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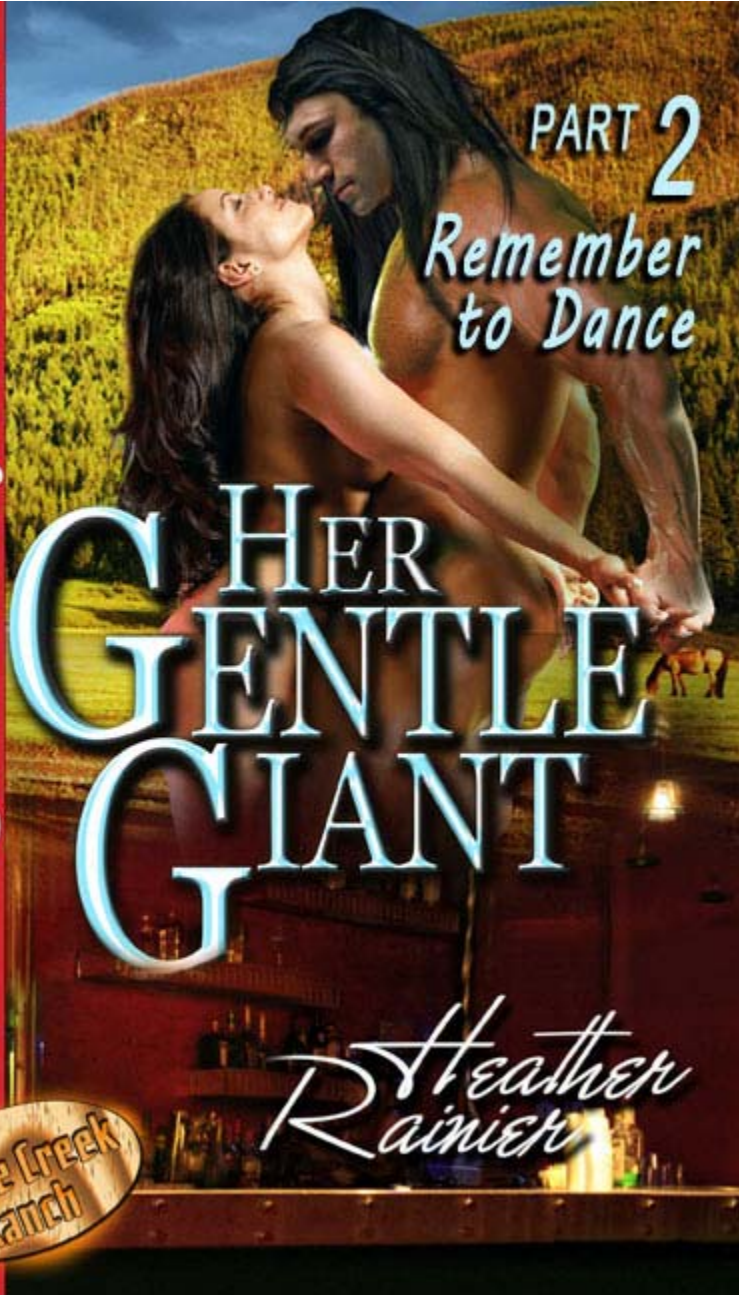
PART 2

*Remember
to Dance*

HER GENTLE GIANT

*Heather
Rainier*

*Divine Creek
Ranch*



Divine Creek Ranch 2

Her Gentle Giant, Part 2: Remember to Dance

Rachel and Eli prepare for a future together, as Grace and Kelly plan their Christmas-time wedding. Eli makes it worthwhile for Rachel to master her jealous tendencies as he shows her how much fun loving him can be.

When Rachel comes face to face with painful memories from her past she claims to have moved on, but Eli struggles with the need to avenge the wrong done to her. A shocking revelation comes to light and the men of Divine Creek Ranch take matters into their own hands to make sure justice is served.

Will it be enough to satisfy Eli? Caught up in the plans of friends and family, Rachel faces the ultimate test of a bride-to-be's faith in her prospective bridegroom. Grace and their friends surprise Rachel and Eli with a pre-wedding celebration, and Rachel must decide if her trust in Eli is absolute?

Genre: Contemporary, Western/Cowboys

Length: 99,538 words

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Part 2: Remember to Dance

Divine Creek Ranch 2

Heather Rainier

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Currington, Billy. Lyrics. "She's Got a Way With Me." *Doin' Something' Right*. Mercury Nashville. © 2005.

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Letter to Readers

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DEDICATION

For my husband, who has taught me more than he realizes about living life with no regrets.

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Thanks to incredible beautiful, graceful pole dancing specialist, Leigh Ann Orsi of Be Spun, for the inspiration she provided with her beautiful moves. I never thought to include something like pole dancing in my story line until I was doing related online research for a bachelor party scene. Wish I could move like that.

And my sincerest thanks to Diana, Alison, Caroline and all the wonderful staff of Siren Publishing, and cover artist Les Byerley who brought Eli and Rachel to vivid life.

Warning: Adults only. This is a work of erotic romantic fiction. It includes elements which some may find offensive, including scorching hot M/F love scenes with very little left to the imagination: from the first shiver, to the last contented sigh. Anal play, anal sex, light bondage, bondage play, sex toys, spanking, pole dancing and stripping, as well as love scenes involving a committed polyamorous foursome M/M/M/F separate from the main characters. This novel is not intended for young readers and was written for of-age adults, and should not be left out where young eyes might see it.

HER GENTLE GIANT

Part 2: Remember to Dance

Divine Creek Ranch 2

HEATHER RAINIER

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Chapter Twenty-nine

“Beautiful.” Rachel gazed out to the horizon, quietly admiring the sunset with the others.

Someone shifted behind her, and Rachel heard a distinct feminine sigh. Eli stood from his seat beside her and Rachel smiled at him, assuming he was getting another beer from the cooler. Looking into his eyes, Rachel could see the love and purpose in their gray depths as he got down on one knee in front of her chair.

Good Rachel and Naughty Rachel perched on her shoulders and broke out in the Hallelujah Chorus.

Rachel sat there in shock, and a small squeak escaped her lips. Her body went limp in the chair as she gazed at him. For several seconds, she stayed that way, memorizing the moment and waiting for him to speak, reveling in the gleaming emotion she saw in this gentle giant’s luminous eyes.

Close by, one of the women sobbed softly. It sounded like her mom. Eli placed his callused hands over hers, which now rested on her thighs. She smiled happily at him and stroked the undersides of his wrists with the knuckles on her fingers.

“What are you doing?” she asked quietly.

He smiled and whispered softly back, "What I've dreamed of doing for months now." He took her right hand in his, kissed her palm, and stroked it with his warm fingers. His touch sent a rippling thrill up her arm and through her body.

"When I laid eyes on you the first time, I recognized what was missing from my life. I asked you out, and you turned me down, but I understood why. I kept asking you out, and you kept turning me down. The blows to my pride were worth it if eventually you'd say yes." He kissed her palm again and pressed it to his cheek. She listened in awed silence.

"When the accident happened, I was so afraid I'd lose you. In such a short time, you'd become everything to me. Now, here you are, almost healed up from all your injuries, and I don't want to waste another minute. Will you marry me, angel?" He gently wiped the tears trickling down her cheeks with his thumbs.

Trying to frame a reply equally as romantic as his proposal, Rachel was momentarily distracted as he removed a box from his jacket pocket and opened it so she could see the ring inside. She let out a sound that was a cross between a whimper and a wail. All the women gasped when he removed it from the box and they could see, too. Suddenly, all the women were talking at once. She placed her hand in his, and he slid the engagement ring onto the ring finger of her right hand.

He brushed her knuckles with his warm lips. "You haven't said yes. Will you marry me?"

Conversations came to a halt, and all eyes turned to her.

"Of course I'll marry you, Eli!" She wrapped her arms around his neck, careful not to club him in the head with the cast on her left arm, and promptly burst into happy tears. "Yes! I'll marry you! Yes! Yes! Yes!"

Everyone laughed as he wrapped his arms gently around her back and under her knees and stood with her. He cradled her in his arms and kissed her like no one else was there, oblivious to the clapping, laughing, and chattering going on around them. He smiled happily at her and tilted his forehead to hers.

"When?" he asked softly as she rubbed her nose against his.

Not fast enough, big boy! "As soon as Kelly and Grace can help me pull it together."

"Good, because I don't want to wait any longer than we have to."

“Your sister and Grace were both betting we’d be married before Christmas. Did you know that?”

“They both made mention of that, yes,” Eli replied with dry humor.

“Kiss me again and leave the details to me, honey.” Rachel squeezed his shoulder and held up her hand to admire her ring. “My ring is perfect.”

Made from platinum, it had a round one carat stone surrounded by swirling flourishes and inset with tiny diamonds.

“Let us see! Let us see!” came the chorus of female voices as they all clamored to see the ring.

Rachel scoffed before allowing them to ogle the ring. “Oh! Like you haven’t already seen it. You all knew Eli was planning to propose tonight, didn’t you?” She didn’t see a repentant face in the bunch as she continued. “Well, girls, looks like we have a wedding to plan!”

Rachel and Eli both cringed as Kelly and Grace shrieked and jumped up and down, hugging each other.

Eli and Rachel chuckled and kissed again as the other women put their heads together and started making plans without her. Eli released her lips and murmured, “So your old boyfriend is going to be on this hog hunt next month, huh? Do I need to kick his ass?”

“Don’t you dare. Mitchell never laid a hand on me and was always a gentleman. Like I said before, if he behaved himself, he got the added bonus of going to my dad’s deer lease. He’s a nice guy and considered a family friend.” Rachel giggled and gave him a crooked little grin before adding, “But I don’t mind if the caveman wants to beat his chest a little.”

Eli grinned, and a deep chuckle rumbled in his chest. Finally, he released her and allowed her to stand up

“It’s too bad Mike and Rogelio couldn’t be here to see you propose,” she murmured, missing her two old friends. “Especially since Mike introduced us.”

“You ought to go out to The Pony and show off that rock,” Ethan said, winking at Rachel. “Show ’em he’s *officially* off the market.”

“You should all go!” Renata echoed. “You, too, Kelly. I can watch Matthew for a couple of hours for you. He’s so sweet, and it would be no trouble at all.”

Kelly looked torn, hopeful but doubtful at the same time, glancing from her dad to her brother. Because of his age, she had not left Matthew with a babysitter yet.

“Sis, I think a couple of hours of dancing and having a good time would do you good. You know Matthew will be perfectly safe with Renata—”

“Mom,” her mom said softly, correcting Eli.

“With Mom,” he said, looking gratefully at her mom, “and I think Christopher would approve of you having a little fun tonight. It’s a celebration.”

“I think the break would be good for you, honey,” Elijah said. “I’ll come along, too, and whenever you feel ready to go, I’ll bring you back to get him.”

Kelly patted her hair. “I think I will, if it’s truly no bother, Renata?”

“None at all. I would have been up late, anyway. Peter, you could go, too, if you want?”

“No, no. I’ll leave that to the young. I know my daughter is in good hands.”

Rachel smiled contentedly as her dad held out his tanned, work-roughened hand to his future son-in-law.

* * * *

Mike whistled admiringly when Rachel showed him the ring, and tears prickled in her eyes when he hugged her and told her he was proud and happy for her. The Dancing Pony was packed almost to capacity by the time their group arrived.

“Quick announcement, ladies and gentlemen,” Ethan said through a microphone in the DJ booth. “For all of you who know Rachel Lopez, you are aware she was involved in a serious car accident last month, and we want to welcome her back tonight.”

Cheers came from around the room because she *did* know almost everyone there.

“And many of you know our most recent addition at The Dancing Pony, Eli Wolf.” There were many more whistles, shouts, and even a few shrill wolf whistles. “Eli proposed to Rachel tonight, and she said yes. Sorry to all

you single ladies. He's officially off the market. A round of applause for Rachel and Eli!"

Eli put his arms around her gently, encircling her in his protective embrace, and he kissed her tenderly during the din and roar of applause and cheers.

Rogelio hugged her and congratulated Eli. She held on tight to Eli's hand, not wanting to be passed around the room away from him, but well-wishers crowded in on them. Nodding at his dad and sister, he carefully led her forward to the dance floor.

In the DJ booth, Ethan requested a special song for them. Eli took her in his arms as "I Wanna Make You Close Your Eyes" by Dierks Bentley began to play. She happily wrapped her arms around him, careful of the cast on her left arm, and rested her head against his chest. As they danced around the big dance floor, other dancers patted him on the back or congratulated her as they passed.

"How are you feeling, angel?" Eli asked, his hands sliding down her back to the swell of her hips.

"I feel terrific, Eli. So happy." She slid her be-ringed right hand over his hard biceps. Eli pointed to his dad and Adam, both taller than almost everyone else there, as their group of friends claimed a recently vacated table.

After the song ended, he led her from the dance floor and helped her into the tall cushioned chair, saying, "Rest for one song, angel. Then we'll dance again. I want you to pace yourself." There was concern for her in his eyes. She'd already had a lot of excitement, and this was her first night out since before the accident.

She knew he was right and nodded in understanding. The men closed in behind her so that she was not completely surrounded by well-wishers, of which there were many. A thick knot of friends and acquaintances soon formed around their table.

Eli stood behind her chair, his gentle hand on her arm or shoulder stroking her. Luckily, the table and chairs they sat at were tall. Otherwise, Rachel would have felt a little claustrophobic with the press of bodies. Everybody was shaking their hands and wishing them well when it occurred to her why they were flanking her so protectively. Rachel felt a lot stronger, but she didn't think she could take too many slaps on the back or hard hugs

before she'd be hurting. She glanced up at Eli and reached for him. He leaned down to her.

"Thank you."

"For what, angel?" he asked, smiling at her.

"For protecting me. I know they mean well. Thank you, Eli," she said, watching the crowd.

"Sorry Rachel," Ethan murmured from the other side. "Maybe I shouldn't have made the announcement."

She shook her head. "I don't mind at all, Ethan. It's good to see them again after so long."

Adam said, "We'll stay here right beside you until the crowd thins out, sweetheart. By then you'll probably be ready for another dance." There was laughter in his voice. He knew her well.

She did get her next dance a few minutes later and a few more after that. At one point, a friend cut in, asking to dance with Rachel, and Eli reluctantly allowed it. He stayed near the dance floor as others cut in also to watch her for signs of fatigue or a signal that she was ready for him to cut back in. She did eventually look over at him and nodded slightly for him to come to her rescue. As her current partner released her, she came into Eli's arms and hugged him close. He steered them across the dance floor to the table.

"How are you doing, angel?" he asked.

"A little tired, but mostly just thirsty. I need water or a Coke." Eli looked up for the waitress, but Ethan patted his back.

"I'll be right back with it, Eli. Sit tight, Rachel."

Looking concerned, Grace patted Rachel's hand. "Rachel, you feeling okay?"

"I feel fine, but my stamina isn't back at full strength yet. I'll probably sit the next few out. Where is Kelly?"

"She's dancing with her dad. She looks like she's having a good time. Oh, Lord. Look who just cut in on them," Grace added. Rachel looked and, to her surprise, saw Kelly dancing and chatting with Brice Huvell. Brice was looking sharp, dressed in new Wranglers and a freshly pressed white dress shirt and sporting a new black Stetson. He'd even polished his cowboy boots.

Ethan walked up behind them and placed Rachel's Coke on a napkin in front of her and said quietly, "I told him he should."

Grace turned to look her handsome husband in the eye. “You did?”

He grinned down at her and said softly, “Brice and I have been talking lately. I’ve been helping him understand how women like to be talked to. He asks lots of questions, receives what I’ve been trying to pass on to him, and uses it. Things have changed a lot for him socially since that bar fight. I didn’t want him to miss out on Miss Right because he gets nervous with small talk or overlooked basic hygiene. I told him Kelly was here with us, taking a little break from the baby grind, and that her husband is serving over in Afghanistan right now. You should have seen his little chest puff up.”

Rachel grinned up at Eli, who was smiling also, watching Kelly as she chatted with Brice on the dance floor. He was every bit the gentleman and danced two dances with her before he returned her to their table. He’d also obtained permission to dance with her again later on.

“Having fun, sis?”

“I sure am! I’m so glad you talked me into coming out for the evening. Brice was so nice and polite, and he’s a pretty good dancer, too. He said he’s a friend of yours, Ethan.”

“That he is, Kelly. That he is,” Ethan replied.

Rachel recalled the fierce look on Brice’s face the night he had defended Grace’s honor against two other men who were bigger than he. Yeah, he definitely was a good friend.

“He’s a good friend to all of us,” Jack said quietly as Grace and Adam nodded in agreement.

“Ready for another dance, angel?” Eli asked after Rachel finished her Coke. She nodded enthusiastically.

“I’d love to. But I’m pacing myself, and nobody cuts in this time, okay?”

“I have you all to myself and don’t have to *share*? I can deal with that. The caveman doesn’t like when other men cut in.”

“Was he beating his chest earlier?” she asked playfully as he squeezed her ass when he helped her down from her chair.

“He wanted to throw you over his shoulder and take you back to the cave.”

“And do what?” she murmured seductively. “Fuck me by the fire pit on his animal skins?”

He chuckled and drew her close to kiss her temple. “Holy shit, you paint a vivid mental image. I’m getting stiff thinking about it.”

“There’s only one problem with my fantasy.”

“What’s that, sexy?” He pressed her hips against his as they turned to each other on the dance floor.

She placed her hand over her mouth at his ear. “The caveman has to be very quiet as he fucks me by the firelight so that the caveman’s father doesn’t hear him in the next cave.”

He grinned and snickered. “Me caveman. Me no care!” He growled as he slid his big, warm hands down over her ass and pressed her to his tremendous erection.

“Baby,” she whispered, very impressed, “you’re so big and so *hard*!”

“And ready to slide right into you, angel.” He licked her earlobe and nuzzled the soft skin beneath her ear. “I can’t wait. But this is your first night out in a long time, and I don’t want to cut it short because I have the self-restraint of a freaking Neanderthal.”

Rachel was instantly wet picturing him dressed in animal skins, standing in the flickering firelight reflected off the walls of a cave. He looked down at her with a knowing look on his face, and she bit her lip and grinned sheepishly. “I would be your cavewoman in a heartbeat, Eli. I am *right there* with you.”

“Easy, now. I could still put you over my shoulder.”

“Your shoulder, your knee, it’s *all good*.” Rachel laughed when he groaned and rolled his eyes.

“Let Me Down Easy” by Billy Currington began to play, and Grace and Adam joined them on the dance floor, followed soon after by Ace Webster and Kathleen Stevens, who seemed lost in their own little romantic bubble.

Kelly and Elijah eventually took her leave after Kelly thanked Brice Huvell for his hospitality and thanked the others for convincing her to come along.

“Are you going to dance with Grace this evening?” Eli asked as he helped her back into her chair.

“I was wondering the same thing myself,” Ethan added, standing beside Grace’s currently empty chair.

Rachel shook her head. "I don't think it would be safe with this cast. It would feel awkward, and I might hurt someone with it. It's pretty hard." She rapped her knuckle on it.

"I could see where that might be a problem," Ethan tapped it with his knuckle as well. "When does it come off?"

"Two weeks. I can't wait." She waggled her eyebrows at Eli while Ethan watched Grace on the dance floor.

"Well, it looks like you've got lots of help lined up planning your wedding." Ethan smiled and chuckled. "Grace has been chomping at the bit for weeks, doing Internet searches and talking with Renata on the phone. She was afraid she'd give the surprise away before he could pop the question."

Rachel turned to Eli, and asked, "How long have you been planning this?"

Eli chuckled and grinned at her. "I asked your father for permission to propose when I brought you to your parents' house to recuperate."

Ethan said, "Grace has had a good feeling about the two of you for months. She loves weddings and planning events like that."

"I look forward to hearing Grace and Kelly's ideas." Rachel leaned into Eli a bit and held on to the arm he wrapped around her. There would be plenty of time for that in the coming days, but for now, she wanted to revel in the fun and joy of this moment.

A while later, Rachel and Grace were standing at the table taking a sip of their drinks and catching their breath from their latest trips to the dance floor. Eli and Jack were standing near them doing the same. The club was quite crowded by that late hour, and the mood shifted as the upbeat country rock song that had been playing gradually changed into a slow, romantic love song. It was one of Rachel's favorites because of its acoustic guitar sound and vaguely erotic lyrics. It certainly put her in the mood to dance with Eli. He'd been taking every opportunity to whisper naughty, sexy things to her as they danced until she was simmering inside.

Grace gave her a knowing grin as Rachel put her glass down and turned to Eli. Both women watched incredulously as an extraordinarily beautiful tall brunette gracefully walked up to Eli and slid her hand over his pecs and around his shoulder. Pressed from hip to breast against him, she asked him if

he'd like to dance. Rachel saw red and nearly growled out loud but Grace put her hand on Rachel's forearm.

She watched as her fiancé immediately backed away and gently extricated him from the brunette's grasp. He said a few succinct words to her, and her body language changed. She glanced over at Rachel and Grace standing three feet away, shrugged, and said what sounded like "sorry" to Eli before walking away, just as gracefully, with her dignity intact.

Feeling like she was going to get whiplash from her emotions, Rachel was actually glad Eli didn't make a bigger show of rejecting her invitation. Glancing around, Rachel saw that men all around them were eyeing the unfamiliar brunette. Rachel was willing to bet she'd have a dance partner before the song was over.

Eli turned to her and smiled and seemed relieved when she smiled back. He held out his hand, and she allowed him to lead her out onto the dance floor.

"She said she was new in town and wanted to dance."

"I didn't recognize her. If I was new in town, I'd go for the most handsome guy in the place, too."

Eli chuckled and kissed her forehead, and she pressed herself as close as she could to him. He kept her on the dance floor for another song and whispered to her about how well *he'd* make her feel at home if she were the new girl in town. He intoxicated her with his nearness and the deep timbre of his voice.

On two other occasions as the night progressed, Rachel was surprised to watch other women approach Eli and invite him to dance. One of them was another unfamiliar face, but the other woman should have known better and gave Rachel a catty look before walking away. Both times, Eli dealt with them, smoothly rejecting the offers.

There came a point when he drew her to him, standing at the table, and didn't allow her to leave his side anymore to deflect any other comers with her mere presence. In her present mood, she knew if any other women approached him tonight the cavewoman was going to be the one dealing with them.

"Angel? Are you all right? You're so quiet now."

"It's nothing, just that old jealousy rearing its ugly head."

"Feeling territorial?"

“Very.”

“How about we dance?” He smiled down at her, and for some reason, she thought her words met with his approval.

Eli guided her onto the dance floor with Grace and Ethan for a sexy slow dance when Ethan requested “Just Got Started Lovin’ You” by James Otto to be played for them. Rachel proved, cast or no cast, she could still hold her man. She earned a few dirty looks from women around the club. Rachel didn’t care in the least.

Chapter Thirty

Eli made it as far as the last long stretch of road that led to their duplex. Rachel slid her hand along his thigh as she sat beside him. Her fingers strayed farther and farther up until she was skimming the length of his cock with her fingertips on each pass. He groaned at the stimulation, and when she smiled seductively at him, he placed his hand over her much smaller one and pressed it to the large, hardening bulge.

He pulled over to the shoulder of the road, ready to tear her clothes off. “Angel, you’re playing with fire. I need you. Hard and loud. I don’t think I can be quiet for our houseguests right now.”

He gave a heartfelt groan when she wrapped her fingers around what she could of his denim-covered cock and squeezed gently. He could smell her sweetly aroused scent in the confines of the truck cab, and it was making him crazy. She was about to get fucked but good, and he hoped and prayed he would be gentle enough in his current state.

“Fuck me, then, honey.”

Eli shut off the ignition and the headlights, ripped open the driver door, slammed it behind him, and came around to her side of the truck. He jerked open the door.

Rachel turned, and he pulled her to him, kissing her until she was breathless. He unbuckled her rhinestone belt, jerked her boots off, unzipped her jeans, and pulled them and her thong right off of her, dropping everything on the floorboard. Standing in the open doorway, he grasped her thighs and pulled her to him, pressing her gently to lie back on the seat as he buried his face in her pussy. She yelped in surprise at his zeal and he growled his approval when she draped her legs over his shoulders.

Damn, but she had the sweetest tasting pussy he’d ever had the pleasure of eating. She was perfect, sweet, slightly salty, and purely decadent. The

muscles in her cunt quivered and grew taut under his tongue as she moaned and whimpered, crying out his name. Her hips thrust against him, and he felt her gentle fingers slide through his hair as her sounds became more high-pitched and urgent.

His tongue slid through the silken flesh of Rachel's pussy lips and moved up to her clitoris as she began to pant. He circled her clit with the tip of his tongue several times then zeroed in on that swollen little bud. Pressing his lips around it, he suckled as he simultaneously slid two fingertips into her hot, slick cunt and went to work on her G-spot. Her body tightened up, and she froze then screamed as she came in a warm, wet gush on his tongue and his fingers, giving him more of her sweet, creamy cum. With one hand, Eli unbuckled his belt, freed the button on his jeans, and then he lifted her hips and helped her slide back so he could climb in the truck and shut the door.

* * * *

Rachel trembled from her orgasm, sliding over as he climbed in and sat in the passenger seat then she eagerly straddled his lap. Careful not to smack him in the head with her cast, she pressed her body to his immense physique, kissing him until she couldn't breathe anymore, tasting her cum on his lips. Their combined scents filled her nostrils and felt like a siren song, pulling her as close to him as she could get. He hit the locks on the door and tilted the leather seat back so he was reclining slightly.

She moaned, unable to speak, and fumbled with his fly. He lifted up and slid his jeans down, and then he helped her into position over him while she held on to the headrest for stability. When she felt the broad, thick head of his cock at her opening, she slid down onto him in one smooth, wet stroke. Rachel panted as the tingling, jumping muscle spasms in her pussy began again almost immediately. She twisted her hips and rose up again and began a pumping motion that lasted less than a minute before they both howled as they came hard, clinging to each other.

Breathless, he stroked her back as she lay sated against him. Small aftershocks ran through her as she responded to his light touch across her back. Bathed in sweat, both of their bodies began to cool as they caught their breath.

Eli murmured, "Feel all right?"

"Mmm, yes. Perfect." She arched over him and kissed a line from his collarbone up to his jaw, squeezing his cock gently with her pussy muscles and making him groan and thrust gently into her again. "Did I give it to you good?" She chuckled softly.

"Hard and loud. Just like I asked for. I get so worked up when I'm with you, angel."

"Me, too, honey. Help me up?" He lifted her hips and pulled out gently, and she noticed he was still semi-erect. She made sure he saw her lick her lips. Eli laughed and tapped her bottom, saying, "Bad girl."

He opened the passenger door, and cool air rushed into the cab. After zipping and buttoning his jeans, he helped her put her thong back on then slip back into her jeans and her boots. He looked down the road, which appeared quiet and ordinary. "I probably could have pulled in the driveway and gotten you inside naked without anyone seeing you."

"Ooooh! But we'd never live it down if your dad or sister caught us like that, not in a million years. At least we got to be as loud as we wanted, right?"

Eli climbed in and drove the rest of the way down to the duplex. All lights were out, and it was quiet on her side. He helped her down and set her gently on her feet.

"Okay?" he asked.

"Yes, baby." She gazed up at him and wrapped her good arm around him. She pressed her cheek to his chest, feeling the ache inside her for him begin again. His big, warm arms felt so good, so solid around her, she never wanted to leave his side.

"I'll bet you'd love a nice hot shower, wouldn't you?" she asked as he put his arm around her and they went inside.

"Will you be in it with me? Nekkid?" He opened the door for her. Soft candlelight flickered off of the white walls around the living room and on the marble bar leading into the kitchen and dining room.

"Kelly must have done this for us after she got home, the little minx," Eli said, smiling at his sister's thoughtfulness.

"They go all the way back into the bathroom and bedroom. Where did she find all these candles?" Rachel said as they followed the trail which led to the bedroom. More candles were lined up on all the flat surfaces, the air

warmed by so many small flames. The comforter and top sheet were turned back on the bed and the pillows fluffed. The walls of his bedroom were bathed in a soft, flickering, golden light. “She is going to be so cool to have as a sister.”

“Yeah, she is.”

* * * *

“Good morning, angel.” Rachel loved the sound of his gravelly, rough voice first thing in the morning.

She stretched slowly, humming in delight at the feel of his fingertip as he stroked her nipple. “How long have you been awake?”

“A while. I’ve been watching you sleeping.”

“You have? Did I drool or snore?”

“No. It was like watching a beautiful angel sleep. Peaceful. You smiled in your sleep. It must have been a good dream.”

“You were probably in it. I dream about you all the time.”

“Good dreams?” he asked huskily, his hand sliding around to stroke her breast.

She caught her breath at the warm touch. “Yes, but frustrating, too.”

“Oh, *that* kind of dream?”

“Yes, frequently. I got left hanging quite a few times, and the one time I came in my dream, I woke up feeling let down. The orgasm was real enough, but you weren’t there to hold on to, you know?”

Eli stroked along her ribcage down to her hip and back with two fingertips, sending warm shivers over her skin. “While you were in the hospital, I hardly slept at all. Once I started sleeping here at home again, it was nearly impossible to fall asleep. I slept alone all those years, and it took me less than a week to get used to you pressed against me. It’s like I didn’t know I was cold until you came and warmed me. Then when you couldn’t be there, I was more aware of how cold I was.”

Sliding her right hand over his bicep, Rachel smiled at the sight of his ring on her finger. She looked up into his handsome face. “Last night really happened? It wasn’t a dream?”

Rolling her onto her back, he fit his immense body to hers with his hard cock cradled against her wet slit. “You said you’d be my wife.” He sighed

as she slowly wrapped her legs around his hips and opened herself to him. He lifted his hips and hissed softly as the head of his cock found home and slid into her quivering entrance a little.

"I did," she said in a shaky voice, "and I've never been so happy." Her eyes swam with unshed tears. Her head fell back in ecstasy as he slid more of his length into her until he filled her completely.

"You are so warm, Rachel." Eli nuzzled her temple with soft strokes of his lips. "So tight." He pulled all the way out and thrust back in, and she groaned in pleasure, tingles racing up and down her extremities. He did it repeatedly, pulling all the way out and then gently sliding back in, until they were both tortured by it.

He lifted her thighs over his forearms and began to slowly stroke her pussy over and over. Eli's chest, abs, and thighs were massive bunches of muscle rippling over her. He slid his hand to her slit and stroked her clit rhythmically with each thrust of his cock until her muscles contracted around him and her orgasm broke free. She took him with her as her pussy pulsed around his cock. Both of them moaned softly in ecstasy as he fit his hips tightly to hers, and he thrust deeply one last time then stilled, breathing deeply. In the aftermath, he held her to him and petted her until she thought she might purr.

"Your sister and father are probably wondering what's keeping us," she murmured softly and writhed as his fingertips stroked over her spine in a light, tickling touch.

"We *hope* they are wondering and that we haven't removed all doubt." He chuckled softly as he rose from the bed in all his naked Viking-Indian warrior glory.

"I thought we did admirably. Sex that freaking good can't be completely silent," she said with a little snicker as she rose from the bed. "Come on, big boy. I need sustenance if I'm to plan a wedding." Rachel watched with territorial pride as he strode naked into the bathroom to turn on the shower.

Mine, mine, mine all mine.

"I'll bet Kelly and Grace already have it planned between the two of them. They probably even have your dress picked out and a date set," he said, laughing.

Climbing into the shower with him, she said, “I’m not much for planning big events like that. I may agree to show up and be their Barbie doll just so I get to marry you when the day comes.”

They found out later that Elijah, Kelly, and Matthew had left the house early and were out visiting and running errands so their attempts at being quiet were for naught. Rachel and Eli met them at Taquería Gomez for breakfast. Kelly was ready and waiting with a notepad and wanted to know what elements were the most important to Rachel.

Rachel held up her hands. “I get final say on my dress and your dresses. You know how much I want to dance and that I want to get married as soon as the budget and the arrangements can be worked out and a date set. Have at it.”

At the word budget, the men joined the conversation, and Eli told Rachel, “Your father has been saving for your wedding for years. I didn’t want him to pay for it, but he said it was a point of fatherly pride. He said whatever you don’t spend can go toward a down payment on a house. He asked me how I’d feel if we had a daughter getting married, and I agreed with him. So the honeymoon is on me, angel.”

“Great, then all we have to do is set a date. Where are you taking me, Eli?”

“I haven’t decided yet. Is there some place you’ve always wanted to go?”

“The Grand Canyon,” she replied easily. “I’ve always wanted to go and never have.”

* * * *

The coming days were fast, productive ones for Rachel. Mr. Grogan set it up for her so that she could work from home since she wasn’t cleared to drive yet. When she wasn’t working on his books, she was working on her novel. True to her word, she left the wedding plans up to the experts. She checked in with her dad occasionally about the budget, but he said the girls were doing fine and he had no complaints.

Grace heard from Maudie about the dresses, and Kelly planned another trip down from Abilene for dress fittings. In a great leap of faith, she left Matthew for the afternoon with Eli, who promised to call if he had any

problems. Rachel's mom made the shopping trip with them to try on mother-of-the-bride dresses.

Maudie seemed confident that Grace and Kelly would love their dresses and enthusiastically unwrapped the two gowns, both in a gorgeous, silky fabric in sapphire. It looked and felt sumptuous, and all three sang Maudie's praises for her good instincts. Grace and Kelly tried the gowns on and sighed along with Rachel as they got a look at themselves in the mirror.

"Jack, Ethan, and Adam are going to flip when they see me in this dress, and it's perfect with the shoes!" Grace exclaimed. "What do you think, Rachel?" They turned so she could see them from all sides.

"Wow. Um, Maudie? Is something like that available in white?" Rachel asked, looking at Maudie's grinning countenance.

"I thought you might ask me that question, so I checked. Yes, it is, and, yes, I have one that is similar in white for you to try on. It has a beautiful crystal beaded embellishment at the waist and neckline." Grace and Kelly cheered and hopped up and down. "But I have three other gowns for you to try on as well."

Grace and Kelly were like giddy little school girls. Rachel smiled, relaxed, and watched them have fun. She'd dreaded this excursion a little, but it had turned out to be a lot less stressful than she thought it would be. Maudie was so easygoing and only let her try on things that specifically fit her requirements.

Rachel said, "Maudie, these are great, but I want to try on that white one that's similar to Grace and Kelly's."

Maudie grinned. "I saved the best for last. Let me help you, sweetie. Have a seat ladies, and prepare to be *amazed*," she said in a sing-song voice. She ushered Rachel into the big dressing room. Rachel squealed happily once the dress was on and she got a look at herself in the mirror.

"What?" Grace called out.

Kelly sounded impatient. "What?"

Grace asked, "Is it that good?"

"Get out here, Rachel!" Kelly called in a bossy tone.

Her mom sobbed melodramatically and said, "My *baby*!"

Rachel and Maudie snickered together but stayed in the dressing room, building the suspense. "You are truly lovely." Maudie's little chin wobbled a bit. "You look like a princess."

Kelly hollered. "Either you come out or we're coming in, Rachel!"

Grace laughed and said, "We're dying out here, Rachel! Kelly, stop being so bossy. She'll only make us wait longer."

"My *baby*!"

Kelly called, "The suspense is killing us!"

Rachel stepped through the dressing room door and made her way with stately elegance to the raised pedestal and smiled at them.

Kelly and Grace screamed in unison. "Aaah!"

"My *baby*!"

Then they were silent, in awe as Rachel twirled for them.

Grace smiled. "I know *just* what you need to go with that perfectly gorgeous dress."

Kelly turned to her conspiratorially, and said, "What?"

"My *baby*!"

Grace had a mischievous twinkle in her bright blue eyes. "She needs sheer white lace-edged stockings, garters, a white silk G-string, and the *wickedest* looking silk corset we can find!" They all cackled.

"Well, Grace," Maudie began, "I have basic white foundation garments here, but you know where you might want to look for great plus-size bridal lingerie? Hips and—"

"Curves.com!" Rachel and Grace cheered together.

"You've heard of it?"

"Like you read about!" Kelly snickered.

"You know what would be fun?" Grace asked Rachel and Kelly. At their questioning looks, she added, "A lingerie shower! You can *never*, ever have enough lingerie! You need things for the honeymoon, and every woman should have *everyday* lingerie, not just underwear and bras," Grace said cheerily.

"Grace, you are a hoot. Fine, plan me a lingerie shower." Rachel laughed, feeling her cheeks heat up when Maudie efficiently wrote down all her measurements and sizes for Grace on a card.

"Goody!" Grace squealed as she placed the information inside her pocketbook.

"She's like a force of nature!" Kelly laughed good-naturedly.

"She's more like her sister all the time," Rachel quipped with a smirk.

"You say the sweetest things, Rachel!" Grace laughed.

Chapter Thirty-one

Rachel found Eli on the covered back deck upon their return after dropping her mother off at home. Matthew was in his bouncy seat, chewing on his fist and listening to Uncle Eli play his guitar and sing for him. Rachel was surprised by that. She didn't know he knew how to play the guitar, or sing, for that matter. He seemed a little embarrassed to get caught at it, so she didn't ask him to play more while the others were there.

She bent down and gave him a kiss over the guitar. Speaking so the others couldn't hear and blocking their view, she gasped seductively and said, "Oh! Would you look at that? You can see right down my shirt."

He grinned handsomely and pressed his face to her cleavage for a second before kissing her there. She sure loved that smile.

"Did you have fun?" he asked as he laid his guitar aside. "Have any luck with the dresses?"

"Did we ever! Maudie is amazing! We accomplished everything we set out to do today," Grace replied as she cooed to Matthew in Kelly's arms.

"So that means you found your dresses?" he asked.

"You should have seen Rachel, Eli. She is going to be a vision!" Kelly said triumphantly. "This is going to be the best wedding *ever*," she said softly to the baby as she nuzzled him.

"I just changed him, sis. Matthew was really good for me. We even took a little nap together."

Rachel smiled at him tenderly when an image of her gentle giant napping with the tiny little baby on his chest popped into her mind.

"Thank you, Eli. You're the best." Kelly hugged him around the waist.

"No problem, sis. We did great. You all want to go eat? I have to go in at eight tonight, but I can take you to O'Reilley's for supper and still be there in plenty of time. Jack and Adam said they could meet us up there at six o'clock, Grace. Ethan's already up at the club. Sound okay?"

Grace nodded. "That sounds great."

"We have plenty of time if you want to rest for a little while," he said as he held the back door open for them so they could go inside.

He slipped into the bedroom to put the guitar away in the closet. Rachel followed him in and kissed him thoroughly.

"I didn't know you could play the guitar."

He smiled self-consciously and simply said, "Yep."

"You have a beautiful singing voice, too."

"Oh, you heard that, huh? My croaking?"

She rubbed her hands across his chest, enjoying the feel of his hard, warm muscles. "Don't say that. I think you have a beautiful singing voice."

"Thank you, angel. That means a lot. Matthew seemed to enjoy it."

Kelly came down the hallway. "Hey, if we're gonna go soon, I'd better nurse this boy. I'm about ready to explode here."

"Yeah," Eli said dryly, "thanks for sharing, sis,"

"Hey, at least I'm not flopping it out right in front of you, big bro," Kelly quipped, sticking her tongue out.

"Thank you for that mental image—"

"Burned into your brain. Yeah, I know, smartass." She laughed and carried the baby into the other bedroom.

* * * *

Eli noticed something was on Rachel's mind as he drove her and baby Matthew to the restaurant, arriving as Jack and Adam pulled up in Adam's truck. Grace and Kelly pulled in beside them.

"Eli, you know what I need to do?" Rachel asked.

"What's that, angel?"

"I'm cleared to drive after next week when my cast comes off. I need to shop for another vehicle."

"We can look tomorrow, if you want. What do you think you want this time?"

"I remember what it felt to look that deer straight in the eye the second before I hit him. I think I want a truck this time."

"I don't blame you. Are you coming up to the club later?" he asked as he parked on the other side of Adam's truck.

"That depends on Kelly and Matthew. I'd like to come up, though. I want to sit with you up at the front. I've missed doing that."

"Me, too, but I'll understand if Kelly wants to stay up late talking." He unlatched the harness on the baby's car seat and carefully lifted his infant nephew out of it. "Oh, your dad called with info on the hog hunt at the end of the month."

"Are you looking forward to going hunting?"

"Yeah, I haven't been in several years. I'm also looking forward to meeting your old boyfriend." Eli tucked the tiny baby under his chin and tickled her ribs as he put his arm around her waist. Matthew squeaked, snuggled closer, and fell back asleep.

"I wouldn't exactly call him my old boyfriend. Remember, they were all a little in awe of my dad and didn't want to piss him off. Mitchell is just an old classmate who I dated a few times."

"Well, I love hunting, and I like your dad, but I never would have been able to keep my hands off of you if I'd dated you in high school."

"Yeah, Daddy definitely would have met you at the door with his hunting knife and shotgun. You have trouble written all over you," she snickered. "But I admit I might have tried sneaking out my bedroom window to see you, if he hadn't let me date you."

Eli looked shocked. "Did you sneak out of your bedroom window to date boys?"

"Never. None of them ever motivated me enough to get the guts to try it. The one mistake I made in dating was after I was already on my own when I was nineteen."

"Your parents let you move out at nineteen?" He was surprised Peter had allowed her to move out that young.

She nodded her head, grinning. "Eighteen, actually. I worked evenings at Cheaver's Western Store during my junior and senior year, so when I graduated, I already had three thousand dollars in the bank and a steady job, plus I did ad sales for the *Divine Courier*. I went to college online and got my degree in accounting while I worked. When I wasn't working, I was studying, so I didn't have many opportunities to get into mischief."

"I'll bet your parents worried about you a lot."

"They did, but they raised me to be independent and taught me to manage my money well. Plus, I've been lucky in my friendships. Selling

ads, I felt like I knew everyone in town. I enjoyed that job, but the office environment at the paper was not to my liking. Too many catty women in each other's business. I prefer the laidback atmosphere at Grogan Home Theatre much more. Plus, I'm working in the profession I chose as their bookkeeper."

"You are something, Rachel. I'm learning all kinds of new things about you."

"Hope you're not easily bored." She laughed as they joined the others in O'Reilley's courtyard.

Dinner was a festive occasion. Jack introduced Eli to several friends who came to greet them, and Matthew got passed around the whole time until they all had a chance to hold him and play with him. Grace especially enjoyed holding the baby, and Rachel noticed Adam and Jack's soft smiles when they watched her cooing to him. Grace glowed with happiness, and Rachel wondered if they were planning on having kids any time soon. The food was excellent as always, and Grace and her men thanked Eli graciously when he picked up the tab.

Eli drove Kelly, Matthew, and Rachel back to the duplex and went on to work. Kelly and Rachel composed wording for the wedding invitations and e-mailed it to Grace for her input. At Kelly's enthusiastic urging, Rachel got herself dolled up, and Kelly drove her to the club.

"Grace and I have monopolized your time this weekend. I don't mind at all. Matthew's already had his bath, so I'll put him down when I get back to the house, and then I think I'll watch a movie."

"You sure you'll be all right by yourself?"

"I'm positive. I've meant to ask you how your novel is coming along."

"Oh! It's awesome! With all the downtime I had while I was at my parents, I accomplished a lot. When it's finished, I'll let you read it. That probably won't be for another few weeks, depending on how much time I get with it."

"Is it romantic?"

"Very, and erotic, too. You may blush a time or two or three. Heck, you may even need a cold shower."

"Ah!" Kelly laughed delightedly. "So you're writing from experience?" She laughed out loud when Rachel's mouth fell open and her face went red-hot.

“Oh, my gosh! You *did* hear us that first weekend!”

“It’s all right. You didn’t know the walls were that thin. And don’t worry. I haven’t heard you at all since then. I assumed you must have figured it out on your own.”

“Yeah, the hard way,” Rachel replied and moved on. “So...yeah, my novel is basically smut.”

“Oooh! Goody! So I get to read it when you’re done?”

“Of course. You and Grace both get an autographed copy.”

“I’ll cherish it always. Grace tells me she’s writing also. I can say I knew you before you were famous!”

“Whatever,” Rachel said skeptically.

“Hey! It could happen. Here we are. Have fun in there, and I’ll see you in the morning. Dance one or two for me.”

Chapter Thirty-two

Grace took a deep breath and began hooking the hidden closure on the side seam of the corset. She made sure the ribbons were in two neat bows at the back and tucked the ends out of the way. Bending over, she adjusted her cleavage to the best advantage, her nipples almost peeking out of the top but still visible through the sheer black lace. Peeking over her shoulder in the mirror, she sighed happily and adjusted the strings on the G-string panty. She hooked the garters to the ribbon loops at the bottom edge off the corset and attached them to the sheer black stockings she was already wearing.

With her foundation garments all on, she slipped into the brilliant sapphire-colored dress. She was happy and pleased to see the corset gave her silhouette even more definition, pushing up her breasts and enhancing her cleavage. After zipping up the back, she put on the bridal jewelry Ethan had purchased for her. The platinum and diamonds were a beautiful touch in combination with the blue of her dress.

Winding her long, wavy blonde hair into a soft twist, Grace pinned it up with her jeweled hair clip. She touched up her makeup with a little powder, freshened her eyeliner and lipstick, then slipped into the new silver strappy sandals they'd found earlier that day and paused to take another look. Perfect.

Satisfied she had achieved the desired effect, she opened the bedroom door and called down, "I'm ready! Would you like to come up, or should I make an entrance on the stairs?"

Soft masculine laughter echoed at the bottom of the stairs. "Make an entrance, baby," Adam called in his deep sexy voice.

Grace tiptoed to the landing and stepped down the stairs. The hem of the dress draped prettily behind her, exposing the silver sandals.

She heard a soft whistle when her sexily-clad feet came into view. With a seductive smile, she moved slowly, knowing the skirt of the dress was now

in view, softly revealing the curves of her thighs and her hips, which were greeted by a soft growl. *Definitely* Adam, she thought and felt a tingly shiver. A softly muttered oath could be heard as her corset-clad torso and upper body came into view until she was completely visible on the first landing, standing in the light.

Jack and Adam stood in the living room, gazing at her with intense expressions, drinking her in. Grace took a few more steps down the stairs until she reached the bottom landing. She stood at the bottom of the stairs as they both approached her. Releasing the banister, Grace stepped toward them, and turned slowly so they could see the outfit from all sides, knowing they'd enjoy the effect of the fabric softly clinging to her curves from all angles.

They each took a hand and kissed her knuckles. Jack spoke after a quick glance at Adam. "Darlin', words fail me. You are a vision," he murmured, looking her over hungrily.

"Baby, you dazzle me," Adam said softly. Neither of them said anything else, just silently looked her over, adoration shining in their eyes.

"So, you think it will do for the wedding?" Grace took their hands, drew them in, and kissed them both. She smiled as they both stroked their hands over her hips and waist.

"There's a little something extra under this dress, isn't there, baby?" Adam stated appreciatively.

"June sends her regards, Adam," Grace said with soft laughter as Adam grinned devilishly and traced one of the bones on the corset. The back of his hand grazed the side of her breast.

"Darlin'? You gonna model that for us, as well?" Jack asked softly while playfully nuzzling her throat.

"Mmm-hmm, just give me a minute to get upstairs and out of my dress." She backed away from them and removed the clip from her hair, shaking the wild blonde curls loose. With a crooked little grin, she inched back to the stairs. Jack and Adam glanced at each other.

"Grace wants to be chased, I think," Adam remarked in his sexy, deep voice and moved slowly toward her.

"I think you're right, buddy. What do you say we oblige her?" Jack made a sudden move for the stairs, where she'd paused on the bottom step. Grace screeched, gathered up her skirt, and ran up the steps, giggling loudly

as they pounded the stairs behind her. A bone-deep thrill raced through her body as they chased her, and adrenaline gave her feet wings.

She stopped suddenly at the bedroom door and faced them, one hand upraised. They paused at the landing. "Tear this dress, and Rachel and Maudie will be furious with me," she said in warning.

Her pussy swelled and ached with need. Her juices dampened the midnight-blue silk and lace of her G-string, and because she wanted it off so badly, she reminded *herself* not to tear the gown when she removed it.

She crooked her finger, and Adam followed her into the closet while Jack texted Ethan. Adam caught her from behind in the big walk-in closet. He kissed her and growled softly when he groped her ass playfully and found the garters attached to her stockings. Adam loved her in garters and stockings. He pulled the tab on the zipper for her. Turning and smiling seductively as she peeled the sleeves and bodice of the dress off, Grace slowly revealed the sheer lace and silk of her undergarments. She lowered the dress over her hips, turned, and presented him with a full view of her bare ass as she stepped from it then pivoted to face him again. Adam's reaction delighted her as he stood there ogling her. Then with a muffled curse, he backed from the closet.

"Damn! *That* good?" Jack said from the bedroom.

Adam looked over at Jack and said, "I'm never gonna get tired of the way Grace surprises us. Get a load of this." He gestured at Grace as she slowly sauntered to the closet door and leaned against it, striking what she hoped was her sexiest pose. From the looks in their eyes, she'd succeeded.

"Damn, darlin', what's the fastest way out of that?" Jack asked, smiling at her in the latest addition to her growing lingerie collection.

"Why?" she asked, feeling sassy. "You don't like it? I haven't even properly modeled it for you. Yet."

"Model it, hell. I'm more in the mood for another striptease!" Adam said with a sexy chuckle.

With a grin, Grace softly said, "That's exactly what I had in mind. I love the way you think, Adam. Go sit down, big boys, and let me show you a thing or two...or three," she murmured. She gave them her best sexy saunter as she stepped into the bedroom while they sat in overstuffed chairs by the lit fireplace.

The soft warmth from the flames caressed her thighs as she followed them to the sitting area. Grace caught a glimpse of herself in one of the standing mirrors as she passed it. The glimpse made her smile and increased her confidence even more as the men sat down and gave her their undivided attention.

Turning slowly for them, Grace looked seductively over her shoulder, smiling as she watched their warm eyes roam over her indecently clad form. She slid her hands over her hips and the tops of her thighs before sliding them back over her ass cheeks. She grinned mischievously when Adam's hands tightened into fists. The men eased back into their chairs as she approached and placed a beautifully shod foot on Jack's knee.

"Jack, honey, could you help me with my sandal please?" she asked softly.

He obliged her, and then she switched and let him remove the other, as well, while she winked at Adam. Grace unhooked the garters that connected the corset to her stockings one at a time, smiling as their eyes closely watched her slow, teasing movements.

She caressed his cheek as Jack handed her the sandals. Laying them aside, she turned to Adam and said, "Adam, would you help me with all these little hooks?"

Grace raised one arm so he could see the hooks closing the side of the corset, and rested her hand on the back of her neck. Her other hand held the front of the corset to her as it came loose quickly in his hands. She moved away momentarily to lay it aside, turned back to them, and revealed her little surprise.

She wore a silver nipple and belly chain that was made from the same silver wire and crystals as on the clit clip she'd surprised them with right before their wedding. The nipple dangles were connected by a draping silver chain. Both the men leaned forward, pleased approval in their features.

Grace came close enough for them to reach out and touch her. Jack lifted one of the dangles, grazing her nipple lightly, and smiled at her soft intake of breath. Adam grinned and reached for the silver chain that draped between her breasts. He gently hooked it with his finger and tugged down a bit then set it to swinging. She gasped and felt her pussy flood with wet warmth as his hand slid down the extender to the silver length that was secured around her waist. He must have noticed that the end hung down

until it rested inside her G-string. She whimpered as Jack's finger gently traced it down over the blue silk, finally ending against her clit. She saw him glance at Adam.

Adam stood and moved behind her. Her eyes slid closed, and she moaned softly at the sensation of his warmth. She opened her eyes, remembering she was supposed to be giving them the show. Grace smiled teasingly at Jack, still in his chair, and carefully placed a stockinged foot on the chair between his legs.

"Jack, could you help me with my stockings?"

Adam's warm, soft lips slid over her shoulder, and he kissed his way up the side of her throat. She tilted her head back and closed her eyes at the dual sensation of his warm lips combined with Jack's gentle hands as he slid the stocking over her knee and down her calf. Jack helped her switch to the other foot and removed the other one.

One of Adam's hands slid over her shoulder to her breast and tenderly stroked the weighted chain that dangled there, and she moaned again. His other hand stroked down over the extender, sliding all the way to the top edge of her now damp G-string. Engulfed in all the wonderful sensations, Grace left her eyes closed and allowed her men to take over.

Jack's hands smoothed slowly up her thighs and slid under the elastic waistband then gently drew down the scrap of silk. He leaned forward to tenderly kiss the juncture of her hip and thigh as he slipped the G-string from her legs. Adam's fingers slid down to her wet slit, where the chain dipped in, disappearing between her lips below the narrow strip of blonde curls but he did not seek entry, yet.

"Grace loves playin' hide and seek," Jack commented with a smile. He gazed up at her and caught Adam's attention and nodded.

"Good thing we love hide and seek, too, isn't it, Jack?" Adam asked conversationally as his hands slid to the backs of her thighs and he moved in closely behind her. She realized at some point he'd removed his shirt because she could now feel his hot, bare chest against her back. "Baby, why don't you put your pretty little foot on the arm of Jack's chair?"

Grace's breathing turned to panting as she did as he asked. She leaned against Adam and tentatively lifted her other foot. Adam grasped the backs of her thighs and leaned her against his naked torso as she placed that foot on the other arm, both knees bent so that she was spread, warm and wet

before Jack, open to him. She slid her hands over Adam's strong hard-muscled shoulders, turning to his kiss as she tilted her head back.

"Darlin', you're so beautiful tonight. With your pretty little pussy spread open like this. Your scent is making my mouth water. I think I'd like a taste. Wonder what I'll find." Jack smiled at her whimper and leaned forward in the chair.

"Mmm, she sounds ready, Jack. I'm anxious to see what she's got hidden. Why don't you take a taste and find out?" Adam murmured huskily.

Jack's hands slid along her inner thighs, moving slowly toward the spot she most wanted to feel their touch but hadn't yet. Her body felt like it was vibrating with the power of the arousal they inspired in her. Using his index fingers, he gently opened her outer lips, humming in pleasure at what he found there. Grace answered with a moan. Her back arched at his gentle touch, parting her inner lips a little more.

Carefully, Adam spread her thighs for Jack so that he had better access, holding her gently but securely. "Do you love that Jack can see all of you, Grace? I'll bet your little pussy is on fire to be touched right now, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes!" Her body trembled in his loving grasp. Her clit throbbed where it was trapped in the clip, and the feel of Jack's gentle, questing fingers was bringing her close to the edge.

Jack kissed a path along her inner thigh to the trembling, wet flesh that lay beyond, eager for his touch. Her back arched reflexively when he slid the tip of his tongue into her opening, before he dragged it over her inner lips, lifting the heavy bead from its little damp nest between them. The movement of the bead tugged slightly at her clit, which was even more sensitive because the silver chain had been gently rubbing over it with her movements since she'd first put it on.

"Oh! Oh, Jack! I'm...Oh!" she yelled as he licked her clit over and over with the same gentle rhythm, giving her this orgasm fast and sweet as she cried out. She slipped right over the edge for him.

"Jack! Adam! Oh, I'm coming!" she wailed as the orgasm washed over her in a rushing tide. She panted heavily, her cheeks heating as she gazed down into his ocean-blue eyes, eyes that now reminded her of the waters around Grand Cayman Island, where they'd spent their honeymoon.

"Did you like that, darlin'?"

Sighing, still catching her breath, she murmured, “You know I did, Jack. I guess you won hide and seek.” She turned her head to smile up at Adam. “I love to play with you. Want to play some more hide and seek?” She caressed Adam’s jaw as she turned back to Jack. “This time you get to hide something.”

Chapter Thirty-three

Eli stood in the foyer of The Dancing Pony, talking with Ethan, when Rachel walked in the door. Ethan saw her first and smiled, drawing Eli's attention to her. Eli looked up and sighed, drinking in the beautiful sight of her. Rachel was dressed simply in a snug long-sleeved black T-shirt and jeans and with high-heeled boots. She snuggled into his arms as he hugged her and all notions of *simple* went out the window.

Whatever the hell she had on under that top was *anything* but simple. It thrust her breasts up so her cleavage tempted him from the low-cut top and made him wish he could cup their lush, fragrant fullness in his hands right that moment. Her hair was pinned up loosely, and she was wearing large silver hoop earrings. Rachel smiled suggestively at him, evidently enjoying the appreciative once-over she was getting. Ethan greeted her with a kiss on the cheek, complimented her appearance, and excused himself. Rachel tilted her head up for a kiss from Eli. When she came up for air, she laughed because Mike and Rogelio were standing there dumbfounded.

Eli murmured, "Hey, beautiful, what do you have on under this T-shirt? Whatever it is, it feels sexy and naughty as hell."

"It's a little something I wore just for you," she replied softly in his ear before licking his earlobe with the tip of her tongue. The soft, warm touch sent shivers shooting down his spine straight to his cock. "I'll show you later."

"I can't fucking wait." He brushed his instant erection against her abdomen as he pressed her to him.

"Me, either." She smiled up at him seductively and then looked over at Mike and Rogelio, who couldn't hear them over the music.

"Okay, *hot girl*, who are you? And what have you done with my young, innocent friend Rachel?" Mike asked, hands on his hips. Behind him,

Rogelio rolled his eyes. Where Rachel was concerned, Mike tended to be a cross between an old spinster aunt and an obnoxious pit-bull...with tattoos.

Rogelio tapped him on the back of the head and spoke up for him. "I think Mike is trying to say you look beautiful tonight, Rachel. How is your arm doing?"

She patted her T-shirt-covered cast and said, "Oh, it's fine, Rogelio. My cast comes off next Wednesday afternoon. How are things tonight?"

"Not too bad," Rogelio replied. "I think Eli is due for a break if you'd like to go dance together."

"Thank you, Rogelio. I'd love to, if you don't mind." Linking her arm in Eli's, Rachel said, "By the way, how is Christina doing?"

"Oh, she's as sweet as ever."

"You ask her to marry you yet?"

He laughed. "You know I want to get my house built first. I want to be able to give her something besides a little travel trailer to live in. I'll be ready to start building next spring. I heard you set a date." The Lopez's pastor had called Eli while the girls were out shopping that afternoon and confirmed the date with him.

"Yes! The fifteenth of December. Make sure and tell Christina I want her to come, too. Tell her it would make me happy if she was there," she said as she squeezed Eli's hand.

"Will do. Now you go dance." Rogelio grinned, patted her hand, and winked at Eli.

Rachel kissed Rogelio's cheek and made him blush. Eli drew her to him and led her to the dance floor. The club was busy, the music thumping loudly, and the dance floor was full as he pulled her to him.

"Who's that man Ethan is with?" Rachel asked, gesturing over to the table by the dance floor where Ethan and a friend sat talking. "He looks familiar, like he's been in here before, but I can't place him."

"He's a friend of Ethan's from Morehead. It's been a while since he's been in."

The man glanced up from his conversation and caught Eli's eye. She quickly turned to Eli, snuggling to his chest as they danced together.

"Interesting guy, huh?" Eli looked down at her, stroking his fingers along her spine, feeling what was underneath the soft T-shirt. He grinned when he felt her soft, trembling shudder as she reacted to his touch.

"I suppose. Not as interesting as you, though, Eli."

He growled softly. "I'm glad to hear it. He keeps looking at you."

* * * *

"Then turn me so he can't see me," she said, clinging to Eli.

For some reason, she felt mildly intimidated by the man. He wasn't nearly as big as Eli, or as strong looking, but something about him made her feel vulnerable. Not weak as much as exposed. As if he could hear her thoughts. The man was dressed informally in jeans, T-shirt, and boots but had a distinguished air about him. Formidable and mysterious but also elegant despite his casual dress. His jet-black hair was short, but not too short, and slicked back, revealing a strong regal profile.

"He seems to have an interesting effect on women, at least some. Kerry, his waitress, is usually bubbly and talkative, kidding around with everybody, having a good time while she works. She gets quiet like that when she waits on him. Not like she's scared of him or anything, more like she's showing him deference. She doesn't look him in the eye unless he speaks and looks directly at her, and she fills his orders fast."

"Do you think she knows him outside of the club?"

"Probably. He asked if she was working tonight. She reacted the moment she saw him and went right to him without being asked to serve him. I'd be willing to bet they know each other well."

"He's talking to her."

"Yeah, watch her face," Eli whispered.

Rachel watched as Kerry returned with a drink for him, and the man spoke in a soft voice that Kerry had to draw near to hear. Her demeanor was almost reverent. As she carefully held her tray, her posture was alert, not servile at all, and her face seemed to glow with quiet contentment.

"Look."

Though unusual for someone like Kerry who was bubbly by nature, her attitude was not put on at all. She replaced his napkin with a fresh one and placed his mixed drink on it. He passed her a folded bill, and she thanked him respectfully. Her face had a serene quality to it.

“I’ll bet you that was a one hundred dollar tip,” Eli said. “I heard one of the waitresses say he always tips well if they give good service. But he seems to prefer for her to wait on him.”

“My goodness. What does he do for a living?”

“Ethan told me he owns a club in Morehead.”

“Oh, a nightclub, like this one?”

“Um, no. He caters to an exclusive clientele. You have to be a member or be invited by a member.”

“Like a country club?” she asked, feeling like she was missing something.

“He is a Dom, angel,” Eli said softly. “His club caters to the BDSM community in this part of Texas. But his club is exclusive. All members are carefully screened.”

“Oh!” Rachel felt like a dimwit. She recalled Grace telling her Ethan had a friend who was a Dom. This must be him.

Rachel decided to not say anything. Grace had mentioned that was a private part of her relationship with Ethan only. Rachel wondered to herself how Grace would react if she were introduced to him. She glanced over at him once more and found him watching her again.

This was different from the time when Ace Webster had watched her on the dance floor with avid interest. He’d made no secret that he was interested in getting closer acquainted. This man seemed to merely observe, almost as if he were assessing her. She found it interesting that Eli was not throwing territorial vibes like he had with Ace. She wondered why and exactly how well acquainted with this stranger he was.

He never approached them, and Eli made no move to introduce her to him, but the man did nod to Eli at one point. Interesting. Ethan and he talked for at least an hour. During that time, when she could do it without being obvious, Rachel observed Kerry as she continued to wait on the intriguing customer. She wondered how Kerry knew him outside the club. Her behavior was out of the ordinary for her bubbly personality, but by no means strange, and she made no production of the way she served him. Rachel might never have noticed the subtle difference if Eli had not pointed it out.

Her mind began to wander, imagining the kinds of things that happened behind the guarded doors of this stranger’s exclusive club. Thoughts of

whips, chains, and ball gags did nothing for her, but she did ponder what it would be like to be tied up and spanked and then fucked to a screaming orgasm while strangers observed. The thought produced a startlingly palpable reaction as her nipples hardened and a warm ache began deep in her pussy. Need coursed through her, and her clit pulsed at the vivid fantasies floating through her mind.

Rachel imagined Eli, chest bare and glistening with sweat, restraining her aching body and teasing her, requiring her to withhold her orgasm until he commanded it. She might have been sexually inexperienced prior to knowing Eli, but that didn't mean she hadn't read about this subject in her erotic romance collection, before it had been reduced to ash, that is. She had a basic, if possibly patchy and glamorized, knowledge of that lifestyle.

The thought of serving Eli submissively, in a setting like that, with observers, affected her much more strongly than she might have thought it would.

Observers? Really?

She recalled their late-night detour the night of his proposal and how exciting sex on a deserted—but very public—street had been. In conversation, she'd confessed a willingness to be tied up, spanked and fucked. The incredible erotic spanking he'd given her came to mind, and her pussy clenched a little and she was unable to stop the gasp that escaped her lips. Eli looked down at her from his seat next to her.

"Everything all right, angel?" He smiled at her softly, and she knew he had to see her deep blush as it spread down her throat to her chest.

He didn't say anything else after she nodded breathlessly at him and felt more moisture gather at her entrance as the fantasies continued to dance in her mind. If she hadn't let that little gasp out, she might have come right there in her seat, thinking about him doing it to her again. Gosh, talk about being suggestible.

"You're flushed. Are you feeling okay?" When she nodded mutely and looked into his eyes, he smiled and leaned down to her. There was a compassionate, knowing gleam in his eyes. "I'll bet I can guess what you're thinking about."

The heat in her cheeks increased, and she leaned into him a little. "I'm that easy to read?"

“No, angel. I looked in your beautiful blue eyes, saw the need there, and I put two and two together. You’ve been uncharacteristically quiet since I mentioned the customer at Ethan’s table to you. You and I both enjoyed the hell out of the hot spanking I gave you last month, and we’ve talked about other fun activities we’d like to try. You’ve been watching Kerry off and on all night, and I think her behavior is becoming more and more intriguing to you. It turns you on, doesn’t it?”

“Your instincts are pretty good, Eli. You nailed it right on the head. Do you know him personally?”

“Ethan introduced me to him tonight when he arrived. Since I’d asked Ethan for some advice about spanking and other stuff, he thought I might like to meet him. I talked to him for a little while before you came in. His name is Joseph Hazelle.”

“You had already met him? That’s why you weren’t throwing alpha male caveman vibes in his direction like you did with Ace?” she said, smirking at him.

“Something like that. I wondered if you were interested in learning more about...”

“Dominant/submissive relationships?”

“Yes, angel, and I thought I’d share a little information with you and let you determine if this was something you wanted to pursue later.”

“Later?”

“Yes, I mentioned your accident. He suggested waiting a few months and using this time to explore reliable sources of information and determine what it is about that lifestyle that is striking a chord with you. He gave me his website address. I’m willing to look into it together, with one understanding.”

“What’s that, Eli?”

“I won’t share you, nor do I care to be shared. Beyond that, I’m willing to explore and am more or less a blank slate. There might be something there that we like, or we may find that the occasional spanking is all we’re interested in. Either way, I wanted you to know you have the freedom to explore it with me if you want.”

“Will you be disappointed if that’s all I want? Or if it’s all that I can handle?”

“No, not if I still have your love.”

“You’re all I want, all I need.” She reached to hug his neck as he wrapped his arms around her. He stroked her torso through the shirt again. “I can’t wait to see what you have on under this. My curiosity is getting to me in a big way.”

“Just a little something I threw on.” She giggled. “I promise to show you as soon as we’re alone.”

Not a single female customer had approached Eli with more than the occasional friendly greeting all evening, and she decided to test the waters to see if there were any sharks lurking, waiting for an opportunity. Ethan had made it official the weekend before by announcing their engagement to the entire club from the DJ’s booth. She decided she also needed a few minutes alone to process all this other information.

“Eli, I’m going to visit the ladies’ room. I’ll be back in a few minutes.” She reached for her purse.

“Would you like me to walk you?” Normally, she’d say no, but there was a particularly rowdy group of men at a table near the doorway that led to the ladies’ room. She thought an escort wasn’t a bad idea.

“If you wouldn’t mind. But you don’t have to wait for me. I know you’re working.”

“I understand if you need a break. Take your time, and I’ll keep an eye out for you,” he said as she slipped her hand into his and followed him through the crowd.

As they passed near the tables at the edge of the dance floor, Mr. Hazelle and Ethan looked up and smiled at them. Rachel smiled back as Eli escorted her past them to the restrooms. The ladies’ room was empty, and she took a seat in the chair in the corner.

Was this something she wanted to pursue? She shook her head and asked herself the most fundamental question. What was her core telling her to do? In her heart, she acknowledged there was a natural dominant and submissive component in her relationship with Eli. It warred with her need to be independent, which stemmed from her desire to please her parents, especially her father. Rachel was undeniably curious, and she’d never know if she didn’t look into it.

She acknowledged the pleasure it gave her to turn control over to Eli, both in their relationship and in bed. She loved it when he took charge. She remembered making love sitting in his lap while they both watched in the

mirror. He'd told her she belonged to him, and she'd gloried in that moment. She'd felt completely his, without reservation or question. It had nothing to do with him being in control of her but had everything to do with her exchanging that control for his protective, loving, and sometimes territorial care of her. Even the territorial part of him gave her great pleasure when he showed that side of his nature. The caveman, he called him. Rachel really *did* love that guy.

She did not have the in-depth knowledge needed to make an informed choice, but something resonated inside her at the thought of learning more. She was grateful for the open timeframe Eli had given her as she continued her recovery but secretly hoped maybe the opportunity to *play* again would come soon. First thing she needed to do was get released by her doctor, get the damned cast off her arm, and build the strength back up in it. Rachel plucked at her curls, fixed her lip liner and lipstick, then washed her hands and exited the ladies' room.

Rachel stepped from the bathroom and immediately heard a commotion outside the hallway. She stepped to the opening leading back out to the club, trying to determine the best path around whatever was going on. She stepped out and saw a fight in the process of being broken up. Rather than being caught up in the flux of people moving forward to watch and people moving back trying to get out of the way, she stepped back near the door and waited for the crowd to disperse.

She watched as Eli frog-walked a large, angry roughneck toward the dimly lit hallway where she stood. Not only did it lead to the restrooms but also to the back offices, a storeroom, kitchen, and the rear emergency exit, which they were evidently about to make use of. Eli's large hands grasped the drunken man by his shirt collar and the belt in his blue jeans, and the guy did not look happy about it. He struggled, and Eli's muscular arms and shoulders bunched and rippled as he maintained his hold easily. Entranced, she watched as Eli and his unfortunate cargo were followed by Mike and Rogelio with similarly cursing, drunken, sweaty, pissed-off friends in tow. A big, strong arm surrounded her waist and gently extricated her from the opening to the hallway as the troublemaker began to fight free from Eli.

Looking up, Rachel realized it was Ethan trying to remove her from the drunken fool's path before he trampled her. Eli muttered a soft curse and moved to obtain a stronger hold on the guy as his fists started swinging.

Three things happened all at once. Eli's attention was briefly diverted as he saw her in their path. The guy lost his balance and pitched forward, arms and fists flailing. Eli reached for him and caught him again, but not before the man's arms swung out in a wide arc, and one of his balled up, meaty fists barely missed striking Rachel in the face. If Ethan hadn't been there to pull her out of the way, she'd have been on the floor. Except for the loud music, which continued thumping, all movement and sound ceased in the immediate vicinity of the doorway.

"Are you all right, angel?" Eli asked quickly, gaining a viciously hard grasp of the drunk by the shirt collar and his long hair. By this point, he'd given up fighting to break free of Eli but continued to curse incoherently, unaware he'd nearly struck a woman in the face with his flailing fists.

Rachel nodded and found her voice. "I'm all right, Eli."

Eli looked closely at her as if assessing her for injuries. He looked up at Ethan, who stood behind her and, after a moment, nodded. She had not looked back at Ethan, so she didn't know what communication had passed between them.

"Come on, Rachel. Eli will be back in a few minutes. I want you to sit with us until he does. Are you sure you're okay?" Ethan asked as he escorted her away from the men but not before she heard a meaty thud and a groan.

"I'm a little shaky, but otherwise I'm fine. Wow, that was close, I think."

"I saw it happen. You have no idea how close you came to getting clocked by that dumbass drunk's fist. It's a good thing I saw you standing in the doorway and pulled you out. Otherwise, we might still be picking you up."

"Thank you, Ethan, for looking out for me," she said as he led her to his table.

"You're welcome, sweetheart. I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine. This is Joseph Hazelle. Joseph, this is a close friend of ours, Rachel Lopez. Rachel is newly engaged to Eli Wolf, whom you met earlier."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Rachel. I'm sorry that unpleasantness precipitated our meeting but glad to meet you all the same," Joseph said as he shook her hand. His hands were firm and strong. Not as rough as Eli's but not soft by any means, either.

“The feeling is mutual, Mr. Hazelle, believe me. It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance.” Rachel attributed her bravado to the adrenaline rush and nerves because she was now completely at ease speaking with Mr. Hazelle, where before she had felt only intimidated by him. She smiled and thanked Ethan when he quickly returned with a Coke from the bar for her. She sat in the chair Ethan offered her and sipped her drink, gazing over to the hallway Eli had disappeared down a few moments before.

“Eli will be back in a minute, I’m sure. It was bad enough that bozo started a fight and needed to be removed, but he nearly injured you on top of that. I’m sure Eli is having a talk with him about that right now.”

“A talk?” She grinned. “Kind of like that talk you all had with Jim and Roy? Your fists and their faces?”

Ethan nodded seriously and replied, “If it had been Grace standing there, I know what I’d be doing right now. I imagine he’s doing the same. That guy came in here looking for trouble, picked a fight and he’s earned whatever he’s getting.”

Joseph nodded in agreement.

“What caused the fight in the first place?”

“What’s behind most of the fights that happen here?” Ethan asked, discreetly gesturing at a rather dejected looking woman as she gathered her coat and purse and was led from the club by a tall, handsome cowboy.

“A woman?”

“There are few other things worth fighting over,” Joseph said quietly. Rachel wasn’t quite sure what to make of his statement.

Speaking to Joseph, Ethan said, “Grace and Rachel are close friends. They’ve been busy planning Rachel’s wedding, which is next month.”

“That’s good. Eli sounds like a happy man,” Joseph replied.

They conversed for a few minutes, and during that time, neither Joseph nor Ethan mentioned Joseph’s line of work, and Rachel didn’t, either.

“I got a text from Jack earlier that Grace tried on her dress and modeled it for him and Adam,” Ethan said with a grin. “From the sound of things, you all must have had a good time this afternoon.”

Rachel laughed. “We did. Your wife loves to shop.”

Eli and the others returned from the hallway, looking cool and unruffled. At least that’s how it appeared until she saw the feral gleam in Eli’s eyes. Before she could rise from her chair, he was beside her.

“Are you all right?” His eyes were fierce as he gently checked every inch of her face, making sure for himself.

“Yes. Ethan got me out of the way in time. Let me see your hands.” She turned them palm down so she could see his knuckles, which were red and a bit swollen. “Thank you, Eli. Sorry my reflexes weren’t better. Then I wouldn’t have been anywhere near him. I was a little awestruck, watching you.”

He enveloped her in his arms and kissed the top of her head. “Were ya?”

She nodded. “You’re very powerful. Very good at your job. Scary good.” She snuggled up to him. Mike and Rogelio had already returned to the front.

“Did I scare you?”

She leaned into him and whispered softly, “You turn me on when you’re like that.”

He grinned knowingly but tried to control his expression.

Turning to his boss, who was already caught up in conversation with Joseph again, he said, “Unless you need anything else, Ethan, we’ll head back up to the front.”

“Will one of you check the parking lot? I want to make sure Heather and Sam were able to leave without being harassed. Jeremy was here with several guys, not just the two who got kicked out with him.”

“Sure thing. Thanks for watching out for Rachel for me.”

“It was our pleasure. I’m just glad she didn’t get hurt.” Ethan hugged Rachel back as she reached for him. “We’ve got to watch out for our girls, right?”

“You do a fine job, too,” Rachel replied as Eli tucked her against him and they started to make their way back to the front. She turned back for a moment, “It was nice to meet you, Joseph.”

“Likewise, Rachel. Likewise,” Joseph said with a smile and a nod.

* * * *

Rachel watched with enjoyment as Eli lifted baby Matthew into his embrace for one last kiss on the cheek. Matthew squealed and grinned, showing his toothless gums. “Later, little buddy. Be good for Mommy.” He nuzzled the thick black hair on top of Matthew’s head and kissed his crown.

The way Eli was with Matthew made Rachel yearn to have kids with him. She wanted a few years to play with Eli, like she'd said before, but she looked forward to watching him with his own children. He was confident as he handled the baby and so openly affectionate. He was not the kind of man to maintain a tough guy image. On the contrary, he acted like a clown and talked baby talk with Matthew, which Kelly hated. She'd gotten on him several times about it.

The last time had been the evening before while she'd been packing.

"If you don't stop that, he's going to develop improper speech habits," Kelly had fussed at him.

"He's two and a half months old," Eli had said, defending himself.

"Yes, but if you're in the habit of baby talking with him, you'll still be doing it when he's a year old. When his kindergarten teacher contacts me and wants to talk about speech therapy, I'm going to call *you* first." She'd poked him with a little manicured index finger. Rachel thought watching the little pixie fuss at her big brother had been like watching a tiny kitten taunt a big, lovable mastiff.

"Come on, it's not that big a deal—"

"Stop it. Or I bring Rachel your baby pictures, including the nekkid ones the next time I come visit." She'd put her hands on her hips, and an evil grin had spread on her face. Rachel had a feeling Kelly was going to bring them *anyway*.

Eli looked genuinely horrified, quickly changed his tune, and had started backtracking. "*Never mind*. I won't do it anymore."

"What a minute, there are nekkid baby pictures of Eli?" Rachel had asked with a snicker. Her imagination had gone wild, trying to picture this big, formidable, sexy man as a little baby or toddler.

"It'll never happen again!" Eli had yelled in mock horror. "I promise!" He'd thrown his hands up in surrender.

"I may carry them with me for insurance. Especially the one with the water hose," Kelly said then had laughed with an unladylike snort. "Rachel, you'd be amazed by how big those old-fashioned diapers would swell up with water before they finally *exploded*," she'd hinted with an evil gleam in her eyes.

"Sis, don't you dare!"

Wow, Rachel had thought, it must have been a really embarrassing picture.

Rachel had consoled Eli. "Oh, come on, Eli. Mom showed you mine, and you'll recall there were several nekkid baby pictures." She'd rubbed his chest and winked at Kelly. She had every intention of seeing *all* his baby pictures.

"Yeah, but you were a pretty little baby girl. And your mom promised no other boyfriends ever saw those pictures," Eli had reminded her.

Kelly had snorted. "Eli, you were as cute as you could be with that water hose stuck in your diaper. You looked like you were *really* enjoying it."

He'd glowered at his little sister. "It was hot! Come on."

"Aw! You thought I was a pretty little baby girl?" Rachel had cooed, pretending to disregard their argument.

Grinning at her, Eli had ignored Kelly like a bothersome gnat. "Angel, you were gorgeous! With your pretty *widdle bwoo* eyes and your cute *widdle* dimpled *heinie*," he'd replied as he nuzzled her neck then he'd whispered softly, "Luscious."

In disgust, Kelly had said, "Oh, you two make me wanna *gag*!"

"It's got more dimples now!" Rachel had giggled as he'd palmed her ass.

She'd hoped Kelly couldn't hear his reply. "I'd like to nibble your luscious ass right now."

She'd whispered back, "You only want to nibble it?"

The devilish look in Eli's eyes had led her to believe what other things he'd like to do to her ass.

Kelly had made a gagging sound and gestured like she was sticking her fingers down her throat before she'd turned to Matthew in his bouncy seat. "Don't worry, sweetheart. Mommy won't let Uncle Eli teach you any bad habits." Matthew had passed gas and blown a spit bubble. She'd frowned and said, "Too late."

All three of them burst out laughing at Matthew's well-timed humor.

"Remember, I have those pictures, *you*," she said, jabbing her finger at him in mock-threat, and then she winked at Rachel.

Yep, she's still bringing the pictures.

Kelly hugged them both hard and got on the road, anxious to get the three-hour drive over with.

At the Toyota dealership in Morehead, Rachel found a jet-black four-door Tundra that she fell in love with. It had leather seats, dark tinted windows, and a decent stereo. She negotiated with the salesman and got a great deal. Rachel wasn't jazzed about taking on a new car payment, but she'd had great luck with her last Toyota and knew this vehicle would be around for a while. Plus, it had four doors, so it would be great for when they had kids and car seats to deal with.

They decided before they got out of Eli's vehicle that if she found a truck she loved, she'd negotiate the best deal she could and then tell the salesman she wanted to take two days to cool off and make sure it was the right choice. The salesman didn't greet this announcement with enthusiasm, as predicted, and threw in an upgraded MP3 compatible stereo, premium floor mats, heavy-duty bed liner, and a maintenance package if they did the paperwork today.

"I don't care about those things. We'll upgrade the sound system with a stereo of my choosing, not whatever you have in inventory. The floor mats that are in it will last forever. I don't need ones that have the company logo on them, which is the only real difference. The heavy-duty bed liner is fine, but the maintenance package is really nothing but oil changes, which I can do myself," she said with a bit of a scoff. She smiled at the salesman, who was anxious that they not leave without a truck, and said, "Knock another fifteen hundred off the price you've already quoted to us and we'll sit down and fill out the paperwork right now."

The salesman excused himself to speak with his "supervisor," who Rachel knew was just another salesman in a different office. As they walked around the car, Eli surreptitiously caressed Rachel's ass. "You drive a *hard* bargain, Miss Lopez."

"I'm good at negotiating, Mr. Wolf. There's nothing I love more than *driving* a *hard* bargain," she said seductively.

Eli groaned softly and leaned over to her as she climbed in the driver's seat. She glanced at the salesman through the glass window in his office.

"What if he offers a thousand off?"

"I'll ask for twelve hundred and settle for eleven hundred if he makes the offer and doesn't waste any more of our time. It'll be supertime by the

time we get back to Divine, and I'll be hungry. Heaven forbid I should get cranky," she said.

The negotiations went as predicted. Eleven hundred *with* the stereo upgrade and bed liner. Rachel smiled when the salesman offered to deliver the vehicle since she was not cleared to drive yet. They were home with plenty of time to go by the store, get shrimp to put on the grill, and a buy bottle of wine to celebrate.

Crankiness averted.

Chapter Thirty-four

The following weekend, Eli's suspicions were realized when he drove Rachel to Grace's house and found Kelly there already. She made no secret of the big box on the dining room table, which he knew contained baby pictures. His mom and dad had taken lots of baby pictures. Lots and lots.

Hell, if it made Rachel happy, Kelly could show them every single one, even the really embarrassing ones. Renata and Grace's friend, and former co-worker, Teresa was also there. Eli pulled Rachel into the kitchen so he could talk with her in private.

He slipped his big hands over her hips and groaned softly as she pressed her soft breasts against his chest. "I slipped a little something for you in your makeup case and in your luggage."

"You did? A surprise for me? Will I like it?"

"I already know you like it," he hinted then grinned at her curious expression.

"I know you'll probably stay up late, but text me after you find them tonight."

"I have to wait?"

"Until bedtime. Text me when you go to bed."

"What if it's super late?"

"Angel, I only sleep well with you. I'll probably still be awake. Text me, and I'll call you back. Where are you sleeping?" Eli asked, looking around.

"I'm in Ethan's bedroom."

"Good, any roommates?"

"No. Everyone got their own room. We'll probably be down here in the living room most of the evening."

"Good, so when you go to bed you'll have some privacy."

"I should, yeah. Eli, are we going to have *phone sex*?" Rachel whispered, blushing a pretty rose color.

"You'll see," he said mischievously.

Everyone was talking in the living room and going in and out of the front door, loading up.

Ethan came in the kitchen. "Hey, Eli, can you help me for a second?"

Eli nodded then smiled down at her. "Be right back, angel. I'm not leaving until I get my good-bye kiss." He left her with Grace as she came in the kitchen.

Eli followed Ethan up the stairs to Grace's opulent master bedroom suite. Jack and Adam were downstairs helping load the two SUVs they were taking with them. Eli could tell how much Grace's men cared about her and how much they enjoyed spoiling her as he looked around at the beautifully furnished and decorated room.

"While they're all occupied, I wanted to show you something we did for Grace as a wedding present. Grace's sister arranged for these to be done. I thought I'd suggest you doing something similar that fits your relationship and your personality, for Rachel. Grace was floored when she saw these the first time. She really loves them. She told me if the house ever catches fire, she's grabbing us, these three portraits, and her laptop before she heads out the door." Ethan led him to each one and showed him the three outdoor portraits they had made for Grace as a wedding gift.

"Charity arranged this?"

"Yeah, she was a pivotal force in our relationship with Grace," Ethan said cryptically.

"I'll have to call her. These are awesome, man. I'll bet Grace loves them," Eli said. Looking around, he added, "Your house is nice."

"That's Grace. We did some major remodeling, but Grace has a touch that makes everything around her better," Ethan said then slowed on the stairs and turned to him. "It was just a house and then she came."

"I know what you mean, Ethan," Eli said, nodding. "Where would we be?"

"Cold and lonely, man. Cold and lonely," Ethan replied knowingly. "Thought I would share those with you. Food for thought. It would make a nice surprise for her."

"I'll call Charity. It's a great idea, and I know Rachel would love it."

“Charity would probably help you get it arranged since you’ve known each other a while. She’s a hoot.”

They returned to the hubbub downstairs. A few minutes later, all the men loaded up into Peter and Ethan’s SUVs and left the girls to their fun.

* * * *

Rachel went out with the girls to Rudy’s for supper. Rudy seated them at a large secluded booth in the corner and hand delivered complimentary appetizers to their table. He turned their service over to his best and most well-mannered waiter.

They nibbled on shrimp cocktail while they talked and looked over their menus. Remembering a few of the details Grace had shared with her about enjoying shrimp cocktail with Jack, Ethan, and Adam at Tessa’s, Rachel leaned over to Grace and asked, “How’s that *shrimp cocktail*?”

Grace laughed and nearly choked on her shrimp. “It’s good, but I know a place where I get more *personalized* service,” Grace said and jabbed Rachel in the ribs.

Grace had told her once that on their first date, Jack had held her in his lap while they fed her shrimp cocktail, and one thing had led to another right there in the private dining booth. Rachel hoped she got to visit one of those privacy booths at Tessa’s someday. Rachel remembered Teresa was with them and she should probably keep the risqué references to a minimum. Teresa was shy and needed time to come out of her shell a bit before they brought out the bawdy humor.

“How are things at Stigall’s, Teresa?” her mom asked politely. “Has business picked up much for the holidays?”

“It’s fairly slow right now, which is why I was able to get this weekend off, but after Thanksgiving we’ll be very busy.”

The waiter returned and listed the evening’s specials for them and took their orders then returned to refill their drinks.

Grace said, “Remember, Teresa, if you ever need to leave Michael with me at the house, you can,” Grace said.

They’d talked Erin, Ethan’s sister, into babysitting for them tonight. Erin would’ve liked to have gone out with them but was trying to pay her way through school and needed the cash, so had stayed home to babysit

Michael and Matthew. Michael was two and a half years old, while Matthew was two and a half months old. Having a babysitter would make it possible for them all to go shopping the next day because the moms could be completely unencumbered.

“Thank you, Grace,” Teresa said, then added with a blush, “Angel also told me he could help out with Michael in the evenings if I needed him.”

“What a great guy,” Grace said, and Rachel noted the high color in Teresa’s cheeks.

Rachel changed the subject, knowing that Teresa hated being the center of attention. They gabbed for two hours and lingered over their meal, enjoying the excellent food and service. Rudy served complimentary desserts to them himself.

After they got home, Kelly opened the box of pictures while Rachel’s mom assembled the ingredients for homemade sangria, and Teresa helped her make it. Grace crooked her finger at Rachel silently and drew her down the hall.

“I had Erin put the babies in the office so I could show you something tonight without disturbing them.” She paused outside of a bedroom door. “This is Ethan’s bedroom, where you’ll be sleeping.” She motioned Rachel in and turned on the light so that Rachel could see. On the wall hung a large, tasteful, but undeniably sexy portrait of Grace dressed in a low-cut black top and high-cut black ruffled panties. The ruffled top edge of a demi-bra peeked from the low neck of the top. Otherwise, Grace was bare-legged and sporting a sassy grin in the portrait.

“Recognize that top?” Grace pointed, giggling.

“Like mine?”

“Yep. I love Hips and Curves.”

“I’ll bet Ethan loves this portrait. It’s perfect for him,” Rachel said, admiring her chutzpah for modeling barelegged.

“I modeled in clothing each of them ordered for me from there.”

“Can I see the others?” Rachel asked eagerly.

Grace took her to Adam’s room and showed her the picture of her curled up in the champagne-colored robe and teddy, appearing as though she were taking a nap but undisputedly sexy.

Slipping quietly across the living room, Grace led her into her old bedroom, now Jack’s bedroom. There on the wall was the portrait of Grace

in a pretty pink satin robe and nightgown, one sexy bare knee perched on the edge of a four-poster bed.

“I’ll bet they flipped for these, Grace. They’re beautiful. I’ve been wondering, do you think I should try and do something like this for Eli? Is there even time?”

“I talked with Carrie and Raquel this week about doing a family portrait of the four of us, and she said they had some openings. I’m sure they could fit you in, and I know they would appreciate the business. Things were slow for them this year, and their rates are reasonable. We’ll call her tomorrow if you’d like.”

Rachel nodded. “I think I would, very much. Thank you for showing them to me. Kelly and Mom will think they’re beautiful, too. You know they love you all.”

“Friends like you mean a lot to us. Do you have something sexy to model in? We could always take a look and see what’s new at Hips and Curves.”

Rachel chuckled and said, “I already have the perfect thing, but I want to take a look at Hips and Curves with you, anyway.”

They went out into the living room to find the other three enjoying their sangrias. Grace turned on her laptop computer and pulled up the plus-size lingerie website.

“Ooooh, pretty!” Erin squealed softly, trying to be considerate of the babies she’d just left sleeping in the other room.

“Wow. That’s just...wow,” Rachel looked over Grace’s shoulder at the computer screen.

“I know. Check her out,” Grace said, pointing to a model. “See? It’s all about angles. She’s the same size as you, maybe a tiny bit shorter.”

“Dang, she’s hot! Gorgeous hair,” Rachel commented, drawing her mom and Kelly’s attention. Teresa rose from the couch and followed them over.

“Forget her hair, that’s a great ass,” Kelly said matter-of-factly. “She’s plus-size?”

“You’d never know it. It’s the way she carries herself. Look at this one,” Grace said, navigating to another page. “Isn’t that corset pretty? Yeah, those are real boobs, no silicone implants. They also have some beautiful gowns and robes. Everything I’ve ever bought through them has been of excellent

quality. No cheap fabrics or scratchy lace, and their prices are reasonable. But I love this website because the lingerie is modeled on plus-sized models, so you can see what it will look like.”

Kelly piped up and said, “Speaking of plus-sized models, *Mizz Lingerie Diva*, did you model your dress for your hunky men?”

Grace blushed and chuckled happily. “Did I ever! They loved the dress and shoes, and adored my new corset. Yep.”

“That’s all you’re going to say?” Kelly said.

“Yep.”

Kelly smirked and said, “That’s *code* for they couldn’t get it off of you fast enough and may have even torn some of it, isn’t it?”

Rachel’s mom snickered, Teresa blushed, and Rachel snorted her sangria.

“Maybe. Yep.” Grace nodded seductively then giggled more. “I need sangria. Kelly, show me these precious nekkid baby pictures of Eli you’ve been cackling over.”

Chapter Thirty-five

Rachel and the girls spent the rest of the evening looking at pictures of Eli at various ages, including the one Kelly had threatened him with. It was a black and white photograph of him at maybe one year of age. He sat on a shaded porch, dressed only in a diaper, and just as Kelly had described, he had a beatific grin on his cute little face. The garden hose was running full blast and gushing out of the front of his very swollen diaper.

There was another one taken the same day. He stood with his back to the camera, holding the hose up so that water sprayed up in the air. The waterlogged, swollen diaper was down around his chubby ankles, his plump little butt exposed as he grinned over his shoulder at whoever took the picture. Rachel laughed until she thought she might pee in her pants.

“I brought all of these pictures for both of you, Rachel, so you have them for your kids. I’ve already made copies of the ones I wanted to keep. Isn’t that a cute little *bubble butt*?”

Kelly leafed through a stack, looking for one in particular. “There’s a cute one of the two of us stuck in the bath tub together. Here it is!” She handed it to Rachel.

“Aww, look!” Rachel handed it to the others to look at.

Eli was sitting in the tub, and his hair was spiked and standing up in the requisite shampoo Mohawk. His chubby little toddler arms were wrapped around his baby sister, helping her sit up in the hip deep water. There was a soap bubble in her mouth, and both of them grinned for the camera.

“Ooh, Rachel! Look! Here’s one of Eli when he was in Little League. Eli was a handsome little hunk!” Grace showed her a picture of Eli when he was twelve or thirteen in his baseball uniform. He was posed holding a bat, looking straight into the camera. His face was a preteen version of Eli, but when she looked at it, the handsome man he would one day become was

clearly there, waiting to grow up. The man she loved was especially visible to her in the young boy's intense gray eyes.

"Here's one of him with his first motorcycle when he was seventeen." Kelly handed Rachel another photograph, this time of a teenaged Eli leaning up against a beat-up motorcycle. His hair was longer in this photo and more closely resembled the man he was today, tall and muscular for his age.

"Gosh, hunk is in his genes." Her mom popped her hand over her mouth. "Did I just say something inappropriate about my future son-in-law?"

Rachel rolled her eyes and laughed.

"Um, no. You said what we're all thinking." Grace snickered. "He's extremely photogenic, Rachel. I hope you have an engagement portrait taken together."

Rachel hugged her future sister-in-law. "Thank you, Kelly. I love that you did this for us. I'll always treasure these pictures."

"You're welcome. They belong to you now, part of your future kids heritage." Kelly hugged her back.

They started winding down around midnight. Grace and Rachel closed the house up and turned off most of the lights.

"I'll be up reading for a little while if you need anything, Rachel," Grace said as she made her way to the stairs.

"Is it hard for you to sleep without them, too?"

"Very. Most nights, I prefer to sleep cuddled up with all three of them," Grace said quietly. "You look like you've been sleeping better since you came home, too."

"I have been. I'm supposed to call Eli when I go to bed. He said he'd probably have trouble sleeping, too."

Grace grinned knowingly. "Well, don't let me keep you from your man. I have three texts of my own to send."

* * * *

Eli lay in bed with the light off, his phone beside him on the mattress. He could barely make out the sound of one of the other men snoring in the room next to his. He'd lucked out that the hunting lodge was large enough for almost all of them to have a room to themselves. Adam and Ethan had

voluntarily roomed together. Eli's phone lit up and vibrated. He looked at it and grinned.

*I found it, you naughty boy.
I'm wet. Call me if you're still awake.
R.*

He dialed her cell phone number and she picked up on the first ring.

"Hello, handsome."

"Hello, angel."

"That was a sweet thing you did, slipping that little silver egg vibrator into my luggage. I found the black lace nightgown and robe in the suitcase, too. You're thorough as well as thoughtful."

"Did it feel good slipping into that nightgown?"

"I don't have it on yet."

"Are you ready for bed?"

"Uh-huh," she replied softly.

"Are you nekkid?" he asked in a husky whisper.

"For you, yes."

"Are you under the covers?"

"Yes," she replied silkily, and he could hear her sheets rustling. "How are you? Were you asleep?"

"No, I couldn't. I need you to sleep," he replied softly, missing her warmth and her scent next to him.

"Maybe I can help," she said softly. "So you were already in bed, under the covers?"

"Yeah."

"Pajamas?"

His cock twitched. "No. I brought them in case we bunked together, but we all have our own rooms. This lodge is huge." He was thankful because he hated sleeping clothed.

"Oh," she said in an achingly soft voice. "Are you hard, Eli?" The tone of her sexy voice made his cock twitch.

"Very, angel. Your voice does that to me," he murmured. He thought he dimly heard the sound of a phone ringing somewhere in the cabin but didn't hear it again.

“You know what I’d do right now if I was there?” Her seductive voice sent a wave of shivers down his spine to his cock as he imagined it.

“Tell me, angel.”

“I’d wet my lips with my tongue, slide your big, hard cock into my mouth, and suck and lick you until you were panting. Are you stroking your cock yet?”

“I am now.” He reached down and stroked his tingling, rock-hard length, and groaned. “Do you have the egg with you, angel?”

“Yes,” she answered shakily.

“Are you nice and wet for me? Throbbing and aching for me?” he asked.

“You know I am, Eli. I wish you could touch me.”

“That’s why the egg was in your luggage. Pretend it’s my fingers, and later it’ll be my tongue. That’s why I sent it with you. Turn it on and put it over your clit.” He listened as she did as he asked, and she whimpered at the sudden stimulation. His shaft throbbed and wept a translucent tear at the sound of her arousal.

“Good, angel. Does it feel nice?”

“It’s torture, Eli. I’m so wet it keeps slipping,” she said with a soft, sexy chuckle. He wished it was his tongue that was doing the slipping.

“Mmm, my angel *is* good and wet.”

“Y–yes. Are you stroking your incredible, thick cock for me? Can you imagine me sucking the head for you? I want to climb on top and suck your cock while you lick my pussy. Would you like some sixty-nine with me?”

“I’d pull you down on my face and lick you till you came, screaming my name.” Eli imagined the feel and taste of her sweet pussy pressed against his face while she sucked his cock. “I’d lick your little pussy until my face was coated with your honey.”

“Oooh, baby, I can almost feel that warm tongue of yours.” He heard her moan low and soft.

“Are you stroking your clit yet?”

“Uh-huh,” she whimpered softly.

“Slip that little silver egg just inside, between your sweet little pink lips. Pretend that’s my tongue, angel. Feel it?” he asked in a strained, guttural voice.

Rachel did as he asked, and the sound of her soft whimpers increased. He could hear her rapid breathing. She sounded like she was already close to coming.

“Oh, Eli. I want you so much.” She panted softly, trying to catch her breath. “After I’m done licking you, I think I want to turn and straddle those lean hips of yours. I want to stroke your hard cock with my wet pussy and just slide back and forth over you and get you wet with my juices. Do you want that, Eli?”

“I want all of you, yes,” he hissed, straining against the mattress. “But I’m going to take hold of your pretty curvaceous hips and lift you onto my cock.”

“Oh,” she whimpered softly. Rachel sounded like she’d increased her stroking, and he groaned in response as he stroked his cock harder.

“Then I’d watch the head of my cock part your soft, wet, hot lips and slowly push into your sweet, lush pussy.”

“Oh,” she keened softly, “I feel you, Eli, sliding into me!”

He imagined it probably made her even hotter to have to be so quiet.

He groaned as he flexed his hips. “Then, *oh, god*, then I’d sink my shaft into your hot, tight little pussy nice...and...sl-slow. Oh, babe, are you close?” he asked, growling as he stroked his stiff cock firmly now, feeling his balls drawing up tight, ready to explode with his release.

“Mmm...Yes!” she gasped, sounding like she was ready to come. Her voice had that soft euphoric sound that told him she was just about there.

“Then I’d flip you on your back, lift your sexy, long legs high and pump into you nice and slow. I’d wait until you begged me to fuck you harder and faster. Then I’d give you *exactly* what you begged me for and fuck you until you screamed.”

He could hear Rachel’s sudden high-pitched exhalation. “Eli! I’m coming, I’m...” She panted softly as her orgasm overtook her, moaning low into the phone.

He fisted his cock and stroked twice more. “Then I’d fill your tight pussy with my cum until you overflowed with it. Oh, angel. Yes!” His voice shook slightly as he came into his hand and on his belly, catching it with a hand towel he’d packed for this purpose, not wanting to explain the mess later. “Oh, angel.” He groaned, lying there panting for a minute, listening to her soft breath sounds as she recovered.

“Eli?” she said with a breathy sigh that brought a grin to his face. It was the sound of his woman, satisfied. He heard her shifting around a little, removing and turning off the vibrator, he guessed.

“Are you all right, angel?”

“Yes, Eli, and you?”

“The only thing missing that would make this perfect is if you were cuddled next to me now, trying to catch your breath and holding on to me. That would make this perfect.”

“Yeah.” She sighed contentedly. “I’ve never had phone sex before.”

“That was my first time, too.” He chuckled.

She laughed softly. “Aw, we were virgins.”

“Are you flushing all over?” he asked, knowing that was a sign she’d come good and hard for him.

“Yes, I just felt it spread over my cheeks and my breasts. Mmm.” She sounded like she was stretching, and the sheets rustled again. “You’re the best, Eli.”

“Thank you. Same goes for you, angel. Did you have fun looking at all my embarrassing baby pictures?”

“Oh, they were adorable, Eli! You were a precious little baby. I loved them all, including the one with the water hose.”

“Ugh! Which was your favorite?”

“Honestly? The one of you when you were seventeen with your first motorcycle. But that’s not a baby picture, I suppose. Probably the one of you sitting in your highchair coated in spaghetti sauce and chocolate pudding. I’ll bet your mom had to scrub you hard to get that mess off of you.”

Eli laughed. “Yeah, see what you have to look forward to, angel?”

“I’d love to have a baby boy or girl that looks like you, Eli. With your gray eyes and black hair.”

“As long as I get a little angel who looks like her mommy, too. I miss you. Will you be able to sleep?”

“I have a better chance of sleeping now than I did before your call. I hope I can stay asleep. I miss you, too, Eli.”

“I’d stroke your soft back if I was there. And tickle you with my fingertips just the way you like.”

“I love it when you do that.” She yawned, he noticed with satisfaction.

“I love it when you moan when I find the right spot above your tailbone.”

“Mmm. You know right where it is, too,” she replied languidly.

“You have your nightgown nearby?”

“Yes, it’s on the chair by the bed.”

“Why don’t you put down the phone and slip into it and climb back into bed?”

“All right, honey. Hold on.” She did as he asked, and he smiled when he heard her sigh contentedly as the heavy satin slid over her skin. She picked up the phone after she got back into bed, sighing happily. “Okay, I’m tucked in.”

“Damn. Listening to you sigh like that makes me wish I was there. After you hang up, imagine the gown is me wrapped around you, snuggling you close to me, all right?”

“You were so thoughtful and romantic to pack this. Are you getting sleepy?”

He folded the towel up and used it to clean up a bit, laid it aside to take care of later, then slid back between the quickly cooling sheets. “Yeah, I think I probably could. I’ll let you go on to sleep, angel. One thing?”

“Yes?”

“Press your index finger and middle finger to your lips for me?”

“Okay?”

“Good. That kiss is from me. Now put it wherever you want it.” He chuckled at her soft giggle.

“Mmm, done,” she said softly. “Guess where.”

“Mmm. Someplace I plan on kissing a lot when I get you alone, angel. I love you.”

“I love you, Eli. Goodnight.”

Eli ended the call and placed the phone on the table by the bed. He gazed out the window opposite the bed and watched the stars twinkle. He could almost feel her soft, warm skin under his fingertips and smell her unique womanly scent. He rolled to his side and pulled the other pillow close to him and tried to fall asleep.

* * * *

Rachel and Grace were the first ones up the next morning. Grace made a pot of coffee, and Rachel joined her out on the back porch. The morning breeze had a slight chill to it, so they sat in their robes enjoying their coffee and a quiet conversation. Grace asked her if she'd managed to sleep last night.

"Yes, I slept well after I talked to Eli. It was good to hear his voice," she replied softly, her cheeks heating a little at the memory.

Grace chuckled knowingly. "Yeah, the *sound of Jack's voice* helped me sleep, too."

"You didn't talk to Ethan and Adam?"

"Oh, yes. I talked to all of them. This is the first time I've been apart from all three of them overnight. I couldn't sleep if I didn't hear their voices first, but Jack and I got to have a *little chat* last night. I slept well after we hung up, but I still missed them." She smiled at Rachel, blushing at her euphemisms. "We can call Carrie and Raquel later if you want."

"That sounds great. I'd like to get together with them soon if they have any openings."

"I'm sure they could work that out."

"How are the wedding plans coming for you and Kelly?"

"Great! Everything is coming together nicely, and your dad's budget has been easy to work with. He's a real peach to throw you a nice wedding like this."

"My dad's a sweetheart. He's a tough guy on the outside, with a warm, gooey filling on the inside, where me and my mom are concerned."

Later that morning, all the ladies climbed into Rachel's new truck and went with her to Clay Cook's to order Eli's wedding ring. The girls browsed the display cases with her mom while Rachel and Clay talked about Eli's ring and Clay took down her inscription. Rachel complimented Clay on the beautiful workmanship of Grace's wedding ring, for which he thanked her with a shy, warm smile. While they finished up, Grace stepped outside to make a phone call.

A few minutes later, she stepped back into the door of Clay's shop and crooked her finger at Rachel. "Carrie and Rachel's afternoon photo shoot had to reschedule on them. Do you want to run out to Morehead today and take some sexy portraits?"

Rachel was shocked but jumped eagerly at the opportunity. "But what about the others?"

Grace shrugged and grinned broadly. "They'll have a blast. Maybe we can talk them into posing for portraits, too."

"If they're game, I am, too!"

Rachel thanked Clay then said, "All right, ladies, here's the deal..."

Five minutes later, they were in the truck driving back to the ranch to pick up lingerie and then out of town.

As she buckled up, Kelly said, "That Clay Cook is a cutie pie."

Grace giggled. "I know. He's gorgeous with his blond hair and green eyes. So far, he's resisted my efforts to match make for him. I think he's rather shy."

"I got that impression, too. But he's very handsome," Kelly said appreciatively.

"That he is! I haven't given up yet. Just have to find the right girl to introduce him to." Rachel noticed Grace turn and wink at Teresa in the back seat and then heard Teresa chuckle.

Two hours later, after a light lunch, Rachel found herself dressed in her black lace nightgown and robe. Raquel carefully applied more eye shadow and eyeliner, giving her a smoky-eyed look, and then she helped Rachel pose seductively for the camera.

"Aren't you going to change and let me shoot you, too?" Carrie asked speculatively, eyeing the garment bag Grace had brought with her.

"Twist my arm, why don't you?" Grace laughed, rifling through it, looking for the perfect outfit.

Rachel's mom had a beautiful portrait made with her daughter as well as a sexy one with a feather boa and dark red lipstick for her father.

Kelly and Teresa were excited to have a portrait taken, as well. Teresa had loosened up and gotten into all the fun but blushed beet red at seeing Rachel and Grace dressed only in lingerie.

While her mom, Kelly, and Teresa took a break and got something to drink and snack on in the waiting room, Rachel allowed Grace and the two photographers to persuade her into posing for a very tasteful nude.

After they were done, Grace was excited, both over Rachel's enthusiastic approach to this endeavor but also over the nudes she did for

her men, as well. Carrie assured them she'd call when they were all ready. They left the photography studio energized and euphoric.

"Am I high?" Rachel giggled as they headed down the highway farther into Morehead.

"It's endorphins, Rachel," Grace replied, fixing her lipstick and powdering her nose. "Stretching out of your comfort zone like that releases endorphins in your system, plus you feel beautiful because you've been dolled up and had professional portraits taken. You'll sleep like a baby tonight." She winked then pulled out her cell phone and sent a text, most likely to one of her men, as Rachel drove them to the large shopping mall in Morehead. Grace's phone vibrated in her hand. Looking at the display, she started giggling. "Oh, my goodness!"

"What is it?" her mom asked from the back seat.

"The great white hunters are scoring big time," Grace said. "They're already planning a pig roast and bonfire next weekend. It's a good thing we have big deep freezers, girls. We're going to need them. Don't worry, Kelly and Teresa, we're gonna keep you stocked to the eyeballs. Rachel, Adam says Eli bagged one that has to be at least four hundred pounds!"

Rachel's mouth popped open at that announcement, and then she grinned big. "Yeah, pan sausage!"

"Adam says they are hunting right now and that everyone has already gotten at least one decent-sized hog, some of them two. I wonder how they're planning to get all that home."

Her mother supplied the answer. "Allen has a flat bed trailer he's letting them use. They'll probably take whatever they kill today to a nearby processor and pick up the meat later. He's anxious to get those off his property. They moved in the last few years, and the population of white tail deer started dropping off. Plus, they've cause a lot of property damage."

"It sounds like they are definitely going to need that trailer," Grace replied, and then her phone buzzed again. "Adam says we should come up with them next time. They all have their own rooms, and the lodge is nice." The phone vibrated again in her hand, and she looked down to read the message and chuckled softly.

"What does he say?" Teresa leaned forward.

"Oh, that he loves me and couldn't live without me." Grace sighed breathily, to which she received a chorus of, "Aww."

“What exactly are they going to do with the pigs they bring home?” Kelly asked, as if the thought of dead animals hanging around the house had just occurred to her.

“They’ll send them immediately to a processor,” Renata replied. “Peter stopped bringing his kills home when Rachel was in college. I couldn’t stand the stench and the gore anymore. Have you ever had wild pig before, Kelly?”

“I don’t think so.”

Rachel glanced at Kelly in the rearview mirror. “Honey, you are in for a treat. Do you think you can come back next weekend?”

“I’d already planned on it. I’m here more than I’m home on the weekends, it seems like,” Kelly said with a laugh.

“Does your husband mind very much?” Rachel asked.

“No. He’s encouraged me to spend time here with you when I can. Chris worries about me at home alone so much. He knows how much I enjoy being with you all and that I’m having fun with Grace, planning your wedding.”

“Good, because we love having you and little Matthew,” her mom said. “He travels so well, and he’s the most easygoing a baby I’ve ever met.”

Grace’s phone buzzed again, and she chuckled softly but didn’t say anything.

“I’m nosey,” Kelly said. “Who’s that from?”

“Jack.”

“What’s he say?”

Grace gazed at the screen. “It was for my eyes only,” she replied with a soft, blushing smile. The others chuckled knowingly. Grace texted back and forth for a couple of minutes with him then sighed dreamily. “He’s so romantic. He said they would all call us tonight.”

At the mall, Grace and Kelly split from the group, in need of some time together to purchase reception decorations. Rachel handed Grace the keys to the Tundra, and they started off. Rachel, her mom, and Teresa went to have a little snack in the food court. The mall was decorated festively for Christmas already, and Rachel wondered out loud what the wedding decorations would look like.

“Well, judging by what I’ve heard Kelly and Grace say, it’s going to be festive and colorful,” her mom replied. “They are using a varied color

palette, including the blue from their dresses. I always hoped you'd want to get married at home, out in the pavilion."

"I used to dream about it when I was little. I told Grace about some of my imaginings as a child, and she got a twinkle in her eye, which means she's got a little something up her sleeve. I'm so grateful I have two friends who love to plan things like this," Rachel said with a chuckle. "Where were they going, anyway?"

"We can't tell you, Rachel," Teresa said, grinning. "We were instructed to help you find a pair of warm, waterproof boots and a heavy winter coat, plus everything to go with it—hat, goggles, gloves, scarf, and thermal underwear. Whatever you want or need for being outdoors in the cold were Eli's instructions."

They took her to an outfitter in the mall and set her up with a heavy waterproof and insulated jacket in the hottest pink Rachel had ever seen.

"Grace will be pleased!" Teresa said, chuckling when Rachel tried it on.

They found a beautiful imitation fur hat that matched the fur that lined the hood on her jacket. Her snow boots were warm and comfy inside, and most importantly, insulated and waterproof. They found socks and silk thermal underwear at a great price, so she was able to get several pairs.

Several hours later, as it drew close to suppertime, they met Grace and Kelly, who now had the back of the Tundra loaded with sealed boxes.

Rachel yelped when she saw the stacks. "Dang, Grace! What have you been up to?"

"You'll see in four weeks." Grace snickered as she popped Rachel's hand when she tried to lift the flap on a box. "Absolutely no peeking. You'll see when it's time. How'd you do finding your coat, boots and other stuff?"

Kelly clapped her hands happily. "We lucked out and found lots of great deals and saved Eli a lot of money shopping the sales."

"Good, then we're done here. It's suppertime, and we have girls' night reservations," Grace announced happily.

Rachel looked in the bed of the truck. "What about the boxes?"

"Don't worry. Where we're going they'll be fine," Grace replied.

Grace directed her to a country road on the outskirts of Morehead. Rachel saw the restaurant tucked back amidst the trees and gasped happily when she saw the diminutive sign. "You're taking us to *Tessa's*?"

Chapter Thirty-six

Rachel looked over at Grace and arched an eyebrow, the question in her mind answered as they all squealed in unison, “Surprise!”

Grace laughed. “This is your lingerie shower, Rachel! There’s a small party room reserved for us.”

Rachel parked and noticed two other cars were pulling in next to them. Rosemary Piper and Charity Conners jumped out and crowed, “Surprise!” They all climbed out of the Tundra, laughing and hugging.

“Happy bridal shower!” Charity cackled, giving her a big hug. She opened her trunk and removed a large, heavy looking gift bag from the interior. Rosemary hugged her, too, looking particularly radiant and happy.

Grace said, “Come on. Tessa has a special room all set up for us.”

Rachel noticed that Grace and the others weren’t carrying anything. Grace really was a planner. Tessa greeted them at the door, hugged Grace and welcomed them all graciously. She was supermodel tall and gorgeous, but had an easy openness to her that was refreshing, not haughty at all. She sauntered down a dimly lit hall and led them to a small, intimate dining room. Candles and festive decorations, which perfectly blended the holiday season and the romance of a wedding, adorned the table as well as the antique sideboard and buffet.

“Tessa, it’s perfect,” Grace commented. “Thanks for all your help.”

“You’re welcome. I’ll step out and send your servers in to you. They’re the best. Enjoy,” she murmured before excusing herself.

Gaily wrapped presents were arranged artfully on the buffet, to which Charity and Rosemary added theirs.

Rachel gestured to the decorations and gifts. “How did you...”

“We set this up in advance. The men dropped everything off for me yesterday after they left.”

“So Eli knows about this?”

“Oh, yes, honey. We have his full knowledge and blessing. There may even be a surprise or two there because the men knew in advance what we were doing. As you’ve discovered, our men are just as adept at buying gifts as we are,” Grace said with a chuckle. “Come sit, so we can get started.”

Grace glanced over Rachel’s shoulder and smiled mischievously. Rachel sat down in the chair Grace indicated and looked up into the clearest, greenest eyes she’d ever seen.

“Good evening. I’m Paul. I’ll be one of your servers this evening.”

As he assisted the ladies in seating themselves, Paul shared the list of culinary offerings for the evening. Bless their hearts, Rachel didn’t think any of the women heard what he said. Paul was not merely handsome, he was...celestially handsome, a wondrous spectacle of masculine beauty. He had tousled, shoulder-length blond hair, beautiful green eyes, high cheek bones, and a nose that looked like it had been chiseled by Michelangelo’s own hand. He had wonderful full, kissable lips and a *sexy-as-freaking-hell* soul patch below his lower lip. He was dressed in cowboy boots, blue jeans, and an untucked white dress shirt, which he had not bothered to button all the way up.

Guiltily, Rachel noticed her mouth was watering as she looked at him. He took their barely coherent drink orders. A couple of them switched to alcoholic drink orders midway through the process. When he strode from the room, Rachel could have heard a pin drop to the floor.

Kelly broke the silence. “Hot. Holy. Hell. Is he for *real*? Is he a waiter? Grace, is he a *stripper* you hired, pretending to be a waiter?”

Grace chortled happily. “You know our men, right? Strippers we don’t need. That, dear hearts, is Tessa’s younger brother, Paul. Isn’t he positively luscious? He’s a chef here, but for this special occasion, he was willing to serve us personally from the kitchen while the other chefs pick up the slack. He *and* his brother, Peter, will be serving us tonight.”

“He has a brother?” Renata asked incredulously.

Grace grinned crookedly. “Mmm-hmm. And it gets even better.” She paused for effect, waiting to be asked how.

“How could it get any better? Did you see those beautiful green eyes?” Kelly sighed.

“Paul and Peter are...*twins*.”

“Oh, no. Oh, yes...oh, *boy!*” Charity whispered as both handsome men entered the room carrying their drinks.

“Hello, ladies. I’m Peter. I’ll be helping my brother serve you tonight. Can I suggest an appetizer?”

Grace and Charity glanced at each other and Rachel, who grinned then felt her cheeks grow hot at their knowing smiles.

Grace turned to him and said, “Good evening, Peter. I think Rachel would enjoy your *shrimp cocktail*. I’ve been craving one, too. How does that sound, ladies?” At their assenting nods, Grace turned back to him and murmured, “A large shrimp cocktail?”

Paul left the room to turn in the order while Peter reiterated the evening’s selection. He took their individual orders and then added, “The bakery delivered the cake, Mrs. Warner. As you requested, we haven’t cut it but will wait for word from you. I’ll turn in your order, and please don’t hesitate to page either of us if you need anything at all. We’re at your beck and call this evening,” he said with a crooked little grin, “and we’ll be right down the hall in the kitchen.”

He leaned forward and handed Grace a small black cell phone, kissed her hand, then did the same for Rachel. “It’s always a pleasure to see you again, Mrs. Warner,” Paul added then excused himself.

They sat at the table, in shock for a moment. “They’re so pretty they make my eyes hurt,” Charity said.

“Exactly how often do you come here, *Mrs. Warner?*” Rosemary asked with a snicker.

“Her men spoil her rotten and bring her here at least *once a month*,” Charity butted in.

“Wow,” Teresa said softly. Everyone’s attention turned to her. She burst out laughing, and they all laughed with her.

“Yeah, *wow*,” Rachel agreed.

“Well, let’s get started, shall we? They’ll let me know before they bring anything else.” Grace rose from her chair and went to the buffet. Touching this gift and that with a well-manicured fingertip, she lifted a square box wrapped gaily in blue paper with a frilly bow. She placed the gift in front of Rachel. “Why not start with your beautiful mom’s gift?”

Rachel smiled at her mom and blew her an air kiss. She tore open the paper, lifted the lid, and gasped. From the box, she lifted a pair of high-

heeled platform slides with clear acrylic heels. The first of many risqué giggles rippled around the room. She lifted out another tissue-wrapped package. The tissue revealed a filmy red babydoll nightie and matching G-string.

“Thank you, Mom! Wow!”

“I was shopping for a granny gown to keep you warm, and Grace suggested something more fun that might inspire *Eli* to keep you warm.” Her mother laughed when Rachel gave her a goggle-eyed look and felt her cheeks heat up.

“Mom! This is a side of you I’ve never seen before! I like it! I love the nightie. Thank you.” She would never have imagined her mother buying her sexy lingerie.

Grace placed another gift in front of her and passed the heels and babydoll nightie around to the others to see. “This is from Teresa.”

Rachel smiled at Teresa, glad to know this demure friend of Grace’s. They’d had a few chances to get to know each other since Grace’s wedding and Rachel had visited with her on several occasions at Stigall’s. Teresa once commented to Rachel that she appreciated her involvement in protecting Grace from Patricia. That confrontation hastened Patricia’s expulsion from Angel’s life, which was an added bonus for Teresa.

Rachel opened the gift and the women cooed over the sheer black mesh and lace gown, robe, and thong panty. “That’s beautiful, Teresa, thank you so much.”

Everyone commented appreciatively on how diaphanous it was. Rachel wondered what Eli would think of the sheerness and had a pretty good guess.

“You’re welcome, Rachel,” Teresa replied, smiling back at her.

“Kelly’s is next,” Grace said, placing it in front of her.

Rachel grinned at her tiny friend and future sister-in-law. Inside the gift-wrapped box was a pretty royal-blue satin nightie. It had a drawstring opening at the deep V-neck, and the sides were crisscrossing satin strings which held the front and back together, waiting to be untied. Inside was also a matching long, blue satin robe with flowing sleeves. The slithery fabric slipped and slid over itself as she lifted it from the box with a soft sigh.

“Gorgeous!” Her mom said as she stroked the silky fabric.

The phone Peter had handed to Grace vibrated on the table. She checked it and texted back then took her seat after she placed the opened gifts back on the buffet.

“Paul is bringing the shrimp cocktails now,” she said moments before their lovely waiter tapped on the door and entered, carrying a tray.

After serving them, he refilled their drinks and took orders for refills on their cocktails. They chatted while they waited for him to return. “Your entrees will be ready in twenty to thirty minutes, Mrs. Warner. We’ll let you know and wait to hear from you.”

Grace thanked him, and he excused himself quietly. Grace rose again from the table and returned with another wrapped gift. “This is from Rosemary.”

Rachel tore off the paper and lifted the lid, then opened the tissue. Momentarily puzzled, she lifted the delicate strips of fabric from the box and found the picture label that had been attached to the lingerie. “I can honestly say I’ve never seen anything like this. Wow, would you look at that?”

“Do you like it?” Rosemary asked uncertainly.

“I love it, but I can tell you Eli will absolutely *flip* for it. He loves a good mystery. I’m going to wear this under an outfit and let him wonder all evening.” She lifted it up and passed the card around so they could see it.

It was a silky spandex chemise that could be worn four different ways. Forward, backward, upside down to the front and upside down to the back, strapless or with shoulder straps. It was a series of clingy straps and strategic cutouts that revealed curves but strategically hid or revealed other parts depending on which way it was worn.

Charity handled it. “Oh, yeah! If I know Eli, he will totally flip for this. Keep that card, Rachel, so you can wear it a different way every time and keep him guessing. I think I need one of these. Where did you find it, Rosie?”

“Oh, this great website, maybe you’ve heard of it? Hips and—”

“—curves.com?” Grace, Rachel, and Charity all laughed outrageously.

“That’s the one! I *love* their lingerie!”

“We do, too!” Grace chuckled and handed Rachel another gift to open while the girls tucked the picture card back in with the chemise in its box and passed it around. This one was two boxes tied together. She opened the

smaller box first and giggled in delight when she found a butter-soft front-lacing leather corset in it.

“Ooooh! That is *awesome!*” Kelly said. “I’ll bet you get a lot of use from that. Eli loves that biker babe stuff! That’s perfect for you, Rachel.”

“See, it zips up the back, but you can tighten the laces in the front. It’s a lot less work for you than reaching behind you to tie laces, and he can get you out of it in a hot second if he wants to,” Grace said. “Look at what else is in there.”

Rachel lifted out a leather throat collar with a large silver ring attached to the front of it, and all the women giggled uproariously. She laughed and unbuckled it then slipped it around her neck. It was thick but softly lined. She could not hide the pleasure she had at the thought of wearing it for Eli as her cheeks heated up. Laughing softly, Rachel thanked Grace for it, trying to not betray how much she *really* liked it. Her mom was in attendance, after all. No point going there. Rachel looked at Grace, and Grace spoke up for her.

“I’m sorry, Renata. The gifts kind of degenerate from this point,” Grace said with a grin.

Rachel’s mom batted her hands and said, “Oh, don’t, Grace. I’m having so much fun. I’m a little more *liberated* than my daughter knows. Don’t worry that you will shock me. Let me see that, Rachel. Is it lined? Oh! That’s nice and soft.” She rubbed her thumb on the lining.

Grace exchanged a relieved look with Rachel.

Rachel opened the larger box and found a truly kinky pair of high, chunky-heeled, black patent platform lace up boots. “Oooh! Hot mama! Look at these!”

Laughter erupted around the table when she lifted it out of the box.

Grace brought Charity’s gift to Rachel and sat the gift bag in front of her. “This is from Charity. Guaranteed to be *adult eyes only*, if I know my sister!” She giggled and then added, “And we love you for it, sis.”

Rachel reached into the bag and pulled out a...feather duster? Only, the duster was small.

At Rachel’s confused look, Charity snickered and said, “It’s a tickler. Keep digging. Eli is going to thank me.” Rachel lifted out a bundle of red satin. She unfolded them and looked at Charity in confusion. “Those are

eight-foot-long bondage sashes for Eli to *tie you up* with.” Charity grinned as all the ladies giggled and Rachel’s cheeks turned red hot.

The last thing in the bag was a pretty, black butter-soft miniskirt with zippers that ran down the front seams to the hem, and a matching leather G-string. “They will match that corset and those boots perfectly, don’t you think? Then you’ll have a complete outfit. Here’s something else from me and Grace,” Charity added the last part in a whisper and slipped her a gift card envelope.

Charity being discreet? Surreal.

Rachel peeked in the envelope and understood. It was a one hundred dollar gift card to a popular online sex toy website. She smiled at Grace and Charity, and they winked at her. She didn’t pass that one around for the others to see. She caught Grace’s wink at Kelly and realized the elf knew about it, too. She slipped the envelope in her purse at her feet.

The phone at Grace’s seat buzzed. She looked at the display. “Our entrees are ready. Let’s go ahead and eat, and then we’ll finish afterward.” She replied quickly to the text.

Rachel looked around the table. “Thank you so much for the beautiful gifts. I love all of them, and you know Eli will appreciate them as well,” she said to a chorus of risqué laughter.

“You’re welcome, Rachel.” Grace gestured to the buffet, where several gifts sat waiting to be opened. “But you’re not done yet.”

“Huh?” She looked around the room and remembered opening every woman’s gift. She looked up at Grace questioningly.

“Those are from some people who could not attend today since this is a *ladies* only event,” Grace said as Peter and Paul tapped on the door and entered with laden trays. The handsome men made conversation as they solicitously served each lady her plate and refilled her water or tea glass.

“Mrs. Warner, will you page us when you’re ready for the cake? We have it set out for you.” Peter said.

“Thank you. I’ll page you when we’re ready for it, Peter. Thank you, Paul. We appreciate your special attention tonight.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Warner,” they murmured and sauntered from the room.

They enjoyed the excellent cuisine and talked about the wedding plans. They also teased Rachel about the variety of gifts she’d received and

speculated on which ones would get the most use. She took all the ribbing good-naturedly, giving as good as she got where she could.

“Peter and Paul prepared our entrees themselves.” Grace chuckled when they all smiled and got that dreamy look again.

At the ladies’ eager urging, Grace paged them both to return and clear the table. Once again, they flirted outrageously as they worked. The women talked and laughed with the handsome men until everything was removed from the table and they left once again.

Grace laughed when Kelly released a disappointed sigh and asked, “Is there anything else they can come back for?”

“Oh, don’t worry. They’ll be back,” Grace said with an indulgent smile. “Why don’t we see what else is here?” She returned to the buffet, bringing Rachel a small, prettily wrapped box.

“Before you open these, Jack, Ethan, and Adam wanted me to tell you something. Over the years, they’ve always held you and your family in the highest esteem and value your friendship to them, but especially to me. They appreciate the way you defended me with Patricia, but also Eli’s quick thinking in handling her the night of the shooting.”

Grace paused for a second, perhaps reliving that night, before continuing, “Our lives would be very different if it were not for your friendship, Rachel. You’re family, and we love you. These gifts are a small token of friendship for both you and Eli. Why don’t you open Adam’s first and let’s see what it is.”

Tears stung her eyes as Rachel picked at the pretty paper. She hugged Grace as she handed her a tissue, and Rachel opened the gift. Sniffling a little herself, Grace rose and brought two more small presents to the table.

Rachel lifted the lid on the box and gasped at the gift inside. Lifting it from the box, she looked at Grace.

Her friend said, “I helped him pick it out. It’s a slave bracelet. You wear it on your upper arm.” The heavy silver bracelet was a series of interlocking flourishes. It reminded Rachel a lot of the design of her engagement ring, which she held up to it.

“Clay made this?”

“Yep. Want to see if it fits?”

“Thank you.” Rachel held it out to Grace to open and then lifted her sleeve. Grace opened a hidden catch and demonstrated how to adjust it at

the hinge before closing it on Rachel's upper arm. "It's beautiful, Grace. Thank you. Make sure and tell him I love it."

Rachel unwrapped Ethan's gift. Inside was a bracelet made of the same heavy silver, only the flourishes were made into linking sections so it had more flexibility. It, too, was adjustable, which Grace showed her as she put it on her ankle. She modeled it for all of them and thanked Grace again.

She opened Jack's gift when Grace handed it to her. Inside was a pair of beautiful, intricate chandelier earrings done in the same intertwined flourish pattern, silver teardrops dangling in a row across the bottom edge of each one.

"Wow, Grace. I'm overwhelmed," Rachel said shakily, feeling like a ninny for being so emotional. "You didn't have to do this for me."

"Well, it would have been weird for them to buy you *lingerie*, right?" Grace snickered, trying to make light of the extravagance of her men's gifts. "You have one more gift to open though, sweetie. See?" She gestured again to the buffet, where a large, flat, wrapped package lay all by itself.

"Who's that from?" Rachel asked curiously

Grace retrieved the heavy box and laid it in Rachel's lap. She lifted the small envelope from the package and removed the card.

*For the woman I've been dreaming of.
Love, Eli*

After a few seconds, she read it out loud.

The ladies all exclaimed in unison. "Aww!"

She tore the paper from the box and lifted the lid. Inside was a sexy, black leather riding jacket. She lifted the jacket out, and they all cooed again. The jacket had fringe across the chest and the back and down the arms. Above each breast and in the center of the back was a pretty red rose inlay.

"Try it on," Charity said excitedly.

Rachel slipped out of the lightweight cardigan she'd put on to protect her from the evening chill. The fragrant leather jacket hugged her curves perfectly.

Grace pointed to the sides and the center of the lower back and said, "Look, it has drawstrings here and here so you can adjust the fit. How does it feel?"

"Like a dream. It's so soft inside."

Grace grinned and sent a message to their hot waiters. "I think it's time for cake, don't you?"

"I'd settle for another look at those handsome waiters," Teresa said then popped her hand over her mouth. "I said that out loud, didn't I? You're rubbing off on me!"

Paul and Peter returned with a beautifully decorated little bakery cake and cake plates and silverware. "Miss Lopez, aren't you a lovely sight in that leather jacket? If you weren't off the market, Paul and I might fight over which of us could persuade you to climb on the back of our Harleys."

"You're *both* bikers?" Charity asked, and then said unabashedly, "They are perfect, Grace."

"Perfect gentlemen, yes." Grace thanked Peter as he handed her the silverware and serving utensils.

"I don't know about perfect, but we both do ride in this area. It looks like we might run into at least one of you on a ride, maybe two? Do you ride, too, Miss..." Paul asked cheekily of Charity.

"Charity. Yes, I ride with my husband all the time."

"Maybe we'll see you around sometime. Mrs. Warner, are you sure you don't want me to cut and serve it for you?" Peter gestured to the serving knife.

At their eager looks, Grace said, "We—Yes, I'd like you to both stay and cut the cake and serve it. If you have time, that is. I know the restaurant must be busy right now."

"Tessa prides herself on the fact that we offer more than just the best food, but that our service is also exceptional. The kitchen is well staffed, and we are here to serve you," Peter replied as Grace handed him the serving knife.

He deftly cut the cake while Paul refilled their glasses and helped him get the cake on plates, which he then served to each woman.

Rachel picked up her fork, and her mouth watered from the luscious scent of it before the bite was even in her mouth. It was absolutely delicious.

"I love this cake."

“Good,” Grace said. “If you like it, I’ll be ordering it for your wedding cake.”

“I knew there was a reason I put you both in charge of this stuff. This is wonderful.”

After the ladies had been served and there was nothing else for them to do, Peter and Paul thanked Grace for asking them to serve her friends. They both kissed Rachel’s knuckles and Grace’s, as well, and wished Rachel good luck with her wedding plans.

After they’d left the room, Charity turned to Grace. “Wow. Just wow. You topped yourself, sis.”

The others agreed.

Chapter Thirty-seven

It was almost ten o'clock by the time Rachel parked the Tundra in front of Grace's home. Rachel tried the whole leather outfit on for them, and Grace and Charity snapped pictures. Grace sent a picture e-mail to Eli's phone. While Rachel changed out of the outfit, her phone buzzed with an incoming text. She smiled as she unzipped her boot and reached for the phone to look at the display.

*I love seeing you in leather.
I can't decide if I want you to straddle my bike, or me!
Call me as soon as you're alone.
Love you like crazy.*

She started to put her clothes back on but thought better of it. She snapped a picture first and then sent it with a short text, giggling deviously.

*Hiya, sexy! Did you eat yet?
Delete this picture after you enjoy it, pleeeeeease!
Love you like crazy!*

* * * *

The men sat on the back porch around the fire pit drinking a beer. Eli had propped his feet up on the porch rail and tilted his chair back on two legs. His phone buzzed back, and he smiled, expecting a text from his pretty woman. He grinned and lifted it to eye level. He did a double take and choked on his beer. He lost his balance and fell backward in the chair. All the men jumped up and laughed, telling him he'd had one too many. He stared at the display screen of his phone and grinned.

“Bet me it’s a nekkid pic,” Adam said to Ethan, grinning.

“Hey, her father is right over there!” Eli shushed him and pointed at Peter, who stood by the porch rail talking with Elijah. He looked one more time at the picture and grinned.

“Yep,” Adam offered a hand to help him up, “nekkid pics.” He snickered softly.

* * * *

Two minutes later, Rachel giggled happily when she received a picture of Eli’s handsome face with his eyes bulging out and a two word text.

Dayum, baby!

“Yep.” She chuckled as she zipped up her jeans.

When she came out of the bedroom, she found the others piled on the couches in the living room, watching *Braveheart*.

“Aren’t you exhausted?” she asked as she came in the living room and stood beside Grace, who sat on the couch.

“We got our second wind and decided we had enough energy to take on William Wallace,” she said with a pathetic Scottish accent. “*Ooh, yes, I’ll marry ye, William.*”

Rachel yawned. “I’m going to take a shower and go to bed.”

“Okay, we love you, sweetie. Enjoy your phone sex!” Kelly called as Rachel left the room. She poked her head back in the living room.

“Hey, that’s my mom sitting next to you!”

“That’s okay, honey. I may call your father later,” her mom said with a snorting laugh.

With her fingertips in her ears, Rachel hollered, “Lalalalala! I can’t hear you! Thanks again, ladies. For everything,” she added with another yawn.

Kelly yawned with her. “Poor thing, we wore her out.”

After her shower, Rachel dressed in her black nightgown, climbed into bed and cuddled up to a pillow. She picked up her phone and typed a short message and sent it to her man.

Hi.

She opted for simple, considering the shock she gave him earlier. She hoped like hell he had deleted that picture.

Hello, my angel. You surprised me so much earlier I fell out of my chair.

Are you tired?

Feel like talking?

Rachel knew he had to have been up early that morning. To hear his voice for a few minutes would be enough.

I'm sleepy, but I miss you.

Call me?

Her phone rang thirty seconds after she hit the send key.

“Hi.”

* * * *

As the afternoon dragged on, anticipation began to build in Rachel's body for her reunion with Eli.

Rachel looked forward to the feel of his big, strong arms wrapped around her and snuggling into his warm masculine embrace. She ached for his gentle fingers trailing over her torso in a tender, unhurried caress and his rugged, masculine scent wafting through her nostrils. She—

Grace waved a hand in front of her face. “Earth to Rachel.”

Rachel felt her cheeks warm up and laughed with her friend, trying to pay attention to what Grace was saying. She strained her ears for the sound of vehicles pulling up. They were due home anytime now.

At five thirty, Rachel finally heard a vehicle pull up out front. Her heart did a quick double flip, and she shot from her seat on the couch, yanking open the front door.

He'd asked her last night on the phone what she wanted to do the moment she saw him. Chuckling, she'd told him she wanted to fling herself into his arms and have him catch her in a big bear hug. She didn't even

hesitate, once he closed the SUV door and turned to her. He grinned with his arms held out wide.

With child-like glee, Rachel raced across the porch and leapt into Eli's big, strong, outstretched arms. When he caught her, she wrapped her legs around his lean waist and her arms around his neck. He held her close, and she breathed him in as she hugged him. He squeezed her tightly and hummed with happiness. She could hear amused male chuckling at their very public display of affection but didn't care enough to let go. Sinking her fingers into his long, silky black hair, Rachel kissed him for all she was worth.

"I missed you," she said sincerely when she finally came up for air. Someone coughed nearby and she recognized her father's voice, full of dry humor. "Hmm, so we gathered," he said as he opened the back of the SUV.

Eli walked away from the men milling around the vehicles with her still attached. "I missed you, too, angel," he murmured and nuzzled her throat. "You trusted me to catch you," he stated happily.

She hugged him tighter. "I missed you so much. Now I have you, I don't want to let you go."

"Your legs wrapped around my waist feel better than you can imagine, but I think we may be testing your poor father's tolerance."

Eli squeezed her back gently as she unlocked her ankles, and he set her back on her feet carefully. He kissed her once more and smiled down at her.

He stared into her face intensely and spoke in her ear. "I'm starving for you."

His lustful gaze made her feel self-conscious, but Rachel didn't look away, just pressed her body to his. Her eyes widened when she felt his bulging erection press against her abdomen.

"For me?" she whispered and licked her lips.

He groaned softly. "If you don't stop that, everyone is going to know what's on my mind."

She smiled. "I can't help it. Can I help you carry your things to the truck?"

"There's just one bag," he said, indicating the duffle bag lying on the driveway by her father's vehicle.

She glanced at the empty flatbed trailer still hooked up to Jack's SUV. "Are the hogs already at the processors?"

“Yeah. We just dropped off the two big ones Ethan and Adam got this morning at the butcher in Divine. They’re going to prep and store them whole for the pig roast next weekend.” She walked with him as he retrieved his bag and took it to her truck. “The processor near Allen’s lodge is going to have a busy week processing all that meat.”

“I heard you got the biggest one.” She slid her hand into his after he put his bag on the back seat of her Tundra.

“Until last night at dusk. Your dad shot one that was a little bigger. You wouldn’t believe the size of them.”

Rachel shuddered, having a pretty good guess. “We have supper almost done. The steaks are seasoned and ready to go on the grill.”

“Great, I’m starving.”

Rachel noticed the others had already gone inside.

He lifted her knuckles to his lips and kissed them and said in a gravelly, soft voice, “We’re going to behave for now, but when I get you home, I’m going to be all over you the moment the lock turns on the front door. I hope you’re packed and ready to go.”

Her pussy liquefied at his words, and her clit ached for his touch, all in a matter of seconds.

“I am,” she said shakily. She loved it when he took charge like this and told her what he planned to do. “It’s already in the truck. Carry me out of here when you’re ready, if you want, big caveman.”

He growled low, and there was a fierce gleam in his eyes. “So, you’re feeling me right now?”

“Yeah, I’m *feeling you*, Eli,” she agreed, then added in a seductive tone, “but I’ll be a good girl and behave myself.”

“Until I ask you to do otherwise?”

“Yes. Then I may misbehave very badly.” He leaned down and kissed her hard and quick then drew her in the front door. She said, “I’m going to check in with Grace and see what I can do to help.”

Turning to walk into the kitchen, she barely contained a gasp as he boldly caressed her ass. She glanced back and smiled with pleasure, too. His eyes followed her hungrily as she crossed the room. She hoped he never changed.

Grace and her men were ecstatic to be with each other again and practically fought over serving each other. The men convinced her to sit

down in one of the overstuffed chairs and allow them to wait on her. They took every opportunity to kiss or caress her when they were near. Rachel had a feeling that both she and Grace were going to have an early night if their men had any say in the matter.

The men made plans for the pig roast the following Saturday night. The roast would be at the Divine Creek Ranch, and Adam and Jack were even planning on lighting a bonfire. The nights were chillier now, and they'd been looking for an excuse to burn a gigantic pile of mesquite brush they had cleared from a pasture the year before.

Elijah and her parents were deep in conversation and Kelly and Grace had their heads together, talking, when Eli and Rachel went from group to group saying goodnight, making good on their getaway plans. It looked like Elijah and Kelly might be at the get-together a while longer, which spurred them both on even harder to get home. Who knew how long the privacy might last?

When they got to the duplex, Eli shouldered his bag and helped her carry her bags and the gifts in the house. The deadbolt slide home and her heart pounded as he stalked her back to the bedroom.

He pulled her to him firmly, and his lips devoured hers in a searing kiss.

She threaded her fingers in his hair and held him to her as his hands worked with the buckle of her belt and the button on her jeans. She toed her boots off and raised her arms when he lifted her top over her head then helped him with his belt buckle and his jeans. He removed his flannel shirt and T-shirt.

"Want a warm shower?" he asked between slow, wet kisses.

"No, I did all that right before we expected you home. I'm completely ready for you right now. Did you want a shower?"

"I showered at the lodge right before we left. Let's get the rest of these clothes off of you. Mmm, look at these cute little britches you have on." He palmed her bare ass under her silver lace cheeky shorts.

"I found them when we went shopping yesterday."

He unclasped the matching silver lace push-up bra and kissed her lips greedily. Eli's kiss was demanding, and he groaned when she slipped her tongue in his mouth, clasping her arms around his neck. He skimmed his hands over her hips and slid her shorts down her legs.

“Did you fantasize about what you would do to me tonight? How did you take me?” Rachel asked as she caressed his abdomen and his thickly muscled chest.

Eli slid his hands up and down her back and over her bare ass then gripped her buttocks and pressed her to his rock-hard cock. He gazed at her with glittering eyes in the soft light from the candles as he looked into hers. “I want to sit on the edge of the bed, like we did before, and use the mirror to watch. But I want you to face me this time so I can kiss you and look into your eyes as you ride my cock. Then I want to make love to you slowly on your back, with your hair laid out over my pillow and your legs spread wide in my hands. Then I want to take your ass.”

His words fanned flames that blazed into an inferno inside her. A soft, lustful groan fell from her lips at the vivid images he planted in her mind, and her pussy began to ache in a way only he could fix.

“If you’ll trust me, I’ll make it feel so good. I promise to go slow and stop if you need me to.”

“Of course I trust you, Eli. I’m going to love it.” Rachel put her arms back around his neck, and as he lifted her up to him, she wrapped her legs around his waist.

Eli opened the closet door and carried her to the edge of the bed, carefully sat down and scooted back. He helped Rachel onto her knees then held her hips when she rose over him, and her nipples rubbed against his chest hairs, drawing a shaky sigh from her. He positioned the thick head of his cock at her wet entrance, and she rocked her hips to take him in a tiny bit.

She paused and whispered, “Did you miss my pussy?”

“I missed your hot little pussy *so* much.” He groaned as her slick lips kissed his stiff cock. Rachel took fierce pleasure in the way the blunt head stretched her open that first inch or two before her body acquiesced to his entrance.

“Like I missed this great big, hard, long cock. I’m going to slide down over you nice and slow, gloving every last inch of you.” Rachel rocked her hips again, and the head was past the tight muscles of her entrance and engulfed inside her. She squeezed his cock as she rose again, tugging on his erection before sliding back down. Eli sighed blissfully, and his fingertips

slid lightly up her spine, causing her hips to flex involuntarily, and his cock slid farther into her pussy with her movements.

Rachel gazed in the mirror and moaned at the sight she and Eli made. It was so erotic, and she relished the thought they'd only gotten started. His cock was barely half-way lodged inside her pussy. He watched their reflection, too, and reached forward, grasping and gently lifting the cheeks of her ass so she could see her glistening pussy better. The movement parted her lips farther, and she slid down over the rest of his hard length as their eyes met in the mirror. Rachel smiled at the ecstasy on his face as his eyelids slid closed and his head tilted back. Her hips flexed forward, and she took him deep until he was seated completely within her. He held her hips still for a moment. She closed her eyes and listened to the warm, deep timbre of his voice.

"Don't move, angel. I want to feel you. I missed you so much, all of you. This was what I wanted, to have you wrapped around me and me wrapped around you." His hands slid all over her body, touching her cheeks, her throat, and her shoulders. He kissed her collarbones and stroked her ribs and her hips.

Reaching behind her, Rachel stroked his testicles with her fingertips, taking him by surprise. She loved his moan of pleasure and the way he leaned his forehead against her shoulder, so vulnerable. She lifted slightly, tugging on his cock with her pussy muscles, and slid back down. Her honey coated his cock and made him slippery inside of her.

Eli lifted his head and looked in her eyes, and then they both watched the mirror. She arched her back in pleasure, lifted off him until only the head remained inside her, and plunged back down over him. She loved the sight of his thick, warm cock easily sliding into her wet pussy. Each time she did it, her hips were angled so that her clit received maximum contact on both the upward motion as well as the downward slide. Each stroke to her clit drew her closer and closer to climax.

Eli growled softly as his fingertips found her rear opening. The sensation took her by surprise, and her breath left her in a shuddering gasp. He smiled at her with a possessive gleam in his eyes as one of his fingers circled her asshole and pressed insistently at the tight ring of muscles but didn't enter yet. She turned and watched in the mirror as his middle finger slowly stroked that hole while she pumped up and down on him with a

slowly increasing rhythm. Her juices flowed over him, and her clit dragged over his cock with each delicious thrust.

The finger at her puckered opening pressed insistently, and she whispered, "Yours, Eli, all yours."

"Mine," he growled as he cupped her ass and helped her ride him, that finger still pressed against her.

Those tight muscles gave way and relaxed for him as her orgasm loomed over her. Eli's finger slid inside her asshole and Rachel felt like her body shattered into a million sparks of combusting pleasure. She threw her head back and came with a long, rapturous cry of ecstasy and rode each pulse of her orgasm to utter satisfaction. He gripped her ass, thrust deep inside her and held her hips tightly. Eli's head fell back, and he let loose with a loud yell. She clung to him and kissed his throat and his shoulders, glorying in the feel of his immense cock pulsing inside her.

Rachel lay limply against him when he lifted her hips and pulled out. He helped her under the covers with her head on his pillows and went to wash up. When he returned, she lifted the covers for him, and he climbed right on top of her. He covered her with his immense, comforting heat and kissed her tenderly. His cock was already hardening again, and she joyfully spread her legs for him as she watched him stroke himself. The sight of his hands on his cock turned her on, and she reached down to spread her pussy open for him and welcome him inside her. *Yours*. He smiled at her warm invitation and positioned his cock and growled again.

In one slow, sinuous stroke, he impaled her, and she moaned in delight. She lifted her knees and offered herself to him. He held her ankles and gently spread her thighs open wide so he could watch as his cock slid out, dripping with her juices. He plunged back into her, growling with pleasure as he slid to the hilt. She held on to the headboard with one hand and slid the other down her abdomen. She stopped at the top of her mound and looked up at him.

"Yes, angel. Stroke your clit the way you like it. Mmm, I love the sight of those delicate little fingers stroking your pussy."

Her hips began to flex with his movements, and her touch at her clit had her on the verge of another orgasm. He released her ankles, grasped her hips and tilted them, and began thrusting against her sweet spot. Her eyes opened wide at the sudden onslaught of sensation, and she threw her head back,

screaming as her orgasm exploded over her. She arched her back and fucked his cock for all she was worth and came again almost immediately. He grasped her hips tightly as he thrust deep one last time and growled as his release jetted from him.

“Oh, Eli.” She sighed with a shaky breath.

He rested his head beside hers and nuzzled her as he settled carefully over her. She stroked his arms, entwined her legs with his, and loved his encompassing warmth.

Rachel was overwhelmed by the deep attachment and love she felt for him, and a soft sob shuddered from her throat. Tears slid from her eyes and ran over her temples into her hair. He saw them, lifted his head to look into her eyes, and gently thumbed them away.

He kissed her lips tenderly. “Happy tears?”

“Yes.” She nodded. “Happy, joyful, ecstatic, and *in love* tears,” she murmured as she pressed her forehead to his shoulder. “I’m so thankful you didn’t give up on me when I kept turning you down.”

“I wanted you in the worst way, Rachel. There was nothing for me to do *but* persist,” he said with a soft chortle. “I’d still be asking you out today. The wait was worth it, angel.” He wiped her tears as they fell, drew her trembling body to his, and kissed her.

After a few minutes, she shifted under him, and he groaned at the movement and pressed his hips to her. She was amazed by his stamina as his hardening cock stroked her pussy. He rolled onto his back and drew her with him, holding her against his chest.

Nuzzling his pec, she asked, “Will you still...”

“Claim this sweet ass of yours? Yes.”

Chapter Thirty-eight

“How do you feel?” he asked as Rachel ground her pussy against him. The image of him taking her ass bathed her pussy and his still embedded cock in a fresh flood of hot moisture.

Eli chuckled softly and stilled her movements with his warm hands on her hips. “I guess that answers my question,” he murmured pressing himself deeper inside her.

“I’m buzzing from those two flaming orgasms you just gave me.” Rachel smiled contentedly as she received his kiss.

“Flaming, eh?” His fingertips trailed softly up and down her hip, raising goose bumps all over her body and making her shudder with pleasure. “I’m going to let you rest a little while. We have time.” He nuzzled her warm throat.

Rachel snickered softly. “You’re such a gentleman, even when it’s about taking my ass.” She felt his low rumbling laughter vibrate through his chest under her palms. He grasped her ass cheeks gently but possessively.

“I happen to love this sweet ass and plan to take good care of it. Rest for a little while and I’ll stroke your back.”

“I don’t want to fall asleep.”

“I’m not trying to get you to go to sleep, angel. Catch your breath and recover a bit. We’ll play more, don’t worry.”

Eli lifted her hips and pulled out, then helped her to lie on her stomach and stroked her back and her ass while she relaxed. She noticed his play gradually focused more on her ass than her back, and sighed happily when his fingers stroked her cleft from top to bottom. A thought occurred to her.

“Do you think your dad and sister are back from Grace’s yet?” What a time to have to worry about being noisy. Rachel knew she would be screaming like a banshee before he was done. She heard him chuckle softly.

“I’ve been a little preoccupied with the hot woman in my bed. I’ll go check.” Throwing his robe on, Eli left the bedroom for a moment then returned. “They aren’t back yet.” He removed his robe and climbed back into the bed.

He reached for the drawer in his bedside table and removed the tube of personal lubricant and another small pouch. Taking the velvet pouch from him, Rachel peered inside and grinned.

“Another little surprise?” she asked, arching an eyebrow playfully.

He grinned back at her. “I might want to use it on you while we play. Are you game?”

“Hell yeah!” She giggled and handed the pouch back to him and rose up on her knees. Rachel still buzzed from before, but the ache and need were intensifying. She’d looked forward to this for so long, and the moment was *finally* here. He climbed from the bed and went to the foot of it.

“Come to me here then we can use the mirror. You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

Eagerly crawling to him, Rachel turned, then backed to the end of the bed. She could clearly see her profile in the mirror, in perfect position and ready for him. Hot juices flooded her cunt, and the heat and ache got stronger. Tiny pulses rippled in her pussy at the thought of what he was going to do to her, and her ass tingled in anticipation. She couldn’t stifle the little whimpering moan that escaped her lips. His warm fingers caressed her and then dipped into her wet cunt.

“Mmm, angel, your lips are swollen. Are you aching for me?” he asked in a seductive tone that got her even wetter as his fingers stroked her pussy lovingly.

“I want this so much, I *am* aching for you. Please take me.”

“All in good time, angel.”

He smiled at her in the mirror as she watched his hands. He opened the pouch and took out the stimulator. It was an oddly shaped jelly vibrator that tucked inside her pussy and stimulated both her clit and G-spot at the same time. She was getting wetter by the second at the thought of him using it on her tonight.

After lubricating it, he teased her clit with the jelly nubs on the head. A ripple of pleasure raced up her spine at the new sensation. Her pussy

tightened up in excitement when he slid it inside of her and tucked it against her G-spot and her clit simultaneously. Then he turned it on.

“Oh!” She moaned deeply.

She was already so aroused she knew she’d come in less than a minute. The G-spot stimulator had a vibrating egg in it like the one he’d hidden in her luggage for her. It was nailing the perfect spot at the moment and sending delicious vibes to her clit, as well. She was glad nobody else was home because she was about to *scream*.

“Oh! Eli! I’m not going to last! Hold it for me!” Rachel squealed and pushed back against his hand holding the vibrator. She rubbed her clit against the nubs, and the friction brought her to the edge of insanity. The muscles in her cunt began to contract around it as she squeezed tightly and let out a loud, screaming wail. Coming hard on the *mother* of all orgasms, her pussy gushed over his fingers and hand. She rocked on the vibrator as he held it for her. “Oh, *fuck* yes!” She groaned.

“That is one good investment. Damn, baby, you are so hot.” Eli’s voice was strained with lust and desire.

“Oh, *that* is my new favorite toy. That was amazing.” She sighed happily, still breathless.

“Ready for me to take your ass?” he asked, stroking her cleft from pussy to tailbone and back again.

“I’ll beg if you want me to.” Presenting herself in open invitation, Rachel arched her back and wiggled her ass at him.

“Eager, aren’t you?”

“You know I am. I’m ready for you.”

She watched in the mirror as he applied a generous amount of the lubricant to his hard, thick erection. Rachel remembered wondering how he’d fit that enormous monster inside her pussy. Now confident in her body’s ability to handle his size, she knew no fear that he would fit and only a little trepidation when he penetrated her ass the first time. Her confidence in his gentleness went a long way to allay her nerves.

Her pussy pulsed with eagerness as she watched him stroke his shaft and then smoothed the same lubricated hand over her pussy. He applied more lube to his fingers and smoothed it all around her asshole and then applied more directly to the opening, pressing it into her tight channel. He removed

another little toy from it's' pouch after wiping his hands off on a towel and placed it within easy reach on the bed.

“Ready for my cock, angel?”

“So ready, honey.”

She looked in the mirror as Eli lovingly smoothed his hands over her hips. He trailed his fingers down in a light, trembling touch to the cleft of her ass. His fingertips slid through the lubrication to her asshole and swirled in a sensual caress of those overexcited nerve endings. Her pussy throbbed with excitement.

Eli circled her rear opening with one finger, and she closed her eyes and focused on the sensation. She relaxed those muscles and allowed him access to her virgin ass. He growled softly in approval when the muscles obeyed her and gave way to his pressing finger.

He pumped it in and out several times, applied more lubricant to her opening again, and got more of it into her this time. He slid one finger, and then a second, into her ass. Her bottom tingled at the additional stretching, but she accommodated his fingers after a few pumps with ease, sliding in and out with no problem. The tight achiness in her cunt intensified, and the urge to rock against him became insistent.

Rachel moaned in need when he removed his fingers again. He applied more lube inside her opening and slowly slid three fingers into her ass simultaneously. She gasped at the added fullness and the slight burning pinch as he pressed past the opening. Willing her body to accommodate him, she relaxed as he pressed in, twisted his fingers around to thoroughly lubricate her opening, and spread them out a bit. She knew the last thing he wanted was to hurt her, and she was happy he could now see she was ready for this experience with him.

When he slid his fingers from her ass, she tried to follow his hand. “My angel wants my cock bad, doesn't she?”

He pressed the nozzle of the lubricant bottle to her relaxed rear opening and filled it with additional lube to ease his passage deep inside her, as well. Her ass burned from all the intrusions, and her pussy and clit screamed to be invaded at one opening or the other. It didn't matter which.

She begged softly to him. “Eli, please, I need you.”

In the mirror's reflection, Rachel watched as he stroked his stiff cock and placed it at her rear entrance. She moaned at the feel of his blunt head

pressed against her there. He wiped his hands on the towel then gently grasped her hips and placed the pads of his thumbs on either side of her asshole.

Eli's voice trembled slightly. "It may hurt a little, angel. If you want me to slow down, I will. If you can't handle it, please tell me. I would never want to hurt you while making love to you."

Making eye contact with him in the mirror, she could see the intense desire and tenderness in his features. Smiling reassuringly at him, she said, "I love you so much I ache with it right now, Eli. You are the kindest, gentlest man I've ever known. You won't hurt me. I want this so much. Just go slow for my first time?" she asked softly, her cheeks flushing warmly.

"Of course, angel." His voice shook with emotion.

Rachel could hear his breath trembling as he struggled to hold back and not give into the urge to plunge forward, which she knew had to be strong for him. She arched for him to encourage him and willed her bottom to relax against his intrusion.

He gripped her hips and pressed for entry gradually. She watched his massive, proud form in the mirror as he slowly took her ass. Rachel hissed at the heart-pounding sensuality of his gentle pressure as he eased past the tight ring of muscles in her ass. The pain was mixed equally with a burning pleasure like she had *never* experienced when using the plugs. Eli had prepared her well, and she cried out softly in triumph when the thick head slid past the tight barrier.

"Oh, yes, Eli."

"Are you all right?" He stopped his advance and rocked against her gently.

"Oh, Eli, it's *amazing*. Please keep going."

He rocked in a little farther on the advance and pulled out a little, so he was deeper inside her with each thrust. She focused on the reflection in the mirror as he slowly slid into her ass, and like she knew it would, every glorious inch fit.

"Oh, fuck, that is beautiful." He growled deeply.

His huge cock slid in and out of her ass in a slick, sinuous motion as she watched in fascination. Eli's body vibrated with tension, and she could see his glorious muscles rippling with every movement in the mirror. On his features was a mixture of pure pleasure and agony as he loved her in this

erotic way. The glorious sensation of her orgasm stirred within her, and she rocked back on him in a graceful, slow dance with him.

Eli reached over and slid his index finger into the tiny vibrator he'd laid on the bed earlier and flipped it on with a fingertip. He slid that hand over her hip and down to her mound and found her clit and began to stroke alongside it. His fingertip found the swollen, aching bundle of nerves, and the vibrations to her clit were heaven and hell all at once. All she felt was throbbing pleasure as she began bucking against him.

Rachel's cries echoed rapturously in the room and mingled with his. She was unable to stop the rising tide of sensation and unwilling to hold it back. She dove in as she was overcome by her orgasm. Her back arched and her hips rocked as he pumped his hot release into her ass, growling and softly cursing. He grasped her hips hard and thrust deep.

She lifted her head and threw her hair back and watched him in the mirror. Every muscle flexed and rippled powerfully, his head bent forward so his face was hidden by the black curtain of his hair. His big hands were strong but gentle as they held her upper thighs. She savored the pure ecstasy in the sounds he made and felt it, too. She was utterly consumed by him. Consumed *with* him.

Weakly lowering herself onto her elbows, Rachel rested her head against her forearms as he slowly withdrew from her throbbing ass.

He placed his hand on her lower back and helped her to rest on her side. "Stay still for a second, angel. I'll be right back." He came back with a hot, wet washcloth, which he pressed to her tender rear opening. It caused her to hiss in surprise at the heat, but it felt good. He cleansed her opening and wiped away the lubricant as well.

"Does it hurt, angel?" he asked softly, brushing a lock of hair away from her face.

"No, the heat feels good. It just surprised me. I don't think I can move. I have no bones." Her body hummed with satisfaction.

"It'll do that to you. You need to rest now. I'll bet you sleep like a baby tonight."

"I know I will. Now that you're home."

* * * *

Rachel smiled blissfully and moaned when Eli pressed his warm lips against the tender skin of her inner thigh. He palmed her leg open with his warm hand and stroked it soothingly. He licked a wet trail to her damp pussy. How long had he been playing this morning? While she'd slept, Eli had brought her to a full state of arousal, so he must have had plans for her that morning.

Rachel found out a second later when his talented tongue dipped into her wet pussy then licked her from one end of her slit to the other. He flicked playfully at her clit and grinned at her from between her legs. Eyeing her devilishly, he slid a finger into her wet cunt and rubbed that finger over her clit before dipping in again. She sighed happily and spread her legs open wide for Eli as he gently pumped that finger in and out of her. He closed his lips over her clit and suckled on it as she slid her fingertips into his hair, encouraging him wordlessly.

She slid her hand down to her mound and held her outer lips open with her fingers, giving him easier access to lick her as he added another finger and pumped into her over and over. The added friction sent a ripple through her pussy, and she began to move with him, rocking her hips. His warm tongue sent shivers of delight through her as he laved her clit and suckled it, gradually building her arousal to a sweeping crescendo. He added a third finger, and the added fullness sliding into her brought her orgasm crashing down on her. She came with a low, soft, panting moan. When she was through, Eli came to lay by her side, licking his fingers like a little boy with a special treat.

Resting his head on his hand, Eli he stroked her abdomen. "Good morning, my angel," he said in a soft, husky drawl.

She chuckled softly. "*I'll say*. Did you sleep well?"

"Much better than I did the last two nights." He smiled as she stretched contentedly. "How do you feel this morning? Are you sore?"

"Yes, I'm sore, but I wouldn't trade last night for all the coconut cream pie in the world."

"All the—" Eli began to say then got a mischievous little gleam in his eyes. "Coconut cream pie, huh?"

"Mmm-hmm. My *favorite*."

"Oh, the possibilities. Let me get you some ibuprofen." Eli helped her sit up and frowned when she groaned a little, but she smiled at him as she

stood and stretched again. He pulled her into a warm, gentle embrace, and his hands on her body felt too good for words.

* * * *

Eli took them all to breakfast at Taquería Gomez. Elijah and Kelly were already packed up and ready to leave for home early that morning. They talked outside in the parking lot for a few minutes before getting on the road. Eli walked Rachel to her truck, opened the door for her, and thought that she was moving slowly as she carefully climbed into the driver's seat. Gazing into her loving blue eyes, he experienced such pride and satisfaction that his woman would give herself to him in every possible way, but also felt remorse to be the cause of the pain she must be in. He pressed his lips against her cheek and nuzzled her, breathing in her clean, womanly scent.

Her hands strayed over his shoulders and into his hair as she intuitively reassured him, "Not for all the coconut cream pie in the world, Eli. I promise I feel fine," she said to him softly

"I'm working tonight, so you'll have a chance to rest."

"I will. After I come up and spend a little time with you at the club. I'll be fine, Eli," she assure him. "I expected to be this sore after the first time. It won't always be this way." He opened his mouth, about to say there might not be another time, and she pressed her fingertips to his lips. "I'm making you supper tonight at my place. I love you, Eli."

He kissed her, feathering his tongue over hers as his hands slid down to her hips and squeezed gently. "I'll see you this afternoon. I love you, too."

* * * *

"Knock, knock."

Rachel looked up, smiled, and rolled her eyes at Bernice's smirky little grin as she poked her head in the doorway. "Hi. What's up?"

"Something arrived for you," Bernice said in a sing-song voice as she walked into Rachel's office.

Rachel had been working from home for a couple of weeks and was glad to be back at her desk. She had spent the day working through the stacks of paperwork that had accumulated during her medical leave. She'd

come straight into work from breakfast with Eli, Elijah, and Kelly to get an early start on the day.

In her hands, Bernice carried a large vase filled with roses. In contrast to the first bouquet, which had met its sad end in her apartment fire, these were a deep, vivid red except for one flaming orange rose nestled in the center. Bernice placed the vase in front of her on her desk blotter, and Rachel removed the card from its holder, pleased to note that the envelope it was in was still sealed.

“Are they from your fiancé?”

Rachel slipped the card from the envelope.

I think the best kind of love grows from friendship first.

Thank you for trusting me.

Love—Eli

“Yes, they’re from Eli,” Rachel replied softly, enjoying the beautiful aroma of the roses.

Things sure had changed a lot since the last time he’d given her flowers. Bernice sighed dreamily. After the receptionist returned to her desk in the lobby, Rachel took out her cell phone and dialed his number. That man needed to write a book for other men on how to romance a woman. *Chapter Ten: How to thank your woman for letting you take her ass.*

“Hello, angel.”

“Hi, yourself, handsome.”

* * * *

Eli opened her front door and inhaled a delicious aroma. He grinned as his empty stomach responded with a growl, and his mouth watered. He could hear a noise but didn’t see her. He called out as he closed the front door and thought he heard a muffled response from the kitchen. He noticed her roses sitting in their vase on her kitchen counter and grinned when he found her on her hands and knees, rearranging the interior of a cabinet. Her winsome little heart-shaped ass was stuck in the air as she reached deep in the cabinet.

“Hi, baby!” she said in a strained, muffled voice. “How was your day?”

Eli leaned against the counter for a few seconds to enjoy the pretty sight. Her snug jeans accentuated her shapely ass and her strong thighs. A deep growl in his chest accompanied the possessive feeling he experienced on a regular basis when he was around her.

Mine.

“It’s a damn sight better now.” He squatted down beside her, wondering how she’d felt during the day. She backed up from the cabinet, wiped a lock of hair from her face, and smiled serenely at him.

“Hi, handsome.” She leaned toward him and kissed him then began to back away from the cabinet to stand. She had a glass lid in her hand. He stood and helped her to her feet.

Rachel smiled up at him sweetly when he wrapped his arms around her and laid a warm, so-happy-to-be-home kiss on her lips.

“How are you feeling, angel?”

“Much better. I got a massage this afternoon. It helped with my sore muscles, and I’m feeling better *everywhere else*, too.”

“I’m glad to hear it. Something smells good.”

“Supper will be ready in a few minutes. It’s in the oven right now. I hope you like King Ranch Chicken.”

“I love it. I hope you made a bunch.”

“Enough for leftovers if you want them.”

“Come sit with me.”

He pulled her by the hand into the living room. She followed him and climbed into his lap after he sat. He cuddled her to him and gently squeezed her, enjoying the way she melted against him and rested her head on his chest with a soft, happy sigh.

He strummed his fingers over her ribs. “I want you to rest tonight, okay, angel? *Okay?*”

He wanted to carry her to bed, strip her, and tuck her in under the sheets and blankets. Then he wanted wrap himself around her and watch over her as she slept. The caveman approved of his plan. She brought out all his territorial instincts.

Giggling softly, she said, “Eli, it’s not that bad. I mean, I don’t plan on asking for anal sex again for at least a week or so. But if you insist, we can lay off for tonight.”

“Tell you what,” he said, hiding a grin, because he knew damn good and well he’d give her whatever she wanted. “You be a good girl, and we’ll see.”

She rubbed her cheek against his chest and stroked his pec slowly. “What if I’m not a good girl?”

Damn, he loved when she used that whispery seductive voice on him.

“Well, I think we’ve established you might need to be punished. I wouldn’t spank you right now for obvious reasons, but I could tie you down with your new bondage sashes and have my wicked way with you.”

“Well, I guess I’ll just have to take my chances and make it worth the punishment if I misbehave.”

If. Yeah, right.

There was no *if*, and Eli knew it. It was more like *when*. She’d called him that afternoon to thank him for the roses and mentioned that she’d been thinking about what they’d talked about the night Joseph Hazelle had been in the club. She’d also hinted that now her arm was out of its cast and healed up nicely, perhaps she’d like to play a little. Her exact words had been, “I’m feeling rather naughty these days.”

Eli growled, imagining all the ways she would find to be naughty, and said, “No misbehavior tonight. Right now, I’m fighting the urge to go tuck you into bed and feed you supper there. I’ll do anything you want to, but not tonight.”

“I promise to be good and rest tonight. I don’t like to see you so worried about me,” she clasped her fingers with his and gave him a wicked little grin, “but I’m intrigued that you’ve been thinking about my new bondage sashes. Will you tie me up sometime soon?” she asked keenly.

He couldn’t suppress a chuckle at her eagerness. “Would you like that?”

“Like it? I *need* it!” she said enthusiastically.

“Well, angel, I am all about meeting your needs.”

* * * *

After Eli left for work, Rachel cleaned up the supper mess and delivered leftovers to Eli’s refrigerator then changed clothes and dolled herself up. After fixing her makeup and hair, she put on the little black dress Eli liked

so much then slipped on the new shoes she'd found the weekend before. He hadn't seen the shoes yet, but she thought he was going to like them, *a lot*.

Looking in the mirror, she liked what she saw. Yes, the dress fit her well, but she also liked the twinkle she saw in her eyes and the glow in her cheeks. Rachel was happy, and it showed on her face and in how she carried herself. She slipped into her soft fleece leopard print coat and put her wallet and lipstick into her evening bag.

When she pulled up to the parking lot, she was surprised by how many cars were there for a Monday. She found a parking space and walked across the lot to the sidewalk along the front of the club. Rachel was excited, she felt beautiful, and she couldn't wait to see Eli. It had only been an hour since he left, but she already longed for him. Her phone vibrated inside her evening bag, and she stopped on the sidewalk to check it. It was a text from Kelly with a picture of Matthew in his little baby bath seat, soap bubbles piled on his head. The message said:

*Hiya, Auntie Rachel!
See me in my bath?
I love you!
Matthew*

As Rachel took a few seconds to reply to the message, several men pushed open the club door and stepped out. She looked up briefly as they walked toward her. They must have come in straight from work because they still wore their work uniforms. One of them looked familiar, and she automatically looked down at the name *Reese* embroidered on his work shirt. Lowering her eyes to her phone, Rachel felt her heart jump into her throat. She did her best to not react visibly. She wouldn't give him that satisfaction.

One of the other men said, "Mmm, maybe we should've stayed. Look at that, would ya? Like to get me some of that." *Wow. Charming and smooth.*

She gritted her teeth as Reese snickered repulsively and said plainly so she could hear him, "Had me some of that a few years back, Tommy. How you doing, Rachel, honey?" Chills and gooseflesh raced over her skin as she stood frozen to the spot. He snickered. "Nice and fresh, too. Did her a favor and popped her little cherry for her."

The others laughed, and Rachel watched them look back at her speculatively in the reflection of the window before her. She closed her phone, her heart pounded and icy, cold chills raced over her skin. She tried to swallow the lump in her throat and couldn't because her mouth had gone bone-dry. The door was less than ten feet away. Taking several slow deep breaths, she forced her feet to move as he continued his nasty story. She reached with cold fingers for the door. Inside the club, she didn't feel so exposed, so vulnerable. Her friends were here and this was Eli's territory, so to speak. Pausing inside the doorway, she braced herself against the wall for a minute. She tried to calm her breathing and slow her heart rate.

Chapter Thirty-nine

Rachel felt his big, protective presence beside her and looked up into his handsome face. His knuckles grazed her chin, and he peered at her with concern.

“Angel? Are you all right? Mike said you were out here. He said it looked like something was wrong. What is it, angel?” He pulled her to him and then said seriously, “Rachel, you’re trembling hard. What happened?”

The strong, independent nature in her wanted to keep this to herself. She’d already dealt with it, gotten over it, and moved on. No good could come from involving Eli. It was old history. Since falling in love with him, she was learning that dependent was not all bad, nor was independent all good. Balance had changed her perspective. She could admit that she loved having a freaking huge alpha male for a fiancé, one who made it clear he’d fight battles for her. A tiny primal cavewoman spark flared inside of her, and the shaking stopped.

Reaching for him when he leaned to her, Rachel wrapped her arms around his neck and hugged him hard.

“Did something happen just now?” he asked, confusion and worry showing on his face.

“Yes, but you’re working, and I don’t want you distracted with my issues. Later tonight will be soon enough. Right now, I need a stiff drink and to hold on to your hand for a little while. I’ll tell you all about it later, but for right now, just be with me?” she asked, her heart beating with intense love and passion for the man standing with her. “I love you like crazy, Eli Wolf.”

“I love you, too, angel. Let me see you,” he said appreciatively as he released her and looked her over.

Untying the belt on her coat, she allowed it to slide down her arms. She draped it over a forearm and modeled for him. He gave her an admiring grin and said, "You look beautiful tonight."

His eyes trailed down to her feet, and she gave herself a mental fist pump when she saw them open wide at the sight of her high-heeled black pumps. What was it about that school-girl style combined with five-inch heels that drove men wild? She didn't get it, but she felt victorious nonetheless at the little beads of sweat that popped out on his upper lip.

"Holy shit, you have no idea how hot you are in those heels," Eli growled. She did a little turn and modeled for him to give him the full effect.

"A woman loves knowing she's dressed in a way that affects her man so...viscerally." She moved close to him and brushed her abdomen ever so slightly against his bulging cock, which was becoming more noticeable by the moment.

He growled low. "You're playing with fire, little girl."

"I might get burned?"

"You torture me."

She shook her head and murmured, "I love you."

"Let's get you that drink before I nail you right here in the entryway." He grinned at her, but she could tell he was a little concerned for her by the look in his eyes. He was patient with her, though, and did not press her for any more answers.

Eli ordered her a mixed drink from Quinten, and she sipped it slowly while she quietly visited with Eli and Mike. Eli talked about the hunt and told them that Ethan planned on roasting both pigs, one on a spit and the other one Yucatan style, in an in-ground pit. Ethan came and visited with them for a while and chatted enthusiastically about digging and arranging the pit for the roast.

Rachel saw a lot of people she knew and asked Eli if he would mind if she went and mingled for a little bit. He drew her to him and embraced her gently then smiled and told her to go have fun. She took her purse and made a stop in the ladies' room first.

Besides all the lewd gossip she usually heard in the restroom when the club was busy like tonight, there were a few stray remarks about the handsome hunk working the door. She rolled her eyes and gave herself another mental fist pump when the talk didn't faze her all that much. Now,

if one of the bimbos put her hands on Eli tonight, Rachel was liable to lose it, but they could talk all they wanted. She was the one he would come home to. Two women were talking over the bathroom stalls to each other about him, not even trying to be discreet.

One of Rachel's friends looked down the counter at her and rolled her eyes. Rachel smiled and shrugged as she refreshed her lip liner. She didn't comment at all but saved her energy for anyone who acted on what they talked about.

Rachel left the bathroom to mingle and visit with friends. Rosemary showed up during the evening, and Rachel gave her an enthusiastic hug. "You look like royalty dressed like that, Rosemary."

Always one to spit in the face of convention, Rosemary was dressed in all white tonight. From her polished white cowgirl boots to her jeans and white silk western top. The contrast with her long, curly black hair made her stand out in the crowd even more. Her ivory complexion, violet-blue eyes, and dark red lip color reminded Rachel of a china doll's.

"Why thank you, Rachel. You're not so bad yourself. How are wedding plans coming?"

Rachel chuckled easily. "Kelly and Grace have taken the reins. My dress is supposed to be ready this week sometime. I sure did enjoy the lingerie shower last weekend."

"Mmm, me, too! Such *excellent* service we had, huh?" She winked at Rachel.

"Stellar, and so thoughtful, too."

They spoke for a few minutes, and then Rosemary went in search of Bernadette and some other friends who were meeting her there. Rachel wondered if Wes and Evan would put in an appearance tonight.

Rachel mingled through the club and caught up with other friends she had not seen since before the accident. A little later in the evening, she encountered Adam and Jack talking to Ace Webster and Rosemary's friend Kathleen Stevens, who must have come in recently, as well. Jack saw her coming, and the men stood to greet her.

"Hello, Rachel. You sure are lookin' pretty tonight," Jack said and kissed her cheek.

"Thank you, Jack. You're such a sweet talker. Hello, Adam." She hugged them both. "Everyone is looking forward to the bonfire and roast this weekend. Rosemary told me she and the boys will be there."

"Oh, good. Grace was hoping they would come over," Adam replied. "Grace was looking for you when she came in, but she brought supper for Ethan, so they're in the office at the moment. She should be out in a bit."

"Ace and Kathleen are going to be at the house this weekend, too," Jack added.

Rachel smiled at Jack's reference to them as a couple. More of Grace's work, no doubt. "Good! The more the merrier."

"We may have to add a third pig by the time Grace is done inviting people." Adam grinned indulgently.

"Will you tell Grace I'm looking for her when she comes out of the office?" Rachel asked. "I need to go check in with Eli. I've been wandering around for a while, and I don't want him to feel *neglected*," she said teasingly.

"We can't be having any of that, now can we?" Jack said with a crooked smile. He gestured with his dark head toward the front of the club. "He looks like he's got his hands full right now."

Eli was surrounded by a small group of big-haired blondes. They were flirting and talking with him, and Rachel could hear the giggling from across the room. They must have just come in. She didn't recognize any of them.

Rachel smirked at Jack and Adam, and they promised to pass the message on to Grace. She stopped at the bar and asked for a Coke from Quinten, who also slid her a shot of tequila for Eli and winked at her.

"On Ethan," he said softly and wiped down the bar.

She thanked him and lifted the glasses and made her way to her poor beleaguered sweetheart. She caught his eye as she sauntered toward him, moving slowly, allowing him to look his fill. The heat and love in his eyes did her heart good.

There were only four of them this time, so she had no trouble wading through the group. She placed her glass and evening bag on Eli's table and then turned to him to give him his shot. Three of them looked like nice enough women, but she noticed one of them looked her dead in the eye and slid the back of her hand over Eli's biceps in an inviting caress.

Eli ignored her touch, reached for Rachel, and gave her a loving, wet kiss. As he did so, she maintained unwavering eye contact with the forward blonde and slowly slid her hand up the same arm and over his biceps. Her right hand stopped and caressed the spot the woman had touched. Her engagement ring sparkled in the light.

Eli said, "Girls, this is my fiancée, Rachel."

Rachel continued to stare at the other woman until she averted her eyes and backed away slightly. Rachel turned to one of the other women, a petite blonde, who behaved more circumspectly, and said, "I love your dress. I noticed that table of guys over there was checking you all out a few seconds ago. They're all single. The one with the white hat is a nice guy and a good dancer, if you came to dance." Then she turned back to the other blonde, who was staring daggers at her, and continued, "But if you've come to 'horn in' on couples, I gotta tell you, this isn't the place for you."

The woman had the decency to blush, so Rachel turned back to the blonde she'd addressed before. "See? He's looking right at you. I'll bet he's going to ask you to dance. He's kind of a hero to the ladies around here, but he's a little shy."

The blonde smiled at Brice Huvell, and he smiled back then excused himself from the table of men where he sat and approached the front as the women watched. The little blonde blushed a little and glanced uncertainly at Rachel.

"Brice is very nice. He'll treat you like a *lady*." As she said the word lady, she glanced back at the other blonde pointedly, before checking Brice's progress crossing the club. "Oh! Here come two more. Looks like your dance partners have arrived," Rachel said, winking at Brice, Andy, and Vince as they made their way over to help Rachel extricate Eli from the friendly women's attentions. What good guys.

Eli introduced Brice to the sweet little blonde whose name was Corina Scott, and he asked her politely to dance with him. Within the minute, they were all gone, including the pushy blonde, who sauntered over to the bar partnerless to get a drink while all her friends danced.

"Angel, you are a force of nature." Eli chuckled and kissed her cheek.

"Thank you, honey. I just made three new friends. That other one? *Meh*," she said with a shrug and a little wave of her hand.

"You handled that with real class, angel." He nuzzled her throat. "Are you having fun?"

"Yes, did you see Rosemary Piper when she came in earlier?" Rachel asked happily.

"I think the safer question would be to ask who *didn't* see her. Even if she weren't dressed all in white, she would be glowing, judging by the smile on her face when she found her men over at their table."

"They all look so happy together. It's sweet. Do you get a break tonight?"

"Yeah, I was fixing to come carry you onto the dance floor."

"Don't worry, big man. I'll go willingly anywhere you want me to," she said with a suggestive arch of her eyebrow.

He cleared his throat and told Mike he was taking a break.

After he had her in a close embrace on the dance floor, he whispered, "I don't know what it is about those shoes, but every time I look at you in them, I get hard as a freakin' rock."

"I noticed that you seemed to like them," she murmured. "Wait until I dance for you in them." Encouraged by his low growl, she added, "Maybe I'll wear them the next time you fuck me." Sliding her fingers into the hair at the nape of his neck, Rachel stroked tenderly, and asked, "Does this qualify as bad behavior?"

"Nuh-uh. This is good behavior, just bad timing. I want you to rest tonight," he said firmly as he led her in the dance.

"I won't tease you anymore, Eli. But remember I can have these shoes on and be ready and waiting in two minutes." She smiled and held up two fingers, giving him a naughty little grin.

"Bad girl," he drawled and squeezed her to him.

Brice and Corina twirled by and looked lost in a little world of their own as they gazed into each other's eyes.

Rachel nodded toward the couple. "That looks promising."

"He and Ethan have been talking a lot the last few weeks. I think some of Ethan's charm and manners may be rubbing off on Brice."

"Good for him," Rachel said, genuinely hoping this was the clean slate Brice needed in his life. It was hard to change a person's image in a small town when everyone knew them.

Eli's hands slid up to her shoulder blades and then down over her hips to the upper swell of her ass and squeezed her gently. "I love you, angel. You make me a very happy man, you know that?"

Rachel tilted her head up to him as he leaned down and kissed her tenderly on the lips, stroking her tongue gently with his. A delicious burn began in her clit, a fire kindled by his hands on her and stoked by his kiss and sweet words. He stroked her hips and waist, and his thumbs slid up the sides of her abs lightly in that tickling touch that drove her crazy. Her shuddering gasps against his lips made him smile in satisfaction, and he squeezed her tightly to him when her hips tilted reflexively and pressed against his stiff cock inside his leathers.

"I love you, too, Eli," she murmured dreamily when he released her lips. "You make me feel so..."

"Beautiful? Desirable? Hot? Wet?"

"You have such power over me. With just a look or a touch, you've got me panting and ready," she said softly, her cheek pressed to his chest as they moved smoothly over the dance floor.

He traced his warm hands down her lower back to the top of her ass, and he held her against him securely as they danced to Thompson Square's "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not." His cock grew very rigid against her abdomen and Rachel looked up when she heard him groan faintly.

"What are you thinking about right now?" *As if I don't already know.*

He tilted his head to her and whispered, "I'm fantasizing about you wearing those shoes while we fuck."

To the others it would look like they were having a quiet conversation as they danced in a close embrace. Rachel hoped they maintained that appearance because she had a feeling he had more than a few words to share about his fantasy and his sexy voice already had her pussy clenching.

"I want you to wear those shoes and the G-string with the little ties on the sides. I'm going to light candles and put them on the back deck late one night so we can enjoy fucking outside."

Oh, yes, please tell me more.

"I'll lay back in one of the loungers and watch you come to me with that sexy walk of yours."

His splayed fingers pressed on her ass, his leather clad thigh slid easily over the smooth knit fabric that covered her mound, and the ache in her clit increased.

Rachel rewarded his efforts with a soft moan she hoped only he could hear. He timed his words well as the dancers transitioned into the next song, “Who Are you When I’m Not Looking” by Blake Shelton.

Eli’s lips brushed her temple as he spoke softly to her. “You’re going to straddle the lounge I’m lying in with your back to me, bend over and give me your pussy to play with. I’m going to put you on my lap, with your legs spread wide outside of mine, and your back to me, and slide my cock into your sweet cunt and let you ride me while I play with your clit until you come.”

The tip of his tongue stroked the outer shell of her ear, and he whispered, “But I’m not going to come yet.”

Maybe not, baby, but I’m about to come right now!

“I’m going to pull out of you and turn you so you face me on the padded lounge. I’ll slide my cock into your little pussy, in one hard stroke.” For a second he pressed her to his erection firmly.

Rachel knew it was impossible, but she felt it just as he said it.

“Then, I’m going to take the vibrator you’ve brought with you and slide it into your luscious, tight ass.” He slid a finger down the her cleft and every nerve ending in her asshole fired to life. “Then, while I fuck your hot wet pussy, I’ll pump the vibrator in and out with my strokes until you scream and come for me.”

He pressed again as he spoke,

“I’ll let you ride me until you climax once more because I love hearing all those sweet sexy sounds you make.” His thigh brushed her mound again. The mention of how much he enjoyed listening to her nearly had her coming right there on the dance floor.

“I’m going to fill you with my cum and watch it drip from your pussy in the candlelight when I pull out of you. Then I’m going to take you inside and start all over again.”

Oh, yes, please more!

“So now you know what I was thinking about,” Eli said with a sexy chuckle.

A low, erotic moan slipped from her lips. "Oh, Eli." She laid her head against his chest as her body throbbed with desire. "You're amazing."

"I could say the same thing about you, angel. I could feel the tension in your body build up as I held you. You want to come really bad right now, don't you?"

Her pussy clenched in affirmation and she nodded against his chest and sighed.

"I love listening to the little aroused sounds you make, angel. So quiet, so sexy and intense. When I get home, I'm going to make you come so hard you see stars." Eli squeezed her to him and groaned. "Damn, you feel good."

Rachel wanted to do a giggling happy dance as she noticed his earlier declaration that they should lay off for tonight seemed to have been laid aside.

"So do you." Chuckling, Rachel couldn't help but notice the erection currently pressed against her abdomen as they danced. It was a good thing the club was dimly lit, otherwise everyone there would know what Eli was thinking about.

After the dance, they mingled around the club for a few minutes, talking with friends. Rachel was distracted the whole time by the way her body tingled and hummed all over. When they came near the restroom, Rachel excused herself for a few minutes.

Boy, did Eli have the ability to strum her body to a screaming fever pitch. His words and touch had left her soaking wet with her juices, and aching to be fucked. While she was drying her hands, Corina Scott and one of her friends came giggling into the restroom. Corina had a pretty glow in her pale ivory cheeks.

"Oh! Hey, Rachel! I am so glad you introduced me to Brice. He's waiting for me outside right now. I think he's so handsome." Corina blushed with pleasure.

Rachel smiled. "You're welcome. He's a nice guy and I'm glad he's being good to you. What about Andy and Vince?" she asked the other girl.

"Oh, they're out there, too. We're having fun dancing with them, but Brice only has eyes for Corina. It's about time that life dealt you some happiness, sweetie." That comment made Rachel wonder about Corina's story. Looking in her eyes, Rachel had the impression that Corina had been

through a lot in her life. Though she was young, there were bluish hints of dark circles under her eyes and she seemed a little fragile, physically.

"He told me I was pretty," Corina said dreamily and another pink blush stole over her cheeks.

"Well, you are, and your face is glowing," Rachel told her honestly.

"Listen, Rachel," Corina said, watching the door. "Our co-worker, Sandra, the one who put her hand on your fiancé? She's not really a friend. She overheard at work that we were coming out here and invited herself along."

"Oh, that's okay. I've gotten used to dealing with persistent women where Eli is concerned. I'm glad you like it here. I have a friend I want to introduce you to later. I think you'd like Grace a lot."

Corina said she'd watch for her. Rachel stepped out of the restroom and spotted Eli talking with Brice. Eli smiled when he caught a glimpse of her. For a night out that started as one of the worst on record, it was shaping up very well.

* * * *

Eli looked up from his conversation with Brice Huvell, as Rachel reentered the hallway from the ladies' room, and admired her as she closed the distance between them. Her eyes twinkled as she slipped her arm around his waist, and Eli said, "I was just telling Brice how to get out to the Divine Creek Ranch. He got an invite from Grace for him *and* a date."

"Oh? You should ask Corina, Brice. She's sweet and pretty, too, don't you think?"

"I sure do, Rachel." Brice nodded and looked down as if he didn't know if he should say more.

"Well, I guess we'll see you on the dance floor, Brice." Eli took Rachel's soft hand, nodded to Brice, and led her toward the front of the club.

He squeezed her to him. "How are you doing?"

Rachel's face was radiant as she gazed up at him and tilted her cheek into his caressing palm. "I'm heavenly."

Eli's cock twitched in response to the sexy tone of her voice. *I'll say.*

"Wow, that good?" He smiled with satisfaction when she said nothing more, only nodded and burrowed closer to him. Eli enjoyed the feel of her

womanly, soft, fragrant body pressed closely to his. He looked down at her in his arms and noticed her lip trembled. “You’re my whole life, angel.”

“Aw, you two are just the sweetest things,” Grace said as she walked up to where they stood at the front. “Have you been *having fun* on the dance floor?”

“Lots of fun,” Rachel said, glancing up at Eli and giggling, before asking her, “Have you put in a song request?”

“Two songs, back to back. Ethan is up in the booth right now.” Grace pointed to him and waved when Ethan looked over at her. He blew her a kiss and put his hand over his heart. She kissed her fingers and waved back. “Can I borrow her, Eli?”

“Sure, Grace.” He kissed Rachel’s temple and whispered, “Did you tell her what we were talking about on the dance floor?”

Rachel smiled suggestively and replied, “No, of course not. But I think she has radar. You can imagine *how* she might know. She says Ethan is a *wonderful* dancer. What? TMI?” She snickered and said, “*Ooops!* I promised to be good, didn’t I?”

“Oh, you’re *good* all right.” He kissed her again. “Dance for me, angel.”

She looked at him with pure lust in her eyes and gave him a sexy smile. “*Only* for you.”

Chapter Forty

“Hillbilly Bone” by Blake Shelton and Trace Adkins began to play. In fascination, Eli watched her hips sway as she walked away in those killer shoes. She looked back at him like she knew he’d be watching and glanced down at the fly of his leathers.

Damn. He could feel the heat of her gaze on his crotch, and his eager cock pulsed in response. The heavy beat and raunchy guitar rhythm had both women swinging their hips as they stepped on the dance floor, where they were joined by other couples and individuals.

He would be hard-pressed to explain why the sight of her pretty little feet perched so high on those sexy heels had such a visceral, primal effect on his libido, but they did. All Eli could imagine was the scene from his earlier-spoken fantasy with her holding the arms of the lounge on the back deck, straddling the frame of the chair with her long, luscious legs spread wide and her pussy presented for him, ready and waiting. The thought made his erection throb for her soft warmth to sink into. And she hadn’t even begun to *really* dance yet. Damn, but she had a way with him.

He noticed several men, business-suit types, at a table near the dance floor nudge each other as Grace and Rachel began to dance. Rosemary bounced out onto the dance floor with them, and then three of the little blondes from the scene at the door earlier came and danced with them, too. He watched the men and read their body language and the looks of lust on their faces. Slowly moving through the groups at the tables, Eli took a position midway to the dance floor and near their table. There were other couples on the dance floor, but all the girls with Rachel and Grace danced together in a group.

His eyes were drawn to the hypnotic sway of Rachel’s hips as they moved to the slow, driving beat of the song. She slid her hands down her ribs, over her hips and around to her ass.

Tonight he could tell she *truly* didn't care what anyone else in that club thought of the way she danced. Rachel's eyes were closed most of the time when she wasn't watching him playfully across the room. He always felt protective and watchful when she danced, but he knew tonight she needed him to watch over her and protect her so she could have her fun.

Rachel smiled when she saw he had moved closer through the tables toward her side of the dance floor. She shimmied and dipped down, rolling her hips. She slid the backs of her fingers over her ribs and the sides of her breasts upward into her hair. That was a move he was particularly fond of, and he knew *she* knew it, too.

He was distracted by movement from the table of men, who he could see were enthusiastically enjoying the girls' dancing. One of them was even waving a dollar bill. The girls ignored them, and one of the men rose from his seat and began to make his way toward the edge of the dance floor, *toward Grace*. She hadn't noticed him yet. *Shit*. A split second before Eli made his move, he saw Ethan step up to the man.

Eli hadn't even realized it when Ethan came to stand near him, watching over the girls also. Ethan wanted his customers to have a good time, but not *that* good, especially where *his* woman was concerned. The poor guy had come to within a couple of feet of Grace when Ethan clapped a hand down on his shoulder and spoke in his ear. The man threw his hands up immediately in a gesture of surrender and backed away at the look in Ethan's eyes. Eli grinned, relieved he wasn't the only one with a fucking Neanderthal residing in his psyche.

The men at that table settled down when they realized they'd been mistaken in thinking the girls were dancing to entertain them. Ethan approached the table and shook hands with a couple of them, pointed at the group of girls, then gestured at the other territorial looking men positioned around the dance floor.

Every one of those girls was being watched over by the object of her affections and was not available for their enjoyment. Ethan hailed a waitress and ordered them complimentary drinks to soothe any feelings of disappointment. Eli smiled, thinking how smooth Ethan was at his job because none of the girls was ever aware of what could have become an ugly scene if the men had touched one of them. He thought Grace might

have had an inkling as she glanced over at Ethan, then at Eli. He smiled at her, and she went back to her fun.

The other men relaxed visibly and went back to watching their ladies but moved protectively closer to the dance floor. The girls were safer than if they'd been inside Fort Knox. The final chorus thumped, hips were swaying, and shiny curls bobbing as Eli reached the edge of the dance floor. The girls laughed and blew kisses at their happily tortured men, ignoring the others who watched appreciatively.

Another song began as Trace Adkins's grinning face appeared on the video monitor over the bar. The girls all cheered for Ethan, who had a knack for picking songs for Grace to dance to. They began to dance to the slightly faster beat as "Honky Tonk Badonkadonk" played good and loud.

Rachel put her hands on her hips and shook her moneymaker, edging slowly through the group until she was directly in front of Eli. She danced right up to him and even brushed him with her breasts as he stood perfectly still. His cock pounded against his fly as he watched her tempting erotic movements. Rachel shimmied all the way down facing him, eye level with his cock, then moved slowly back up, brushing against him again as if she were a professional exotic dancer.

His woman was incredibly beautiful and sensual in her movements and his throbbing, insistent cock was negotiating with his weakening resolve like crazy. Moving like this, she *had* to feel better. She was so tempting in that dress, and he noticed the shoes again, and *fu-huck* his determination truly began to crumble. How she even stayed upright with her heels perched so precariously high, her legs looking ten feet long, was beyond him. *Damn!*

Rachel turned her back to him again and shimmied her ass within inches of the erection she'd made eye contact with moments earlier when she'd dipped for him. Eli stood through the song, hands on his hips, watching her and tightly reigning in his control.

As the last chorus began to play, she became bolder, smiling at him and giving him a come-hither look over her shoulder. She allowed her luscious ass to *accidentally* bump against his thighs as she dipped again. She turned without ever rubbing against his erection, because she wasn't *that* cruel, and faced him. Placing her hands on his abs, Rachel and her hands up and over his pecs as she moved with the beat.

She dipped and rolled her hips again, sliding her hands over his shoulders. Of their own volition, his hands reached for her hips and stroked over them, grasping gently as she swished them in front of him. His fingers slid over her ass as she moved. *Fuck*, but she was hotter than hell tonight!

As the song faded, she smiled up at him, and her fingers trailed down to his hips, her movements slowing until she breathlessly allowed him to pull her into his arms.

He growled in her ear as the club cheered the girls' efforts. "You are the *hottest* fucking thing in this place, Rachel. You're not leaving my side the rest of the time you're here. I don't want to have to kill anyone tonight. Damn, but you're beautiful. You and the other girls are going to have to stay near your men tonight, or there are going to be fights breaking out all over the club."

Rachel's eyes glowed with blue fire as she looked up at him. "You're not mad, are you? That I danced so suggestively for you? I really let go."

"I *know*, and, *no*, I'm not mad at you. But any man comes near you and he's liable to lose a limb or worse." He gently pulled her to him, and they walked back to the front. Eli ordered her another Coke after he helped her into her chair and smiled down into her radiant face. "Now, how am I supposed to let you leave by yourself tonight?" he asked, hands on his hips, standing in front of her.

"Don't think about it right now. I'm not leaving for a while. It's only nine o'clock," she said, checking her watch.

Not for the first time, Eli wondered how his jobs and his odd hours would affect their lives. He enjoyed working for Ethan and Ben a lot. Most of the time, Eli felt like he worked *with* them and not *for* them. Rachel never complained about his hours as a bouncer or the challenges inherent to that line of work, trusting in his abilities. If anything, she seemed to have more of a problem with the tower climbing work. Maybe down the road changes in work would come, but for now, he didn't want to rush into more. The next item on their agenda was a change of address.

Rachel had cleared a little time off on Wednesday afternoon, and they made an appointment with a friend of Rachel's who was a real estate agent. She had a list of properties to show them, some with houses and others without that they could build on. This was where the tower work came in so

handy. He charged premium rates for climbing, and that money would help make building a home of their own a reality that much quicker.

Rachel leaned against him as he sat next to her, and he kissed the top of her head, breathing in her beautiful womanly scent. She looked up at him and smiled. "I finished the novel today."

"You did? Congratulations, that was fast!" he said admiringly as he kissed her forehead and hugged her.

"It literally flew from my fingertips once I got started. After I re-read it and check it for errors, I'm going to submit it for publication and see what happens from there."

"My wife, the bestselling author," he said, looking down at her proudly.

"That sounds heavenly coming from you. Calling me your wife like that. No one has ever called me a writer, either."

Eli didn't pretend to be interested in her career as a writer. He did care and loved seeing her live out her life-long dream. He laced his fingers in hers, and they chatted with Mike about his wife and kids and the wedding.

* * * *

Across the club, Ethan looked on with amusement as he kept an eye out for Rachel's approach while Grace and the girls planned a bachelorette party for her. Grace had her phone to her ear, brainstorming with Kelly. Rosemary, Kathleen, and even Corina, who Grace had taken under her wing because of Brice's clear interest in her, sat together at Grace's table all in cahoots with each other. Ethan considered Brice his friend, and so for Grace it was only natural to go ahead and claim the little sweetheart who had caught his eye as one of *the girls*.

Grace looked at Ethan speculatively then winked at him and blew him an air kiss. "I don't know. He's right here. I'll ask. No, I can't ask Mike. He's over talking with Eli and Rachel right now. Let me ask. Hold on."

Ethan drew closer to her, and she asked, "Are there going to be strippers at Eli's bachelor party? Kelly says no strippers for our party if you aren't hiring one for Eli."

Ethan shrugged and looked at Adam and Jack. "What do you think?" He didn't want to get crossways with Rachel, but he knew they'd keep Eli out

of trouble. “What if we went to a strip club instead of hiring a specific stripper?” he asked.

She returned the phone to her ear, repeated his question, then nodded and looked up. “What if we took Rachel out to Morehead and did the same thing? What would Eli say?”

Ethan thought about it for a second. He somehow doubted Eli would have a problem, but on one condition. “What if one of us went with your group and one of you went with our group, sort of as chaperones? Plus, that way, you would have a man to watch over you and keep you safe. We could hire a limousine, so none of you had to drive.”

“I like that idea!” Grace said with a twinkle in her eye. “But how do we choose? All of us want to go to the party.” She didn’t like the thought of anyone missing out on the fun.

“Oh, I think whoever goes as a chaperone will be shown a good time, but we could draw straws,” Ethan suggested.

“No need. I’ll volunteer to go with them,” Adam said, grinning at Grace as she smiled devilishly at him and then winked.

Ethan had a feeling Adam was willing because he wanted to watch over Grace as much as Rachel and not because he planned to enjoy the bachelorette party. Although, Grace did have a way of making *everything* fun. Shit, maybe he should have volunteered for chaperone duty.

“Good,” Ethan said. “Then you pick someone from your group to come with us. We’ll keep her safe and make sure she enjoys herself, too. She can keep an eye on Eli for Rachel while Adam watches over Rachel. Fair enough?”

Grace repeated the idea into the phone and then nodded at them. “Okay, I’ll call you with a date. Yes, I’ll get Erin to babysit for you. What?” She listened and looked up at Ethan, fighting back laughter, and asked him, “Were you going to let Erin come to the bachelorette party?” At his bulgy-eyed look, she snickered. “I thought not. Um, no, Erin won’t be in on all the hot stripper fun. I’ll call her and arrange it. Love you, too! Bye! All right,” she said to the group, “all we have to do is pick one of the ladies to go with the guys to the gentlemen’s club. I think I know who fits that bill *perfectly*, too.” She chuckled and tapped her fingernail on the screen of her phone again.

“Hey, Charity, ever been to a gentleman’s strip club? Wanna go? I thought you’d say that, you kinky thing!” Grace rolled her eyes and laughed. “Yes, you can wear *whatever* you want!”

* * * *

An hour later, Eli walked Rachel out to her truck in the parking lot. There was a light chill in the air, and he drew her close to his side when she shivered. Glancing around for anyone lurking in the parking lot, he unlocked and opened her door for her. He helped her into the truck and smoothed his hand over her silky, voluptuous calf.

“You were something else tonight, angel.” He drew a fingertip under her bottom lip before he leaned down and kissed her soft lips lightly. Her warm little tongue flicked out playfully and licked his bottom lip then sucked on it gently when he returned for another kiss.

“Thank you for watching out for us while we were on the dance floor.” She slid her fingertips over his biceps. “I always feel safe with you, Eli.”

“The pleasure was mine. Thank you. You feeling safe is my job and my pleasure.”

“We didn’t mean to cause a problem.”

“That wasn’t for you to worry about. All of you were spoken for in that group, and it was our responsibility to watch out for you so that you could have your fun. If you’d been aware, it would have spoiled it for you. It’s *our* job to keep you safe.”

During the course of the night, he’d made a point of speaking with Brice, Andy, and Vince, making certain that they knew they would need to make sure Corina, Lisa, Michelle, and even Sandra made it back to their vehicle in the parking lot safely when they left. He knew all the other women who had danced with Grace were leaving with the men who brought them. He’d been pleased to note that the three men had stuck to the women and made sure nobody bothered them once the girls made it clear they welcomed their attention. It was a win-win situation for all involved.

“I love your alpha male sensibilities. It’s a huge turn-on, Eli,” she said softly, and her warm gaze made him feel about ten feet tall.

“I’m all about turning you on, angel. And, yeah, you definitely bring out the alpha in me.”

“I *love* that guy.” She chuckled as he nuzzled her lips with his.

“Will you tell me what happened earlier tonight after I get home?” He’d tried to focus on the moment while she’d been there, but whatever had happened earlier had never strayed very far from his mind. She seemed to handle herself well tonight, but whatever it was had really upset her earlier and that didn’t sit well with him. The alpha male in him wanted to make whatever it was *right* for her.

She smiled up at him and said without hesitation, “Yes, it hardly even matters to me now, but I’ll tell you everything. I probably should have told you about it before today. I’ll be waiting for you.”

“In my bed?” He growled softly.

“Yes, in your bed.” She giggled and kissed him again.

“Good. I’ll see you in a little while, angel. Drive safely, and remember to text me when you’re in the house so I know you made it home all right.”

“I will. I love you.”

He stood in the parking lot and watched as she backed out, waved to him, and drove out of the parking lot.

* * * *

Later that night, Eli leaned against the bedroom doorframe and drank in her appearance. She was fresh from her shower and dressed in her black lace nightgown. Her hair was soft and brushed out, and he imagined it smelled clean like the shampoo she used. The lamp was on beside the bed, but she’d also lit the candles around the room for when he eventually turned the lamp off. Her computer sat open in her lap, indicating what she’d been doing while she waited for him to get home. He leaned over the edge of the bed and kissed her lovingly.

“I’m going to take a shower and then I’ll join you.”

“I’ll warm the bed for you,” she replied softly, shut down her computer, and laid it on the bedside table.

He showered and returned to the bedroom, wearing his robe. She’d turned off the lamp, so only the soft, warm candlelight flickered around the room. He slipped the robe off and turned to her as she lay on her side, watching him appreciatively. Her eyes moved over his body like a warm caress. No matter his words or his resolve, the look in her eyes confirmed

Rachel would have her way, whatever it was, and he would not object. His stiff, erect cock twitched insistently and volunteered for duty.

“Will you tell me now?” He lay down, pulled her to him, and gently caressed her arms and shoulders. She climbed over him, straddled his hips, and laid her supple body over his. He groaned in bliss at the silky, warm contact.

“In a few minutes. Let me love you now.” She joined her lips to his and caressed his cheek.

Rachel received no argument from him and smiled as she slid down his body, kissing a damp trail along his torso as she went. She pressed her breasts to his cock as she slid lower until she reached her destination and smiled up at him. She flicked the tip of her warm tongue out and licked the head of his cock. He hissed softly and arched his back at the warm touch of her velvety tongue.

She licked her lips and slid them over the underside of his cock, tonguing him and swirling back and forth until she reached the base of his cock and proceeded through his crisp curls to the sac beneath.

Eli’s hips flexed, and he shuddered and moaned, relieved he could make as much noise as he wanted to. His balls drew up as she licked and suckled them gently with her warm mouth, and he moaned again. He slid his fingers through her silky hair and breathed out words of encouragement to her. She gently sucked one ball into her mouth and caressed it with her tongue and paid tender attention to him there for a minute and then moved back up.

Laving his cock with her warm wet tongue, she pressed her lips against the throbbing head. Sliding between her full soft lips into her mouth was second only to sliding into her pussy. The way she sucked his cock for him, tugging gently to mimic the way her pussy tugged him when she gripped him with her inner muscles, sent icy-hot chills up and down his spine. He couldn’t help but move with her. When he encouraged her to suck harder, and she did, there was no other feeling like it. Rachel always took her time with him and he loved that the most about having her lips on his cock.

She sucked his cock lovingly for a few minutes, responding softly as he whispered to her how much she pleased him, how much he loved her. After another minute, she suckled him one last time and climbed back over him. She lifted her nightgown, revealing the satiny-smooth beauty beneath as she pulled it over her head and laid it aside.

Stroking her pussy with his fingertips, Eli could feel the slick evidence of her desire. She moaned softly and moved against his fingers when he fingered her swollen clit and then lay down on his torso and straddled him again above his hard cock. She kissed his lips, and he lost himself in her eyes as she lay over his chest and slowly slid down until the big head of his cock made contact with her slick, wet entrance.

Eli loved the feel of her soft, resistant flesh as his head pressed for entrance against her quivering, slippery-hot opening. He flexed his hips, pressing for entry into those tight muscles. She inched back a tiny bit more and groaned softly in delight when her resistance subsided, and he slid inside her warm body. He groaned in ecstasy as her wet heat tightly engulfed his shaft and wished he could stay inside her like this forever. She looked down into his eyes as she squeezed him with her pussy muscles. A strangled, gasping moan escaped his lips, and he fought the urge to release right then.

“Angel!” he growled in ecstasy as she swiveled her hips over his cock.

“I love you, Eli.”

“I love you.” He wrapped his arms around her warm, voluptuous body.

She continued squeezing him rhythmically then tilted her hips to give him a different sensation. He lay still for her and allowed her to play as long as she wanted, giving her the control over this beautiful moment. Her sexy body draped over his was sweet torture he gladly submitted to.

Rachel’s breathing roughened, and she slid down another notch and welcomed more of his aching cock into her hot, lush wetness. She continued squeezing him and rocked over him in wet, sensual grace. She played like this over him, whispering to him of her love and desire for him, until her arousal flamed into a fire around him, and she rose over him, her blue eyes glittering with lust.

Bracing her delicate hands on his chest, Rachel slid down all the way on him in one luscious, sweeping plunge to the hilt. Her soft, moaning gasp was music to his ears. The sound of it alone made him want to come.

She remained motionless for a second then opened her eyes and steadied herself. She flung her long, fragrant hair over her shoulder, sat upright and lifted off slightly, and rocked her hips as she slid back down over him. He thrust against her, wanting to be as deep inside her as he could be.

Her soft lips parted on a moan, and her eyelids slid closed in bliss. The backs of her hands slid up her rib cage in a perfect copy of her dance move from earlier in the evening, her fingernails straying over her tight, erect nipples, and then her hands slid up into her hair. Her back arched, and her head tilted back. He felt the ends of her hair trace in a tickling touch over his thighs.

He experienced a moment of something like *déjà vu*, remembering the moment he'd seen her face on the dance floor as she danced with Grace the first time he'd laid eyes on her. He'd envisioned her like this, astride him, her back arched, soft lips parted in ecstasy as she rode his cock in rapturous abandon.

Back then, he knew he desired her body. Now, he knew *her*. He knew the color of her eyes, the depth of her love, the goodness and gentleness of her soul, and he was reduced in that moment to a man hopelessly enslaved to his woman. He was overcome with the strength of her love for him, her desire for him.

Eli threw his head back in blissful surrender as she rode his aching, throbbing cock to a blistering, red-hot orgasm, both of them crying out in unadulterated joy. They rode every single pulse together as his cum jetted from his cock, and her pussy clenched like a vise around him. When the pulses stopped, she toppled limply over him as a quivering, sated sigh escaped her lips.

He held her as she trembled against him and traced his fingers over her silky back. As she lay over him, her flush swept over her, and it filled him with primal male satisfaction to feel this visible, tangible proof that she had experienced such great pleasure with him. Her soft breathing wafted over his chest, tickling the smattering of chest hairs there. She sighed deeply and touched his face.

Softly, he asked, "Are you all right? Any pain?"

"No. Making love with you was beautiful, pure pleasure. No pain at all. Thank you for letting me have my way with you. I loved it. Do you feel good?"

"Hmm, do I feel good? I feel like I died and went to heaven. I feel like I'm still there." He tilted his hips slightly, feeling his cock lodged in her tight, hot depths. They both moaned softly. "That's heaven, angel."

After a few minutes, she rose and allowed him to pull out. He held out his arms to hold her against his chest. After she laid her head on his shoulder and relaxed, he said gently, "Tell me what happened before you came in tonight." He tried to brace himself for whatever she might say.

She told him exactly what happened in the parking lot, blushing hotly, and he held his reaction in check as well as he could and listened.

Chapter Forty-one

“Reese McCoy,” he grated out under his breath.

She could hear the indignation in his voice and feel it in the tense muscles under her palm.

“Yes. You know who he is?”

“He works for an outfit that subcontracts with the electrical co-op in this part of Texas. I’ve worked with him at some of the electrical substations in the area on their wireless Internet antennas. I remember seeing him come in the club this evening.”

“We dated briefly right after I moved out on my own. I was restless and testing my new independence. He took me out a couple of times, and I didn’t realize he was only after one thing. One thing led to another, and...you know. It hurt horribly, and he wasn’t gentle at all, like he didn’t care it was my first time. He seemed to make a game out of how hard he took me, like that was how he wanted it, with no thought for me. I never heard from him again after he got what he wanted.”

Rachel felt the tension in Eli’s body increase. She stroked his chest and kissed him there. She wondered what went through his mind. She gave him time to process, and he asked. “Did he know you were a virgin?”

“Yes, when it looked like we were going to have sex, I told him. I thought he had a right to know beforehand that I had no experience. But I also hoped that he would take his time and be gentle. It was like I poured gasoline on a lit match.” She knew it was a strain for him to hear those things when she felt a rumble in his chest under her hand and heard a soft growl. His body vibrated with tension for a moment. “I couldn’t get him to stop. I couldn’t get him to slow down. He didn’t even bother with a condom.”

“I’d gotten on the pill, so I never lived through the fear of wondering if he got me pregnant, but I felt so stupid. Before that night, I never would

have thought that if I told him I was a virgin he would take pleasure in doing it so roughly. I bled like crazy and cried afterward. He was...triumphant. When I continued crying, he slapped me and told me to get a hold of myself and deal with it. It was over and I wasn't a virgin anymore 'thanks to him.' That was how he put it." She sensed the tension in Eli's body and the quickening of his heartbeat, though he still stroked her gently. "I *never* told him I wanted to get it over with. Those were his suppositions. I took the first opportunity that presented itself. I paid hard for my foolishness. The bleeding didn't stop until the next day. I waited a few days to recover, and then I went to a doctor and got all the tests they recommended. I was never more ashamed of my own stupidity than I was in that moment."

"But he hurt you, and then revisited that pain on you again tonight."

"The shame I felt is for being nonchalant about giving up a part of myself that was sacred to someone so *foul*. I was blind at the time and naïve. I—I can't believe I felt this way, but I wanted to get it over with. I never *once* told him that, but it was how I felt before he...did what he did."

"Did the doctor ask you if he'd raped you?"

"Yes, but I told them no because, in essence, I had asked for it. I went willingly, to a point. I couldn't call it rape because I consented to be with him."

"He ambushed you."

"Yes, he did. But pressing charges against him, with the circumstances being what they were, I'd have been raped over and over again going through the proper legal channels, in the courts, the media, in front of my family and friends. Tell me I chose wrong," she said, mild challenge in her voice. "I do know this. Someday, Reese will get paid back for what he did. It doesn't even matter if I ever hear about it or know it happened. I know he'll be repaid."

"Did you get some help?"

She appreciated him more in that moment than he could realize for understanding that it wasn't something that she could just *get over* without help.

"Yes, I was referred to a support group and went for a couple of years. They helped me a lot. Now, it's just something that happened to me a long time ago. It doesn't affect who I am now. I don't think it has impacted how I relate to you, though my behavior tonight was perhaps a bit over the top,"

she said with a slight grin. "I have moved on from the trauma, but that doesn't mean I enjoyed encountering him tonight or hearing his vulgar retelling of the incident in the parking lot. I've always been able to avoid him when our paths have crossed before. I don't hide from him, mind you, but I've been able to avoid any face-to-face contact. That's saying a lot, considering the size of this town. I hope someday he'll move away or disappear."

"Does your father or any other man in your life know?"

"Are you kidding? I didn't want to see my dad go to prison or any of his friends or my classmates, for that matter. They all knew something was wrong for a while, but I attributed it to the stress of going to school and being out on my own. I was fairly solitary for a while. Getting out and socializing was very therapeutic, proving to myself I could socialize and enjoy having friends to hang out with safely. They all welcomed me back like I'd never been gone." She paused for a moment before asking, "Did you consider him a friend?"

"No. He's a greasy, lazy son of a bitch. He wouldn't know what a decent day's work felt like if it reared up and bit him in the ass."

She'd noticed that time had not been kind to Reese, though it had only been nine years since that night. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you about this thing that happened to me sooner. You had a right to know that about me."

"Rachel, I want all of you, even the parts that have been hurt."

"If I had kept my head straight, I would have come to you untouched. I regret that now more than anything."

He lifted her chin to gaze into her eyes. "No regrets, remember? Our first time was precious to me. Whether you were a virgin or not, it was no less magical or amazing. I wish I could erase the pain of that memory from your mind."

"You have, you know? You are so gentle and sweet, and I finally understood what making love was *supposed* to feel like. My efforts to get past losing my virginity backfired on me, you see? Because I still didn't know what it was like until I met you and fell in love with you. How do you feel about what I've told you?"

He took his time answering her. She thought he was trying to protect her from the depth of the emotions he experienced. He simply said, "Vengeful,

but not foolish. You and I have big plans for our lives, and nothing is going to change that. But I do feel vengeful.”

“I’m sorry he’s someone you work with.”

“He’d actually have to do some work for that to be true. I’m self-employed, so I don’t have to work with him.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Nothing except hold you, right now. How do you feel?”

“Light as a feather.”

“Good. Angel, I’m sorry it happened, and I’d erase it all from your memory if I could. You know you’re safe with me.”

“Of course.”

“Then it will all work out.”

She couldn’t quite put her finger on it, but she knew he was formulating a plan. That had not been her intention in telling him.

“You’re going to do something, aren’t you?” She sat up and looked at him.

“I’m not going to kill him, if that’s what you’re worried about.” Eli smiled at her and tucked a stray lock of hair behind her ear. She allowed him to cuddle her to his chest, and she fell asleep listening to the comforting sound of his heartbeat as he stroked her back.

* * * *

Eli had to smile as Charlie took his hat off and scratched his head in embarrassed surprise. Eli and Rachel had just shared a clear conversation through the wall adjoining their bedrooms.

“Well, I’ll be damned, Eli! I could see where that might be a bit of a...uh...*problem*. I wonder why none of the other renters said anything.”

“Well, Mr. Hardaway was practically deaf, and he never had any visitors except his grown kids. He was always very quiet, and I never heard a thing from over on his side. We didn’t discover it until one day when there were people home on both sides of the duplex.” Eli spared his congenial landlord the more descriptive details.

Charlie had stopped by on Wednesday to get started on some repairs he’d talked to Eli about before Rachel had her accident. Eli explained to him that they had since gotten engaged and would be house hunting in the area

for a place of their own. Eli offered to pay whatever penalties Charlie expected for breaking the lease so early, but Charlie waved off his offer.

“You’ve have been such neat renters, never give me any trouble, never late with the rent, and you keep the place looking nice. I’m not going to charge you any penalties. But I am glad you showed me this wall. I’m going to have to get some soundproofing in there. When’s the wedding?” he asked, and they chatted for a while.

Charlie changed his plans and made a top priority of putting in sound-reducing insulation in the hollow wall. Rachel was at Eli’s place more than her own, so she cleared out her bedroom and moved the furniture back to her parent’s storage barn until it was needed again.

Her mom and dad never batted an eye about the bed returning and never asked about her sleeping arrangements.

Rachel and Eli met with Jane Jensen, Rachel’s real estate agent friend. Jane directed them around the area to ten different properties. They liked a few of the acreage sites, especially the ones that had a lot of oak trees on them. Eli and Rachel both had a dream of having a home amidst oak trees, far back from the road. Several of the properties Jane showed them fit the bill.

There was one twenty-acre ranch that had a nice-sized older house on it. It was more space than the two of them needed, but it offered room to grow and to raise a family. The previous owners had evidently loved gardening because the overgrown flowerbeds hinted that, until recently, they had been lovingly maintained.

The lawn in front of the house had not survived the hot summer and drought the year before and would need to be re-done, but the house and yards were surrounded by woods on all sides. He could see kids running in safety and freedom in the yards and around in the wooded area and playing in the low creek that ran through the property.

Jane kindly turned down the offer for lunch and left them with a shortened list of the properties they liked the best, along with the directions for getting to each, so that they could talk in private about what they should do next. Jane told them she had the key to the ranch house if they wanted to pick it up and go take another look in case they missed something before.

Eli took Rachel to Rudy’s, and they sat in the quiet corner booth and held hands and talked.

“You liked the ranch house, didn’t you?” he asked, smiling softly at the excitement in her eyes when he brought it up.

She nodded. “I did. Someone took care of that place while they lived there. It’s a little rundown from being vacant, but I see a lot of potential. They worked hard on the basic landscaping and all the shrubs and trees around the house.”

“I like the long, meandering driveway through the woods and the trees all around the house, but the lawn...Ugh.”

Rachel nodded. “I know. We’d have to rip out all that carpet grass.”

“As far as the house goes,” Eli said, “it needs major updating and remodeling. Replace any rotten wood, paint, and maybe redo some flooring. I can do a lot of that, if the price is right on the house.”

“I could help with the paint and other things. I’d like to hire a professional to update the landscaping, and it would be worth it to put in a sprinkler system.”

He laughed. “We’re talking like we already made our decision.”

“Oh, no, not yet. I want to have it inspected first. I’m not getting emotionally invested until we know if it would mean buying a money pit. I do like the basic structure and layout, though. The house itself seems solid and structurally sound.”

“All those appliances would have to go, for sure.”

Rachel laughed and rolled her eyes. “I haven’t seen a harvest gold refrigerator in years! Yes, all new appliances, please! We need to see about the wiring in the house also...”

They talked and laughed through lunch. Rudy congratulated Eli and Rachel on their upcoming nuptials and brought them a complimentary dessert, which they shared before Rachel went back to the office. Eli told her he would be home by early evening after his last service call of the day.

* * * *

Eli sat down with the men at one of the tables, and Ethan brought them all beers. Eli looked around at the group and said, “What I tell you can’t leave this room, or this group. Whether you help me or not, you have to promise me that much.” Eli wished he could have included Mike and Rogelio at this gathering but they were too close to Rachel’s father. Rachel

had been very clear on why she hadn't told him years ago and Eli respected her wishes.

Ethan, Jack, Adam, and Ace agreed.

Eli detailed to them what happened to Rachel and that she had received no justice for what had been done to her. He told the story to the best of his recollection, and when he was done, he could have heard a pin drop it was so quiet around the table. Eli looked around the table, making eye contact with all of them in turn.

"Rachel says she's content that someday he'll get what's coming to him, and I think she was a little worried I'd kill him at first. You can imagine how I reacted, right?"

The indignation he felt so strongly was clearly reflected on their faces.

Ace spoke up first. "I could look into his past, into his dealings for you. Find dirt on him. He sounds like a predator. If he did that to her, he's done other bad things that could come to light. He would not fare well in prison. I'd be willing to bet he's got lots of skeletons hanging in his closet. Let me do some digging. Do you have much information on him?"

"Just his name and employer. I work with him from time to time."

"That's a start."

When Jack spoke, his demeanor was calm, as were Ethan and Adam's, but Eli could see the anger beneath. He thought they might feel strongly about what happened to Rachel. "Eli, first, thanks for deciding to call on us about this. We'll do whatever we can to help you. Ace, if you need someone to help watch this bastard or assist you in any way, you let us know. Calling on Ace was a good idea, Eli. He'll help us nail this son of a bitch, but good."

Ethan and Adam nodded.

"That prick won't know what hit him," Adam muttered.

"I promised Rachel I wouldn't kill him, but it's damned tempting."

Ace chuckled and nodded in understanding. "Don't do anything permanent yet. I have a good feeling about this. If this guy gets his jollies doing things like this, he's probably got buddies he brags to. He's boasted about other stuff, too, I'll bet. Let's focus on making him the girlfriend of some seven-foot tall, three-hundred-pound prison inmate. I'll start digging for you this afternoon and contact my guy to watch him."

"Thank you, guys." Eli shook their hands. "Ace, whatever the cost, I'll cover it."

Ethan said firmly, “There’s no way he’s gonna to get away with hurting another woman like that ever again. Ace will find something.”

Adam spoke up then. “We know how it feels to find out that the woman you love has been harmed and mistreated by someone she trusted. We’ll bring this guy to justice, one way or another.”

“Thanks, man,” Eli said, glad to have their backing.

“Do you know if you’ll be working with him anytime soon?” Ace asked as he made notes on a pad.

“No, I only see him on the jobs scheduled at the sub-stations. He works all over the co-op’s service area, which would explain why she hasn’t run into him more often. The company he works for assigns them randomly.”

“Okay, I’ll track him down.”

“And don’t worry, Eli,” Jack said. “This conversation won’t leave this room.”

* * * *

Ethan said good-bye to the others when they left and went to his office. He worked for a while, looking over purchase orders and paying bills. Thoughts of Grace occupied his mind and made it difficult to focus for any length of time.

Ethan could relate to how Eli felt right now. He remembered a time when he’d felt like killing the bastard who had mistreated Grace. He recalled not being able to move fast enough to stop Owen before he’d viciously struck Grace twice in the face. He shuddered at the memory of the way she’d toppled backward against the kitchen counter and then had hit the floor at Owen’s feet. His heart throbbed at the memory of the way her body had shaken as he held her tightly in his arms afterward.

They’d made it their mission to begin to undo the negative self-image Owen had sown in her mind and to convince her the woman they saw was beautiful and precious, not fat and ugly. With their love and attention, they’d made a believer out of her, and she made them the happiest of men.

During the previous night, he’d awakened with her curled up beside him in his bed. He’d stayed at the club late and she must have come to check on him and decided to snuggle up under his covers. While he watched her sleep, she’d stirred and cuddled closer to him with her lips pressed to his

chest. Later that morning as dawn turned the sky a pale gray, they'd made love. Ethan remembered the way she'd felt, so warm and sleep tender as he held her in his arms and stroked into her sweet, hot pussy, both of them coming with a deep, burning intensity.

Ethan slipped his phone from his pocket. Today was Grace's day off, and when she answered, he could hear horses neighing in the background. She must be out in the barn.

"Hello, my baby." Her voice had a mellow, seductive tone that sent a shot of lust straight to his cock. He knew he'd be hard and aching by the time he was done talking to her.

"Hello, Gracie. What are you up to?"

"I'm out in the barn, brushing down Coraggio. What are you doing?" Grace had a way of asking questions like that. Her subtle, suggestive tone hinted at what she wished he was doing. He answered the question she was *really* asking.

"Wishing I could take you in my arms and sink right into your silky little pussy. The sound of your sexy voice makes me hard enough to hammer nails."

Grace hummed softly in approval. "I wish I were there. I'd let you hammer me instead. After I finish with Coraggio, I'm going to work for a while. I have a hot love scene to write."

"Well, honey, you'd know a thing or two about hot love scenes, wouldn't you?" The throbbing steel pole in his jeans testified to that fact. Ethan, Jack and Adam had watched her blossom into their very own sex goddess since she'd begun writing.

"As well-loved as I am? I should be able to set my laptop to smoldering," she replied with a giggle. "Wanna come help me with research?"

"I'm tempted. I should be done here in another hour or so. I had another reason for calling, though."

"What's that, babe?"

"You haven't hinted to me what you'd like for Christmas."

Ethan already knew what the three of them planned on getting her for Christmas. There was a BMW Z4 on special order for her at the dealership in Morehead. It was going to be a deep, sparkling blue that reminded them of her eyes with butter-soft leather seats and a premium sound system.

"I'll have to think about it, Ethan. The way you all spoil me, I'm hard-pressed to come up with something I need that I don't already have."

"A flat screen TV for your bedroom?"

"My bedroom is *not* for watching television. All the entertainment I need up there walks up my stairs in cowboy boots," she said, chuckling.

"New outdoor furniture?"

"I wouldn't trade that old porch glider for anything. Too many beautiful memories made in it."

"I'm pretty attached to that old glider myself," he replied softly, remembering all the times they'd made love on it with her straddled in his lap under a blanket. It rocked *just right*.

"*I know*," she said quickly, a soft hitch in her voice.

"What, Gracie?"

She paused, breathing softly in the phone. Boy, whatever it was, it was *good*. "Do you remember the night I wore my clit clip for you the first time?"

"I'll *never* forget that night. I've never seen anything hotter in my whole life, especially the way you teased us into discovering it on you. *Yes*, I remember, Gracie."

"Well, you said Clay makes...that kind of jewelry, too."

Ethan growled softly, loving the way her mind worked. "Is that what you want? Maybe something with a little more weight to it? Like solid gold?" At her strained, whispered assent, he knew he had the perfect gift. "Any type of jewelry in particular?"

"I'll leave it all...up to you. I wish you were here." She sighed with need. "You'll be home in another hour or two?"

"Maybe less, if I hurry." He was a newly motivated man.

"Hurry."

Chapter Forty-two

Eli laughed with Rachel when Craig Morgan's "Bonfire" played on the country radio station as he drove them out to the Divine Creek Ranch for the bonfire and pig roast Saturday night. Eli was planning to drop Rachel off and visit for a little while with the men before heading in with Ethan to the club.

His dad and sister arrived with baby Matthew in tow. Grace had talked Kelly into staying over at the ranch so they could talk wedding plans later, and Rachel went with them up to the ranch house to get her settled. His dad was staying in the second bedroom at Rachel's duplex.

Eli smiled when Ace and Kathleen arrived, and Ace showed him the corner of a manila envelope in his jacket pocket and nodded. The man worked fast.

The Divine Creek Ranch hands helped to set up tables, and one of them with the necessary skills helped Ethan get the sound system connected and working so they'd have music later if anyone wanted to dance. Adam had *his* fun earlier in the week, using the rented bulldozer to pile the massive mounds of mesquite they'd cleared the year before into a gigantic pile on the edge of the new pasture. Rachel helped Grace, her mom, and some of the other ladies with setting out the food on the tables.

Eli, Ace, Ethan, Jack, and Adam had a chance to put their heads together. Ace removed the manila envelope from his coat pocket and opened it, saying, "Mr. McCoy was easy to track down and tail. He doesn't go very far afield to hide his activities. This is even more serious than we thought. It made me nauseous, what we uncovered."

Eli and the others waited as he laid out the papers and photographs on the work bench in the first barn where they were less likely to be interrupted. "What do you mean? He's done that sort of thing before?"

"He's a pedophile." The disgust was evident in Ace's tone of voice.

“Oh, fuck,” Ethan muttered softly.

Ace pointed to a black and white photograph. “That’s a roadside hotel on this side of Morehead where McCoy rented a room on Wednesday night. That girl being escorted into his room is a young prostitute.”

Jack groaned, “Oh, no. How young?”

“My guy, Kemp, pulled some long hours this week and matched his photograph to her face on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children website. She’s a fourteen-year-old runaway.”

“She’s only fourteen?” Eli said, filled with revulsion. The hardened girl in the image looked young, but not that young.

“Yeah. Drugs and living on the street ages you. Kemp had an inkling, and once he found her on the website, he called me, and I contacted the police with the description and license plate of the car that brought her, and they told me they would act on the information immediately.”

“Damn,” Adam said softly. “Fourteen?”

Ace nodded sadly. “If we’d known, that would have been when he got arrested. If adults want to get together and do crazy stuff in a roadside motel, that’s one thing. Start messing with kids and people take action. Another friend of mine hacked into his computer and provided us with his e-mail and Internet contacts, along with archived e-mails. He saves records of his conquests instead of deleting them. He likes to brag. The most recent e-mail is a description of what he did to the girl in the hotel room. I don’t recommend reading it. It’ll ruin your evening. In the right hands, this information is just cause to search his residence.

“A skilled friend of mine has been to his house and located his hiding place for storing videos and pictures, mostly teenagers, but also some preteens, both male and female. He also found a drug stash that he probably uses when his victims won’t settle down for him, or it may be for his own use. The dumb bastard even used credit cards to pay for the motel rooms.

“I’m surprised it was this easy to find evidence for bringing the proper authorities down on him. Have any of you ever heard what happens to pedophiles in prison? He won’t fare well. The information is copied and ready to be sent to the FBI, the local police, and county authorities, as well.

“Rachel’s name has been left out of the documentation. The young girl in the motel room was the most disturbing part of this for me once I saw the pictures. Kemp got a good enough digital image of her that hopefully it

won't be long before they track her down and get her back home, or more likely into rehab and off the streets."

"So what do we do next?" Eli asked, still trying to take it all in.

Ace nodded, almost apologetically. "I have a friend at the FBI who will take an interest in his activities and can get the ball rolling. Eli, I know you wanna kill him, but avoid any contact with him if you can. All his buddies and regular coworkers will probably be investigated, too. Judging by some of his contacts and e-mails, he may work with other men who are involved in the same sort of activities."

"Part of me wishes I could have just two minutes alone with him."

Ace nodded again. "I hear ya, but I'd steer clear of him. I'll be watching him again tomorrow. McCoy appears to be settled at home for the evening watching television tonight, so Kemp is taking a break right now, and he'll check in with me after supper. If there are any new developments, I'll let you know. I know we have enough evidence now, but I feel like it's our civic duty to keep an eye on this asshole."

"Ace? If he..." Jack looked disgusted and hesitated for a second before continuing, "If it looks like he's up to something real bad..."

"I get what you're saying," Ace replied. "If he is on one of his exploits, we'll call the police and FBI immediately and document until they arrive. We won't let any other children be hurt. If it comes down to it, we'll act if we have to."

"Thank you," Eli said.

Ace smiled with grim determination. "Like I said, it's our civic duty to bring this evil motherfucker to justice. He held out a black and white surveillance photo of McCoy to them, which they passed to each other. "This is what he looks like, in case you've never seen him before."

Eli reminded them, "Remember, Rachel can't know about any of this."

"We'd be cool about it," Adam said, and the others nodded.

Eli put out his hand to shake Ace's and the others' and said, "Then I guess you need to contact your friend at the FBI."

Ace nodded and replaced the papers and pictures in the envelope and put it in his coat pocket. "Consider it done."

* * * *

Rachel sat with Grace, Kelly, and Teresa in lounge chairs a safe distance from the bonfire. The sun had long since set, and Rachel and Grace would be leaving shortly to take massive amounts of food up to feed their men and the other employees at the club. Adam and Jack were, at that moment, loading disposable aluminum pans with ribs and roasted pork, potato salad, beans, cole slaw, cornbread, sausage, Ethan's homemade barbecue sauce, and Grace's peach cobbler into Jack's SUV. They were doing it for Grace so she could sit and visit with the other ladies. The only reason they weren't also delivering the food was because Rachel and Grace wanted to see their hard-working men, since they couldn't be there for most of the evenings' festivities.

Rachel chuckled into her plastic cup. "My dad is drunk."

She was drinking Coke and serving as the designated driver for the evening trip up to the club. Grace snorted before taking another sip from her beer.

"How can you tell, Rachel? He's always so stoic and serious," Grace said.

"See how he's all lovey-dovey, getting in Mom's space like that? Ooops! He just *grabbed her ass*. Shit, now I'm scarred for life!" she said dramatically, covering her eyes. "He likes to dance with her when he's drunk. Listen to her giggle, would you?"

"Your parents are the cutest thing," Kelly said. "It's nice to see older married couples like that are still totally into each other. Gives the rest of us hope for the future. I hope Christopher is still grabbing my ass when I'm that age."

"Aw! Look at Brice and Corina. Aren't they sweet?" Rachel nodded to where the couple were sitting on the tailgate of Brice's pickup truck, smooching.

Adam and Jack came over and squatted down beside Grace's lounge.

Jack said, "Darlin', everything is loaded up in the back of the SUV. Make sure and take it slow on the turns."

Grace leaned forward to smooch Jack's nose. "Okay! Rachel's the designated driver for this trip."

"Are you getting inebriated, baby?" Adam asked, quirked an eyebrow at her when she snickered and patted his tanned cheek.

Grace shook her head and replied, “Nuh-uh, but I have had a couple of beers. I don’t want to take any chances behind the wheel.”

“Good. Thanks for doing that for her, Rachel,” Adam replied, smiling over at Rachel.

“You’re welcome, Adam. I don’t mind.” Jack handed Rachel the keys to the SUV, and Rachel said, “We’ll be back in a little bit.” To the girls she said, “Ladies, keep the party lively until we return.”

Rachel had Grace text message Eli as they neared the club. The girls were supposed to pull up to the rear entrance, and the employees would bring the food in through the backdoor and put it in the kitchen. Then they could come and go and eat as they had time. Grace and Rachel set the food up and put out the utensils and paper plates then made up nice, full plates for Ethan and Eli. They came back to take a break and eat while the girls were there. Their men talked them both into one little dance before they returned to the ranch.

It was a good thing the Divine Creek Ranch didn’t have any close neighbors. Even with the SUV’s windows closed, as they pulled down the long driveway toward the barns, they could hear the music blasting. Rachel parked Jack’s SUV next to the screened-in porch, where they were met by Jack and Adam.

“Everything go all right, darlin’?” Jack kissed Grace.

“Oh, yes! They all said they were coming out after they got off at one. They all said thanks for sending the food. The club was busy, but I think we have them beat with our noise level. What are you doing?”

“We’re claimin’ our dance partners!” Jack laughed as he put Grace over his shoulder and carried her giggling around the barn to the area that had arbitrarily been designated as the dance floor.

* * * *

A while later, Grace reveled in Adam’s secure embrace as he led her around the improvised dance floor. Her cheek was pressed against his firm, warm chest, and she held on as they danced a slow, languid waltz together. He squeezed her gently, and she looked up at him then smiled at the twinkle in his pale green eyes.

“Baby, I just realized something.” His deep, sexy voice sent a delicate shudder through her, centering in her clit. In his arms, she was never more than a heartbeat away from arousal.

“What, honey?”

“You haven’t told me what you want from me for Christmas.”

She snuggled closer to his tall frame in the crisp night air. “I already have what I want.”

“I’m glad you feel that way, but I want to give you something special for Christmas,” he murmured as he stroked her cheek with a callused finger.

“I don’t need anything.” She held on to him tighter. “Just your arms around me.”

Adam sighed. “Are you giving me something?” he countered reasonably.

“Oooh, yes, baby! And it’s going to be so awesome!” she said, her cheeks warming as she envisioned the looks on their faces when they opened their gifts.

“So you understand why I would want to give you something? You love the idea of having a surprise for me for Christmas. I want to get you something, too.”

Well, he certainly has me there, doesn’t he?

She tilted her head up to look at him. “All right. Only I can’t think of anything I want right now.”

“There’s bound to be something you’d like to have or maybe do?”

“Oh. Something we could do together?”

“Sure. Wanna go skydiving?” he asked, grinning at the face she made.

“You *do* know me, right? Do I strike you as the type to leap boldly from a perfectly good airplane?” Grace asked with a chuckle.

“Okay, it was just a thought. How about a swimming pool?”

“That’s too big an expenditure for a Christmas gift. You can do that in the spring if you want to, though. Then we could have parties out by the pool. But I do have an idea.”

“What is it, baby?”

“I’ve always wanted to take formal ballroom dancing lessons. You know, the Viennese waltz, the cha-cha-cha, and the rumba? That’s what I want from you, Adam. Ballroom dance lessons,” she announced happily.

He looked down at her quizzically. “You’re sure? You’re already a phenomenal dancer. You and Ethan make such good dance partners. Maybe you should ask him...”

She realized taking ballroom dancing lessons to him was like her going skydiving—a bit of a stretch out of his comfort zone.

“He’s already decided what he’s getting me. I love dancing with him, you, and Jack. But I want to take lessons with *you*. We’d have to go to Morehead, so we’d have the drive over there and the time in the lessons, for *just the two of us*. Wouldn’t you like that?” she asked softly, rubbing her breasts against his chest.

Adam squeezed her and chuckled sexily. “Since you put it *that* way, baby, I think dancing lessons would be fun.”

“Thank you, honey. I’ve always wanted to do that.”

“If you think of something else you want, you tell me, okay? Maybe something you can unwrap from me on Christmas morning.”

“I love you.” She sighed happily.

“I love you, too, baby.”

Jack walked up and patted Adam on the back. Adam deftly twirled her into Jack’s arms.

“Dizzy?” Jack asked with a grin as she giggled and settled in his strong embrace.

“Oh, no. My buzz was short-lived. I haven’t had any more beer since we got back. I may get one later, but I’m having fun without it. Are you having fun, honey?”

“Yes, darlin’, especially with you in my arms,” he murmured and kissed her gently. “I heard you talking to Adam about Christmas when I walked up. Are you going to tell me what I can get you for under the Christmas tree?”

“I do know of something I’ve wanted to do.”

“Name it, darlin’.”

“You and me at Tessa’s. *Just the two of us* in one of the privacy booths.” His immediate smile confirmed that he liked the way she thought.

“What about something to unwrap Christmas morning? Jewelry, maybe?”

“Honey, jewelry *always* works. Now that you mention it, I would like something else. Remember the slave bracelet you all had made for Rachel?”

At his nod, she said, “I liked that slave bracelet and anklet. Can Clay make something to go with my other matching pieces?”

“I’m sure he could. I’ll ask him. I’ll get you the bracelet and let Adam get you the anklet. Ethan already has another surprise up his sleeve for you.”

“But I know about—”

“Yeah. This is something you *didn’t* ask for, though. I’m anxious to see *you* in what you asked him for. Naughty, naughty girl.” He growled into her ear with his sexy Texas drawl. Her clit throbbed, as Grace realized he was imagining her in her more intimate jewelry pieces. “You are a sweet, hot thing, Grace Warner.” She trembled deliciously when he pressed her to him so his stiffening cock was against her belly. “I want you. Right now.”

She surreptitiously rubbed against him again. “Tack room, first barn. Give me a two-minute head start.” The tack room in the first barn had a lock on the inside of the room. She had no idea why. His hands slid down over her ass and squeezed gently.

He chuckled softly and his next words made her pussy go completely slick. “Two minutes. Bare-assed and over my favorite saddle.”

He patted her ass then kissed her and led her from the dance floor. He casually strolled over to the beer keg then looked back at her with secret promise in his eyes. She slipped away into the shadows and made her way up to the darkened first barn. Walking up the moonlit aisle between the horse stalls, Grace paused when Languir nickered faintly at her, and she patted his neck before continuing on to the tack room. She found the key to the outer padlock and unlocked it then slipped inside, leaving the key on the shelf nearby. Moonlight filtered in from the roof skylights as Grace located Jack’s saddle on its rack and quickly took off her boots and socks. She unbuttoned her jeans and slipped them off and folded them. As she laid them on a bench, she heard a sound.

“Darlin’?”

“I’m here.”

The door cracked open, and Jack entered then turned to lock it from the inside. She slid her fingers into the waistband of her thong, slipped it off, and laid it with the jeans. She silently moved to him and gasped at the feel of his hot hands as they slid around her waist and palmed her ass cheeks. He kissed her hard on the lips, and she wrapped her arms around his neck. His fingers glided down the cleft of her ass and found her hot and wet. His

callused fingertips slid into her slick heat, and she was unable to stop the gasp that escaped her lips.

“Darlin’, you’re hot and ready, aren’t you? Eager to play?” His other hand slid over her mound, and his fingertips stroked her clit as well.

“Mmm-hmm,” she moaned softly as she fumbled with his belt and the fly of his jeans.

Once she had his thick cock free of the denim, she knelt in front of him and, without preamble, slid his rock-hard erection between her lips. His low groan of pleasure brought another rush of moisture to her swollen lips. She worked him in a slow sucking rhythm until he stopped her. Surprised, she looked up. The intense love and lust in his tanned face spoke volumes to her, and he didn’t need to say a word.

She rose to her feet and sauntered bare-assed over to his saddle, which sat on its rack at hip level. She looked over her shoulder at him, and crooked her finger. She leaned over the saddle and took hold of the rack underneath as she braced her feet in the corners of the stand. She knew doing so presented her ass in a delicious display that would have his cock screaming to get inside of her.

“Mmm, darlin’, that is such a pretty sight. You on your little tippy-toes, this pretty little pussy of mine for the taking,” he whispered softly so they would not be overheard if someone came in the barn.

He slid his fingers up her inner thighs and caressed her inner lips. He chuckled at her little moan of pleasure. One hand slid around her hip and down over her mound to play with her clit. Doing that caused her back to arch, and she offered herself to him with soft, panting breaths. She groaned when his thick cock pressed at her entrance and pushed back onto him, crying out softly as his thick heat burrowed inside her.

“Oh, Jack! Oh, oh, honey, I’m already so—”

“Is it good, darlin’? Does my cock feel good slidin’ into you?” He gently but firmly grasped her hips, thrusting all the way to the hilt. His other hand strummed her clit as he began to stroke into her, and he tilted his hips as his cockhead slid past her sweet spot.

“Oh, Jack...” Gone was the notion of keeping silent. There was just no way.

Jack growled softly. “You have such a soft, warm little pussy, darlin’. I’m never going to get enough of it.”

He pulled out and thrust in again, pressing her firmly against the saddle and thrusting deeply inside her. She loved the feel his thick, hot erection sliding into her. He rubbed her pleasure spot and strummed her clit at the same time. She groaned in happy delight as the little jumping spasms began in her cunt. She arched her back and tightened up around his cock as she gyrated against him.

“Jack, I’m close, I’m...I’m...oh, Jack, I’m coming!” She gasped. Soft little cries escaped her lips as the muscles in her pussy gripped him tightly, and he pumped wildly into her hot depths.

Grace felt his lips between her shoulder blades as he continued strumming her clit and rocked his hips into her. On the heels of her first orgasm, another bloomed, and she tightened her muscles around his cock again. He fucked her with firm, short strokes, ramming to the hilt with each thrust.

Her breasts and hair swayed over the saddle as she turned to look over her shoulder. She watched Jack as his thrusts became more intense, and she groaned in ecstasy as another stronger orgasm rippled through her body. Her hips undulated wildly as she rode his cock with a low moan, uncaring who heard that time. With a final thrust and a deep growl, Jack held her tightly to him and she hummed in approval as she felt his cock pulse deep inside her.

She lay over the saddle, completely boneless as he slid from her and went in search of something she could use to clean up with. Finally, he came back with his clean handkerchief and helped her. After she was re-dressed and he was put back together, he pulled her into a gentle embrace.

“Darlin’, you’re my every dream come true, you know that? Was I too rough?”

She chortled softly in the dim light. “No, you were rough *enough*. I love you, Jack. I’m so lucky to have you in my life. I love you so much.” She looped her arms gently around his waist.

“I love you, darlin’.” He held the base of her head in his hands as he kissed her thoroughly but gently. “I’ll always love you.”

“Our guests may be wondering where we are. We should probably get back.”

“You want me to give you a head start?”

She waved a hand carelessly. “Ah, we’re married. Anyone here who is shocked needs to be shocked more often,” she replied, chuckling softly.

Jack grinned at her and reached in his jacket pocket. Checking his cell phone, he got a serious look on his face and said to her, “Darlin’, let me take you back to the party. There’s something I need to deal with. It won’t take but a few minutes. I need to borrow Adam from you for a few minutes, too, if you don’t mind.”

Grace noticed the serious look on his face and grew worried. “Is everything all right?”

He smiled warmly at her and kissed her. “It’s perfect. I have to make a call, and we’ll both be back before you know it.”

Chapter Forty-three

Jack walked Grace back to the party and stopped to hold her and kiss her tenderly once more then made his way through the shadows to where his SUV was parked. He sent a text, and Adam and Ace joined him less than two minutes later. Once they were in the SUV and he was pulling down the long gravel driveway, he called Ethan back. Ace sat in the front passenger seat sending a text.

“I can’t *fucking* believe our luck.” Ethan’s voice grated over the speaker phone. “You guys need to get your asses here quick. Eli’s holding it together so far, probably only because McCoy hasn’t mentioned seeing Rachel here the other day. He’s drunk as a skunk and running his mouth non-stop up at the bar. Pull around to the back. I’ve left the door propped open, and the security cameras are already turned off. Hope you have a plan.”

“We’ll take care of it,” Jack said. “You closing up right now?”

“It’s last call. The waitresses and other workers are already cleaning up so they can all get out to the ranch. The timing is perfect,” Ethan replied. “McCoy won’t know what hit him, or who, for that matter.”

Ace said. “Kemp is going to meet us there. Remember, not one word about who this is for or what we know about his predilections. The less said the better. Jack, have Eli tap him on the head before he brings him out back. Kemp will handle the rest. He’ll think he blacked out and won’t know who beat him up. But not one word about what we know, or he’ll bolt if he remembers what you said.”

They all agreed as they pulled up to the backdoor. Using a hunting knife, Jack tore off the corner of a heavy cotton tarp, grabbed a roll of duct tape, and gave them to the men. A large, black Escalade pulled up beside them, and a giant of a man climbed from the front seat. The man was built like a tank but dressed in a suit and an expensive leather coat. He nodded at them and spoke quietly with Ace.

Jack left the others waiting in the back and went in. The bar was emptying out as people finished their drinks and headed to the front door. Eli, Mike, and Rogelio were all smiles when they saw Jack. Eli must have let them in on it, considering how close they were to Rachel, though he doubted that Eli gave them all the details.

* * * *

Eli watched Reese McCoy in disgust as he sat at the bar, raving about his days on the Divine High School football team to Ben, completely unaware the lights had come on and the place was closing down. When the last customer was out the front door and the deadbolt lock slid into place, Mike nodded at Eli. Eli looked at Jack, who gestured to the backdoor. Eli approached the overweight, slobbering drunk. A dissipated, degenerate lifestyle had visited its revenge on him in the last few years, and Eli was revolted by even the thought of touching him.

Eli took him by one upper arm and lifted him bodily from the tall chair.

“Hey there, buddy. Come on with me. I’ll help you out to your truck,” Eli grated out as he steered him to the backdoor.

McCoy was so blindly drunk he didn’t even realize he was being escorted out the backdoor. “Aww, shanks, Eli. What a good guy, here’s my keesh,” he slurred, handing the key ring to Eli.

As Eli pulled him into the dim hallway, he tapped him lightly on the head with his fist, knocking Reese silly. He toed open the backdoor into the alley, where Ace and Adam waited with the blindfold and the duct tape. As they secured the tarp over his face so he could breathe but not see, they gave him a chance to regain his wits. Ace gestured to Eli with a finger to his lips, and Eli nodded in understanding.

For each innocent victim McCoy had ever abused or used, they silently kicked his sleazy, drunken, perverted, and dissipated ass. Justice was almost served. It would be complete when Ace got the incriminating evidence to his friend at the FBI.

After they were done, Ace got Jack’s attention. “Kemp would be happy to move him around front to his truck, but he was wondering if he could borrow your duct tape.”

Raising an eyebrow and smiling, Jack handed the roll of tape to him and said, "Sure. Why don't you invite him back to the ranch? I know it's late and all, but let him know he's more than welcome."

"Sure. Be right back."

Kemp slung McCoy onto Jack's torn drop cloth on the rear floorboard of his Escalade and shook Ace's hand before leaving to finish his task. He waved to the others, saying nothing else, and Jack drove away from the club with Ethan and Eli following behind in Ethan's truck.

After they returned to the ranch, Eli stopped them and said, "I would have been satisfied with seeing him on the evening news getting hauled into jail. Thank you, guys. That was for Rachel."

Jack replied, "I wish like hell that it'd never been necessary in the first place, but I'm sincerely glad to be a tool for justice to be served."

"We look out for our women," Adam said softly.

"Hell yeah, we do," Ethan added, and the others nodded.

Ace reminded them, "Not a word to anybody. He's got to think he was jumped in the parking lot by thugs."

"Greasy fucking bastard," Ethan said. "I need to wash my hands."

"Me, too," Adam replied with a grimace.

* * * *

Rachel and Grace sat in the loungers by the bonfire, talking with her mom, Rosemary, Charity, and Jack's older sister, Anne.

"I wonder what's keeping the guys?" Grace asked. Rachel checked her watch. It was a little past one thirty.

"The club was pretty busy," Rachel commented. "Maybe they had a lot of cleanup to do. Or maybe Jack's errand took longer than he expected. What was he up to, anyway?"

"I don't know," Grace said with a shrug. "He didn't tell me."

Rachel was getting another cup of beer from the keg when large, gentle hands slid around her hips and pulled her to a tall, hard body. She shivered at his husky voice next to her ear. "You're beautiful with your hair tousled and your cheeks rosy from the chilly air. Do you need me to warm you up a little, angel?"

She turned and smiled up at him, handed him the beer, and replied, “Just feeling your big, strong arms around me makes my heat index rise, big man.” She rose on her tiptoes, and he leaned down to kiss her. “We were starting to wonder where you were.”

“Mmm, the place was still packed at closing time.” He kissed her deeply, lifting her from her feet for a few seconds. “Bonfire’s going strong, I see.”

“Yeah, as big as Adam piled it, it’ll still be going on Monday.” She chuckled. “It’s nice and warm to sit near it, but I smell like smoke now. Everyone else follow you out?”

“Oh yeah, the whole crew is coming,” Eli said, gesturing with a thumb toward the increased noise level near the dance floor. Several newcomers made their way over, greeted Rachel, and visited the beer keg.

It was then that Rachel noticed Eli’s hands. “What were you doing before you got here?” she asked softly, tracing a fingertip over a swollen knuckle as she examined his hand.

“Just doing my job,” he murmured softly, but when she gazed up into his eyes, she saw something more. More than just him doing his job. For some odd reason, it struck her that he seemed satisfied.

“Oh? Did...someone get out of hand?” she asked softly. A shiver raced up her spine.

“Yeah, he needed to be taught a lesson. He won’t be mistreating any more women for a *long* time.”

“Oh. Somebody I know?” she asked, pressing his knuckle against her cheek, looking up at him with brimming eyes.

He nodded to her, and she hid her face in his chest as he smoothly moved away from the edge of the crowd into the darkness. “Are you upset with me? I didn’t seek him out. McCoy came in the bar and got drunk and...irritating.”

“He wasn’t worth all this trouble.”

“Oh, yeah he *was*,” Eli said with deep conviction in his voice. “It’s behind us now.”

Jack approached with his cell phone. Smiling at Rachel, he beckoned to Eli and held out his phone. She watched as Eli took a sip of his beer and looked at the screen. She snickered as Jack jumped back when Eli spewed what he’d just sipped.

“Does that say what I think it says?”

She thought she heard Jack whisper, “Duct tape *underwear*,” as he pointed at the screen. Eli made a disgusted face and handed him the phone.

“Good thing there’s no picture,” Eli replied.

* * * *

Rachel couldn’t hold back a yawn at two thirty, and Eli chuckled when she did the Jell-O-neck-head-bob for the second time in five minutes.

“I think it’s time to tuck you into bed, Rachel. Does Dad have the key to your front door?”

She’d given her future father-in-law the key earlier in the evening. “Yeah. Why don’t we go say goodnight to Grace and the guys?” She yawned sleepily. She’d wanted to stay for a while once Eli arrived at the ranch since he’d missed the early evening fun.

They said goodnight, and Grace reminded her to sleep well since she was having her formal bridal portrait the next afternoon.

“You should sleep in. You don’t want to have puffy, sleepy eyes.”

Eli drove while Rachel dozed on the way home and lifted her from her truck and carried her to the front porch. He set her down to unlock the door then swept her back into his arms and carried her over the threshold.

“Good practice,” he whispered then kissed her.

They took a relaxing hot shower, and he washed her hair. “When are you going to wear that sexy-as-hell leather outfit for me?” he asked, massaging her scalp gently with his fingertips.

She moaned gratefully at his touch. “When we go out next Saturday night. You have that Saturday off, right?”

“Mmm-hmm. The boots, too? And the slave jewelry?”

“All of it. You’re fun, Eli. I love you,” she said dreamily as she rinsed her hair.

He then turned off the water and wrapped a towel around her. “That’s what you think now. Wait until *tomorrow* night.”

“Goody.” She giggled then yawned again as she climbed onto his bed.

He got under the covers with her and cuddled her back to his front and drew the sheet and blankets over them. She wriggled back against him,

loving the feel of his body heat pressed against her. She decided she didn't mind if he wanted to press some of that body heat *inside* her right now as well.

Eli chuckled and whispered, "Sleep for now, angel. You're tired, and you've had a long day. We'll make love when we wake up."

"I love you." She wiggled back against him on her side until she was effectively sitting in his lap. They were skin-to-skin from her heels up to the top of her head, which rested under his chin on his biceps, when she sighed in contentment. His warm hand slid over her hip and stilled her movements with a soft chuckle.

"You're tempting me. I want you to rest, angel. In the morning, I'll love you good and hard. Right now, we're tired." He kissed the top of her head. "Be a good girl."

"Mmm."

* * * *

Eli made good on his promise later that morning when she awoke to find him poised above her, between her thighs, suckling on one of her nipples and playing with the other. He must have been playing with her for a while because her pussy felt swollen and hot and soaking wet.

He released the nipple in his mouth with a soft pop and said, with a big grin, "Good morning, angel."

He slid into her wet pussy in one smooth, slick stroke. She wrapped her legs around his hips and drew as close as she could to him.

"Oh, Eli! How long have you been awake?" she whispered. Her pussy trembled and tightened around him. She was close to coming already.

"A while," he murmured, flexing his powerful body over her and thrusting his enormous cock deep inside her.

She wrapped her arms around him and stroked his back, feeling the muscles there flexing under her fingertips. He was so massive, so larger-than-life, and she loved the way it felt when he covered her body with his own. "I've been playing by myself for that whole time. I'm glad you woke up."

"Oh! Eli, I don't know how you get me all hot while I'm asleep."

He nuzzled her throat and thrust inside her. He explained in his deep sexy voice, "I'm very gentle, not trying to wake you up, just trying to get you wet and hot for me. Then you wake up when your body can't stand it any longer. I know you're close because your hips were flexing even before you were awake."

"Oooh." She whimpered soft and low, her cheeks flushing with warmth as he gently fucked her.

He wet his finger and stroked her clit gently, growling in approval when she reacted instantly, arching her back and rocking against him.

"Mmm, I love when you move like that, angel. I can't get enough of the way you fuck me and take every inch of me, greedy for more." He placed her heels on his shoulders then gently grasped her hips and lifted her slightly, pumping into her with a slow, steady rhythm. She began to whimper, and her breath came in panting cries.

He pulled out of her, and she groaned in desperation because she'd been so close to coming. "Don't worry, angel. You're going to come good and hard. Get on your hands and knees." He growled in a deep, lust-ridden voice as he helped her. He pulled the pillows away from the headboard and helped her lay over a stack of them to support her pelvis. She moaned in wild anticipation.

His hands kneaded her ass cheeks over and over and she sighed when he placed his cock at her wet entrance.

"Oh, yes, Eli!" she wailed as he slid inside her a bit. Not nearly enough. Not nearly what she wanted from him. His chuckle sounded mischievous, as he teased her with what she wanted so badly now.

"Is my angel ready to be ridden hard? Are you sure you don't want to take it slow?" He gave her another inch before pulling out then slowly, torturously, pumped in, giving her another inch. He held her hips still on the pillows so she couldn't rear back on his cock and impale herself, and the muscles in her pussy tightened, desperate for him.

"Eli!" she murmured in a soft shaky voice.

He leaned over her, his lips near her ear, and said, "Tell me what you need, angel. I'll give it to you."

Rachel knew exactly what she needed. Looking over her shoulder at him, she said, "Eli, I need you to fill me full with your long, hard cock and

fuck me till I come screaming. Fill me with your cum and don't stop until I'm overflowing with it."

Chapter Forty-four

Her pussy clenched at the glitter of lust in his eyes.

“Angel, your wish is my command.” He punctuated the last word by thrusting his cock deep into her pussy in one slippery, wet plunge.

He stroked her pussy as her rasping cries of ecstasy built to a full-on scream. He fucked her hard like she’d begged him to, the ecstasy building inside her higher and higher. She came with a great wailing cry, and he roared as his release exploded from him.

He gathered her to him, lifting her, so she was upright and her back was against his chest, his cock still hard inside her. He slid a hand down to her mound, the other holding her to him. He stroked her clit as he rocked against her, and she gave herself over to another orgasm, this one milder and sweeter for them both. She reveled in the sensation of him holding her like this and fucking her from behind and imagined what they must look like locked together this way.

While she recovered, he nuzzled her neck and caressed her blushing breasts and stroked her abdomen, his fingers drifting down to the juncture where the top of her thighs dipped to her mound.

“Angel, I...” He sighed, tried to speak again, and kissed her shoulder silently. His hands were incredibly gentle as he stroked her.

“I know, Eli. I feel it, too. There are no words, are there?”

He shook his head then kissed her temple tenderly. “What I want to say, what I feel would sound silly coming out of my mouth. I can’t seem to...”

“Then tell me what you feel, Eli. I’d never laugh at what you’re trying to express from your heart. Tell me, and I’ll bet I won’t think it’s silly at all.”

“No woman will ever be as well-loved as you will. When you ask me for my cock, I’ll give it to you as many times as you want it. You’re the perfect woman for me, Rachel. There’s a fucking caveman inside of me, and

not only are you not intimidated by him, you seem to enjoy him as well. The caveman is beating his chest right now, wanting to fuck again, fill you again, and watch my cum dripping from between your sexy thighs after I'm done. Then he wants to curl you up with him and hold you while you sleep with your pussy filled to overflowing. See? It's stupid."

"It's not stupid, Eli. It's beautiful. Cavemen are not politically correct, but I never wanted you to be politically correct. I love every part of you, especially that guy. I like that part of you is wild. You make me feel wild, too. Being with you and having you inside me makes me want to do crazy things with you."

Rachel groaned and arched her back. She rocked against him and knew their words were having an effect on both their libidos as his cock grew hard inside her again, filling her throbbing pussy tightly. She might not get out of bed before noon. "So what does he want to do now, go out and kill a saber-toothed tiger and bring back the meat to feed me?"

He growled and thrust gently inside of her, groaning as his hardening cock slid through the rush of hot moisture generated by their shared fantasy. "That's later. Plus, he'll skin it and make a hide for you to sleep under and stay warm. No, first, after you wake up, he'll want to fuck some more. Because your pussy is the *sweetest* thing he's ever known." He growled. "He'd wallow in bed with you all day if that were possible."

"See, that's something else I love about him. He's tender, sweet, and careful with me. Loving you is beautiful in all its forms, Eli."

He lifted her more upright then placed her hands on the headboard for support, his own hand beside hers, and began to thrust gently but with an increasing pace. He slid two fingers into her hot, swollen slit and tenderly stroked her engorged clitoris, and her head fell back to his shoulder. She moaned softly at the sensation.

She held on and rocked with him, and as her orgasm loomed over her, her hips began to undulate with his rhythm, and he growled, encouraging her to come for him, and she did. She took every pulse greedily, satisfying what she supposed was the *cavewoman* in *her*. Then, whispering words of encouragement to him, she continued to fuck him into his own orgasm as he filled her to overflowing with his cum.

"You're amazing, Eli. You're still hard, aren't you?"

"Fuck yes. You keep me that way."

In an utterly wanton display, she placed her hands back on the bed and lay chest down over the pillows. She arched her back, watching him over her shoulder as he slowly pulled his semi-erect cock from her pussy. She was filled with satisfaction and growled in a soft feminine way at the pleasure that was all over his face at the sight of his milky cum dripping from her tender, well-used pussy. He stroked her pussy lips, which she knew would feel hot and well-fucked. She sighed and moaned in sated bliss at his touch and the male pride in his eyes when he glanced up to see her watching him.

“I can’t get enough of you.” He lay down beside her. He spooned her to his chest, one hand on a breast, the other in her slit, stroking her lips and her clit, alternating between the two. Pressed back against his warmth, she felt consumed with love and need for him. They were both slightly damp with sweat, and she was very aroused by his clean, manly scent.

“I can’t get enough of you.” She gasped in pleasure, amazed that he had her turned on again so quickly.

“We’re like addicts.” He slipped his fingers into her opening and slid them through her slick heat. She whimpered and arched her back to him in offering. Incredibly, *impossibly*, he was hard again against her buttocks.

“Oh, please, Eli. Please.” She reached for him.

Sounding doubtful, he said, “If I do, you won’t be able to *walk*.”

“Yes, I will. I *need* you, Eli!” she whimpered, lost in the erotic bliss of being with him.

* * * *

Eli couldn’t take his eyes off of Rachel as they ate lunch at O’Reilley’s. They sat and talked at a table for two, and Eli felt like he must be wearing a big sappy grin as he sat there taking in her glowing beauty. She would blush when she caught him staring but said nothing about it, sometimes just pausing to gaze into his eyes quietly.

At one point he asked softly, “What are you thinking about?” He watched in pleasure as her cheeks blushed rosily.

“I was just imagining what it will be like, being married to you, making a home with you and...”

“And what?” he asked huskily over the lump in his throat. He couldn’t help but respond to the love in her eyes.

“Waking up to someone who loves as sweet and hard as you do every morning. Raising a bunch of kids with you. Making that house into a home with you.”

The sappy grin returned to his face as he imagined it along with her.

Eli was meeting a home inspector later in the week to check out the ranch house they had looked at to determine if the house was sound enough to warrant an investment in the necessary remodel. After they heard from the inspector, they’d decide about whether to make an offer on it or not.

After paying the bill, Eli walked her through the crowded lobby and out to his truck. He lifted her gently into the passenger seat since she was wearing her long denim skirt and buckled her in. She grinned and kissed him as he *accidentally* brushed her breast with his shoulder. This was becoming a habit with him.

He took her back to the duplex so she could drive herself out to her parents’ ranch. He helped her load her wedding dress, which was zipped up in a long opaque garment bag, and the tote bag that contained her hot rollers, cosmetics, shoes, and other accessories so she could beautify herself for the portraits Carrie and Raquel would be shooting of her today.

Smiling at her once she was buckled into her seat, he said, “I have a couple of errands of my own to run right now, so I’m going to take off, too. How are you feeling?” He placed a hand on her upper thigh, squeezed gently and felt her body quiver slightly in response.

Her beautiful face radiated love when she looked into his eyes. “I feel super.”

“Good. Have fun with the girls.” He kissed her tenderly then waved as she backed out of their driveway.

* * * *

“Holy *hot* freakin’ hell!” Kelly shouted as Rachel quickly snapped closed the hinged cover on her nude portrait and clutched it to her chest. Grace did the same with the ones she had done for her men. Kelly had snuck up on them as they were taking their first looks at the nudes, which Carrie had brought with her. Teresa and Rachel’s mom were outside helping Carrie

and Raquel arrange potted plants for an advantageous shot out at the pavilion.

“Kelly! I’m shocked!” Grace said in mock horror. “When Little Matthew’s first word is ‘hell,’ I want to be a fly on the wall when his daddy asks you where he learned it.”

Kelly snorted. “Trust me, he’ll know.” Then she reached out to get another look at the portraits they clutched. “Come on, I’m like a sister, or something, right? Show me?” she wheedled.

“Okay, you can see mine,” Grace said, laughing, and laid all three out on the bed in Rachel’s old room. Kelly opened them all and gasped, looking over at Grace with new respect and admiration. “Grace, they are going to *love* these. They are so...so gorgeous.”

Grace clapped her hands in happiness. “I think they will, too. It’s good to have someone else’s opinion, though.”

“They used the lighting and shadows so cleverly. You are so brave to do these, and I love that they are all black and white. It gives them a timeless quality.”

“Thanks, sweetie.”

“Can I see yours, Rachel?” Kelly asked nicely. “Please!”

Rachel smiled and relented, cringing when Kelly flipped it open and gasped. Rachel shut her eyes and said, cringing, “Too much? Too much *me*?”

“Nuh-uh. It’s perfect! He’s going to treasure this. I love how you have your hands in your hair. That does great things for your boobs. He’s gonna be *stunned*!”

“Carrie said we could look at the others, but we better hurry because we need to get your hair fixed, Rachel.”

They peeked at her mom’s first and cooed over it. Her mom looked over her shoulder into the camera, a feather boa framing her lush, satiny shoulders as she gazed at the camera with a come-hither stare meant for Rachel’s father.

“Daddy’s going to love it.”

They looked at Teresa’s next. Carrie had captured her demure personality perfectly in the shy tilt of her head and the way her eyes looked up at the camera.

In Kelly's portrait, she was reclining on a chaise lounge, dressed in a white gown and barefooted. Kelly had a twinkle in her eyes and appeared to be slowly drawing the hem of the gown up her legs.

"Wow, your husband will love this, won't he? Can you send him a copy of it?" Rachel asked.

"She gave me a disk with the file on it that I can load on the computer and e-mail to him. She also printed me a small copy to mail to him. This one is for our bedroom. He's going to love it." Kelly sniffled and wiped a tear from her eye. The girls hugged her and let her bawl for a minute. She pulled it together pretty quickly, though, and they got started rolling Rachel's hair. Rachel's more risqué boudoir portraits were in the back of Carrie's SUV, otherwise they'd have snuck a peek at those as well.

The portrait shoot went well. The weather held out nicely, not too bright and not too cloudy, but the temperature was a little on the cool side. Afterward, her mom served them a late snack, and they had fun looking at *almost* all of the portraits, including the boudoir portraits. Her mom was giddy with excitement for her father to see the portrait that evening.

Teresa was thrilled with her portrait as well but begged off early. Angel had volunteered to watch Michael for her that afternoon, and she didn't want to take too much advantage of his good nature. The others looked knowingly at each other. Anyone who observed Angel with Michael knew he was over the moon for the little boy. He probably was taking him for a horseback ride around the ranch at that very minute, completely unaware of what time it was.

Rachel's mother invited her to stay for supper, but Rachel declined, since Eli had told her he had already made plans, but promised they'd come over for supper another night soon.

She pulled into the driveway, happy to see Eli's truck parked there. Another familiar SUV was parked behind the motorcycle, and Rachel recognized Jane Jensen, their real estate agent, standing on the porch talking with Eli and Elijah.

Jane was animated, and her pale cheeks were flushed a pretty pink. Rachel waved back when Jane waved at her but sat in the truck observing. Jane was speaking to Eli about something but kept looking up at Elijah and smiling. Rachel climbed from her truck after a few moments, smiling and

wondering what was up with Eli's dad and Jane. Elijah was a sociable, easygoing guy and quite good-looking. Jane seemed quite taken with him.

Interesting.

Eli stepped off the porch and came to her, swinging her up into his arms and hugging her.

Elijah spoke several quiet words to Jane. She nodded and handed him a business card. She turned and stepped off the porch. "I have to run. Hi, Rachel, Eli and Elijah can fill you in on the news. I'll look forward to hearing from you soon. Wish I could stay, but I have another appointment to keep." She hugged Rachel, said good-bye to Eli, then turned to wave at Elijah, who was standing on the porch, leaning up against one of the porch beams smiling at Jane. She blushed again and hurried to her car. Rachel looked up at Eli in curiosity, and he cleared his throat and rolled his eyes at her. Something was *definitely* cooking there.

"Well, kids. It's time for me to hit the road," Elijah said as he stepped off the porch. "Gotta get back to San Antonio, but I'm sure I'll be back soon."

"Okay, Dad. I sure am glad you got to come out for the pig roast. I hope you had a good time," Rachel said, walking with Eli over to where he stood on the driveway.

"Oh, I did, I did. I know you have plans, so I'll let you get on with them. I'll catch a quick bite in town and head on out."

"I could fix you some supper, Elijah. I don't mind at all," Rachel replied, not liking the thought of him leaving hungry.

"Nah, sweetie. I should have gotten on the road earlier. Got caught up talking with Eli and Miss Jensen. But thanks for the offer."

"You're welcome. Drive safely, all right?" she said and gave him a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Eli hugged his dad. His dad got in his pickup and waved as he drove out of sight.

"Interesting," Rachel said softly.

"You have no idea," Eli said meaningfully, kissing her again. "I have a feeling we may be seeing more of Dad around these parts, thanks to a certain pretty real estate agent."

"She seems like she is attracted to him."

"Oh, *I'll* say." He chuckled. "And Dad was definitely turning the charm on for her."

“So tell me the good news.”

“Jane stopped by to let us know that the current owners of the ranch house are becoming anxious to sell the house so they can settle the estate and pay bills. Taxes are due on the house, and they are hoping to get them taken care of at the time of sale. The county is willing to work with them, but they need to get it sold soon. They are willing to consider any reasonable offer.”

“Excellent. Did you tell her we want to have it inspected?”

“Yes. I told her I’d be meeting with an inspector this week. She understood that we wouldn’t know anything until then.”

“Great, what else is going on?”

“I have a surprise inside for you.”

“Oh, goody, can I see it?”

Eli brought her inside, but she didn’t see anything out of the ordinary. He convinced her to take a warm shower while he got ready. While she was in the shower, he came in and said, “I’ve put something on the counter for you. After you have it on, open the bathroom door, and I’ll come get you.”

When she stepped from the shower, toweling her hair dry, all she found on the counter was the satin blindfold.

With her heart pounding, she dried her hair quickly and tied it on. With her eyes covered, she opened the bathroom door. Deprived of her sight, and turned on by the idea of being naked and vulnerable like this, she waited for him.

He didn’t keep her long. She gasped when she felt his touch at her waist. He gathered her to him, and she went with him into the bedroom. Quietly, he helped her onto the bed and positioned her comfortably. He moved to one side of the bed, and she heard fabric being gathered up, and then he lifted her wrist gently and began to tie something soft to it.

Her bondage sashes.

“Eli, what are you—” she began to say until he held something to her lips. Uncertain, she didn’t know what to do.

“It’s just a grape. Eat it. I know you must be hungry. I’m going to feed you with my hands. Is that all right?”

She sighed happily and nodded, chewing on the grape he slipped between her lips. He went around the other side of the bed and tied her other wrist. Her arms were bound now, but not tightly. She had freedom to move a

little. He crawled up on the bed between her thighs and offered her a piece of cheese, which she took gratefully, realizing she was hungry.

As she ate the cheese, he slid his warm hands up her thighs, groaning softly as he touched her. She wasn't expecting it when he lifted her hips and slid her down so that her arms stretched out toward either corner of the bed. He caressed and stroked her hips before offering her a small chunk of freshly-baked bread that had been dipped in a sweet cream cheese dip. She "mmm-ed" over that, and he gave her another as he chuckled before he left the bed and moved down to the foot. He stroked her arch as he lifted her foot. She lifted her head blindly in confusion.

"Wait a minute, I only had two. How—"

"I ordered two more." Amusement filled his voice. He spread her thigh out wide. "Is that too much? Are your muscles sore from this morning?"

"Oh, no. I...I-like it, actually," she stammered as he held another grape to her lips, which she accepted gladly.

He tied her ankle down, and her heart began to pound. She felt so exposed already, but when he spread the other thigh, she knew her glistening wet pussy would be opened for him. Then what would he do?

He placed another piece of cheese between her lips then tied the other ankle down, spreading her till she had to moan with the erotic pleasure of it. More moisture gathered in her opening, and she knew he'd see it, too. He crawled between her thighs and smoothed his warm hands gently over her, gently rubbing down the muscles in her thighs and calves and in her arms. Once when he leaned over her, he groaned again like he was restraining himself.

After he finished rubbing her down, he left the bed again. He returned with something he laid on the mattress. Sliding his hand up her torso from her abdomen to between her breasts, he offered another small chunk of the bread smeared with the cream cheese dip. As he caressed her, he spoke love words to her, telling her he adored her and he'd thought of her as he sat on the back deck that afternoon and played his guitar. All the while, he fed her more grapes, cheese, and bread.

When she'd had her fill, he said, "Now, it's my turn to eat."

"You've fed me, but you haven't eaten?" she asked softly. Her pussy began to throb in time with her heartbeat,

“Oh, I’ve had the main course, but now I want dessert. I think you will like it, too.”

She was startled when she felt a moderately cold touch on her nipple. It was his fingers, smearing something on her. Her heart began to pound, and her breathing turned into panting. He smeared more of the same thing on the other nipple. It was cold, but her nipple felt like it was on fire. His fingers came back with more, placing it on her quivering abdomen randomly in a pattern that led down to her mound, his fingers caressing and smearing the dessert on her as he returned with more and more. He stopped, and her breathing became rasping moans because she knew what was next, and she knew he was looking at her mound, enjoying the view and building her anticipation.

“I’m going to enjoy licking my dessert from you so much, angel. But nowhere more than from *right here*.” His warm fingers delivered a dollop of whatever the dessert was to her mound and enflamed pussy. He was going to use her as his dessert platter.

She wanted to moan and scream with delight and agony at the same time. The smearing of the dessert on her had been sheer, torturous bliss, and now he was going to lick it off of her, as well. She arched her back, crying out when he applied an extra-large blob all over her lips and her clit, being very thorough. He spread more over her hipbones and into the dip at the juncture of her hip and thigh. He moved up to her chest and spread the last of it over her collarbones.

“This is how I’d love to always eat my dessert. Straight off your luscious, sexy body. Want to know what it is?” At her panting nod, he said, “Open up, angel, and taste what I’m about to feast on.”

She opened her lips and felt two fingers slip into her mouth, a little of the dessert on the ends of them. She sucked good and hard, causing him to groan in pleasure as she stroked his fingers with her tongue. The creamy coconut custard and whipped cream with little flakes of baked sugary coconut mixed in

“Mmm, my favorite. Coconut cream *pie*.” She sighed blissfully.

“I think it’s about to become my new favorite, as well.” He bent down and lapped at her collarbones.

She sighed happily taking a little mouthful here and there from his fingertips, sucking them some more for him. He worked his way slowly

down her body, feasting greedily on her nipples as he sucked each one clean and released it with a soft pop.

Finally, Eli reached her mound and growled as he dug into his dessert with real gusto. He laved her hot lips and her clit until she writhed in pleasure. He dipped his tongue into her entrance, getting every trace of his coconut cream pie. He licked her until it was all gone, by which time she was begging incoherently.

“Would you like some more pie? Or would you rather have my cock, angel?” he asked as he smoothly untied the restraints at her ankles.

“Eli,” she purred, “I need it, I want your cock.” She lifted her knees as he moved into position between her thighs and wrapped her legs around him.

In one smooth, gentle stroke he slid into her slick, pussy, through *her* cream. “Angel, I’d rather have you for dessert than anything else.”

She moaned softly as he raised her ankles and spread her thighs wide. “So beautiful. I love to fuck you. You were so sweet, letting me eat my dessert off your little wet pussy. I have a couple of surprises for you. I think you’re going to love this new toy I bought for you.”

“Oh?” Her heart pounded in her ears, as he shifted around for a few seconds.

Eli pressed something soft and wet against the flesh around her clit. When he released the pressure, a gentle vibrating suction began directly over her clit.

“Oh, Eli!” Her hips began to undulate, finding her own unique rhythm as he encouraged her. Her breathing became rasping moans as he quickly lubed her asshole and positioned something slippery at her ass. “What is it? Eli!”

“It’s a plug, like you’ve been using, but this one has something special about it.” He slipped the plug into her lubed opening. She cried out when it began to vibrate inside her ass, in *just* the right spot. She couldn’t help but move with it, on him. The vibrations might have had their origin on her clit and in her ass, but the sensations coursed through her whole body. Holding back was not an option and she moved uninhibitedly on his cock, which felt like it had gotten even larger. Being tied down and helpless magnified her need to move.

“Oh, Eli, It’s *so* good, all so good! I’m going to come!” she cried out, arching her back, moving in a wild rhythm along with him. “Oh! I’m—I’m...oh! I’m coming, Eli! Yes!”

Her hips ground into him as she screamed and exploded in ecstasy. He looped her calves over his forearms while thrusting into her with his long, hard cock. He pressed on the toy that held her clit in a suction grip and it began to vibrate faster and harder. Her body seized up, and she came with a joyous wail. As she recovered, he released the suction at her clit and turned off the vibrating plug and carefully slid it from her ass. Then he pulled out of her, hard as a bar of steel. Did she miss something?

Breathless, she mumbled softly, “Eli, you haven’t come yet, have you?”

“No, I wanted to untie you first and take off your blindfold. I need to hold you while I make love to you and finish while I’m looking into your eyes.”

Eli pulled the sashes at her wrists loose seconds later, and slipped the blindfold off, as well. Rachel’s body still vibrated from her orgasm as she gazed up into his handsome face. He smiled and kissed her as he settled over her, and she spread her legs wide for him. He slid back inside her slick passage, groaning deeply in pleasure. His arms slid around her, one arm under her hips, the other under her shoulders, and he held her to him tightly and began to stroke into her with long, smooth, agonizingly beautiful stokes, all the way in, all the way out.

She felt captured and consumed, tight in his arms like this, acquiescing to his strength and immense power as he fucked her tenderly, neither fast nor slow, but somewhere in between. Perfectly.

He might be a large, tall, intimidating man to some, with good reason, but to her, he was always her gentle giant. His heart, for her, was as immense and magnificent as the rest of him. His face became serious, and the tension started to build in his body. Her body responded, tightening up like a bow string pulled taut. He began to pump into her with mindless abandon.

His roar broke her tension, and she came again along with him. He thrust deeply, filling her with his cum, stroking her hard, holding her hard, crying out in ecstasy until his head slumped weakly to her shoulder. His ebony hair spread over her chest like a silken blanket.

When she came back to herself, she slowly released her arms and legs which were wrapped around his body, holding on as tight as he had been holding on to her.

“Eli, you are so...beautiful when you come. The pleasure is written all over your face, and the way you sound when you come touches something so deep inside me. I *love* that sound,” she whispered. She took a deep, shaky breath as her heart rate began to return to normal.

He raised his head from her shoulder, his pale gray gaze searching her eyes. He smiled tenderly at her, tilted his head, and kissed her adoringly. He stroked her tongue the way his body had stroked hers earlier. She caressed his shoulders and his arms, and then her fingers strayed in his long, black, silken hair. His kisses spread along her jawline and down her throat as he slowly withdrew his cock. They both chuckled when he lifted his body from hers and their flesh stuck together from the sugar in the coconut cream pie.

“Another shower?” She laughed as she touched her fingers to the slightly sticky flesh of her torso. “I appreciate you not getting any in my hair.”

“Yeah, I’ll go start the shower for us.” He grinned as he rose gloriously naked from the bed, lifted the tray that contained all the food, and returned it to the kitchen. He returned to the bed and gathered up the toys to wash them and helped her rise from the bed, where she had been enjoying the view as he came and went.

“Keep ogling me like that, and I’m going to get hard again.” He gestured to the long shaft hanging between his legs that already looked like it was taking an interest.

So soon. It takes a licking and keeps on ticking. It amazed her, the lovemaking stamina this man possessed.

She arched a dark eyebrow, saying, “And that’s a problem because?”

“Insatiable woman,” he growled, coming up behind her and grasping her ass in both hands, making her yelp and giggle as they went into the bathroom.

* * * *

When the movie they put on after their shower was over, Eli lifted her soundly sleeping form from the couch, carried her to his bed, and tucked her

in. Removing his robe, he climbed in behind her then pulled the covers over them. She murmured contentedly when he slid her black satin robe from her, needing the direct contact with her warm, sleep-tender flesh. He fell asleep breathing in the clean scent of her hair, mixed with her own womanly fragrance that was a part of who she was. Drawing his knees up behind her, he drew her deeper into his embrace and curled her to him, pleasing the caveman who resided in his chest, near the heart that she had claimed to the uttermost.

Chapter Forty-five

On Saturday morning, a week before the wedding, Rachel's cell phone rang, and she and Eli couldn't help but chuckle. Grace had gotten hold of Rachel's new cell phone and downloaded special ring tones so Rachel would know who was calling based on the ringer. The ringer for Grace sounded, playing "The Stripper." Eli shook his head and grinned at Grace's humor.

Kelly's ringer was "Wild Thing," Charity's was "Friends in Low Places," and her mom's was "Respect." Bashful Teresa also had a special ring tone, which all the girls thought was hysterical, "Rockstar" by Nickelback. There was no telling who else in her address book got a special ringtone. Rachel supposed she'd find out eventually.

"Hello, Grace."

"Now, *see*? Isn't it nice to know who's calling without even looking at the caller ID?"

"Very amusing. I hope you *never* call me while I'm in church."

Grace snorted. "Now that *would* be embarrassing! Hey, listen, we wanted to have a little something for you and Eli up at The Pony tonight, sort of like an engagement party. Why don't you dress in something hot and sexy and come up to the club?"

"I think we were planning to go over there tonight, anyway. What time?"

"Oh, how about...six o'clock?"

"We can do that. And, Grace? Thanks. You've been so good to us."

"I love you guys. See you at six o'clock."

Putting the phone away, Rachel smiled at Eli across the breakfast table.

"That girl's up to something."

"Mmm-hmm. Can't wait," he said, taking a sip of his black coffee.

Later that morning, they left to go on their first Christmas shopping trip together. They stayed in Divine and visited all the little small retail businesses that had struggled in the last year to stay afloat. With most everyone on their list taken care of, they stopped at a local drive-in and split a hot fudge sundae together.

He fed her a bite and asked, "You wanna know one of the things I love about you?"

She gave him a crooked grin and nodded. "Sure."

"I love that you don't obsess about your weight and your appearance to me. You don't sit there and simper and whine about how you shouldn't be eating this sundae with me because you might get fat. I love sharing it with you and watching you enjoy it. That tells me that you're happy with who you are, which is the woman I'm in love with."

"Thank you, Eli. Women who do that drive me crazy. It's like they feel they have to make excuses for enjoying life and what it offers. That extreme focus on food, being obsessed with it like so many are, is a sign that there's something missing from their lives. I like chocolate, and if you offer it to me, I'll probably take it. I'm happy with this body, though I know it's not perfect. If *you're* happy with this body, then it's all good."

"Angel, your body is heaven to me," he replied softly and put the spoon to her lips, smiling when she licked it suggestively. "Mmm, heaven."

They put up Eli's artificial tree when they got back home, opting to not get a real one since they would be on their honeymoon most of the ten days between the wedding and Christmas. It would be a shame to come home to a dried-out, dead Christmas tree. Rachel handed him the Christmas tree topper, an angel, and stepped back to look the tree over. She had found the angel at one of the shops that day and purchased it to commemorate their first Christmas together. Soon, it was time to get ready for the evening's festivities, whatever they were.

Eli asked, "Are you going to wear your leather outfit for me tonight?"

"Wait till you see me," she said, giggling as she turned on the shower and collected what she would need. After her shower, her pussy got a little damp as she began to slip into all that soft leather.

She zipped up the knee-high, black patent platform boots and stood up, amazed at the difference in her height looking in the mirror. She rolled her hair and applied her makeup, going for an extreme dark, dramatically

shadowed and lined eye and blood-red lips. Her hair she left in wild, loose finger-styled curls, which she sprayed carefully, then stared back at the sexy stranger in the mirror. She threaded the buckle on her collar and positioned the large ring at the front of her throat.

She called out, "Eli? Are you ready?" as she attached the slave bracelet on her upper arm and hung the matching dangling earrings in her ears.

"Hell yeah, I'm ready!" he called from the living room.

She took a few deep breaths to calm her pounding heart. She glanced once more at the beautiful stranger in the mirror and smiled with deep, sexy satisfaction. Yeah, he *thought* he was ready. She hoped he was sitting down. She reached down and adjusted the zippers on the sides of the skirt, a little higher, like she'd seen Charity do. She stood tall, opened the door, and swept out into the hallway, sauntering into the living room, where Eli stood at the bar, replying to a text message. She stopped in front of him and stood there in poised silence, waiting for his reaction.

He was dressed in his black leathers and a snug black T-shirt with his black leather biker boots and his heavy black leather riding jacket. He looked delicious, and she wanted to push him back on the couch and ravish him on the spot. He looked up and dropped his phone and didn't even notice when it hit the floor.

* * * *

Eli was sending a text message when she called out to him. The bathroom door opened, and a cloud of scent floated down the hallway, a combination of the bodywash she used and the perfume she wore tonight. At the swish of her leathers, he looked up and was stunned stupid.

Eli stood there trying to catch his breath. He dimly heard a clatter and thought he might have dropped something. The blood pounded in his ears and rushed with painful force into his rapidly thickening cock.

She stood in front of him, her feet spaced apart in a wide, confident stance, waiting for his reaction. There was no denying it was Rachel. Her midnight-blue eyes, her light olive complexion, and her soft, full kissable lips all told him it was her. But this beauty before him was a whole new dimension of Rachel.

Her eyes were made up dark and mysterious with thick lashes, and she'd painted her lips red. The corset was laced tight up the front, and her lovely breasts generously filled the confines of the bust in a way that made his mouth water.

Eli gulped convulsively and drank the rest of her in. She had on the short leather skirt, which fit her like a second skin, with the zippers adjusted to at least a five-inch slit either side, and then he got a good look at her long, shapely legs sheathed in fishnet stockings and encased in tall, shiny black boots with the platform and ultra high heels. In them she was at least five inches taller, if not more.

He still had not spoken, but she obviously could see his reaction in his eyes because she gave him a sexy, knowing smile and glanced at the front of his leathers, where his erection stood, perfectly hard, screaming incessantly to get inside her. He did the only thing he could do, the only thing he could do that was worthy of her effect on him.

He slid to his knees before her, stunned.

She gasped as he wrapped his hands around her shiny, patent-encased ankles and slid his palms slowly up her calves. She moaned faintly when his hands made contact with the back of her knees. He felt her tremble as his hands paused at her hemline, and he looked up into her face. Her eyes were closed, and her ruby red lips were parted as she panted quietly, her cheeks a blushing rose color.

He slid his hands beneath her skirt, because he *needed* to know, and groaned in tortured delight when he discovered she was wearing fishnet stockings and a garter belt. He traced his fingers up the backs of her thighs, to what lay beneath the garter belt. Her breathing accelerated to a staccato panting rhythm as his fingertips skimmed over her bare ass cheeks then slid to the front, to the smooth, leather of her G-string. Dressed in leather from head to toe, she was a goddess. No, that description wasn't quite right. She owned him, body and soul. He slid his arms around her and pressed his face to her abdomen, his lips at her mound.

He looked up at her, in awe. "My queen."

* * * *

Now it was Rachel's turn to be speechless. On his knees, he called her his *queen*. Her heart pounded an insane rhythm, and she had to reach for the bar to steady herself with a hand as he kissed the knuckles of her other hand. When she'd sauntered out confidently earlier and waited for his response, she didn't realize how profoundly his reaction might affect *her*.

"Oh, Eli." Her lips trembled, and she fought the tears that wanted to flood her eyes. She'd worked too hard on her eye makeup to ruin it now.

He stood in front of her with a positively euphoric look on his face as he placed a little white box, wrapped with a white satin bow, into her hand. "A little something for tonight."

Rachel looked up at him, surprised at his unexpected gift. "Thank you, Eli."

She untied the satin ribbon.

"I hope you like it and that I chose well based on past conversations."

Glancing up at him, she lifted the lid then looked inside. Lying in the box was a heavy, flat, solid silver heart pendant with a lobster claw clasp. Engraved in script letters on the heart was the name *Eli*. Whoa.

"Turn it over, Rachel." On the other side in thick, larger block letters was another word. A *warning*. MINE.

"Oh." She breathed out, fingering the lobster claw. She understood. This was a tag to be worn from the ring of her collar. *He understood*. He knew how this would resonate with her. She claimed to be his, she'd promised she was his, she'd cried out in ecstasy she was his, and now the whole world would know it, know that he owned her body and soul. She smiled joyfully and handed it to him and lifted the ring on the collar. He slipped it on with his name facing up.

"I'm glad you like it." He fingered it above her cleavage as her heart thumped rapidly beneath it.

"I love it," she whispered. "Knowing I'm yours and that you lay claim to me like this, it...feels so *good*, Eli," she finished lamely, unable to find the right words.

"I love you, angel. That tag says you are mine, but it rests there only by your choice, only if you believe it's true. I would never seek to truly enslave you, Rachel."

"I already am."

His fingertips brushed lightly over her cheekbone as he looked at her with deep approval and appreciation.

"It's six fifteen. We don't want to be late. I have your jacket here." He traced his fingers over the slave bracelet on her arm, noticing it for the first time, and smiled softly. He held the jacket, and she slipped her arms into it then turned to him, the fringe swaying with her movement.

"Beautiful," he murmured.

* * * *

Eli helped Rachel climb from the seat of his Dodge, and she smiled wickedly as she treated him to a sexy glimpse of her inner thigh above the edge of her fishnet stocking before boldly sliding down his torso as he set her on her feet.

"How do I look, handsome?" she asked with a naughty grin, giving his chest a light brush with her breasts just for good measure. The sexy rumble that rose from his chest sent a quiver of pure lust straight to her clit.

"I should pop that delectable fanny of yours for teasing me like that before we go into public," he growled, squeezing her ass cheek as she giggled unrepentantly. "You look good enough to eat right here in the parking lot, angel." He softened his words with a gentle nuzzle against her neck that sent delicious shivers all over her body, and her pussy swelled and throbbed in response to his touch.

"You're not so bad yourself, handsome man." She laid her hand over his heart. "I promise I'll be so good you'll have to *beg* me to be bad."

"And what if being bad *is* good as long as you're with me?"

Rachel didn't hold back her sexy chuckle. Her hand slid down over his chest and abdomen to the waist of his leathers as she said, "Honey, you know the old saying, 'When I'm good, I'm very good. But when I'm bad, I'm even better?'" Her fingertips slid an inch into his waistband, right by his fly. "I'll be as bad as you want me to be." *Maybe even badder if it means I get extra licks, handsome.*

"Shit. Let's get inside before I start getting ideas. You're wicked tonight, woman." He took her hand and led her to the club's front entrance.

“Let’s see what Grace has up her sleeves, or down her stocking, or wherever she hides her bright ideas,” Rachel said, grinning at Eli when he laughed at her comment.

He pulled open the door for her and held her hand as she stepped in. When Mike and Rogelio looked up and saw them, they got twin reactions. First, there was a deep, squinting scowl of non-recognition of the female with Eli, then bulgy, bug-eyed shock as they realized it *was* Rachel with Eli. Mike let out a loud wolf whistle that drew *everyone’s* attention as she sauntered confidently up to Mike, and was eye-to-eye with him and Rogelio. She gave them both big smiles and left red lip prints on their cheeks to match the red and white Santa hats they were both wearing. Rachel wondered who sweet-talked them into wearing them but had a pretty good guess. Grace, no doubt.

“Dang, girl!” Mike said loudly. “You’re killing me! Wait till your *dad* sees you! You’re in *trouble*!”

“My dad is not—” She was interrupted by the tell-tale distinctive throat clearing noise behind her.

“Ahem.” It sounded just like her—

“Dad! What are you doing here?”

“Hoping to see my lovely daughter. You do look lovely, princess, if a little...*different* from what your dad’s used to.” Her dad turned to Eli. “Wolf, was this leather outfit your idea? You seem to match tonight,” he said sarcastically as Rachel whapped her dad gently on the arm.

“Dad, there’s nothing wrong with how I’m dressed. These were all shower gifts. You should be glad I’m not wearing what *Mom* gave me for a shower gift.” She grinned as her dad squirmed a little.

“I don’t see any other women dressed head-to-toe in leather, and since when are you so tall? Oh, never mind, you look beautiful.” He kissed her cheek as Charity and Justin walked in, dressed similarly to Rachel and Eli.

Grace made it up to the front, surprising them with Kelly in tow. Rachel and Eli hugged her and asked where Matthew was. Kelly explained he was with Ethan’s little sister, Erin, at Grace’s overnight.

Grace had on a beautiful, red velvet corset, edged with sparkling rhinestones at the bust, with a transparent black wrap thrown over her shoulders. She wore it with a black satin pencil skirt, which ended below the

knee. Her pretty, pedicured feet were done up in glittering, silver high-heeled sandals.

Kelly was going for a classic look in a slinky little black dress with shiny, black high heels on her dainty tiny feet. Her hair was styled in whimsical little ringlets all around her face. She looked like a pixie on a hot date. Standing next to Kelly was Elijah, dressed in Wranglers, cowboy boots, and an open-collared white dress shirt.

Rachel turned to Grace and grinned. “Okay, what’s going on, Grace?”

Grace smirked. “Come sit down, and we’ll tell you. By the way, you are smokin’ hot in that leather outfit, Rachel!”

Rachel and Eli followed her to the table they usually sat at. Everybody else was there. Everybody—her parents, Charity and Justin, Kelly, Elijah, Rosemary, Wes and Evan, Kathleen and Ace, Corina and Brice, Ethan, Jack, Adam. Teresa and Angel were there, too.

Rachel greeted them all, a little surprised, and turned to Grace. Grace said two words she hated to hear—bachelorette party.

Then she said two more Rachel hated even *worse*—bachelor party.

Shit.

Her old jealous nature reared its ugly head. A strippers and her fiancé in close proximity to each other. She felt a deep crease formed between her brows, and she turned to Eli, looking up at him uncertainly.

He stroked her back and murmured quietly, “This is a surprise to me, too, baby.”

Grace touched her hand and said sincerely, “Don’t worry, Rachel. Charity is going with the men as a sort of chaperone. She’ll keep an eye on Eli and run wicked interference with any women who get too friendly. Plus, they’re going to a strip club, not hiring a stripper to come to them. And if he misbehaves, she’ll rat him out faster than she can type WTF.”

Chapter Forty-six

“My thoughts exactly, ‘What the *f—*’” Rachel zipped her lip, remembering her dad was there.

Then she realized something. It was great that Charity would be there. Then she’d get all the juicy details later, but if her dad was in attendance, Eli would never—*No*. That was just it. Eli, *her* Eli, would never lay a hand on another woman as long as she was alive. Not because she was jealous of other women but because he loved her and wanted only her.

She relaxed, and looked into Eli’s eyes. “Go have fun, honey.”

Eli did a double take. “But—what?”

She murmured to him, “No regrets, remember? I trust *you*, Eli. Charity will deal with anyone who gets too frisky with you. Break a few twenties so you have one dollar bills for the dancers, but remember,” she whispered sexily, “I dance for *love*.”

He slid his palms up and down her waist until her dad cleared his throat, and then he returned from the spell she cast over him.

“But that’s not all,” Grace said. “Rachel, *you’re* coming with all the ladies. There are two limousines waiting. The men will go to a gentlemen’s club in Morehead, taking Charity with them as escort. The ladies will be going to a ladies’ club in Morehead, and Adam will be our gentleman escort, keeping us safe and watching over Rachel. We’ll only be a few minutes apart the whole evening. The clubs are that close. Adam and Charity will keep in touch, and we’ll rendezvous back here when we’re ready. How does that sound, Eli?”

Eli never hesitated. “Go have some fun, angel.” Then he added softly, “I’ll be ready and waiting for *my* lap dance when we’re alone.”

She nuzzled his throat, realizing she was going to miss him for the next few hours, but gasped in pleasure and a sudden rush of...delight as his hands grasped the zippers on each side of her skirt and slowly slid the

zippers down to the bottom. He made no show of it. Only she was aware of what he was doing as the others prepared to leave.

Folding the zipper tabs down and locking them in place, he growled, "These stay closed while you are away from me, angel." Then he kissed the silver pendant hanging from the ring on her collar and looked into her eyes, checking for her reaction.

She seductively promised, "They'll stay where they are until you unzip them all the way...if you *want* to."

"Oh, I *want* to, all right." He squeezed her ass while her dad wasn't looking and kissed her hungrily.

She went to the ladies' room to fix her lipstick and fluff her hair. Grace came in to do the same. She gestured to heavy silver pendant and said, "May I?" Rachel smiled and nodded. Grace lifted it, read Eli's name, turned it over, and smiled wickedly. "Nice," she murmured softly. "It looks good on the collar, makes it more...meaningful, I think." She eyed Rachel carefully.

"Definitely more meaningful. I love it. Thanks again for the collar."

"You're welcome. Eli is waiting to escort you outside. You may not have realized it, but when you came in wearing this *hotter-than-hell* outfit, you caused quite a stir amongst the male customers. I'm not even sure they've recognized you yet. It's funny, I think I heard Eli *growl* earlier." Grace chuckled. "My territorial men aren't the only ones growling tonight. But check the club when you walk out and you'll see what I mean. It's good for a girl's ego."

Rachel grinned. "You look beautiful tonight. Let me guess. Um...Adam bought this outfit for you, head to toe, including the lingerie and shoes. From...June."

"That's a no-brainer. Did you see Adam tonight? He's very handsome in his suit."

"You make a perfect couple in your evening attire. He looks devastatingly delicious," she added, making Grace laugh. "Speaking of gorgeous, let's get *our* fannies out to the limo."

She exited the ladies' room and stopped at the entrance to the back hall. Eli was across the club speaking privately with Adam. Rachel had to laugh. Adam was probably reassuring Eli how many different parts he'd break off of any guy who got frisky with her.

She smiled and sauntered away from the hallway, trying to ignore the impact she had on the men in the club. Stares followed her, and more than a few men got elbows in their ribs from their dates. Two unfortunate friendly fellows she'd never met approached her before she gotten far.

"Excuse me, beautiful, would you like to dance?"

"Pardon me, darlin', care to dance with *me*?"

A third was approaching and about to speak up when she stopped them and smiled at all of them and gestured to Eli, who was striding across the club. "I'm sorry. I'm here with my fiancé." Caught in Eli's admiring gaze, she sauntered through the crowd to him.

"Hey, beautiful. Ready to go?"

"Ready as I'll *ever* be," she said dryly. What was she supposed to do at a ladies' strip club, anyway?

When she asked that question in the limo, all the ladies stopped talking, looked at her, and burst out in laughter.

Grace replied, "You don't *do* anything, sweet cheeks. They come to *you*."

"Tell me honest and straight what you have planned. No games. No stupid 'suck for a buck' bachelorette T-shirt, and no scavenger hunts. I don't want to be embarrassed."

Grace scoffed. "Aw! I liked the 'suck for a buck' T-shirt idea. But Kelly said it would piss Eli off too much if he found out dancers were sucking LifeSavers off your shirt. So thank her, I suppose, party pooper. Nope, we're just going to enjoy a few drinks and watch men take their clothes off. Lap dances are your option."

Rachel looked over at Kelly and clasped her hands together and mouthed, "*Thank you!*"

Kelly snickered and gave her a thumbs-up signal. Rachel was feeling more trepidation by the minute. She sat next to Grace in the limo, and Adam sat on the other side of Grace. As Rachel watched the others laugh and joke around, a hand gently tapped her shoulder. She looked, and Adam leaned over behind Grace.

"Don't worry, Rachel. We're going to make sure you have a good time without getting embarrassed or in trouble with Eli."

"You won't let them take me up on stage, will you?"

"I have the strictest instructions from Eli that you are not to be taken up on stage or embarrassed in any way. This is supposed to be fun for you, too."

"Is that what you and Eli were talking about at the club?"

"Partly. But even if he hadn't approached me with that specific concern, I still wouldn't let them do that. Don't worry. You're going to have a great time." He patted her shoulder.

Rachel smiled at him and tried to relax enough to join in the conversations. She was caught up in her own thoughts, wishing she'd known about this whole bachelorette-strip club plan to begin with. She'd have done what she did best—research the subject. She pulled out her cell phone and did some quick Internet research on strip club etiquette and what to expect in a strip club. She quickly scanned and found three well-organized articles from several different perspectives—dancers, bouncers, and customers. A lot of the rules were common sense. She leaned over to Adam and got his attention.

"What is the touching rule in the club they are going to?"

"Generally, their policy is 'touch and go,' which means you touch and you go, escorted by a bouncer out the door."

"What about lap dances? How much?"

"Usually about thirty bucks and then you buy the girl a drink. She usually makes half of what the customer pays for the drinks, which are outrageously expensive. The guys plan to keep him at the main stage watching the onstage dancers and tipping them. Out on the floor is where the lap dances happen. After they dance on stage, the girls go around and receive tips from the customers on the floor for the dance. Then if a customer likes them, they buy them a drink and the girl will offer to give a lap dance."

"What are the rules for lap dances there?"

"Hands down at your sides the whole time. Very strict, very big bouncers, very talented dancers."

"Can you tell me what a lap dance is?"

He defined that particular club's version of a lap dance. The dancer sat on the customer's knee, moving to the music, gyrating and pulling the customers face to her breasts if she wanted to. She could touch him anywhere she wanted, but the customer could not place his hands on the

dancer, or he was out the door. She might lift her G-string and let the customer tuck the money under the string.

“What about one-on-one rooms or VIP rooms?”

“They have a VIP room. They won’t take him in there. As long as the tips flow, the girls will hang around and chat, enjoy a drink, and give a preview of a lap dance. They thought the best place for him would be at the main stage with a thick stack of bills.”

“Are they *all* topless?”

He grinned at her. “Not a stitch above the waist where they are going. Even the waitresses.”

She was thoughtful for a moment. The limitations they had placed on Eli basically negated any fun time he would have tonight. *Crappity-crap*.

“Thanks, Adam.”

She dialed Charity’s cell phone number. “Have I got a job for you, Charity. This is what I want you to do...”

* * * *

Eli had a good time talking and laughing with all the men. They kept their stories mostly clean until Charity finally had enough and told the dirtiest joke she could think of. That broke the ice real good, and they’d acted like red-blooded American men from that point forward. He was glad Charity had been on her phone with an important call for the last few minutes because the talk had gotten fairly raunchy.

When they had gotten to the club, Jack tipped the doorman, who found them a large table at the main stage. Eli realized they were insulating him from contact with the dancers once they left the stage and mingled on the floor. Although there was plenty of beautiful bared flesh to look at in the club, none of it did much for him. He could appreciate a lovely pair of breasts and long legs as much as any guy there, and he might even have had wood a time or two, but none of these were what his body was craving. There were beautiful smiles and probably even deep-blue eyes here, too, but none that could compare with Rachel’s.

A waitress delivered their drinks, and when she smiled and placed his in front of him, he tipped her and smiled back. Topless or not, this was a job to

her. Charity and Justin stood up at the bar talking for a minute before he kissed her and came back to the table and sat down, chuckling.

“You’re not gonna believe this.”

“What?” Eli looked over at him briefly and then smiled at the dancer on stage. Jack and Ethan looked over at Justin, too.

“The manager offered Charity a job as a dancer. No audition, *nothing*, just liked the way she looked and moved when she came in.”

Eli chuckled as the blonde on the stage dipped in front of him and smiled flirtatiously. “I’m not a bit surprised, Justin. Charity is gorgeous, and she’s got guts. What did you say?”

“That I’d be her best-tipping customer, and I asked her to reserve her first lap dance for me,” he said with a chuckle. “Shit, man. The mother of two half-grown kids, and someone offers her a job based solely on the way she looks and carries herself. No way was I going to tell her no. She knows her own mind.”

“In other words, you trust her to make the *right* choice?” Peter asked, admiring the dancer’s long legs as she swung over him on the pole.

“No, I trust her to know what she can handle and what she can’t. Working nights is hard. I know. I did it for years.”

They clapped for the dancer as her song came to an end, and each of them tipped her several more bills. She smiled at Jack, Ethan, and Justin and hooked her finger in her G-string, inviting them to tuck the bills in for her. Then she sauntered in her skyscraper high heels over to Eli, half-squatted in front of him, and hooked her thumb in the other side of her G-string. He slid a couple more bills in under the string. She smiled seductively, blew him an air kiss, and worked her way down the stage.

“They’re going to be all over him with that long black hair,” Justin muttered.

Eli chuckled and looked back at the bar, where Charity was chatting with the pretty blonde who had just finished her dance. The blonde nodded and smiled enthusiastically. She moved away from Charity to work the room while Charity talked to a petite strawberry blonde with shoulder-length curls. She nodded and made her way to the door that led backstage.

A song started, and another dancer took the stage, this one of medium build with long auburn curls. Her body shimmered as the lights reflected off

her body glitter while she danced. She worked her way down the stage and over to their table when the men held paper bills between their fingers.

She grinned and flirted as she danced, blowing his dad an air kiss as she trailed her hair over his shoulder when she spun over him. He grinned and “mmm-ed” but politely kept his hand gripping a bill at the edge of the stage, flirting back. She did it again, slipping the bill from his grasp in the same move. She paid similar flirtatious attention to all the men as the bills kept coming before dancing her way to the other end of the stage.

The club had gotten busier, and they were on their second round of drinks when the pretty blonde dancer made her way to their table. “Hello, boys. Did you like my dance?” she asked flirtatiously, slipping her forearm through Ethan’s and sliding her hand over Jack’s shoulder. The men commented positively and slipped her more bills, for which she thanked them kindly.

“We sure did, sweetheart. What’s your name?” Ethan slipped her a ten as Justin rose from his seat next to Eli and offered it to her. She smiled at him and sat down.

“My name is Charlotta. I haven’t seen you here before. Where are you all from?”

“Most of us are from Divine. Can we buy you a drink?” Justin offered when the waitress reappeared. Charlotta nodded and told the waitress what she wanted.

“I understand there’s a man among you tonight who’s tying the knot soon,” she said, looking up at Justin.

Justin slapped Eli on the back. “This is Eli, one of the best friends a guy ever had.”

“Well, congratulations, Eli,” she said in her smooth-as-honey voice.

Charlotta made conversation with them for several more minutes while she drank her mixed drink as a couple of other girls approached and chatted with the other guys. All of the men were well aware of the rules and did not touch any of the dancers but allowed the women to touch them. Poor Brice had his hands stuck in the pockets of his jeans, like he was afraid he would forget and wind up getting kicked out, but his grin was a mile wide.

A dancer with platinum blonde hair came and sat in Peter’s lap and began flirting with him. Cool as a cucumber, he grinned and offered to buy her a drink. He chatted with her as if this happened to him every night and

twice on Sundays, but he kept his hands resting on the arms of his chair. Wes and Evan were approached by a sexy little dancer with short, black, spiky hair who evidently knew them from previous visits, calling them by name. She offered a lap dance to them, and when they accepted, she led them to a couch along one of the walls not far away.

Charlotta sat and talked for another minute or two with Eli and Justin about mundane things, telling them that she was student working online toward a degree in psychology. The tips helped to pay bills and tuition.

The next dance song began, and the tiny little strawberry blonde with shoulder-length curls bobbed out on the stage, dressed in a schoolgirl outfit, dancing to Nickelback's "Shakin' Hands." She danced and flirted with the customers from the stage, revealing her tight little tush as she spun on the pole.

Dancing to the hard rock beat, she made her way down the stage to the bachelor party, gyrating and dancing for the admiring men. She winked at Charlotta, who grinned conspiratorially as the little blonde popped her top open in Eli's face, making him grin broadly. She slipped the necktie off and draped it around Eli's neck and pulled him a little closer as his friends hooted and hollered in encouragement. She gave him a crooked little grin and winked then pecked him on the cheek very lightly, and this time her smile reached her eyes when all he did was wink back and nod appreciatively, handing her a paper bill for her efforts.

She spun on the pole at their end of the stage, and the men kept the tips coming, assuring her continued attention. Her top came off to loud cheers, revealing her perfect, full breasts, just right for her small size. As the song came to the final chorus, she stripped her schoolgirl skirt off, revealing the pure white G-string underneath. The only other thing she had on were her little white lace anklets and her white schoolgirl high heels. She returned to their end of the stage and thanked the guys and flirted briefly as she collected the tips they gave her. Eli handed her the tie she'd slipped around his neck and a couple of folded bills, thanking her as she blew another kiss to him.

"That's Cami. She's a little sweetie. Thanks for remembering the rules earlier, you know, not touching?" Charlotta added softly to Eli. "A drunken customer pulled her from the stage one night last week while she was

dancing. It scared the daylights out of her. We appreciate the men who really *are* gentlemen. Eli, may I offer you a lap dance?"

She asked so sweetly, Eli imagined that she never got turned down. He smiled apologetically at her and said, "I'm sorry, Charlotta. I wouldn't feel right about doing that. My fiancée—"

Charlotta held up her hand to stop him from apologizing further. She seemed more impressed than rejected by his refusal. "Don't apologize, Eli. I think it's sweet of you, but I did have to at least offer. Well, I need to go get ready to dance again. Would you mind if I stopped by your table again in a little while?" she asked as Eli rose from his chair.

"We'd like that very much, Charlotta. We'll save your seat," Justin replied.

Eli was developing a nice buzz when Cami walked up, bubbly as could be. "Hiya, fellas! How was my dance earlier? Did you like it?" she asked as she smiled up at them. She could not have been more than five feet tall, though her high heels helped. The other men greeted her and slipped her numerous bills, which she tucked in her G-string, thanking them enthusiastically. Eli doubted all of those were ones.

"Could we buy you a drink?" Eli said, offering her his chair and standing to his full height.

"Oh, my goodness you're tall as an oak tree, aren't you!" she said giggling. "I'd love a drink, thank you." She sat in Eli's chair and gave the waitress her order. "So what brings you here tonight? Are you from out of town?"

A couple more girls who'd finished their dances joined the group, making small talk with the men after ordering a drink.

"Bachelor party," Eli said as Jack slapped him on the back. "I'm getting married next Saturday."

"Oh! Congratulations! By the way, I'm Cami. So what do you do..." She hesitated.

"Eli! Sorry, my name is Eli. I'm a bouncer at a club in Divine."

"Really? Divine is such a pretty town. What's the name of the club, if you don't mind me asking?"

He told her, and they talked for a few minutes. They asked her if she liked her job, and she said she did most of the time and the money was

good. She asked them if they had traveled much and then revealed why she was working in the club.

"I'm a student right now, but after I graduate in May, I'm taking off for three months to travel through Europe with a couple of friends. I'm dancing three nights a week right now and putting the money I make away for the trip. It's sort of a last hurrah before settling down in a career."

"What's your major?" Ethan asked, hailing the waitress for another round for the ladies.

"Thank you. My major is business management. I'd like to have my own nightclub someday. The hours suit me."

"Ethan here owns The Dancing Pony in Divine," Jack said, joining the conversation after the dancer he had been talking to left to go perform on stage.

As they talked with the girls, they never ignored the dancers who performed on stage, showing their appreciation with their tips. The pace of the conversation was different than in a regular club. The dancers who sat with them allowed them to enjoy the view, spreading the money around, so to speak. Wes and Evan returned to the table and offered the dancer who had just given them both lap dances a drink, which she gladly accepted.

"Charlotta told us about your scare last week. I'm glad you weren't injured," Justin softly remarked to Cami.

"Me, too. I guess the poor guy got too drunk and forgot the rules of the club. By the way, thanks, Eli, for remembering them earlier. Your whole group are real sweethearts, and I appreciate the tips."

"You're welcome, Cami." A few minutes later, when the waitress returned, Eli said, "Buy you another drink?"

"Sure, I have time for another quick one, and then I'll need to get back to work. Eli, since this is your bachelor party, could I offer you a lap dance?" Cami asked, her voice silky and seductive as she leaned into him a little. She looked over his shoulder and smiled. Eli looked up and saw Charity standing behind him with a devious grin, holding out her phone to him.

"A quick phone call for you, sexy." Eli took the phone and put it tightly to his ear so he could hear.

"Hello?"

He smiled as Rachel said, "Hello, handsome! Are you having a good time?"

"Yeah! How about you?"

"None of them compare to you, Eli." Even over the noise, he could hear the sexy tone she used.

"Same here, angel."

"Eli, listen, I want you to have fun tonight. No regrets, right? I trust you. I want you to let Charlotta and Cami dance for you this evening. I want you to enjoy yourself."

"Angel, are you sure? I'm having a good time."

"Let them dance for you, but remember when we get home tonight I'm giving you a *real* lap dance." He growled into the phone at that thought and heard her giggle. "I love you!"

"I love you, too, angel." The connection ended, and he handed the phone to Charity and asked, "What have you been up to?"

Charity scoffed and rolled her eyes and grinned at him. "You weren't cooperating with her *plan*. I had no choice but to call her. I think it made her night when I told her you refused the lap dance from Charlotta."

* * * *

Rachel knew that Eli's bachelor party was not the typical bachelor party. They had not been turned loose in the strip club to sample the delights of all the women who made their living there. Charity had been along to raise the standard of conduct a little and help form a buffer around Eli.

The same basic privileges were afforded to her at the other club. Grace had Adam sit right next to Rachel, and though there were a number of dancers, none touched her inappropriately. Once she made the call and talked to Eli, giving him a green light to interact with the two dancers Charity had specifically hired for him, Adam did the same basic thing for Rachel and found two dancers who were conversational, charming, and willing to work within the same parameters.

No one touched the zippers on her skirt or anything under it, nor were they allowed to touch from the top of her cleavage down, ensuring her breasts were untouched. She had an interesting encounter with one of the two dancers Adam had hired to entertain her personally. He had agreed to

the rules, and as he had danced for her, he lifted the silver heart to look at it since it rested well above her cleavage. When he saw a man's name, he gently turned the tag, and she saw more than just the expected smiling reaction in the dancer's eyes.

Later, he gestured to the silver tag on her collar. "For some people, that tag has a powerful message from your fiancé. I take it as an honor to be one of the dancers chosen to entertain you." He sipped his drink and grinned up at Taylor, her other dancer, as he danced for Rachel from the stage she sat next to.

Rachel's curiosity was piqued. "What does it mean to you? I'm sorry, that sounds rude. The collar was a shower gift, but the tag means something special to me. What does it mean to you?" She hoped she didn't offend him with the blunt question.

"It means that you are precious and valuable to your fiancé. It's a way of marking you and warning others off, obviously. It is also significant because you allowed him to display it on you openly like this. You must be deeply in love with him."

Rachel's cheeks tingled with heat, and she said simply, "Soul deep." She missed Eli very much in that moment.

"I can see that."

Grace and the others were blissfully ignorant of their conversation, busy cheering for Taylor and waving bills to get him to come dance for them. Even her mom was busy flirting and having fun. She smiled at Brandon and thanked him. The conversation was a strangely comfortable moment in the midst of in a sea of erotic and, at times, comical interaction between the women and the dancers.

"How's your drink? Are you ready for another?" Brandon asked, once again playing the role of exotic dancer. She had him order another for both of them.

He peered at her and said, "You're looking serious and contemplative. I'm sorry if I ruined the sexy bachelorette vibe you had going."

"You didn't, not at all. But you have given me some food for thought."

"Well, Rachel, it has been more than a pleasure to serve you *and* your fiancé tonight. Make sure and tell Eli I was honored," Brandon said as he rose from his seat. "How about I give you something more....*stereotypical* to

think of for a little while. After all, you *are* in a strip club. Ready for another lap dance?" he asked with a devilish gleam in his pretty green eyes.

"Twist my arm, why don't you?" She enjoyed the attentions of both Brandon and Taylor. They were sexy, sensual, and erotic in their moves and dances without carrying it too far. But she felt an unmistakable camaraderie with Brandon.

* * * *

Eli felt his cheeks flush with pleasure that refusing the lap dance meant that much to Rachel.

Charity grinned widely and continued. "Rachel wants you to have a good time. She wanted me to find two beautiful dancers that looked *nothing* like her who would work within her parameters but still show you a sexy, good time."

"She did, did she? What limitations did she give?" he asked, looking at an impish Cami as she giggled behind her hand before answering him.

"Basically, we can touch you anywhere except for your hair and your crotch. Everything else is fair game. I like your fiancée. She's got spunk!"

"You have *no* idea." Eli found it ironic that Rachel's *voice* on the phone had gotten him hard when the sexy little thing wearing nothing but a thong and those high heels hadn't. Maybe the sight of them only affected him when Rachel wore them.

"Well, now you have no worries, right? You know me and Charlotta will be taking good care of you and that we will keep our hands out of your fiancée's private territory. Charity said that you receive a lot of unwanted attention from women who come in the club and that Rachel is the jealous type. We know how that is. We both have boyfriends. At least our bouncers keep most of the customers from touching us. You kind of have to take it, don't you, or lose their business?"

Eli shrugged. "It's not as bad since Rachel and I got engaged. She handles it pretty well now and has even made some new friends that way. Most people are pretty decent that come in there."

"I'm going to talk to Charlotta about visiting The Dancing Pony sometime. It would be nice to go out to a club and keep my shirt on while I dance with something besides a shiny pole," she added, chuckling. "Enjoy

your drink, and I hope you take me up on the offer of a lap dance. Charlotta is coming on now and then she'll come sit with you again. You should let Char give you a lap dance. She's smokin' hot!" She patted his chest before leaving their group to mingle with the customers.

Charlotta did a slow, sexy striptease out of a sexy red satin evening gown and gloves to "Santa Baby" sung by Kellie Pickler. She paid special attention to Eli but danced for all the men seated at the stage. Later, she rejoined them at their table, clad in her red satin G-string and red tasseled pasties, thanking all the men as they handed her more folded bills.

Justin ordered Charlotta a drink, and she chatted with Eli, Justin, and Charity. "You're fiancée sounds like a lot of fun, Eli. Are you ready for your lap dance?" The other men happened to hear her question and cheered him on, even Peter.

"Sure," he said, meeting with shouted approval from all the men.

Charlotta rose from her chair and led him to a low bench-like seat located at the end of the stage. She sat him down on the edge. Placing her hands over his on the seat, she said, "Just keep your hands here and let me do the rest, Eli."

She leapt onto his thighs, gracefully resting on her shins. Balancing perfectly, she rose up to press her perfumed breasts into his face and began to dance for him, gyrating to the loud music. She slid down onto only one of his thighs and continued to dance for him, sensual and sexy, but she was true to her promise to Rachel and Charity and never once touched his cock or his hair, even accidentally.

After the dance, she escorted him back to the table and sat in the seat Justin offered while Charity sat in Eli's at his insistence. Charity saw to it that Charlotta had another drink and slipped her an extra tip for executing the dance without breaking the rules.

Cami's next dance started, and they enjoyed watching her shake her tail feathers, this time in a little Christmas Elf costume. She danced to another Christmas song, "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" sung by The Ronettes, and playfully slipped a red and white Santa hat on Eli's head and kissed his cheek, Cami threw down her best moves for Eli and his table as the smiling men waved money for her to come and collect. She flirted with them enthusiastically before moving down the stage to entertain the other customers. Charlotta chatted with them a while longer then excused herself

to go get ready for her last dance. They invited her back for one last drink afterward before it was time for them to go. She happily agreed and excused herself.

After finishing her dance, Cami returned immediately to their table, clad in her red and white candy-striped thong and stilettos. “Charlotta says we’re going to visit The Dancing Pony some night when we’re both off for the evening and our boyfriends can get away.”

Charity had a twinkle in her eye. “Cami, why don’t you call me and let me know what night, and I’ll make sure and let the girls know. I have a question for you. Have you ever been asked to give lessons in striptease?”

“All the time. Sometimes the customers bring in their wives, and if the wives are cool, they have a good time. It’s those wives that will ask if we give lessons in pole dancing or stripping. None of us are professional instructors, but we can teach what we know. Did you know you can buy your own pole online to use at home?”

“Yeah,” Justin said with a big wide smile. “I got her one for Christmas last year.”

Charity leaned into him and kissed him. “He sure did. He was very appreciative of my efforts, but I think I’d learn more from interacting with a teacher than I did from watching the video. I’d like to talk to you sometime about that. I’ll bet Rachel would fall all over herself signing up for those lessons, too.”

“Now see, *this* is what makes this job fun,” Cami said to Charity. “You girls get that we do this for a living and that we’re not hooker sleazebags trying to steal your husbands. Unfortunately, not all the women that come in with their husbands are cool with it. They want to prove something to themselves, and they get uncomfortable or self-conscious and wind up resenting us, their husbands, or themselves. This is entertainment, and I have no desire to run off with anyone’s man.”

“Does your boyfriend come in while you work? Is he okay with you doing your job?” Charity asked.

Cami replied, “We have a unique situation, not typical at all. He’s also a dancer. Contrary to popular opinion, male strippers are not all gay, nor are they self-obsessed. He stripped during his college days to help pay his tuition because he could make more doing that than waiting tables and had more time for studying. He’s working tonight at the club you told me your

sister took Rachel to.” She patted Eli’s chest. “He may be giving her a lap dance right now!”

In an oddly bizarre way, Eli found that both amusing and acceptable. If he’d been questioned yesterday what he thought about *any* man giving Rachel a lap dance, he would have gone ballistic, but Charity was handling things well on this end, and he was confident that Adam was having similar good luck at the other club.

“Really!” Charity laughed at the irony. “What’s his name?”

“His stage name is Brandon, but his real name is Jacob. He prefers to not use his real name. A lot of us do that.”

“Is Cami your real name, if you don’t mind me asking?” Charity asked in a lower voice.

“Not at all. It’s short for Camilla. No one’s called me Cami since high school, except for here. I like things simple. So are you going to take me up on my earlier offer for a lap dance?” she asked cheekily as she stepped from her chair gracefully and crooked her finger at him. “I promise I’ll *mind my manners*. I’d be just as territorial as Rachel if you were my fiancé. Come with me, and I’ll make this as painless as possible for you.” She grinned wickedly, swinging her hips, her breasts bobbing like little ripe melons as she seated him on the low couch against the wall.

More cheering cat calls came from the men at his table, but he ignored them and grinned admiringly up at her as he sat on his hands. “I’m helpless. Do your worst.”

“You know that old expression, right? ‘When I’m good I’m really good—’”

He nodded and laughed. “‘But when I’m bad, I’m even better?’ Yeah, Rachel used it on me earlier this evening. You two *should* meet.”

“Your fiancée sounds so cool! Does she like to dance?” she asked as she slid down over his thighs, grinding on his knee.

“The first time I saw her, she was dancing. I was half in love by the time ‘Save a Horse Ride a Cowboy’ was finished playing.”

She looked surprised and said, “Shooey! That was a close call! It was a toss-up what to play for my last dance earlier, and I picked a holiday number over ‘Save a Horse Ride a Cowboy.’ I wouldn’t have wanted to mess that up for you.” She smiled sassily as she shook her breasts right in his face, careful to not touch his hair when she gripped his shoulders. “Tell me what

she's like," she said, dancing for him but distracting him with questions about Rachel at the same time, bless her, because she was good.

"Tall, beautiful, brunette, voluptuous and perfect. She's self-confident and sassy, like you. She works as a bookkeeper, but she is also a writer. She just finished her first book."

Cami carefully turned in his lap and gave him an up close view of her tight little tush, saying cheekily, "Sorry, Eli, it's not a lap dance if I don't do that move at least once. I don't want management to think you got cheated. What does she write?"

Eli chuckled, thinking she'd probably never had to explain *why* she used that move before. "She writes erotic romance."

She turned to look at him in pleased surprise. "Hot damn! Good for her! I hope I get to read her book someday."

"Me, too."

"I'll bet you're her *muse*, aren't you?" she asked as she shook her breasts in his face again. He smiled but must have looked doubtful because she added, "Trust me, Eli, you are *definitely* muse material."

"Thanks, Cami. You're a real sweetheart."

"Back at ya! I've enjoyed getting to visit with you tonight. That Charity is a real hoot, too. Her sister sounds like a peach."

She climbed from his lap, and he rose from the bench. "Grace and Rachel are close. She and my sister are the ones planning our wedding. She's multi-talented."

Charity cackled, looking at the screen on her phone as they returned to the table. "Shit a monkey! Look at this!"

Justin looked and frowned at Eli. "Dude, it's a picture of Rachel getting a lap dance. You sure you wanna look?"

Eli scoffed and held out his hand for the phone. "Man, the woman trusts and loves me enough to arrange for me to have a couple of lap dances in a strip club, how can I object? Adam is right there with her. He probably interviewed and fingerprinted that dancer before he let him anywhere near Rachel."

Cami held out her hand. "Can I see?" Charity handed her the phone first, and she grinned and laughed as she said, "Guess who that is dancing for her." She turned the phone so he could see.

Eli looked at the picture on the screen. Rachel was sitting in a low, armless chair, her hands in her lap as a male stripper danced for her in a leather G-string. She was smiling and laughing gaily in the picture, looking like she was having a blast. Then he noticed her zippers. They were right where he had left them, zipped all the way down.

“Your boyfriend?”

“Yep! And oooh, Eli! She is hotter than hell in all that *leather*. You two make the perfect couple. Wanna take a picture to send back to her?”

She and Charlotta posed with Eli, and Charity sent the picture to Adam’s phone. A text came back a minute later.

Wow! They’re pretty!

Ask them if they give striptease lessons for me?

I love you, honey!

He chuckled when Charity showed him the message then showed it to Cami and Charlotta.

“Tell your fiancée we’ll *both* give her lessons. You, too, Charity,” Charlotta said.

“And Grace, too!” Cami added, giggling playfully when both Jack and Ethan perked up at that news.

“Hot damn!” Jack hollered.

“Hell yeah!” Ethan yelled. “Charity, text Adam back and let him know. Lessons for any of the ladies who want them are on me.”

The girls stayed for a little while longer, finishing their drinks. The men talked Brice into accepting the lap dance offered by the sexy little dancer with short, spiky, black hair. He behaved himself like a perfect gentleman, saying only appropriately complimentary things to her, and tipped her generously when she was finished.

The driver arrived at eleven, and the two dancers rose from their seats and thanked all the men for their generosity. They both gave Eli a light peck on the cheek and wished him and Rachel all the best and promised to get their boyfriends to bring them out to The Dancing Pony soon. They told Charity they’d let her know when, after she gave them her number. Charity texted Adam to let him know they were about to leave and return to The

Pony and Adam texted back, saying all the girls were ready to return to the club, too.

Sounding a little nervous, Brice asked, “What are we gonna do when we get there and they smell other women’s perfume on us?” Eli had personally heard Corina assure Brice he should have a good time. She’d said she had a friend who was a stripper in college and that she trusted Brice. It was obvious the poor guy didn’t want to screw up with his sweet little girlfriend.

“No, the question you need to ask yourselves,” Charity replied, “is what *you’re* going to do when the women get out of the limo and smell like other men’s cologne? You call it even and *let it go*.” She typed on her cell phone keyboard. “Because they’re asking themselves the same question *right now*. Pointing at the phone, she said, “See? I just saved you a relationship dilemma. Now let’s go dance. I need to *shake* it, baby.”

Chapter Forty-seven

Eli climbed out of the vehicle and waited with the others on the sidewalk as the ladies' limo pulled up. The limousines arrived within a few minutes of each other at The Dancing Pony. He reached for one of the door handles and opened the door, holding his hand out to assist the women.

Eli smiled to see them all bubbly and cheerful from their fun evening. Rachel waited and exited the vehicle last as all the couples were all reunited. Eli wrapped his long arms around Rachel's curvy, leather-clad body and kissed her hard. When he released her, she grinned and swiped a gentle finger on his cheek and held it up.

"Body glitter is a new look for you," she said with a sexy chuckle.

"You, too," he replied, wiping a smudge from her bare shoulder. "Aren't you cold?"

"A little, now that I'm out of the car." She gestured to her arms and shoulders. "I noticed when we left that I have it all over my arms. I wanted to clean up in the ladies' room first, so I don't get it inside my new jacket. If my jacket is going to smell like cologne, I want it to be yours only."

"Do you feel like staying and dancing?" he asked as the other couples talked.

"Yeah, I do. Is that okay?"

"Of course. Let me know when you're ready to leave and we're out of here."

Peter, Renata, Elijah, and Kelly all said their goodnights, and the others went inside to dance and hang out together a while longer. As Eli and Rachel strode in, Eli felt the caveman reassert some territoriality in his psyche as he saw how many men stared at Rachel in her corset and miniskirt.

* * * *

Rachel saw Eli watching her as she returned from cleaning up in the ladies' room. She recognized the intense look in his eyes and smiled while she slowly sauntered across the club toward him. Dressed in her leather outfit, she felt like a siren calling out to his body to respond, and respond it *definitely* did. A suggestive smile spread slowly across Rachel's face as she went into his arms and felt the large, hard bulge pressed against her belly. He pulled her onto the dance floor as a classic, romantic song began to play. Keith Whitley crooned the lyrics to "When You Say Nothing At All" as she stroked his back through the black silkiness of his long hair and rested her cheek against his chest, utterly happy.

"I want to tell you something, Rachel. But I don't want for you to think I expect that you had a similar experience, okay? I know you're only human, just like me."

Her confusion must have shown on her face because he forged on immediately. "There were beautiful women everywhere we looked, who were good at their jobs, but not one of them aroused me the way you do. Sure, a well-executed move or a particularly teasing view might have rendered a tingle or two, but I only got truly rock-hard one time tonight. You know when that was?" he asked as she smiled softly up at him and shook her head. "It was when I heard your soft, sexy voice on Charity's cell phone when you called."

He laughed softly. "Cami had on little white high heels just like that pair of shiny black heels you wear with the strap over the top, and even *that* didn't do it for me. All you have to do is walk into a room with those on, fully clothed, and my cock is ready for action."

She felt her cheeks flush and giggled. "Really? And she was topless, wasn't she?"

"Totally. They were both terrific, but they didn't do it for me. Now, here we are dancing and talking, and I'm hard and ready to take you right now. It's like my cock missed you and wasn't considering any substitutes."

She smiled. "A hard man is good to find," she said in her best sexy vamp voice. He threw his head back and laughed with her.

"I'll bet you and Cami would be great friends, given the chance."

"Speaking of Cami, her boyfriend, Brandon, was one of the dancers Adam hired to entertain me for the evening. He pointed her out in the

picture Charity sent Adam. He and I had an interesting, if cryptic, conversation.”

“Really?”

Rachel nodded, happy to share the exchange with him. “He saw and understood my tag. He knew to look at the back. He made a point of asking me to tell you that he was honored to be one of the ones chosen to entertain me. They were both awesome and never said or did anything to raise Adam’s eyebrows. I had fun but never had to worry that they would get too...overt.

“I want *you* to know something else, too. That place was wall-to-wall muscled, sexy bodies, and not a one of them held a candle to the man I love. Their oiled pecs and abs were nothing compared to my man’s. It was all fun, and I had a fantastic time, never doubt it. But it was a little like vacationing on the Texas Gulf Coast if I lived in the Caribbean. Probably a lot of fun, but I couldn’t wait to get back home. You’re my home, Eli,” she said, sighing happily when he gathered her to him and lifted her off her feet and kissed her tenderly.

“You’re good at putting your feelings into words, angel. You are home to me, as well. And I love *coming* home.” He growled, nuzzling her throat. “You’re hot, angel. Do you want to take off this heavy jacket?” he asked, peeling her jacket from one shoulder. The cool air felt good against her hot flesh.

She’d been a little warm but had decided that she probably should leave the jacket on for his benefit. When they’d re-entered the club earlier, she’d gotten a lot of looks. She nodded. “But only if it’s all right with you, Eli. I know there’s a lot of *me* showing tonight.”

He growled again. “Mmm, there sure is. I love every inch of it. But you’re not leaving my side for the rest of the evening, so I don’t mind.” He helped her out of it and held it over his arm as they continued dancing. “You are absolutely incredible tonight, Rachel. When I set eyes on you earlier...You *are* my queen. Do you understand that? You give yourself to me completely, but ultimately it is *me* who is *your* slave.”

“You see? That’s why no man could ever compete with you. I have the same feelings for you. I’m your slave, to do with as you will.”

He leaned toward her and kissed her, then said in his deep, rumbling sexy voice, “Well, my slave girl, I want you to dance for me. Were you and the girls planning on dancing for us tonight?”

“Mmm, would you like that, baby?” she replied, radiant with happiness.

As the song ended, they returned to the table where the others sat. He placed her jacket over her chair back and pulled Ethan aside, speaking quietly to him. Ethan grinned and nodded then turned to speak to Grace and excused himself from the table as the others talked.

Grace leaned over to her and said, “Ethan is arranging a good dance song for us. I wasn’t sure how Eli would feel about you dancing tonight in your leathers, but Ethan says *Eli* wants a dance song for us. He’s asking the DJ to play it next.”

“Good, because I’m certainly in the mood.” She rubbed up against Eli, smiling when he growled softly. She looked up and caught him ogling her cleavage. “See something you like, handsome?” she asked and bit her lip suggestively.

“I see something I *need*.” The deep, wanting way he said it made her pussy begin to warm and throb, desire for him flaring inside her. Desire to be away from this crowd.

She turned to him, looking into his sensual gray gaze. “After I dance for you, I want to go home.” She pulled him to her and spoke softly, “I want to go home, and I want you to make love to me. I *need you*.” Her voice felt shaky.

He straightened and looked in her eyes with promise in his own. He helped her into her chair and casually put his hands on her knees. Anyone looking would have at first assumed he was caressing her legs, showing her affection. But his fingers flicked the tabs on the zippers at the hem of her leather skirt open. He leaned into her and kissed her tenderly, and her heart pounded as she felt the vibration of the heavy metal teeth unzipping a little at a time until they were locked back in place where she had them earlier.

Oh, boy.

“You’re with me now,” he said as his fingers gently slid into the slits the zippers created and caressed her inner thighs above her fishnet stockings. Oh, hell yeah she was right with him, *right now*. “Be ready to leave when the song is done, angel,” he murmured.

Ethan returned to the table so he could have a front row seat for the show. Grace went to Ethan to kiss him and thank him and whispered in Jack and Adam's ears before kissing them, as well.

Rachel grinned at Grace when they both recognized the song Ethan had chosen for them. Jason Aldean's "My Kinda Party" began to pound over the sound system, and Rachel and Grace moved away from their men onto the dance floor, joined there by Kathleen, Charity, Corina, and Rosemary.

Rachel smiled when Angel non-verbally affirmed Teresa's choice to sit and watch, drawing her closer to him and kissing the top of her head. He didn't look disappointed in the least. Rachel thought the two of them together were brilliant. Angel did not need another Patricia in his life. He needed someone whose waters ran deep and was quiet and stable. Sane sure helped, too.

Rachel turned, rolling and grinding her hips as Eli stood at the edge of the dance floor. She gradually moved closer to him as she rocked and swayed. Rachel slid the backs of her fingertips up her waist, over the sides of her breasts and her collarbones, then into her hair, lifting it off her neck. Her palms slid back down and traced over the leather covering her ass and hips then down her thighs as she ground down as low as she dared before she came back up, turning her back to Eli. Thrusting out her ass in a risqué move, she slapped it, hard. His eyebrows shot up in his only perceivable reaction.

Rachel dipped and swung her hips, grinding in a circle right in front of him, brushing her breasts against the thin knit of his T-shirt. Even through the leather of her corset she sensed his body heat, and her nipples hardened into stinging little points. The beat of the song pounded through Rachel's body and she timed each sinuous movement with its rhythm. Smiling up at him, she winked and shimmied for him as he smiled back at her. Rachel could see the tension in his posture and caught him glancing around the room briefly but didn't spare a thought for who else watched. She didn't give a rat's ass who looked as long as they didn't touch.

Looping her fingers around the front of his belt to stabilize herself, she slowly ground down in front of him one more time, nice and slow, then just as slowly rose in a circling grind, brushing lightly against his front with her breasts, as the song ended. He looked down at her admiringly as she stood against him, her hands clutching his biceps.

The deep timbre of his sexy voice sent a quiver straight to the part of her that was currently very damp and hot. “You’re hotter than hell, all on your own, Rachel Lopez. *How* are you going to dance for me after you’ve had lessons?”

“Oh, I’ll be smoother and sexier,” she replied, feeling like a goddess as he kissed her. He knew all the right things to say.

“Damn, woman. You could write books on smooth and sexy. Hell, *you* could give lessons. Half the men in here were watching you with their mouths hanging open.”

“Nuh-uh, really?” She chuckled as he held out her jacket so she could slip her arms into it. She embraced Charity and thanked her for running interference for her.

“Oh, no problem. I want to go back again and take you and Grace with us. I’m glad you had a good time and that you weren’t too upset with us for not clearing it with you ahead of time.”

“I would never have agreed.”

“I know. Sometimes it’s better to beg forgiveness than ask permission.”

“Well, you’re right. It was a blast. But we are *so* out of here now,” Rachel said, laughing.

Charity snickered. “I notice you seem in a bit of a hurry.” Eli hugged her, too, after thanking Adam for taking care of Rachel and seeing to her entertainment, as well.

Rachel said goodnight to Grace last. “I can never thank you enough for all you have done for me, and for us,” she said, hugging her.

“Seriously, I feel the same way about having you as my friend, Rachel. I’m so glad tonight turned out all right for you, at least I’m assuming it did by the smiles on both your faces and the fact you’re in such an *all-fired* hurry to get out of here all of a sudden.” She giggled as Eli hugged her, too.

“Smokin’ hot, Rachel,” Mike said as Eli shook hands with him and Rogelio. Rachel hugged them both, and then they hurried out the door to Eli’s truck.

The radio played softly in the truck as he drove them home. A sweet, deep current of desire flowed like a river between them as Eli held her hand on his thigh, stroking her palm gently.

“Rachel, I was jealous as hell when all those men watched you while you danced, but I was also proud that you’re mine. I wanted them to see it

was me you danced for, me you held on to and brushed up against. The caveman wanted me to throw you over my shoulder and walk out the moment the song ended. Anyone who didn't know you would believe you were a professional dancer."

"Thank you, Eli. Something comes over me when I dance for you. I get this feeling...and I see the appreciation in your eyes. It spurs me on."

"I love watching the way you move." He shifted in his seat beneath her hand.

When they got in the house and Eli locked the door behind him, he led her back to the bedroom, turning off all the lights as they went. Rachel lit a few candles as he turned on the shower and came back to the bedroom. They both undressed, and she watched with open admiration as his proud, naked body was revealed. He undid the catch on the back of her skirt, unzipped it, allowed it to slip to the floor, then knelt in front of her and helped her step out of it. He looked up at her with adoration as she stood in her fishnets, boots, G-string, and, of course, the corset and collar.

"I need to *look* at you for a minute, Rachel. Just take in the sight of you like this." His cock stood completely rigid, firm and stiff against his abdomen. Her hands itched to reach out and touch him, to draw him close to her, but Naughty Rachel tapped her shoulder and told her to *pose* for him.

Keeping eye contact as long as she could, she turned slowly and tilted her ass to him, making eye contact again. She pulled at the bows on the front of her corset and slowly slid her fingers through the laces, undoing them, until it slipped to the floor.

The silver tag reflected the candlelight as she stood before him in a wide, confident stance. He slid a warm hand over the ankle of one of her boots, then up her calf and knee. As he reached her thigh and the fishnet stockings, his movement was slow and unhurried. His warm palm rode all the way up to her hip, where the ties of one side of her G-string were dangling, begging to be tugged free. He plucked gently at one, and the bow came undone.

Rachel's pussy began to pulse and ache, and she hoped he would touch her soon. His other hand slid up the other leg, repeating the process. He reached a single, gentle finger up to the dip at the top of her thigh and slid it under the edge of the leather, tugging gently as it came loose under the garter the fishnet stockings were attached to.

Slowly, he pulled the ties free and allowed them to brush deliciously through her damp flesh. He paused again and looked up at her, his eyes almost worshipful. He repeated his move from the beginning of the evening, sliding both hands around her ankles and up the back of her calves, over her thighs and to her hips, then around to her ass. His hot fingers left a fiery trail behind them.

She moaned as Eli's fingers met just above the cleft of her ass and teased against the ultra sensitive spot there, sending a lightning bolt straight to her clit. Her pussy flooded with even more moisture, and her muscles tightened and contracted, foreshadowing an orgasm of seismic proportions.

He carefully unzipped the boots, placed her hands on his shoulders, and helped her to step from each ultra-tall boot. After they were gone, he undid the garters from her stockings and slid his fingers carefully under the waist of the garter and unhooked it.

Chapter Forty-eight

After their shower, she followed her gentle giant back to the candlelit bedroom. Rachel's heart pounded and felt so full it might overflow. He molded his lips to hers in a searing, yet gentle kiss and stroked her tongue and her lips with his. His hands slid over her shoulders and down her back in a light, tickling touch that made her hips undulate reflexively as he caressed all the right spots. She moaned in pleasure as his hands slid farther, his fingers splaying over her ass as he gently grasped each cheek and squeezed.

He released her and pulled back the covers then helped her to climb onto the bed. She crawled on her hand and knees and could tell that her pussy was soaking wet, and he could probably see her lips glisten as she moved away from him into the center of the bed. She glanced back and saw that he watched and knew he saw it. The thought made her pussy clench again, aching for him to fill her.

She lay down in the center of the bed with her head resting on his pillow and looked at him through half-shuttered eyes. He stood there, gazing at her with adoration and lust warring on his features. Eli was a huge mountain of a man and so incredibly beautiful standing there fully erect and ready to make love to her. Rachel slid her feet up and parted her thighs as she fanned her hair out on the pillow.

Eli crawled over to her, coming to rest on his knees between her parted thighs. She slid them farther apart, opened herself for him, and slid her hands down her abdomen and over her mound, topped by dark curls, into her dripping slit. She parted her wet outer lips, hearing his low growl as her gentle fingers revealed the slick, heated flesh inside.

Under her fingertips, her lips and clitoris felt engorged and hot with her arousal. Rachel's breath came in soft, shuddering pants as she watched his face. Her pussy convulsed as he licked his lips, and she knew with absolute

certainty that if she felt his tongue once against her clit, she would come fast and loud.

He seemed in complete control, as she watched with lust pounding through her veins, while he stroked his cock with one hand. Rachel wished it were her pussy stroking him instead. She licked her lips, and he smiled at her and she thought maybe that was his intent.

Rachel spread her legs wider and arched her back as she brushed a finger over her slick pussy lips. She didn't *dare* touch her clit. She was saving that for him. Her finger slid through her juices, making slippery, wet sounds as it slid between her lips into her engorged opening.

Rachel froze, knowing she had pushed herself *just past* the pinnacle as her pussy began pulsing in radiating waves. She looked into his eyes, and her breath began to roll out of her in heaving, high-pitched cries. He understood, and, instantly, his warm, wet tongue sought and found her clit with his first touch, licking and flicking at it expertly. She sobbed out her release as she plunged her fingers farther in her slit, thrusting with each pulse. Eli hungrily licked her clit and her fingers as her honey flowed from her pussy.

Grasping her softly rocking hips, Eli lifted her to his mouth, and he continued licking her clit and her lips as her hands fell away limply to the bed. He teased her gently to another cresting orgasm then lowered her, fit his blunt, thick head to her opening, and groaned loudly as his big cock slid home in one smooth stroke.

* * * *

Eli growled deeply with satisfaction at her responsiveness, happy that she was finding her pleasure on him for herself. When he was deep inside her, he stopped moving. He wanted to savor the hot, silky feel of her pussy gloving his aching cock. He suckled on her breasts and breathed in her subtle womanly fragrance.

Flexing his hips, Eli thrust inside her, pulled out a bit and slid back inside, loving the sweet, sexy way she sighed in pleasure. Pulling out again, he thrust fully into her sweet, satiny heat.

Little muscle spasms rippled through her walls as he continued thrusting. He wanted to be gentle but gradually lost control as each thrust

came harder and harder. He fucked her with every inch of his thick, engorged cock. Rachel grasped his wrists in an effort to keep her body from sliding up on the bed. She arched her back and pounded back against him as her moan becoming a wail.

Eli rose over her on his knees, never missing a beat, and grasped her hips. He watched as his hard, red cock filled her, sliding through the cream that dripped from her and coated his cock. He threw his head back when his release signaled its arrival. His spine tingled, and his thighs went rigid as he pumped into her repeatedly. Rachel's pussy became impossibly tighter as her wail grew into a scream of utter rapture. She came in a glorious gushing wave, her hips rocking wildly in his tight grasp, her pussy convulsing on his cock. His spine stiffened, and he came with an animalistic howl.

Continuing to thrust inside her, he tilted his hips and rubbed her at just the right angle. He slid one hand from her hip to her clit and stoked her clit firmly. Her body bowed majestically, and she sobbed in surrender to the ecstasy.

Relaxing over her, Eli stroked her face and felt the heat spread as she flushed for him, a sign that her pleasure had been extreme. He gathered Rachel's warm quivering body in his arms and kissed her tenderly. She held on tight and kissed him back. Her body fit to his so perfectly. He tucked her into the circle of his arms, where she fell soundly asleep, warm and satisfied, like him.

* * * *

The week of their wedding, Rachel worked on Monday and Tuesday but didn't get all that much done. Using every spare moment, she polished her completed manuscript, looking for discrepancies and errors. She tweaked wording here and there and streamlined where the story needed it. As she read the final pages, she cried.

Rachel stored a copy on a DVD and printed one copy. She took the printed copy to the local print shop and made four sets and then used their binding machine to bind them into book form. By Wednesday at lunchtime, she had composed a query e-mail and attached the manuscript to the e-mail. After they ate, Eli sat with her, and she looked up at him, excited and teary-

eyed as she prepared to submit her book to a publisher. Eli put his arms around her and kissed her temple as she clicked the send button.

Wiping her eyes with the backs of her hands, she said, “I did it.”

“You did, honey. We’ll all say we knew you before you were famous. Now we have another reason to celebrate tonight at Tessa’s. I’ve got two more service calls to take care of this afternoon. What are you going to do now?”

“I have a surprise to deliver to three wild and crazy women out at the Divine Creek Ranch. Grace said she, Charity, and Kelly would all be at her house this afternoon. I’m calling her in a minute to let her know I’m coming out, but I’m not telling her why. I printed and bound copies of the manuscript, one for each of them as a surprise.”

“Will I be able to hear the screams from my job site?”

“Knowing them? Yeah, probably. It was thoughtful of you to come home for lunch and be here with me when I submitted the story. It means a lot to me that you did. That felt like the big moment, clicking ‘send’. My hands are shaking.” She held them up to show him as they trembled slightly. He took them in his big, warm hands and kissed the knuckles of both.

“My wife, the bestselling author.” He enfolded her in his arms.

When it was time for him to go back to work, she bundled up because it was a little chilly that day and then locked up the house. She showed him the box on the front seat of her truck, which contained the bound manuscripts.

“There’s a copy for us, which you are welcome to read, if you’d like. I wouldn’t mind having a man’s viewpoint on my work for future reference.”

“You wouldn’t mind?”

“No. You were part of my inspiration to write it. It seems appropriate to have you read it.”

“Well, have a good time. I’m going to my service call, and I’ll see you when I get home later this afternoon. Reservations are for seven, so we should leave around six.”

“I’ll be ready, honey. Stay warm.” A weak cold front had blown through, but the weather was expected to be mild for that weekend. Rachel hugged him tight, kissed his warm lips and climbed in and started the ignition. The heated air blew over them. He closed her door then smiled and waved at her before he walked to his truck and got in. She rubbed her hands

together to warm them, experiencing a hunger for him to stay near her that never really abated. She sensed the same reluctance to part in Eli at times, as well.

During a visit with her mother earlier that week, Rachel had asked her mom if her feelings for her dad had changed over the years. Did she still feel the way she had before she married him?

“Well, Rachel, there’s no simple answer to that question. After Peter asked me to marry him, he would do little things for me, like call me at work to say hi. He would bring me a flower or a candy bar. I was in awe of him, that he loved me enough to make a lifetime commitment, and I was afraid that I would disappoint him as a wife.” Her mom had brought two bowls and a sack of pecans to the table, and Rachel had helped her crack and shell pecans as they’d talked.

“The first few weeks I was nervous all the time, trying so hard to keep things perfect. He never saw dirty clothes on the floor or dishes in the sink. He came home on our one month anniversary with a dozen red roses, a great big Hershey bar, and a pepperoni pizza. I’d planned on making him an elaborate meal.”

Her mom had smiled with a faraway look in her eyes as she’d popped a small sliver of pecan in her mouth. “I think he knew I’d bite off more than I could chew because he got home early before I started cooking. He came in the door of our little house, put everything on the table, then took me in his arms and gave me the roses.” Her voice had gotten misty and crackled a little, and Rachel had heard her snifle.

“He sat down with me on the couch and had a heart-to-heart talk with me. I’ll never forget what he said. ‘Honey, stop trying to please me so hard. You please me when you wake up in the morning and smile at me. You please me when you laugh. I come home to a perfect house and meal that you spent hours on, but you’re smiling less often. You don’t laugh as much as you used to, and you’re trying to be the perfect lover when the truth is you’re exhausted.’

“I broke down and cried for a long time while he held me. I felt like I had been released from bondage. We ate the pizza, and watched the Blues Brothers on *Saturday Night Live*. From then on, because I still had a full-time job, when I got home from work, I didn’t do anything house-related for at least a half hour. I sat down on the couch and read the paper, watched the

news, or listened to music before I ever got up to start supper. When your dad got home, he would come sit on the couch, and—”

“Pat his lap for you to sit in it,” Rachel had finished for her, sniffing herself. She had her own memories of her parents’ daily evening ritual.

“Yes. I discovered he didn’t care whether I did laundry every day as long as he had socks and underwear. And he always helped me with the evening dishes. At the rate I was going, I’d have made us both miserable. He had the guts to risk offending me so that he could have back the girl he’d intended to marry. Don’t try to become who you think Eli needs after you’re married. Be who you are now because that’s who he wants. Let him be strong for you and *allow* yourself to rely on him.

“We did a good job raising you to be independent so that you could take care of yourself. You got your degree, you have your work, *and* you’re writing,” her mom had said as she patted Rachel’s arm. “You keep pursuing that dream because he’s fascinated by that part of you. I can tell by the way he looks at you when you talk about it. You have real chemistry together, but you are going to need to be patient with yourself and him as you lay the groundwork for your married life over the next few years. He’s a good man, but they’re all human.”

“Thanks, Mom.”

“And change all the locks when your child moves away from home.” She’d snickered, trying to lighten the mood a little.

Rachel had laughed, remembering walking in on her parents one day *in flagrante* on the dining room table. “You had to remind me of that *didn’t* you? I said I was sorry! I didn’t even know you still did that!” she’d added with a full-body shudder that made her mom cackle.

“Honey, we are *still* ‘doin’ it’! And that’s another thing—”

Oh, no! No sex talks please! “I can’t hear you, la-la-la-la!” Rachel had cringed with her fingers stuck in her ears.

“But this is important!”

“La-la-la-la! Can’t hear you! La-la-la.” She’d laughed and knew her face had turned beet red.

Oh, Lord, I’m about to get a pre-nuptial pep talk!

“Rachel Lopez!”

“Okay, okay. I’m sorry. I’ll listen.” Rachel snickered. *No, please, no!*

“Never hold out on him. Give him what he needs as often as he wants it. Too many women use sex as a tool to manipulate their man. *Never* do that. It will backfire every time. Oh, and *regular blow jobs will make him your willing slave*,” she’d added in a rush and chuckled gaily at Rachel’s sudden intake of air.

“Mom!”

“What? Did you think I don’t do that? That I didn’t know what a blowjob is?” she’d asked in a knowing tone.

“I figured that you did. You got married in the seventies, after all. *Everyone* was freaky! But I didn’t need that image *burned* into my brain.” Rachel had laughed and experienced another full body shudder.

“Then I shouldn’t tell you that your father is very good at—”

Rachel had screamed and jumped up from the couch like she’d been shot from a cannon. “Don’t! Don’t say it, *please!* I got you, okay? I get it. Screw his brains out. *Check*. Blow jobs. *Check!* Eek!”

She and her mother had laughed hard before her mom said, “That bonfire out at Grace’s burned bright for two days, but did you know there are still red-hot coals at the base of it? She was out there recently and could smell it burning. Fires like that can smolder down deep for months sometimes. Red-hot love is good, but real love smolders for a lifetime. That’s what I want for you. Remember to always hold on to him and let him know how much you need him.” In a trembling voice she’d added, “I’m proud of you, Rachel.”

“I love you, Mom,” Rachel had said with a snuffle.

“Now when do I get my autographed copy of your book, hmm?”

“Mom, it’s full of hot sex!”

“Ooh, goody! What? I helped make *you*. I know how it works,” her mom had said expectantly.

Holy crap! Want to get away?

Chapter Forty-nine

When Rachel pulled up to the Divine Creek ranch house, she noticed that Grace had somehow found the time to put out Christmas decorations on the front of the house, as well as inside. “Is everything all right, Rachel?” Grace hugged her and led her in. Charity and Kelly sat at the tall dining table, rolling up a large sheet of white paper, which probably had the wedding decorations mapped out. They were supposed to start decorating tomorrow. Charity turned her legal pad over and laid her pencil down.

“I have a surprise for you,” Rachel said happily and laid the manuscript box on the table.

Grace peeked in the box, her eyes became huge, and she squeaked and did a little happy dance. Rachel grinned and reached in the box and handed her the copy that was inscribed to her. Grace held it in her hands like a precious little infant.

“Is that what I freakin’ think it is?” Charity rose from her chair as Kelly came from her side of the table, and Rachel placed their copies in their hands.

Kelly held it with reverent hands. “*Bella’s Bridled Desire*.” Ooooh! So you finished it?” she asked as she went to Rachel and hugged her.

“Yes, I submitted the manuscript to a publisher today. Now I just wait and work on the outline for the next story.”

“You had these made just for us?”

“You’ve become my best friends, and I wanted you to be the first to read it.”

“We’re the first?” Grace asked, a little awed as she looked down at the title page and smiled.

“Yes, I also have a copy for Eli and me. He’ll be reading it, too. It’s kind of scary, you know? Like showing you what’s in my head. You may think I’m a little freaky.”

Charity laughed. "Silly girl, we already know that about you. I have a feeling I'm gonna be up all night." She gleefully hugged the thick manuscript.

Grace and Kelly agreed, but Grace said, "Not too late. I'll need both of you awake for tomorrow."

Rachel gathered the box, which contained the last copy of the manuscript. "I'm keeping you from your strategizing."

"Yes, and you have an appointment at Madeleine's to get to, don't you?" Grace said.

Her mother had surprised Rachel with a gift certificate for a massage and exfoliation treatment at Madeleine's Day Spa. "Yes, but I wanted to bring those over to you. I hope you enjoy it."

"I'm going to start mine after we finish our planning session," Kelly said enthusiastically.

"What should I tell the guys if they want to take a look?" Grace asked her.

"That I value a man's opinion of it, as well, but it is an erotic romance. They may not be interested in it."

"Rachel, my men know all there is to know about erotic romance," Grace answered, blushing right along with Rachel.

"I can imagine. Yes, tell them I would love for them to read it. Same for Justin."

Rachel arrived back home after her spa appointment around mid-afternoon, feeling like she was buzzing and tingling from head to toe. The massage therapist had gone deep on her shoulders and her back, which had been knotted and tense, and now she was loose and relaxed. She had plenty of time before she had to start getting ready for their special evening at Tessa's. She tingled with excitement for how this evening might turn out. Complete uninterrupted privacy in the middle of a crowded restaurant. The possibilities were endless.

* * * *

Rachel knelt on the padded seat, panting quietly. "Eli, I'm ready to come right now," Rachel whimpered softly as her pussy pulsed in anticipation.

He kissed her and lifted her hips as she held on to the railing on the back of the private, enclosed booth, straddling his lean hips.

“I’m so fucking turned on myself I may not last a minute,” he whispered. “The thought of making love to you with so many people so close by has my cock screaming for you.”

The thought had her pussy pulsing, too!

“It’s the caveman.” She giggled softly. “He wants hot communal cave sex, doesn’t he?”

He positioned the head of his cock at her hot, quivering entrance, and they were about to have sex in the middle of a crowded restaurant. She imagined doing it with the drapes wide open.

Rachel looked into his gray eyes, flexed her hips slightly, and smiled at the satisfaction on his face as he entered her. Gripping his cock with the muscles in her pussy, she slid down on him, and a soft shiver raced down her spine as her name slipped reverently from his lips. She undulated her hips, and another whimper escaping her softly as she felt the tell-tale tingling spasms in her pussy that made her long to rock into an orgasm with him right then. Not wanting it to be over so soon, she tried to hold the orgasm off, focusing on kissing his lips and stopped her ascent for a moment.

He held her tenderly in position, giving her a second. “We have time. No need to rush.”

When the throb had lessened a little, she circled over him as his cock pressed into her depths. Rachel knew he was working to keep from thrusting into her by the tension on his face. She gripped the railing behind the backrest with both hands and looked at him as she ground on him once and stopped.

“Angel, do that again, slowly.” He slid his hands over her abdomen and back to her ass, squeezing gently. Tilting her pelvis forward, she ground on him again, aching slowly this time, her pussy enveloping another of his thick, long inches inside her.

She stopped to kiss him, trying to relax and ignore the part of her brain that was screaming for her to plunge down on him and ride him to a screaming, gushing orgasm. Holding out would make it all the sweeter, she knew. After a minute, she squeezed his cock gently and smiled at his soft

groan, and she rolled her pelvis, lifted off him a little, and repeated the motion.

“Oh, I like that. I love feeling your thick hard cock filling me so tightly. You’re huge, Eli.”

She ground on him some more, her pussy tightening as her tension built, aching for him to fill her completely, wanting more than just the first few inches. Her hips flexed against him, and she laid her forehead on his as he wrapped his arms around her hips, holding her still.

His breathing was soft panting like hers as she asked, “How much time do we have until the waiter texts you again?”

He glanced at his watch and replied, “Fifteen minutes.”

“Hold out for five minutes. Then we both get to fuck until we come.”

“Three, baby. I’ll never make it five. You have amazing control, Rachel. I thought you were going to come several times, but you didn’t.”

“You told me to wait, so I’m trying real hard,” she whimpered, feeling a fresh rush of moisture to her pussy at his compliment.

“I love you, baby.” He groaned softly as she lifted off, leaving only the head inside of her. Then she ground down until he was in as far as he had been a moment ago. Her juices wet his cock, and she lifted again and rolled in the other direction. The look on his face was one of torture, but the best kind, as she took another inch then slowly lifted off. She kissed him, her heart throbbing with love for him even as her cunt ached for the pounding of his cock. She pumped in small, tiny movements, and he moaned quietly.

“Time?” she asked breathlessly.

“One minute, angel.” He groaned softly as he tried to focus on his watch.

Rachel leaned back a little and tilted her pelvis forward, holding the rail, and remembered that on the other side of the heavy drape in front of her was a room full of people. Her control began to crumble. At his soft, sexy growl, another fresh rush of moisture came to her pussy.

He muttered, “Thirty.”

She imagined that the drapes were opening and they were being observed.

“Twenty.”

She bit her lip to keep from moaning out loud. She descended, knowing the best, thickest part remained.

“Ten,” he gasped.

She began a slow, unstoppable glide over his silky, rock-hard flesh.

“Oh, angel. Now, please, please, angel. *Fuck me*,” Eli implored almost imperceptibly. In the warm glow of the candlelight his handsome face was beautiful and his expression was intense with passion. He tilted his head back, and breathed quietly.

“Hold me, Eli. Please don’t let me scream.”

He wrapped his arms around her securely and pulled her face close to his. “You’re not going to scream. Put your lips on mine, angel.”

Rachel did and exhaled sharply as she ground all the way to the hilt then lifted and began to ride him in a slow hip-grinding dance. Her hips flexed against him. His thickness stretched her lips, and she rubbed her clit against him. With a shudder, Rachel welcomed the rippling spasms that rushed over her. Her control left her as his arms tightened around her. He held her head in his gentle hands as she kissed him, and he quieted her moan with his mouth. Her hips gyrated wildly over his cock, grinding as each pulse shook her to her core, warmth exploding through her spasming pussy.

He released her head and tightened his arms around her hips and began to thrust powerfully, the only sound the soft, wet slip and slide of their flesh as they moved against each other. His head fell back on the backrest, and she pressed her mouth to his. Rachel enveloped his soft groan as he thrust once more and came on a silent scream, thrusting powerfully as he held onto her.

Rachel imagined what it would be like if she opened her eyes and realized they were fucking out in the open while all the restaurant patrons watched them. She ground down on him again in quick succession and buried her face in his neck. Her lips clamped tightly shut as she came again, overpowered by the extreme sensation of waiting so long on the edge of coming, the erotic extreme of his orgasm, and the fantasy of fucking in public. If she had been able to, she would have screamed the roof off, and because she couldn’t, it was that much more powerful. Eli’s erection twitched and pulsed inside her.

She lay against his warmth, trying to quietly catch her breath. Her quickly cooling body shivered perceptibly. He quietly reached for his coat and pulled it over her shoulders, still breathing a little hard. She stayed like

that a few more minutes, sated and resting, before she lifted her head and smiled at him.

She whispered shakily, "Wow."

"My thoughts exactly. Wow."

"How long?"

"About five minutes." She sat up limply and allowed him to help her lift off of him then helped her stand up.

After cleaning up, he helped her put her thong back on. Giggling softly, she adjusted her stockings and garters and slid her skirt back down her thighs. By the time she was done and ready to roll the table back into its original position, he was re-dressed and looking as handsome as ever in his black suit. Rachel turned to him, melting in his gaze as he looked up at her from his seated position. He looked like a man satisfied and in love as he gazed at her wordlessly.

Self-consciously, she asked, "What? Can you tell? Do I look demolished?" she asked, feeling her hair and wiping under her eyes, checking for smudges.

"You look...radiant. I feel like I'm having a vision, angel. And you're *marrying me*. Wow."

"Yes, I am. Thank you, baby. I was afraid that I looked bedraggled or untidy. My face feels very hot." She put her hands to her cheeks as he pulled her down to sit beside him.

He placed his palm against her flushing cheek. "You're blushing beautifully, but if you don't think about it, it'll fade in a few minutes. Are those matches on the table? I'm going to relight the candles then pull the table back. You just sit and relax."

The phone vibrated right on time. "I'm going to ask him for another five minutes." His fingertips moved quickly over the keyboard. "That will give us a chance to cool off a bit more."

She leaned her head against his shoulder. He turned slightly toward her and pulled her back against his chest, wrapping his arms around her. She placed her hands over his and stayed there, enjoying the quiet, satisfied embrace until they heard the light tapping at the entrance. Rachel sat back in the booth as Eli responded, and the waiter entered with another tray. On the tray was one large dinner plate with a generous portion of coconut cream pie, Rachel's favorite dessert, with two forks.

“How has your evening been so far?” the waiter asked as he gathered the other plates and stacked them on the tray.

“Perfect,” Eli said honestly, but Rachel knew he was referring to the whole experience and not just the tenderness of his steak. Her cheeks tingled with a blush at his sneaky compliment.

“Please tell Paul and Peter that it was delicious, in every sense,” she said, squeezing Eli’s thigh under the table, “and that the coconut cream pie looks luscious, as well. Their skills are unsurpassed, and they’ve made this an evening we’ll never forget.” Her fingers stole up his inner thigh before he placed his warm hand over hers, stopping her mischievous advance.

“I will, and congratulations on your upcoming wedding this weekend. May you have many happy years together.” He bowed to them then refilled their wine and excused himself, allowing the heavy drape to fall closed again.

She took a forkful of the creamy dessert and fed it to Eli then took the bite he offered to her. She put her fork down and placed her hand on his shoulder, looking up at him for approval. He smiled and pulled her back into his lap.

“There. That is so much better!” she said happily, being careful not to wiggle or move suddenly in his lap.

He kissed her cleavage and said, “Mmm-hmm, it sure is.”

Taking a small bite from the dessert, she looked directly in his eyes and touched the fork lightly to her cleavage, careful to not touch the chiffon.

“Oops! Look what happened. I spilled it.” She seductively slid a finger down the edge of her bodice and invited him in. “You wouldn’t want to miss out on dessert, would you?” Eli literally swooped in. His warm mouth and tongue removed every trace of the dessert.

Grinning devilishly, he said, “I love your cream.” The look in his eyes and the tone of his sexy voice left no doubt *which* cream he was referring to. “I’m sure I’m going to want seconds when we get home. As a matter of fact, I may want to slip some more dessert between *your* lips once we get home.”

“Hot damn!” Rachel giggled playfully. “You can have thirds if you want it.” She didn’t doubt his stamina for a minute.

Eli put his lips to her ear. “You’re wet for me again now, aren’t you?”

Rachel’s eyes slid shut in bliss at the sound of that velvety, promising voice, and she nodded in delight. She leaned her head against his chest and

snuggled as she reached with the fork for another bite and slipped this one between his lips. They shared some more of the dessert, and Eli buzzed the waiter to bring the bill.

After he paid and tipped the waiter, Eli rose from the table and helped Rachel scoot out. Rachel detoured to the restroom, and Eli waited for her by the entry. Eli told Rachel when she returned that Tessa was penciling them into her calendar for next year on their one year anniversary. After greeting Paul and Peter, she asked Eli if he knew that Tessa's brothers were bikers.

"Well, maybe we can get together and go for a ride in the spring," Eli suggested, clasping Rachel's fingers with his.

"We'd like that a lot. Good luck this weekend. We're sorry we couldn't come. Tessa has us packed to the gills that night, back-to-back all evening. What can you do?" Peter said with a shrug.

"Such is life in the restaurant industry. Life and love have to revolve around food," Paul said with a mischievous grin. "I think we have that concept pretty well-developed around here."

Eli chuckled deeply. "I'll say."

* * * *

They had just arrived home from Tessa's, and Eli chuckled quietly, watching Rachel as she came down the hall with the large, flat package in her hands. He could see the anticipation in her eyes as she placed the gift-wrapped box in his hands.

"Who goes first?" he asked, noting she practically vibrated with excitement. Eli knew he was going to like whatever was in this box. She was giggly and giddy with excitement, and she hadn't even opened her gift yet.

"You do! You go first, honey," she replied.

He laid the box on the coffee table and began ripping the paper off the plain cardboard box. Lifting the lid, he found several flat, tissue-wrapped packages on a bed of packing peanuts inside.

"Does it matter which one I open first?"

She touched a couple and pointed to a small one. "This one first."

He patted his thigh. "Come sit in my lap."

Rachel climbed up and watched him open the first portrait. It was a framed black and white photograph of her under a big pecan tree. She was lying on a blanket, on her tummy, dressed in blue jeans and a low-cut T-shirt, barefooted. Her hair was ruffled around her shoulders by a passing breeze, and she had a faraway look in her eyes.

The way she was lying on the blanket, her luscious cleavage was showcased to its best advantage. The necklace she wore in the shot invited the eye there.

“Wow, I love this. Thank you, angel.” He kissed her. “When did you do these?”

“About a month ago.”

She handed him the next one. He ripped the tissue off and was taken completely by surprise. “Hot damn!”

In this color portrait, Rachel was dressed in the black satin gown and robe he had bought for her, posed seductively on her side, resting on a chaise lounge. The robe was off one shoulder, and the black satin was arranged around her in light-reflective puddles. Her hair was spread out around her on the pillows.

“You know how much I love your hair like that.”

Through the deep slit on the side of the nightgown, one calf was bared as well as her knee and part of her thigh. Her head rested on her hand, and she was looking directly in the camera lens with a sexy come-hither stare. The light was soft as if she were surrounded by candles.

“This is beautiful. I want to hang it in our bedroom, if that’s all right.”

“Of course. That’s why I had them done for you. I’m glad you like them...so far,” she said softly reaching in for another tissue wrapped frame.

“So far?” He ripped the tissue of the next one eagerly, and his jaw popped open silently.

This time, Rachel was dressed in a short sexy black satin nightie. She was facing the end of a bed made up with an antique ivory quilt. One knee was propped on the bed, and she was standing on tiptoe, stretching her delicate arch and defining her calf muscle.

The front and the back of the nightie were held in place by a drawstring from under her arm down to her hip, where it was tied. The space between the front and the back of the gown was at least five inches wide, so the side of her full rounded breast, her waist, hip, and thigh were all bare.

Rachel was looking over her left shoulder with a naughty little one-sided grin. Dangling by its ties from her hand was the black satin blindfold he'd given her. It was playful but the intent was clear in her eyes. She was ready for some slap and tickle.

He let out a little "huh" sound and looked at her and said, "Are there more?"

She giggled, kissed his cheek and reached into the box again, lifting yet another tissue wrapped package. He ripped the paper off.

"Whoa," he said softly, gazing at it, admiring her more and more.

This was a large one, done in black and white. In this picture, she was posed in front of an open window through which soft light filtered.

She was brushing her hair as she looked out the window so her arms were up above her shoulders. She was dressed in a white corset that laced up the back, the ribbon bows just barely visible. She wore a white G-string and white garters securing her white lace-trimmed stockings. Her feet were shod in sexy white high-heeled pumps.

"Damn, that is beautiful, angel," he said softly, looking at her. "You're one gutsy lady."

"Do you like it?"

"I love it. I love them all! It's unbelievable."

"Do you like them enough to hang them in our bedroom?"

"Of course! But I'm not letting just anyone go in there, that's for sure!"

Giggling, she said, "Understood." Rachel rose from his knee, and he pulled her back, cuddling her to him.

"You're not getting away that quick, naughty girl. I love them, and I love you," he murmured, kissing her tenderly.

"I guess you don't want the last one," she said with a touch of pouty sadness.

"There's more?"

"One more. A special one," Rachel said and Eli noted the twinkle in her eyes.

"Special one?"

Reaching into the packing peanuts, Rachel rummaged through them till she found it, building his anticipation before she handed it to him.

This one felt different as he removed the wrapping. It was a bound leather frame that opened like a book. He flipped the cover back on itself

and nearly dropped it when he saw the photo inside of it. An eleven-by-fourteen inch, black and white *nude* portrait of Rachel.

Eli gulped loudly. The light was much softer in this portrait, and she was posed in front of a lit fireplace on a black bearskin rug. She was on her knees perched on her raised heels. Her knees were parted, and her arms were bent, her hands in her hair. Her back was arched, and her breasts were tilted up in an enticing display.

The light shimmered in her hair and her skin was a teasing mixture of light and shadow because of the backlighting. She was turned away from the camera just enough so that only the tiniest trace of the dark curls over her mound were visible. The photo had an old-fashioned, grainy quality to it. The lighting was perfect over the curve of her hip and her ass to the gentle upper and lower swell of her breasts. Even her navel was a lighting masterpiece. Her face was relaxed and contemplative, her eyes slightly downcast, the irises catching the light a little. His fingers traced on the glass over her form.

“You posed nude for me,” he said softly.

“I sure did. It took a little convincing, but I did it.”

“This is beautiful.” Eli looked down at it again and squeezed her close.

She flipped the cover back over and demonstrated its dual function. “The cover serves as a stand. If it becomes necessary to close it for privacy’s sake, you flip it closed, put it on the shelf and it looks like a scrapbook.”

“I’ll display it proudly unless we have company. Angel, you’ve blown me away with these. Damn! I’m still trying to wrap my mind around the fact you were willing to pose nude for me! You’re incredibly beautiful in all of them. You’re full of surprises. Speaking of which, it’s time to open *your* gift.”

* * * *

Rachel ripped the paper off with glee and looked up at him in confusion when she saw wrapped packages similar in shape to the ones he had opened.

He smiled and said nothing, just handed her the first one. She removed the wrapping paper and held the black frame, similar in style and color to the ones she’d had Carrie and Raquel use.

“Carrie and Raquel shot you?”

“Carrie did. She met me out at the lake the Monday after the hog hunt.”

“We were *had*, weren’t we?”

“Yes, by Ethan and Grace, I believe. Ethan took me upstairs and showed me the outdoor portraits they had made for Grace for her wedding gift. He suggested maybe you might like something similar.”

“He was *right*. Grace showed me the boudoir portraits she had done for them that hang in their bedrooms. I decided to do the same thing for you.” Rachel was holding the frame facedown.

“Turn it over. See what you think.”

She did as he asked. “Oh, *mama*.”

It was a black and white of Eli posed in his leather jacket, a white T-shirt, faded blue jeans, and his black leather biker boots. He was sitting on his motorcycle, his long, raven-black hair waving in the breeze behind him. His big, muscular arms were crossed over his chest as he gazed into the camera, the filtered sunlight illuminating the pale gray of his eyes. His smile was devilish and playful.

“Like it?”

“I love it,” she said dreamily. “I want more.”

The next one was taken down at the cove on Bowie Lake. It was a much tighter shot of a shirtless, tanned Eli. He was sitting down against one of the massive trees that grew neat the water’s edge, and he was resting his head against the weathered, gray bark. The look on his face was intense, and his body seemed to vibrate with restrained energy. His pale gray eyes radiated with sexual heat. It was a startlingly honest revelation of his feelings in his eyes, and she released a purely feminine sigh. Rachel recognized this guy.

“The caveman.” She laid her hand on the image.

“I was afraid you might not like this one. I thought the look on my face was too...intense.”

“It is intense, but I know him. The part of you that is so fiercely protective and territorial. Very *intense*, but also fiercely loyal and protective of me. I love that wild part of you.” Tapping the glass with her fingertip, she added, “He makes *me* feel safe.”

The wrapping on the next one revealed another black and white image. In this one, he was walking toward the camera through the trees in a mix of sunlight and shadow. The trees were not as thick here, so he was well lit, just a subtle shadow here and there.

Eli was looking off into the distance across the lake, but his thoughts appeared much farther away. His face was relaxed in this portrait, serene, in fact. His eyes were illuminated by a ray of sun, and there was a soft smile on his lips. His arms were relaxed, loose at his sides. He was bare-chested and barefoot, his jeans riding low on his lean hips. Eli's thoughts were obvious in the subtle hint of an erection through the denim of his jeans. In sunlight, it would have been obvious, but with the mix of sunlight and shadow playing over his body, only someone looking for it would see it.

Sighing softly in appreciation, Rachel glanced at the portrait of the caveman and at this one, feeling so blessed and fortunate. This was her portrait of Eli the lover. Both were her soul mates, the caveman and the lover.

She looked up at him, feeling pure wonder. "How did Carrie manage to capture such authentic shots of your personality? There's a different aspect of you in each of these."

Eli shrugged. "She would ask me questions about you, I would answer her and tell her about you, and then she would start snapping pictures. Once I got used to the camera, I let my mind wander until she would ask the next question. That one of me on the Harley, I was thinking about you sending me that naughty nekkid picture mail 'did you eat yet?' when we were on the hog hunt. Bad girl."

"I'll bet I can guess what you were thinking in this one." She chuckled, tapping the glass on the portrait of her lover man.

"Well, the obvious answer is that I was thinking about making love to you. I was specifically thinking about making love with you after we got home from the hog hunt the night before. I was remembering the sounds you made when you came each time. It's a sweet, precious memory."

"That was an amazing night. I like knowing the way I sound when I come has such an effect on you." Her cheeks warmed at her own sweet memories of that night.

"Remember the fantasy I shared with you on the dance floor?"

"Yes, the high heels, the side-tying G-string, and the vibrator on the deck chair in back?"

He reached over and lifted the last and largest picture from the box. "That fantasy was in my mind that morning when we were doing this portrait. I shared it with you later that same night on the dance floor."

“My goodness, this is a *nice big one*,” she purred, glancing naughtily at him as he groaned and rolled his eyes. Rachel didn’t miss the erection now straining at his zipper, either. She ripped off the paper and took a look. Her eyes popped open as round as saucers.

“*Oh. My. Word.*” Her fingers traced over the glass. She stood it up against the coffee table and looked at it in awe. This portrait was a black and white, not coincidentally matted and framed to match her portrait in front of the window in her white corset.

Sneaky freaking photographers.

Eli was standing in the water to his upper thighs. He was soaking wet, the water sluicing down his body, dripping from his thickly muscled arms, which were bent. His hands were at the sides of his head, like he was slicking his dripping-wet hair back from his face. Water droplets glistened on his torso and his face, sparkling like diamonds wherever the sunlight touched them.

His eyelashes were wet and clung together into little points all around his eyes, which were sparkling with the reflection from the water. Eli looked directly into the camera, his sensuous lips opened slightly as if he’d come up for a breath of air, a playful, sexy smile on his handsome face. His massive shoulders, biceps, and pectorals corded with muscular power.

The weight of the water pulled the waistband even lower on his soaking-wet jeans, and *damned* if the top button wasn’t popped open! The little opening revealed a marked absence of undergarments, and the wet fabric left nothing to the imagination about the size and placement of his cock, which didn’t seem to mind the cold water at all. It wasn’t visible, just the delectable outline of it through the wet denim. She gulped loudly when her mouth started to water.

“Was the water cold?”

“It might have been a little cold, but you can probably guess what was on my mind. I don’t remember feeling cold. And just so you know, I buttoned right back up after she took it,” he said, kissing the top of her head before she looked up at him, smiling.

“I wasn’t going to ask. But I’m glad to know. These are the nicest, finest, most thoughtful gifts I’ve ever received, Eli. Thank you.”

Rachel kissed him as he held her in his lap. His palm rested lightly on her cheek. He tilted his head and deepened their kiss, so gentle and tender it made her heart throb and ache as well as other parts farther south.

When she came up for air, she said, “Eli, I’m so in love with you it hurts.”

“Can I make the hurt feel better?”

“No, make it worse,” she whispered.

Chapter Fifty

Rachel was at home wrapping Christmas gifts she would be delivering later in the day. They had decided to extend their honeymoon over Christmas and would return home on the evening of the twenty-sixth. She was attaching the gift tag to Rogelio's shirt box when the doorbell rang.

Rising from the breakfast bar where she'd set up shop, she answered the door. Corina Scott stood there looking cute as ever in her Christmas cardigan, T-shirt, blue jeans, and boots. Her hair was done up like usual, and judging by the time, she must be on her lunch break. Corina cut hair at one of the ladies' hair salons between Divine and Morehead.

"Corina? This was kind of far to come for lunch. Are you okay?" Rachel noticed the troubled expression on her friend's face.

"My one o'clock cancelled, and I took the rest of the day off to help with decorations at your mom and dad's."

"That was nice of you. We appreciate your help. Are you all right? Is something wrong?"

"Yes, actually. I know this is not the best time, and I can help you wrap while we talk if you want," Corina offered, gesturing to the rolls of paper and other gift-wrapping paraphernalia.

"I'd love some help! I have quite a few to go. Tell me what's up." Rachel fixed her a glass of tea and offered her a seat at the counter.

"I was at The Pony last night with Brice. While I was in the ladies' room, I met a person who told me she was a regular there. She said she wanted to warn me about Brice. She wouldn't be specific. She said to 'watch out.' She said her name is Barbara James and that I should ask you about Brice."

Rachel groaned and rolled her eyes. Some people just could not stand to see someone happy and had to do whatever they could to bring them down.

“Brice has been nothing but kind and wonderful to me. He treats me like a lady, like you said he would that first night. I know he’s not perfect or anything. I decided I would trust what I know and see and ask you about her since she said she knew you. I noticed she sat at the bar the whole time we were there. Brice asked me if everything was all right when I sat down. I suppose he could tell something was wrong. I told him I was fine. I wasn’t going to tell him what she said because she didn’t say anything besides ‘watch out,’ whatever that means. Can you tell me what she might have meant? And tell me if I should talk to him?”

“I can tell you what I think she meant, but before I do, I want you to know I think you are the sweetest, freshest breeze that has ever blown through his not always happy life. I know none of it will matter to you because you’re right in trusting your instincts.”

Corina placed a small box on a piece of paper and began wrapping. Rachel disliked the woman Corina referred to intensely in that moment for causing Corina needless worry like this. “I need to know, Rachel. I think I’m falling in love with him. If he has a history I may hear about from someone like her again, I need to be armed with at least a few facts. I’m a realist but an optimistic one. I know he’s not perfect, and I’ve figured out that his home life growing up was not good, or safe, for that matter.”

“You need to know Barbara James is a busybody and a barfly.” Rachel wrapped as she spoke, setting the pace by busying her hands, and allowed Corina to settle in and think about what all she had to say. “She likes to be in other people’s business, and she loves to gossip. Barbara probably thinks she did you a favor and will talk about you behind your back if you persist in seeing Brice.

“I’ve seen the way Brice looks at you sometimes, Corina. I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if he hasn’t already admitted to himself he’s in love with you. You’re something pure and perfect to him, and I think sometimes he’s afraid of scaring you off.” Glancing up at the young woman, Rachel asked, “Has he told you he loves you?”

Corina cheeks turned a rosy color. “No, but I think he started to last Saturday after you and Eli left the club. We were interrupted, and then he seemed to lose his nerve. I didn’t push him, just hugged him and stayed by his side. Sometimes he’s like that. He doesn’t need to talk but just sit and kind of ‘be’ with me.”

Rachel smiled, recalling a time when Brice would have said the first thing that popped into his head.

Corina asked, "Can you tell me what Barbara meant by what she said?"

"Up until back in September, Brice Huvell is what you could've called 'socially challenged.'"

By the time she was done telling Corina what she could, Corina seemed to feel much better.

Rachel placed a hand on Corina's delicate forearm and said, "I would disregard anything Barbara said to you. Trust your own instincts. If anybody says anything to you in front of him, could I ask a huge favor?" At Corina's nod, Rachel continued, "Defend Brice. You don't have to condone or excuse past mistakes he's made. But you have a much better grasp of the man he is now than anyone else in this little town. He's worth it, Corina. Believe in him like crazy because that's what he *needs*. And don't worry, I'll bet Brice tells you he loves you this weekend. He's probably waiting for the perfect time, to be romantic, which is what Ethan would encourage him to do."

"Rachel, I'm so glad I came to you about this. I *knew* I couldn't put too much credence in what Barbara was saying. She's so..." Corina said, faltering at last.

"Loud and obnoxious? Yes, you can say it. Try to ignore her talk. Trust what your eyes see and what your heart is telling you about him. Where are Michelle and Lisa today?" Rachel asked.

"Oh, they're at work right now, but they told me they're meeting Andy and Vince at The Pony later."

"How's Sandra?" Rachel grinned mischievously.

"Strutting around the salon with her lip stuck out. Sandra spends more time primping on herself than she does on her customers. She overheard I was coming out to see you. You should have seen her, acting like someone had stuck a corncob up her ass."

Rachel burst out laughing at the vivid imagery. They talked and wrapped gifts for a while longer then Corina took her iced tea glass to the sink and rinsed it out.

"Thanks for the help with my Christmas wrapping." Rachel hugged her.

"Thanks for talking me down off the ledge."

"You weren't that bad, Corina. Your instincts were already telling you what you needed to hear."

Rachel finished wrapping everything else and packed her suitcase for the honeymoon. Eli had gone in search of boxes for her to use for packing up her apartment. All the furniture was already returned in storage with the exception of her cedar chest, which she'd agreed to let Eli take to a furniture refinisher for her. He was in Morehead at the moment, picking up some things he would need for the trip.

Rachel walked over to her side of the duplex and began gathering things, moving them into the kitchen and organizing them into boxes. She needed a little background noise but didn't feel like going back to the other side for her MP3 player. She turned on the television and listened to the noontime news while she went through the rooms and brought everything in and put it on the breakfast bar.

She was removing the contents of a kitchen drawer into a box when a familiar name caught her attention. Rachel left the kitchen and grabbed the remote, turned up the volume, and listened to the news anchor share the story.

"...arrest was made and charges of trafficking in child pornography were filed against a Divine man. Reese McCoy, age thirty-four, was charged and taken into custody on several counts and is also being investigated on allegations of rape of a teenage runaway. McCoy was also charged with narcotics possession and is being investigated for tax evasion, as well. The arrest came as the result of an anonymous tip to the FBI and local police authorities. Extensive evidence was uncovered in his home..."

Rachel stood there watching a belligerent Reese McCoy being led to a police car in handcuffs. He had been rather overweight when she last saw him, but she noticed he walked, or rather, waddled strangely as he was led shuffling to the police car and put in the back. Boxes and boxes of papers and electronic equipment were being taken as evidence out the front door, and she prayed that they had what they needed and that he wouldn't be able to hurt anyone else ever again.

Rachel turned the news off and plugged in her alarm clock radio in the kitchen and listened to music while she worked instead. She sealed each box and stacked them by the door for Eli to come get later. Eli had made her promise she would not try to move all the boxes herself. After they were all stacked, and ready to be moved, she went back over to the other side and carried the Christmas presents she needed to deliver out to the Tundra.

She called to check in with Eli before she left to see how his shopping trip was going and to let him know what she had accomplished. Rachel also told him about what she'd seen on the news that afternoon, and Eli commented that it sounded like McCoy's deeds had finally caught up with him. He asked her how she was feeling about it, and she told him that she was relieved and satisfied that justice would be done now. She felt sorry for his young victims.

Rachel ran her errands, delivering all the Christmas presents. She swung by the ranch and left the gifts for Grace and her men, Kelly, Matthew, and Elijah with Jack, who was at home doing paperwork in his office. She swung by with gifts for Mike and Rosa and the kids then went out to Rogelio's and dropped off his present and a big box of Milk-Bones for Rogelio's dogs.

The sun was setting by the time she arrived home after making all her stops. Eli's truck was in the driveway, and she hurried inside, happy he had beaten her home. She discovered him in the second bedroom, stacking all the boxes against a wall.

"Hello, angel." He squeezed her and kissed her thoroughly. "Pizza and a movie are waiting for us in the kitchen. I thought I'd go ahead and get these moved over while I waited for you to come home. Did you get finished?"

"Yep! I'm done. Now all I have to do is pick up my dress and your ring tomorrow. I volunteered to bring the girls' dresses out to them, and the evil *elf* told me, and I quote, to 'stay the hell away.' The stress has gotten to her, to them all. Crazy people. My dad was the only one who sounded like he was having a good time. Grace has him running errands for her. Mom sounded like she was busy, too."

"I'm not working tomorrow, so we could run those errands together, if you'd like? Will your dress be wrapped up?"

"Should be. If we go together, then we can get both rings at once."

They made a list of the stops they would have to make the next day, she called to check in with Grace while they ate their pizza, and Eli put in the movie. After she finished her call, Rachel came and cuddled up with Eli on the couch.

"Is Grace okay?"

Rachel nodded and rested her head on Eli's chest. "Oh, yeah. I couldn't get a word in with a wedge, but it sounds like she and Kelly had it all

completely under control. Honey?” She began, tracing a pattern on his thigh. “There’s something I want to do right now. Do you mind watching this later?”

“No, what do you need?”

You.

“To make a fantasy a reality.” Rachel smiled invitingly at him as she rose to her feet and went in the bedroom. She gathered all the candles from the bedroom and asked him to take them on the back deck, and understanding dawned in his eyes.

Rachel felt her cheeks blush under his warm gaze as he took the candles from her. “It’s a wonderful night tonight. Why don’t we see what it’s like to make love under the stars? No one will see us or hear us. Everyone is too busy to bother coming over here.”

“You’re always full of surprises, angel.”

“Could you light the candles for me and take my robe and a blanket out there to cuddle up in afterward?”

“Sure, anything else you need?”

“Just you. Nekkid. I’ll be ready in a few minutes.”

* * * *

Eli lit the candles and set them out on the deck and laid her robe and a blanket on a nearby table. He laid a towel on the reclining deck lounge. Getting harder by the moment, he began to undress outside under the light of the moon and stars.

When he was naked, he reclined in the deck chair. Thinking about what she was changing into right now had him hard as a steel pole. He lay back and stroked his cock and imagined her slipping those shoes on. His cock responded to that mental image and the additional stimulation of being outdoors stark naked, readying for the fulfillment of his fantasy. A fantasy she wanted him to have come true. Rachel was amazing.

The porch light went off, and the deck was plunged into soft, flickering candlelight. He’d made sure and positioned some candles by the door so she would be able to see where she was going and so he would be able to see her. The backdoor opened, and the woman he loved stepped through, even sexier than in his original fantasy.

Moving toward him slowly and seductively, Rachel was naked except for her black satin side-tying G-string. Her feet were shod in her five-inch naughty school girl pumps, just like in his fantasy. She carried in her hand the vibrator that stimulated her G-spot and clitoris at the same time and a bottle of lubricant. Rachel stood in front of him at the end of the chair, her shoulders back, hand on her hip and her feet in a wide, self-assured stance, nothing hidden. The scent of jasmine floated on the air from her dewy skin.

"I hope I didn't keep you waiting long."

He chuckled. "You're a beautiful sight, standing there, angel. Turn for me," he murmured.

Rachel complied, slowly and confidently giving him a nice, slow view of her ass and legs. She gazed down at him with desire glittering in her eyes as he stroked his cock, drinking in the sight of her. He knew that seeing him stroke himself never failed to turn her on.

He spread his legs as he sat up, put a foot on the deck on either side of the lounge, and held out his hand to her. "Come here to me, angel."

She stepped over to his right side, taking his hand.

"Eli, I want you to make your fantasy a reality. Do to me exactly what you told me about. I'm yours," she whispered as she leaned down to kiss him. She arched her back with a gasp when his hand slid up her thigh to palm her ass.

"Thank you, angel. This is only the first time we are making love outside. You, naked in the moonlight, are a vision. Turn your back to me and take my hands. I promise I won't let you fall." She reached back, and he allowed her to grasp his hands securely. "Hold on to me and straddle the chair facing away from me."

Straddling the chair, she leaned forward, giving him a mouth-watering close-up view of her ass. Her stance now was wide but not so wide that she was unstable.

"How's that? Too hard on your ankles?"

"No, my ankles are fine. How is it for you?"

Eli could hear the smile in her voice. He sat back in the reclining deck chair, admiring her ass and pondered her question.

Pretty fucking near perfection from where I'm sitting.

Tilting forward at the hip a little, Rachel braced her hands on her thighs. Eli traced the palms of his hands up the backs of her thighs to her ass,

trailing the pads of his thumbs up her inner thigh so that, as his hands met, his thumbs caressed her outer lips through the black satin. He smiled at her sudden intake of breath.

“It’s perfect for me, angel. Did that feel good?”

“Yes, Eli. You’re making me wet doing that. Oh, don’t stop.” She whimpered when he slowly did it again, his hands moving slowly as they neared the apex of her thighs. He slid his fingers over her hips, and pulled on the little ties of her G-string. The fabric slipped away, and he laid it aside.

“How does it feel to be naked and outside with nothing on but these heels?” he asked as he slid his hands over the tops of her feet before moving up her calves again.

“Oh!” she whimpered as he made slow torturous progress, building the anticipation.

In the still air around them, he caught the scent of her arousal, and his cock twitched in response to her siren’s call.

“Mmm, what will I find when I reach your pretty little pussy? You must like to be naked and under the stars. Are you very wet?”

“Yes, Eli. I love it out here. So open and exposed. Oh! Your hands. I need your hands on me so much.” She cried out in pleasure when his fingertips reached her ass and slid to her lips and parted them so he could see her most intimate self. “Oh, Eli!” she whimpered.

He sat forward in the deck chair and stroked her lips, which glistened with her arousal in the moonlight. He could easily see how wet and needy she was. The novelty of being outside in such a vulnerable position, naked and straddling his deck chair with her beautiful ass in his face, was having as pronounced an effect on her as it was on him. His cock twitched with the need to be inside her. Eli’s mouth watered for a little taste, and he tilted his head as he grasped her hips and slid his tongue through her opened slit. She cried out in pleasure as he satisfied his desire to have a taste of her pussy. He slid his tongue in her opening and then gently flicked over her engorged clitoris. She trembled in his hands.

“Are you all right?”

“Oh, Eli, yes!”

“Put your hands down on the cushion in front of you.” Placing her hands on the cushion he’d put there for that purpose took the pressure off her knees and tilted her a bit more, so Eli had even better access.

Returning his mouth to her pussy, Eli feasted on her honey as she squirmed and moaned. He paid loving attention to her clit, bringing her close to the edge as his cock throbbed between his legs, aching to slide into her. With her back turned, she was unaware when he lifted the vibrator she had brought outside with her. He set it on its lowest setting and gently placed the nubbed head to her wet, parted inner lips, which had swelled and darkened to a deep rose color. She whimpered in raw ecstasy.

“Are you ready for the vibrator? Ready to come for me?”

“Yes, baby.” She cried out as the thick, jelly-like vibrator slipped into her slick opening.

He slowly slid the vibrating nubbed head toward her G-spot. When he reached it, the lip of the clitoral vibrator made contact with her clit. He tilted the vibrator, applied pressure to her G-spot, began a slow stroking motion, and pressed the outer vibrator against her clit.

Her pussy dripped with her juices, and he leaned forward for another taste as he continued the short, firm strokes to her pleasure spots. He enjoyed the rising sounds of her ecstasy, which told him he was stroking her just right. He backed off slightly until Rachel begged him to make her come, then he applied steady, direct stimulation.

Rachel was beautiful as her back arched, and she cried out in ecstasy, her hips undulating in a slow, sensuous dance as her orgasm took her. Before she had a chance to come down from those heights, he switched off the vibrator, gently removed it then securely grasped the backs of her thighs and said, “I have you angel, and I won’t let you fall, I promise. Bend your knees. I’m going to slide you down over my cock. I can’t wait another second do be inside you.”

“Oh, yes, Eli.” Rachel held onto his arms and did as he instructed, bending her knees. She cried out as her pussy convulsed in hot liquid waves around his cock and came again as he slid deep. The caveman growled in deep approval at her welcome.

“Fuck, that is hot, feeling you clenching on my cock like that.”

He lifted her thighs and spread them wide over his, and she placed her hands on the cushion in front of her, leaning forward a bit, so she had some

leverage. He was seated to the hilt as she sat down on him, touching the deepest part of her.

“How does it feel?”

She moaned softly and shifted on him. “Like you own every inch of me, Eli. Is it good?”

“Like heaven. Are you ready? I’m going to lie back a little. Hold your balance and let me do the lifting. I want to fuck you till you come for me again. Are you touching yourself?”

“Do you want me to?”

“Yes, I want you to use the vibrator on your clit.”

Eli lay back while Rachel turned on the vibrator and he slid his hands under her hips. She had a little leverage to pump on him as he began to thrust into her gently. She applied the vibrator to her clit, and he groaned.

“I can feel the vibrator on my cock, too. Damn, that’s amazing,” he said as he looked down, lifting her and seeing her cream smeared all over his cock as he pumped into her. “Fuck, I love how your little lips part over my cock like they’re kissing me while I tunnel into you.”

Her walls tightened around him.

“Oh, yes, Eli! Fuck me harder, please, please, please, yes! I’m...I’m coming, Eli!” She wailed loudly as her hips moved uncontrollably over his cock.

He thought his head would explode trying to restrain himself. In order to make the fantasy real, he had to hold off on coming, for now.

She moaned as he growled deep, fighting with his control but maintaining it. The need to fuck and come inside her was almost insurmountable. Rachel settled back against his chest, and he allowed her to catch her breath and steady herself.

She turned to him, dreamy eyed, and said, “I love you, Eli. I love your fantasy.”

“You’re my fantasy coming true,” he murmured as he stroked her shoulder. “Ready for more?”

“Always.”

Helping her rise, he withdrew his still fully engorged cock from her hot, languid depths. It stood straight out from him, demanding he return to the tight confines of her pussy so it could finish what he’d started. Eli took no small delight in her feminine little moan as he slid from her. The sight of her

pussy, wet with her cum as she rose to one knee on the chair only served to torture his already painfully hard cock.

“Can you stand, angel?”

“If you’ll help me a little.” Rachel reached out to him as he rose and offered her his hand to help her up. She stepped carefully, mindful of his bare feet as he drew her to him in a passionate kiss. She giggled when his insistent erection twitched between them, refusing to be ignored.

Stepping away from him, she turned back to the lounge, and stretched luxuriously, raising her arms over her head. She ran her fingers through her hair, sighed sexily, then reached for the arms of the deck chair. She slowly lifted a foot, parted her long, satiny legs, and straddled the chair. Clad only in the high heels, her back arched and her ass tilted up, she offered herself to him. Turning her head, Rachel flipped her hair over her shoulder, gave him a sexy teasing smile and wiggled her ass at him.

“My pussy is begging for your cock again. How about you come here and fuck me, then fill me with your cum this time.”

She didn’t have to ask twice. Eli straddled the chair behind her, the shoes bringing her up to the perfect height. He grasped her hips, positioned his head at her entrance, pausing to enjoy the sight of her like this. Her strong legs were stretched long and graceful, and her pussy was completely open and welcoming to him, dripping wet and ready to be taken.

This sight would stay buried in his heart as a deeply cherished memory. Not one he’d trot out and share during the holidays with family but maybe with just her. This memory of her making his fantasy a reality.

Rachel panted as he took in the sight of her. She bent her knees slightly and pressed her cunt back against his cock a little bit, enticing him. He growled low at the sensation of her tight wet heat squeezing on his head and said, “Hold on.”

Eli impaled her with one solid thrust, grasping her tightly against him as she moaned deeply and flexed against him in powerful waves.

“Slow down, baby,” he murmured, and she panted, stilling her movements.

He slid his hands up from her hips to her abdomen and over her ribs, pulling her gently into a standing position. Eli kneaded the delectable handfuls of her breasts gently but firmly, and she reached behind her and threaded her fingers into his hair. She laid her head back, and he tilted

forward to kiss her tenderly as he began to thrust into her, looking into her eyes, so filled with bliss.

“Eli,” she whispered, “it’s so good. It’s so right with you. You fill me perfectly.” She placed her hands over his as he cupped her breasts, and she rocked back onto him, grinding on his cock. He growled deeply when she did it, and his strokes became firmer as he tunneled into her heat.

“Angel,” he groaned, “you are my fantasy come true. You feel so good. You look so good, taking my cock like this.” He slid a hand down to her slit and stroked a finger over her clit. Rachel reacted to the additional stimulation immediately.

“Oh, give it to me hard, Eli, please! Harder and faster! Fill me, oh! Eli! I’m coming!” She groaned low, thrusting back on his cock hard and tight, flexing her hips and drawing on him with a powerful womanly strength her soft feminine curves belied.

Maybe his Rachel had a little cavewoman in *her*? Her counterpart to his caveman. Her response to her orgasm had an almost feral, primitive quality to it. Eli loved the hell out of this part of her that took whatever the fuck she wanted when she wanted it, as hard as she could. He howled in ecstasy as his cock pulsed inside her, and her pussy consumed every drop of his cum, milking his cock.

Surprising him, Rachel reached back with both hands, grasped the backs of his thighs, and held on to him tightly. His cavewoman growled and arched against him, daring him to pull out before she was finished with him. He bent over her, wrapped his arms around her and growled back in answer, pounding into her with renewed vigor, giving her what she demanded.

Firmly stroking her clit, Eli trapped her against him and fucked her until her pussy clenched in ecstasy. She threw her head back and moaned rapturously and her body stroked him with her tightening muscles again.

She went limp in his arms, the satisfied cavewoman’s grip released, and his sweet gentle Rachel returned.

Sliding his still semi-erect cock from her, he laid her limp form back against him, lifted her, and held her in his arms. Stepping back from the lounge, he turned and sat back down on the towel-covered cushions, cuddling her close to him as she clung to him and her breath hitched.

Pushing her hair back from her face, she looked up at him, her cheeks flushed bright pink. “I’m sorry, Eli.”

Flabbergasted, he looked down at her and said, “Huh?”

“Sorry, I was so...forceful with you. I felt like I lost control. I think I scratched you with my long fingernails.” She was embarrassed for being his cavewoman.

“Wow, lose control like that as often as you need to. That was fucking amazing. I’ve only seen a little glimpse of *that* one here and there. But I love *the shit* out of the cavewoman. She’s hot and wild.”

“Really?” she said with a breathless giggle.

“She takes whatever the fuck she wants and won’t be denied. I *get* her. I *love* her.”

“Oh! Well, all right, but she’s gone now. I think she exploded. It’s just a puddle of Rachel that is left behind,” Rachel replied, laughing softly as she stroked his shoulder.

“Oh, but see, I win either way because *melting* Rachel is another favorite of mine, the one who needs me to hold her after she comes undone. She’s pure sugar and sweetness,” he whispered as she repositioned, having gained some strength back.

Smiling radiantly, Rachel straddled him and laid her warm, wet pussy on his now hard cock. She moaned at the feel of his heat against her own, moved forward at his own sharp intake, and did as he had told her in his fantasy. She laid her pussy against the head of his cock, over his abdomen. Eli flexed when she did and both of them whimpered softly when he slid into her easily.

“Are you sore, angel?”

“No. I’m aching for another filling with this magical cock of yours. I’m going to do like you said and slowly work my way down your cock until I’ve taken all of you inside me. I’m going to grind on you until we both have one more sweet release. Then I’m going to fall into a deep, coma-like sleep.”

“Music to my ears, angel. I’m going to slip these off of you so you can be more comfortable.” He slid each pump from her feet and left them lying on the deck.

He reached for the blanket on the table he’d moved to within easy reach of the chair and unfolded it over her until they were both under its warmth. He groaned as she moved in a small, sinuous motion against him, fucking the part of his cock that rested inside her tight heat, sliding him deeper by

minute degrees. Eli caressed her shoulders and back, stroking her and touching her wherever he could. His hands came to rest on her ass, and her slow, circling grind continued over him.

This part was even *better* than his fantasy as Rachel lost herself to the fluid, repetitive, rocking motion of her hips. He knew the moment when she no longer controlled the motions and they controlled her. She moaned quietly, her cheek resting on his chest, and her eyes closed. Her rhythm remained slow, and the tension built inside them both.

She began to moan and cry out, murmuring his name in an erotically thrilling, intense voice as her strokes became a little longer but no less delicious and sensuous over him. Tears flowed freely from her eyes, and he did nothing to stop her or them for fear of distracting her from this profound moment. Eli watched in awe as she lost herself utterly in the sweetest orgasmic wave he'd ever known, taking him along with her as her gently tugging pussy milked another blissful release from him.

There had been no fucking, no thrusting on his part, just a sinuous draw from her pussy to his cock, coaxing him to fill her one more time. The pulses went on and on, and he felt, at that moment, that she took more from him into her than his seed. Rachel drew his love into her, binding him to her irrevocably. Her cheek rested on his chest, and her breathing was punctuated by hitching sobs of bliss. He closed his eyes, feeling tears flow from his eyes. The ache in his heart was almost painful as he gave himself utterly to her, heart and soul, falling even deeper in love with her. She drifted into a deep, motionless sleep as he caressed her back tenderly, unable to keep from touching her.

Later, he wrapped the blanket around her, rose with her in his arms, carried her in through the backdoor, and tucked her into the bed, wrapped in the quilt. The temperature had dropped since going outside earlier, so he slipped into his robe and went back to collect the candles and blow them out. He gathered everything and brought all of it back inside. After cleaning up, he turned off the lights and slipped under the covers. He untucked the blanket she was wrapped in and drew her gently to him, sharing his warmth with her. Rachel never stirred once, even as he kissed her face and her hair.

Chapter Fifty-one

Eli awakened to the sound of a groan and realized it was himself he heard. Then he was overcome by a warm feeling of utter bliss. Rachel's warm, soft hands were at his hips, and he realized he was moving as he came fully awake and opened his eyes. The warmth was her velvety-soft mouth and tongue on his cock, and the movement was his hips thrusting his cock between her soft, welcoming lips as she sucked his cock under the covers.

He drew off the blanket and found her, hair tousled, sleepy-eyed, and giggling as she suckled on his cock. Judging by its size, *it* had been awake for a while and was glad Eli had finally woken up and gotten with the program. She sighed blissfully and released his cock with a resounding pop.

"Good morning, my baby." Rachel climbed on him and kissed his lips happily. She positioned his cock at her entrance and slid down over him, flexing and grinding on him as he growled deep in bliss. She clasped her fingers with his and rose and plunged down hard onto him.

"Yes," she whispered as she began to rock gently, keeping all of him inside her. He moaned softly at the feel of her tight, wet pussy gloving him so tightly.

Eli kissed her knuckles and murmured, "Good morning, beautiful."

He thrust deeply into her, causing her to topple giggling onto him. He released her hands and rolled her on her back and pulled out until just the head remained in her slick entrance. "I could get used to being awakened like that in the morning." He thrust into her, searching for that spot, knowing he found it when her eyes rolled back and her lips pressed together on a whimper.

"I know what you mean." Rachel groaned blissfully when he did it again.

“I can’t seem to get enough of you, my angel,” He rose up to look down at the honeyed place where they were joined together.

Biting his lip, he pulled out and lifted her ankles until they were above her and spread them wide, seeing her reacting to this position. She loved being taken in positions where control was given over to him. He held her thighs spread wide, her pussy lips parted and wet with her cream. He positioned his cock at her pussy again and growled at the way it nudged her lips aside, sliding around in her wetness. He loved watching her little lips spread and stretch around him, drawing her clit closer to his cock.

Looking into her blue eyes, Eli saw the glittering desire and her own awareness of how much he loved that sight. He pulled out and did it again, just to see them stretch around him one more time, noticing her clit was swelling as she got even more turned on by the sight of him watching her like that. He pushed in a few inches, engulfed in her heat, and watched as his cock disappeared inside of her then reappeared, coated in her cream.

“Fuck. That is beautiful. Your pussy is so hot. I’m as hard as a baseball bat. Don’t move a muscle,” he growled as he pulled out and stalked to the bathroom, returning with a large hand mirror. “Look. I want you to see.” He lifted her legs, spread them wide, and replaced his twitching, hard erection at her entrance again. She held the mirror, and he said, “Look, isn’t it beautiful?”

“Oh, Eli.” She watched as he slowly pushed his rock-hard cock between her lips while he stroked her clit. He felt the fresh rush of moisture to her pussy, when his cock disappeared inside her and slid back out, coated in fresh clear honey. “Oh, Eli, it’s beautiful. Nothing compares to you sliding into me.”

“I can say the same thing about your sweet pussy. You like watching my cock slide into you, don’t you? See how dark and swollen you’ve gotten? I can tell how much it affects you to watch this. Our bedroom will have lots of mirrors so you can watch as we fuck.”

Rachel giggled in delighted abandon. “Oh, yes, Eli. I want to watch you fuck me from every angle, and I want to watch up close like this, too.”

A thought came to him and he asked, “Have you been using your plugs?”

“Yes.” Rachel looked up into his eyes and smiled. He groaned in pleasure as he stroked her with his cock.

“You have?”

“Of course, I wanted to be ready the next time you wanted my ass. You want it now?” Rachel was *perfect*.

“If you think you can handle it.”

“I can. I’ll get the lube, you fix the mirror.”

Eli positioned the mirror on the closet door, Rachel got the lube, and he retrieved the dual clit and G-spot vibrator from last night, in case she wanted to use it, and put them at the end of the bed where he could reach them. She turned and backed to the end of the bed and wiggled her ass at him. He chuckled as he applied lube to her ass and pressed with a finger. She relaxed, and the muscles gave way under the pressure.

“Good, baby. That hurt?”

“No,” she growled, thrusting back a little as he chuckled again.

“Eager little vixen, aren’t you?”

“For you, yes!”

He applied the nozzle of the lube to her opening and squeezed some inside her then applied more to his hand and slathered his cock with it.

“Ready? I’ll go slow.”

“Yes, I’m ready.” She watched in the mirror as he placed his stiff cock at her opening and grasped her hip gently, pulling her back onto him. His heart began to pound at the pleasure of her ultra-tight passage encircling his cock. He rocked into and out of her in short, gentle strokes, fighting for control not to plunge in. The sensation was unlike anything else he could name.

“Oh, fuck, Eli, it feels so good! So tight and hot!” Rachel moaned and arched against him.

“Ready for the vibrator?”

Enthusiastically, she wailed as she ground her ass against him. “Oh, yes, honey, yes!”

He switched it on low and stroked her clit with it, making her buck violently and moan, and then he pressed it to her entrance. He rocked out of her ass and placed it in position, where it hummed with her movements as well as on his throbbing erection. He clenched his teeth as his balls drew up tight to his body at the vibration against his cock inside her.

Eli grasped her hips and began a smooth rhythm in and out as her pussy and ass began to clench. “You’re close, aren’t you? Come for me, Rachel.”

He strummed her sweet spots with the vibrator as he pumped into her ass. She began to whimper and arch her back, taking more of him, and cried out in bliss as he slid to the hilt. Her ass clenched tightly.

“Oh, Eli, I’m coming!” She wailed as he pumped into each opening. Several thrusts later, his body became rigid as his scorching release exploded in hot streams inside her.

“Angel!”

Rachel’s arms gave out, and her upper body collapsed on the bed as he held her in place by her hips. She moaned softly and relaxed against him. Still seeing stars as he caught his breath, he removed the toy and pulled his softening cock from her ass and pressed her to lie down.

“Be right back, angel.” He returned with a hot washcloth, cleaned her up, and helped her up to the pillows. “I’m going to shower real quick. Be right back.” He kissed her as she lay down to rest for a few minutes. He covered her, took the washcloth and toy with him and left the room.

When he returned to the bedroom fresh from his shower to dress, he discovered her curled up in the bed. She was sound asleep and he didn’t have the heart to wake her. He checked the clock and grinned. They had plenty of time. He picked up her phone from the bedside table and carried it with him to the kitchen so if it rang it wouldn’t disturb her.

Two hours later, he heard a slight movement from the bedroom and her muted voice. “Crap.”

She was sitting up in the bed, her hair wild and disheveled, and turned to the doorway when he chuckled.

“Hungry? I made some lunch?”

She grinned sheepishly at him. “Believe it or not, I’m famished.”

“Of course I believe it. Making love that many times for that long is hard work. You *should* be starving, you didn’t have any breakfast.” Handing her one of his T-shirts, he added, “Stay here, and I’ll bring it to you.”

He brought her lunch, and she ate hungrily. While she was in the shower, her phone rang, and Eli spoke at length with Jane Jensen. She told him she’d heard from the owners of the ranch and that they were amenable to the offer Eli and Rachel made. Jane hoped to hear something that day and not have to bother them on their honeymoon. As the conversation drew to a close, Jane mentioned that she would be at the wedding the next day.

Eli replied, “We’re looking forward to you being there, too.”

"I mean I'll be there with your dad," Jane replied, sounding a little uncertain. "I hope that's all right. Elijah knew you'd invited me, but he asked me last week if I might be interested in going as his date."

"Oh! I see." He chuckled.

She sounded genuinely worried. "I hope that's all right with you, Eli."

"Of course it is. It's good to see him...dating."

"Awkward?"

"No, I'm a big boy. Dad deserves to have fun, too."

"Well, I guess we wait to hear from the sellers. Enjoy your day," she said. He chuckled at that thought.

So far, so good.

* * * *

Rachel was seated in front of the vanity mirror in Grace's bathroom. Soft country music played on the stereo in the bedroom. She watched as Grace separated her hair into small sections and rolled each into a hot roller and pinned it down on her head. Rachel had assured Grace that she could do this. Rolling her hair was something she'd done on a regular basis, but Grace insisted that she should relax and allow herself to be fussed over a little.

Rachel was doing her own makeup, but Grace asked Carrie to help since she was going to be here, anyway, taking pictures as the bride got ready. There was even going to be a shot of Rachel in just her heels, lingerie, jewelry, and bridal veil that she knew Eli would *love*. The rollers were in place when Carrie came in and shot a grinning picture of Rachel with rollers and pins all over her head.

"Aren't you nervous?" Grace asked.

"I'm not nervous at all. I'm worried that I'll take one look at Eli at the end of the aisle and make a fool of myself bawling like a baby. He insists I'll be fine, and it'll be the other way around. But we're not nervous at all. No. Just make sure I've got a hanky on me and that we use waterproof mascara and eyeliner."

"Do we know where the rings are?" Grace asked, lacing her into the corset after she had the G-string on.

“Teresa has both of them in safekeeping in their boxes until right before the ceremony. I have to say I’m glad we ditched the ring pillow. I liked your idea better.” Rachel smiled as she remembered the rehearsal the night before. To a little boy, a small pillow is just too much like a football.

Carrie did her makeup, Grace finished her hair-do, and they moved on to the stockings and shoes. Then Grace pinned the flowing, lightweight veil into Rachel’s hair. Carrie snapped some pictures, giggling when Rachel warned her to quit shooting her ass.

Carrie snorted with laughter and said, “Nah, Eli will be thanking me, honey, for making sure this freaking-hot outfit got immortalized. Maybe I’ll put them all in a naughty little wedding album for him to keep in a safe place since I have a feeling he doesn’t share well.”

“Rachel, why don’t you camp it up a bit before we put on the dress? That’s *perfect!*” Grace encouraged as Rachel struck a sizzle pose with her fingertip on her ass, and said, “*Tsssss!*”

That few minutes of silliness did a lot to help her jitters about becoming too serious and teary-eyed, and maybe that was Grace’s purpose all along. Grace helped her into the dress, which felt like a dream on, not stiff and bulky at all. Because there were several layers of fabric to the skirt, she wore no slip underneath, just her lingerie. Carrie was busy snapping pictures as they talked.

There was a tap at the door, and Carrie opened it when they heard Rachel’s father’s voice. Her mom and dad had brought the Escalade to escort Rachel back to the Lopez ranch. Rachel stood by the open window and turned as they entered. Both her parents stood there looking at her, a mixture of love, pride, and pain on their faces. Her mom started crying first, and her dad, bless him, shed tears, as well, as they came to her. Carrie was ready for it and shot quietly as they embraced Rachel, and she wiped their tears, fighting tears of her own.

Grace stood back in her royal-blue dress and quietly waited as they spoke softly to Rachel, touching her dress and her hair and her cheek. She smiled and nodded, and they turned to go. Carrie snapped that portrait as they looked up. Perfect.

When they were within sight of the pavilion on the ranch, Grace had Rachel turn away so she wouldn’t be able to see it. The sun was nearing the horizon, breathtaking in brilliant colors and the perfect background. The

ceremony would start in less than twenty minutes. As instructed, all the drapes and blinds in the large back windows of the house were drawn so she couldn't see out yet.

The bride's party waited inside the ranch house with Justin and Ethan. Eli waited out at the pavilion with the preacher. They all wore admiring smiles as Rachel entered the front door. Kelly helped her with her short train while Grace hurried to put Rachel's things in the Dodge Ram. Grace came in, her cell phone to her ear, talking to Charity, who was overseeing things from the other side of the backdoor.

"Rachel, do you need a few minutes?" Grace asked as Ethan escorted her mom out through the barely-open backdoor to walk her to her seat.

Rachel nodded and took steady, calming breaths for a couple of minutes.

Grace patted her shoulder and said, "You take your time and let me know when *you're* ready."

"How is my lipstick?" she asked, standing to look in a mirror. Grace had done a beautiful job on her hair.

Grace replied, "Your lipstick is perfect."

Ethan slipped back in the backdoor and nodded. Grace held her phone to her ear then looked at Rachel. "Ready to go, Rachel?"

Rachel turned to her and smiled. "I'm ready."

Carrie shot pictures as Grace lined them up in order. Teresa removed the wedding bands from their boxes, tied a ribbon through them, and then looped the ribbon over Little Michael's sweetly tousled black curls so that it hung around his neck. He grinned and stuck his hand in his little pocket and reached for his mommy's hand. He was being escorted by his mommy, who found a dress in the same shade of royal blue so she would fit in with the rest of the wedding party. Teresa would walk him down the aisle, to where he would stand with Ethan and Justin. She would have a seat in the front row so he could join her when he lost interest or when one of the men brought him to her, whichever came first. He was dressed in a black tuxedo that matched Justin and Ethan's and looked as cute as button.

Grace lined them up, positioning Rachel away from the doorway on her father's arm. Kelly went first, a bouquet of deep red roses in her hands as she stepped to the door on Justin's arm. Grace whispered into the phone, and Charity opened the door from the other side, glancing in at Rachel. Her eyes

popped wide open, and she gave her the big thumbs-up then disappeared just as quickly. Kelly looked back and winked then allowed Justin to lead her through the door.

Grace joined Ethan at the open door and smiled up at him. Rachel smiled, catching Ethan in the act of looking down Grace's cleavage admiringly. Grace rolled her eyes and hugged his arm, and then she turned and blew an air kiss to Rachel as he led her through the door. They moved closer to the door, and Rachel could hear guitars playing. The basic melody was familiar, but Rachel couldn't place it at the moment.

Teresa smiled down at Michael and nodded then led him through the door. Rachel turned to look at her father. He gazed into her eyes, fighting tears hard, and tried to smile at her but failed miserably. She pulled her hanky from inside her sleeve and blotted his tears and kissed his cheeks as Carrie shot one last image then slipped through the door.

"Your mom and I love you so much, Rachel. You've made us very proud of you. You've found a man of worth, and I hope he makes you happy in your lives together. This is your time, princess. Ready? He's waiting for you."

She tucked the handkerchief back into her sleeve, took the bouquet of vivid red and flaming orange roses he handed her, and took his arm. He led her to the door, and she turned to him.

"Do I look all right, Dad?"

"A little better than all right, princess. Can you see him up there? I'll guide you, honey. You just keep your eyes on him."

Rachel looked up the gentle, smooth slope to the pavilion, awash now in a thousand twinkling lights. She stood still, searching for him as her eyes adjusted to the dimmer lighting outside the door. She found him easily because she need only look for the tallest man there. She couldn't clearly make out his features yet, but she knew the moment he caught sight of her as she stepped out on her father's arm and moved forward into the dwindling light.

Eli's body language changed. He became motionless, focused on her. Other people noticed the change, and guests began turning to watch her. The soft guitar music continued, and she realized that Grace must have speakers set up between the pavilion and the house. Otherwise, there was not much chance she would have heard the music playing from the pavilion, but the

music was a perfect wedding processional. Charity adjusted her short train and backed away, smiling at her.

Her father patted her hand and led her forward. Eli stood with the preacher, flanked by the members of the wedding party. Little Michael was perched happily on Justin's arm. Each step brought her closer to Eli until she could clearly make out his features. His handsome face was illuminated by candlelight, and anyone could tell he was a man very deeply in love. It was in his eyes and his sensual smile and the way he held himself. Rachel's lip quivered when she clearly saw his gentle heart in his eyes and prayed for the waterworks to hold off a bit longer.

The area where the ceremony was to take place was surrounded on either side of the wedding party by two long rows of evergreen trees. The sunset blazed beyond where Eli and the preacher stood.

Processing slowly forward on her dad's arm, Rachel was thankful her tears and quivering lip were under control as they moved down the aisle between the rows of guests who now stood for her. The guitar music intensified, heralding her arrival in their midst.

Gazing into Eli's crystalline eyes, she remembered walking to him at the club the night she faced her fears of insurmountable jealousy and dealt with a whole horde of females as they flirted with him. Rachel remembered facing the women again and again, singly and in groups, proving to herself that she could overcome her jealousy and she did have what it took to hold him. Humbled that the love in his eyes was for her, she reflected it back in her own. Her heart throbbed with adoration and respect for him that he didn't try to play it cool for everyone there. He watched her as she moved toward him like she was the only woman in the world and she was his.

Taking a deep breath, Rachel felt her rigid body relax. Her stiff spine, tall and straight as always, loosened. Sauntering Rachel, the woman who moved *for* him, to please him, made her appearance. Whether it was walking away from him while he ogled her ass or walking toward him as he eyeballed her swaying hips and full breasts or dancing for him, Sauntering Rachel smiled at him with a seductive twinkle, and she watched his reaction. She could tell by the glitter in his eyes that he was *liking* what he saw as she closed the remaining distance between them.

Her father stopped with her at the end of the bridal runner as the preacher and Eli approached them. Rachel turned to her father, who was

once again fighting tears. She kissed his leathery cheek and looked back at her mom and smiled. Her father responded as he was directed in the rehearsal the night before. Then he backed away and sat in the empty chair beside her mother, dabbing his eyes with his handkerchief.

Rachel looked up at Eli and smiled happily. Love glowed in his gray eyes as he took in her appearance. He led her to the spot where they were to say their vows. As she moved beside him, he looked down at her and whispered, “You’re a vision, angel.”

Rachel softly replied, “You look so handsome.”

The preacher shared a short message with Rachel and Eli and the congregation. He detailed a little of their history for those who did not know their story and spoke about marriage vows being sacred. He asked for the rings.

Justin nodded to Michael and set him on his little feet. He stopped in front of Eli and looked up, and up, and up, and up, until his little head was craning far back. The congregation chuckled. Michael slipped the ribbon from around his neck and handed it to Eli, who squatted down and accepted the rings then held out his hand. Michael slapped his palm with a little cracking sound and returned to Justin, who picked him up again so he could see what was going to happen.

The preacher prayed for them and spoke about the rings and their significance. “Rachel and Eli both wanted to have something special inscribed inside the other’s wedding band. They kept the inscriptions a secret from each other until now. They wanted to give each other a part of themselves they could carry inside their wedding band and in their hearts. They communicated the inscriptions to me separately and told me how the words spoke volumes to their hearts even though they were few. After all, how much can you fit inside a wedding band?

“It is my earnest prayer that they keep those words in their hearts and that we would do the same. We should care for each other in such a way that we can say we live with *no regrets*. This is a philosophy they have both developed in their love for each other and in the life they look forward to living. I pray it continues on and believe that it will because they both chose the exact same inscription for each other without knowing it.”

Rachel looked up at Eli and laughed with him, not surprised at all. Eli took her hand in his.

The pastor laughed with the congregation and held up his hands, "Whoa, Eli. Can't kiss her yet. I'll get on with it, though."

Rachel exchanged rings with Eli and thought she held it together pretty well as she repeated her vows and listened to him say his. When he was given the go-ahead, Eli gathered her bodily in his arms and kissed the daylight out of her amidst cat calls, whistles, and clapping. Soon, they were surrounded by guests hugging Rachel and patting Eli on the back.

As their guests congregated around them, the rows of chairs were removed and dispersed around the tables. The guests were invited to take a seat so that they could be served while the bride and groom and the wedding party took pictures briefly.

Rachel had a chance to look around and notice all the hard work the girls had put into the decorations. The wind blew softly through the fir trees that surrounded their group, filling the air with their woodsy fragrance. The tables were decorated with candles, which gave the outdoor setting an intimate feeling. Rachel noticed that strands of twinkling white lights which had been strung from the rafters were being illuminated little by little.

Each round table was spread with a royal blue tablecloth. In the center of each table was a tall ivory pillar candle within a hurricane globe so they wouldn't blow out at the first breeze that blew past. Each globe was centered inside an evergreen wreath, votive candles arranged randomly around the wreaths.

She didn't know how she had missed it, but brilliant red poinsettias were grouped at the entrance to the pavilion. The bridal party's table was a long rectangle, spread with a white tablecloth and holding more tall pillars under hurricane globes. Evergreen boughs lined the outside edge of the table. Plates were prepared by the caterer and served at the bridal party's table, and as they ate, all the guests were served.

Rachel noticed Ben and Quentin, Mike and Rogelio, and several others from the bar and leaned forward to Ethan. When she caught his eye, she said, "Who's at the bar?"

Ethan grinned and replied, "Nobody. They are all *here*. The employees *and* the customers. Ben and I figured with so many invited and planning to attend that we could close the club for the evening. We left a sign saying we were sorry that the club was closed for a family wedding."

Her lips trembled as she pressed them together for a second before saying, “Thank you, Ethan. That was sweet of you.”

“You’re welcome, Rachel. You’re special to us, remember?”

She nodded, a little choked up as he patted her hand. She took a deep breath and relaxed, slid her chair closer to Eli’s, then said, “Enough of this formal stuff, already.”

Rising from her chair, Rachel sat in Eli’s lap amidst snickers and chuckles from the guests and wedding party, and they fed each other from their plates. Things loosened up a little then.

After they ate, Rachel and Eli were kept occupied for a while being introduced to family members, cousins, aunt, and uncles.

Eli had been excited to find out that his grandparents on his father’s side were in attendance. Rachel was thrilled when Eli introduced them to her and hoped for an opportunity to hear some of the stories these two could tell about Eli.

The DJ from the club had his equipment set up on the other side of the pavilion. The Christmas trees were moved back to line the perimeter and more Christmas lights were turned on, adding more sparkle to the pavilion of lights. Carrie and Raquel shot pictures as Rachel and Eli cut the cake.

Rachel lifted his bite of cake to his lips and grinned devilishly as she slid her fingers into his mouth, her heart flip-flopping when he licked and sucked the icing from her fingers.

The crowd whistled and clapped for Rachel to take a bite. She opened her mouth when he swiped cake and icing with his index finger from the plate and slid it between her lips. Rachel caught his hand, their rings twinkling in the lights, and sucked his finger completely clean. She ignored the outrageous catcalls, whistles, and applause as she flicked the tip of his finger with her tongue before releasing him. At the guests’ urging, they shared a kiss at the cake table. Camera flashes went off all around them like a short-lived strobe. Grace turned the cakes over to the caterer to cut and deliver to the guests.

“Mrs. Wolf, I do believe it’s time for our dance,” Eli said. A thrill rushed through her at his softly spoken words.

The crowd moved to the tables as the DJ announced the first dance and introduced them as Mr. and Mrs. Eli Wolf to applause from the guests. Grace had asked her to put together a list of any songs she wanted played at

the reception and asked Eli for a similar list. Grace had told Rachel that Eli picked the instrumental music for the processional and had asked that the actual song be played for their first dance.

She recognized the instrumental guitar music from her processional when the song began again, and the vocals jogged her memory. It was “Just Look at You” by Jimmy Wayne. Eli gently pulled her into a close embrace, and all she could see was his handsome face. Her hand rested on his chest as they moved to the music like they had been dancing together all their lives. He looked so handsome in his black tuxedo, vest, and black tie. She slid her hand up to cup his tanned cheek and he leaned down to kiss her tenderly.

“My husband,” she murmured softly.

“My wife,” he replied, kissing her deeper this time.

Chapter Fifty-two

They came up for air when Eli felt a tap on his shoulder. He drew back from kissing Rachel to find his father-in-law standing behind him, waiting for his dance with his daughter. Heartland's "I Loved Her First" was already playing, and he apologetically released Rachel into her father's arms and went to Renata and asked her to dance with him, which she did happily.

"Welcome to our family, Eli." Rachel's mom glided expertly with him over the dance floor.

Smiling, he said, "Thank you, Renata. Now I know where Rachel gets her natural grace and dancing skills from."

Blushing, his mother-in-law thanked him. "You are such a sweet talker, Eli. You make Rachel very happy. We're glad she found such a good man. Peter has always thought highly of you, and I have, too. I'll never forget the first time I met you. Do you remember?"

"The hospital." He nodded thoughtfully. He wondered what she must have thought of him. A train wreck.

"Yes. I remember you called us regularly while we were on the road coming home, giving us regular updates about her condition. You met us at the main entrance of the hospital and took us to her instead of waiting for us to come find you. And you never, ever left her side while her condition was so serious. Every mother wants a man for her daughter that loves that deep and knows how to show respect. The love you felt for her was in your exhausted eyes. I was ready to claim you as a son-in-law then."

He felt his cheeks warm a little at her words. "I had already ordered her ring by that time, hoping she would say yes to me when the time was right."

"And here we are," she said as he spun her, the song coming to an end.

Renata hugged him, and he kissed her cheek and walked her to her husband, who was holding a weeping Rachel. Peter looked up at him apologetically as he returned her to Eli. For now, nobody else had noticed,

and he hoped to keep it that way. He gathered her to him and kept dancing, knowing stopping would draw every eye to them. Peter and Renata nodded approvingly as he held her and spoke softly.

“What is it, angel?”

“It’s Daddy. You won’t believe it. I’m not sure I do. He told me he saved money all these years for my wedding, which I already knew, but he didn’t tell me he invested it. It’s been a *really good* investment. What Grace spent on the wedding and reception didn’t even scratch the surface on the little bit he pulled out to pay for all this. There’s enough to *buy* our ranch, Eli. Or we can put it all in savings and investments and let it keep growing. Eli, *I had no idea*. He said it was just a lucky break that paid off for the family. He said that was why he taught me to always save my money and handle it wisely, so I’d be able to handle this money after I got married.”

“There’s enough to pay for the house?”

She whispered the amount, “Two hundred thousand dollars.”

Holy cow.

“I wasn’t sure what to say for a minute.”

“How do you feel about your dad buying your house for you? Be honest, angel.”

“He raised me to take care of myself, and I’ve trusted you to put a roof over my head, Eli.”

“I can pay for the house you live in, angel. Why don’t we wait and talk about it while we’re gone and get your dad’s advice later. It sounds like he has some experience with investments and money management. I suppose it’s just the pride thing for me.”

“Yeah, me, too, but I understand what you’re saying. We’ll figure it all out. It sure does give us some options, though,” she said, her beautiful face radiant despite her tears.

“True. I’m so glad those were happy tears you were crying.”

“I’ll say.” She dabbed gently beneath her eyes with her hanky. “Now, I want to celebrate with you. You know how much I love you, right?”

“Yes, I do, Mrs. Wolf.”

“That sounds wonderful.” She sighed shakily. “Say it again,” she said with a watery giggle.

“Mrs. Wolf, Mrs. Wolf, Mrs. Wolf. My wife, my woman.”

“My fantasy come true.” She blushed as he slid his hand down her back to just barely above the upper swell of her ass.

“Mine,” he growled.

“Mine,” she growled softly back.

* * * *

They were joined by others on the dance floor as Tim McGraw and Faith Hill sang “It’s Your Love.” Rachel was as light as a feather and positively euphoric when Eli pulled her to the center of the dance floor as the song ended. She thought he wanted to dance with her again but noticed Grace and Ethan putting two chairs in the middle where all could see. The guests speculated quietly, wondering what was going to happen.

“Eli, we already talked about this,” she said, making a giggling assumption. “No *garter groping*!”

He turned to her and chuckled. “Oh, there *will be* garter groping, but only when we’re alone tonight. Then I plan on groping *all* the interesting articles of clothing you have on under this pretty dress, and not just your garters, Mrs. Wolf. This has nothing to do with me sliding my hand up your leg, though I *do like* the way you think.” He laughed. “I have a little surprise for you, angel.”

“A surprise?” she asked, conscious of the guests pulling their chairs to the edge of the dance floor.

He seated her in one of the chairs and handed her the glass of wine Grace brought to him, placing his glass by his chair. Grace brought another chair, and the DJ turned down the music. Rachel turned and looked behind her when she heard movement. It was Ethan approaching with two guitars. She turned and looked at Eli and smiled up at him as he winked at her. She got comfortable in her chair and took a sip of her wine. Ethan handed Eli his guitar, and they both took a seat before her, Eli directly in front of her and Ethan at his side. They checked tune quickly, and Grace spoke from the DJ’s table.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you may or may not know it, but we have some real musical talent in our midst. Eli wanted to do something special for Rachel tonight, and he and Ethan have been working on this for weeks. We hope you enjoy it.”

They began to play their guitars in a slow, sweet rhythm that she recognized instantly. “She’s Got a Way With Me” by Billy Currington. They must have been practicing on the sly, very faithfully because they were smooth and in synchronization with each other.

She had no idea he could sing. *None.*

*It’s a gentle touch, but more than enough.
She can stop this ol’ world from spinning too much.
It’s a natural thing, and I do believe
I’ve found my reason to be.*

* * * *

Eli sang the chorus, gazing into her expressive, brimming blue eyes. The words flowed from the depths of his heart. Ethan’s background vocals were dead-on and made the song even better. He was so glad he’d discovered that Ethan had some serious skills. It was obvious Rachel loved this.

*I’m not the same man, since she’s been around.
There’s more to this life, I’ve suddenly found.
I look at myself now so differently.
It’s her love that brings me peace.*

* * * *

Rachel felt tears slide down her cheeks as she listened. From the first note to the last, this was not a nervous, uncomfortably performed declaration of love. This was a well-rehearsed, polished, and professional performance. They played together like they had for years, and they could *both* sing. Ethan provided back-up vocals for Eli as he sang the song to her. Eli’s voice was like a rich, luxurious caress, making love to her senses. When they were done, the guests clapped and cheered wildly for them.

Eli smiled at her, and so did Ethan as he rose from his chair and took Eli’s guitar from him. Eli held out his hand to Rachel as Ethan, and Justin

returned with filled wine glasses. Both men raised their glasses and toasted Eli and Rachel then Grace and Kelly joined them and offered toasts as well.

Rachel was still flabbergasted but took a minute to profusely thank Grace and Kelly for their hard work, grabbing Charity and thanking her, too. The girls giggled when Eli picked her up and bodily carried her back to the dance floor in mid-sentence.

She looked up at him and said, “Eli, I had *no* idea you could sing like that.”

“There have been so many times when I’ve wanted to sing to you, especially as you fell asleep. Both Ethan and I were given classical guitar lessons when we were growing up. One night at the bar, we were talking and we discovered that we both could play and sing.”

“Your voice,” she murmured happily, “your voice *makes love* to my ears.”

“Wow! That good, huh?”

“I want to throw myself at you shamelessly right now.”

“Well, it’s interesting that you mention that because Grace is about to dim the lights for Ethan so they can dance, and I’ve requested two or three songs for just...that...reason, *if* you’re feelin’ me?” He growled quietly and wrapped his arms around her waist.

Pressing her body to his, Rachel felt the growing hardness at his groin. “Oh, I’m feelin’ you all right.” The lights dimmed, and she smiled up at him softly as the first bars of “Let’s Make Love” by Faith Hill and Tim McGraw began to play, and a soft sigh left her lips.

Grace had already joined Ethan on the dance floor, speaking softly to him. They began to dance, and he tilted his head down and pressed his lips to her ear. Her eyes shut in bliss, and she turned her face into his shoulder.

Rachel smiled up at Eli. He kissed her, and she tilted her head into his shoulder, his long, coal-black hair shielding her face from view as he whispered in her ear. And his voice really *did* make love to her.

* * * *

After the dance, Eli returned with Rachel to their table. He drew her into his lap and gave her a chance to collect herself and drink some water. She told him she was thankful for the dimmer lights that disguised her spreading

blush. Eli playfully fed her bites of cake, and it was a sweet, quiet moment between them before the others began coming up to visit. By the time she recovered, a blissful Grace and smiling Ethan had joined the group. Corina and Brice came and congratulated them, and so did Ace and Kathleen. Rosemary twirled by with Evan and Wes, dancing with both of them at the same time. Somehow, that girl managed to keep both their hands full. Rachel pointed out Eli's dad dancing with Jane Jensen, who was looking pretty in a red satin dress.

Grace returned to the table after dancing with Jack and caught Rachel's eye. She enthusiastically signaled that the girls wanted to dance. Rachel nodded, and Eli grinned, helping her up from his lap. She and the other girls made their way to the dance floor as "If I Die Young" by The Band Perry ended.

"Save a Horse, Ride a Cowboy" started playing over the loudspeakers, and the girls started rocking. Eli stood next to Jack, Adam, and Ethan and groaned, watching the way the gown moved sinuously with her body, her little silver sandals flashing in the muted light as she danced.

Eli smiled over at Jack when he heard him groan, watching Grace grind with them. At the center of the group, Rachel gradually moved closer and closer across the dance floor until she was right in front of Eli. Her eyes flashed in the twinkling lights as she trailed a finger down his chest and abdomen then freaking stuck it in her mouth and *sucked on it!*

Damn! That song ended, but not the torture, as the DJ played "Honky Tonk Badonkadonk" by Trace Adkins next.

* * * *

Ethan stood with Jack and Adam, conversing quietly as he watched the woman he loved dance. Grace exuded happiness and confidence, but he remembered how shyly she had stepped into their lives, not realizing she was about to win the hearts and devotion of not one, but three men. Now, she moved sensuously and gracefully, with joyful freedom, looking beautiful in her blue dress, supremely confident of their love as she gazed at them watching her from the edge of the dance floor.

Ethan spoke up. "Her other gift came today."

"Oh, yeah?" Adam asked with a crooked smile. "She find it?"

“No, I was there when UPS brought it. It’s hidden in your closet, Jack. I need to attach an anchor to a beam in her bedroom ceiling to support it.”

“Grace will wonder what it’s for. She’ll talk the surprise right out of us,” Jack warned. They all knew full well her persuasive abilities.

“We’ll put it in the day before Christmas while she’s away from the house. She’ll be so busy with Christmas festivities and stuff that she won’t even notice it in the ceiling. I’d rather do that because you know the moment she opens it, she’s going to want to try it out.”

“I like that plan,” Adam said then groaned as she rolled her hips seductively to the music.

Ethan smiled and blew her a kiss and put his hand on his heart when she smiled at him. “She loves making love on that old porch glider so much. Wait till she gets a load of her love swing,” he murmured, imagining her in it right then. The men smiled and agreed, watching her indulgently as the song came to an end and she moved gracefully across the dance floor to them.

Jack kissed her as she reached for him first. “Darlin’, I’d say the wedding is a huge success. Are you tired?”

“Yes, but also very happy. It all turned out perfect, and Rachel was a gem through the whole process. Eli, too,” she added as she hugged Ethan. “It was a great idea to suggest the photo shoot, honey. She loved the pictures.”

“Well, you did, Gracie, so we figured it was worth a shot. I hear hers were pretty well received also.”

She grinned. “Yeah, you know what that’s like.” To which they all nodded, remembering her unveiling their boudoir portraits to them before their wedding.

Smiling playfully, Grace said, “You have to take opportunities like that when they come your way, right?”

Adam grinned and nuzzled her neck as she hugged him. “Seize the day, baby?”

“That’s my motto!” As her men crowded a little closer to her on the dim edge of the dance floor, she caught Adam looking straight down her cleavage. “Is that what you’re doin’ right now?”

He growled. “Yes, because I’d regret it if I didn’t take the opportunity. You’re luscious, baby.”

“You all say the sweetest things. What were you talking about while I was dancing?”

“Your Christmas surprise,” Ethan replied, and eyed her insatiably.

“Oooh! Is it that good? You look at me like you want to eat me!” She giggled softly as they came close even closer.

Ethan growled softly. “That’s only for starters. Then we might play a little hide and seek, maybe a little Twister.”

Grace pressed her lips together and blushed prettily.

“But eventually we’ll be done playin’ games,” Jack murmured softly so only they could hear.

“Then we’ll make love to you,” Ethan murmured, kissing her warm cheek.

Adam lifted her palm and kissed it and said, “Until you lose track of who is touching you where.”

Jack kissed the knuckles of her other hand.

“Oh, mama.”

* * * *

Rachel laughed as she collapsed into Eli’s strong arms when the song ended.

“How long before we can leave?” he asked with a deep, sexy growl. She loved when he growled like that. It was a sexy, primal sound that her body always responded to with an equally primal reaction.

His big, strong arms wrapped around her waist and pulled her to him tightly. That move squeezed her breasts up so that they nearly overflowed her gown. He smiled crookedly before glancing around to see if anyone watched. Quickly, he pressed a kiss to the top of each breast then released her. Rachel had to hold on to him breathlessly for a few seconds. Her skin tingled where his warm lips had touched her.

She looked up at him flirtatiously. “A few more dances?”

“With you *in* my arms, yes. You girls were torturing us poor guys standing here watching you.” The soft smile on his face told her he hadn’t suffered too badly, but the hard cock pressed against her belly hinted at his impatience.

Looking all business with a happy gleam in her eye, Grace came to Rachel and said, "Time for the bouquet toss!"

All the single women in the room crowded the front and jockeyed for position as Rachel looked over her shoulder, giggling at them and making them wait. She tossed it high in the air. Rosemary jumped a split second after Erin, who was taller. Rosemary's well-timed move intercepted the bouquet in the crucial moment. She came down the winner and held up the prize in triumph. Jack and Ace nudged Wes and Evan in the ribs when they saw who had won it. Wes and Evan grinned at her when she returned to their sides with it in her hands.

"Eli wants to know when we're leaving," Rachel said as Grace rejoined her after the bouquet toss.

"I was coming to see if you want me to help you change here or if you want to get to the bed and breakfast and let Eli undress you."

"I'd rather let him since what's underneath is a surprise."

"It's no fun if he doesn't get to unwrap the gift first," Grace quipped. "Your luggage, including your makeup case, is in the truck, which is securely locked. Some of the kids *may* have decorated the outside of the truck, but everything inside is safe."

Rachel scoffed good-naturedly. "Come on, Grace, I saw you hand Charity's kids the bag with crepe paper streamers in it."

Grace hid a gleeful snort behind her hand. "Oh, well! A little bit of decorations on the truck won't hurt. People love that stuff! I warned them they could not use shoe polish, though."

Rachel hugged Grace happily as Kelly joined them. "This was the happiest night of my life. You both made it beautiful and perfect. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts."

Eli joined them as Grace and Kelly hugged her.

Kelly took Rachel's hands. "Rachel, thank you for making my *brother's* dreams come true." She sniffled and started to cry. Eli laughed and hugged Kelly, lifting her off her feet. "You're the best big brother in the whole world!" she mumbled from inside his big embrace.

"Thanks, sis."

Grace looked at Rachel and said, "I'm so glad you gave him a chance, Rachel. Men of worth are so hard to find. You've married a good one." She

turned to Eli and poked him gently in the chest with her fingertip. “And you, you big *galoot*. Take good care of my dear friend.”

“I promise, beautiful,” Eli said and leaned down to hug her. “Thanks for being such a good friend to us.”

Eli hugged his dad and grandparents, and Rachel hugged her mom and dad, thanking them again. The wedding guests lined up and tossed birdseed over them as they ran from the pavilion together. Halfway down the paved walk, Eli stopped and scooped her up in his arms. As the guests cheered, he ran to the truck with her.

Chapter Fifty-three

Firelight flickered around them, the only light in the bedroom as Eli stood behind Rachel and unzipped the wedding dress. Her sweet, womanly fragrance filled his nostrils, and his hardening cock responded with a yearning twitch. The dress fell from her in a silken whisper to the thick rug between the bed and the fireplace. He placed a warm kiss on her shoulder and helped her step from the dress. She turned, and he took a deep breath, sighing appreciatively.

“Well, this looks familiar.”

Stepping back, Eli took a moment to enjoy the sight of her. Rachel’s hair was brushed out in soft waves, and she was laced into the white silk corset from her portrait. He could see the slightest hint of her rose-colored nipples through the patterned lace of the cups. She wore a white silk G-string, the garters, sheer white stockings, her pretty silver heels, and nothing else. She gave him a graceful turn then presented her back to him, and he undid the bow at the back.

“Carrie shot a series of pictures for you back at Grace’s house while I got dressed. She thought you might like that.” He heard the quiver of excitement in her voice.

“I would.” The corset had hook and eye fasteners on the side, but what was the fun in that? He continued working the laces through his fingers until the corset fell away. She turned to him, slid his tuxedo jacket off his shoulders, and unbuttoned his shirt while he removed his tie and vest. They took their time and didn’t rush the moment.

Eli gazed down at her, adoring her, as everything fell to the floor around them. He removed his shoes and socks, stopping her when she would have removed the rest of her clothing. She reached to help him with the button of his pants, and he could hear her soft, uneven breathing.

Finally freed of her clothing, she rested her warm, silken body against his. She sighed as he slid his hand down her back to the waist of her G-string. He led her to the large thick rug in front of the screened fireplace and got down on his knees. He placed her hands on his shoulders so she wouldn't lose her balance and slipped her high-heeled sandals from her slender, graceful feet. He lifted each foot to his knee and slowly slid the sheer white stockings from her long legs, one at a time.

He drew her down to her knees in front of him and gently grasped her warm hips with his hands, kissing her until she clung to him breathlessly. Her hands trembled, and her lips quivered a little as he lapped at her bottom lip with the tip of his tongue. Desire sang in his blood, and his impatient cock twitched persistently at being ignored. He lowered her to the rug slowly and reclined beside her. With one hand, he hooked the waist band of the G-string from her hips and slid it quickly down her legs until she was free of it.

Eli slowly stroked her collarbone and leaned down to suckle a nipple. His hand continued down her trembling torso to a softly rounded hip then over her mound. Her breath caught in her throat as his fingers strayed into her warm, wet lips, glistening with the silken evidence of how aroused she was by his attention.

"Oh, angel," he groaned over her nipple, licking it softly. "So wet already."

Rachel moaned breathlessly as his fingers stroked her clit, gently sliding through her slick honey. She arched and moved with his hands. The muscles in her cunt clenched around his finger when he slipped it inside and stroked her pussy, sliding through all her juices. He gently rubbed her clit with his thumb and added another finger to the first, stroking into her silky, delicate flesh.

Rachel's hand stroked his shoulder. "Oh, Eli." She threw her head back, and her back arched. "Baby, you're so good to me."

She moved on his finger and began to pant and cry out. He began a gentle pumping motion and growled when her muscles tightened on his fingers. She came with a low, moaning sob. Stroking her until she finished, he kissed her gently and nuzzled her lips.

"I adore you, angel," he whispered as she reached for him.

Kneeling between her legs, Eli hooked one of her thighs over his forearm, lifting her hips slightly. He growled low when her silky, wet heat kissed his cock as he positioned the head at her opening.

She looked up at him, love radiating from her eyes. “Make love to me, Eli,” she murmured softly when he hesitated for a few seconds.

He wanted to enjoy and remember the moment when he entered his wife for the first time. He smiled at her as his body vibrated with desire, and her breath caught with a deep, impassioned moan as he quite literally slid home.

Epilogue

June, six months later...

"I can't believe I'm really going to do this." Rachel said to herself as she looked in the mirror. At Cami's direction, she applied another layer of liquid eyeliner to her eyelids. Charlotta helped Rachel with her false eyelashes and put the sky-high acrylic shoes by the stool.

"Oh, don't worry. You're going to be phenomenal. I can't wait to see you up there," Charlotta told her.

"You have time to run through your routine once if you hurry." Cami buckled the silver strap on the clear platforms. The shoes put any other pair of fuck-me shoes she owned to utter shame. Just as Cami and Charlotta had taught her, Rachel rose from the stool gracefully, tilting out her ass as she straightened her legs in a classic stripper turn. She adjusted the waistband on the skimpy black and silver cheeky shorts, which revealed most of her ass to great advantage. She checked and adjusted her cleavage in the mirror. Charlotta teased and sprayed Rachel's hair one last time, making it big and wild. She needed to look just different enough from her everyday self for this to work but enough like herself to catch his eye.

"Your music is out at the DJ booth, cued up and ready to go," Cami said, trotting back in the room in her white, ruffled bikini thong and white ruffled bra. Her feet were shod in her white platform school girl style pumps.

"You don't think the Trace Adkins song would have been a better choice? I could do either one."

The girls shook their heads, and Cami said, "You need music that is totally different from what you usually listen to when you're together. It needs to be just different enough that when he hears it, it won't automatically bring you to mind."

Rachel grinned. “And you’re sure neither of you danced for him to these songs?”

“I’ve never danced to either one of those songs, but I may use your routines after you’re done, if you don’t mind,” Charlotta said, grinning.

“Well, you both taught me and helped develop the routines, so go for it. Just not for *him*, okay?”

Cami giggled. “No problem. I used to dance to ‘Supermassive Black Hole,’ but it’s been a while, and I’ve never danced to ‘Bad Things.’ That routine is my favorite.”

“It’s the vampire thing,” Charlotta snickered. “Maybe he’ll *bite* you tonight.”

Rachel laughed and checked her ass in the mirror one last time, running her hand over a dimple that was visible.

“Do I have enough body glitter on?” Rachel asked.

“You look perfect,” Charlotta reassured her. “Once you get under the purple neon lights, all imperfections disappear. Your ass looks great. You’re going to want to warm up a little.”

“Yeah, how long do I have?”

“Twenty minutes, give or take. The appointment isn’t scheduled until two o’clock, and it’s one thirty now. Jake is meeting him at the door since the front is locked. It’s going to be *perfect*.”

Rachel was a little nervous, but the girls’ enthusiasm helped to build her confidence. She ran through part of her routine under the lights. Her muscles felt warm and relaxed when Charlotta came from the front and waved at her and Cami to get behind the curtain, where they listened and waited.

* * * *

Eli checked his appointment planner and made a quick call while he sat in his truck. He’d arrived early for his two o’clock appointment. When five minutes until two rolled around, he got out of his truck and strode across the parking lot to the door and was met by one of the managers.

Charlotta had given his name to the owner. They were having some problems with their AV system, and the manager had called Eli. Eli had told him it sounded like a signal distribution problem and agreed to come and check it out the following day.

"Thanks for coming, Eli," Jake said, shaking his hand. "Let me show you where everything is. I have a lot of paperwork that I'm trying to wade through right now, so if you need me, I'll be in my office. Charlotta is here working on routines with a couple of the other dancers. If you need me, she can direct you to my office." Jake showed him the problem then exited through a heavy wooden door beside the bar.

"Hi, Eli," Charlotta said as she walked up, dressed in short shorts and a workout top.

He turned, smiled at her, and gave her a friendly hug, saying, "It's good to see you."

"You, too. I'm helping two other dancers refine some routines and practice some new moves. Will it bother you if we have the music up? We don't want to be in your way."

"Oh, no. I'm checking the monitors right now. You won't be bothering me at all. Rachel tells me she has enjoyed taking lessons with you both."

"I'm glad to hear that," Charlotta said in her melodic, sweet-as-honey voice. "She's an excellent student. Some things come naturally to people, and Rachel is a natural at dance."

"I'll say," Eli said.

She chuckled. "I'm glad you've enjoyed the fruits of her labor."

"Yep." He carefully pulled the monitor from its built-in cabinet.

"Well, I'll get out of your hair. Good luck finding whatever the problem is."

"Kay," he said as she walked away. Hmm, that was odd. When he pulled the monitor back, he expected to see a mess behind the TV, but the cables were all fitted properly, the wiring neat and orderly, and all labeled properly. He sighed, thinking he'd have to trace the problem back to the source.

As he double-checked the wiring and connections behind the monitor, music began to pound through the loudspeakers in the heavy bass beat that dancers preferred. He glanced up briefly as Cami and another dancer took the stage, running through their routine. Jake must have hired a new dancer, and Cami was developing a routine to do with her. They were moving simultaneously to Muse's "Supermassive Black Hole."

He went back to work but felt his eyes drawn again. And again. The other stripper was *something else*. He could be a happily married man and

still appreciate that fact. She had long, curly, dark hair, and under the purple lights, he couldn't be sure if it was black or brown. Her features were in shadow. She was built perfectly, with soft, smoothly toned feminine curves. She and Cami went through the basic moves of their dance on the stage, and then she turned and leapt for the pole, timed perfectly with Cami. She spun and worked her way up the pole, using her ankle and the back of her calf for leverage.

Guiltily, he realized his full attention was on the dancer and not his job. Even worse, his cock responded. He turned away, trying to ignore her. Now he understood why Rachel had arranged for Charity to find two strippers at his bachelor party who looked *nothing* like her. It made sense, and it also explained why he was responding to this one. She reminded him of Rachel.

To check the theory, he glanced up again over the back of the monitor, and sure enough, she *really did* remind him of Rachel. His cock wholeheartedly agreed, wanting Rachel, preferably *right now*. He realized he was still watching when she looked up from her squatting position at the base of the pole and gracefully rose, swinging her delectable ass way out. Then she grinned at him.

He stood up and banged his head on the cabinet. *No*. He looked away, feeling guilty when a white-hot streak of pure lust shot right through him. The dancer was *flirting* with him, and he was responding. He needed to get done and get the *fuck* out of there.

He cursed at himself for taking this job.

Sure, Jake, I can fix your problem. No, Charlotta, you won't distract me a bit. No, Eli, you're not some horny, over-sexed fucking Neanderthal—

He glanced up as she climbed the pole, in sync with Cami, and somehow held herself there with no hands, arched out over the stage, spinning. Reaching for the pole, she flipped herself then spread her long legs above her head into a perfect ballet-like split before twining them around the pole. She slid back down it fast, way too fast for his comfort. Stopping smoothly at the last second, with just her fingertips on the stage floor, she rotated onto the stage on her back. She rolled and rose on her skyscraper shoes, her knees parted as wide as they would go, and ground her way into a standing—

What. The. Fuck?

His heart lurched, and his pulse pounded in his ears. He *knew* that grind. The dancer flicked her hair and looked over her shoulder, directly at him. Smiling again, she twisted around the pole, lifted her feet off the stage, and spun with her hair sailing around her. Releasing the pole, she danced on the stage, skimming her hands down her satiny thighs. His cock reared up when she caressed her mostly-bare, curvaceous ass then trailed the backs of her fingers over her ribs and the sides of her full, round breasts, up her throat, and into her hair.

He *knew* that move, too.

The beautiful dancer shimmied down to a squat and crooked her finger at him as she rose gracefully, rolling her luscious hips. The song ended, and another song began. Cami left the stage as the dancer transitioned smoothly into Jace Everett's "Bad Things." He pushed the TV monitor back into the cabinet because there was nothing wrong with their system. He knew why he was here.

His cock tingled in gratitude when he slowly made his way out from behind the bar, moved toward the stage, and took a seat, smiling territorially at his dancer. She never spoke or broke character as she turned and grasped the pole again, dancing with it as she swung her ass out, stepping gracefully in the heels that were higher than any he'd ever seen on her before. They made her legs look impossibly long.

Leaping to the pole, she spun as she climbed higher then somehow flipped upside down and executed another perfect split, and the lines of her long, supple thighs and calves made his mouth water and his cock twitch. In a move that made his heart lurch fearfully, she released her grip on the pole and locked her calf around it before she could plummet to the stage.

She slowly slid down and lowered her body gracefully to the stage, her ankles still twined around the pole. She released the pole, stretched out, and came up on her hands and knees. The sweetly arching curve of her back inspired vibrations in his cock that had him gritting his teeth to control his response, as did the sinuous grinding of her hips as she whipped her hair back with her hand. Sitting upright, she ground her hips and pumped up and down in an erotic move that he could've sworn he felt on his cock. Repeating the movement, she caressed her abdomen and slid her hands over her breasts.

She placed the sole of her shoe on the stage and rose on one knee then leaned forward on that foot and smoothly placed the other shoe on the stage and rose in a slow, graceful rolling movement, swinging her ass out again. Swinging her beautiful ass out like that was akin to waving a red flag in front of a bull. She danced around the pole then spun around it, climbing again. She rotated upside down and split her legs wide open as she did, one hand above her on the pole and one below, lowering her in the spin until she came to a stop spread wide directly in front of him.

He had no idea she was so flexible.

She came to her knees and executed a roll on her hands and knees that positioned her at the edge of the stage, her ass directly in front of him. She gave him a teasing little shake, which had him grinning and chuckling at the sudden urge he had to lean forward and take a little bite. Rising again gracefully, she rolled her hips, one foot first and then the other. She took the pole in hand and leapt to it, spinning with one calf around it, the other bent up to her ass, and threw her hair around. Spinning, coming back to the stage, she swung her legs out, landing flawlessly.

She continued dancing around the pole, rolling and grinding her hips, swinging her ass out, always in slow, unhurried erotic movements. She stretched out her hips to him and swung her ass around and back again as the music began to fade. She stood upright and released the pole and sauntered gracefully in the skyscraper heels until she stood directly above him in a wide, sexy, confident stance.

Slowly, she squatted and lowered one hand to the stage and then the other. She panted lightly, and her body was covered in a fine sheen of body glitter and sweat. The purple lights illuminated the upper swells of her succulent, full breasts, and she was close enough to him that he could detect her sweet womanly scent, tinged with her arousal.

He'd already glanced around and knew they were alone in the main room of the club. Jake probably had surveillance cameras and monitors in his office so he could keep an eye on his business, which was wise. It was for that reason Eli was relieved that she'd not removed her top as part of her dance. To Jake, they were probably just more breasts, one pair out of twenty or thirty he saw on a nightly basis. To Eli, they were the most perfect twin beauties in the world and not for others eyes, only *his*. He was glad she felt the same way.

“Sir, if you enjoyed my dance you’re permitted to tip me.” She smiled playfully at him and hooked her finger in the elastic waistband of her skimpy little shorts as if she thought he might actually slip a bill in there, then added, “But why stop at the tip, when I’d really prefer the whole thing?”

There was no stopping the deep rumble that rose from his chest as he stood. He couldn’t take her up on the offer here, so he kept the caveman in check. Given his height, he was at eye level with her on the stage. He placed his warm hands on hers and kissed her, gently at first, but his hunger for her deepened quickly.

When he released her lips, she spoke softly. “Did you like how I danced for you?”

“You are one incredible woman, Rachel Wolf.”

She gave him a sexy, confident grin. “Why, thank you.”

“Why here?”

“It was Cami and Charlotta’s idea. They thought you deserved the full strip club experience, and I’ve been fantasizing about doing this since we first started. I had to do it when no one was around, so they thought of an excuse to get you here. Sorry you had to go through the trouble of messing with the monitors. If I could perform on a real strip club stage, privately for you, then I had to take that opportunity, right?”

“Of course. I loved it.

“No regrets?” she asked as she reached for him.

“No regrets, angel.” He lifted her gently from the stage and set her on her feet. He grinned as he looked at her. Rachel was nearly eye level with him in those heels. She slid her hands over his chest and wrapped her arms around his neck.

“I’m probably getting body glitter all over you.”

“Mmm, yes, angel. Get it *all over me*.”

He slid his hands over her ribs and down her waist as he kissed her deeply. She moaned when he squeezed her ass cheeks.

“You’re bringing the shoes home, right?”

A seductive smile spread across her lips. “Oh, yeah, these are mine.”

He growled deeply in approval.

THE END

www.heatherrainier.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Heather Rainier lives and writes in South Central Texas. Her stories offer up the content of her fantasies, with autobiographical humor, triumph and tragedy mixed in.

Heather believes that life doesn't always present love to us in neat little sanitized packages. Sometimes we have to seize the day, live life with no regrets, forget the past, never give up, learn to trust, and dare to live, even in outrageous circumstances.

When not happily typing at her keyboard, Heather is usually busy corralling her kids, volunteering at local schools, or loving on her smokin' hot husband, who thankfully loves to cook.

Also by Heather Rainier

Divine Creek Ranch 1: *Divine Grace*

Divine Creek Ranch 2: *Her Gentle Giant, Part 1: No Regrets*

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