

ELLORA'S CAVE TABOO

Lila Dubois

Red  
Ribbon

## **Red Ribbon**

*Lila Dubois*

Running into an old friend isn't a big deal, unless you're attending a BDSM mixer. When Liz, a woman who has it all—except a sex life—sees college pal Mark in the parking lot, she brushes off her embarrassment and agrees to go out for coffee to catch up.

Mark assumes Liz is a Domme, but when she reveals her red ribbon—a ribbon identifying her as a sub—he has to have her. He makes her complete a sex checklist that lists every toy, kink, position and taboo he might do to her, on her or with her.

Though desperate for this relationship to work, Liz cannot fully accept her desires or bring herself to submit passively. She wants Mark to master her, to dominate her. Mark is delighted by the way she challenges him, and with one touch, he knows she's his perfect sexual match.

Now they face their greatest challenge yet, that forbidden territory that lies outside the bedroom... *Dating*.

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Red Ribbon

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## **Chapter One**

What the hell was she doing here?

Swirling the alcohol-enhanced punch in its small plastic cup, Elizabeth Brown surveyed the small room despairingly. The occupants had broken off into pairings or groups of three. For the most part the women were seated on the chairs and couches placed against the walls while the men stood over them. In another setting this might be taken for consideration, the gentlemen having kindly allowed the ladies to sit while they stood, but in this room, in this situation, that was not the case.

Liz eyed the other women with mild distaste. Everything about them was sending off waves of submission—their posture, the gentle murmur of their voices, the soft, easily removed clothing they wore.

Liz was the only woman in pants.

Shoulders curled forward, chins tilted down, words soft and hesitant, they were exactly what the men in the room were looking for. She was not.

Fingering the red ribbon around her neck that marked her as a submissive, Liz took one more look at the potentially partnerless men in the room, those who stood in groupings of two or more men to one woman. Strangely she had assumed that there would be more women than men. Perhaps that view was shaped by BDSM literature she had read, which always had Dominants with multiple lovely young submissives, making it seem that beautiful, naturally submissive women were as thick on the ground as leaves in New England during fall.

In one corner, two men lounged in arrogant splendor, their eyes fixed on the large breasts of the woman sitting between them. Their body language was relaxed, confident—their postures said that if they wanted the girl they could have her.

Liz shuddered at the thought of allowing either of them to kiss her cheek let alone stick his dick in her. Both men looked weak to her, in body and spirit. One had a beer gut and love handles, his clothes poorly fitted and messy-looking. The other was rail-thin and gangly, like a bean sprout, his hooknose and squinty eyes adding to his overall air of unattractiveness.

The conversation between the couple next to her caught her attention. Shifting in her pumps, Liz leaned against the wall, watching them out of the corner of her eye.

The man was older than many in the room—early to mid-fifties. He wore a simple black sweater with a V-neck that allowed curling white chest hairs to escape. He had an older-man paunch, accentuated by his pants—belted tightly below his belly. She couldn't begrudge him his homely face but he had obviously let himself go. How could the woman sitting so quietly in front of him hope to be mastered by this man who clearly could not take care to master himself? How could she expect to feel captured, captivated by his arms when they contained no muscle, only soft flabby flesh? For a moment Liz pictured herself on her knees before the man, his—*old, wrinkly*—cock pressed to her lips demanding entrance, her lips parting, his cock forcing its way deeper into her mouth...until her forehead came up against his flabby belly, the insertion of his cock into her mouth stopped by the paunch.

Repressing a gag, Liz pretended to sip her revolting punch as the fantasy she had been trying to build shattered. With a shiver she went back to eavesdropping on the paunchy man's conversation.

"You will be a good slut for me, won't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Robert." *Ugh. His name is Bob.*

"What if you are a bad girl, slut?"

There was a slight hesitation before, "You will punish me, Mr. Robert."

Liz heard the tremble of arousal in the girl's voice now, the words broken by soft huffs of air as her breathing quickened.

"That is right, slut." The girl flinched slightly as "Mr. Robert" called her "slut", but he didn't seem to notice and barreled on, saying, "I will punish you, nice and hard, just like you need it."

"Thank you, Mr. —"

The idiot cut her off, clearly not hearing her, not caring what she'd been trying to say, the obedience she had been trying to show. His eyes were fixed on the plump brunette's cleavage, on display above a purple wrap dress that showed the top of a lacy bra. He rambled as he built his fantasies around his own pleasure.

"You will always be kept naked in my presence, and always on your knees. Whenever I want you will suck my cock and anyone else's cock. You will become a little cum-bucket. Don't worry, my pretty slut, I will teach you to take my cock so deep in your throat that it feels like it is a part of you. I will train you so that you will feel like something is wrong if you don't have a cock in your mouth."

The girl's features had tensed, her body drawing away from him as the arrogant prick rambled on about his toy cocksucker fantasies. Liz couldn't blame her. Never once did the man mention pleasure for the girl, or how he would cherish the gift of her submission.

When the man's eyes glazed over in lust at his own fantasies and he stopped talking, the timid young woman gamely tried to salvage the conversation and the fantasy she was trying to live.

"What would you do to punish me, Sir?" There was a hopeful note in the girl's voice. Undoubtedly she was waiting, praying for him to describe how he would pull her firmly over his knee and spank her, deny her orgasm while keeping her highly aroused, or put her in tight bondage.

"Why, my pretty slut, I would deny you my cock in your pretty mouth. The denial of her Master's cock is the ultimate punishment for a slut."

Liz watched the girl crumble, the last of her fantasy shattered. Her vision of a Dominant as a sexually powerful and knowledgeable man who would demand her



obedience but treasure her, and *pleasure her*, replaced by the reality of an all-too-human man who only wanted to stick his dick in her mouth. Mr. Robert thought his prick was God's gift to women.

*Well that's done it, Liz thought, I've truly had enough.*

Reaching up, Liz yanked at the red ribbon around her neck, jerking it free. Some of the men glanced up at her, frowning, but none approached her. That, more than anything, solidified Liz's belief that these men were nothing but posers, playing Dominant when in reality they were users and losers. Setting her cup down on the nearest table with a loud snap, Elizabeth strode proudly from the room. Some eyes were on her, watching the sway of her hips and breasts, focusing on the parts of her that they could understand and control. These oh so powerful men shied away from her as a whole—the sexual, powerful woman who did not need losers like them to give meaning to her life.

Liz made her way into the long hallway of the community center. The host organization had rented out the one-story building for the evening. The event, called The Gathering, was an invitation-only affair held four times a year. Liz received her invitation upon her completion of a BDSM 101 class.

She had stumbled onto an advertisement for the class buried deep in one of her favorite erotic stories websites. The class had claimed to be an introduction to living a BDSM lifestyle in the real world, the perfect bridge for people who wanted to make their fantasies a reality.

She'd tried to bring her sexual desires into a vanilla relationship and it had blown up in her face. Celibacy was not a good long-term solution, so Liz had signed up for the class, which was hosted at the neutral location of a community center. As far as everyone but the members of the class knew, it was an introduction to wine-tasting class that met once a week for ten weeks. Liz had paid the \$500 fee with her Visa after they assured her "Vineyard Educational Services", as opposed to "BDSM 101", would show up on her statement. The ten-week class had been divided into Doms and subs, to

keep it from turning into a mixer. Each session was a one-hour lecture with Q and A and then discussion time.

Many of the “rules” they taught seemed more like common sense. Most handouts had titles like, *Why It’s Important to Have a Way to Say No – Safewords*, or *The Difference between RACK – Risk Aware Consensual Kink – and SSC – Safe, Sane, Consensual*. At the end of the course they had a few guest lecturers, including one real-life Dom. It was the memory of this Dom that kept Liz from giving up all hope. While his still formality and four-page list of rules wasn’t her ideal Dom, he was much closer than any of the pricks in the community center tonight.

Liz was looking for a man who could handle her desires – who didn’t make her feel like such a freak. She didn’t need or want a boyfriend, at least not one who was also a Dom. It was perfectly clear to Liz that when your sexual desires were this dark you didn’t get to have love and sex with the same man.

As far as Liz was concerned there had been no one there tonight she would have had sex with after six tequila shots, let alone with the cold calculation needed to embark on a BDSM affair. Liz had come to The Gathering hoping to find her Mr. Right – er – Dom Right. The itching sexual need that burned inside her, that beast that girls were taught to deny existed from an early age because society fears female sexuality, was awake and howling. Tonight was supposed to mark the beginning of the end of her self-imposed celibacy-torture.

And it was a disaster.

With quickening steps, Liz strode down the hallway of the community center, past other rooms filled with members of the BDSM community, both seasoned players and new hopefuls.

A less-determined, less-sexually-frustrated person would have given up, but even as she pushed through the double doors leading to the parking lot Liz was forming a new plan of action. This was only the first one of these events she had attended. There

would be another one in a few months. Until then she would go through some of the contacts that they had been given in class—online message boards and groups.

So intent was she on formulating a new plan of action that she almost didn't see the man who stood slumped against the grille of a big SUV, though he was clearly visible in the security light illuminating the parking lot. Liz's first impression of him was one of size. This guy was BIG. His slumped posture made it all the more apparent that when he straightened he would tower over her. Dark hair hung down to his neck, a few strands had fallen in front of his face, shielding it from view. He wore jeans and a t-shirt, which was pulled taut across the swell of muscle on his arms and shoulders.

Liz froze—her heart picking up speed as hope bloomed. It was unlikely that someone not in the scene would be standing outside the community center at nine p.m. on a Thursday night. Could he be a Dom? He was the perfect physical embodiment of what Liz wanted in her Dom—big, strong, with muscles to sink her fingers and teeth into—someone whom she could trust not only emotionally but physically.

Knowing her luck he was probably a sub waiting for one of the Dominatrices inside. With a disgusted sigh, Liz started walking again, headed toward her car, which she now realized was parked only two down from the SUV. As her heels clicked closer, the dark-haired dream looked up.

The way he moved, his head snapping up, eyes bright and sharp, made Liz think of a predator. Raising her own chin a notch, Liz kept walking, but as she got closer and studied his face her steps slowed. A face she knew.

Straight dark eyebrows had pulled together over his nose as he frowned at her. Liz slowed to a stop, sure she knew him from somewhere. He remembered first, his features relaxing, his lips curled in a devastatingly sexy smile.

"Liz? Liz Brown?"

At the deep, rumbling voice, his name came back to her. "Marcus Palmer?"

With a few long strides he was at her side, his arms coming around her in a rib-crunching hug. On instinct Liz's arms went up around his shoulders, returning the

fierce hug. It was not the greeting an adult woman would give to an old acquaintance but the hug of a twenty-year-old college student to a good friend. After a final squeeze, Mark held her at arm's length, his big hands spanning and cupping her waist.

"Lizzy, wow, how are you?"

"Mark, it's been so long. I'm fine, how are you?"

"I'm good, I'm good, thanks."

Mark held her back from him and his gaze made a slow, easy sweep over her, from the crown of her glossy, straight blonde hair, over her torso hugged by the ribbed sweater and down the lean length of her legs, emphasized by the tailored slacks she wore. With a smile, Liz returned the favor. His dark hair was worn longer than she remembered, curling against the nape of his neck, the sides pulled back behind his ears. It should have looked boyish but instead he looked like a warrior. The breadth of his shoulders tapered to a nice waist. His pants were tight around his thighs, outlining the powerful muscles there.

Liz could see appreciation reflected in his eyes. She found nothing offensive in his examination, merely an acknowledgement of her beauty, and she had returned the favor. They had given each other similar perusals while in college. They had met in class, each from very different parts of their university community—she an involved student leader and crusader, he the star wide receiver of their national championship football team. Back then they had both been in other relationships. Only with their frank appraisal of each other had they acknowledged that if the situation were different they might have been together. But because they had both been committed to other people, their friendship had grown strong without the overlying need to posture and pose. It had been a strange friendship, but a good one.

Mark let his gaze sweep over the stunning woman before him one more time. She had changed from the sweatshirt- and jeans-clad co-ed he had known into a polished and professional woman. They had parted ways after college, both knowing when they

said goodbye the last time that theirs was a friendship that would not survive the transition into their adult lives. She had gone on to corporate America and he to the boys' club of professional football. There had been some regret for the friendship lost but he had appreciated the time spent together enough to celebrate it for having existed rather than mourn its passing.

Then Mark remembered where he was, and more importantly he remembered what was going on in the community center. A slow grin curled the corners of his mouth, widening until he showed teeth. For a moment Liz looked uncomfortable. She turned her head slightly to one side as if embarrassed, her feet shifting, heels clicking against the pavement of the parking lot, but as Mark watched she straightened her shoulders and turned to look at him with the fire of defiance in her eyes. Her look said that she would not be afraid or ashamed for having been found here. Indeed, Liz raised one eyebrow and tilted her head, giving him a questioning look, her posture inquiring what *he* was doing here. Then it was his turn to feel slightly uncomfortable at having been caught.

"Well this is certainly an interesting situation," Liz said.

"Yeah, well, I guess you could say that. But I would have said 'fucking embarrassing' instead of interesting."

Liz laughed, her head falling back, exposing the long smooth line of her throat. The slow burn that had started in Mark's belly when he first saw the stunning woman walking toward him fired a little bit hotter.

"So, I figure there are three things we can do." She chuckled. "One—we can walk away and pretend this never happened. Two—we can exchange business cards, renew our friendship by e-mail and just pretend that we didn't meet each other here. Three—we can go and get a cup of coffee and catch up."

"I say number three. There's a good place down the street or we can go downtown," he offered.

"Let's go to that place on the corner of Ninth and Fig. You remember it?"

"Yeah, I remember. We used to go there to study. You always drank Diet Cokes, when did you grow up and start drinking coffee?"

"As soon as I realized how much more caffeine there was in a cup of coffee than a Diet Coke. However there are times at night when I crave that sweet fake sugar taste."

Mark chuckled appreciatively. Lifting his hands from where they still gripped her waist, he looked around for her car. "Do you want to follow me or do you want to drive with me?"

"I'll follow you."

Liz headed toward her black SLR, hips swaying. Mark watched her walk away, his eyes tracing the outline of her tight ass through her pants.

*Now that is one fine-looking, sassy woman. Too damn bad she's a Domme.*

\* \* \* \* \*

An hour later, Mark and Liz were sitting comfortably in a booth at a 24/7 diner that served all-you-can-eat waffles and coffee between midnight and five a.m., which made it a favorite venue for a late-night carbohydrate fix among the students at the university.

With a nod to nostalgia, Liz had skipped the coffee and ordered a Diet Coke. She was slouched on the bench, one leg tucked under her, the other swinging free, her heel making a rhythmic thump against the booth with every swing. Her pumps lay discarded under the table. Mark had assumed a familiar pose, his back against the window, long legs stretched out along the bench with ankles crossed. He was so tall that every time the waitress came by she had to dodge his feet because they stuck out so far. One thickly muscled arm rested along the back of the booth, the other along the tabletop. His big, rough hands were relaxed. Occasionally he would lift the arm that rested on the back of the booth and use it for emphasis when making a point.

They had been sitting here for over forty minutes, reminiscing. They'd done rounds of "how is so-and-so doing" and "remember when". There were tears of laughter in

Liz's eyes as Mark retold the story of Liz going toe-to-toe with the evil TA of their class. His colorful retelling, with Liz as a warrior of Arthurian proportions crusading for the repressed members of BUAD 428—Advanced Biz Development was wildly inaccurate and hysterically funny.

When he wound down Liz went to wipe her eyes with her sleeve, an old habit from the time when sweatshirts made up most of her wardrobe. She stopped herself just in time and plucked a napkin from the dispenser.

Liz looked into Mark's face. Maturity had slimmed it down, refined it, but that wolfish grin was still the same. Though humor sparkled in his eyes and his posture was relaxed, the bulk of his physical presence combined with the grin was vaguely threatening.

As the echo of her laughter faded they fell into a companionable silence. It was amazing how easy it had been to fall back into her old friendship with him. It had always been a friendship that had included simply the two of them. They had no mutual friends, so when they were together there had been no one there to expect them to act like the star football player and the student leader. What started out as an assigned partnership for a class project grew into a refuge—a chance to vent frustrations and worries to a friend without any expectations.

Bending her head, Liz took a long drink from her soda, letting the bubbles fill her mouth. She glanced up from beneath her lashes to see that Mark was studying her with cool appraisal. With a sigh she lifted her head, flicking her tongue across the tip of her straw to catch any stray drops. Leaning back against the creaky vinyl, Liz prepared herself for what would undoubtedly be an embarrassing conversation, though oddly she didn't feel as embarrassed as she should.

"So, how did you get an invitation to The Gathering?" she asked, wincing. The name seemed melodramatic in the cheery warmth of the diner.

Mark must have seen her wince. "It is a stupid name, isn't it?"

Liz smiled. "It really is."

Mark returned her sunny smile with his own darker one. "I got the invitation because I've been to a couple of parties hosted by the group that runs the class."

"How did you get involved in that?"

This time Mark's smile was wicked. "A few years ago I saw a notice in the paper about a conference and demonstration they were holding at the convention center. It was all about D/s stuff. You had to go through a bunch of hoops to get tickets but I had been real curious for a long time so I managed to snag one. Let's just say that going opened my eyes. I realized that all my life I had been treating the girls I slept with like submissives, except I always felt like an abuser. Every time I ordered a woman to spread her legs I felt like I was raping her. Once I found BDSM, I had a name for what I wanted, a name that came with a certain set of expectations.

"I picked up a bunch of flyers and stuff hoping to find a way to meet submissive women, women who wouldn't freak out if they ended up tied to the bed. I started sending emails, meeting some people for coffee. Eventually someone recognized me from my pro years and like magic I was invited to the inner circle."

"Weren't you concerned about tabloids finding out?"

He shrugged, "Not really, now that I'm not playing ball anymore I'm not really news, and everything I read said these people like their privacy. It would be worse if I tried a BDSM relationship with a woman who wasn't into it. If she thought there was money in the story, or just got scared and told someone who told someone else, I'd have a problem—that's why all my subs sign a nondisclosure agreement with a multimillion-dollar penalty."

Liz stared at him in amazement. She had never considered how hard it would have been for a guy like him, so physically imposing, to treat a woman like a submissive without scaring her.

"So why were you there tonight, just looking for a play date?" she asked.

"Naw, I had plenty of those. There were always unattached girls at the parties who had been brought by other guys, or girls who had...er... Masters, but who weren't in a



committed relationship with them and whose Masters were willing to share. That was fine for a while, but I've discovered that it's the guys who have just one sub, who know their girl like the back of their hand, who really know what they're doing. I went tonight looking for a girl I could keep for myself."

Liz shifted on the bench, sliding her foot from beneath her so she could press her legs together. His casual talk of dominating a woman, tying her up, ordering her to spread her legs, had her incredibly aroused.

She could hardly believe that her ideal partner seemed to be sitting across the booth from her. The problem was that now she didn't know how to broach the subject. She wasn't prepared to do it while sitting in a diner. She had been prepared to deal with this back at the community center, but not here. If she were to start a sexual relationship with Mark it would take away some of the danger—she already knew who he was and was fairly sure he wasn't a serial killer.

Then a horrible thought occurred to her—he may be just what she was looking for, *but what if she was not what HE was looking for?*

Liz figured it would be just her luck to find the Dom of her dreams and then find out he had an Asian fetish.

"So what about you?"

Liz looked up with a start. "Me?"

"Yeah, how did you get invited?"

"Oh, I took the BDSM 101 class. I haven't had much luck with real-life BDSM and got tired of only having my fantasies. It seemed like the safest way to meet someone who was already into it."

"You just felt safe taking a class. You always were a school nerd."

Liz threw a napkin at him that he caught with hands well accustomed to accepting a thrown item.

“Okay, maybe you’re right, I know how to take classes, and it is something I was good at.”

“Didn’t find what you were looking for?”

Liz moaned in exaggerated anguish. “Not even close. That’s why I left early, but what about you?”

He shook his head. “Nothing.”

“So you didn’t find any subs you liked?” she asked, fishing for information on his preferences.

“I met a bunch of girls who were nice and quiet and submissive. They probably would have done exactly what I told them every fucking moment of the day,” he said in tones of despair.

“Isn’t that what you want?”

He shifted on the bench, uncrossing and then re-crossing his legs with the opposite leg on top. “I don’t want a girl who lies there. I want someone with more strength...” He ran a hand through his hair, looking frustrated. “Sometimes I don’t know if what I want is really a submissive girl, because the girls who were there tonight...” He trailed off and shrugged as if he were unable to find the words he wanted.

Liz’s heart leapt into a fast tempo. She wanted to scream that *she* was different from the girls who were there. She wanted, no—*craved*, the domination of a strong man but she wouldn’t, *couldn’t*, simply drop to her knees. She needed a man strong enough to take her.

*Can he really be this perfect?*

The Dominant of her dreams was sitting on the other side of the table and he seemed completely unaware of her as anything other than an old friend. She wanted to jump across the table and say, “*Look! What about me?*”

It was fear that stopped her. He knew the girl she had been, and probably knew of the ball-busting venture capitalist she had become since college. Nothing about her

would indicate that she'd be a good sexual submissive. Maybe if they didn't have a past, if he had no idea who she was...

"I wonder if you and I might not have the same problem, Liz. I glanced in the male subs room for a minute and they all looked like a bunch of pansies. I bet you would chew them up and spit them out in a heartbeat."

Liz stared at him in astonishment. *Does he think...?*

"You looked in the male subs room and...?"

"I didn't see you. Then again I wasn't really looking very hard at anyone in there."

"You didn't see me in the room for female Dominants and male submissives?" she repeated, knowing she sounded stupid.

"No," he said, frowning at her.

Liz took a deep breath and reached one hand into her pocket, curling her fingers into a fist.

"Mark, there was a reason you didn't see me there," she said slowly.

Liz laid her closed fist on the tabletop with the back of her hand resting on the cool Formica. Mark looked first to her hand then to her face, his eyebrows drawn together in a frown. With her gaze locked on his, she slowly uncurled her fingers.

Mark stared at the crumpled red ribbon in her palm. For a minute he simply gazed at her hand in confusion, and then the implications hit him. A picture of slender necks circled with red ribbons popped up in his mind's eye.

Startled, he met her gaze. He read defiance and power in her eyes, both a thin mask to cover her fear of rejection and uncertainty, he was sure.

He glanced back down at the ribbon curled on her palm. In one motion he swung his legs off the bench and sat up straight. He took the ribbon from her hand, letting the tips of his fingers caress the soft pad of her palm.

He lifted the ribbon, draping it over his index finger, drawing out the moment he studied it. Raising his eyes to hers, he smiled and clenched the ribbon in his fist.

There was a stabbing pain in Liz's chest. She released the breath she'd been holding for too long and shuddered as she inhaled again. Terror, excitement and dread filled her. Had she made a mistake, or the best decision of her life? Mark wasn't a stranger the way she'd planned. If he said anything...

"Liz, do you mean to tell me you were wearing this ribbon?" His voice was lower than normal, almost threatening, yet he was smiling.

Retreating behind her pride, she lifted her chin. "Yes, I was."

His grin widened. "You're a submissive?"

Her chin notched up another degree. "Yes, I am."

"Well, isn't that interesting?"

"Drop the smug attitude," she said, annoyed.

"Are you getting fresh with me? That's a risky thing to do," he said, sounding smarmy and fake Dom-ish. Her perfect man was turning out no better than the wannabe Doms at the community center.

Liz gritted her teeth. "Do not think that just because I am a submissive you can treat me like a toy."

Abruptly Mark's expression became serious. "I don't think you're a toy. I was surprised –"

"You think that because I am a woman who has her own life, who can stand up for herself and make her own decisions I can't look for something different in the bedroom? I am so tired of men's inability to see a woman as a complex person. Why can't I be submissive in the bedroom and nowhere else? And why is it that a man just assumes that if I am submissive I will fall to my knees and beg to suck him off while he taunts

me with petty threats? As far as I'm concerned he had better be willing to fight for my submission, to earn it."

Liz's hands were fisted on the tabletop as she leaned forward. Anger had knotted the muscles in her shoulders and back. There was a hollow, gray feeling in her stomach. Mark hadn't laughed at her, but he also wasn't really the man she was looking for. He'd jumped right to the attitude she despised. The faux threats, the condescension...

Mark, rather than pulling away, was leaning toward her, absorbing her anger and drawing in the emotions in her words.

"Liz, Liz, let me finish my thought. I would never treat you like a toy. I didn't mean to be arrogant or condescending. That was a dumb-fuck thing to say. I'm sorry. You are an amazing woman and I know that about you. I can only imagine that you would be an incredible submissive."

"That's sweet of you to say, but I know my attitude isn't that of a great submissive. I want sex, Mark. I want lots of sex. I want pleasure and pain and bondage and yes, I want to be controlled, but if that control involves being told to vacuum the house naked but not have sex for days then I'm going to walk out."

Mark's eyes had gone dark at her words and she could tell that he was aroused. The happy, normal bustle of the diner faded away around them.

"I realized I messed up with what I said before, but you blindsided me," he said. "You know I don't handle surprises well. I like to run the play that was called. Pretend that didn't happen."

Liz let out a slow breath and sat back. "I'm sorry I jumped on you like that. After all the bullshit I had to see tonight at the center..."

Mark imagined some of the losers he had seen at the community center with their hands on her. Reminding himself of his dentist's warning about grinding his teeth, he unclenched his jaw.

"Those dicks at the community center aren't fit to lick the bottom of your shoes," he growled. "They couldn't handle you."

“Are you implying that you are competent and confident enough to handle me?” she asked, eyes searching his face. He was serious and she realized she might have overreacted to his earlier teasing.

He met her gaze squarely. “Yes, I think I am.” He held out his hand.

Returning his stare, she took a chance, both on him and on her fantasies. “I think you are too.”

## **Chapter Two**

The next night Liz met Mark at a rotating restaurant atop one of the city's most expensive hotels. Considering the planned discussion for the evening, it might have been better to meet at either his condo or her house but this particular restaurant boasted enclosed booths with walls that touched the ceiling.

After trading a valet her car keys for a ticket, Liz strode to one of the black glass elevators. Stepping in, she positioned herself so she could use the reflective dark glass for a last-minute check of her appearance. As the elevator began its quiet ascent to the fortieth floor, Liz gave the hem of her little black dress a quick twitch. Made of a thick silk, the strapless dress hugged her curves in a way that spoke of tailoring not spandex. Rather than a straight bodice, this dress had a molded top, the fabric rising over each breast with a deep dip between. Clipped to a hanger, it looked like the top of a heart, but once on it was nothing but sex appeal in black silk. Tonight she had decided to dress it up with a gold and black antique shawl. Black strappy Coup D'états with burnished gold detailing and black chandelier earrings completed the ensemble.

Liz knew what she probably should be wearing. A loose skirt, button-up shirt, no underwear and hooker makeup was what most girls in BDSM stories wore. One of the classes had covered the topic of attire. When she had questioned it, asking why a Dom would want his sub to look sloppy, the instructor for the evening had told her that "sloppy" was her opinion and the only person whose opinion mattered was that of her Dom. As much as Liz was trying to understand submission as the world told her it was, she just couldn't make herself agree.

She didn't want to look like a sidewalk hooker, she wanted to look like sin and sex in leather and velvet—a courtesan, not a whore. While the idea of not being allowed to wear underwear was sexy as hell, Liz had boobs, real boobs, the kind that liked to rest

closer to her navel than her chin without assistance. This dress would be a tragic fashion mistake without the half corset she had on underneath lifting her breasts. As the light in the elevator panel moved from floor 29 to 30 Liz checked her hair. While normally it was straight, she'd used hot rollers to give it a soft wave. The curl shortened her hair so it just brushed her shoulders. She'd pulled back one side, exposing her neck. With the soft wave she looked like a sultry femme fatale from Hollywood's bygone era. Her makeup was done in the darker shades appropriate for an evening look—a smoky eye, careful blush to boost her cheekbones and deep rose lips with a high gloss finish. She looked like a high society girlfriend, too pretty to be a stockbroker herself, too voluptuous, too sexual, to be a stockbroker's wife.

Liz was proud that she could hang up her Anne Taylor business suit for a Tadashi Shoji cocktail dress and not only look good in both, but like who she was in both.

When the elevator door slid open with a slow hiss, she was standing dead center of the car, one hip cocked, the shawl draped over her arms and framing her black silk-encased waist. Stepping carefully from the elevator, she savored the moment. She was minutes from taking her first real step toward making her fantasies realities in the flesh. No matter what happened, she could savor the anticipation. She rolled her hips as she walked—*boom, tisss, boom, tisss*—the heavy thump of a floor drum followed by a single tap of a cymbal.

The hostess didn't even ask her name, simply rose and with a murmured, "Will you follow me, madam?" led her around the teak-paneled entryway. While the entry was stationary, just behind it the rotating floor began. Situated in one of the hotel's round glass towers, the restaurant took one hour to go all the way around—the only interruption in the view when a booth rotated past the entryway. Liz stepped onto the slowly rotating floor and followed the hostess. The booths were on her left, the floor-to-ceiling windows to her right. The restaurant was so large it was hard to tell how far around the circle she was from the entryway once it passed out of sight. Just ahead of them a man slid out of one of the booths. Mark.



She looked like sex on a stick. Expensive sex on a stick.

Mark barely noticed when the hostess drifted away. As he had in the parking lot, he gave her a once-over, a slow appraisal. He tried to start at her feet and work his way up but he got distracted by her breasts. He heard the hiss of air as she took a deep breath and then had to do a little deep breathing of his own as those fantastic breasts rose and fell. They seemed to call out to him, “come, Mark, pet us, love us, play with us”.

Manfully ignoring the fact that he had just had an imaginary conversation with her tits, he started again with her feet. She had on strappy things, which looked painful but did amazing things to her calves. The skirt of the dress hugged her thighs and hips just so, the material pulled taut by her one-hip-cocked stance. On the way to her face he once again was drawn in by her breasts. After a quick eye caress and mentally promising to have a nice long conversation with those babies at a later date, he made it to her face. Her eyes seemed more exotic surrounded by dark girly stuff, her lips very red and kissable, fuckable. That perfect blonde mane just touched one side of her face. She was the girl-next-door after she moved to the city and learned a few things. There was no uncertainty in her eyes—she knew she was ravishing, but there was challenge—as if she dared him to disapprove. She had a long wait coming if that’s what she was waiting for.

“Liz.” He took her hand and raised it to his lips, placing an open-mouthed kiss on the back. “You’re utterly gorgeous.”

“Thank you, Mark,” Liz murmured as goose bumps rose along the back of the hand he’d kissed.

He looked great in a dark gray suit with a white shirt and navy tie. Not exactly the most GQ outfit but it was a classic look that would never stop working for the gentlemen, and considering his size, Liz shuddered to think of the cost of having suits tailored. His hair had been brushed so that it fell back from his face without being

tucked behind his ears. Liz had to stop herself from reaching over and pulling one lock forward just to re-create the rakish look from last night.

He eased her into the booth, opposite where he had been sitting, with a hand at her back. As he slid in across from her she took stock of the table, eyeing two black leather portfolios. Seeing her look at them, he slid them down onto the seat with a teasing smile. As the waiter glided up they settled easily into the routine of two urbanites enjoying a high-quality meal out on the town. After the waiter listed that night's meal options, they chose the fish, Mark seamlessly selecting an appropriate white wine. Liz mentally lifted an eyebrow. While she had never taken him for a dumb jock, that level of wine knowledge was a bit above the norm.

After the waiter had glided away she asked about it. "Where did you acquire such extensive wine knowledge?"

Mark settled back into the booth and smiled. "I wish I could say that I was a true connoisseur, but a buddy of mine from my pro days bought a vineyard as an investment and then got really into it. For years I got cases of different wines for holidays until he finally dragged me up to his vineyard for a week. I learned more than any man could ever want to know about wine and grapes. For example, do you know why they plant rosebushes at the edges of the grapes?"

The conversation continued as the four-course meal was served, moving easily from one topic to another. Liz was once more struck by how easy it was to fall back into a friendship with him. They talked about their jobs—Liz's venture capital company, Mark's post-pro career as a sportswriter and commentator.

When the entrée was gone, Mark asked the server to hold off on dessert. He reached down next to him and then carefully placed the portfolios on the table. Liz sat up a bit straighter, a shiver running down her spine.

Mark carefully took one of the portfolios and placed it in front of her. She let her hand rest on it but kept her eyes on Mark.

"I'm going to be honest with you, Liz. I'm having fun and you look fucking amazing. Right now I'm worried about the catch – there has to be one, right?"

He smiled and Liz laughed. She felt the same – this was too easy, too perfect.

"It's eerie that we would find each other again under these circumstances, when we each want what the other," she smiled, "possesses."

"Then let's get to business. Tell me if we aren't seeing eye to eye on anything I'm saying." Mark took a small sip of his wine before continuing. "You're looking for a Dom. I'm looking for a sub. I've had some experience and pretty much know what I like, and know that what I want is not the 'standard'. From what you said last night, I think you might be the same, but we need to be sure. In here," he tapped his portfolio, "is a BDSM checklist."

Liz let out a little breath, her fingers tingling with excitement. BDSM checklists were lists of every possible kinky toy and scenario in the BDSM world. She'd seen a sample in class, but never a full one, since real ones could be hundreds of items long.

"This is my checklist, so I've removed anything I won't do, or stuff that's really fucked up. Mark your answers and then we'll swap and go over it. If nothing matches up we'll have dessert and..." He trailed off.

"And no hard feelings," Liz finished for him.

"Exactly."

Liz smiled. This was better than anything she'd dared hope for. She was a logical soul and the idea of a checklist was very appealing. He knew what he was doing.

As the city rotated past the glass, Liz opened her portfolio and began to read.

Mark leaned back and took a sip of his wine, enjoying both the view out the window and the sight of his lovely companion. He could already imagine her chained to a wall in his bedroom, her hair tangled around her as she fought him at the same time her pussy dripped for his cock.

Since he'd put the list together and had done this before, it wouldn't take him long to fill it out. As he watched her bite her lip and swallow hard he decided he wouldn't hold anything back. Usually he toned down his desires and wants, making sure that he wouldn't scare his partners when they went over the list. But this woman... Mark took a deep breath as his dark urges rolled through him. He wanted to do everything to her.

*Activity*

Abrasion

Anal plugs

Anal sex

Liz had to stop and take a breath, look away from the list. Her skin was tingling with arousal and she was wet. She'd read three lines of the checklist and she was already panting. Half-disgusted with herself, she closed the portfolio. She was so lost in her tangled thoughts and feelings that she'd forgotten that Mark was there until he spoke.

"Too much?" he asked quietly.

Liz looked over at him, a quick smile and platitudes rising to her lips. She knew what it was like to be made to feel a freak for wanting this. She wouldn't do that to him. Just as she was about to reassure him, tell him it was all right and she was just excited, she stopped herself. She took a breath and released it slowly.

"Do you ever hate yourself for wanting this?" she asked. She meant the words to be strong but they came out like a plea.

He sat back, clearly surprised. "Well, yeah, sometimes. Do you?"

She looked down at her hands folded on top of the checklist. "All the time."

His large tan hand covered her joined ones. His hands were warm, hers were perpetually cold. "Lizzy, listen to me."

She looked up into his eyes. There was no sympathy in his gaze, but there was understanding. "There is nothing wrong with us," he told her. "We're mature, consenting adults engaging in responsible sex. Some of this stuff," he gestured to the portfolios with his free hand, "is even mainstream. You don't think people do a little light bondage, a little spanking? They do."

"But that's not what we want, is it?" she pushed. Liz wasn't sure what she wanted from Mark but she wanted something. She wanted him to say something to make this okay, say something to make her feel as if she weren't damaged in some way.

"No."

"Why? Why can't I just accept the life I have? I have a really great life. Wanting this is..." She trailed off, shaking her head.

"Selfish. Greedy," he finished for her. "You should be satisfied with vanilla sex, but you're not."

Liz sighed in relief. "Yes."

"I feel the same." Mark leaned back. "I had things most men only dream of. I could have had some of the most beautiful women in the world and it wasn't enough."

They sat in silence for a moment, the honey-sweet anticipation that had covered them replaced by grim self-loathing.

"I was in love," Liz said, breaking the silence. "He sold me my condo and we hit it off. The night it closed we went out to dinner. He was as busy as I was, and so when we had time to be together it was explosive, like we were packing days of togetherness into only hours. I fell in love with him and him with me. The sex was good."

"But not enough."

Liz looked up at Mark, hoping she wasn't blushing. It was embarrassing to talk about her past sex life, though that seemed ludicrous considering why they'd come here tonight. "That's the thing, I like vanilla sex. I like the intimacy of a man's body pressed against me, of how it can be lightning fast or slow." Liz's breath was growing shallow

as memories filled her, of groping like teenagers in the foyer, quick, sweaty sex up against the door, slow Sunday-morning sex that faded into lazy drowsing.

“What happened?” Mark asked. Liz refused to look at him. She could feel him watching her with a gaze that promised things she was scared to want.

“We were fine for a while, but when we started talking about committing – moving in together, maybe getting married – I knew I had to say something. I loved him, but I knew that if I didn’t say something I’d be unhappy later.”

Liz huffed out a little laugh. “You know what? I used to lie awake at night and fantasize about him doing things to me. I wanted him to bend me over his knee, to toy with me, torment me, use toys on me. There I was, fantasizing about a man who was lying right next to me.”

She shook her head at the memory. “I was sure it’d be fine. He was an aggressive, dominant guy. I thought he’d be excited by what I wanted. At first he was. He knew a bit about serious D/s, though not much. I very carefully outlined the kinds of things I liked but I didn’t want to plan each move for him. That...that *control* is exactly what I didn’t want.”

“What went wrong?”

Now she did look at him. “Everything.”

Mark kept his gaze steady on her as he asked, “Did he hurt you?”

She could only nod as a flood of embarrassing, frustrating and frightening memories filled her.

“Tell me,” he said. It wasn’t a command, not in the way those ridiculous fake Doms had issued commands, but it was a demand.

“Let me just say that he didn’t get it, and the more I tried to explain the worse it got. He didn’t understand that I wanted that behavior confined to the bedroom. He used to smack my ass, all the time. If I said anything he didn’t like – if I teased him about the way he’d parked his car – he’d swat my ass and whisper, ‘Naughty girl deserves a

spanking, doesn't she?" Liz's hands on the tabletop curled into fists. "It was all I could do not to knee him in the balls."

"He really didn't get it, did he?"

"A lot of what happened was my fault. When I wanted him to be...masterful." She winced at the word and Mark let out a bark of laughter. Liz smiled ruefully before continuing. "If I wanted that domination, I'd try to goad him into it—taunting him, saying he wasn't man enough—but then he'd just get pissed."

"Did he hit you, in anger?" Mark growled.

Liz wished she could say yes and play the victim, but the truth was she was the abuser. She'd taken something that should have worked, that should have been enough for her, and she'd destroyed it.

"No." Tears prickled her eyes. "He was a good man. He would never do that. He would walk away—leave and call me later."

Mark stood and came around to her side of the table, sliding into the booth next to her. She stiffened slightly, keeping her back straight.

He laid one arm around her shoulders and pulled her into his side. "You can cry if you want," he said with impressive stoicism.

Liz tilted her head up so she could look into his face. He was a handsome man, made more attractive by the concern that marked his features. He understood her, he cared that she'd suffered and he wanted to comfort her.

A little crack started in the shell she'd carefully erected around her heart.

"I'm not going to cry," she said, smiling. It was true. She'd wept plenty of tears over lost love.

"You looked like you were going to cry."

"I was, but I've probably cried enough about this." She took a deep breath, and if it shuddered slightly neither of them mentioned it. "I'm sorry, Mark. I seem to have destroyed the mood."

"I would rather know more about you than maintain a mood," he said. "If what you really need is a friend you can talk to about this stuff, I'll be that friend."

"Oh Mark, I—"

He cut her off. "However, I need you to know that I will not be happy about it and I will be picturing you naked every time I see you."

Liz laughed, a deep belly laugh that had more to do with releasing the emotional tension within her than with amusement. She relaxed into his side, tipping her head back against his shoulder to look up at him.

"Naked, huh? How do I look?"

"Fucking amazing. But you're not just naked." His voice was deeper and rougher than it had been a minute ago. His gaze, which had remained on her face as she spoke, now traveled south to her breasts.

"What am I wearing?" she whispered, desperate to know. She wanted him to say she was draped in chains, fastened facedown to a bed, wearing a mask, a gag.

His gaze returned to her face. "You're aroused," he said. "I can see it in your eyes, your lips," he touched his thumb to her lower lip, "your cheeks." He moved his hand to cup her face, thumb pressed into her cheekbone. "I want to do things to you that should frighten you."

"I don't think they will," she murmured. Her skin felt like molten lava encased in ice. She was shivering with cold and burning with heat at the same time. Her sex felt swollen between her legs.

She hated herself for derailing their evening. She should have just filled out the checklist, handed it to him and begged him to fuck her.

"Let's go," she begged. "Mark, I want you."

With a growl he pressed his lips to hers in a hot, rough kiss.



The evening was not going exactly to plan, but plans were made to be broken. At least that's what Mark told himself as he left the restaurant with Liz on his arm. They stepped into the glass elevators. The city was spread before them, the lights dazzling.

"I'm going to regret this," Liz said quietly, "but I want you."

Mark hadn't figured out what she was talking about before she turned, wrapped one arm around his neck, hitched up her skirt with her free hand and, with a little hop, wrapped her legs around his waist.

He figured it out then.

Never one to pass up a good opportunity, Mark wrapped a hand under her butt, the other around her back.

He grinned at her, loving the weight of her in his arms.

"Does this turn you off?" she asked him, face serious.

Mark suppressed a groan. He really wasn't in the mood to have another long discussion.

He pressed her back against the elevator wall. "What do you think?" he growled as he brought his lips to hers.

Their lips were millimeters apart when the elevator doors opened.

"You have got to be fucking kidding me," Mark growled, glaring at the open doors.

Liz smiled—she really was gorgeous—then pressed her lips together, suppressing the smile. Mark could still see it sparkling in her eyes.

She unwrapped her legs from around his waist. Mark didn't release her. She raised a brow in question.

He was seriously considering pressing the button for the highest floor and starting a second elevator ride, but he didn't want to be interrupted. He ran the hand cupping her ass around her hip and then up her side, cupping her rib cage so that his thumb rested just below her breast. She took a deep breath, shuddering a little.

Mark's cock jumped and he suppressed a growl. He wanted this woman with a ferocity that was frightening. She was so strong, so self-assured and confident, that the glimpses of vulnerability and submission he saw in her were all the more potent. He knew that when she finally submitted to him it would be something rare and special, like winning against a strong opponent. Quick, easy victories were nice, but they didn't mean as much as the ones you had to work for. He wanted to take her, master her, hurt her and pleasure her.

He backed away as the elevator dinged, stretching out one long arm to keep the doors from closing.

"Tonight ends here," he said.

"Probably best," Liz agreed, twitching her skirt.

"After you," he murmured, holding the doors so she could precede him.

She didn't wait for him but started toward the valet stand. Mark took one extra-long step to catch up with her and put his hand on her back. She looked at him from beneath her lashes.

"Why did you think I would be turned-off?" he asked in a low voice, keeping the conversation light.

Her reply had to wait as they each handed their tickets to the valet. Mark paid for her car and, after a pause, she put the money she'd pulled out back in her purse. He liked that she hadn't assumed that he'd pay. The minute people knew he had money they expected him to pick up the tab—especially women.

"Because I was being aggressive. Is this about you being in charge or about you being a gentleman?" she asked, gesturing to the valet stand and to his hand, which still rested on her back.

Mark knew this was a gray area. Liz was perfectly capable of walking by herself and paying for her own parking—he didn't think she needed him for those things.

"If it bothers you I won't do stuff like that."

"It doesn't bother me—I just wanted to make sure it wasn't a control thing."

"I always open doors and pick up the tab while on a date. My dad would say it's good manners."

"I'm a secure-enough feminist to say that I have no problem with that," she said with a smile.

They brought her car first. Liz looked at him as the valet held out her keys. "This didn't go the way I expected."

"This isn't what I'd expected either," he said. A part of him—his dick—was aggravated that they hadn't gotten through the checklist and made plans to take this to the next level. "But I don't regret it."

"You sure?" she asked, and there was a hint of something in her face—vulnerability, maybe—that made him simultaneously want to hug her and paddle her ass.

"I'm sure," he cupped her neck, kissed the corner of her mouth. "This isn't over. It's just starting."

Mark watched her drive away, ignoring the stares of the valets. They brought his car around, but with a curt, "I'll be back," he went inside. Once in the elevator he leaned against the cool glass, the city at his back, and tried to will away his hard-on.

Liz was...perfect. She was perfect.

The hostess smiled when he walked into the restaurant. She crouched and pulled the portfolios from under her podium.

"I thought you might be back for these," she said.

"Thanks," he searched her face for a reaction to what she'd found inside the book. Was her smile a little too bright?

*Leave it*, he told himself. He no longer needed to search constantly for a woman who might share his tastes.

He'd found Liz and finally had an opportunity to have the sexual relationship he'd been longing for. All he had to do was get her to submit.

\* \* \* \* \*

Liz poured herself a glass of wine then stood there, bottle in hand.

Wow.

Just...wow.

The night hadn't ended the way she'd anticipated, but she didn't regret it. There was something delicious about drawing this out.

If she was being completely honest with herself—which Liz always was—she'd admit she was scared.

The grin she'd been wearing ever since she got in her car disappeared at that thought. Liz stoppered and put away the wine, taking her glass to her favorite chair, which faced a large portrait window. She lived in the hills, just east of Hollywood, and on clear nights like this she could see LA spread before her—an ocean of lights and movement crowned by the terraced downtown skyline.

The fear she felt wasn't the easy-to-understand fear she'd felt when she started out on this BDSM journey. That fear was the fear of a woman about to do something dangerous—easily countered by taking appropriate safety measures like the BDSM 101 class.

This fear was murkier. She wanted, desperately, to have the sex she'd been dreaming about with Mark. But she liked him, really liked him, and part of her wanted to ignore the sex and instead see if a romantic relationship was possible. Taking a sip, she grimaced at herself. One date—a date to plan kinky sex no less—and she was thinking about a relationship.

It was probably a sign that it had been too long since her last relationship ended. She wasn't getting any younger, though she certainly wasn't old, but she wanted a companion. Breaking up had been horrible, and the return to being single, and the

accompanying social stigma of lacking a plus-one when at this point all her friends and associates were in relationships, had taken its toll on her self-confidence. It wouldn't have been so bad if the end of the relationship hadn't been her fault. Her friends didn't know how to comfort her. Their first instinct was to call the guy a "jerk" and blame him for everything, but that didn't work this time.

She needed to get her expectations about the relationship with Mark in check, right now. This was about sex. This was about finally having the sex she'd been dreaming about.

The next day Liz went into the office to catch up on paperwork. She arrived home to find a package propped against her front door. There was no return address and no postage. She took a step back, thinking it was a mail bomb or something equally hideous. She had her phone in hand to call 9-1-1 when she noticed a red rose, tied with a red ribbon, hiding behind the package.

Slipping her phone into her pocket, Liz instead took out her keys and opened the door. Setting down her purse and taking off her shoes, Liz did all the things she normally did when she first got home before retrieving the package and rose. She put the rose in a bud vase, smiling at the malformed bow.

Considering the lack of postage, she wondered if Mark had delivered it himself. Looking at that bow, she was sure—no florist would have let that bow walk out their door.

When everything was in place and there were no distractions she took the package over to her favorite chair.

She ripped off the brown paper.

*Liz,*

*We have unfinished business. I don't want to wait to have you. Fill this out so we'll know if we want the same things. When you're done, text me and place the portfolio on your doorstep.*

-M

Liz let out the breath she'd been holding and carefully pulled the note, which she saw with some amusement was written on stationery bearing their alma mater's logo, off the portfolio.

She rested her hand on the cover, taking her time before opening it. She let her mind wander, wondering how he'd found her address. She hadn't lived in this house long, having sold her condo after the breakup. She thought about what had happened at work that day, made a list of work she had to do tomorrow.

She thought she'd done a good job of distracting herself until she realized she was shifting side-to-side, rubbing her legs together to alleviate the ache in her sex.

With an impatient sigh, she flipped open the portfolio.

It was a simple checklist, with the activity in the first column and several possible responses—"Yes, yes, yes", "Willing to Try", "Neutral/What's this?", "Not sexy" and "No, no, no". There was also a space for comments.

Mark had written "Answer all" in a bold scrawl across the top of the first page.

"Okay, Liz, do the first two pages, then stop," she said aloud, her voice husky.

*Activity*

Abrasion

Anal plugs

Anal sex...

*Abrasion* got "Neutral" while both anal options got "Yes, yes, yes".

Liz felt dirty—and she liked it. She scanned through the next two pages, answering yes to more things than she expected, only because she trusted Mark to do them. More than that—she wanted Mark to do rough, dark things to her.

*Animal roles, arm and leg sleeve and boot worship* were nos, while *ball gag, blindfolds, biting, breast bondage and bondage – light* were yeses. She answered “Neutral/What’s this?” to *breast fucking*, “Willing to Try” to *beating – soft, beating – hard* and *bondage – hard*.

She had to stop there and catch her breath. She was so aroused her pussy was swollen and slippery-wet. She was surprised that she hadn’t answered “Not Sexy” to anything on the list. She’d seen one of these lists in the class and there had definitely been some gross things on there. She looked over her answers again and had to admit that, under the right circumstances, even the things she’d said no to might be yeses with Mark.

That thought frightened her more than anything else.

Mark pressed his head back into the headrest. His hands were clenched on the steering wheel to keep himself from jerking off while sitting in his car. He could just imagine the headlines—*Former NFL star caught masturbating in the Hollywood Hills – Secret sex fetish exposed*.

It was bad enough that he was sitting here in the car. After he’d dropped off the portfolio he’d gone home, only to wind up pacing back and forth, unable to focus on anything. The article he’d tried to write about high-school football recruits hadn’t gone anywhere.

Full of restless energy, he’d left his condo. He’d driven aimlessly through the city, all the while knowing he was going to end up at her door.

He knew she had the portfolio and the flower he’d left her—they weren’t on her doorstep anymore. He hoped the flower hadn’t been too much. Flowers weren’t exactly necessary for what they were doing, but he’d wanted to get her a flower.

He shifted in his seat and closed his eyes.

What was she answering “yes” to? What were the “nos”?

He hoped there weren't too many nos. He liked everything on the list, though some of them were only mildly interesting.

But with Liz...well, he wanted to do it all. And more.

His phone buzzed.

*I'm done.*

Mark smiled in satisfaction, started his car and pulled forward so he was directly in front of her house.

Liz was standing in the open door, silhouetted by soft light that spilled from inside her house.

He turned off his car, hopped out and came around to the passenger side. He leaned on the fender, crossing his legs at the ankle.

Liz crouched and set the portfolio on the step. Mark waited for her to be looking down and then moved forward. He was only steps away when Liz straightened. He saw her jump a little when she saw him.

"Hand it to me," he said. His voice was a growl, though he hadn't meant it to be.

Liz straightened, her shoulders coming back. "I believe you have something for me?" She held out her hand.

Mark wanted to paddle her ass for her defiant tone—he was unspeakably glad this wasn't going to be easy.

He pulled his folded list from his back pocket and held it out to her. She took it, making sure their fingers didn't touch.

"Thank you," she said quietly. Mark took another step forward, touching two fingers to the back of her hand. Her fingers curled up into her palm, making a nervous fist.

"I want you, more than anything," he told her.



"What if I'm not what you want?" she asked.

"I'll make sure we both get what we want." He took her fist, uncurled her fingers and rubbed her palm with his thumb. "What we need."

"I'm not wired the same as those other girls," she whispered.

There was pain in her voice, more than he'd expected. She really was worried that she wouldn't be what he wanted. Mark opened his mouth but closed it again, not sure how to assure her that this would all work out.

After all, he wasn't entirely sure it would. He was certain he wanted to try.

Mark stooped and picked up the portfolio.

"Trust me," he said, cupping her chin as he stood. "Trust that I know what I want and," he held up the portfolio, "now I know what you want."

She nodded softly, then tilted her face into his palm, letting his hand take the weight of her head.

Something he didn't care to examine too closely welled in Mark's chest.

Tipping Liz's face up, he pressed his lips to hers in a chaste kiss and walked away.

## **Chapter Three**

Five days later Mark still hadn't made contact. Throughout the course of those five days, Liz had gone through a staggering range of emotions.

She rolled over and picked up her cell phone from the nightstand. It read 2:14 a.m. Setting it down with a groan, she got out of bed. She'd been awake for hours, wondering why she still hadn't heard from Mark. There must be something on her checklist that he didn't like, or something he really did like that she hadn't liked. Either way, it had been one hundred and three hours since he'd come to her door—and wasn't that just extra-pitiful that she knew exactly how long it had been?—and she hadn't heard from him.

There was no point in playing the "well, maybe I should call him" game that she would have played if she'd met Mark at a bar or through friends. This relationship was all about him taking control, and if he hadn't contacted her it was because he didn't want to.

Wandering into the kitchen, she opened the freezer and pulled out a low-fat fruit Popsicle. She really wanted ice cream, but was glad she didn't have any in the house. Eating ice cream directly out of the tub at two a.m. because a guy hadn't called was just too pathetic.

The plastic wrapper was loud as she peeled it away and disposed of it. Hip propped against a counter, she told herself that he might still contact her, maybe he was busy at work, maybe he was waiting for the weekend.

He'd call. Why wouldn't he? She was pretty, smart and would be an excellent submissive. Bolstered by her self-pep talk, she resolved to stop being so doom and gloom.

Sliding the smooth strawberry Popsicle into her mouth, she swirled her tongue around the tip. Filling out that checklist had been one of the sexiest things she'd ever done. There were things on there that scared her and she liked that. There were things that were just exciting, things like ice...

Liz pulled the Popsicle from her mouth, realizing she been sucking it like a cock, she was so aroused.

Tossing it into the sink before she could do something stupid, she bent over the counter, lightly thumping her head on the granite. She needed sex. No, she needed Mark.

Liz returned to the bedroom and took the envelope containing Mark's checklist from a drawer in her nightstand. She ran her finger along the flap, licked her lips. She hadn't opened it yet because she was afraid she'd find his answers were the complete opposite of hers. With each day that had passed she was sure that was the reason he hadn't contacted her — despite their hopes, they weren't a good sexual match.

Climbing into bed, she settled herself against the pillows with her legs under the covers. With deliberate care she bent the butterfly clasp of the envelope and opened the flap, removing the pages inside.

He'd completed it in blue pen, his handwriting broad and spiky.

*Enough stalling, Liz.*

She skimmed the disclaimer and instructions at the top of the page. As with her list there was an activity and then a rating system, but the options for rating were different on the Dom version. While hers had ranged from "Yes" and "Willing to Try" to "No" and "Absolutely not", his categories were "Necessary", "Desirable Play", "Punishment use", "Willing to Try" and "No interest". Besides "Willing to Try" there was no overlap in the categories. There wasn't an off-limits or "absolutely not" category, but that made sense, since Mark had said he'd customized the list. That meant everything on here was something he was at least willing to do. The question then was did her "yeses" match his "necessaries"?

She flipped open to a random page, landing in the Ss.

*Activity*

Sexual deprivation

Shaving

Spanking

Speculums

Speech Restrictions, what and when

Spreader bars

Stable – serving in, with or without other submissives

Stocks

Straitjackets

Strapping

Suspension

One by one she considered each item, and as she did Liz sank lower in the bed, her free hand roaming over her belly and thigh.

*Sexual deprivation.* Mark had his marked “Necessary” while she remembered indicating “Willing to Try”. She didn’t want to be denied orgasm. She wanted to orgasm over and over again, the way other women talked about, the way magazines said she should. She’d never had that before, because she’d never really been sexually satisfied before. Of course orgasm denial was a big part of BDSM play, and she was being stupid to think otherwise, but she’d never looked forward to that aspect of it. Until Mark. What would it be like if Mark aroused her only to take his hands away?

Liz had been lightly scratching her nails over her panties, but now pulled her hand away and out from under the covers. She squeezed her knees together to alleviate the ache she’d left behind.

She'd be frustrated, as she was now, but she'd also know that he would put his hands back, would and could bring her to orgasm.

*Shaving* ranked "willing to try" from both of them. Liz wiggled out of her underwear and combed her fingers through the trimmed hair on her sex. She waxed regularly and so knew she was well groomed, but wondered if Mark would like her sex naked and smooth. He didn't seem like the type to wield a straight razor over her pussy lips, but maybe he'd watch her shave, watch her spread her legs, rub the shaving cream over the lips of her sex.

Her fingers mimicked her thoughts, playing out the fantasy. When her index finger circled her clit she forced herself to pull back and read the next item on the page.

*Spanking*. He'd underlined "necessary" twice. Mark was going to spank her. He would pull her over his knee, pull down her panties and swat her ass with his big, rough hand while he told her what a bad girl she was.

She had a finger buried deep in her pussy now, her thumb on her clit. Would he spank her as punishment or for his pleasure? The list didn't tell her. All she knew was that if he called, if he wanted her, she would end up over his knee.

*Speculums* were an "absolutely not" for her, as she didn't want to be turned-on every time she saw her gyno, but he'd only listed them as "willing to try".

*Speech Restrictions, what and when...* were another "no" for her, but "necessary" for Mark. Liz's fingers stilled, her arousal fading as she wondered if she'd found the thing that had prevented him from calling her. Maybe he wanted a sub who was quietly obedient and didn't speak unless ordered to or given permission.

*Would it be that bad with Mark?*

The traitorous thought whipped through her before she could stop it. Something inconceivable with a nameless, faceless Dom wasn't as horrifying at the hands of a man she knew and respected. Closing her eyes, Liz let the pages flutter to the floor and groped in her nightstand for her trusty vibrator.

What would it be like to be Mark's ultra-obedient slave?

She imagined herself kneeling in silky thigh-highs, a breast-baring black corset and a leather collar with a thick ring in the front.

*Her legs are held open by a spreader bar. Mark sits in a chair across the room, one leg extended, chin propped on his hand as he watches her. She wants to beg him to touch her but she cannot. To speak out of turn is to risk a brutal strapping session, orgasm denial and loss of his favor.*

*He rises from his chair, tall and strong in leather pants and vest. Hooking a finger in the ring in her collar, he draws her to her feet. Rough palms cover her bare breasts, massaging them gently before slapping each. She gasps at the slap and he does it again, harder, fingerprints marring the white mounds.*

Outside the fantasy, Liz was gasping and moaning, her fingers thrusting in and out of her sex while she balanced her vibrator against her clit with the other hand. She was sweaty and thrashing under the covers.

*Fantasy Dom Mark spins her, forcing her to bend at the waist and positioning her neck and wrists inside stocks. With a frightening thud he lowers the upper piece, locking it in place. Terrified, she wants to cry out but will not disobey her beloved Master.*

*Hands massage her hanging breasts, slapping and pinching the nipples. Her ass is swatted until it burns, her thighs beaten with a crop. Just when she would beg for forgiveness, beg his pardon for whatever she'd done to earn such punishment, she feels his cock at her sex, the hot, thick length rubbing the length of the sex before finding its position.*

Liz came, the vibrations against her clit combined with her fingers thrusting in her sex providing the physical stimulation she needed to match the emotional and intellectual stimulation of her fantasy. She held the vibrator on her clit just past the point of pleasure into the realm of so-good-it-hurts before taking it away.

Panting slightly, she lay there, staring at the ceiling. In the sober light of post-orgasm she was embarrassed and ashamed of her ridiculous fantasy. While it had been nothing more than a fantasy, there was no denying the simple truth that there were things that she would do with Mark, or more precisely let Mark do to her, that she wouldn't with anyone else.

If only he'd call her.

She went to the bathroom to clean up then came back and quickly reviewed the rest of the list, this time not stopping to fantasize about each item. On the whole they were very compatible. The major issues were around her dislike of the more formal aspects of ritual BDSM—speech restrictions being one example. Surely those weren't deal breakers for him.

He would call. He'd probably call tomorrow.

Sure of this, Liz tucked the checklist under her pillow and finally went to sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day she dragged herself through work on less than four hours of sleep. The moment her alarm went off she'd scrambled to check her phone, sure she'd have a text or email from Mark. When she didn't, the surety she'd had in the night that he would call disappeared. Disappointed and angry, she felt her self-confidence starting to crumble.

By noon she'd settled into self-loathing. She locked herself in her office with a cupcake she'd made the intern get her—it was an especially potent batch of self-loathing.

All that disappeared when her computer chimed and she saw his email. The subject—Tonight.

*Liz,*

*We're starting tonight. I'll see you at 8:30 at my condo. The address is below.*

-M

No commentary, no pleasantries. Liz sat back and considered the email. Part of her wanted to lie and say that she had plans, just to see how he'd deal with that, but those were the games you played in a romantic relationship, not the games you played in a sex-based one. What was the point? They both wanted this.

In truth she was thrilled by his direct tone and manner. He wasn't condescending or rude—he was, well, dominant.

It was a Thursday night and it seemed a bit odd that he'd asked to start on what was technically a weeknight, but then again, maybe they were just meeting to go over rules and discuss the checklists.

That possibility both relieved and disappointed her. She liked the idea of further discussion of what they wanted from each other, but also worried she wouldn't be able to control herself if she had to sit there looking at Mark while they talked about things that made her wet. She might lose it and jump him, as she had in the elevator.

She replied with a simple, *I look forward to seeing you.*

Tonight.

She couldn't wait.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Liz," Mark said, opening the door and stepping back. "Please come in."

"Thank you."

Mark's hands went to her shoulders, helping her slide off her coat. He was gone for a second and then his hand was on her back, guiding her through his home. His condo was masculine, with dark leather furniture arranged around a giant TV, and smelled like pine-scented cleaner. She saw a dining room and hallway, but barely noticed the details. They stopped just inside the living room and Liz's eyes went to the gorgeous view offered by the entirely glass wall. The city was spread out before him, sparkling



urban sprawl. He was on the west side of the city and, unlike her view, his included a vast expanse of darkness where no light glittered – the Pacific Ocean stretching to the western horizon.

It would be beautiful in daylight.

“Liz,” he whispered. He was there behind her, his shoulders looming above her, head bent—he was large and commanding. Hands on her hips, he tipped her so her weight rocked onto her heels, her back against his chest. His lips were at her ear.

He dropped a kiss on her neck and she shivered.

Across her waist, up her sides, he slid his hands, skirting around to her shoulder blades then up over her shoulders.

“Close your eyes.”

She obeyed without hesitation.

Something soft slid into place over her eyes, she could feel the tug of elastic at the back of her head.

She shivered in fear and arousal.

This was it, it was happening.

He slid his hands down her neck, over her shoulders and arms to her wrists. His fingers curled, forming manacles. Her shudder passed to him where their bodies touched. He pressed closer and she could feel his erection against the top of her ass.

“Mark, please,” she whispered without thinking.

This wasn’t right, she hadn’t planned to give in like this. She wanted to be treated differently than other submissives. She wanted respect and had planned on gaining it by making her Dom earn her submission, yet here she was, begging for him when he’d barely touched her.

“On the checklist you said you didn’t like the idea of calling anyone Master or Sir.”

“No, no I don’t,” she stammered, trying to calm herself enough to focus on what he was saying. “It seems...silly. It always sounds fake to me.”

His lips fluttered over her neck and she moaned, twisting her face to the side in an attempt to kiss him. Mark pulled his head back.

"I respect that, and if you think it's awkward we won't use it. But we do need player nicknames."

Liz smiled slightly at his words. "What was your nickname when you played football?"

"Something I don't want you repeating." He kissed the other side of her neck and Liz felt herself dissolving into a puddle of arousal.

"You usually call me Mark instead of Marcus, so when we're...*playing*," he drew the word out, adding inflections all over the place, "you will call me Marcus."

"Yes, Marcus." The name, so much more formal and less approachable than Mark, sounded right. It tasted heavy and dark on her lips.

"It seems only fair that I call you Elizabeth."

Full names carried memories of parents and teachers using it to grab attention and reprimand. Entirely appropriate for their play.

"Elizabeth," he said, and there was a tone in his voice she'd never heard before. "Remove your clothes."

He was gone from her back, the sudden removal of his body heat causing her skin to prickle with cold. She couldn't see him because of the blindfold, couldn't hear him because her heart was pounding in her ears.

Liz stepped out of her shoes and untied the bow holding her wrap dress closed. She undid the inner tie, then shrugged the dress off.

She was very aware of her exposed skin, aware of the way her bra and panties cupped and touched the most sensitive pieces of her body. Liz hesitated, wanting to know where he was, wanting to know if he liked what he saw. She wasn't ashamed of her body but she wasn't a swimsuit model and carried extra weight on her hips and thighs.

“Elizabeth.”

He said nothing more but her hands went to the clasp of her bra, obeying the implied command.

She let the shoulder straps fall but cupped her hands over her breasts, holding the bra in place. Her nipples were hard against her palms, through the lace. She waited, drawing out the moment, testing him and herself.

Dropping her hands, she let the bra fall to the floor.

Next her panties, which she slid down her legs to the knee with her thumbs, then let them fall.

Marcus clenched his fists.

She was gorgeous. She had long legs, a round ass and large breasts. Her pink nipples were beaded tight. Her pussy was smooth and hairless. He was briefly puzzled as she'd said no to “waxing – vagina”. Maybe she'd just meant she didn't trust a Dom to do it.

He'd taken a seat so he could watch her in profile, wanting to see the curves of her breasts, belly and ass. He let her stand there, naked and alone, for two full minutes. He expected her to say something or move but she didn't. Instead, with each passing second, he could see her gathering her defenses, her shoulders straightening and going back.

Marcus tilted his head to the side and considered how to handle this. He didn't want to change her, he liked the way she challenged him, but he also didn't want to have her falling in and out of subspace every other minute.

“Elizabeth,” he said. She turned her head and he watched her body soften, her shoulders falling, her hips canting to one side in invitation. He remained silent and a few moments later she was back to looking tense.

He stood, bare feet silent on the hardwood floor, and came up behind her. He touched the small of her back to let her know he was there and once more captured her wrists in his hands.

Elizabeth sighed, her whole body relaxing. She tipped her head back against his shoulder, turning her face into his neck.

Marcus slid his arms around her waist, pulling her back against him. She placed her hands on his forearms, lightly stroking him.

"You need to be touched, don't you?" he whispered. "That's the only time you really feel it."

"Feel what?" she whispered.

"The desire to submit."

"Oh." She lifted her blindfolded face from his neck and tilted her head. "I guess you're right. I didn't realize."

"You shouldn't have to. It's my place to discover what will take us farthest, what will give us the most pleasure."

She shivered in his arms and Marcus wanted to roar in triumph.

"Marcus, please," she begged.

"Tell me what you want."

"You, I want you. I want you to touch me. I want to touch you."

"Turn around." She turned to face him, her head tilted back, her mouth parted, lips wet.

Marcus cupped her face and brought their mouths together in a brutal kiss. He savaged her, pressing his tongue into her mouth, nipping her lips. She moaned into the kiss, accepting him. Her hands were wrapped around him and he could feel her nipples, hard as diamonds, pressed into his chest.

He broke the kiss and pinched her chin with his thumb and index finger. He bit her bottom lip, just hard enough to have her jumping, and then released her.

Marcus manacled her wrists with his hands, brought her hands to his chest. She immediately started to unbutton his shirt. He liked that she wanted him naked, now. He'd always been dissatisfied with subs who were more interested in being ordered to undress him than actually having him undressed.

He released her wrists and she pushed his shirt from his shoulders. Her palms settled softly on his chest, exploring him with the pads of her fingertips. Now it was his turn to shiver. She smiled, just a little, and he felt the power shifting between them.

He couldn't have that.

Marcus took her hands and pressed them to his waist. She undid his belt and the button of his slacks. Her fingers inched down the zipper.

Marcus put his hand on her shoulder to push her to her knees. Elizabeth resisted, her mouth twisted in an unhappy line.

"Mark, I..."

He growled, stepped behind her and knocked her knees out from under her by pressing them forward with his own legs. She gasped and fell on all fours, her descent controlled by his hands on her upper arms.

"Don't disobey me," he warned her, grabbing the back of her neck and gently hauling her up so she was kneeling.

He peered down into her face, waiting for her to rip off the blindfold and march out of here. He hadn't hurt her. He knew how to move someone around without actually hurting them, but there was no mistaking the fact that his actions were about control. She hadn't done something he wanted so he'd physically forced her to obey. Right about now it was probably sinking in that if he wanted to, he could hurt her, force her. She was probably scared as well as aroused, so he was going to go easy on her, just in case. He knew the bone-deep fear that came from the awareness that you'd run up against someone who was physically more powerful than you and that you couldn't stop them from hurting you. They'd paid him well to look out through a helmet at men

who could cripple him. It had taken a special brand of stupid courage to jog out there each play.

Liz was doing this out of desire and need, but that didn't make it any less frightening, or courageous. He hadn't respected that enough in the past, and he wouldn't make that mistake again.

She licked her lips, chest heaving so that her breasts jiggled slightly. Marcus freed his cock and it stood up against his belly.

"I know what you want. You have to trust that, and me," Marcus said. In her checklist, *sucking – cock, while kneeling* had been ranked as neutral. Had she not also marked *sixty-nine* as a big yes, he would have thought she really didn't like having a cock in her mouth but, knowing her as he did—or as he was starting to—Marcus figured it had more to do with how cock sucking was used in the BDSM community. It was an easy and cheap way to make a girl submit and, understandably, Doms were fond of it.

She bit her lip, tilting her head down and away. He cupped her neck, forcing her chin up with his thumb planted in the soft skin under her jaw.

She nodded slightly. "I'm sorry, Marcus."

"Finish undressing me," he said. He kept his hand on her head, stroking her brow, tracing her ear, as she worked his pants and boxers down and off.

She was panting by the time she was done. Her fingers explored his legs, which showed the marks of his career. She traced the scars that decorated his knees and one hip. She moved her fingers around to his back, squeezing his ass, digging her nails in. He growled at her and she just smiled.

The tip of his cock traced her smile. Her lips were smooth and warm against him. Marcus held himself back, not touching her except for his cock at her lips. Though she was on her knees before him, he didn't grab her and fuck her mouth the way he wanted to, the way his throbbing cock demanded. He waited until her lips parted, then thrust just the tip of his cock into her mouth.

He closed his eyes in bliss as she tongued the tip, swirling around the head and flicking the slitted tip. When she tried to pull back he stopped her with a hand at her head, maintaining control, but gently.

She raised her blindfolded face and he pressed his cock deeper into her mouth. Her tongue traced the vein on the bottom of his cock, her pink lips rubbed his shaft and after only a few slow strokes he clenched his hand in her hair. She dug her nails into his ass, urging him on as he thrust into her mouth in short, hard strokes. His gaze never left her face—the sight of her on her knees before him was driving him to an embarrassingly quick orgasm.

He came then, quick and hot. He spilled into her mouth, felt her tongue flex as she swallowed. Pulling his cock from her mouth, he traced her lips with the tip. He was still hard, still wanted her. The orgasm hadn't brought long-lasting release—he wanted her too much for that.

He slipped to one knee, putting them on the same level, and pulled off the blindfold. Liz crossed her arms over her belly, hugging herself.

“You’re beautiful,” he told her. He wasn’t sure what was going on in those blue eyes but he’d seen enough women cry to know that the vaguely luminous quality was a sign of impending tears.

She smiled, laughed a little. “Thank you.”

He cupped her lower jaw, brought her in for a hard, quick kiss.

Enough of this.

“Hands behind your head,” he ordered. She hesitated, seemingly confused by the sudden shift from tender to demanding, but obeyed, lacing her fingers together.

Marcus took his time exploring her body, which was now his to touch when and how he wanted. He cupped her cheek, rubbed his thumb over her lips. With a gentle touch of his forefinger he urged her to close her eyes, then put the blindfold back in place, wanting the added vulnerability lack of sight brought. He slid his hand down her

neck, over her collarbone to the top of her right breast. He held it there, her nipple still untouched, then repeated the path with his other hand.

In a synchronized movement, he slid his hands over her nipples, cupping and lifting her breasts while her nipples speared into his palms. She shivered and moaned, sucking her lower lip into her mouth.

His hands traveled south, abandoning her breasts to caress her belly, her sides—which he discovered were ticklish—and finally her hips.

Elizabeth had her legs squeezed together, her naked mound partially protected. He couldn't have that.

"Stand," he ordered. "Good. Now spread your legs. Wider." He tapped the inside of her thigh. "Wider."

Inch by inch she spread her legs, opening her most vulnerable places to him. Marcus rose for a moment to flip on some additional lights then moved a lamp from a table onto the floor.

"I'm bringing a light closer. I want to see you."

He settled himself cross-legged on the floor, pressing his knees against the inside of her calves so she couldn't close her legs even if she wanted to.

"I want to examine you. Inspect you."

She shivered when he said "inspect".

"Ahh," he said, running his hands up her legs. "You want to be inspected. You don't like 'examined', which makes sense, since you said no to medical fantasies. Too bad, because I make a damned fine naughty nurse."

Marcus had to stop for a moment and pinch the base of his cock to calm himself while Elizabeth giggled.

Settling his hands on her hips, his thumbs pressed to the top of her naked mound, Marcus could barely breathe through the desire that lay thick in the air.



He slid his thumbs down along the lips of her sex and then pulled them open, examining her pink, wet interior.

"You have a gorgeous pussy," he told her. Marcus dipped one finger into her, rubbing the small inner lips of her sex but avoiding her clit.

He could see and feel the muscles of her thighs twitching.

"Tell me," he demanded.

"Touch me, touch me, please."

"Where?"

"Anywhere."

"How should I touch you?" He slid his finger to her entrance, then into her. Her body clenched around him.

"Ah, yes, oh please. How...however you want."

Marcus grinned in satisfaction. His thumb pressed the bottom of her clit, sliding firmly up.

Elizabeth let out a sharp cry and collapsed. Her knees gave way and she fell on top of him, knocking them both backward.

Marcus rolled her onto her back. He drove her legs open with his knees and forced her hands above her head, holding them there with one of his. She bucked and arched beneath him, wild and beautiful.

He braced himself on his free hand and paused to roll on a condom before he pressed his cock against her sex. They both shuddered in reaction. She was molten hot and slippery wet.

"I want to see you," she said, "Marcus, please."

He flipped the blindfold off, waited for her eyes to adjust, for her to focus on him, and then drove himself into her.

Elizabeth cried out, in delight and maybe pain—he wasn't small—but then her legs were around his waist, pulling her hips up to meet his thrusts. He twisted and caught

her nipple in his mouth, sucking the bud between his teeth. With each thrust of his body, he pulled sharply on her nipple.

He abandoned her nipple to look into her eyes. What he saw there brought him closer to his second orgasm.

He released her hands, tucking his forearms under her to grab her shoulders. His cock slid in and out of her smooth sex, going so deep that his body rubbed her clit on each thrust.

He could feel his orgasm building, could feel hers building in the way her body clutched at his cock when he withdrew. This was great sex, no doubt, but he wanted something more from her than sex.

Marcus pulled out. Elizabeth cried out, "No!"

He pulled her up, turned her around.

"Bend over, put your head and shoulders on the table."

He forced her into position—her cheek and shoulder resting on the low coffee table, her breasts hanging free, ass up, legs spread.

Marcus leaned back to examine her, taking in her submission, her sexuality. Her ass beckoned him.

*Smack!* He swatted her ass—once, twice, three times.

"Why," she panted, "tell me why."

"Because." He positioned himself behind her. He used his hand to rub the tip of his cock up and down her sex, bumping her clit with every pass before positioning the tip at the entrance to her body. "I want to."

He thrust in, touching places inside her that he hadn't been able to reach before. He hammered into her, each hard thrust slamming their hips together. He caught a dangling, dancing nipple with one hand and flicked it in time to his thrusts.

Close, he was so close.

"Look, look at me," he demanded.

She twisted her head to look at him. Her cheeks and lips were flushed, her eyes bright. He slid his hand from her nipple, across her belly to her sex. He placed a finger on either side of her clit and rubbed.

Elizabeth's eyes closed and teeth clenched as her orgasm claimed her. Marcus quickened his thrusts, tunneling his cock into her ultra-tight body. His own orgasm swept over him in a wave and he pulled her hips back, fusing them together.

## Chapter Four

“Are you alive?” Liz asked sometime later. She was sprawled on the floor, her head pillowed on Mark’s belly. He grunted in reply.

The lazy silence fell once more, unbroken until Liz’s abused body registered its protest at lying on hardwood. She sat up with a wince. A moment later Mark was up too, his big body at her back, his hands on her arms. He dropped a kiss onto her naked shoulder.

*No, don’t be nice. Don’t be sweet after sex or I’ll want this to be more than it is.*

She twisted away from him – an act of self-preservation.

“That was,” she smiled as she got to her feet, “more than I expected.”

Mark rose also, towering over her. He watched her with quiet eyes. Liz crossed her arms over her breasts, her shoulders hunched. “Look at our clothes – they’re everywhere. I don’t remember how my bra ended up on the couch. Do you?”

*Say something. Please, say something.*

His silence could mean only one thing – he hadn’t enjoyed that and wanted nothing to do with her.

She certainly wasn’t going to let him see how broken she was by his rejection – no, this wasn’t even rejection, it was worse, it was lack of interest. Liz picked up her panties and pulled them on, stifling a gasp as muscles in her back, legs and arms all twitched. Marcus stood between her and the couch and it was a bit of a mystery as to how exactly she’d get around him. Worst-case scenario she could just leave the bra –

Mark wrapped one steel-hard arm around her waist and pulled her to him, chest to chest. He fisted the material of her panties – pulling it tight so that it rode up along the crease of her ass and between the lips of her sex, rubbing her still-throbbing clit.

He lifted her onto her toes. Liz dug her fingers into his shoulders.

"Did I say we were done?" he growled.

Liz froze.

Marcus nearly lost his hold on Liz when she started thrashing. She'd gone still when he whispered in her ear but he shouldn't have expected her to give in so easily.

The sex they'd just had was great, no question there, but it was barely more than vanilla sex. The spansks, his control—those things started to tip the scale into kink, but weren't nearly kinky enough by his standards.

Liz thrashed in his arms, pressing the heels of her hands into his chest. She wasn't really fighting—she wasn't kicking or punching him—but she was trying to get away and he wouldn't have that.

"Did you think we were done?" he asked, backing up toward one of his big armchairs. When he was next to it he flipped her facedown over the back. He rested his hip on the corner and used his thigh to press her legs into the back of the chair. One hand on her back kept her down.

"Did you?"

"Yes," she hissed. "I thought you... I thought you didn't like it."

Marcus couldn't help it, he laughed. Didn't like it? Jesus, women were weird.

"Fuck you," Liz snarled, attempting to push herself out of the chair. Marcus increased the pressure on her back and she collapsed with a small "umph".

"That was good sex," he said, "but I want more from you than good sex."

She made a noise that might have been agreement, might have been a muffled "fuck you". Marcus grinned, knowing she couldn't see his expression, but when he spoke his voice was stern. "And you want that too, don't you?" He rubbed his palm over her butt and thighs, enjoying the feel of her skin. "Answer me, Elizabeth."

She said nothing so he swatted her ass. She jumped and wiggled. Marcus carefully tucked the edges of her panties into the crease of her ass, leaving the cheeks bare. They were light pink from her earlier spanking.

He spanked her again. "You know this isn't punishment, right? I like spanking your sweet ass. You like being spanked like a naughty girl." *Swat!* "If you want a spanking, all you have to do is ask. Doesn't mean I'll do it, but I don't want you to fight with me to get what you want."

Something in Liz relaxed at his words. She was still raw inside from thinking he'd rejected her. It was stupid—all in her head. She'd been waiting for him to push her away, the way other men had, and the instant the overwhelming physical stimulus was removed she'd overreacted and jumped to conclusions. Though he hadn't rejected her, hadn't wanted her to leave, she was still emotionally raw from thinking he was. With all those thoughts and emotions rolling around inside her, she didn't want something slow or gentle. She wanted it to hurt, she wanted it to be rough, she wanted it to be all-encompassing so that, if only for a little while, it would drown out the doubts and fears that filled her head.

"I want," she whispered, words pressed into the leather of the seat. "I mean, I don't want to have any room inside me for anything but this."

She felt Marcus go still and winced. She'd revealed too much, made it too personal and not sexy enough.

"I, uh," she said, twisting her face away from him so her other cheek pressed into the rapidly warming leather. "I want you—"

Marcus pulled her up. She staggered a little as the blood returned to her head. Marcus opened his arms and she gratefully fell into them, resting against his chest as she recovered.

This was very, very dangerous.

Great sex and fantasy fulfillment, coupled with tenderness and humor, all from a man she both liked and respected. Right. She was doomed.

She pushed away from him. "Mark," she said, deliberately using his nickname. "I'm sorry. When you didn't say anything after we had sex I assumed you were disappointed. That...well, frankly it broke my heart, as that was some of the best sex I'd had in years."

Liz shook her head and, without thinking about it, leaned into him again, taking strength and comfort from him. "You must be sick of hearing about all my hang-ups, but I know I'm not like the other girls, I mean the other subs. I'm not like them but I'm not normal either, and so I just always assume what I'm doing, or what I want, is wrong."

Mark's hand, which had been moving slowly up and down her back, slid over her ass to her knees. He squatted and picked her up, carrying her around the armchair to the couch where he could hold her on his lap. They both shivered a little as bare skin met cold leather and Marcus helped her snuggle into him.

"I wondered if it wasn't something like that," he said, voice rumbling in her ear through his chest. "I get it. You're two years behind me as far as kinky-lifestyle learning. I told you how I felt before I found the BDSM people—I felt like an abuser, a Neanderthal. It was a relief when I found out there were other people like me, but then I realized that even for them I was a little too much. They like control with words and rules—I'm more direct."

"So you don't mind it when I...fight back?" Liz asked.

"No, as long as you don't mind that you'll never get away and never win the fight." While her question had been half-teasing, his response was completely serious.

Liz nodded in agreement. He looked down and away and she realized that this was a worry point for him too.

"Hey," she said, turning his face to hers with a hand on his cheek. "I don't want to get away, sometimes everything that's going on just wells up and fighting seems like the only outlet when I don't really want to fight."

He smiled. "I'm glad. You'd different than the others," he said.

"Thank you," Liz said, hoping it was a compliment.

She took a deep breath, inhaling his masculine scent. Feeling more secure in herself and in what they were doing, Liz's desire rose once more. Leaning away from him, she took time to study his chest, the smooth skin with its light dusting of hair, small flat nipples and the thick slabs of muscle beneath.

"Like what you see?" he asked.

"I do." Liz feathered kisses across his chest. The butterfly kisses turned to open-mouth wet kisses, then nips. She bit him, hard, just above his left nipple.

Mark jerked in surprise. He grabbed her by the back of the neck and pulled her away. He looked down at her with both eyebrows raised. Nervously biting her lower lip, Liz smiled – slyly, teasingly.

Marcus' brows lowered and a low growl rumbled in his chest. "You are a very bad girl," he said.

"That's okay, because I know you would never punish me," she said slowly, each word saying that she wanted, more than anything, to be punished.

"Won't punish you?" One eyebrow rose, disappearing behind the hair that was tumbled over his forehead.

Liz blinked innocently. "Isn't that what you said? I think that's what you said."

He regarded her for a moment and Liz fluttered her eyes. "You're perfect," he said, and she wasn't entirely sure he'd meant to say it out loud – though she was glad he had.

In the next breath she was facedown over his lap.

"I think you need a spanking," he said.



Her panties were still tucked into the crease of her ass, leaving the cheeks bare. He caressed them with his open palm, lightly tapping each one.

Liz pressed her hands to the floor to hold herself up. Little ripples of desire were shooting through her and he hadn't even started yet. He pinched her left ass cheek near the bottom where butt met thigh and she yelped.

*Smack.*

He spanked her right cheek with enough force to have her bouncing against his thighs. It hurt, and for a moment she thought *oh no, ouch, I don't like this* but then the pain morphed to warm pleasure and the fact of where she was—over the lap of a man who wanted to use and abuse her—washed over her. The combination of mental and physical stimuli crashed down on her like a ten-foot wave.

"Oh my God, that felt good. I didn't know, I mean I suspected, but I was scared it couldn't be as good as I'd imagined, but it is—"

*Smack, smack.*

"Count it," he demanded.

He spanked her again, twice in rapid succession.

"O—one, two, three."

"No. You're being a bad girl. Those don't count. We'll begin again."

*Smack.*

"Oh! One."

By five her ass was warm, by eight it was stinging. There were tears in her eyes for nine and ten. She relaxed after ten, assuming they were done.

*Smack.*

"Ouch!" Liz cried out, lifting one hand from the floor.

"You thought we were done, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Don't assume anything. Don't assume you know what I'll do to you, even if you've asked for it."

"I didn't ask for this," she said breathily.

*Smack.* "No lying."

She *was* lying—this is exactly what she'd wanted when she teased him about refusing to punish her. Liz braced herself on one hand and twisted so she could see him, neck straining until he slipped a hand under her to brace her.

"You're right. I'm sorry," she said. "Is it a problem for you that I did that—acted like that?"

"No," he ran his hand over her well-spanked ass, "but don't think that I'm always going to be that easy to play."

"I wasn't trying to play you. I just wanted..."

"You wanted something rough?"

Liz thought about his question, then nodded.

"I'm glad that you had the courage to let me know what you wanted, even if you didn't just come out and say it. I won't always give you what you want, exactly when you want it."

"I know that," she said.

"Do you?" His dark gaze bored into her. "Do you have any idea how to really give up control?"

Neck aching from twisting to look at him, Liz dropped her head, staring at the floor. "I don't know," she whispered.

Mark grabbed her wadded panties and pulled hard, snapping her back into a world of pure physical sensation. She was aroused and wet from the spanking, the brutal, almost casual flip from conversation to sensual intensifying that arousal.

"Marcus," she moaned. Her lacy underwear was wedged between the lips of her sex, the seam rubbing directly against her already sensitive clit.

“How about this.” His fingers were pinching and pulling her ass cheeks, making her feel terribly vulnerable. “If you want something rough, if you want a spanking, all you have to do is ask for it.”

His finger traced the fabric of her underwear between her legs to her sex. The pad of his index finger brushed over her clit, trapped by fabric. Elizabeth nearly came out of her skin.

He chuckled – rather evilly – and scraped his nail over the fabric covering her clit.

“Holy shit!” Elizabeth gasped, her toes curling. The sensation was exquisitely fine, almost too much to bear. He did it again.

And again.

She pressed her legs together, denying his hand access, and he spanked her before repositioning her on his lap with her upper body across his thighs, her ass and legs off the side, forcing her legs apart.

“Spread them,” he demanded.

“Marcus, please...”

“Spread your legs for me.”

She inched her toes across the floor, parting her legs.

“Wider.”

He kneaded the inside of her thigh, massaging his hand up to her sex. He cupped her sex, placed his thumb over her clit. She tensed, waiting for the deliciously sharp pleasure. His nail scraped her panties over her clit. She struggled to keep her legs spread. Grabbing his leg with one hand, she dug her nails in, the other hand clenched around a lower rung of the chair.

The only sensation was his thumb on her clit, scraping over flesh protected by cloth but sensitive from the prior orgasm. Soon she was thrusting against his leg, gasping his name.

Elizabeth screamed as she came, her legs slamming together, trapping his hand.

The orgasm was quick and hard, tensing the muscles in her shoulders, belly and legs, causing her to clench her teeth around the scream. It was gone in the next breath, leaving her a boneless heap across his lap where she lay, gasping, for several minutes.

"That was beautiful," Marcus said when she'd recovered, helping her to sit up.

Her underwear, wedged against her body, rubbed her clit and an aftershock shook her.

"Off, off," she begged though teeth that were nearly chattering. "Please, take them off. Marcus, please."

He slid her panties off her hips, throwing them away once they'd cleared her feet.

"That was...um, wow," Liz said, staring at the ceiling. Marcus slid out from under her, returning a moment later with a glass of water. She sat up and took the glass, drinking half in one go. She raised a brow when she saw that he'd put on a robe.

He settled into the armchair closest to the couch and pulled the black portfolio from the base of the table beside it.

"Now that the introductions are over, let's get down to business."

Marcus cleared his throat. "I'd like to thank you for joining me this evening. There are some things we should go over before we start. It would be a mistake to do anything before we set the ground rules." He looked up at her and grinned.

Liz huffed out a laugh and leaned over the couch, reaching for her wrap dress. Marcus stretched out one long arm and stopped her.

"You get a robe and I don't?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Marcus," she warned. She'd said no to *naked – complete denial of clothes*.

"I like looking at you. Sit down."

She sank back into her seat.

"Now then, there are a few things we need to agree on," he said, looking at the papers he held. "We have both certified that we're disease free and you're on birth control, meaning condoms are unnecessary, though if you'd like I will use them."

"We'll use condoms for anal sex, correct?" She could feel the wetness seeping from between her bare legs onto his couch. Served him right.

"Of course. Safeword—I'd prefer to use the stoplight method. Do you know what that is?"

"Green means go or more, yellow means slow down or I'm uncomfortable, red means stop, immediately and the scene will end," Liz said, matching his businesslike tone, though that was hard to do while she was completely naked. Her only satisfaction was that she could see him sneaking glances at her. She felt beautiful and powerful.

"That's correct," he said, after ogling her boobs for a moment. "Though with me red will mean stop what you're doing, but the scene will not end entirely."

"What do I say if I want everything to end?" Liz asked.

Marcus looked up, met her gaze. "There's nothing you can say to get away from me until I'm done with you."

Liz let the meaning of his words sink in and let out a slow breath. It was no wonder he'd had trouble in the scene. Those words were a big red flag. If he were anyone else she'd be out the door.

"Can you agree to that?" he pushed.

Liz nodded, reluctantly.

"Say it," he demanded.

"You want me to say that whenever I walk through that door I'm yours until you're done with me? How am I realistically supposed to agree to that?"

He just looked at her, then back to the paper in front of him. Marcus' free hand was curled into a fist.

Liz narrowed her eyes. "What happened?"

He shook his head. "Not now. Maybe...later."

"No, now. Marcus, I can't agree to no real safeword."

"Don't you trust me?"

"That's not fair. I trust the boy I knew years ago and I like you, but I'm going to be putting myself in some very scary situations. You've already shown that you're going to push me and be aggressive, which is what I want, but I need a way out in case you bump up against something that's a deal breaker for me."

Marcus looked at his hands. "You're right. It's just that...the last sub I had, every time we did something she didn't like she'd use her safeword, but as soon as she did she'd want to reset the clock and start the session over. She just used it to play me."

"I promise you I won't use the safeword that way," she said.

After a beat of silence Marcus nodded. "What's your safeword?"

"Rochester."

"And your hand signal?"

Elizabeth held up the pinky fingers on both hands—her safeword for those times when she wouldn't be able to talk.

"Got it," Marcus said, writing down what she'd said. "We already agreed that we'll use our full first names in place of titles."

He noted a few more things on the paper then passed it to her. Liz reviewed it, not surprised to see it was a Dom/sub contract, all the blanks carefully filled in. In the "length of contract" section Marcus had written "indefinite".

How was she supposed to handle that?

Deciding she'd handled enough for one night, she initialed each of the four pages and signed at the bottom of the last page.

She passed it back to him and he signed just below her name. He slid the contract into the portfolio and put it away.

After two orgasms, Liz assumed she was done, but when Marcus beckoned her she went willingly and easily into his arms. Sliding her knees on either side of his hips, she sat back on his thighs. She was acutely aware of her bare breasts and vulnerable nipples. When his hand cupped her rib cage, just below her breast, her body tingled to life.

“How is it that I can still feel this way, still want you?” she asked.

“I don’t know, but I feel the same. Do you have to work tomorrow?”

“I wasn’t planning on it.”

“Good, then you’re mine for the weekend.”

Marcus laid her back on the coffee table, a cruel hard thing at her back, and spread her legs.

## Chapter Five

Liz woke the next morning to find Mark's hand cupping her breast. She stretched, winced and rolled onto her belly, his hand slipping away. She lay on her stomach for a minute, stretching out her back before sliding out of bed.

She locked the bathroom door, wanting a few minutes to herself. Leaning on the counter, she looked at herself in the mirror. Her hair was a disaster, makeup long gone. There were stubble burns on her neck and across her chest, faint bruises on her upper arms and, when she turned to check the back, her butt had a few pink fingerprints.

Mark, Marcus, whoever, had decided last night that since she'd enjoyed her first spanking so much, she'd get a second one. He'd turned her over his knee and spanked her already pink ass until it was on fire, until she was jumping and yelping with each blow. She'd promised to be good, she'd promised to be bad, she'd promised to do anything and everything he'd wanted. He'd assured her that she would do those things anyway and went right on spanking her.

She'd loved it. *Loved it.*

The spanking had lasted a long time, with Marcus taking frequent breaks to play with her pussy or breasts. By the time he was done he'd been able to put four of his very thick fingers into her.

Through it all, his cock had been pressed into her belly, a long, hot rod that reminded her how this was sure to end. When he had finally fucked her again he'd made her stand, bent at the waist with her hands braced on the wall and her feet spread. He'd fucked her roughly, swatting her already stinging ass between thrusts. Her arms were sore from holding herself up, from keeping her body in place so that the force of his fucking wouldn't slam her into the wall.



He'd warned her as he came, their hips fused together, his thrusts lifting her onto her toes—next time he did this she'd have a plug in her ass and weights dangling from her nipples.

That delicious, dark threat had brought her to orgasm.

Liz touched her ass, almost disappointed that there wasn't more evidence of what she'd been through.

Her inner thighs were sticky, as were her hands and breasts. Liz jumped into Mark's shower, washing herself with a variety of man-scented products. She felt much more human when she climbed out. She would have paid fifty dollars for a toothbrush—a quick search revealed no extras.

Wrapped in a towel, with her finger-combed hair falling down her back, Liz exited the bathroom. The bed, an enormous mattress in a tall frame, was empty.

She heard murmured voices and closed the bedroom door, pressing her ear to the crack so she could hear. What if it was other Doms, or white slavers, or...

"Thanks, man, this is perfect," Mark was saying. She couldn't hear the other person's reply.

The front door closed and the smell of pancakes drifted to her.

She opened the door a crack and peered out. Mark was in the kitchen, unloading Styrofoam boxes from a large bag.

"Good morning," he said, the corners of his eyes crinkling as he smiled.

"Good morning," she replied, leaving the bedroom. "I hope you don't mind that I used your shower."

"Of course not." He handed her a box containing a short stack of pancakes and another with sausage and bacon.

"You do realize I don't ever eat things like this," she said, breaking a slice of bacon into small pieces and eating one bit at a time. She loved the taste, hated the calories.

"Woman, I don't want to hear about your diet. You're gorgeous."

"Because I don't eat pig fat," she argued, waving the bacon at him.

He grabbed a sausage from her box, ripped it in two with his fingers. "Open."

She opened her mouth and let him put the sausage on her tongue. She closed her mouth and chewed slowly. He placed two pieces of sausage in a pancake, rolled them up and ate it like a burrito.

"Ugh, that's disgusting," she said, secretly wanting to do it too.

"I'm hungry," he said, completely unapologetic. "I save my manners for dates. This is post-sex food. This is about restoring our strength, not looking pretty while we eat."

Liz tore a strip from a pancake and nibbled on it. Her stomach rumbled.

"Told you so," Mark said, grinning. Liz threw the rest of the pancake at him.

He made himself another pancake and sausage burrito and headed for the bathroom, shucking the boxers he'd pulled on as he went. Liz wolf-whistled and he added a little ass-wiggle to his walk.

Liz grinned as she finished a pancake and the shredded piece of bacon. Her smile faded and she wondered if this wasn't a horrible mistake. If he'd been a stranger they wouldn't be having this casual, friendly breakfast. They'd still be in D/s mode, or they'd be taking a very definitive break and having a polite conversation. There was no doubt that this wasn't a straightforward D/s relationship because they already knew each other, were already friends. But she liked him, always had, and this didn't feel like a mistake. It felt wonderful, satisfying in a way she'd only dreamed of.

The fact that he was an amazing and dangerous lover was just an added bonus.

She spent a few minutes daydreaming about what would have happened if they'd hooked up in college. Undoubtedly they would have quickly learned about one another's kinks—though she was only starting to admit to them at that age—and by now they'd be married with a large house, happily fucking each other silly every night.

Whoa, where had the M-word come from?

Liz stress-ate a second piece of bacon as she did her best to pretend she hadn't thought about Mark and the M-word together.

He returned wearing a towel of his own. He leaned against the counter next to her and started eating her remaining pancakes. For every two bites he took he fed her one.

"I'm going to have to spend hours in the gym," she mumbled around the bite of pancake he'd just put in her mouth.

"Sex burns calories."

"I think you did most of the work," she said. "I doubt *getting* spanked actually burns calories."

Liz regretted saying it the moment the words left her mouth. Their teasing banter had avoided the specifics of last night but now she'd broken the truce.

He leaned into her personal space, caging her between his chest and the back of the barstool she was sitting on. "I don't know about that," he rumbled, "all that twitching and jumping and begging probably used up some calories."

Liz licked her lips and looked up, meeting his gaze.

"What you said yesterday, about my having to agree not to leave until you were done with me..."

"I meant that," he said, deadly serious.

"I don't doubt that. I was just wondering... Are you done with me?"

"Not even close."

\* \* \* \* \*

Elizabeth pressed her fingers into the thick pads of muscle on Marcus' shoulders, running her stiff fingers down either side of his spine then out across his sides, kneading as she went.

He mumbled something and then lifted his head slightly. "You're good at this," he said sleepily.

Elizabeth bared her teeth at him and he chuckled, tugged on the thin silver chains he held in one hand.

Elizabeth moaned and leaned into him as the clamps on her nipples tightened.

Marcus rolled onto his back, propping his head up on one folded arm. He watched her with hooded eyes. His free hand toyed with two thin chains—the same chains attached to the clover clamps on her nipples.

She settled her oily hands on his belly. She wasn't sure exactly how to massage a man's front but she was going to do her best. She could probably do better if she wasn't being driven mad with arousal and anticipation by the clamps on her nipples.

Sliding her hands across his upper belly and pecs, she was waiting, always waiting, for him to manipulate the chains.

After breakfast Marcus had made her close her eyes. She'd sat impatiently, and nakedly, on the couch and listened to him moving around. Anticipation had turned to puzzlement when she heard the distinctive *snick* of scissors on paper.

He'd taken a seat on the couch beside her, picked up her hand and placed it against something soft. "Pick one."

Liz's exploring fingers had identified the soft thing as a baseball hat—filled with folded bits of paper. She'd smiled and opened one eye to peek at him. He'd pushed her eyelid down with his thumb.

"What am I picking out of the hat?"

"What I'm going to do to you today."

"Oh really?"

"See, I'm not that controlling. I'm letting you pick."

Liz laughed lightly. "Oh yes, you're a sheep in wolf's clothing. What exactly is on the paper? Diagrams? Stick figures fucking?"

"That's not a bad idea—the stick figures, but no. It's the checklist. I printed out a fresh copy and cut it up into sections."

"Oh," Liz said, drawing the word out. "And what if the things on the piece I pick are also on my 'no' list?"

"Then..." He leaned in so that his words fluttered against her cheek. His hand went to her bare back, stroking up and down her spine. "You'll have to trust me."

She plucked a paper from the hat and held it out. Marcus took it from her. "This will be fun."

She opened her mouth to ask what it said, then closed it. She wasn't going to ask.

"Open your eyes."

The minute she looked at him Marcus swept in and kissed her. Elizabeth's eyes fluttered closed as she sank into the power of his kiss. He bore her back onto the couch, his big body pressing down on her, controlling her, protecting her. Elizabeth slid her legs around his waist, pulling his hips to hers. The robe he wore fell open and the thick length of his cock pressed against her sex.

"Marcus," she whispered, "fuck me, please."

His forehead dropped to her shoulder. "I should paddle your ass for being so..."

Liz lifted her hips, sliding her sex along the underside of his cock. "So what?"

"So fucking hot." He took a deep, shuddering breath then looked up. The laughing friend she'd shared breakfast with had stepped down and Marcus, the man who'd so effortlessly mastered her last night, had taken his place.

He slid out from between her legs and Liz couldn't stop the frown of disappointment that pulled her lips down. "No sex?"

"Come here, wench."

"Wench?" Liz laughed and placed her hand in his. He pulled her from the couch, led her to the bedroom. The slip of paper was still in his hand and Liz wanted, desperately, to snatch it and see what it said.

Marcus pulled a large, shallow container from under the bed. Liz inched forward, looking into the box with trepidation even as her nipples beaded. She could see a

paddle, a small coil of climber's rope, a bunch of feathers and a clear box containing three graduated sizes of glass plugs.

Marcus closed the box and pushed it into place under the bed.

"Like what you saw?" he asked.

She just nodded. Marcus' hands were empty. What had he taken from the box?

He pulled the paper from his robe pocket and handed it to her.

*Massage – getting*

*Massage – giving*

*Medical play*

*Model for erotic pictures*

*Mouth bits*

*Nipple clamps*

*Nipple weights*

Liz read the list a second time. "Medical play" had been on her "no" list, but the others...

When she looked up, Marcus held out his closed fist. One finger at a time he uncurled his hand, revealing what waited in his palm—a small bottle of massage oil. Liz sighed heavily, nearly lightheaded with the letdown.

Marcus was grinning, clearly aware of what he was doing to her. Dropping his robe, he sat on the bed, beckoning her forward with one finger. She stepped up to him, leaning against his knees.

"You're going to give me a massage."

She took the bottle of massage oil and examined it. She wished they were doing anything other than this—a massage was sensual and gentle, the action of a lover. Of course there had been plenty of instruction regarding serving and grooming of Doms in

her BDSM 101 classes, but this wasn't what she wanted. She wanted sex, lots of hot, rough sex.

"But I wouldn't want you to get bored or too...comfortable." His hands settled on her hips, smoothing up her ribs to cup her breasts. She took a breath, her breasts lifting and falling in his hands. His thumbs circled her areolas. Her already pert nipples crinkled into tight buds. He grinned.

Warm breath washed over her left nipple, then her right. The tip of his tongue touched each bud, his head moving smoothly between her nipples as he squeezed her breasts together. Liz had to place her hands on his shoulders to hold herself up.

The touches to her nipples were so precise and intimate that each breath, lick and kiss sent sensation bolting into her clit.

Finally he took her left nipple into the hollow of his mouth. His tongue licked then flicked. He closed his teeth over the bud, gently at first, but with pressure that grew until it was pain, until she cried out, her fingernails digging into his shoulders even as her hips thrust forward.

He repeated the ritual on her right nipple. This time she knew the pain would come, knew he would touch her, abuse her, in ways no man had ever dared, and the anticipation made the first tingle of pain all the sweeter.

He pulled back, blowing on her wet nipples.

"Watch me," he demanded, voice rough.

She looked down, watched him take a nipple clamp from the pocket of his discarded robe. The complicated-looking clamp glittered evilly.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked. His left hand still cupped her right breast, his thumb rolling her wet nipple.

"Nipple clamp," she whispered.

"More than that, it's a clover clamp. See the ring at the bottom? When I pull that the clamp gets tighter."

She looked at him, licked her lips, looked at the clamp.

"You want this, don't you?"

She nodded.

"It's going to hurt," he warned her — promised her.

"Yes, yes," she moaned.

He pressed the center of the clamp, opening the pinch. Each side was tipped by a small ball. He centered her nipple inside the clamp.

Liz's rapid breaths were jiggling her breasts. Marcus squeezed her left breast to hold it still and gently released the clamp.

Liz cried out but it didn't really hurt. She took a breath and examined the sensation. It was no harsher than fingers holding her nipple — she was a little bit afraid it would fall off.

Marcus rolled and pinched her other nipple before placing the matching clamp on it. This time she didn't cry out.

"How do those feel?" he asked.

"Nice," she said.

"I know what you're thinking," he said with a wicked smile. "Scared?"

"No," she answered truthfully.

"I meant scared I'd disappoint you?"

Liz hesitated, but again said, "No."

Marcus grabbed her chin, forcing her to look at him. His eyes were dark and intense, flecked with gold. She could feel the strength of him, both physical and of spirit, surrounding her. "I can't force you to trust me, but trust me. I'll give you what you need. If I started with the fucked-up, dangerous things we both crave it would scare you away. So trust me."

He pulled her down for a punishing kiss then released her, the intensity of the moment melting away as if it hadn't happened.



Marcus attached thin chains to the loops on the bottom of each clamp. The chains dangled against her belly, ticking her.

Marcus slid onto the bed, rolling onto his belly and stretching out with the ease and arrogance of a king. "Hand me your chains."

Liz carefully passed him the ends of the chains.

"Good, now massage my back."

She poured some massage oil into her palms, warming it before settling her hands on his back. She stroked his back and the tight curve of his ass. He was roped and slathered in muscle. He wasn't the giant he'd been in college, but out here in the real world, where there weren't other football players to compare him to, his size was always startling.

Liz's fingers followed the muscles of his shoulders, watched them twitch under her touch. She hadn't been looking forward to this, but now that she was doing it she was into it. She liked touching this man. She liked his size, his strength, his reactions to her touch.

She was so aroused she'd probably come if he breathed on her clit. If he fucked her she'd explode and that's what she wanted, to explode. "Isn't there something you'd like more than a massage?" she murmured.

Marcus lifted himself onto one elbow to look at her. The expression on his face made her pull her hands back, a cool knot of fear and anticipation forming in her belly. Without a word he jerked one of the chains.

The clamp on her right nipple tightened, the balls pressing together, squeezing the flesh. Sweet, hot pain zipped from her nipple down to her clit.

Not done with her, he ordered her to climb off the bed. Mindful of the chains, she obeyed.

"Face the wall. Bend over," he commanded.

He swatted her ass twice.

"Face me," he said.

She'd been bad so he spanked her. Liz shivered, watching him with anticipation.

With cold deliberation he picked up the chains.

"Massage my back," he said, voice thick with arrogance.

Liz exhaled and picked up the bottle of massage oil.

Lying on his back, Marcus looked at Elizabeth. She was flushed from her breasts up to her cheeks. Her eyes were bright and wild and he could see the glint of wetness at her sex.

The clamps were tight—the tips of her nipples were white. He couldn't leave them on her much longer. He tugged again, just enough to move the clamps, not enough to tighten them further. Her eyes fluttered closed.

Grabbing her wrists, he pulled her down so she leaned over the bed. Her breasts dangled free. Taking one clamp, he twisted it slightly. Elizabeth cried out and grabbed his forearm, nails digging in.

"Did I tell you to stop massaging me?" he growled.

"N-n-n-no," she stammered, shaking her head, but her hands didn't move. He released the clamp and she cried out again, arching her back. "Marcus, please, please."

It wasn't fear that had her stammering, but overwhelming arousal. Marcus was sure of it, because he felt the same. He'd had to turn over because he couldn't stand lying on his wet and dripping cock anymore. Rubbing her tightly budded nipple with his thumb, he replaced the clamp.

Elizabeth's breath was coming in short, choppy pants, the chain between the clamps swaying back and forth to brush her belly lightly. He gave her a moment to gather herself as he stroked her belly. When her breathing had calmed he traced the other clamp and twisted.

She screamed and collapsed forward onto the bed. Fisting a hand in her hair, he forced her mouth to his cock. She took it between her lips without hesitation. He was right—she was fine with sucking cock.

Slapping her ass as she sucked him—just because he wanted to—Marcus then smeared his fingers through the massage oil on his chest before sliding them into her pussy. He shouldn't have bothered, she was dripping wet. Her teeth closed around his cock when he added a second finger and he growled at her.

She licked him in apology.

He pushed a third finger into her pussy, filling her, stretching her. This time she didn't bite but instead went wild, her mouth bobbing up and down, her tongue teasing the tip as she pulled back. Three fingers in her pussy, he released her hair and picked up the chains.

He twisted the fingers inside her, drilling them in deeper. His thumb pressed between the cheeks of her ass, resting on her anus. She jerked and moaned as he touched her there.

"I can't wait to take your ass," he told her, feeling her pussy react to his words. "I'm going to fuck your ass soon."

She nodded, her hips pumping back and forth. She was losing control, her hands were everywhere, stroking any piece of him she could reach, her back arched, hips thrusting in a desperate rhythm as she continued to suck his cock.

He felt his orgasm building and took up the slack in the chains. He pulled his fingers from her pussy, wiping her juices on her thigh and ass so he could see them, smell them. He pulled her head from his cock.

"Ride me," he demanded and she scrambled onto the bed, moving awkwardly to keep from jerking her nipples.

She straddled him and sank down, his cock tunneling into her molten, wet pussy. She came. He felt it happen in the tightening of her pussy, saw it in the closed eyes and held breath.

The sight of her climaxing pushed him over the edge and with a hiss he came too. He waited, waited until she was starting to come down, waited for his own orgasm to dissipate.

Then he jerked the chains, yanking the clamps from her nipples.

Elizabeth screamed, her hands going to her breasts. He was ready for that and caught her hands, holding them away. He turned, rolling her underneath him.

She thrashed in pain as he pinned her wrists together above her head. His cock, still hard despite the orgasm, had slipped from her when they rolled.

"Look at me," he demanded.

"You bastard, that hurts!" she screamed.

Marcus forced her legs farther apart and slammed his cock into her.

Elizabeth's eyes went wide with surprise. She shuddered.

"Fuck, oh fuck, yes," she whispered.

"Do your nipples still hurt?" he growled, looking down at her pink and white breasts. The sight of them jiggling in time with his thrusts spurred him on.

"Yes, fuck you."

"Good."

"Bastard," she said, legs around his hips. "I can't come again."

"You can," he assured her, adjusting his knees so he could fuck her deeper. She moaned. "I'm going to make you."

Her teeth were clenched, her body tight around him. She'd come once and would need more stimulation to achieve orgasm again. Not wanting to change position to reach her clit, Marcus pressed his lips against her neck, whispering dark, dirty things—things he might not ever do but that sounded right in those wild moments before orgasm.

“You’re mine now. I’m going to fuck you whenever and however I want. I’m going to pierce your nipples. I’ll lead you around by chains, jerking them. Fuck you while I pull them. Whenever I want.”

Elizabeth moaned, pressing her cheek against his head. He grinned savagely. The aural stimulation was working. Marcus released her hands so he could concentrate on fucking her. He couldn’t come again so soon but he could enjoy the sensation of being in her while she orgasmed.

“Maybe I’ll pierce your clit and attach a chain to it too. Is that what you want? Want me to pierce your pretty clit, wrap you up in chains, fuck your pussy, ass, mouth?”

“Marcus!”

She screamed his name as she orgasmed again.

## **Chapter Six**

Saturday morning crept in on soft paws, the sun slowly lighting the western sky and seeping under the heavy velvet drapes. Liz woke when a poorly located gap between panels allowed a blade of too-bright light to cut across her sleeping face.

She rolled away from the window. Mark's hand smoothed down her arm and he mumbled something soothing. He pulled the duvet up over her shoulder. Warm and content, Liz went back to sleep.

She woke several hours later due to the heat. Even with the curtains the sun was heating up the room and Mark was a furnace. Throwing off the duvet, Liz slid off the high bed, lifting her hair off her neck as she padded to the bathroom.

The bathroom was dark and cool. Liz stretched, rolling up onto her toes and lifting her arms over her head. The inside of her thighs, ass and calves all ached as if she'd worked out. Her breasts, however...

Liz flipped on the light and faced herself in the mirror. Her hair was post-sex tangle, her cheeks flushed and lips plump but pale. She lifted and cupped her own breasts, holding the heaving globes. Her nipples were dark pink and drawn tight. She gingerly touched them with her thumbs and hissed in pain.

A shiver racked her, followed by another, then another. Panic darkened her vision. She fumbled for a towel, wrapping it around herself and sinking to the floor. Liz gasped for air, a terrifying band around her chest. Drawing up her knees, she pressed her head into them, shaking.

What was she doing? This was insane. Insane. Normal people didn't want this. Normal people wanted sex to be pleasurable, fun. The words tumbled through her head—her own doubts mixed with the angry words of the man she should have married.

She'd thrown away everything because she was picky in bed. A good man, a great life and the surety of love had been tossed aside on the hope that there would someday be something that tamed the wildness inside.

Sitting on the floor with her heart breaking, even as part of her delighted in the marks on her body, Liz hated herself.

*Wake up. Come in here and save me from myself. Touch me so that I can't think anymore.*

Liz wrapped her arms over her head. As if she wasn't pathetic enough, now she was expecting a man to save her. Absolutely pathetic.

Pathetic, broken, deviant.

Fisting her hands in her hair, Liz gritted her teeth. She deserved the pain without the pleasure. She should be black and blue—that's what she deserved for wanting this.

Pushing to her feet, mind clouded by a black fog, Liz left the bathroom. Dropping the towel, she climbed onto the bed beside Marcus. He lay on his back, one arm over his head. She jerked the duvet and cover down and off. He started slightly and groaned, rolling his head to one side but not waking.

"Come on, you bastard," Liz growled, "wake up and hurt me."

She drew up her fist and punched him in the stomach.

Mark jerked awake, coughing as he struggled to regain his breath. What the fuck had just happened?

Liz was kneeling beside him. She was naked, filtered light highlighting her killer body. Her face was in shadow.

Had he dreamed that? Mark rubbed his stomach. It didn't feel as if he'd dreamed it.

He shook his head and sat up. Frankly, he could do with some more sleep, but it was rude to roll over and go back to sleep if there was a hot naked girl on the bed. Rude and stupid.

"Morning, Liz," he said, reaching for her.

She slapped him. Hard.

Mark fell back, the left side of his face smarting, his ear ringing. Liz lifted her fist again. This time Mark caught her hand before she could hit him.

What the fuck was going on?

"What the fuck is this?" he snarled.

Still holding her fist, he slid off the bed. She climbed down too. With her back to the window he couldn't read her face, but the stiff set of her shoulders was not that of a happy woman.

"Are you angry about yesterday?" he asked. He was *not* going to apologize for doing things they'd both wanted. By God he was tired of being made to feel like a fucking rapist.

She didn't respond except to try to knee him in the balls.

Cursing as he twisted his hips to the side, Mark shook his head to clear it. He needed to get control of this situation.

Grabbing Liz by the upper arms, he forced her to sit on the side of the bed.

"What's going on?" he demanded.

She'd softened when he touched her. Her shoulders lowered, her head tipping to the side. He heard her let out a small broken sigh.

She jerked her arm free and punched him in the stomach again.

Snarling, he pushed her onto her back, pinning her arms to her sides.

"What. The. Fuck." Leaning over her, he finally got a look at her face. There was nothing there—her expression was frozen, stiff. Eyes flat and dead as a doll's.

*Shit.*

"Hit me back," she demanded.

"I'm not going to fight you, and I'm sure as fuck not going to hit you in anger. What's going on, what happened?"

"I don't want to talk." She wriggled, her breathing rapid.



"I don't care. Talk."

"Just hit me!"

"I'm not going to hurt you."

"You did last night."

Mark let go of her, his gut gone cold. "You think that's what last night was?"

He willed her to say no, to say that she knew that what he'd done hadn't been about hurting her but about pleasuring them both. The physical domination was just a way to get there. He wasn't an abuser.

She said nothing.

"So this is what," he asked tightly, "suicide by Dom? I can't believe this, Liz. I can't believe you."

"I...I'm..." Liz looked away.

Mark plucked his robe from the floor and put it on. "I thought you got it. I thought you wanted...what I want. If you want some stupid fucker to smack you around and make you feel victimized you've got the wrong guy."

"We're disgusting," she said, looking right at him with those dead eyes.

"No, I'm not." Mark grabbed her purse off the floor and tossed it onto the bed beside her. "Get out."

\* \* \* \* \*

In a house in the hills, a woman broken by her own desires sat on the floor weeping.

"Mark deserves better than this," Liz said, wiping away tears. "He's perfect. I'm the one who's broken."

On a moonlit beach, a man dying of loneliness stopped mid-run and fell to his knees.

"Fuck this," Mark snarled. "It is not ending like this. At the very least she needs to tell me what went wrong."

Two paths stretched before them—one easy but pale, the other jagged with difficulty but hot and bright as the noon sun.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mark was toweling off sweat and sand before getting into his car when his phone rang. He frowned, not wanting to deal with his buddies asking him why he hadn't met them at the bar. He was in a rough mood, the kind of mood that ended with property damage and tabloid headlines.

His phone buzzed again, this time with a text message. "Elizabeth Brown Cell" popped up on the screen.

*I'm sorry. I'd like to explain. Will you meet me? You pick place and time.*

Well, this was surprising. Mark assumed he'd have to go bang on her door to get her to talk to him. He was relieved that she was rational again, or seemed to be. The person in his condo this morning...

He shook his head. He didn't know who that chick was, but he didn't like her.

*Monday 8 p.m. My place.*

Mark hopped into his SUV and laid his head back, spinning his phone on his palm. How would she take his response? Would she assume that he was asking her there for sex?

If she did she'd be sorry. The barn doors were closed until she proved to him that she wasn't some self-hating lunatic masochist.

\* \* \* \* \*

Liz pulled in to Mark's parking structure at 7:04 p.m. She drove out at 7:28, tears sliding down her face. At 7:34, she pulled into a gas station and laid her head against the wheel until she got herself under control. From 7:38 to 7:45 she lectured herself.

Liz pulled in to Mark's parking structure – again – at 7:51 p.m.

She stood outside his door precisely at 8 p.m. but didn't ring the bell. She couldn't do it, couldn't face him. Embarrassment and shame kept her hands at her sides. He was such a great guy – successful, smart, hot, funny and a freak in bed. He was literally the perfect guy for her, and in the middle of a weekend of awesome sex she'd screwed everything up.

*Isn't that why you screwed it up? If you fell for him and he didn't fall for you, no man would ever measure up and you'd be alone forever.*

She wanted to see him, smell him, feel his hands on her. She wanted to run from him, pretend they'd never re-met.

Liz was staring at the carpet – her massive internal war crippling her – when the door swung open.

"How long were you going to stand out here?" Mark asked.

He was wearing gray slacks and a black dress shirt, open at the neck to show golden-brown skin and a black undershirt. Liz felt underdressed in her jeans, t-shirt and lightweight jacket. Mark stepped back and she entered, tentatively. As he closed the door the scent of him – cologne, leather and sweat – washed over her.

Liz hugged her arms to her belly. The urge to throw herself into his arms and cry was nearly overwhelming.

Mark brushed past her into the living room. Liz trailed behind, pulling her self-confidence around her like an iron cloak. It was the same shield she'd used when her last relationship fell apart.

Mark took a seat on the couch, crossed his legs at the ankle and stretched his arms along the back. His bigness, his physical presence, was imposing. Liz positioned herself across the coffee table from him and remained standing. She couldn't sit, that would mean relaxing and relaxing might lead to crying.

"Mark," she said, "thank you for having me here."

"I can't say it's a pleasure." His tone was cold, his speech pattern more formal than normal. His head was turned away as he looked out the window.

"I'm sorry for what I did. I had no right to physically abuse you."

"You're damn right you didn't." Mark looked up and his eyes glittered with anger.

Nearly falling back a step from the force of the anger now radiating off him, Liz fiddled instead with the cuff of her jacket. The words she'd practiced in the car were tasteless on her tongue.

"It was inexcusable—I'm so sorry."

"Do you know what would have happened if I did that to you? Do you know what they would call me if I got upset and smacked you around?"

Liz wanted to curl into a ball and die. "I know, I do know. I'm so sorry—I didn't want to make you feel that way."

"You didn't," he said, sitting forward. "I know what I am. It's taken me a long time to understand that I'm not some evil bastard who likes to hurt women. I don't hit women. I'm a good guy."

"You're an amazing man. Like I said, I'm sorry, it's me."

"It's me." He snorted. "That's bullshit. What the fuck happened Saturday?"

Liz tucked her hair behind her ear. "I had an internal crisis and I took out my anger on you." She gave him a self-deprecating smile and folded her arms, praying it looked

as if she were okay, if ashamed. "It was so nice to see you again. I do hope we can stay in touch, despite what I did." If she could get out of there without falling apart she'd count it a success.

There was an awkward pause before Mark nodded once.

"I'm just...going to go." She was starting to shake. Nails biting into her palms as she struggled to hold herself together, she headed for the door.

*Just get out of here.*

Eyes on her toes, Liz opened the door.

The knob jerked from her hand. Mark's palm flat on the door slammed it shut, his big body caging her in against the jamb.

"You didn't think you were going to leave like that, did you?" he growled, casting a shadow over her.

He put his other hand on the wall beside her head. Liz turned to face him, tucking her hands behind her back to keep from reaching for him.

"I am barely holding it together," she whispered, blinking rapidly. "You have to let me go."

"That's not going to happen." Mark shifted one hand to cup her cheek. The first tear rolled down Liz's face, catching on his fingers.

"Beautiful, tell me what really happened," he whispered, voice soft.

Liz tipped her head forward into his chest. The first sob rocked her upper body.

Mark scooped her up in his arms, like every great romantic lead should, and carried her to the couch.

"I just...I was looking at myself in the mirror and I realized that I was insane. I'm so messed up. I work really hard to make sure it doesn't show on the outside, but I'm all broken inside."

"You're not—"

"But I am!" Liz climbed off Mark and sat beside him. Cupping his face, she looked him in the eye, wanting him to see, really see, what she was. "I wanted you to hurt me. I wanted you to punish me for wanting the things I do. I still...regret that I've let my desires destroy parts of my life."

"Your ex?" he asked. Liz nodded. "Do you still love him?"

There was something in his voice – insecurity?

"No," she said, "not love. It would almost be better if that was it. I'm ashamed, and I feel stupid. On paper it was perfect. What's wrong with me that I couldn't accept what I had?"

"Nothing is wrong with you."

"Isn't it? I accept that people have different sexual desires, but to throw away a good relationship for *that*." She shook her head. "That's selfish and insane. It's no different than the person who abandons their nice 2.5 family to go hike through the Andes and become a spirit guide."

"You think it would have been better to stay with a man who couldn't please you sexually just because your relationship with him seemed like a good – what did you call it? – 2.5 family?"

"Better than being alone."

"You know that's bullshit. You'd be bored and irritated that he couldn't give you what you needed."

"Sex isn't that important."

Mark threw his head back and laughed. "Oh beautiful, you're lying to yourself. You're damn near a nymphomaniac. You need sex. It's just part of you."

A smile broke through Liz's self-loathing. "Did you just call me a nymphomaniac?"

"A gorgeous one, but yeah, nympho for sure. And I'm fucking glad. I wouldn't have you any other way."

Butterflies filled Liz's belly. "You still want to work on..." She fluttered her hand vaguely in the space between their bodies.

"Absolutely." Mark smiled and his eyes sparkled with it, and he was gorgeous and she fell in love.

The precipice she'd teetered on fell away and she was floating in the sparkling blue water of being irrevocably in love. Stunned, thrilled and terrified, Liz leaned into him, tilting her face up. Mark cupped the back of her neck and kissed her.

He broke the kiss by nipping her bottom lip then resting his forehead on hers.

"I'm so, so sorry," she whispered.

"I shouldn't have thrown you out. I should have made you stay and tell me what was going on. But you have to promise me – no more suicide by Dom."

"Suicide by..." Liz dissolved into sputtering laughter.

Mark tipped her back onto the couch then came down on top of her. She ran her hands up and down his warm back. Annoyed by his clothing, she pulled his dress shirt and undershirt free of his pants so she could stroke his naked back.

"I like your hands on me," he said.

"Ditto."

He kissed her long and deep. Liz's body, which was enjoying the release from the tears and tension, started to heat up. She wrapped one leg around his hips. Mark pressed his groin against her and she could feel his cock through their clothes.

"I'm going to do something neither of us will like," Mark said. Liz raised a brow. "I'm putting a stop to this."

"This?"

"Tonight. Too much happened tonight. It would be a bad idea to have sex right now," he said.

"Oh."

"Don't pout. It makes me want to fuck you."

Liz poked out her bottom lip.

Laughing, Mark sat up and pulled her to sit beside him. Liz squashed her disappointment.

"Have you had dinner yet?" he asked.

"No, I haven't."

"Wanna get something?"

Like a date? Liz struggled not to read too much into it. "I'd like that."

\* \* \* \* \*

Liz was struggling through a client meeting when her cell phone buzzed in her pocket. Desperate for a reprieve, she excused herself and answered Mark's call.

"Good afternoon," she said, smiling. Her secretary walked up, clearly concerned that Liz had walked out of the meeting, but when the older woman saw Liz's smile she nodded and returned to her desk.

"I'm in downtown and thought you might want to have lunch," Mark said.

Liz's stomach flip-flopped, as it always did when he asked her out on a date. Date was the only way she could think to describe the increasingly frequent meals they shared.

"Lunch would be great. I'm meeting with clients right now, and will be for another thirty minutes."

"We can meet near your office then. Water Grill?"

"I'm not dressed for that," she said. "Someplace casual would be better."

"McCormick's?"

"That would be perfect."

"Great. I'll pick you up."

"There's no need, it's walking distance from my office."

"Then I'll park there. See you soon." Mark hung up.



Liz slid her phone back into her pocket. That quick, easy conversation was one she could have had with any one of a dozen friends. But she wasn't sleeping with those friends.

Not wanting to leave her difficult clients alone for too long, she returned to the spartan conference room.

As she dove back into the meeting, wading through the human issues that were preventing this little start-up from developing its idea into the industry-changing platform she'd originally agreed to fund, Liz worried about Mark meeting her here. He'd never come to her work before and she'd never gone to his. They'd met for lunch and dinner, but they'd kept it casual and stayed away from places he'd be recognized, and therefore stayed out of the gossip magazines. What did it mean that he was meeting her at work? More than likely it was just a matter of convenience.

"You spent all your money on that stupid car, that's why you can't have a corporate card," one of the clients was saying to the other.

"You spent it on weed and Xbox Live," the other sniped.

"Gentlemen," Liz said, swearing for the millionth time to stay away from clients who were family, even if their compact battery technology would revolutionize energy storage from solar panels. They didn't know it yet, but they were going to be the wave of the future in home improvement. People didn't put solar panels on their houses because there was no compact way to store the energy, so you either had twelve huge, car-sized batteries in your basement or you lost unused energy on sunny days and had none on cloudy. Their batteries could and would change that—if they would stop bitching long enough to develop the technology fully.

"Holy shit, it's Marcus Palmer!"

The two long walls of the rectangular conference room were glass. One wall had a view of downtown LA, the other was frosted glass to shoulder height, clear glass above showing the interior of the office. Mark's head and shoulders were clearly visible as he stood at Liz's secretary's desk.

"Where?" the other brother swiveled, his shirt with its built in wi-fi detection lighting up as he, apparently, got a better signal.

"Fans?" Liz asked, thinking fast.

"No kidding. You can have him on your Madden team even though he's old now, and I always kick ass with him."

"Dumbass, don't call him old, what if he hears you?" his brother hissed.

"Would you like to meet him?" Liz asked.

They gaped at her. Taking that as a yes, Liz once more slipped from the room.

"Mark," she said and he turned.

His eyes widened as he caught sight of her and she grimaced. He grinned and started to laugh but she quickly shushed him.

"I don't want to have to explain to my client that I don't dress like this all the time," she said.

"Is that an old-school Nintendo controller?" Mark asked, pointing at her shirt.

Liz sighed and nodded, turned in a circle so he could get the full effect. With geek-and-proud clients she had to dress for them, not expect them to don thousand-dollar suits for her. Today she wore knee-length jean shorts, black chucks, a dove-gray thin leather jacket and a t-shirt with a picture of an old game console controller on her belly. The cord for the controller appeared to "plug-in" to her heart. If she thought about it for too long it made her crazy—honestly, men who wanted a woman controlled by a game console remote—so she tried not to.

"The shirt makes noise if you touch the buttons," Liz's secretary said.

Mark's eyes lit up and he reached out to play.

"Oh no," she said, warding him off, "help me and then I'll let you push my buttons."

Her secretary snorted.

Repressing a desire to thump herself on the forehead, Liz grabbed Mark's hand and led him to the conference room.

"What do you do again?" he asked. "I thought you were in money, banking, something high profile. Didn't you have a piece written about you in *The Wall Street Journal* or something?"

"I'm a venture capitalist. Help me with these clients and it will all make sense." Leading a bemused-looking Mark into the conference room, Liz said, "Gentlemen, I'd like you to meet Marcus Palmer..."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Are all your clients like that?" Mark asked as he picked up his burger.

"Thankfully no, but at the heart of it I'm dealing with inventors. A lot of these people have spent years working on the ideas I'm investing in and they've developed quirks. The inventions that are eco-related or eco-conscious are the work of passionate people. You should see what I wear on those days."

"Coconut bra?"

She threw a crouton at him.

"So what did they invent?"

Liz shook her head. "I can't talk about it. I can tell you that it's going to revolutionize home remodeling and home construction in this country."

"They didn't look like contractors," Mark said between bites.

Liz picked apart her chicken sandwich, discarding the upper bun and cheese. "They aren't. I haven't really talked to them about what I think the applications of their invention are. All they need to know is that I see the possibilities. They have the technology but not the vision for commercial production—that's where I come in. Right now the biggest problem is them. Their company, such as it is, isn't really functional. Most start-ups are destroyed not because their idea isn't good but because of poor management. That's where I come in."

"I thought you gave them the money."

"I do, and if that's all I did I would lose a lot of money. I have to help them start their companies, manage the companies, baby them through the first five years. Then I can go hands-off."

Mark sat back. He was regarding her with an odd expression.

"What's wrong?" Liz asked.

"Nothing," he said, "besides the way you're destroying that sandwich. I never knew how much work you did, or what you did. It's interesting, and more work than I thought it would be."

Liz shrugged, slightly embarrassed. "This isn't how they taught us to do it in business school."

"Sounds like a smart way to run your company."

"You know something, I actually started to go back to school."

"Oh yeah? In what?"

"Electrical engineering." Liz shook her head at the memory. "It took me a year and a half to get through all the pre-reqs over at LACC just so I could audit a class in engineering. I was tired of just helping out with other people's inventions. I wanted to invent something."

"You always were a school nerd."

"True. But that was too hard. I couldn't work and do that."

"Damn, that's too bad. I'm sorry."

Liz shrugged. "I haven't told many people about that. I don't know why I told you."

Mark took her hand. "I'm glad you did."

They finished their meal in companionable silence, Mark stealing the leftovers off her plate, Liz propping her feet on top of his under the table.

"I was meaning to ask you something," Mark said with that dangerous smile. "I know it's short notice—I forgot about this thing—but I need a date to a restaurant opening tonight. Want to come?"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Marcus, Marcus, over here, who's your date? Marcus!"

Liz ran her tongue over her teeth then smiled, struggling not to flinch as camera flashes went off. She was on Mark's arm, posing in front of the paper backdrop printed with the logos for the restaurant and a vodka company. The ubiquitous red carpet was under them, taped to the slick sidewalk of Hollywood Boulevard outside the restaurant's door.

A young woman in a black dress and headset ushered them away from the backdrop into the restaurant, letting the next set of guests take their place.

"You okay?" Mark asked her once they were inside.

"Yes, though I think I was making a rather stupid face in most of the pictures."

"Naw, I'm sure you're gorgeous."

"'Marcus Palmer's grimacing no-name date.' The headlines will be riveting."

"They'll find out your name," Mark warned her. "That's why I was keeping you away from paparazzi places."

"I doubt they will. I'm specialized and barely known in my own industry. I'm hardly a major player in LA's business world."

"Mr. Palmer, welcome," the hostess said in a thick Brazilian accent. "Right this way."

"It's going to happen," Mark said. "Don't say I didn't warn you."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day, clustered amid the photos on a gossip blog of famous athletes and Hollywood celebrities from the previous night's opening of an LA Lakers' star's newest

restaurant was a photo of Marcus Palmer and a gorgeous blonde in a one-shoulder, midnight blue gown. The caption read, "Football legend Marcus Palmer and famous financier Elizabeth Brown."

## Chapter Seven

*Corsets*

*Cuffs*

*Double penetration*

Elizabeth handed Marcus the strip of paper with trembling fingers. Marcus, reclined in an armchair with Elizabeth sitting astride him, smiled when he read what she'd chosen.

"This will be fun."

Liz nodded, her eyes fluttering closed as Mark cupped her left breast, kissing the upper curve as his other arm tightened around her back. Liz curled her arms over his shoulders, fingers tangling in his hair.

She was sweating lightly and throbbing in anticipation. She was a lightning rod in a storm—tingling with electricity and desperately waiting for the lightning to strike.

He rolled her nipple with his thumb until she was grinding herself down onto him. The fabric of his pants seemed unnaturally rough against the insides of her thighs.

"You're ready for me to fuck you, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes," she moaned. Without thinking, one hand crept down her belly, toward her open, throbbing pussy.

It was Friday night and finally, *finally*, he was going to satisfy the terrifying hunger he'd woken in her. It had been a week since they'd had sex, despite meeting several times for lunch or dinner dates. Every time she saw him she got wet, no matter how casual and friendly their meeting was.

“No,” he said, catching her wrist. He forced her hand behind her back, folding her arm into a position that wasn’t uncomfortable but wasn’t casual. “You’re going to obey me.”

She shuddered as her arousal ratcheted up. “I can’t wait,” she said. “It’s been too long.”

“I didn’t tell you not to play with yourself. Why didn’t you?” he asked in a husky voice.

Liz leaned into him, pressing her face into his neck and taking a deep breath. He smelled like aftershave and sweat and sex. She’d told him she hadn’t been masturbating that morning in one of the dirty text messages they’d been exchanging like horny teenagers. She was one “u r so sexy” away from sending him a nude cell phone picture like a former mouseketeer gone bad.

Liz licked his neck, wanting his taste to fill her mouth. “I didn’t play with myself,” she whispered in his ear, “because I knew it wasn’t going to be enough.”

“Why have hamburger when there might be steak?” he asked and slapped her ass.

Liz nodded, easily hiding her smile at his analogy.

Her breasts were pressed flat against his chest, the hand that had tormented her nipple trapped between them. Liz tipped her head to the side and kissed the top of his ear. The smell of his hair, the curve of his jaw, the laugh lines at the corners of his eyes—they were her mad obsession. Each part of him was rare and perfect and sexy.

The hand at her back slid up into her hair. He made a fist, yanking her head back. Liz’s back arched, her breasts thrust up. Mark kissed the hollow of her throat, causing her to gasp and shiver.

“What would you do,” he asked, voice harsh, “if I had another man fuck you while I fucked you?”

“Mark—”



Mark dropped his hands to her waist and pushed her off his lap onto the floor. Liz slid easily to her knees, a shiver of fear working its way through her. Taking her by the arm, he pulled her forward so that she was pressed against the chair between his spread legs.

“What did you call me, Elizabeth?” His voice rumbled with menace.

“I’m sorry, Marcus,” Liz replied quietly. She was nearly shaking with fear – not fear that he would hurt her in anger, but fear that he’d push her away.

“Are you playing games with me?” he asked. “Are you disobeying so you can have a spanking? I’ll spank you if and when I want to, not when you want it.”

He pulled her closer so she was now bent forward, forehead touching his stomach. She could feel the hard structure of the chair against her diaphragm. Her fear that he would push her away dissipated.

“That wasn’t what I was trying to do,” she said, shifting slightly. This was silly, it had been a mistake. She wanted to talk about what he’d said before, about the other man.

“You. Are. Mine.”

His thumb beneath her jaw pushed her face up until she was looking into his eyes, which were bright and hot.

A thread of feeling stole through her, made up of dread, longing, arousal and defiance.

“Am I?” she asked, looking at him from under lowered lashes.

She wanted him to throw her back and fuck her, haul her over his knee and spank her. She wanted...him.

He looked away for a moment, jaw clenched, the muscles in his forearms flexing.

“You’re playing games.”

Exasperation was cutting through her arousal. “I’m not. You said something I felt we needed to discuss, that’s all. Calling you Mark was a mistake, nothing more.”

Marcus released her and Liz sat back. He seemed annoyed with her, his arms crossed, mouth set. Liz tried to smile, tried to push down her own rising annoyance and find that sweet arousal she'd been swimming in only moments earlier.

"You find this funny?" he asked when she finally forced herself to smile.

The smile dropped. Liz stood. "This is ridiculous. I don't know what happened but this clearly isn't going to happen tonight. I'm done with you."

Gritting her teeth to bite back tears of frustration, Liz stormed into the bedroom and started pulling on clothes. She jerked on her panties, then jeans. No Mark. She put on her bra. Still no Mark.

Liz shook out her t-shirt, hesitating. He wasn't coming after her. That didn't seem right. What happened to "I'll keep you until I'm done with you"?

Liz paused, shirt half on, obscuring her vision.

*Oh.*

He was done with her.

That's why he'd overreacted, to push her away on purpose. He was pulling an "it's not you it's me" but without saying anything. He was manipulating her so that she was the one to leave...so he didn't have to kick her out.

It was kind, in an assholeish way.

Liz felt sick. She finished dressing and leaned against the wall. She'd fucked this up. She didn't know what she'd done or said wrong, but she'd fucked it up and now the man of her dreams was trying to get rid of her in the nicest way possible.

What was he thinking right now? "Good, she's leaving. Strange, demanding, needy Liz is finally leaving. It's better this way, she'll think it was her idea."

Bile rose up her esophagus and Liz gagged. Pressing one hand over her mouth, she took deep breaths, trying to calm down. She needed to get out of here before he had no choice but to come looking for her.

On shaky legs, she left the bedroom. Mark wasn't in the living room. Rounding the corner of the kitchen, she found him standing at the door.

Liz tilted her chin up. She wasn't a doormat, wasn't going to be run out of here whimpering. She would walk out, head high.

"I'm sorry this didn't work," she said, stopping in front of Mark.

He was looking at a point just above her head. At her words he twitched but didn't look at her.

The bastard wasn't even going to say goodbye? Fine. Fuck him. She didn't need him.

*Want him? Yes. But need him? No.*

He was standing in front of the door, preventing her from leaving. Turning so her body wouldn't brush his, Liz reached for the door handle.

*Thump.*

Mark leaned back, his shoulders hitting the door with a meaty sound that reminded her how physically large he was. She dropped her hand.

"Either let me go or talk to me," she said, voice gone husky. There was a little flutter of panic in her belly – and that panic was turning her on.

"You're not walking out of here," he growled.

"Mark, either you want me here and you want to work on this," she gestured vaguely between them, unwilling to define what they were doing, "or you want to play games. If you're not interested in me anymore please just say so. Don't push me away or try to hurt me so that I leave first. I'd rather we be honest."

Mark touched her, big fingers curling all the way around her upper arm. He pulled her forward as he shifted away from the door. His movements were slow, deliberate, giving her every opportunity to put up a fight, or at least resist.

She did neither.

He positioned her with her back against the door. The hand wrapped around her arm slid down to manacle her wrist, his free hand catching her other wrist. Liz licked her lips, watching his hands.

The panic had grown, quick and hard, the arousal climbing along with it. His silence frightened her, aroused her.

He raised her hands until they were level with her ears and then pressed the backs of her wrists against the door. He splayed his hands over her wrists, pinned her in place.

"Were you trying to get me to spank you earlier?" he asked.

Liz looked up when he spoke. His voice was gravelly, as if he'd been holding back the words. "No, I wasn't. You said something that upset me. All I wanted to do was discuss it."

"Do you trust me?" He leaned forward, increasing the pressure on her wrists. Liz could feel her heartbeat drumming against his palms. She curled her fingers, licked her lips. His gaze tracked the path of her tongue.

"That's not fair," she replied in a whisper. "I do trust you, but that doesn't mean I shouldn't be able to tell you, warn you, when I'm upset or worried."

Their gazes met, held. He nodded.

"You're right. That was my mistake. But you should have used the safeword." He straightened, releasing her wrists.

Liz crossed her arms over her belly, feeling foolish for forgetting about the safeword system. She pressed her tingling hands against her sides. "I didn't think it applied except to actions," she admitted.

Mark nodded.

"I wasn't trying to control you," she said, remembering his story about a previous sub.

"I'm sorry," he said, "for reacting that way."

"Overreacting you mean," she said on a smile. It was a tentative smile, because without his hands on her she was once again unsure of his interest.

"Men don't overreact, that's what chicks do," he said, grinning.

Liz rolled her eyes. "Apparently nothing you learned in gender studies stuck with you."

He smiled and it lit up his whole face. "The NFL beat it out of me, along with the cartilage in my joints."

"I guess I could still be friends with you," she said with a long-suffering sigh.

"Friend," he repeated in an ape voice.

That surprised a laugh out of her. He slid an arm around her waist, pulling her to him as the laugh faded into a giggle.

"Why does this keep happening?" Liz asked. "I know it's my fault. I keep overreacting. This is the second time we've ended up at the door."

Mark shook his head. "This time was me too. I don't like to be manipulated."

"I swear that wasn't what I was doing. You mentioned another man and I..." Liz shivered in revulsion.

Marcus hugged her, drawing her tight against his large, warm body. She'd never felt so protected before. "I'd never share you, believe that. Doesn't mean that when we're all riled up I won't talk about it, or threaten it. That's just talk, same as all the other crazy stuff."

"Okay."

"You ready to try again?" Mark asked. "Because I can't stand to not have you tonight."

\* \* \* \* \*

Elizabeth lay facedown on the floor, panting. Marcus had decided to save the sex checklist items she'd selected—cuffs, corset and double penetration—for next weekend.

Instead he'd bound her to the coffee table and fucked her from behind while describing in graphic detail how he would allow every one of his former teammates to fuck her and if she complained he'd paddle her ass.

The thing that started the fight now drove her to orgasm.

Once they'd both come he'd untied her, kissed her, assured her it would never happen and let her collapse.

"Now for your punishment."

Elizabeth sucked in a breath. "What did I do wrong?"

"Nothing. But I want to punish you and you're mine to do whatever I want to. Aren't you?"

He slapped her ass and lifted her to her knees. Though she was still lethargic from orgasm, she was growing freshly aroused by his words. Yes, she was his to do whatever he wanted to.

Holding her by the waist, he backed to a chair and sat down, pulling her down with him so she was kneeling astride him, facing him. She was painfully aware of the fact that her dripping sex was wide open and her breasts were at eye level.

"I'd like to have a conversation with you, Elizabeth."

Maintaining eye contact with her, Marcus slid his hand up her inner thigh and casually pushed two fingers into her pussy.

"Marcus!" she yelped, rising up. He moved with her, keeping his fingers in place. Her cheeks went red with embarrassment.

"We can't have a conversation with you, ah, your..."

He raised an eyebrow and removed his fingers, only to add a third. Elizabeth gasped. His face was the shadowed face of a villain and she shivered.

"If we are going to have a conversation as Marcus and Elizabeth, I'll do it with my fingers in your pussy, my cock in your ass or with a gag in your mouth."

He pushed, forcing his fingers in deeper, until she had to lift herself to relieve the pressure.

His fingers slipped from her sex and he pulled her in for a long kiss. It started sweet but, as with so many things between them, it quickly grew rough.

He nipped her upper lip, dragged her head back to bite down from her neck to her breasts. He sucked her nipples one at a time until she pressed her breasts together, allowing him to take them into his mouth at the same time.

"I think I'll give you a choice," Marcus told her left breast.

"Is this one of those diabolical Dom choices?" Elizabeth asked, running her hands over the muscles of his upper back.

He laughed. "That's why I'm never letting you go. Yes, it's a diabolical Dom choice. Twenty lashes with a flogger or ten swats with a paddle."

"How kind," she said, trying to be sarcastic, but the catch in her voice gave away how turned-on she was by his words.

His eyes darkened. "Unless you want them on your breasts instead of your ass, you'll pick soon."

Liz shivered in bone-deep arousal at his threatening tone. He saw it.

"Ah..."

His finger slipped between the lips of her sex, finding the fresh wetness there. He rubbed her clit and Elizabeth buried her face against his head.

"Flogger or paddle."

He rubbed her clit with his thumb until she stuttered out, "Flogger, Marcus."

Marcus helped her from the chair, then left her bent over the back with an order to keep her legs spread. He returned a few minutes later and helped her to stand. The first thing he did was to slide a blindfold into place.

"Count them," he ordered.

*Swoosh, thump.*

"One," Elizabeth moaned.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I can't believe you think that," Liz said, leaning forward.

Mark stretched out a long arm and scooped her hair behind her ear, preventing it from falling into her miso soup. "Why should my tax dollars go toward them?"

"And you're okay with your tax dollars funding nuclear weapons?"

"No, I put a note on the check saying that the money can only be used to help baby bunnies." He grinned and Liz couldn't help but laugh. "I'm a practical man. I can't believe you're still such a bleeding heart. I thought all you high-finance types were supposed to have offshore accounts and hate the left."

"Stereotypes are lazy," Liz announced, picking up a piece of edamame.

"They save time," Mark countered.

"Okay, now you're just trying to piss me off," she growled.

Mark grinned and popped a piece of California roll into his mouth.

Liz wasn't really angry. She was fascinated, invigorated and happy. They now had a strange, almost bipolar, relationship. On one hand they were involved in an intense sexual relationship. The sex often left her shaking, near tears. She'd show up at Marcus' condo wearing nothing but a trench coat, her mind void of the minutia of daily life. In this part of their relationship she was a physical, instinctual being.

On the other hand they were...dating. There was no other word for it. They went out to lunch, dinner. They met for happy hour, went to the theater and vegged out in movies together. When out on a date, it was as if they'd been together for years, as if they'd never lost touch. They could talk about anyone, anything. They'd run into friends and introduce each other with a simple, "You remember..." In LA that wasn't out of character, as labels were passé. She attended several other high-profile events with Marcus, their names now forever linked in the gossip pages.

The two sides of their relationship never mixed.



Tonight Liz would go home alone. They would both make excuses about work and go their separate ways after dinner. Friday afternoon she'd receive a text, demanding her presence that night.

There hadn't been a repeat of that first shared breakfast that mixed sex and companionship.

After the check was settled — Mark paid — he held her coat. He dealt with the valet for her after they left the restaurant.

"What are you commentating on tomorrow?" she asked as they waited for the cars.

"The NCAA sanctions."

Liz hissed. "I hope you rip the NCAA a new one. That was completely unfair."

"The NCAA has some fair points —"

"As a fellow alumnus I demand that you defend our honor!"

"But if you ask me to, I'll tell them to go fuck themselves."

Mark helped a laughing Liz into her car and closed the door. He watched her drive away.

"Mr. Palmer?"

The valet's tone suggested that it wasn't the first time he'd said something. Shaking himself, Mark turned to his car. Climbing into the convertible Mercedes he was driving tonight, he buckled up and pulled out. Rather than heading directly home, he drove aimlessly, letting the flow of traffic direct him like an ocean current.

What were they doing?

This...thing...with Liz was more complicated than he'd anticipated. She was a good companion. He'd had a few trophy girlfriends, the kind who wouldn't get out of the car without checking the mirror four times and who were always looking over their shoulder hoping to see a photographer. One former "girlfriend" was now the host of some low-budget gossip show. Dating a celebrity, though he hardly counted, was an easy entrée into Hollywood.

Liz wasn't like that. They'd been photographed coming out of a no-name restaurant the week before. The picture hadn't done her justice—she'd been dressed casually to meet with clients and the caption had listed her name and job title. He'd sent her the link, wanting to warn her before she found it herself. It wasn't a good picture and the comments weren't nice. Liz shrugged it off.

His past girlfriends would have freaked.

Liz was a woman he could settle down with. He could see himself marrying her, buying houses, traveling, having kids.

He'd never been in love before. He'd felt the desire to settle down and directed those desires toward whatever girl was in his life at the time, but he'd never felt this bone-deep surety about someone.

Liz was the girl for him.

He loved her.

He'd also done things to her that a man wasn't supposed to do to his wife. He'd started out looking for a BDSM companion, not a life partner.

Gravel crunched as he pulled to the side of the road along Pacific Coast Highway. He got out of the car, crossed to the fence that edged the short drop to the crashing waves. The broken path of white moonlight stretched to the water-soaked horizon.

He'd found a woman he loved to fuck and fallen in love with her. Now he was scared to fuck her unless he wasn't thinking about how much he loved her.

*Fuck.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Mark thought about Liz as he showered the next morning. His phone buzzed as he tied his tie.

*Good luck. Fight on.*

He caught sight of himself in the mirror—he was grinning like an idiot.

Mark calmly shrugged on his suit jacket before replying. It was the principle of the thing.

He thought about Liz on the way to work when he saw a pretty blonde driving an impractical sports car. He should get Liz one. When was her birthday? He needed to check that, he vaguely remembered it being in the spring.

He thought about Liz as he argued with the other commentators over the sanctions the college football governing body had just placed on his alma mater as the studio lights beat down on him and the producer signaled for them to wrap up.

When he went to lunch with some former players, he thought about Liz as his lunch companions boasted about their wives' jobs, charities and projects.

"My girl, Liz, she's a venture capitalist," Mark said.

There was a hard pause as three sets of eyes turned to him. Mark threw his shoulders back, facing them down. He'd never participated in these conversations before, the last "player" left in this group.

"I'd heard you were hooked up with a pretty thing," said L.J. Rue, a former tight end whose career ended in injury just as Mark's had. He was still a big man—they all were—and the seams of his pale pink dress shirt were straining.

"Mary saw you on a gossip column with her," Travis Parker added. He'd married while they were still players and Mary had run Travis' personal life with an iron fist, leaving Travis with a reputation free from scandal.

"You keeping tabs on my love life now?" Mark asked with a smirk.

"Not that there's been much happening lately," L.J. said. "Probably why you've been such a bitch lately."

"Fuck you, L.J.," Mark said, without any real heat.

"Is this one for real?" Travis asked. "She looks smarter than the others."

Mark sat back, raised his glass in a toast to Liz. "She's for real."

## **Chapter Eight**

The deep V of Elizabeth's dress showed the inside curves of her breasts and the top of a lace bra. Marcus leaned into the door, drinking in the sight of her. His cock twitched in his jeans. He'd left them unfastened, riding low on his hips.

Elizabeth shifted, her weight moving from one hip to the other. The mellow lights in the hallway outside his door highlighted her hair, which hung loose around her shoulders. From the neck up she looked like an angel—gold hair and innocent eyes. From the neck down she looked ready to fuck.

Marcus held out his hand.

Her fingers were cold against his palm. Her bones seemed fragile, her skin soft and thin. And yet, as he wrapped his free hand around her waist, pulled her body flush against his, there was nothing fragile about her lush breasts or the aggressive thrust of her hips against his.

Elbowing the door closed, Marcus walked them backward into the condo's living room, which was lit only by a few accent lights. Her eyes were locked on his, her lips parted, breaths growing shallower by the moment. The slippery fabric of her dress had shifted to the side. One breast was now fully exposed, the lace of her bra barely hiding her nipple.

He wanted to rip it off her, wanted to shred it with his teeth but experience had taught him that her bras were expensive and well-made, not prone to ripping. He'd thought about buying her cheap stuff—neon blue lace, fishnet bodysuits, pleather—just so he could rip it off her, but that wasn't Elizabeth. She was La Perla and silk robes. She was the iron fist disguised by a pearl-studded kid glove.

"Marcus?" she asked, hand coming to rest on his face.

Shaking himself from the introspection that had gripped him, Marcus smiled, tipped his face to the side and kissed the pulse at her wrist.

"I was thinking about your underwear," he whispered against her pulse, eyes on her face.

She tried to hide her smile but it caught the corner of her mouth and tugged it up. "Still bitter that it won't rip?"

"Naughty girl," he growled, fisting the hand at her back. "I should spank you for that."

Elizabeth's eyes dilated, she licked her lower lip and Marcus almost gave up on the plan for the night and fucked her right then.

Instead, he released her, stepping back. Impatient now, the need to have her, dominate her, pounding through him, Marcus grabbed the dangling tie of her dress and pulled. The bow came undone. The dress fell open.

"Off," he said.

With a shrug of her shoulders she was free of it, leaving her wearing the bra, matching panties and shiny black shoes with a thin strap around her ankle.

Marcus walked around behind her, picking up the discarded dress and tossing it into the kitchen, out of the way. He heard Elizabeth gasp and grinned. She'd finally seen his preparations.

A waist-high display case that flanked the TV had been stripped of its football trophies and plaques. Four clear glass dildos stood in their place. Track lighting in the ceiling highlighted the glass phalluses, showing off the ribbons of color woven through the largest of them.

In the deep armchair where Marcus liked to sit to spank her was a corset. It wasn't a pretty, frilly piece of lingerie, but a heavy, thick thing. It was dull black leather, formed

into an hourglass, so stiff that it stood up on its own. There were ratchet closures down the sides and lacing up the front.

Elizabeth almost screamed when Marcus touched her, so tightly was she wound. It was a familiar sensation – this heightened sensitivity that bordered on overstimulation.

His big, warm hands traced a path from her shoulders down her arms to her wrists. Three fingers of each hand curled around each wrist, forming manacles of living flesh.

It was only then that she remembered the slip of paper she'd drawn weeks ago. *Cuffs, corset, double penetration.* They'd been together since that fateful night, both sexually and on platonic but romantic dates, but they'd never revisited the list.

"You know what I'm going to do to you tonight."

It wasn't a question but Elizabeth took a shaky breath and said, "Yes."

"Say it."

"Cuffs."

He squeezed her wrists behind her back.

"Corset," his hands moved to her waist, "and double penetration."

Marcus hadn't fucked her ass, he hadn't really played with her anally at all. Elizabeth bit down on the urge to remind him of this, to warn him that her body wasn't ready.

"I know what you're thinking," he whispered, his breath causing her hair to flutter against her cheek. "Wanna say it?"

"No," Elizabeth said firmly. "I trust you."

Marcus stepped back and swatted her hard on the ass. She jumped and stumbled forward a step, catching herself on the back of the couch.

"Stay there," he growled.

Elizabeth froze. She was bent slightly, her hands braced, one leg in front of the other.

Marcus hooked a finger in the back of her panties and pulled them down, tucking them under the cheeks of her ass. He swatted her ass, spanking her with short, hard blows. After only five blows she was jumping and moaning. Her nipples had drawn into hard points inside her bra, her body's movements causing them to rub against the lace, which now felt as rough as sandpaper.

As suddenly as he'd started Marcus stopped. He pulled her panties up and gently patted her bottom. Elizabeth opened her eyes, blinking to clear her vision.

"Do you know why I did that?" he asked in his gravelly voice.

Elizabeth dipped her head and looked over her shoulder, letting her hair fall to cover her face and hide the fact that she was looking at him. She wanted to lick the trail of hair that led from his bellybutton down to the top of his unfastened jeans.

"Yes," she answered. "Because..." She tossed her head, throwing her hair away from her face so she could see him, so he could see her. "You wanted to."

He smiled a fierce, feral smile. It was the smile of a predator, a warrior.

Then he was on her, pushing her upper body down over the back of the couch, forcing one hand up behind her back, reminding her of her submission while leaving one hand free for her to brace herself. There was the *snick* of a zipper and then Marcus' big cock was pushing at her, shoving her panties between the lips of her sex. Impatient fingers dug into her pussy, dragging the panties out of the way. Then his cock was tunneling in, opening her, filling her.

Elizabeth moaned in pleasure, pressing her head into the couch seat. This felt so good, so right. A wave of pure pleasure swept through her, a mini orgasm. Marcus fucked her for a few minutes, only long enough for her to settle into the moment, into the rhythm, before he pulled out.

Elizabeth growled at him. Like some insane, wild animal, she growled.

Marcus hauled her upright and pushed her to her knees. Without warning his cock was at her mouth, the glistening head bumping against the corner of her lips.

Elizabeth's body thrummed with arousal, the need to orgasm so acute it was close to pain. She didn't want to suck him off, she wanted him to fuck her. This was stupid.

She stood, wrapped an arm around his shoulders and a leg around his waist. His cock bumped against her belly. Marcus didn't move to help her or to stop her. Some part of her brain sounded warning bells, but she was too intent on getting his cock into her to care. She wiggled and twisted but couldn't get the angles right, especially with her panties in the way. Even with the heels she wasn't tall enough to manage it without help.

When she stilled, Marcus forced her arm and leg down. Elizabeth was panting slightly from her exertions and made an effort to slow her breathing. She threw her head back, facing him.

"I've noticed something about you," Marcus said, gaze skimming over her. "You need hands on you to really feel submissive."

"You've said that before."

It was true. Without his hands on her there was always a vague feeling of wrongness, or silliness. Unless he was touching her, she couldn't stop that annoying internal voice from asking, *"Why are you doing this? What are you doing?"*

"I wonder," he said as if she hadn't spoken, "if bondage will serve the same function as my hands on you."

"We've done bondage before."

"No, we've played with restraints. Cuffs and little ties aren't bondage, you know that."

Elizabeth nodded. Real bondage was an art form in and of itself, and had almost nothing to do with S&M. Intricate rope bondage, complicated leather furniture and/or being packaged in saran wrap hadn't interested Elizabeth so she'd never paid much attention to it.



She frantically tried to remember what had been on Marcus' list as far as bondage went. Clearly there were some things that she'd indicated an interest in, like the corset, but how many others were there?

"I let you run wild," he said, in a teeth-grindingly arrogant tone, "because I wanted to have some behavior to measure against."

"How scientific of you," Elizabeth snapped.

That earned her a sharp slap on the ass. She licked her lower lip.

"You tempt me," he growled.

"Then just fuck me," she begged.

"Just plain fucking we can have whenever. Tonight there's a game plan."

Liz almost broke and asked when it was they could "just plain" fuck, since they'd never touched each other sexually without the trappings and rules of BDSM play. But then he was pulling several thick pieces of leather from a box on the coffee table and the moment was gone.

"Strip."

Slowly, and as sexily as she could without trying to look like a stripper, Elizabeth turned her back to Marcus and bent, unbuckling and stepping out of her shoes. With her back still to him she unfastened her bra and let it drop before turning.

She rolled her panties down and off, watching him watch her. It was in moments like these that the paradox of the power games was found. He was the Dominant, but she held the power.

"Offer me your wrists," he said.

Elizabeth took a few steps forward, then held out her wrists. Marcus lifted and kissed each before wrapping a thick leather manacle around one. Made of stiff black leather, the cuff went from mid-forearm to wrist and laced closed. Once the lacing was drawn tight, Marcus fastened three buckled straps—one at the wrist, another midway up and the last at the top off the cuff.

A large circle was set into the leather at the outside of the wrist. Marcus released a snap, showing her that the metal circle wasn't just decorative but was built into the manacle at one point and either extended out, allowing it to be used for restraint, or folded flat to the piece and snapped in place.

Elizabeth played with it, twisting her wrist, flexing her arm as he laced the second one in place. It was frightening. There was no way to slip out of it, hide it, get away from it. The intricacy of it, the time it took to put it on, made it seem as intimate as jewelry, yet foreboding.

"I like you in those," Marcus said when he was done. He'd unsnapped the rings on both. Hooking his fingers in the rings, he jerked her forward, lifted her arms above her head. "You look like a pretty little slave girl."

He released her and Elizabeth let her arms drop loosely to her sides. The unfamiliar cuffs bumped against her hips and thighs, startling her. She was wet and getting wetter. She liked the cuffs, liked the way they made her feel.

Marcus turned back, holding the corset. Up close it was even more foreboding.

"I don't think that will fit," she said in a small voice, eyeing the tiny waist.

"It will," he said calmly. One by one he undid the clips that held the sides together, separating it into two halves. The dim lighting cast his face into stark relief. His cheekbones cast shadows on his face, making him look like a villain.

He slid the back piece around her, wiggling it into place. He forced her to hold it there as every inch of her body broke out in gooseflesh from the cold leather and bits of metal. Marcus was fiddling with the front piece, loosening the lacing. He stopped once, held it up to her, then went back to work.

It seemed to take hours. Elizabeth's heartbeat had slowed, the dim light now seemed mellow and warm rather than cold. She was so aroused that the very air seemed to be sexual, brushing against her nipples and breasts, floating down over her sex.

She spread her legs, letting the air caress her swollen sex.

Marcus' head came up, a wolf scenting prey. No, not prey. A wolf scenting his mate.

The front of the corset dangling from one hand, he slid the other through the inviting wetness of her sex. His index and middle fingers separated the folds of her sex, pushing apart the swollen lips, enveloping her clit before sinking deep into her.

Fingers withdrawing, he dried them on her breasts before pressing the front half of her corset on to her. A panel of leather prevented any pinching as he slowly ratcheted the corset closed using the metal fastenings on the sides. He started with the middle, the tightest place. Elizabeth took a short, shallow breath, feeling the restriction. The sounds of the closures were frightening—the *clack* of metal, the *thunk* as each was pressed into place against the leather. Her body rocked side-to-side as he worked on her. She was utterly under his control. He molded her, formed her to please him.

The manacles at her wrists were growing heavier, the corset seemed to weigh fifty pounds, digging into her hips, constricting her breasts.

Marcus took a step back.

Elizabeth looked down, wanting to see what she'd become, but she couldn't see anything below the swell of her breasts.

She swayed on her feet.

"Stay still," he barked. A muscle in his jaw clenched.

"I can't," she said, barely a whisper.

"Yes," he said quietly. His eyes were intense, boring into her.

She let out a small sound, a whimper almost. Elizabeth felt near fainting and yet she had never been more aware. Lightheaded, yet hyperaware of her own body, she panicked to be free of the corset and manacles, and yet ached to remain in them to please Marcus.

Marcus stepped back, wanting her out of grabbing range, and shucked his jeans. The quick fuck at the couch had taken some of the edge off, both physically and mentally, but he could have easily thrown her to the ground right then and fucked her for hours.

Any other night he would have, the corset and manacles enough, but he was going to push them tonight. He wasn't doing them any favors letting the sex coast along at levels only slightly naughtier than vanilla.

She was swaying in place, her lips open, eyes wide, tracking his every move. Her waist was tiny in the corset, her breasts two tight shining mounds he wanted to bite and pinch. She'd spread her legs and he could see that her bare pussy and the insides of her thighs were wet. He could smell her.

He licked his fingers, tasting her beneath the fresh scent of leather and metal of the corset. She let out another soft whimper.

He loved Elizabeth like this—soft and unsure, dripping with arousal, waiting for him, wanting him. And yet he knew that with the right provocation she'd be spitting and snarling or fighting back.

If he wanted her soft and compliant he knew how to make her that way. Her triggers were restraint. Before tonight, his hands on her had been the only way, but it looked as though the manacles had the same effect, just as he'd anticipated.

Pleased with knowing his submissive so well, Marcus decided he deserved a reward.

"Kneel."

Without hesitation, Elizabeth dropped to her knees, rocking slightly as the corset threw her off balance. He steadied her, let her bury her face against his thigh for a moment.

Cupping the back of her skull in his hand, he turned her head as he shifted his hips, pressing the long length of his cock into her cheek. She drew back and took the head into her mouth, her lips and teeth caressing the crown.

Marcus closed his eyes and let himself enjoy the moment, then pushed his cock deep into the warm cavern of her mouth. Her tongue rubbed the vein along the underside of his cock, causing his balls to twitch.

He pressed in deeper, his cock head touching the roof of her mouth near the back of her throat. She balked slightly, trying to pull back, but he tightened his hold on her head, pushing his cock in deeper.

She whimpered and he heard her breath, felt it around his cock as she panicked slightly. After a moment she calmed, her tongue once more stroking the underside of his cock.

He pushed his cock in deep, until the tip touched the back of her throat, held it there for a moment then released her, allowing her to pull away. He then pushed in again, holding her face down on his cock for a bit longer this time. When he allowed her to pull away he heard her gasping for air.

He forced her head down again, her jaws pushed wide, her breathing, already restricted by the corset, now cut off. Her forehead touched his abdomen, her hair brushing his sides.

Testing her, Marcus released her head.

Elizabeth didn't pull back.

Grinning in savage satisfaction, he quickly pulled her head back. She took a desperate gulp of air.

Withdrawing his cock from her mouth, he played the tip over her lips as she struggled to catch her breath.

Elizabeth gasped and panted but each breath felt smaller than the last. There was no room inside her. The corset was squeezing her, arousal shaking her so that she couldn't find herself, couldn't center herself. All she could do was react.

Marcus' cock head rubbed her lips and she parted them, willing, wanting it in her mouth. Those first deep thrusts had terrified her. She couldn't breathe, she had to change the situation, yet she didn't want to ruin the moment. Always before there'd been a way in moments like this to subtly alter the play to make it more palatable, to tone it down. This time there hadn't been.

Or if there had been she'd been too overwhelmed to think of it.

And so Elizabeth had let go. She trusted him and, terrifying as it was, she just held her breath and partook of the experience.

And it was amazing.

The arrogant, strong man above her. His hand on her head, cock in her mouth. He controlled her breath, her movement.

Each hard thrust of his cock into her mouth, each time he forced her to keep him deep inside, she'd grown wetter, more desperate to have his cock not in her mouth but in her sex.

He pulled out, brushing the tip of his cock over her lips. He tipped her head back. His face was so far above her. She looked for a hint of the man she was dating in the hard face of the man who was so brutally fucking her mouth.

"Give me your wrists."

When she lifted her arms, Marcus caught his fingers in the metal loops on the outside of her wrists and used them to pull her to a standing position.

She felt safer, calmer, because she could see the flecks of gold in his eyes, could see the man who took her to dinner and refused to let her pay, the man who held doors out of courtesy and narrated football games to her with the fervor of a missionary.

"What makes you so damned complicated?" he asked.

That startled Elizabeth and she let out a breathy laugh, swaying into him.

"I was thinking the same about you...Marcus."

He growled and captured her lips in a punishing kiss, breaking it to say, "You taste like me."

Elizabeth nipped his lower lip then sucked it into her mouth. The stubble on his chin scraped her and his cock jumped against her hip.

He pulled her arms above her head, transferring hold of both rings to one of his hands. His free hand traced a path down her arm, tickling soft skin unused to caresses. His fingers tested the hard swell of her cleavage, pressing between her breasts. A few tweaks to the front of the corset and the cups detached, her breasts spilling free.

Elizabeth took a deep breath, the restriction around her rib cage still there but the pressure release from across her breasts making breathing much easier. With returning breath came a returning need and sense of self. The lethargy she'd felt while sucking him faded.

"Loop your fingers through the rings, keep your arms up. You may rest your wrists on your head," he said.

He released her arms, returning the weight of her limbs to her. Elizabeth did as he commanded, threading her fingers through the rings, which were warm from his touch, and resting her joined wrists, which were heavy with the weight of the manacles, on her head.

He took a step back, looking her over.

"You're beautiful."

"I'm glad you think so," she whispered, and she was, but she wanted to scream at him to do something. She couldn't take much more teasing.

He turned to the window. "Are you ready to take this further?"

"Yes!" she shouted, frustration jumping from her.

Marcus smiled, the hair he'd tucked behind his ear falling forward over one eye. "Really?"

"I trusted you when you put me on my knees, even though part of me was screaming that I couldn't even *breathe*."

The manacles and corset were starting to feel foreign and ridiculous instead of sexual and frightening-in-a-good way. "I want this. Why are you questioning it?"

"I want more from you."

What little breath Elizabeth could draw froze. Did he mean...

She started to ask what he meant, started to tell him that she wanted more also. But that wasn't a conversation she wanted to have like this.

At a loss, she nodded, dropping her gaze to the carpet. When he touched her cheek she flinched. She was so lost in her thoughts she hadn't noticed he'd approached her once more.

"I lost you, didn't I? That's not fair, considering what I'm about to do to you."

At that her head snapped up. He grinned at her, a predator's smile.

"You like that, don't you?" he asked, curling a hand in her hair. "Knowing that I'm going to do wicked things to you. Hurt you."

She whimpered at the word—the wicked, wicked words.

He feathered his fingers over her breasts, thumbing her nipples, scraping them with his nails until they were beaded into hard balls. His other hand traced down the back of the corset to cup her ass, the tips of his fingers sliding between the cheeks.

"You liked hearing me say what I'm going to do to you."

One fingertip touched the entrance to her ass and she looked from Marcus to the glass dildos and back. He smiled, pinching and twisting one nipple. He released the nipple, repeated the treatment on the other nipple, then lightly slapped each breast. All this while his fingertips were buried in the crease of her ass, one finger poised so that if she moved at all she would impale herself.

Her breasts were hot, her nipples throbbing. Her wrists, still held on top of her head, grew heavier by the second.



He slid his hand from her ass and took hold of the manacles, helping her untangle her stiff fingers.

Marcus stepped up behind her, opened the cheeks of her ass with his hands and pressed his cock into the valley. Elizabeth gasped and swayed forward but he barked at her to stay still.

His fingers rolled her nipples, the weight of her breasts in his palms. His touch was rough, his breath hard in her ear as his cock rubbed against her ass, the dry friction exciting yet uncomfortable. Unsure what to do with her hands, Elizabeth reached up and back to cup Marcus' head and neck, massaging his head and scalp.

"I'm going to fuck your ass," he whispered roughly. "First with my fingers, then with the little dildos, then with my cock. Then I'm going to fuck your pussy with my cock while I fuck your ass with that dildo."

Elizabeth sobbed out a breath, the pressure on her nipples, the presence of his cock and the words bringing her to the brink of orgasm. She raked her nails from his scalp down his neck and across his biceps.

Marcus spun her and jerked her forward, bearing them both down to the floor. She landed hard on her back but didn't notice, or didn't care, when Marcus pushed her legs apart.

"I can't wait to have you. I need you. I need you."

"I need you too."

This wasn't controlled, as it had been when he bent her over the couch. Marcus was wild and fumbling, his control almost gone. Elizabeth knew she'd pay for that and she didn't care.

She tried to stroke his face and neck but he snarled at her, forced her hands down to the floor, forced her to put them above her head, like a good submissive.

Oh yes, she would pay.

When he'd positioned his cock at the entrance to her sex, he caught her face in his hands, forced her to look at him as he sank into her inch by inch.

Yes, yes, yes. This was what she wanted. Her body was stretching, opening to be filled by him. She felt full and complete. The soaking wetness was finally being put to use as he slid easily into her. Each shallow breath made her aware of the corset and how he controlled her.

He held still for a moment, let them savor it, before he withdrew completely and slammed into her.

On the third thrust Elizabeth came. She screamed his name as she climaxed, her body having maintained a high state of arousal for so long that it hadn't taken much to take her over the edge.

As soon as she came, Marcus turned her over and thrust into her sex from behind, holding her ass cheeks open with his thumbs.

"Your ass is still getting fucked tonight, Elizabeth," he warned her, just before he, too, came.

## Chapter Nine

The corset closures clattered and clinked. Elizabeth took her first deep breath in an hour, sighing as Marcus lifted it away. She rubbed at her belly and sides, the imprints of the stitching just faintly visible.

She held out her wrists to Marcus but he shook his head. "Those stay," he said.

He offered his hand and she accepted it, letting him lead her to the display cabinet by the TV. Her steps dragged the closer they got, until Marcus had to put an arm around her waist to draw her close.

"I know you want this," he said, voice low. "I see you shivering with arousal every time I say I'm going to fuck your ass."

On cue she shivered. Ashamed of herself, she turned into his shoulder, hiding her burning cheeks. He didn't allow her to hide, from either him or herself.

"Is part of your enjoyment of this being ashamed of it?"

Elizabeth blinked in surprise. Was it? She was ashamed of her desire for BDSM sex, and that shame brought her no pleasure, only weary acceptance. But the shame she felt when she thought about anal sex...

She shivered.

Marcus kissed the side of her neck. "It's not uncommon, like a rape fantasy."

Mr. Football knew more about the female psyche than she did? "How did you know that's what I felt?"

"Other Doms told me. I read some books. Forbidden thrill is a great thing. There's real physical pleasure in this too, but I want to make sure that you get everything you can from this experience."

*I love you.*

She thought the words but didn't say them. Not the most romantic moment to think them, but a true moment. He cared about her and for her in a way no other man ever had.

She looked over the glass dildos, all of which seemed too large. Yes, she wanted this, but she was sated after the great sex they'd just had and wasn't sure she wanted to go through what would undoubtedly be a deeply emotional and physical experience.

Marcus didn't give her a choice.

The sweet man who'd gently discussed the emotional realities of what they were doing was gone. Firm hands pulled her back against a wide chest. He licked her ear and then whispered, "I can't wait to fuck your ass. I'm going to put each of my pretty toys in you."

He rolled her nipples, scraping them with his thumbs.

"I'm going to open you up, fuck your ass, then I'm going to leave a dildo in your ass while I fuck your pussy."

He slipped a tweezer clamp onto her right nipple, then did the same to her left. The pressure was light, just enough to provide constant stimulation. The sight of them on her flushed pink breasts ratcheted up her arousal.

"I've never worn these before," she said.

"I'm glad. They're loose, because you're going to have them on for a long time. Next time I make you wear them they'll be tight."

*Next time.*

"Up on the bench," Marcus ordered.

Elizabeth looked at him in utter confusion.

Marcus moved a padded bench into place against the built-in cabinet. The bench wasn't some sinister BDSM piece but a normal bench with a back, the kind you could purchase to go with dining room tables. He positioned it touching the cabinet, with the back out.

"I don't understand," she said, still distracted by her nipple clamps.

Marcus scooped Elizabeth up, lifted her over the back and had her stand on the padded seat of the bench facing the wall.

"Lean forward and brace your hands on the wall. Arch your back and stick out your ass."

In that position she was bent at a nearly ninety-degree angle, looking down at the top of the display case and all the dildos she would soon be intimately acquainted with. Her legs were slightly spread, calves pressed against the back of the bench.

Twisting to looking back, Elizabeth realized why Marcus had her in this awkward position—her ass was at chest height to him. She watched as he went to a panel in the wall and adjusted the track lighting, directing a pin spot directly on her ass.

"Marcus," she yelped.

"You're mine and I'm going to inspect you," he growled. "I want to see everything as I shove the dildos into your pretty ass."

Her neck started to protest as she watched him open a box and pull out baby wipes, lube and rubber gloves. He put on a rubber glove with a snap and she moaned.

Marcus slid his gloved index finger into her sopping pussy, liking the contrast of the white glove and her deep pink flesh. He was disappointed in himself for what he'd done—stopping mid-scene for vanilla sex was a rookie mistake—but it hadn't detracted. After all, they had all weekend and, if he had his way, longer.

He had big hands, big fingers, so she was going to feel it when he did this, but she wanted it that way. Her masochistic streak was healthy, her kinky streak ran deep. God, he loved this woman.

He squeezed the water-based lube directly into the crack of her ass, loving the way she jiggled as the cold gel slid down her ass and into her pussy.

Using his thumbs, he parted her ass cheeks, exposing her puckered ass. She clenched and he laughed

“Tightening is only going to make it worse,” he said, deliberately making his voice cruel, letting her know that pain was a real possibility, that hurting her could please them both.

He pressed his index finger against her puckered anus. “I’m going to fuck your ass with my finger. If you relax it won’t hurt as much. If you tighten up it will hurt a lot. If you keep it tight I will assume you want pain and the next thing you get will be my full cock.”

His other thumb was on her clit as he spoke, rubbing in circles.

Her anus relaxed. Marcus smiled, then rubbed the ring of muscle, stimulating the nerves there before gently pressing with just the tip of his finger. It sank in easily. He withdrew his finger and started over, this time pushing to the knuckle.

When he pushed his finger in past the knuckle she cried out and bucked.

It was glorious. The noises she made, her bouncing breasts and jiggling ass were perfect. Her reactions were genuine and unrehearsed, her desires a strange mix of wholesome and perverted.

He added lube and pushed his whole finger in.

“That’s my finger,” he told her.

“Just that?” she whispered.

He kissed her ass cheek before withdrawing his finger.

“Pick up the smallest dildo,” he told her. “Lick it.”

With one hand still braced, she did as he said, selecting the smallest of the glass toys and slowly licking every inch. He watched her and felt the plan start to fall apart again. She was just so damn sexy.

The glass magnified her pretty pink tongue, her white teeth peeked out from behind her lips. Her breasts were swaying with each breath, begging to be fondled. He wasn't going to last through training her to take all four sizes in her ass tonight.

He'd wanted to give her a spectacular night, to show her what a good Dom he was so that tomorrow she'd know he was serious. Damn it.

Marcus tried to remember why it was imperative that he keep pushing tonight but he couldn't. Instead he spanked her because she was distracting him, and took the dildo from her.

"Beg me for lube," he said, knowing she hated to beg.

She said nothing.

He spanked her again, another five swats to each ass cheek. His cock was rock-hard.

He could see that there was still enough lube to be safe but said, "Beg for lube or it will hurt when I fuck you with this. Is that what you want, for it to hurt when I fuck you in the ass?"

He didn't give her time to answer. The clear glass had a slim tip and an easy taper. He positioned it against her anus and forced it two inches into her ass in one smooth thrust.

Elizabeth screamed – in fear and imagined pain more than anything else.

"Marcus, Marcus!"

Feeling as frantic as she sounded, he fumbled for the strap that matched the plug she currently held inside her. Not wanting to lose the moment, he pulled it out a few inches and pushed it in again, this time going slightly deeper, opening her slightly wider.

He threaded the strap – a long nylon belt – through a slit in the base of the dildo.

"You have two more inches to take, then I'm going to fuck your pussy. Tomorrow I'll teach you to take the other sizes."

"M-m-more?" she asked.

He might have taken her words for fear if it weren't for the fact that she was flicking her nipple clamps and her pussy was so moist that her wetness was running down the insides of her thighs.

Marcus withdrew the dildo completely, lubed up his gloved finger and inserted it into her ass. He worked the entrance to her ass, rubbing and stroking, while his ungloved hand did the same to her pussy. The impact of seeing her pussy and ass so close up was amazing. His cock was wet with precum and, as before, it was going to be a short session.

When she was well lubed he withdrew his hand and removed the glove.

"I'm going to insert it all the way," he said, aware his voice was rough but unable to help it. The glass tip took its place at the entrance to her ass, then he sank it into her, opening her little by little. Her tight ass opened, the clear phallus giving him a perfect view of the tight ring as it yielded for him. He kept the pressure steady even as she started to thrash and moan.

"Marcus, it's big," she panted, leaning away as if to escape but then pushing back, impaling herself.

When the straps had come to rest against her ass, Marcus tied them around her and lifted her down.

"The straps hold the dildo in place," he told her. "It won't slip out or slip all the way in." He set her on her feet and watched her eyes widen as the dildo shifted inside her. The straps were tied across her upper thighs.

Marcus tugged on the knot, testing it, and Elizabeth stumbled into him, her eyelids fluttering closed. The hardware on her nipples pressed into his chest.

"I've never been this aroused," she said. The words slurred together drunkenly. He tipped her chin up with a thumb and looked into her eyes. They glittered with fever-bright arousal and yet were heavy lidded. He could sympathize. He felt as if he were



moving under water, wanting to go faster than his limbs would let him, and yet his skin itched and pricked with sensation.

Holding her by the neck, Marcus separated their upper bodies and in two quick jerks ripped off the nipple clamps.

Elizabeth went rigid.

He held her gaze, drinking in her shock, the hints of pain and rumbles of pleasure, before ducking his head. Pressing her breasts together, he sucked both nipples into his mouth.

She tried to push his head away, whispering, “No, no, too sensitive,” but he simply reached around behind her and placed two fingers on the base of the plug, forcing it deeper into her ass.

She stilled and her hands fell away as the plug stretched her ass wide. Grunting in satisfaction, he took his time with her nipples. He nibbled each one in turn, flicked them with his tongue, then sucked hard, drawing the blood back into the sensitive peaks.

Soon her hands were back on his head, but this time, they were tangled in his hair, nails lightly scraping his scalp.

The throbbing in his cock grew too insistent to ignore. Releasing her nipples, Marcus planted his shoulder against Elizabeth’s hips and stood, her upper body dangling down his back.

“Oh, oh, ooooh, fuck...” she moaned as he carried her to the bedroom.

Marcus smiled, knowing that with each step he took the dildo was shifting inside her, effectively fucking her as he walked.

He set her on her feet and turned her to the bed, keeping his hands on her shoulders in case she tried to run.

\* \* \* \* \*

A black rubberized sheet covered the bed. Positioned in the center was a large foam wedge, also covered in black rubbery material. Laid out near the edge were nylon

straps with buckles on the ends. Two short lengths of chain extended from the top corners of the bed toward the center.

Elizabeth tried to take a step back and Marcus tightened his grip on her shoulders.

She wanted to weep in frustration. She was lightheaded with arousal, desperate with the need for release. Her pussy was soaking wet, her nipples throbbed and her ass ached from the pressure and presence of the invading dildo.

Hadn't she been through enough tonight? Couldn't he fuck her until she had some massive beautiful orgasm and they could call it a night? After all, this was just the first day of the long weekend.

Apparently not.

Marcus led her to the bed, forcing her up onto the rubbery sheet—which she was reluctant to touch.

"Facedown over the block," he said.

Vaguely repulsed by the way her skin seemed to stick to the sheet, Elizabeth hung back.

"Elizabeth," he warned.

"Why is it sticky?" she asked. "It's gross."

"It's not sticky, it's rubberized and it has good grip. Over the block. Now."

Still she hung back. "Why do we have to do this? Why can't you just fuck me?"

He fisted his hand in her hair, forcing her to look over her shoulder at him. His face was shadowed, his eyes dark. "I want to fuck you so badly right now my cock fucking hurts. I can see and smell how turned-on you are. I know that you want me to fuck you, and yet you're acting up."

"I-I..."

"Now, rather than pleasuring both of us, I have to stop and punish you."

Elizabeth's belly fluttered in twin reactions of fear and excitement. "Marcus, I didn't mean to be bad. I am aroused and that's why I want you to fuck me. We've already

done more kinky stuff tonight than any other night so why all this?" She swept out a hand to indicate the bed, movement awkward because he still held her head by the hair while she knelt on the bed as he stood beside it.

Marcus smiled, forced her to turn so she fully faced him.

"Why?" he repeated. "Because you want this. You don't want a simple fuck, especially after all this." He leaned into her so their bodies pressed together from thigh to chest. Their faces were only inches apart. "You want to be chained down and tied up. You want me on a rubber sheet so that I can fuck you harder and deeper. You're scared of it, but you want it.

"This is you, this is what you really want. Endless hours of primitive, kinky fucking."

He was right. As frightening as it was, he was entirely right, and something inside her came apart at the realization. But the introspection would have to wait, because he broke the kiss, dragged her off the bed and forced her up against the wall.

"Face that wall," he growled.

"Marcus, I'm sorry."

"Stand still."

Elizabeth could hear Marcus rummaging around behind her. She shifted side-to-side, her bare toes curling nervously. As she moved, the dildo in her ass rocked, stimulating her.

He touched her back, just between her shoulder blades. His hand was warm against her skin.

"Cross your hands at the small of your back."

The moment she did, he fastened the manacles together with the built-in metal circles. She dropped her hands and the restraints caught, holding her arms in place.

"Your ass isn't available for punishment." Marcus tugged the dildo out a quarter of an inch and then pushed it back in. "You'll take your punishment on your thighs." He

squeezed her ass cheek then trailed his hand down to her left thigh, stroking the smooth skin there.

Elizabeth sucked in her belly, terrified that this was actually going to happen. Yet she felt her already wet sex dampen further. There was a *crack* and Elizabeth shrieked.

"I didn't touch you. Yet."

"What is it?" she asked the wall. She wanted, desperately, to turn around, but wouldn't disobey the order to face the wall—not when he was holding something to punish her with.

The tip of something stiff and cold traced her shoulder blades, the back of each arm, the bottom curve of her ass.

"Count them."

She heard the crack, then felt sharp pain high across her thighs. It hurt enough that she didn't want it to happen again, but the pain wasn't terrible.

"One," she said steadily, curling and uncurling her fingers.

The second one landed just below the second. She rocked forward, her forehead and breasts touching the wall. "Two."

"Does it hurt?"

"Yes."

Marcus' fingers slid between her thighs, up to her sex. He stroked the outer lips with two fingers, then brushed her clit lightly. Then his fingers were gone and the third strike landed high on her thighs, just below her ass.

"Th-three," she stammered, the sharp pain spreading to an ache across both thighs.

There was a clatter and then his hands on her wrists, releasing the cuffs. She dropped her hands but didn't move.

"Turn around."

When she did Elizabeth kept her gaze focused on Marcus' bare chest. He was standing close to her, his shoulders looming above her, his presence overwhelming her, controlling her, making her feel alive.

"What's going on in those pretty eyes?" he asked, cupping her jaw and tilting her head up.

"I don't know how to feel," she whispered. When she looked into his eyes she saw longing and arousal there.

His hot amber gaze searched her face, making her wonder what secrets he'd uncovered. His thumb brushed her lower lip.

"Don't make me cane you again. I'd rather be spanking you, or fucking you."

His thigh slid between hers, pushing them apart. His hand on her ass pressed against the dildo and forced her forward so her sex rode his leg. She rocked forward, the lips of her sex parted and her clit brushed the rock-hard muscles of his leg. Marcus' cock rubbed her hip.

"Get back on the bed."

He pushed her facedown over the wedge-shaped "block". Her upper body lay along the long gentle slope, her ass lifted high. Marcus had her lift her hips and he untied the straps holding the dildo in place. He then spread her legs so her knees were at the edges of the foam block.

The moment he did, Elizabeth became acutely aware of her aching thighs and still-dripping sex.

"Spread your arms to the corner of the bed so I can chain you down," he said.

She twisted her head to watch him as he attached the unnecessarily heavy chain to the manacles. Once she was secure, he ran his hands over her, proving to both of them that he could, and would, touch her how and when he wanted.

He secured her knees to a bar hidden in the base of the block with the nylon straps she'd seen at the edge of the bed. He wrapped them around her thigh just above her knee, loose enough to protect blood flow, and then tied them to the bar, preventing her from closing her legs.

"How do you feel?" Marcus asked. His palms were gliding up and down the backs of her thighs. Elizabeth couldn't answer. Her teeth were clenched to prevent herself from screaming and begging for him to touch her pussy.

"Elizabeth, how do you feel?" he asked.

She shook her head, nodded, unable and unwilling to answer.

His hands slid up to where her thighs met her ass, his thumbs pulling apart the lips of her sex. She wanted to weep as moisture poured from her, cool air seeping into her sex to touch her clit.

That breeze grew stronger, focused—not a breeze but his breath. Then a gentle touch on her clit. A slow lick, a soft nip, another slow lick.

"Fuck me, fuck me, please," she begged through clenched teeth.

The bed shifted beneath her as his big body moved up behind her. His thighs settled against hers, his hands brushed her back, shoulders and cheek.

"What's the word if you need me to reevaluate?" he asked, and though the words were the calm, measured words of the Dom, his hands on her cheek were rough and hot, the hand that had settled on her hip squeezing hard.

"Yellow," she said.

"And stop?"

"Red."

"Good," he sighed, running his hands possessively along her back, sides and shoulders. "I can't wait to feel how tight you're going to be with that dildo in your ass."

Elizabeth shivered, excited but scared. She'd never experienced double penetration. What would it feel like? Would it hurt?

Marcus slid a single finger into her sex and it felt as if his whole cock was squeezing into her. The dildo in her ass and the hard wedge below her pressed her body tight. She felt every inch of his finger, was acutely aware of every inch of her sex.

"It won't work," she said, panic taking hold, "your finger feels huge, your cock —"

Marcus added a second finger. Elizabeth groaned as she was stretched, the inner surface of her vagina caressed between his finger and the dildo. He paused, curled his fingers and caught her G-spot.

"Yes, yes!" Elizabeth screamed, pleasure hitting her. It wasn't an orgasm, but close. If he'd been touching her clit at the same time she would have come. As the pleasure swept through her she clenched her ass around the dildo, nerve endings in her anus sending pleasure signals winging to her already overstimulated brain.

His fingers were gone and there was a wide, hot presence at the entrance to her sex. His hands gripped her hips, lifting her off the block so she rested on her knees.

"You're mine," Marcus said, rubbing the tip of his cock up and down the crease of her sex.

Elizabeth nodded slightly, her face, now wet with sweat and her own tears of pleasure and frustration, resting on the rubbery sheet.

"All yours," she agreed. "You're mine too," she said without thinking. The moment the words were out of her mouth she winced. She didn't want to throw off the play again, hadn't meant to rile him up or provoke punishment, and those weren't the words a sub said to a Dom.

Silence filled the bedroom. Marcus wasn't moving any longer. His cock was still, resting just at the entrance to her sex. Elizabeth was one hundred percent sure that if his cock didn't enter her body within the next minute she would die of sexual frustration.

"Yes, I'm yours too," Marcus said, and before she had time to digest that, he pressed his cock forward.

Marcus' cock pushed into her, opening and stretching her sex. Elizabeth whimpered and moaned, the stretching sensation both pleasurable and slightly painful. His cock was moving the dildo, shifting it against her sensitive anus.

"You're so tight, so wet," he said.

Inch by inch he slid in, filling her. Elizabeth became a being of sensation, focused on the pleasure to be had as his cock found and caressed each nerve ending.

When he stopped, she sighed.

"You like this, being full? I think my pretty Elizabeth is off in subspace."

Her only response was the soft clank of chain as she adjusted her arms.

"I'm glad you've enjoyed that, but now I'm going to fuck you."

He withdrew his cock from her sex, leaving her empty and bereft.

"No," she moaned, fingers tangling in the chain as she tensed in distress, "I need you, I need you." She raised her head, looking over her shoulder.

Marcus rose behind her like a primitive god. His chest and shoulders were shining with sweat, his hair clung to his neck and forehead. She could see the tip of his cock, red and swollen, standing up against his stomach.

She watched as he pushed his cock down, felt the head against her sex, felt it slide into place and then into her body. He was looking at their joined bodies and she liked that, wanted to know what he could see, if it looked as amazing as it felt.

Gathering the straps of the dildo with one hand, he leaned back, only then looking up and noticing her watching.

Gaze locked on hers, he slammed his cock fully into her.

Pain and pleasure combined ripped through her. Elizabeth turned her head away, pressing her face into the rubbery sheet, smelling plastic and struggling to breathe through the sensations. It felt good, but hurt, but she liked the pain.

Marcus withdrew, thrust, with only a small pause.



He fucked her with hard, deep thrusts. It never got easier, the sensation of fullness never eased.

Marcus slammed into her, cock going so deep that his balls slapped against her clit, but this time he didn't withdraw. At least, he didn't withdraw his cock.

He withdrew the tapered dildo, inch by glass inch, letting her stretched anus close, relieving some of the pressure. He withdrew it completely, then reinserted it, pressing it in even deeper than before, stopping only when she begged him to.

"Stop, stop, no more!" she begged.

"Fine," he agreed. Releasing the dildo, he thread the straps through the restraints on her legs, adding an extra tug that forced it in a bit more, wringing another tortured cry from Elizabeth. "Remember, tomorrow you have three larger sizes you have to learn to take up your pretty ass."

"Yes, yes, fuck me, hurt me, fuck me," she whispered. She felt his cock jump at her words.

Marcus withdrew and thrust. With the dildo secured to her restraints it didn't move with her body and as Marcus fucked her, the dildo slid in and out of her ass.

"Marcus, Marcus!" she cried. Tiny earthquakes and lightning storms of sensation were going off within her. His big cock was pounding in and out of her, its upward thrust hitting her G-spot. The dildo was riding in and out, pushing deeper and deeper, widening her ass.

He fucked her, commanded her, owned her.

"Tell me," he demanded.

She didn't have the presence of mind to form sentences so she let the words come in fragmented thoughts and bits. "So full, and you're fucking me. The dildo, now it's fucking me, going deep, too deep. You're so deep. G-spot. Oh fuck. I want to come. Can I? So hot, so wet, so long. I want to come. Want to come. Want you. Fuck. Fuck me."

"I am going to fuck you until you come, then keep fucking you until I come. And if I think you haven't been fucked enough I'm going to get another dildo and keep fucking you with that."

His words pushed her over the edge.

She came, screaming his name, thrashing in the bondage he'd placed on her, screaming in pleasure so acute it was agony.

"Yes, yes, Marcus, yes, I love you!" she cried, so lost in the pleasure she didn't know what she was saying.

He continued fucking her as her orgasm faded, and so she felt and heard every moment of his orgasm, from the sudden increase in speed, which had her bracing, to his own shouted, "Yes, mine, yes."

He collapsed on top of her when he was done, heavy body falling over hers. His cock was still inside her, as was the dildo. He was heavy, making breathing difficult, but he was warm and she liked feeling so close to him.

The moment passed and he slid out of her, then off her. He released her legs and wrists and then gently withdrew the dildo.

He helped her from the bed, leading her to the bathroom. By the time she came out, Marcus had stripped the bed to reveal the normal sheets underneath.

Exhausted to her core, both physically and emotionally, Elizabeth leaned against the side of the bed and waited for Marcus to complete his turn in the bathroom. When he came out he smiled at her, raised a brow when he saw she hadn't moved.

Grabbing her at the waist, he helped her onto the bed, then came up behind her. He grabbed the duvet off the chair and drew it over them.

With Marcus' big, warm body at her back and his biceps for her pillow, Elizabeth sank toward sleep.

"I love you too," Marcus said.

"What?" Elizabeth said, not wanting to wake up but knowing she should.

"I should have said it earlier, but I was distracted. I love you too."

"Okay. Good night."

His chuckle was the last thing she heard before she fell fully asleep.

## **Chapter Ten**

Marcus woke her the next morning by kissing his way from her wrist up her forearm to the bend of her elbow.

She sighed and stretched, straightening her arm. Her fingers encountered warm chest and she scratched lightly. He nipped her arm.

"Good morning," she whispered, voice rough.

"Good afternoon, Liz," he replied. "It's 12:01."

Liz opened one eye, relieved to hear they weren't in BDSM play mode at the moment. "Were you waiting to wake me up?"

"Yes."

"Why?" she said, rolling onto her side. She pulled up the sheet and tucked it over her breasts. Mark was leaning over the side of the bed. He looked clean and neat, his hair combed behind his ears. He was the all-American football guy. Gone was the shadowy villain from last night.

Liz combed her fingers through his hair, destroying its neatness.

"That's better," she said.

"What was wrong with it?"

"Too neat and tidy. Made you look non-threatening."

Mark rose to his feet, towering above the bed, and cocked a brow. Liz rolled onto her back, shrugged and stretched, her breasts popping free of the sheet.

Mark cupped her left breast, giving it an appreciative fondle.

"Hands off," Liz said, shoving him away and pulling up the sheet, "I need to shower." Seeing him so clean and tidy made her aware of her own post-sex stickiness. She ached in—

Mark inched the sheet down to her waist and lay down next to her. Bracing himself on his forearm, he once more cupped her left breast. His face was only inches from hers. He was watching her, waiting for her reaction.

"You called me Liz," she said slowly. "So we're not playing."

"No, we're not playing."

"We're having sex, as Mark and Liz. Plain vanilla sex."

Mark kissed her collarbone, her chest, her breast just above her nipple. "I don't know about *plain* vanilla."

He pushed the sheet away and she helped him to shed his boxers. He was already hard for her as they rolled together across the bed. The sex was quick but not frantic, and when they finally came together she was on top, Mark's hands on her breasts.

If his fingers on her nipples were rougher than most people would find normal, and if in the moments before they came they vowed to do things to each other that would have violated the Geneva accord, there was no one in the room to hear.

Panting, happy, awake and hungry, Liz lay on her back. One of her legs was dangling off the bed, her arm was tangled in the sheet and her head rested on Mark's stomach.

"Why 12:01?" she asked.

"What?"

"You woke me up at 12:01, why?"

"After last night I thought I should let you sleep in, but I'm hungry. Noon seemed good, not too early, not too late," Mark said. His stomach grumbled to confirm the story.

Liz couldn't help but giggle. "There's some faulty logic in there but I'll accept it. It was sweet of you to let me sleep in and," she stretched, "now I'm hungry too."

"Good, let's go get food. Then we'll come back here and have sex, get more food, have sex. Food. Sex."

Mark jumped off the bed, grinning, but Liz's bubble of happiness faded. That had been fun, but what did it mean, and when they came back from food what kind of sex would they be having? He was already headed out the bedroom door.

"Mark, wait, I need to understand this."

"Liz, we'll talk about it over food."

"No, now. I need to understand what this is." She gestured to the bed where she still knelt, naked and oh so vulnerable. "Why have sex as Liz and Mark? We've been keeping sex so far away from our outside friendship it was like we were cheating on each other with ourselves."

Mark scrubbed his face with his hands. "Liz, for someone so smart you can be a real pain in the ass."

Hurt and shocked, Liz stared, open-mouthed.

"Liz, you're my friend. I like having you as a friend and I always did. I like Liz my friend, but what I was looking for was Elizabeth the sub."

"So you thought you'd play both of them and see which one you like better, you son-of-a-bitch?"

She threw a pillow at him, which bounced harmlessly off his head. The wireless clock she plucked from the side table easily weighed two pounds. That made a good-size dent in the wall when she threw it, and would have made a better dent in him if he hadn't jumped out of the way.

He tackled her from across the room, easily pinning her thrashing form.

"Please listen to me," he said with maddening calm as she tried to head-butt him.

"Please let me up so I can storm out of here and key your car," Liz said, trying for the same cool tone and failing.

Mark laughed, dropping his head to the mattress beside hers. Liz sighed and she too laughed.

"I never throw things," she told him. "I'm very calm, very logical."

"Not with me," he said. "Probably because you love me."

Liz gasped and looked at Marcus. Ever since she woke she'd been doing her best not to think about that part of last night. She had only vague memories of screaming that she loved him in the throes of passion. Her memories of his "I love you too" were, however, very clear.

"Whatever we said last night, with everything that was going on..."

"I love you, Liz."

Liz smiled and closed her eyes. "Say it again, please."

"I love you, Liz Brown." He punctuated each word with a kiss.

Mark sat up, then helped her to sit up so they were looking at each other.

"Let me try this again," he said. "Don't throw anything at me. I told you what I was looking for at the beginning. I wanted a submissive I could really know. I needed this sexual partner in my life. I'm tired of hiding it, or worrying about taking home a sub and wondering if I'll end up with a blackmail note the next day."

He paused to take a breath and Liz nodded because she understood. That same need had driven her to the BDSM 101 class.

"When I saw that ribbon in your hand, Liz, I couldn't believe it. I knew I was the luckiest guy ever. I didn't plan what happened between us outside of BDSM." Mark shrugged. "If I wanted to get some dinner I just...called you. That part of it just happened."

"And I did the same," Liz said, lacing her fingers with his. "There were so many times after we had dinner or met for drinks that I wanted to take you home, or to come back here, but we never had sex outside BDSM."

"I didn't think it would be fair, until now."

"Because you love me," she said, smiling.

"You haven't said it back," Mark said. "If I were a girl I'd be freaking out."

“Don’t disparage women like that. Also, I’m saving it. I want it to be a perfect moment.”

“What are you talking about?” he groaned.

“The first time we say ‘I love you’ I want it to be romantic.”

“The first time we said ‘I love you’ I had you chained down as I fucked your pussy while there was a dildo shoved up your ass and you begged—”

Liz slapped her hand over his mouth. She could feel the blush in her cheeks. “Exactly. Which is why we’re going to do it again and it’s going to be romantic. And G-rated.”

Mark boomed out a laugh. “All right, I guess we have to have something to tell our kids.”

Liz nearly fainted. “Kids? I need coffee.”

“Woman, I’ve been waiting for breakfast for hours. Don’t blame me for the lack of coffee. But I guess we should date first.”

“News flash, we’ve been dating. Time to move on to ‘in a relationship’,” Liz said, smiling. She was so happy she could scream with it. “Mark, are we really doing this? Are we going to be together, do normal couple stuff, vanilla sex, BDSM sex, all of it?”

“I want to, don’t you?” He picked up her hand and kissed it, his eyes slightly narrowed, a hint of worry showing.

“Yes, I do,” she said.

Mark hopped off the bed and scooped her up, carrying her to the bathroom. “Shower sex?” he asked.

“Vanilla or BDSM?” she asked suspiciously, more than a little sore.

“Victim’s choice.”

“In that case I’ll take oral sex—receiving.”

He hissed out a breath. “Play action, that’s a good call.”



“Oh sexy, talk more football analogies please,” she said in a sultry voice as he gently set her down on the edge of the tub.

“Remind me to spank you. Later.”

## About the Author

Lila is a multi-published, bestselling author of erotic, paranormal and fantasy romance. Having spent extensive time in France, Egypt, Turkey, Ireland and England, Lila speaks five languages, none of them (including English) fluently.

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