Le Cordon Bleu." Banner smiled and helped himself to another biscuit, which he used to scoop up grits and eggs. Damn, she was a good cook. The scratch biscuits were perfect. After last night's intense scene, and the sleepy morning sex, he needed to refuel. It had been really nice waking up with her in his bed this morning. Something he wanted to get used to for damn sure.

"Oh this is nothing. We ate like this every Sunday morning," she said, pouring them both a fresh cup of coffee before she sat back down at the kitchen table. "Mom *still* cooks like this. It's sort of a family tradition. If you're in town, you go to Mom and Dad's for Sunday breakfast."

"Grits. I didn't even know I had grits."

"As stocked as your pantry is, that doesn't surprise me. And I may look all citified with my dyed hair and ink, but underneath it all, I'm just a country girl," she said, taking a bite of sausage.

He grinned at her. "So, country girl, where did you grow up? How big is your family?"

"I was born just outside of Jacksonville. Mom and Dad still live in the same house I grew up in. I have three brothers and a sister. Two of the boys are married with kids now. I have two nieces and a pack of wild animals my sister-in-law swears are my nephews." There was a bit of a twang in her voice he hadn't heard before.

She took a sip of her coffee before she continued. "My mom pretty much raised us by herself. Daddy drove a rig and was always on the road. With five kids to feed and bills to pay, I can't say as though I blame him, but it was really hard on mom. He's retired now so things are different, but growing up...it just would have been nice to

have him around.” It was obvious that talking about this was uncomfortable for her. She stared down at her plate, pushing her food around with her fork.

“Well enough about me. What’s your family like?”

As a well-known chef he was used to talking about his career, but not his family. It was complicated and something he didn’t particularly like discussing. But he’d asked her to open up to him and she had. He needed to man up and do the same. “My mother died when I was a baby. My father...he left right after that. Couldn’t handle raising an infant on his own, I guess. My maternal grandparents adopted me.”

She reached across the table and put her hand in his. “Oh, Banner, I’m so sorry.”

It surprised him when he looked in her eyes and saw only concern, not pity. “No, don’t be. I have no memories of either of them. My grandparents raised me like I was their own. I even called them Mom and Dad.”

“So you had a good childhood?” she asked with a smile.

“You really want to know?”

She sat cross-legged in her chair with one elbow on the table, her chin resting in her hand. He loved that she’d grown so accustomed to her nudity that she seemed oblivious to it.

“Of course I do.”

“I had a good childhood. Mom was a homemaker. I swear she lived half her life in that kitchen—made everything from scratch. She would have loved your biscuits. My passion for cooking, I got that from her. Dad worked for NASA and he spent a lot of time there. They were strict, old-fashioned. It was sort of like growing up in a fifties household.”

“Well I personally happen to love that era.”

“Maybe that’s why I find you so irresistible.”

“You think I’m irresistible?” she asked, standing up.

Yes, naked Indie, waiting on him in his kitchen was pretty damn irresistible. “Don’t be coy.”

She laughed as she began to clear the dishes from the table. “It’s kind of hard to do coy when you’re naked.” She wiggled her ass when she walked by him.

“You make a very valid and very sexy point,” he said, reaching over and lightly slapping one of her ass cheeks. Already he missed seeing his handprint on them.

She turned and narrowed her eyes playfully as she cleared the rest of the table. “So, what are we going to do today?”

“Have you ever been to a play party?”

“No.”

“A friend of mine hosts one on the last Sunday of every month. I want to take you.” He hadn’t been in a long while. The idea of bringing her to Jared’s party as *his* submissive was just too tempting. Yes, it was selfish and a little barbaric, but for some reason he felt the need to publicly stake his claim. Aside from that, the party would be the perfect venue for a scene he planned for her. Something explosive. Something emotional. Something she wouldn’t easily forget.

“I’ve always been curious. I have friends at the agency that are always trying to drag me along. Going without a Dominant never appealed to me.”

“You won’t have to worry about that now will you?” He stood and cornered her by the sink, leaned down and playfully bit her neck.

“I guess I don’t have to do a whole lot of worrying with you around.”

“That’s the idea.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Indie stood in front of the closet watching as Banner slid into a pair of soft, black leather pants. “So what should I wear tonight? I have this gorgeous corset—”

Banner shook his head.

"No? Well I can't very well go naked can I?"

He wiggled his eyebrows at her and she froze. *Oh please, don't let him say I'm going naked.* Maybe the package that had arrived earlier was something for her to wear to the party. A girl could hope.

"You'll be going to the party as Indie the submissive, not Indigo Hartley, the fetish model."

"What do you mean by that?" Did he not like her style? Were her clothes not good enough? She didn't understand. She wanted to, but it looked a hell of a lot like he wanted to change her. That wasn't part of their deal. This wasn't supposed to be serious. He'd been steadily chipping away at her idea of casual and she didn't like it. Not at all.

"I love the way you dress. It's fun. It's unique and you are stunning when you're all made up. But you hide behind the image you've created. It's a shield you use to protect yourself. I don't just want the tattooed, blue-haired model who wears retro clothes, high heels and red lipstick. I want the woman beneath all that too. I want the raw honesty, the brave trust and the passionate soul that you show me when there is no place left for you to hide."

Her throat suddenly felt painful and tight as she tried to swallow down all the emotion he'd just dragged into the light.

"I don't...hide." It was a lie and she knew it as soon as the words left her mouth.

He pulled on a fitted black t-shirt and approached her calmly. He cupped her face in his hands. "Indie. It's okay. We don't have to talk about this right now."

He saw too much, read her too well. Part of her wanted to pour out her heart, bare her soul, but she just couldn't. Not right now. Maybe not ever. Besides they had a party to get ready for. She should focus on that.

He walked over to a set of drawers toward the back of the closet and opened one. When he turned he had a black leather collar and two sets of cuffs in his hands.

"You're going to restrain me with those?" Her mind quickly shifted gears.

"I might," he answered.

She waited, expecting him to elaborate, but he didn't. "At the party? In front of everyone?"

"Indigo, do you trust me?"

"Yes."

"Then no more questions."

She took a deep, cleansing breath and willed herself to relax. Why did she always need to know every little detail? Maybe it was her way of trying to hold on to a thread of control. Where, what, why...for fuck's sake, she couldn't let go even for a minute. She could lie to herself and hide behind the notion that she didn't want to embarrass him with her lack of knowledge. He was fully aware of her inexperience. If there was something he felt she needed to know, he'd tell her. She was safe with him. He would look after her. She needed to trust in that.

She should just...let go.

If only she could place herself in his care and let him worry about the rest. Free. She would be—free—without care, without stress, without anxiety. It hit her for the first time that this was what submission was truly about.

"Lift your hair."

She obeyed.

"Are you nervous?" he asked as he wrapped the thick collar around her throat. The leather smelled earthy and comforting as the O ring jingled from where it hung in the center. Banner buckled it into place and for just a second, she wished it were hers, not just a play collar. She understood the significance of it and how sacred it was in a Dominant/submissive relationship.

Part of her ached to belong to him and dreaded the fact she'd be going back to her mundane life tomorrow. She shoved the thought down where it belonged, buried with

her fantasies. It was the last night of their arrangement, she didn't want to spend it wallowing over things she couldn't have.

"A little, but I'm in good hands."

He flashed a devastating smile her way as he led her over to the bed. "Yes you are. Jared's parties are safe, sane and consensual. You can expect that people will be engaged in all sorts of sordid, kinky things. Jared doesn't have many rules, but those he does have are strictly enforced. Treat everyone with respect, subs and Doms alike. Never interrupt someone else's scene. No drugs. And safe words must always be honored. People who break the rules don't get invited back and invites are very hard to come by."

"Sit," he commanded and she did. The fleece on the inside of the leather wrist cuffs was soft against her skin as he fastened them. After they were buckled, he turned them so that the buckles were on the inside and the D rings faced out. It seemed methodical, something he'd done many times before. With a small bite of jealousy, she wondered how many subs had worn them before her, and how many would wear them after she was gone.

He knelt before her and gingerly picked up one of her feet as if it were a delicate piece of glass. His fingers were soft and light as he fastened a cuff to her ankle. When he looked up at her, the warmth in his eyes was too real, too honest. She dropped her gaze. They'd slept together, had sex, he'd spanked her, but this...this small act seemed so intimate.

He seemed to sense her withdrawal and buckled the last cuff into place with more efficiency, less care. Instantly she missed that small bit of warmth. What would she miss tomorrow or in the weeks to come? The months?

When she looked at him again, the tenderness was gone, but there was desire in its place. Still on his knees, he placed a hand on each of her thighs and parted them slowly.

A shiver rolled through her as he ran his hands along her skin until he reached her pussy. With his thumbs he massaged the sensitive hollows where her thighs met her



labia. Unconsciously she spread wider, but he tightened his grip, pressing his fingers painfully into the flesh of her thighs, reminding her who was in control.

“You move when I say.”

“Yes Sir.” She knew how this worked now. If she wanted him to touch her, she had to obey and God, did she want him to touch her.

“Good girl.” He parted her lips with his thumbs, barely brushing the sensitive nub of her clit. When he took her nipple between his teeth, she whimpered. He alternated between teeth and tongue as he played. The pleasure warred with the pain, then he sank a finger inside her pussy and she willed herself to remain upright.

What she really wanted to do was lie back on the bed and beg him to make her come. Instead she sat there and trembled. Slowly he strummed her clit with his thumb as his finger pumped in and out of her. She wanted, almost needed to thrust with him, but she held still. It was torture, a pleasurable, blissful, torture. He brought her close, so very close to orgasm, but to her disappointment, he backed away leaving her throbbing and needy and frustrated.

“Don’t pout. You’ll get to come...eventually.”

\* \* \* \* \*

It was absolutely insane how aroused Indie was at the moment. Banner had brought her to the brink twice more before they left the house. She was thankful he’d left her alone for the drive. Well not as thankful as she’d be if he took mercy on her and gave her an orgasm. Apparently he wasn’t in a very merciful mood. Frustrated, she shifted on the passenger seat of Banner’s SUV.

Banner’s smile was all too smug as he pulled up to a gated driveway. It would appear that he enjoyed watching her squirm. She clenched her teeth and tried to ignore how damp her pussy was. It would serve him right if she left a wet pot on his nice leather seat. He punched a series of numbers into the keypad and it slowly opened, allowing them entrance.

If Banner's house was modest and quaint, Jared's was exactly the opposite—grandiose, modern and located on a very affluent stretch of South Beach. Banner parked among the other dozen or so cars and shut off the engine. Anxious, she fiddled with the D ring attached to the cuff on her wrist.

Banner retrieved his toy bag from the back seat then came around and helped her out of the vehicle. "God, you're beautiful," he whispered before he kissed her.

She felt naked. She'd been right about the package that had been delivered to the house earlier. Banner had chosen a kimono-style, wrap-around dress for her to wear this evening. The wide sleeves of the elegant ivory silk hung almost to her wrists. The hem just brushed the tops of her thighs. A Japanese floral design had been hand painted on the back and over the lapels. He'd allowed her no undergarments, minimal makeup and had her pull her hair back in a chignon. Black strappy four-inch heels completed the outfit.

The man had incredible taste. The outfit was extraordinary, but she felt off balance wearing it, as if she weren't quite herself. Judging from what she knew about Banner, the way she felt was intentional on his part.

She wondered if he intended to remove the dress or if he just liked having her available to him. The prospect of being nude in front of everyone at the party made her uneasy, however if that was what he wanted, then she was prepared to give him that.

The front door opened before they reached it. Banner placed a hand at the small of her back. The gesture was comforting, reassuring.

If Indie were to imagine what a Spartan Warrior would look like, the man standing in the doorway would be it. Not only was he tall, but he was stacked with muscle. His dark brown hair hung to his shoulders in waves. He presented quite an intimidating picture as he stood there with his arms folded across his chest, glowering at them.

"Well I'll be damned." The man's deep timbre reverberated through her and she shrank closer to Banner.

"Are you going to stand there and be rude or are you going to let us in?" Banner asked with an arrogant grin.

"By all means," the brute said as he stepped aside. He clapped Banner on the back as his face split into a huge smile. "How the hell have you been, Banner? And who is this tasty little morsel you've brought us?"

"Jared, I'd like you to meet Indigo Hartley. Don't get your hopes up. This one is mine."

Jared stopped giving Indigo the once over and snapped his attention back to Banner. "Did I hear that right?"

"Yes. Mine," Banner said as he led her into a foyer that was bigger than her entire house. A huge crystal chandelier hung from the ceiling that stretched two floors up, marble floors gleamed and expensive art hung on the walls. A staircase started up each side of the circular room and led to a second floor balcony that wrapped around the perimeter. The decorative molding alone had to cost more than she made in a year.

"Well, I think there will be more than a few broken hearts over that one," Jared said with a sly smile.

Indie's curiosity must have registered on her face because Jared gave her wink. "Subs have been vying for his collar for quite some time. Isn't that right, Banner?"

"Oh I think there's another Dom around here that tops that list. Pun completely intended." Banner smirked.

"*Touché*, my friend. All joking aside, it's good to see you back in the scene. And very nice to meet you, Ms. Hartley." Jared's smile was genuine as he gave her a polite nod.

"Please call me Indie and if you don't mind my saying so, you have such a beautiful home, Sir."

"So formal. She's beautiful, Banner. It's a shame you don't share. I'm sure I won't be the only one disappointed by that either. Almost everyone is already here. You can join

them in the main room or head to the dungeon. I still have a few preparations to make, if you'll excuse me," Jared said before he disappeared down the hallway.

Banner led her to a small coatroom off to the side where he stored his toy bag then led her back through the foyer and into the main room. Indie swallowed hard at the sight of so much leather and skin and latex. It was almost like walking into a scene from one of the novels she read, only everyone wasn't young and perfect. There were some gorgeous hard bodies milling about, but the rest just looked like everyday people, except they were dressed in fetish wear. Compared to most, she was overdressed in her little kimono.

"Drink?" Banner asked her.

She thought about it briefly, but decided against it. She didn't want to dull her senses. No, she wanted her mind clear so she could imprint every detail from tonight in her memory. "Actually, just a bottle of water would be great."

He gestured to one of the submissives standing near the entrance to the room and she came rushing over. She was nude but for her red collar, wrist and ankle cuffs. "How may I be of service, Master?" she asked with a submissive bow.

"A bottle of water," he told her and she went rushing off. Indie hadn't missed the flash of disappointment on the girl's face.

"Submissive servants?" Indie asked Banner.

"All the girls you see in red cuffs and collars are being trained by Jared. Those who do well are allowed to provide service for his play parties."

Indie felt her eyebrows trying to reach her hairline. "Service? Like how?"

"Anything a Dominant may require."

"Anything?"

"And they are glad to do it. Jared is one of the best at what he does. Some of the subs he trains are brought here by their Masters. Those who come to him on their own

usually find themselves collared by the time they complete their training. He has a waitlist longer than my reservation book for Crave."

Indie couldn't imagine placing her submission in the hands of anyone but Banner.

"We'll do the polite thing and say hello before we head to the dungeon. Although I'm sorely tempted to forego all the niceties so I can strap you down and mark you in front of everyone."

*Yes please.* "I'm ready."

"Are you now?" He reached under her dress and cupped her pussy in his hand. She fought not to grind against it as he slid a finger inside her. "So wet for me."

"Yes," she whispered. He was right. It was all for him. She was putty in his hands, moldable to his desires and they'd only known one another a matter of days. How had it happened so fast?

"Not yet." He removed his finger from her pussy. He brought it to her mouth, smeared her own wetness across her lips then kissed her with her taste between them. He probed her mouth with his tongue, taking every bit she'd give him and demanding more. If she could come from a kiss alone, she'd have done it right then.

Indie was so distracted by her heightened sexual arousal that the next twenty minutes were a blur of introductions and polite conversation. It was strange to be discussed as if she were an object rather than a person. She had an odd sense of detachment from it all. It was Banner's steady hand at the small of her back that kept her tethered, grounded.

"I think I've had enough of the small talk. It's time to go play," Banner said, taking her hand. He led her down a hallway, through a set of doors and into the dungeon.

*Whoa.*

The dimly lit room was enormous and well stocked with various types of dungeon furniture. The exam table fitted with restraints in the far corner caught her attention first. Just the thought of being strapped down and spread open for all to see made her

anxious and uncomfortable. In the opposite corner was a contraption that looked like a giant tripod. A submissive was currently bound and suspended from it. There were sawhorses, St. Andrew's crosses, a whipping post, even a set of stocks. Jared could have operated his own private bondage club out of this room had he wanted.

It wasn't until they were standing in the middle of the dungeon that she was yanked back to reality full force.

A man with a very distinctive tattoo on his back was strapped down to an angled spanking bench off to one side, receiving a vicious paddling from a female Dominant.

No. No way.

"Does watching them turn you on?" Banner asked her.

"Banner, that's Matt," she whispered.

The smile that spread across Banner's face was so devious, Indie got a little chill. He steered her closer to where Matt was restrained. "Rose is an expert with a paddle. Just look at that swing. And she handcrafts each of them herself using exotic woods. I have a few myself actually," Banner informed her, not loud enough to interrupt the scene, but just enough to let Matt know that someone was watching.

Indie's heart rate picked up as Matt turned his head to look at them. His eyes widened when he caught sight of Indie.

"What the fuck are you staring at? Frigid bitch."

Matt's venomous words hit Indie like a slap to the face.

The woman dressed in the PVC cat suit, wielding the paddle, froze mid-stroke. "I know you didn't just speak without permission and insult another Dom's sub." She walked around to the side of the bench and looked Matt in the eyes, then placed her stiletto-clad foot right on his face. She leaned into him, digging her heel into his cheek. "Did you, slut boy? Did you just deliberately disobey me and call another Dom's submissive a frigid bitch?"

"Yes, Mistress Rose," Matt whined.

"And whining on top of it. You know how much I dislike whiny little slut boys don't you?" Rose removed her foot from Matt's face and turned to Banner. "It's always so hard to break in the new ones. You know what? I think we should allow *her* to administer his punishment. Would that be enough to make up for his nasty attitude?"

Karma was a sweet thing.

"Actually, I think that's a damn fine idea, Rose. I'm sure Indie would be more than willing to oblige. Indie?"

The *you-wouldn't-dare* look Matt gave Indie sealed the deal as far as she was concerned. "Whatever you think is best, Sir," she said giving Matt a smug little smile. This was going to be good. Paybacks were a bitch.

Rose handed her the long, slim paddle she'd been using. "It may seem thin, but it's Bloodwood. Trust me when I say it can take everything you can dish out and then some. So can my little subbie here, isn't that right?"

"Yes, Mistress," Matt said meekly.

"He needs ten good ones and I want marks," Rose said as she walked around and stood in front of Matt. "And as for you, naughty little slut boy, after each whack, you're to say you're sorry. I want to hear it loud and clear. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Mistress."

"You may begin," Rose told her.

Indie took a deep breath, feeling the weight of the wood in her hand and glanced over at Banner who gave her a reassuring nod. The amused smirk on his face let her know just how much he was enjoying this.

She rested the paddle against Matt's buttocks testing her aim. Her adrenaline surged as she reared back and swung. The paddle landed with a loud smack. She'd held back some, unsure how much of an impact the paddle would have.

"I'm sorry," Matt barked out. A long rectangular welt formed across Matt's skin. He didn't seem distressed by the strike at all and Indie breathed a small sigh. She despised him, but she didn't want to seriously injure him.

"Harder, sub," Rose ordered.

Yeah. She could do harder. She swung the paddle again with more force this time and heard Matt grunt after it smacked across his ass.

"I'm sorry," Matt breathed through clenched teeth.

"Much better, little sub," Rose praised her. "Again."

Indie did as she was directed and struck another forceful blow, really getting into it now.

Matt was slower to speak this time. Indie could hear the pain in his voice when he finally said he was sorry. A thrill shot through her and she delivered the next blow without prompting.

"I think you're submissive might have some switchy tendencies, Banner. She's rather enjoying this." Indie heard Rose say.

"Of that, I have no doubt," Banner said.

They were right, Indie thought as she swung and paddled Matt again. She was definitely enjoying this. She couldn't resist smiling as Matt gritted out another strained sorry between panting breaths.

She landed the next series of blows with relish. By the time she finished, her breathing was as labored as Matt's. Satisfied and a little high from the power of experiencing the Dominant side of things, she handed the paddle back to Rose. "Thank you, Mistress."

She got it now—the thrill, the rush that Dominants gained from the position of control—heady stuff. Topping certainly had appeal, but she couldn't see herself doing it again. This was a onetime thing, but damn it felt good.



“Thank you for loaning me your sub, Banner. If you ever decide to let her explore her Dominant side, let me know. I’d be happy to mentor her,” Rose said.

“Thank you, Rose. You have no idea how gratifying that was for me,” Banner said as he looked at Indie. There was enough heat in his gaze to burn the place to the ground.

Maybe, just maybe, she’d get to come soon. After the huge adrenaline rush, her whole body was tense with need – a need that was all for Banner.

## **Chapter Seven**

Banner couldn't have planned it better if he'd tried. He almost fell over when Rose had suggested that Indie administer Matt's punishment. Rose couldn't have known how fitting it would actually be. Indie would regain a little piece of herself from the experience and maybe Matt would learn to keep his mouth shut. As far as Banner was concerned, the fucker got off light. Rose was a fair Domme, but she had a cruel streak her subs loved. Matt was not only getting what he deserved, but likely loving it in return.

Ah, but they were all such a twisted lot. Banner hadn't realized how much he'd missed the scene. He was a fool to think that his career would be enough. It would never be enough. As long as he chose to ignore this side of himself, he'd never feel complete, whole. And while he hadn't felt that way when he was active in the lifestyle before, now that he'd found Indie, he couldn't go back to denying it. He'd know what was truly missing from his life.

His little submissive had been fierce swinging Rose's paddle. Watching her had made his cock so hard it fucking hurt—her skin glowing from exertion, her breasts straining against the silk, the smug smile that played on her lips. The need to harness and control all of that volatile emotion almost overwhelmed him.

"Did that really just happen?" she asked in a loud whisper.

He pulled her close, planting a quick kiss on her forehead. "Yes, it did and you were amazing. I'm so proud of you."

He loved the way she preened under his praise.

"Tell me how it felt."

"It felt fucking great. Did you see his face? I thought that vein in his forehead was going to pop. I cannot believe he's a sub, although, that does explain a lot. I'm babbling again aren't I?" She covered her smile with a hand.

"Yes, but after that you're allowed. Is topping something you'd like to explore? I'm not volunteering, mind you."

"Honestly? No. I'd much rather be on the receiving end."

"Oh I think we can arrange that."

"Was my performance good enough to earn me an orgasm, Sir?"

"We'll see." He motioned to another one of the service subs. She hurried over and he sent her to retrieve his toy bag. He led Indie to the exam table in the corner while he waited for the little sub to return. He'd originally thought to use one of the crosses to play out their scene, but her reaction to the exam table when they'd first entered the room hadn't escaped his notice.

The intimidating piece was adjustable and fitted with restraints at the ankle, thigh and abdomen. A large O ring was attached to the wall above the table so that the subs wrists could be locked above the head. Jared had put enough thought into it to include a stool for the Dominant to give it an authentic medical feel. Medical scenes weren't Banner's kink but this set up would work just fine for what he wanted.

"Here?" Indie asked with a note of fear, resisting the last few steps.

"Are you questioning me?"

"No. It's just...I'm a little apprehensive is all."

"Can you tell me why?"

"I don't know," she said irritably.

He could tell that she was not just afraid, but annoyed by her fear. "Fear doesn't equal weakness, Indie. Not in my eyes. Never in my eyes."

There was quite a bit of anxiety in the little sigh she gave. Her shoulders tensed up as she folded her arms across her chest and shrank inward as if she were attempting to

protect herself. "I'll be completely exposed. I'm afraid of being so naked," she said softly as she looked at the floor.

He pried her arms apart then took her hands in his. "Look at me, Indie."

She slowly lifted her fearful violet gaze to his.

"You have nothing to be ashamed of. There is no part of you, body or soul, I don't find beautiful. And as your Dom, my opinion should be the only one that matters right now. The other people here, not one of them will judge you. If they do, they'll have me to answer to. Or...you could always borrow Rose's paddle."

Her laugh was loud and uninhibited.

"That's my girl."

The service submissive returned with his bag and waited off to the side. He motioned for her to set the bag on the floor next to the stool then dismissed her.

Indie made a small sound of protest when he reached for the sash on her dress.

"Do you trust me?"

"Yes Sir," she whispered.

"Submit. Give yourself to me. Let me take it from here." He finished untying the sash and let the kimono fall open.

The tension seemed to drain from her body and the fear in her eyes vanished. Her acceptance happened that fast, as if he'd just flipped a switch. She just needed a gentle hand, his reassurance and she was all his.

He ran a hand along the collar of her dress. As if choreographed, she pivoted and stepped out of the silk in one graceful movement, leaving him holding the garment, which he then folded and placed in his bag.

He adjusted the table so that Indie would be sitting at an incline rather than lying flat. Not one to rely solely on his own skill, or Indie's willingness to safeword, he wanted the ability to see her facial expressions. What he was about to do would push

her to her limits. Physically, she'd be capable of handling everything he'd planned. Emotionally, it would stretch her way beyond her comfort zone.

"Up on the table, Indie," he ordered.

Indie managed to hop up onto the table. He helped her position her legs along the extensions then adjusted them so they were bent at the knee and spread wide. He strapped her ankles down before fastening her thighs into the restraints.

"We doing okay?" he asked as he adjusted and tightened the abdominal strap.

"Yes Sir," she murmured.

He retrieved a metal clip from his bag and hooked it to the D ring on her wrist cuff. "Last chance to scratch if you have an itch."

There was that gorgeous sarcastic smile. "So thoughtful." She tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ear then offered him her other wrist.

"So brave to be a smart ass while I'm strapping you down to have my sadistic way with you." He kissed her hand before he clipped her wrists together then attached them to the O ring on the wall above her head. "Comfortable?"

"As I can be," she murmured.

He ran a light hand down her arms and over the mounds of her breasts. Her pale nipples pebbled beneath his touch. She was so beautiful, so tantalizing bound and available for his use. Trust blended with a note of fear and the haze of lust filled her bright eyes. Ah, so his little sub was afraid, but aroused. He trailed his fingers over her stomach and down her thighs as he walked to the foot of the table. He loved the contrast of her soft skin and the hard leather of the restraints.

*Oh definitely aroused.* She was so wet her bare pussy glistened in the soft light. He couldn't resist leaning down and tasting her cream. He heard her muffled moan as he drove his tongue deep inside her, enjoying the smell and taste of her arousal. She was trying to be quiet. Well, he'd just have to see what he could do to make it a little harder for her. He fucked her with his tongue, in and out, feeling her slick walls contract

around him. Abruptly he pulled back and brought a hand down on her cunt with a jarring smack.

She cried out, looking down at him with shock.

He spanked her again right on top of her mound. A small throaty sound came from behind her tightly closed lips as she fought to hold it back.

“Do you like having your cunt spanked?” he asked. He delivered another stinging strike, which she followed with another muffled groan. Her pale skin bloomed a vivid pink.

“Answer me.”

“Yes,” she hissed as she leaned her head back against the padding.

He tenderly caressed the abused flesh. Spanking her pussy had brought the blood to the surface. Her labia, lips and clit were now swollen and the sensitivity of them would be amplified. She was now ready for him. He kissed the inside of her thigh.

“Are you ready to come, Indie?”

“Please Sir.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. Oh God, yes.”

He sat down on the stool and retrieved a vibrating massage wand from the depths of his bag. He turned it on low and her head snapped up as it hummed to life. The smile she gave as she looked at him was downright wicked. He was pretty sure she wouldn't be smiling like that if she knew what he had in store for her.

Oh thank you God, a vibrator. Finally she'd get to come. Her body was so tense from the lack of release that she felt like one big knot. She needed to unravel. Being strapped down to the exam table wasn't as scary as she'd anticipated. She just had to concentrate all her attention on Banner. She couldn't think about the other people in the room or she'd start to panic. At first it had been damn hard to block out the sounds of

the others playing around her. But as Banner began to put her into the restraints, her mind drifted and her anxiety bled to arousal. With each strap he buckled, her body relaxed more.

Maybe she should have been disturbed by how comforting it all was—the bonds, the loss of freedom, the submission to someone else's will. She wasn't. It was as though her body knew it belonged there, the relaxation was automatic. She was meant for this. It should have scared the ever-loving shit out of her to stand on the precipice, looking into the abyss, but it was hard to be afraid when she was so damn calm.

The pussy spankings jolted her out of her haze. The sting was a pleasurable one and for a moment she thought she'd be able to come from that alone. But of course he backed off. Banner wouldn't let it be that easy. He hadn't strapped her down to make her come right away.

The hum of the wand was such a glorious sound she wanted to shout halleluiah from the top of her lungs. Her clit throbbed with anticipation. A blissful orgasm was surely soon to come.

"Do you remember your safe words, Indie?" he asked.

"Yes Sir," she said with a bit too much enthusiasm. *Down girl*. She couldn't help it. She was too damn excited about the prospect of release. Finally. He'd been teasing her with it for hours and hours.

"Indie?"

"Yes Sir?"

"A bit of advice, don't hold back. Don't fight it. You'll only make it worse."

What the hell was he—oh, oh, oh. He'd placed the rounded head of the wand on the top of her mound. The sensation sent subtle ripples of pleasure through her folds and into her clit. She desperately wanted to grind against it, increasing the pressure, but with the way she was restrained, that wasn't happening.

He traced the outside of her cunt with the wand, avoiding direct stimulation to her clit. Damn him. She was so close. Everything from her waist down tensed. She strained, trying to position her clit under the vibrations with the small amount of movement her restraints allowed.

He removed the wand and brought his other hand down in a vicious slap on her already swollen and sensitive pussy.

"When I say. You need to ask me, Indie."

"Please, Banner," she whimpered.

"Please what?"

"Please may I have an orgasm?"

He parted her folds, exposing her clit then pressed the wand right against the little bundle of nerves. The pleasure was sharp and immediate. She held her breath feeling an orgasm building. In that moment, Banner was absolute. Her attention narrowed down to him and the vibrations at her core. The pressure grew and suddenly burst as she came, moaning deep in her throat and releasing the air from her lungs. The pleasure from the orgasm peaked, but he hadn't removed the wand.

"I'm done. I'm done," she forced out, trying to escape the relentless sensation. The wand stayed right where it was.

"You're not done until I say you are."

*What? Oh God, he's not serious is he?*

She was so sensitive that the continued vibration was a twisted mix of pleasure and torture. He eased the pressure off a fraction, but the wand was still touching the hood of her clitoris, still sending tormenting sensations through her. Her body felt as if it were in a vise. She thought for a second that she might freak out. It was really fucking intense.



He pressed the massager down again and she screamed as another orgasm exploded through her; this one, harder, faster, longer than the first. It seemed to go on and on.

When her screams died down, he eased off again, but still kept the evil fucking wand against her clit. The vibration was so unyielding she thought she might die.

"I can't. I can't, Banner!" Her breath came in quick pants as she pulled against her wrist cuffs, squirmed against the abdominal and leg restraints. She hated it. She loved it. She was losing her fucking mind.

Through her panic, she heard Banner's voice. "Yes you can, Indie. Don't fight it. Embrace it."

She took the deepest breath she could manage.

"Look at me, right into my eyes. Stay with me," he ordered as he stood, the wand never losing contact.

She nodded frantically, trying to stay calm.

She gasped as she felt the hard flesh of his cock probe her entrance.

He increased the pressure of the wand as he slammed into her. She closed her eyes and bucked against the straps.

"Indie! Look at me," he commanded.

Her eyes snapped open and she held his gaze, his beautiful intense gaze. The connection she felt to him at that very moment was surreal. It was as if they were the only two people in existence.

Then he amped the speed of the vibrations and began to pump in and out of her soaked cunt. It was pure torture. The pleasure was so intense it hurt. She felt like a wind-up toy, tightened and cranked beyond her capabilities. Unmerciful Banner held the vibrator to her clit and wound her tighter and tighter, fucked her harder and harder. He sent her higher than she'd ever been. She suddenly found herself seeking the stimulation that would send her even higher, sure she would shatter.

Then she came.

Her climax burned through her like fire, exploding again and again. Orgasms rolled through her, one after the other blending together, coming on top of each other. Her pussy contracted through each one, the muscles stimulated into spasms.

She thought she heard Banner growl as he came, but she couldn't be sure.

Everything around her was muted, dulled. No longer bound to the exam table, she was off floating somewhere in space. Banner had reduced her down to nothing but ecstasy.

He eased his cock from her pussy and the vibrations stopped. Her body came one last time all on its own.

Lips slid across her mouth in a gentle, tender kiss. She opened her eyes to see two pale blue irises staring back at her. Her brain didn't seem to want to communicate with her mouth so she just smiled. She was rewarded with Banner's crooked grin. He kissed her softly again and stroked her cheek.

"You don't have to say anything, just nod if you're okay."

She nodded slowly, coming back to her body, to her surroundings. Her pussy was so engorged she could feel her folds sticking together from his come. Or was it hers?

Minutes passed. It could have been hours for all she knew. A warm wet cloth was pressed between her legs. Oh it felt so good. She looked up to see Banner wiping her clean and smiled at him through her haze. When he was done, he leaned down and placed a kiss just above her mound.

Slowly he unbuckled her ankles, then her thighs. She hissed as he lifted one of her legs from the extension it had been strapped to. The muscles and ligaments were tight from being in one position for so long. He gently massaged her flesh, starting at her foot then working his way up to her hip. He set her leg back down, following the same regimen with the other.

He was silent as he worked. The tenderness in his eyes was almost unbearable. She dropped her gaze. A well of emotion threatened to spill out of her. He'd given her more pleasure than she'd ever even imagined possible. And now, the softness, the care he offered her, nearly broke her. She blinked, trying to will her tears away.

What was wrong with her? She was never this emotional. Never. She wanted to laugh. She wanted to cry. She felt so many things she couldn't put a name to them all.

After Banner finished releasing her from her bonds, he gently pulled her to the edge of the table. She trembled, unable to look at him. He seemed to sense that she was barely holding herself together. He produced her kimono then carefully lifted her arm, putting it in the sleeve. He continued to dress her, even tied her sash.

The way he took care of her was too much. She would burst into tears at any moment and she fought to swallow it down.

"Let's get you home," Banner said gently as he picked her up.

She blew out a jerky breath as she wrapped her arms around his neck and buried her face.

"It's okay, Indie. Let it out. I'll take care of you," he whispered as he carried her through the house.

A small sob burst from her as the first tears fell.

## **Chapter Eight**

"You're leaving?" Banner asked, scrambling out of bed. He raked a hand through his hair as he tried to shake off the last bit of sleep. Goddamn it. She was packing.

She looked distressed by the fact that he'd woken up before she could sneak out. "I-I have things...stuff I need to do today." She zipped up her suitcase.

"You were going to leave while I was still asleep," he said incredulously as he shrugged on a pair of pants. He noticed that she was fully dressed—tight black pants, cherry print top and a full face of makeup. She'd gone back to what made her feel safe. Even through his tired fog he realized he didn't have much of a chance of convincing her to stay. She'd been awake long enough to talk herself into leaving.

Last night had been hard for her. He'd pushed her out of her safe little shell. The scene had been amazing and so had she as he'd forced her to come over and over. But it was what came after that she'd had such a hard time with. The intensity had opened her up. Her emotional release had taken a lot out of her. He'd brought her home and she'd cried herself to sleep. He hadn't pushed or prodded her. Hadn't asked her to talk about it or tried to give her advice. He'd just held her, comforted her, wiped her tears. He had a feeling she'd been holding it in for quite some time.

He'd known that today would be awkward for her. He'd known that there was a possibility she would run. What he hadn't known was that he would feel such panic over her leaving.

"I'm sorry. I didn't want to wake you." Her voice was small and full of guilt. She turned and rushed into the bathroom.

He followed her, watching as she stuffed her toiletries into a small case. "Indie, you don't have to run. You don't have to hide. Not from me."

She whirled on him, pointing a finger at his chest. "I am not running or hiding! Your time is up, Banner. I need to get back to my life. Back to some sense of normalcy." She stalked past him.

"Don't rush off just yet. Let's at least have a cup of coffee."

She narrowed her eyes at him as she slung her purse over her shoulder. "Don't try to handle me." She sighed. It was the kind of sigh someone gave right before they delivered *the brush off*. "Look, we had fun, but that's all it was." She bent down and picked up her suitcase.

He tried to take it from her. "Stay with me," he said softly.

She jerked her luggage away from him. "I can't. I have a life, Banner. May not seem like much of one to someone like you, but I'm okay with that."

"Stay with me. I know last night was difficult."

"Chalk it up to PMS, whatever. Like I said, it was fun. I had a good time. If you ever need a backup sushi model, gimme a call," she said with believable nonchalance as she made her way to the front door.

Damn she was good, but he knew better. She was afraid, and she was angry and she hid it very well behind her casual tone and red lipstick. Exacting Matt's punishment followed by such a profound emotional release had been too much for her. She'd been so open, so free. He loved seeing her that way. He wanted to tell her how beautiful she was stripped down, soul bared, heart open, but she wasn't ready to hear it yet. He had to let her go.

Indie flung the front door open and dragged her luggage across the porch and to her car. It was petty and childish, but he couldn't bring himself to help her make her escape. And that was exactly what it felt like as she rushed to her car as if she'd been set on fire, as if she were escaping him. She shoved her bags into the trunk, not sparing even a glance in his direction.

She needed time to process everything that had happened and she needed to be away from him to do it. He owed her at least that. He had to let her go.

He swore under his breath as he watched her get behind the wheel, slam the car door and start the engine. She waved as she backed out of his drive. He mustered up a smile for her, his little submissive.

Now all he could do was hold on to the hope that she would come back when she was ready or so help him, he'd drag her back kicking and screaming.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a beautiful morning to enjoy coffee outside by Jared's pool. Banner couldn't seem to gather the genuine appreciation as he sat across from his longtime friend. One of the service submissives poured them each a cup of coffee.

"You didn't come over just so you could admire my good looks," Jared said with a smirk.

Banner rolled his eyes. "You're not going to make this easy on me are you?"

"If you wanted easy you'd have gone elsewhere. So spill it. This have something to do with that new little sub you put through the wringer last night?"

"You already know it does. Go ahead, tear me a new one," Banner muttered with a sigh.

"Before I do that, how new is she?"

Banner scrubbed a hand over his unshaven jaw. "Not even out of the womb."

Jared shook his head. "And you put her through a forced orgasm scene at a party. You should know better." Jared leaned back in his chair and sipped his coffee. "So tell me the story."

Jared was right. He'd pushed Indie too hard too fast. It was his responsibility to protect her, make her feel safe and instead he'd frightened her. He should have known better, but he'd wanted, *needed*, to make his mark on her emotionally.

"She was a replacement model for Craving for Death. The centerpiece actually and she was stunning, absolutely perfect. I knew from the moment she looked at me that she was submissive. She's a natural, Jared. The way she responds to me... I've looked

for that—for a submissive like her—for as long as I’ve been a part of the kink community.”

“So you thought throwing her into the deep end was the way to go? Brilliant thinking there, Banner.”

“No. It wasn’t like that. Well, it *was* like that, but she was insistent that we stay casual. She had this wall built around her and I needed to breach it.”

“Breach it? I’m pretty sure you knocked that fucker down. Knowing you, it was on purpose, you sly bastard. You knew she’d run. If this backfires on you, it would serve you right.”

Banner threw Jared a cold glare.

“She’s it for you, isn’t she?” Surprise wasn’t something Banner often heard in Jared’s voice, but there it was.

“I don’t know.” He raked a hand through his hair. “But I want the chance to find out.”

“So what’s the problem?”

“She needs a little time to digest everything that’s happened and then I think she’ll come around.”

“And what if she doesn’t?”

“Then I’ll just have to go get her and spank her ass until we come to an understanding.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“What is that god-awful racket?” Aimee came shuffling into the kitchen. Her short blonde hair stuck out in random places all over her head. It looked as if she’d cut it with hedge trimmers.

Indie turned her mixer off and swiped a taste of the cake batter with her finger. “Needs more cardamom. Morning, Aims. Coffee?” She reached for the French press and poured Aimee a cup. Indie really wasn’t in the mood for a heart-to-heart with her

roommate, but there was no way Aimee would let her off the hook, not after she'd just been busted making cupcakes. Cupcakes were standard breakup fare in their house.

Aimee grabbed the mug from her and added sugar and milk. "You're home early and you're baking. Sweetie, what happened?" she asked as she sat down at the scuffed and stained laminate kitchen table.

"Nothing happened. It's just over that's all. You look tired. Late night?" Indie put another dash of cardamom into the mixer bowl then flipped the switch.

"I had an appointment that ran late. Guy decided he wanted to sit for more than just the outline. Don't try to change the subject either, Indigo Hartley. I may be a zombie in the a.m. but I'm a fuckin' smart one. Those are chai spice cupcakes, aren't they?" Aimee narrowed her eyes and waved her spoon at Indie. "You only make those when it's serious."

Yeah, Indie wouldn't get out of this kitchen without spilling her guts. It seemed as if she were doing that an awful lot these days.

"Was he a dick? Did he hurt you? I'll fuckin' put my foot in his ass if he did," Aimee muttered before she took a sip of her coffee.

Indie didn't want to face the feelings that would come with telling Aimee. It was much easier to stuff it all down if she didn't talk about it. She sighed with all the weariness she felt as she shut off the mixer and leaned against the counter.

"Hon, come sit down and talk to me. You know you'll feel better after you get it out. The cupcakes can wait."

Indie grabbed the French press and her coffee mug then sat down across from Aimee. "He asked me to stay." She paused and added a teaspoon of sugar to her coffee.

"He did?" Aimee asked, her eyes soft and dreamy.

"Yes, and to tell you the truth, Banner is nothing like I thought he'd be. He's this gentle dominating force. I know it sounds weird, but I don't know how else to put it. He's not arrogant or egocentric. He's actually very thoughtful and intelligent. The



dominance and submission stuff was...so much more than I thought it would be. It was the craziest, scariest, sexiest, most amazing couple of days I've ever had." She took a sip of her coffee to shut herself up.

Aimee leaned forward. "Oh I'm gonna need juicy details."

Indie smirked. "You would say that."

"Hey, let a girl live vicariously. I can imagine he's a Brandy instead of a Banner."

"You have serious issues, you know that?"

Aimee rolled her eyes. "Pot, kettle? Get on with it already."

"Well, last night he took me to a play party, strapped me down to an exam table and gave me more orgasms than I could count. Multiples, Aimee. It was the most mind-blowing sexual experience of my life." And Indie's clit throbbed to life at the memory.

"You fucking slut! Multiples? In public?"

"Can you believe it?"

Aimee scrunched up her face. "Let me see if I get this. He's kind, thoughtful, good looking, makes a shitload of money in a field you both love, and the kinky bastard can make you come six ways to Sunday? I'm not seein' a problem here, sweetie."

"The problem is...he scares the ever-loving shit out of me and I'm mad at him. I broke down and cried like a baby after the scene at the party. I couldn't really tell you why. It just came flooding out. I never cry. Never. He just...held me. Who does that? Oh, and you know what else? He made me take off my blue dress and wash the makeup off my face in the first fifteen minutes I was there! He thinks I hide behind my modeling persona."

"Well don't you?"

"You're supposed to be on my side!"

"Honey, I am on your side. But be honest with yourself. You love the makeup, the clothes, the rockabilly style, because generally no one looks beyond that. No one sees

the country girl from Jacksonville who used to take care of her family when her mom took a mental vacation."

With a hard glare, Indie got up and went back to making cupcakes. What the hell did Aimee know anyway? She snatched the bowl from the mixer and slammed it down next to the pan she'd already greased and floured.

"Go ahead and be pissed. But this is me talking here, your best friend, roomie for the last five years. You know, miserable breakup cupcake eating champion?"

Indie snorted. "I'm sorry. It's just..." She turned back to Aimee.

"That this guy has you wrapped around his little finger because he can give you screaming orgasms and he sees you for who you really are?"

Indie huffed. "That's one way to put it."

"Like I always say, life is too short for regrets. If you have the chance to be happy, then why are you here making cupcakes?"

"I don't know." But she did know. She was afraid. She was afraid that this could be what she'd always wanted. What she'd fantasized about having. But she'd have to leave her safe little life behind to have it.

"Complete bullshit, Indie. You've taken big risks before and they paid off. You broke away from your family to come down here, go to school and live your own life. So live it. If you don't give this a chance you'll always wonder. And besides, you can't stay here with me and bake all the damn time. I'll get fat and who's gonna want a fat gay tattoo artist?"

"With that hair? I have no idea."

"Whatever, heifer, but seriously, you should call him or something."

"I can't. I'm still pissed at him." He'd had no right to make her care about him when they'd only had a three-day agreement.

"If you say so. I'm gonna go shower. I have an early sitting today," Aimee said as she got up from the table. "Save me some of those cupcakes."

## **Chapter Nine**

Indie pulled the last pan from the oven when she heard the doorbell. "One sec," she yelled.

Who in the hell was at her door at eight thirty in the morning on a Monday? She threw the deadbolt and opened the door. Her heart leapt into her throat at the sight of Banner Faust on her front porch. They stood there for a few moments and just stared at one another. The intensity in his turbulent blue eyes forced her to look down at her feet.

"Invite me in, Indie," he said in that low, rough voice she'd come to love so much.

"What if I don't want to?"

"Are we going to play this game?"

Indie raised her gaze to his and challenged him with a glare. Yeah, it was a little petty, but she was mad at him right now. Anger was easier than fear. It certainly felt better and so what if she wanted to hide behind it?

Banner gave her a wolfish grin. "If you weren't planning to invite me in, you'd have already slammed the door in my face."

Damn, he had a point. Indie gritted her teeth and held the door open. "How did you know where I lived anyway?"

"Let's just say that I got a phone call from a concerned friend."

Indie sucked a sharp breath through her teeth. Aimee, that meddling... "The kitchen is through there. Please make yourself at home. I'll be back in just a sec."

She left Banner standing there and stormed into Aimee's bedroom. "You want to explain yourself?" she asked her friend, trying to keep her voice from rising to a shriek.

"Well you did tell me that if I was worried about you I should call that number." Aimee showed her the index card Banner had given to Indie. "I was worried."

"I am so going to pay you back for this," Indie hissed as she shut Aimee's door.

"You'll thank me later!" Aimee yelled.

Sure she would, right after she put Nair in Aimee's shampoo.

Right now she needed to pull her shit together. Indie straightened her apron and smoothed out her hair before she went to find Banner. When she entered the kitchen, she stopped short. He stood, leaning against the sink, one of her wooden spoons was in his hand and he had a wicked gleam in his eyes. Now all she could think about was what it would feel like to be spanked with it. She swallowed hard.

"I think we should talk," he said as he tapped the spoon against his leg.

How the hell was she supposed to concentrate on anything he said? Anger! Yes, she was supposed to be angry with him. And she was, just maybe not as much as she had been a few minutes ago.

"You know, I still have the full day according to our agreement. You left early. Do you want to tell me why?" he asked in that quiet, stern way that made her shiver.

She bit into her bottom lip, trying to figure out what to say. Did he really want to know? A better question—did really she have the guts to tell him?

"Indie, talk to me."

"I'm mad at you. There I said it." She paced in the small space the kitchen offered, her bare feet slapping on the old linoleum. Her honesty would have to come by way of anger, but damn it, she'd tell him. "You had no right to go digging around in my head the way you did. We had a three-day arrangement. Three days. It was supposed to be fun and casual. You weren't supposed to look deeper. Or make me look deeper for that matter." Her voice grew louder with each sentence.

"Indie—"

"No, you wanted me to talk so I'm going to talk. You were right when you said that I hide. Do you want to know why? Because I don't want anyone seeing the person I used to be. When I said my mom had a hard time when my dad was on the road, it was

a big fucking understatement. She was depressed; so depressed she couldn't drag her ass out of bed to care for five kids. *I did it. I made sure we all got to school, everyone was fed and the house was livable. Me, Indigo Jane Hartley.* But you know what was almost as bad as my mom's depression? The way people would talk—that poor Hartley girl. It's a shame she'll probably end up just like her momma—married young with a passel of kids and never moving more than a few blocks from where she was born." She took a shaky breath and wiped her face with the back of her hand. It came away wet. When had she started crying? Great, Banner would think she was a complete basket case after this. She'd told him this much, she might as well tell him all of it.

"When Daddy retired, I got out as fast as I could. I moved down here, where nobody knew me and I could be whoever I wanted to be. Getting into modeling just made it easier for me to leave my old life behind. I wasn't that poor girl from the sticks anymore whose momma was a little loose in the head. I was Indigo Hartley, fetish model and aspiring chef. After a few tattoos and blue hair, no one really looked beyond that. Well, it used to be purple, that's beside the point. I'm babbling again aren't I?"

Banner grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her to him. She settled into his arms and wrapped herself around him. This was where she belonged. There was no other way to explain why he felt so safe. He felt like home. With a deep sigh she sniffed back the last of her tears.

"Thank you," he whispered as he kissed the top of her head.

She pulled back from him so she could look into his eyes. "For what? Blubbering all over you for the second time in less than twenty-four hours?"

"No, for trusting me enough to tell me that."

"Well just don't go feeling sorry for me. I couldn't take that."

"I don't feel sorry for you. I'm amazed by you." He cupped her face in his hands, forcing her to look at him. "You're a strong, capable woman who decided you wanted more than what life handed you and worked to make it happen. As my mother used to

say, it takes grit. Now if I could just get you to let go of this delusion that I told you our time together would be casual and fun. I don't recall ever saying those words to you."

"I don't understand, Banner. Then why three days? What was that all about?"

"It was about a start."

"A start?" Then it hit her like a good, stinging slap on the ass. "You planned this out from the beginning, didn't you? You just sold me a three-day package because that's all you'd thought I'd buy," she said in disbelief.

"That's a bit blunt, but essentially yes." He nodded as if luring her in and seducing her was perfectly okay.

"I can't believe you! You took away my clothes, strapped me down, gave me the best sex I've ever had, made me cry, made me care about you!" She slapped him on the arm. "For what?"

"Because I want to keep you."

He what? "You what?"

"Indie, I've looked a very long time to find someone like you. Three days is not enough. I need more...a lot more."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about you and me not just playing at Dominant and submissive," he said softly as he ran a hand through her hair.

"You're serious aren't you?" she asked, hoping yet afraid that he'd say yes.

"Very."

"I can't be like those subs that Jared trains."

"Nor would I want you to be. I don't want or have use for a slave. I can't lie and say I won't push you, because I will. I can't say it will always be about what you want, because it won't. What I *can* say is, I care about you and I can give you what you need."

"You really care about me?" She almost couldn't believe he'd said it. She needed to hear him say it again.

"Do you think I would be here if I didn't?"

"I don't know, I mean what do you want with someone like me? I'm a pain in the ass. I'm not trained. I say fuck a lot. I'll never be a size two and I have a horrible addiction to cupcakes. Do you really want all that?"

"How many times do I have to tell you that I think you're perfect, just the way you are? I think I'll add a few more swats to your punishment for making me repeat myself. *Again.*"

Her breath caught. "What?"

"Mmm, you didn't really think that I would let a thing like you leaving before our time was up go unpunished did you?" There was that wolfish grin again.

Uh-oh.

"And you slapped me. I think we can add a few for that as well," he continued as he rubbed the wooden spoon he still held along the outside of her arm.

"So, um, how many am I up to now?"

"Oh I think at least twenty."

Indie felt her eyes widen and her clit pulse.

"Clothes off. On second thought, put the apron back on after you're naked. It's kind of sexy."

"What about Aimee, Sir?" It was funny how easily that word just slipped out.

"You should have thought about that before you decided to cheat me out of my last day with my submissive."

"What? I didn't cheat—"

"Shh. Am I going to have to put vocal restrictions in place?"

She shook her head a little too vigorously. He would and she knew it. She'd rather not earn a spanking every time something flew out of her mouth. Slowly she undressed until she stood before him completely nude, then retied her apron around her waist.

"Bend over the kitchen table."

*Fallon Blake*

Oh shit. This was going to hurt.

The End



## About the Author

Fallon Blake loves to spin stories that explore the romance of dominance and submission or venture into the realms of the paranormal. When she'd not glued to her netbook writing away, you can usually find her in the kitchen whipping up something vegetarian. She loves horror movies, has a soft spot for zombies and cupcakes, and reads everything she can get her grubby hands on.

Fallon resides in Florida with her family and loves to hear from her fans.

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

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