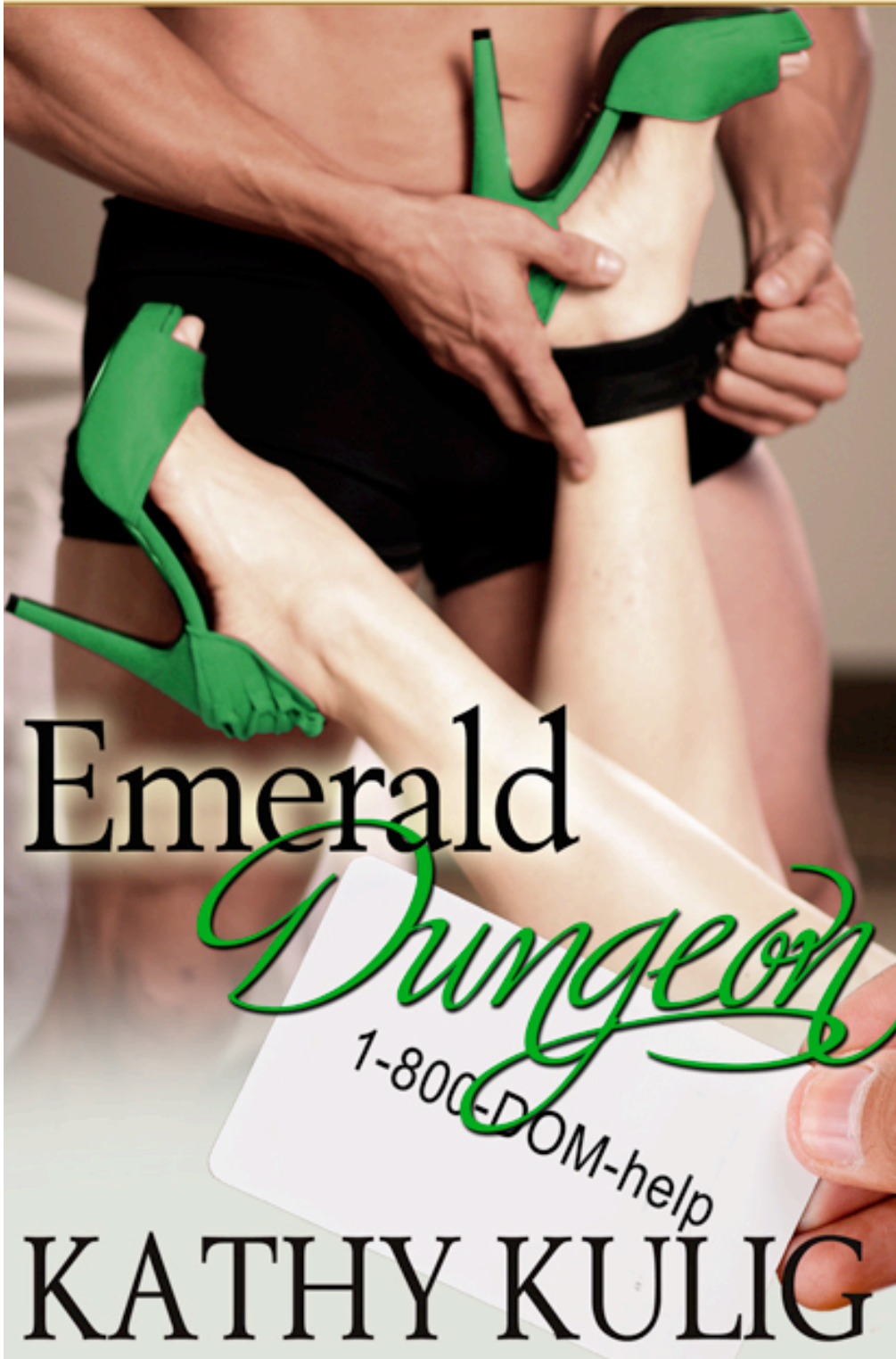


ELLORA'S CAVE TABOO



Emerald

Dungeon

1-800-DOM-help

KATHY KULIG

Emerald Dungeon

Kathy Kulig

A story in the 1-800-DOM-help series.

Dana's summer job as a musician in an Irish castle takes an adventurous turn after she witnesses a BDSM scene in the dungeon, and her submissive side awakens. Jack is a sexy Dominant who recognizes the sub smoldering beneath her demure exterior. His skillful commands take Dana beyond her darkest erotic fantasies.

Whips, restraints and increasing levels of pain heighten her passion, but complete surrender and ecstasy are out of her reach. Secrets and strange events around the castle only add to the couple's troubles. Will a summer affair be enough to find what they both need? The appearance of a mysterious business card may help guide them. If Dana can accept Jack with complete trust and surrender, then ultimate pleasure and true love are possible.

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Emerald Dungeon

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EMERALD DUNGEON

Kathy Kulig

Dedication

To the authors of the 1-800-DOM-help series, for their support and knowledge.

To all my readers for their kinds words and support.

Trademarks Acknowledgement

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The Magic

The magic begins with the appearance of the business card. Sleek black print on a pristine white background – unassuming in its appearance. Those brave enough to call the number will begin a journey that will explore their greatest desires.

Once the call is made, the Operator goes to work. Somehow he knows just what every caller needs, always able to find the answer the caller seeks.

Callers may be directed to Unfettered, a new club in town, one nobody has heard of. It provides a safe haven for all who enter. Members are free to explore their every desire...even those they weren't aware of. Little do they know Unfettered will disappear once those yearnings have eased.

Submissives who don't know how to handle their Dominants. Masters looking for the perfect sub. People who need just a little push to admit vanilla isn't their favorite flavor. The card finds them all.

And once you dial 1-800-DOM-help, *anything* can happen.

Chapter One

"The park's closed today," the gentleman at the visitor's desk said in a slow Irish drawl. He scowled at his computer screen then scribbled notes on a piece paper without looking at her.

"I'm not a tourist, I'm Dana Brennan. I was hired as a musician for the show."

Glancing up from his work, he gave her a quick once-over and frowned. "What happened to you, miss? You're soaking wet." He stood and approached the counter from the other side, giving her a closer look. "Didn't fall into the bog now, did you?"

"Bog? No, I had a flat tire on my drive over. It was raining."

"Changed it yourself now?"

She nodded.

He smiled, clearly astonished. He was a man of indeterminate years with white hair, a weatherworn face and blue eyes that held humor one moment and were severe the next.

"I'll get you your key so you can get into dry clothes. I'm Will Donegal, the proprietor of Rathmore Castle." He opened several drawers until he held up a key. "Here you go, Ms. Brennan. The cottages for the performers are to the right of the castle." He handed her the key with the number six on it. "You be an American? First time in Ireland?"

"I'm an American, but I've visited before. My cousin lives in Dublin. She told me about the job."

"I'd come and show you the cottage, but I best be staying here. Being it's Monday, the park is closed, but tourists still wander in."

Her spirits fell. "Darn. I was hoping to check out the castle. It's magnificent."

"It is that now, isn't it?" His eyes brightened and his back straightened, then he turned serious again. "You'll have plenty of time to explore the castle when it's open."

"I will. Thanks." She sighed. "I'm supposed to meet Jack. I understand he's the one who hired me." They'd talked on the phone and emailed for months. She had all the music he'd sent her memorized for the show. She couldn't wait to meet him. Her curiosity was driving her mad. Would his looks match her fantasy image of him? Jack's voice had a slow, rugged sound. Maybe it was the Irish accent that had kicked her libido into gear or that she hadn't had anything more than a casual date over the last six months. Knowing her luck, Jack probably looked more like the proprietor.

"Jack's around," Mr. Donegal said. "His cottage is at the edge of the forest, number two. And best you don't wander into that forest alone. You could get lost in the bogs."

"I'll keep that in mind." Get lost? She used to go backpacking in the Shenandoah National Park alone and she never got lost. She thought better not to mention that. "I had a large package shipped. Do you know if it's arrived yet?"

He pondered her question for a moment. "Yes, it's here. Delivered two days ago."

"Where is it? How did it look?" She clasped her hands to her chest, preparing herself for the worse.

He gave her a puzzled look. "Why, it looked like a box, a rather large one at that."

"I mean was it damaged?"

"Don't think so."

"Good. Can I pick it up now, please?"

"Jack took it. Said it was your harp. Probably took it to the castle for the show."

"And the castle is closed," she reminded him. Her heart leapt with relief and disappointment. By the look on the proprietor's face, he wasn't going to leave his post so she could get her instrument.

"Ah, I love the folk harp. 'Tis a lovely sound. I shall look forward to hearing you play."

“Thank you, Mr. Donegal.”

He caught her gaze and gave her a slight nod. “If you follow the drive, you’ll come to a fork. Bear to the right. You’ll see the cottages. There’s a meeting tonight at seven in the castle for the entertainers. You can get your harp then.”

She thanked him again and left the visitor’s center with its quaint thatched roof and miniature windows with flower boxes, like something straight out of a fairytale. Despite her disappointment in having to wait to practice her music, she was excited about her summer job. Her parents had frowned on Dana’s decision to take a leave of absence from a well-paying management position in a security company for a part-time, minimal-paying job as an entertainer in a medieval show. They were both high-powered executives and thrived on long work hours and stress. How could they understand that the stress of Dana’s job had been wearing on her life? Work usually slowed down in her company over the summer, so her boss had agreed to the leave as long as she returned by September first. She deserved this break. At thirty-three, this was the first reckless thing she’d ever done.

The midday sun dried up the earlier rain and the air smelled of dew, cut grass and flowers. For a Maryland girl, June in Ireland was on the cool side. She climbed into her rental car, which looked more like a fishbowl on a roller skate, and drove along the gravel road toward Rathmore Castle. As she reached the fork in the road, she stopped the car. Across a large field toward the right were a dozen thatched-roofed cottages similar to the visitor’s center. The left road led straight to the castle.

As she gazed up at the massive structure, a slight tremor went through her. Mostly, she was shivering from cold. The rain had soaked through to her underwear and the cool air had chilled her to the bone. But the tremor was more than that. She couldn’t imagine her good luck at working in such a beautiful place, but what if her parents were right and taking this time off would somehow hurt her position at her old job? She found herself hoping to go back to her old routine. Why did she think she could make a big change in her life? That wasn’t her.

Dana swung the car toward the cottages and stopped in front of number six. After unloading her luggage, she dragged it all into her unit and dropped it on the bed. The cottage was small but very neat. A tiny kitchen with a table for two was at the front, a bed and dresser in the middle, then a seating area with loveseat and coffee table. On one wall was a fireplace. Her teeth were chattering at this point and a hot shower beckoned.

She showered and changed into jeans and a tee shirt and slipped on a lightweight hooded sweatshirt, leaving it unzipped. Grabbing her room key and stuffing it in her sweatshirt pocket, she gave her unpacked suitcases a weary look as she left her cottage.

When she tried Jack's door and got no answer, she accepted the grim fact that harp practice would have to wait until after the meeting that evening. The castle loomed in front of her. A drive into town for groceries would wait. How could she pass up exploring the grounds of a five-hundred-year-old monument? Closed or not, she had to take a closer look. She had all afternoon to shop and unpack. Walking toward it, she admired how the dark stone structure rose well above the trees and at each corner were tower-like turrets. The view from the top must be amazing.

After working in a security company for thirteen years, force of habit had her scanning the castle walls for security cameras or spotlights. No cameras, minimal lighting, no motion sensors. She hoped the park had a better system in place inside, considering the castle was supposed to have fifteenth- and sixteenth-century furnishings.

Why did the castle have to be closed today? Just her luck. She walked up the drawbridge and tried the door and sure enough it was locked. *Crap*. Maybe it wasn't so easy to break into a castle.

Walking around the building, she ran her hand along the rough stone. Five hundred years old. What would it have been like to live here centuries ago? What was it going to be like to entertain here? She hadn't practiced in over two weeks since she'd

shipped her harp. Even though the audiences for the dinner shows would be small, her stomach knotted up as if she was about to perform at a huge symphony hall.

She was three-quarters around the building when she discovered a small alcove and a wooden service door at the end of the narrow walkway. Dana tried this door and it opened. She shook her head. *Very poor security.* She should mention this to Jack and make some recommendations while she was here.

A narrow curved stairway led up. The castle was huge and she preferred to know the layout of the place since the first show would be in a couple of days. One flight up opened onto a great hall. A few tapestries hung on the walls between giant windows and heavy dark chairs and one table took up one wall. They'd need more tables to seat guests. There must be another room.

Dana crossed the hall to another doorway that led to a different stairway and was about to climb, when she saw a flickering glow from the darkness below. *Fire?* Could the castle be on fire? Wiring or the furnishings could be. She trotted down the circular stone stairs.

Darkness crept in around her except for the golden, flickering light from the basement. Walking through another doorway, she thought she heard voices but she wasn't sure. The hairs on the back of her neck stood up.

As she rounded a stone partition, the room brightened. Flames flickered within a half dozen wrought iron sconces, a fire burned in a small stone fireplace. The room smelled of sweet burning wood and damp stone. At the far wall two people hovered in shadows. Dana remained in her circle of darkness at the bottom of the stairs, unable to take her eyes away from the sight.

The woman was naked, her wrists and ankles bound with straps that hung from the ceiling. Her arms and legs were spread wide in a V shape. As Dana took a closer look, she saw the woman was cradled in a narrow hammock rigging that supported her back and bottom. Her pussy and anus lay open wide and metal clamps were attached to her nipples. Dana winced at the distended tips protruding from the tight clamps. The

woman was also wearing a blindfold. The other person, wearing a hooded robe, was male. She could tell by his bare legs and feet. His back was facing Dana.

A rush of heat, then cold crept through her. Wrapping her arms around her waist, her first instinct was to escape and call for help. Then she stepped back and searched for a weapon, planning to do some damage to the guy if the woman needed help. Instead, Dana froze at the bottom of the stairs. Attacking this man was not a good idea if the woman was a willing participant. She would watch long enough to make sure the woman was okay.

There were people who got into this kinky stuff. Why this woman would allow this man to do these things, Dana couldn't fathom. "More, slave?" the man in the robe asked the woman.

The woman nodded. "Yes, Master, if it pleases you." His fingers stroked the narrow thatch of dark hair between her legs, avoiding the glistening folds of her pussy. The woman squirmed and tried lifting her hips.

Dana managed to breathe in teaspoon-sized portions of air. People did this for fun? It didn't look like fun. Was the woman in trouble? Should she stop this? Go for help? *Move, dammit.*

"You want me to touch your clit, don't you?"

The woman whimpered and arched her back. "Yes Sir."

"But I hadn't given you permission to move." He continued to tease her, his fingers trailing along her inner thighs, across her ass and back up to the thatch of hair.

The woman moaned in pleasure. "No Sir. You didn't. I forgot."

His hand moved to her breast and adjusted the nipple clamps until she let out a little yelp and sharp intake of breath. "I'll have to punish you for forgetting."

"Yes Sir."

He swung a flogger in the air several times. The woman's chest rose and fell quickly as if anticipating the blows that would come. Dana held her breath. The robed man

struck her ass and she cried out and jerked against her bindings. Her feet pointed and legs tried to spread wider.

“Yes, Master, again. Please.”

Biting her lip, Dana clamped a hand over her mouth. Good lord, the woman *was* enjoying this.

“Not just yet. You’re being an ornery slave today.” He chuckled as the flogger swatted her bottom and the underside of her thighs.

Dana’s blood chilled with the sharp crack of leather hitting the woman’s bare skin. As he hit her again and again, the woman slumped in her restraints, her head hung to one side. He approached her and brushed her long dark hair from her face and kissed her forehead tenderly. Whimpering, the woman leaned into the kiss. Dana stared at the couple shamelessly. She should leave quietly but couldn’t pull herself away.

“Good,” he said. “You ready for more?”

The woman nodded and leaned into his hand. He walked over to the wall and pulled an object out of a tote bag then came back to the woman.

“You remember the safe signals with a gag?”

“Yes, Master. Three quick grunts or open and close my hands.”

“Yes.” He bent down to kiss her. “Now open.” A ball gag was secured in her mouth. He tied the straps around the back of her head. Now the woman couldn’t scream if she needed to.

Dana was unable to shout or run. Should she trust this man or do something?

“You’re such a pain slut, my love.” The man stroked her hair then he swung the flogger in a circle. Turning to the side, the man faced Dana, and she noticed his robe was open. He was naked underneath. His hard cock jutted out from the draped fabric. “I think you like pain as much as coming.”

The woman made a mewling sound as she nodded.

"You want to come, don't you?" His hand slipped between her legs, then he plunged a finger inside her.

She nodded and moaned, trying to raise her hips.

"No, stay," he ordered, pulling his hand away. He then swung the flogger and swatted straight across her breasts.

The woman gave a yelp as much as she could with a gag in her mouth.

Dana bit her lip as heat flowed through her followed by a throbbing in her pussy. Lord, she was wet and getting turned on by this. The man lapped at the woman's clamped nipples, then took a swollen tip between his teeth. The woman jerked against her restraints. "Too painful?" he asked.

She shook her head and arched her back, offering her breasts to him. He bit harder this time and the woman cried out beneath the gag. Dana's nipples hardened too and her pussy was sopping. How could she stand that kind of torture and appear to beg for more?

"Are you ready to be fucked?" he asked as his hand dipped down to her slit.

She nodded, writhing in her restraints.

"I'm going to fuck you, but I want to taste you first."

The woman let out a groan and looked up at her right hand. She had her pinky finger sticking up. He looked up. "You're signaling you're on the edge?"

She nodded.

"Good. I'll go slow." He cracked the flogger in the air. The sound made the woman and Dana jump. "But don't come until I give you permission. I still wish to taste you so you must remain in control."

The woman nodded slightly and whimpered. Stroking her breasts, the man then moved his hand lower, circling her pussy. His mouth positioned between her legs and Dana could see he was blowing across her clit and labia. The woman groaned. Dana held her hand over her mouth.

Obviously, these were lovers, strange as it was, and she needed to get out of there before they saw her. Slowly, she took a step back and another, but somehow managed to trip over her own feet in the darkness. Stumbling, she fell back against the wall. The movement and noise caught the man's attention. He jerked his head toward her.

Taking a step closer, he frowned and studied her for a moment. He didn't make any move to hide his cock or the flogger he held out at his side. Sliding the hood back off his head, he let the robe hang off his shoulders, giving her a view of his face and body. Straight black hair fell past his shoulders. Dark, intense eyes lingered on her breasts, then he locked his gaze with hers with an intimidating smile. "You like to watch, I can tell."

The woman hanging from the straps moaned.

"It's all right. We have a visitor, my love, but I don't think she means any harm." His eye narrowed. "Do you?"

Dana shook her head. "No. I saw a light. I thought it might be a fire." As if that explained why she was in the castle when it was closed to the public.

"Except you pulled my lady out of her sub space." His smile was grim. "Never interrupt a session."

She wasn't sure what he was talking about. "I didn't mean to disturb you. I wanted to make sure..." She was going to say make sure the woman wasn't tied up against her will, but she'd figured that out the first minute. Then why hadn't she left sooner?

"That something ominous wasn't going on here?" He laughed. "I can see your nipples through the bra. You like to watch. It's in your eyes too. My lady likes to be watched. You can stay if you wish, but you can't interfere and you must remove your clothes."

The throbbing in her pussy was almost painful at the thought of his suggestion. Her panties were soaking wet. This was turning her on, and scaring the hell out of her too. "I think I'll go. Sorry to disturb you."

He looked annoyed. "Suit yourself."

She backed up the spiral stone steps. As soon as she couldn't see him anymore, she turned and ran the rest of the way. Running across the main hall on the first floor, she found the door to the outside, yanked it open and raced toward the front of the castle where her car was parked.

A fine misty rain cooled her heated face but her body was on fire. She kept glancing behind her, expecting to see the naked man in the black, hooded robe chasing her. As she came around the front turret, she crashed into him.

Dana screamed and tried taking several steps back. Strong, muscular arms enclosed her.

"Easy now, miss. Are you all right?"

She looked up into calm, blue eyes that held concern, not the intense annoyance of the man in the castle's dungeon. "Let go of me." She pushed at his chest. Despite the cool air, he wore a short-sleeved shirt that showed off decent-sized biceps.

He released her and she took a step back. "You running from a ghost?" the guy asked, smiling. Not the man in the black, hooded robe. He was taller, his hair shorter and he was wearing jeans, not a robe, thank God.

She held a hand to her chest while she sucked in air, trying to catch her breath. "Who the hell are you? You scared the daylights out of me."

"I'm Jack."

"Jack Murray?"

He nodded, smiling with a glint of mischief in his eyes. "And you are..."

He was much better-looking than she'd imagined him. During months of email she'd made her own fantasy image. Thick, dark hair was combed back but a wavy lock fell low over his brow. He was a few inches taller than she was and about the same age. "I'm Dana. I just got here."

"Dana, hello." His eyebrows went up. "Got here. From where?" He was giving her an odd look, probably trying to figure out what she was doing running from behind the castle.

She hesitated. Glancing over her shoulders, she half expected to see the naked guy, robe flowing behind him as he chased after her. Her heart still pounded.

Jack looked past her as if he too expected to see someone.

"Dublin. I drove in from Dublin." She'd rather get as far away from the castle right now. What if that guy came out and saw her? But Jack was the one who'd hired her or recommended her for the job. She took a deep breath and let the air out slowly, willing herself to relax. She glanced back again. If the robed guy was chasing her, he would've been out by now.

She turned back and met Jack's eyes and her stomach did a twirl. Actually, he was damn hot, no question there. God, she didn't need the inconvenience of a summer fling, not that he'd be interested. Even if he was, it wasn't worth the trouble or pain. Imagine the awkward moment when she had to return to the states.

"Something wrong," Jack asked.

"No, I'm fine."

He gave her a look of disbelief and the corner of his mouth quirked in a grin.

"Did the other harpist have her baby?" she asked.

"Don't think so."

"The job is still mine through the end of August?" There was something about Jack that was very appealing—the easy way he talked, the spark in his eyes. In his emails he'd mentioned he wasn't married, but didn't say if he had a girlfriend. Their chats had occasionally gotten a little personal, but mostly they were business friendly. She glanced at his left hand and confirmed he wasn't wearing a wedding ring. Not that all men wore wedding bands.

He smiled and she wondered if he caught her checking him out. Her heart gave a little leap. She didn't believe in love at first sight but she did believe in instant attraction. Either the man was charismatic or her hormones were strung out after the bizarre scene she just witnessed.

"Yes, through August." He looked over her shoulder, and she spun around to see what he was looking at.

Had the man in the robe finally come out?

"Someone with you?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No, no. Just looking around the castle."

"Ah, 'tis quite a fine, old place. I can show you now if you like."

"No!"

He grinned. "Another time, perhaps."

"Yes, thanks. I should get to my cottage and unpack. I thought I'd drive into town for groceries then take a walk in the forest." She didn't want to ask for her harp now. Mr. Donegal said it was in the castle.

"Lots of bogs in the forest behind the cottages. Careful if you decide to go on that walk. Stay on the trails."

"Thanks for the tip," she said with a hint of sarcasm. Did they think she was from the city and never took a walk in the woods?

"You'll be wanting your harp?" he asked.

Dana panicked. She wanted to say yes, but she didn't want to go back inside the castle.

"I'll bring it to you. It's in my cottage."

Chapter Two

After Jack brought Dana's harp to her cottage, he drove into town to work at the store. Later, as he crossed the meadow toward home, haunting harp music drifted from Dana's place. The melody he recognized as one of the songs from the show. Standing now on the gravel walkway in front of her porch, he was mesmerized by the smooth precision of her music and the sensual flow of the notes. An accomplished player, not an amateur.

She was as beautiful as her music. She should be performing in a large symphony orchestra, not a small medieval dinner show.

While he listened, the stress of the afternoon eased from his shoulders. It had been a disappointing day. Another loan application turned down. He was running out of options. The thought of returning to his old job in the wool mills wasn't appealing. The last seven years he'd been running his uncle's store, pulled it out of near bankruptcy and now his uncle planned to sell it. The money from the sale would be his uncle's retirement. If Jack was the new owner, his uncle could continue working part-time. But if Jack couldn't get a loan to buy the store, his uncle would be forced to look for another buyer and would lose his part-time job. His uncle couldn't afford to hold a loan for Jack.

The music stopped and Jack found himself holding his breath. Was his private concert over? Why would she come all the way to Ireland for a summer job? Nothing in their emails had given him a clue as to why.

The music began again, a difficult classical piece for as much as he knew about music, not part of the show. He was a singer, not a musician. Closing his eyes, he got lost in his private performance. His mind wandered and easily imagined Dana playing the harp naked, then incorporating a pattern of rope bondage for that scene, allowing only her hands and arms free to play.

Someone who was that skilled at an instrument had to be regimented and disciplined. A master of her harp, had she ever allowed anyone to be her Master in the bedroom?

Dana reminded him of a sub he once knew at the club Unfettered. Usually focused and in control in her normal life, but under the careful attentions of a Dom, she would surrender to her sensual side and completely let go. During their many chats online, he wondered if Dana had picked up on his Dom nature. At first emails were business related, discussing the dinner show and where she'd be living, then progressed to friendly teasing and a little suggestive chat.

His cock hungered for the opportunity to train a sub, to have her surrender her physical self to him. There was something very enticing about bringing a novice into the lifestyle. She'd either be curious enough to ease into it or be scared off. Jack couldn't deny who he was—a sexual Dominant looking for a woman willing to take on the role as his submissive.

Unfortunately, the troupe couldn't afford to be without a harpist. His priority was to help Donegal, the owner, find a temporary harpist, to replace Jane while she had her babe, not find a new slave for himself. The summer was their busiest season and he didn't have time to hire and train someone new.

"Taking a nap are you, Jack?"

Jack shook himself out of his musing, opened his eyes and looked at Damon. The fellow troupe member and friend studied him with devilish dark eyes.

"Nah, listening to the new girl play. She's good, isn't she?" Jack answered.

Damon, the violinist, tilted his head toward Dana's cottage. His long dark hair was damp, and a large duffle was slung over his shoulder. "Yeah, she is. Is she coming to the meeting tonight? She needs to get her costume," Damon said.

"I don't know. She didn't say."

"You met her then. Is she cute?"

"Very." Jack couldn't stop himself from smiling.

"Ah Jack. I know that look. You'll be wanting to tie her up and do unmentionable things to her." Damon narrowed his eyes. "But don't scare her off now. We need a harpist for the summer."

"I know," Jack groaned. He could listen to her play all day.

"You could go to Unfettered and find a willing lady."

Jack shrugged. "For the night, yes, but I want more. A woman in my life, not just a one-night partner. I'd like what you and Shannon have."

Damon nodded. "I understand. Shannon and I are going to get something to eat before the meeting. Want to join us?"

"I'll pass, thanks. I think I'll check on the harpist." He gave Damon a wink.

* * * * *

"Dinner?" Jack asked, an easy smile greeting her at the opened doorway to her cottage.

"Jack! Hi." Dana's stomach gave a bit of a flutter. She knew he was probably looking at her opened suitcases with clothes piled all over the bed. Once she'd had her harp, she'd given up unpacking to practice. It'd been over two weeks since she'd played. Usually if she went more than a day she started climbing the walls. "What?" Sometimes when she played her harp she'd get so disconnected from the world. It took her a second to understand what he was asking. "A little early for dinner, isn't it? I was going to find a market in town for groceries. I can cook something here."

His eyebrows rose. "It's twenty minutes to town. I doubt you'll have time."

"I have all afternoon." She checked her watch. It was nearly five p.m. "Oh my God. I was playing for four hours." She suddenly realized she was hungry. "I guess I'll have to go after the meeting."

Jack shook his head. "Bet you didn't have lunch either."

She didn't answer.

"Follow me," he ordered, walking off her porch, not waiting for her to answer.

"Hang on, let me get my sweatshirt." Dana sorted through the clothes on her bed and found her sweatshirt and put it on. She slipped the room key in her pocket and felt a piece of paper. Her grocery list? She pulled out the paper but it was a business card. On a crisp white card was typed in black ink: 1-800-DOM-help. Weird. She didn't remember anyone giving her a business card. She turned it over and nothing was written on the back. The idea that someone must've slipped it in her pocket was unsettling and a little annoying.

"Dana?" Jack called from her porch.

"Coming." She ripped up the card and tossed it in the trash, then rushed out of her cottage. "Where are we going?" she asked Jack.

He didn't answer and kept walking. She hesitated for a moment then decided to see what he had in mind. Jack had to go to the meeting too. Maybe he knew a local place where she could get a quick bite. Grabbing her purse, she closed and locked her door, then ran to catch up to him.

"Are you going to tell me where we're going?"

"Jack's place."

"And why are we going to your place?" she asked. He gave her a sexy grin and her pulse kicked up a few beats. The sexy voice she remembered hearing on the phone certainly matched the rugged good looks of the man before her. Following him gave her a nice view of him from the back, from wide shoulders, to the tight ass in snug jeans to boots.

He glanced over his shoulder and shot her a dark look from blue-gray eyes. "Trust me." His smile was warm and sensual. His cottage had the same layout as hers—the kitchenette was at the front of the cottage, the bed with a red patterned duvet and a loveseat in the back. It was neat and organized except for several boxes stacked in one corner, a laptop computer on the small dining table and a bicycle propped against a wall. A wide window overlooked the forest behind the cottages.

In the kitchenette, he took out pots and pans, sliced brown bread and removed an enormous amount of food from the refrigerator.

"I don't want you to go to any trouble," she said.

"Soup and sandwich is no trouble. It's dinner. Have a seat. It won't take long. But this kitchen is too small for two people." He handed her silverware and pointed to one of two chairs at the small dining table.

"Thanks, Jack."

After he finished cooking their meal, he brought out bowls of steamy vegetable soup with warmed roast beef and melted cheese sandwiches. The creamed soup was flavored with herbs and the bread tasted homemade. "Good?" he asked.

"This is great. You didn't bake the bread, did you?"

He laughed. "No. I'll take you to the market in the morning and show you around town, including the bakery."

"That's really nice of you." She glanced around his cottage. "How long have you been doing the show?"

"Couple years. It's a part-time job. I also manage my uncle's store."

"What do you sell?" She was devouring the soup and sandwich. Have to love a guy who could cook.

"Woolens and leather goods."

"I'll have to stop by and check it out. I'm sure I could use a sweater in this weather. Ireland's summers are cooler than I'm used to." Something about the way the man was looking at her made her squirm in her seat. Not in a bad way. He had the most gorgeous blue eyes, sensual, intense but at the same time calming. "Not the season for leather though. Too warm and too much rain."

Jack smiled. "Leather never goes out of season." The look he gave her spread heat and longing through her. It was a very bad idea to get involved with someone

considering she was going to leave in three months. "Leather goods provide our largest sales in the summer." His voice lowered. "Some of our clientele have special requests."

The way he said it made her feel strangely aroused. Her nipples tingled and hardened and her pussy throbbed. "Should I ask?"

He shrugged. "Fetish wear and bondage equipment. More soup?" He got up and spooned another serving of soup into his bowl.

She swallowed. "No, thanks. I've had enough."

His gaze locked with hers as if he was testing her, waiting to see if she'd react to the comment about leather goods. This reminded her of a business deal. Was he playing games with her? If he was, she wasn't going to let him rile her. "Interesting. And what's your best-selling SM device?"

Smiling he said, "Floggers, then various restraints. A lot of people enjoy pain."

"Mmmm." She said it in a tone as if they were talking about the weather or a favorite movie.

"What do know of the SM scene?" He was serious, the teasing tone gone.

She took in a breath. Images of the couple in the castle's dungeon flashed in her mind. Heat flowed through her like warmed honey. Her pussy felt wet and achy. "Not a lot. I read some about it. Curious, I guess."

He smiled. "Fantasized then?"

She choked on the last spoonful of soup. "Wow, this conversation got personal. From groceries to bondage to sexual fantasies." Her voice was shaking and her whole body was on fire. Exhilarated by the topic, she pressed her thighs together as her pussy clenched and pulsed. Damn, this man had her worked up now, and she'd only just met him. "Why didn't you mention this in your emails?"

"You mean about working in a store?"

She laughed nervously. "I mean about the SM products you sell."

He shrugged. "I didn't want to scare you off. We needed a harpist and your cousin highly recommended you."

"I don't scare too easily." She smiled. God, was she flirting? Yes, she was flirting and wasn't he her coworker?

"What does scare you?" He shot her a self-satisfied grin.

Her mind went to the couple in the dungeon. Had they brought leather items from Jack's store? Was she scared by what she'd seen? Or intrigued? This time she shrugged. "I'll have to let you know."

"I'll count on that," he lowered his voice and heat flowed through her. "We should go to the castle."

"What?" she breathed. Dana's heart fluttered as she thought about Jack tying her up in the dungeon.

"The meeting is starting in a few minutes. What did you think I meant?"

"Nothing."

* * * * *

After Jack introduced Dana to everyone, he walked her through her parts. Why was she so nervous? She knew the music. She met the other minstrel players, singers and actors.

"Damon and Shannon will be up later. They're bringing the costumes from town," said Jack. "There'll be a rehearsal at eleven tomorrow and a dress rehearsal at two. This is mainly for the benefit of our new member, Dana. She knows the music. I've heard her play. She'll do fine in the show tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" Dana squeaked. She thought she'd have a couple days.

"Is there a problem?" Jack asked.

"No, looking forward to it." She swallowed. Dana glanced at Jack, giving him a worried look. Not much time to practice. Talk about getting thrown to the wolves.

Returning her gaze, he gave her a reassuring smile with a slight nod. He must know what she was thinking. Did she have that panicked look in her eyes?

"You'll be fine," he whispered in her ear.

"That's all I have for you," Jack said. "Any questions?"

Everyone shook their heads. "Except for the costumes," Thea, a woman with long reddish hair said. There were eight people in the troupe, four women and four men, minus the couple who was missing. Thea was the flute player, her boyfriend, Kevin, played the uilleann pipes, which sounded a bit like bagpipes, and two dancers. "I hope it's soon. We all have plans tonight."

Jack nodded. "I know. Hang here for a few. I'll give Dana a quick tour while we wait for Damon and Shannon." He held out his hand, pointing the way to a spiral staircase. "After you."

Dana followed Jack up the shadowed staircase. He pointed out several rooms that had once been bedrooms, a chapel, guest rooms and servant quarters. Then the stairs opened onto the roof. A gust of cool air penetrated her sweatshirt and she shivered. "Wow, what a view."

"You can't see much in the dark."

"I'm glad to be here, Jack." She could feel him studying her and the butterflies were flitting around in her stomach. "Why did you bring me up here?"

She heard him let out a breath. "I want to know what you were so afraid of before. Why you were running from the castle earlier?"

She wanted to tell him, but she was embarrassed and confused by her reaction. She wasn't afraid, not anymore. Mostly she was turned on. How could she tell him this? A previous boyfriend had tied her up a couple times for fun during sex, but it wasn't anything like what she saw in the dungeon. "I can't."

"Don't you trust me?"

She let out a half laugh. "Jack, I don't know you."

“We’ve been talking for months.”

“It’s not the same.”

“Take the chance. I can be trusted.”

The sound of voices far below caught her attention. Dana looked over the stone wall and noticed most of the entertainers walking across the meadow carrying costumes.

“Shannon and Damon are back,” Jack said, looking over the wall. “Maybe you’ll tell me later.”

Back down the stairs, Dana entered the grand hall again and it was empty. Then at one end she saw two people hunched over the large table with medieval clothing draped on top.

“Hey, you two. What kept you?” Jack asked.

The guy spun around and Dana gasped. “The dry cleaners had a time finding all the costumes—” He took a look at Dana and smiled. “Hello, there.” By the way he looked at her, Dana knew he recognized her from the dungeon. “Look who’s here, Shannon. Our visitor from earlier.” The woman with long, dark hair turned around and gave Dana an up-and-down look, her mouth pressed together as if trying to hold back a smile. Her fingers played at the cleavage of her low-cut sweater.

“Welcome to Rathmore Castle,” Shannon said with a teasing grin. “Next time maybe you’ll stay longer or join in?”

“I don’t think so. Sorry I disturbed you.” Dana couldn’t stop herself from remembering Damon naked in the black robe, or Shannon strapped up, legs spread. Her face felt flushed and her nipples tightened.

“Am I missing something?” Jack said.

“You’ll have to get the details from Dana.” Damon grinned. The man didn’t look embarrassed at all. “My guess is we have a sub smoldering beneath that demure surface. With the right Master—”

Shannon punched him in the arm. "Stop it." She turned to Dana. "Ignore him. He's shameless, but harmless."

Dana glanced toward Jack's questioning look. "I'll tell you later." She wasn't about to go into details in front of this couple.

Jack nodded, his face expressionless.

Picking up a forest-green velvet dress in her arms, Shannon brought it to Dana. "This should fit you according to the measurements you sent us."

"It's beautiful. Thank you." She glanced at Jack. "I should go and practice. See you all tomorrow."

"Would you like me to walk you back?" Jack's expression turned serious.

"No," she said a little too forcefully. "It's been a long day." That brought a snicker from Shannon and Damon. She didn't acknowledge them, just descended the stairs out of the castle.

Back in her cottage, she tried playing her harp, but even that didn't help calm her. Images of Shannon and Damon in the dungeon haunted her mind. She could hear the flogger striking Shannon's ass and thighs and see the inflamed flesh, while her anus and pussy were exposed for Damon to fondle. Shannon had appeared to be in ecstasy. Was that type of sex really pleasurable? She'd had a few good lovers but had she ever experienced extreme ecstasy? Would Jack do something like that?

Everywhere her body tingled as she fantasized about standing in the dungeon naked, Jack restraining her and striking her with the flogger until her skin was red and raw. Then stimulating her clit, thrusting his cock inside her pussy. She groaned out loud. Enough, she was torturing herself.

From her sitting area she looked out the window onto the forest. Yes, she did have the same view as Jack. Dim light from the cottages illuminated a narrow path that led from the meadow into the trees. Light seemed to be coming from deep within the forest, or was it her imagination? She hadn't noticed houses back there.

She went outside to look. Sleep was far from her reach at the moment. Too many life-changing thoughts were spinning around inside her head. The air was dead calm and scented with pine and mossy bog. The silhouettes of tree branches appeared frozen against the twinkling star-filled sky. Scanning the forest, she no longer could see lights, nothing but trees. It must have been a trick of the eyes. Walking along the edge of the meadow, she listened for night creatures. Nothing. How odd. In Maryland at night, she'd hear crickets, cicadas or frogs. Then she heard voices.

Across the open field between the castle and the cottages were a half dozen cloaked figures heading right for her. They looked like monks or something out of a medieval horror story, some of them carried lanterns. Druids? Hoods covered their faces. Dana stepped back into the shadows from the cottages and froze, blood pounding in her ears. As they passed, the hood of one of the cloaked figures slid back. It was Shannon. Another cloaked figure covered her again. Was that Damon? Then she heard women's voices, giggling and whispering. It was the entertainers from the show. All of them. Was Jack with them too?

They all rushed by, not seeing her hidden in the dark. Entering the forest without flashlights, they moved as if they had night vision goggles. How could they see where they were going? "Shannon? Shannon!" She called out to them but they didn't answer. She thought she heard someone call her name so, ignoring Mr. Donegal's and Jack's warning, she strode into the forest.

Chapter Three

Dana followed the lamplights of the robed people who darted through the forest. When she could no longer see them, she used their voices as a guide. But the voices shifted from far to her right one moment then far to the left. She was getting disoriented in the dark. The ground was mucky and smelled of damp, rotting leaves. She'd walked off the trail dozens of yards ago, but the lights from the cottages glimmered through the trees so she wasn't lost.

A shriek of laughter to her right sent her running in that direction again. Her feet stuck in mud, she turned and tried to back out but sank in deeper. The squishing sound from her feet blotted out the faint voices. Giving up on her pursuit, she tried backing out onto dry ground. Losing her balance, she slipped and fell into mucky water over her head. She struggled to the surface and screamed.

Spitting and sputtering the sour-tasting water, she swam to the muddy bank and tried climbing out, but the bank was overgrown with slick, wet grass and it was like trying to crawl up wet satin. Each attempt sent her slipping back into the water. Then strong hands gripped her wrists and dragged her up onto dry ground.

When she got to her feet, she expected to see one of the robed people. "Let me go!"

"Dana, what're you doing out here?" Jack said, still holding onto her. He wasn't wearing a robe, just jeans and a tee shirt.

"I fell in the bog. What does it look like? What are *you* doing out here?" She pulled free of him and planted her hands on her hips. Grass and muck hung from her arms, legs and clothes. She hated to think what was in her hair, what she smelled like.

"I heard you scream from my cottage. Come on. You need to get a hot shower and I'll show you how to start a turf fire in your fireplace so you don't get pneumonia."

Standing on her cottage porch, Dana dug around her soggy sweatshirt pockets for her key. Not there. No key. But she felt something else. She pulled it out and stared at another white business card. 1-800-DOM-help was clearly marked. The card wasn't even wet. A chill went right down to her bones. "Holy crap."

"What's wrong?" Jack asked.

He'd think she was crazy. She crumpled up the card. "I lost my key in the bog."

Jack started to laugh. "You didn't leave it in your room?"

"No, I didn't leave it in my room," she snapped. "It was in my sweatshirt pocket. Now what do I do? Can I get a spare at the office?"

"Sure." Jack laughed. "Tomorrow. The office is closed. Donegal's gone home for the night." He continued to laugh.

"It's not funny. Can't you break in or something?"

"Nope. Donegal would have my head. And I'd be paying for any damages."

Dana sighed and leaned against her door, defeated. "Terrific." The card was probably a joke, and she couldn't be bothered right now. But how did it get in her pocket?

"Dana, stay with me. I'll get a key in the morning."

She thought for a moment, trying to figure out her options. She didn't have any. "I could check with one of the other girls in the troupe..."

"They won't be back for hours."

She gasped. "They were the ones in the robes? Are all the entertainers involved in whatever is going on in the woods? Are they doing some kind of pagan ritual?"

Jack pressed his lips together. "I'll explain it to you when the time is right but now you need yourself a shower to warm up. I'll give you something dry to wear."

She hesitated again. What choice did she have? The keys to her rental car were in her cottage and so was her purse with her money. She couldn't even consider finding a place in town for the night.

"I'm being blunt here," Jack added. "Y'are shivering and you're smelling like a swamp. You'll be safe in my place. That be a promise."

"Okay," she said through chattering teeth.

As Jack led her into his cottage, she trembled more from the cold seeping into her bones than worry about spending the night in the one-room cottage. They'd been chatting by email for months so they were friends. Why shouldn't she trust him? The heat and attraction between them since she'd arrived couldn't be denied. She wondered if Jack felt it too.

Jack gave her towels, then a sweatshirt and sweatpants to wear. She stuffed the business card in the pocket of the pants. Maybe she'd try calling tomorrow and find out what it was about.

"I don't have a washer but I'll dunk your clothes in the sink with soap to get the bog smell out."

"Thanks." Dana's feet and hands were numb.

"Get yourself a hot shower now. I'll put the kettle on for tea and start up a fire."

Much later, Dana was sitting on the floor in front of the fireplace, mug of hot tea in hand while Jack soaked her clothes including her panties and bra. Once finished with his task, he brought over a blanket and covered her shoulders, then sat beside her, rubbing her arms. "Y'are still shivering." The heat of the fire and Jack's touch penetrated her body and was making her horny. Without her underwear, her body felt ultra-sensitive beneath Jack's baggy clothes.

"A little, but I feel much warmer. What kind of wood are you burning in the fireplace? It has a sweet scent."

"It's not wood, it's turf, organic material cut from the bogs."

She stared at the blazing briquette. "Why not use firewood?"

"Not many trees. Lots of turf."

"It smells good and it's warm." She pulled her wet hair away from her neck and shivered.

"Hang on." Jack got up, went into the bathroom and returned with a comb. "Turn your back to the fire." He sat cross-legged behind her and ran the comb gently through her hair, lifting sections as he did, allowing the heat from the fire to dry her hair.

"Feels nice," she said, closing her eyes.

"You'll feel warmer once it's dry." He used his fingers to hold her hair away from her neck. Sensations skittered over her skin, tightening her nipples. As he continued, her body relaxed. The pleasurable stoking of her hair, the gentle caresses along her neck made her pussy wet and achy. She trembled a little, feeling her body come alive beneath his touch. Her clit throbbed. She was so aroused, she had to control the urge to turn around and pounce on him.

"It's going to curl wildly without a hair dryer to smooth it out," she said. Now the fire was too warm. She let the blanket fall from around her, and as it did, his oversized sweatshirt bared one of her shoulders. Her breasts swelled against the soft fabric, her nipples clearly protruding and sensitive.

"I like it curled. Beautiful and soft. Smells like my shampoo now instead of the bog."

She play-punched his thigh, which was pressed against her hip. He laughed. Even though her hair was nearly dry, his fingers still combed through the strands and brushed the nape of her neck. God, it felt so good. Leaning into him, she wished his hands would slide from her hair and neck and move inside the shirt to her breasts.

It took all the willpower she had not to grasp his hands and guide them to her breasts. The attraction was so strong. She'd sensed the sexual teasing during their chats on line, nothing too obvious. He'd maintained a friendly professionalism, but she suspected there was more. How much did she know about him?

Her cousin knew him, went to college with him. What was she worried about? Why did she have to overthink everything in her life? Couldn't she be impulsive,

spontaneous and indulge in some fun for once? Wasn't that the point of her taking this job? Putting her tea mug down, she slowly spun around and faced him. His hands dropped from her hair and rested on his knees.

There was no mistaking the lust in his blue eyes. His lips were slightly parted, ready to kiss her if she wished. He was letting her lead. If she wanted him, she could have him. All she had to do was give him a little encouragement. The sense of sexual power was such a rush. Her pussy was soaking his sweatpants. That thought got her even more aroused.

A muscle twitched at his jaw, a slight smile formed at his lips. "How are you feeling?"

"Good." She rested both hands on his arms. "And thanks for rescuing me and giving me a place to hang for the night."

"My pleasure." His voice was hoarse. He breathed deeply as his gaze dropped to her mouth then her breasts. Obviously, he wanted her. Why wouldn't he try to kiss her? She was so aware of him, thinking about how his muscular body would feel against her damp skin.

The heat from the fire only added to her lust. She couldn't stop herself from what she did next. Her hands slid up his thighs, to his waist and moved along his sides. Jack let out a soft moan and shook his head.

What a fool she was. Had she misinterpreted his desire? "I'm sorry, Jack. Guess I got a little carried away." She jerked her hand back and tried scooting away.

He let out a long breath. "I offered you a safe place to stay."

"I know." She watched him stare into the fire as if withdrawing from her. Shadows danced across his face and an uneasy feeling twisted in her gut. Picking up one of those briquettes, he tossed it on the fire and jabbed it with a poker. Sparks shot up into the chimney. "Anything wrong?" she asked.

"You were frightened today by something. What was it?"

The question slammed into her as if he'd dunked her back into the bog. She swallowed. "I'm not sure if frightened is the right word. At first I was, maybe. Curious, confused, intrigued. I'm not sure how I feel."

He nodded. "Want to tell me about it?"

Studying his face, she saw concern and warmth in his eyes. "Yes, I do want to tell you. I haven't been able to stop thinking about it. That's why I followed those people into the forest."

"What happened at the castle this afternoon?" He took her hand.

She felt like she could trust him and it didn't seem like such a big deal now. "It's kind of embarrassing. I went into the castle, even though Mr. Donegal said it was closed. I was curious and wanted to look around, maybe find my harp. I saw a light flickering in the basement and thought there was a fire so I went to check it out."

"You found the dungeon." His mouth twitched into a slight smile.

"Two people were having a...sex."

"Really?" He held her gaze as if he was studying her response to the event. "Is that what scared you?"

"No, I mean, at first I thought the woman was in trouble because she was naked and tied up, hanging by her hands and feet. But then she seemed to be enjoying it quite a bit. And a man in a robe was whipping her." Dana shivered.

"Guess you've never done anything like that."

"No!" With Dana's abrupt answer, Jack glanced into the fire again.

"When you realized the woman was having a grand time, you took off?" He met her gaze so intensely, her heart leapt in her chest.

"No."

"No?"

"I couldn't stop watching. The woman was obviously in ecstasy. I don't think I've ever experienced that. And I thought I'd had a couple decent lovers in my past."

He chuckled. "Damon did say he thought you were getting turned on by watching."

"Damon told you I was there?"

"Yep."

"And you let me go through all the gory details?" She felt her face flush, her pussy tingling, from the memory and from sharing it with Jack.

"Yep."

"Why?"

"Why do you think?" He grasped her arms and pulled her closer.

"You wanted to hear a good sex story?" She grinned.

Smiling, he shook his head. The smoldering look he gave her sent her heart fluttering. "I wanted to know about you. How you felt about that situation."

"Why?" But she had a feeling she knew the answer.

"To see how familiar you are with that lifestyle."

"Not very, I'm afraid. You?"

His look was so intense, she had to hold her breath. "I'm a Dom. I've been in the lifestyle for years."

"Oh." Breathing again. His admission frightened her a little but she was more excited by it. The business card came to mind. 1-800-DOM-help. Could Jack have put the card in her sweatshirt? He didn't seem the type to do sneaky things. "That's interesting. I'd like to hear more."

Had he been wondering about her during their flirty conversations online? Could he be fantasizing about torturing her the same way? All she knew of this lifestyle was from an erotic novel she'd read. Now that she thought about it, the story had shocked her then but also turned her on. She had been too embarrassed to talk about it with the boyfriend she'd been with at the time, but those fantasies had drifted into her mind during their lovemaking.

“Good answer,” Jack said. Before she could say another word, he slipped his hand around to the back of her neck and lowered his warm lips to hers. The slow, gentle kiss teased her mouth then he moved to her ear. Her fingers dug into his hips, wanting more, so much more. Turning her head, she drew his mouth into a kiss again.

He moaned and parted her lips with his tongue. The intensity and heat surged through her body in sensuous waves. Hooking his arm under her knees, he pulled her across his lap and deepened the kiss. They both gasped for air.

She could feel the hard ridge of his engorged cock pressing against her thigh. Skin, she wanted bare skin against her. She wanted him. Boldly, her hands slid under his shirt, across his hard abdomen to his chest and felt his arms tighten around her. Then he grasped her breasts, first through the sweatshirt, then yanked it off, tossing it aside. His mouth captured one nipple and sucked it, rubbing the tip with his tongue, leaving raw nerve endings tingling.

Jack’s clothes were so loose on her, it wouldn’t take much for her to wriggle out of them. The thought heightened her arousal, making her clit throb. Images of the extreme sex scene in the dungeon played over and over in Dana’s mind. This was a side to her sensuality she must explore. Wrapping her arms around his neck, she met Jack’s gaze. “Teach me. I want to understand what this is all about.”

He closed his eyes and took in a breath, then looked at her for a long moment. “It’s not for everyone.”

“That’s what I’d like to find out.”

Abruptly, he pushed away from her, stood and walked into the kitchen area. She stared at the fire for a moment, deciding whether or not to press him. Finally, she got to her feet and went into the kitchen. “I struck a nerve. Can you tell me why?”

He nodded. “A woman I was involved with was curious about the D/s lifestyle. It wasn’t for her and she left. It was hard on both of us.”

“Well, you know ahead of time this would be a brief arrangement. I’m only here until the end of summer. Haven’t you had a casual affair before?”

"A few at the clubs."

"Then we both know what to expect."

"Perhaps." But he didn't sound convinced. What was wrong with a summer romance and sexual exploration between two adults? She'd leave Ireland with fond memories of her hunky liaison, and he might remember her as his sexy American fling. They would remain friends after. Wouldn't they?

Then a jolt of excitement and part fear struck her. Would he tie her up like Shannon? Part of her wanted to try that and part of her was terrified of the thought. "Are you going to take me to the dungeon?"

"No."

Her insides wanted to scream at him in disappointment even though she didn't know if she was ready for that. "Why not?"

He let out a long breath. "Because there are things we should discuss first. Limits for one. I wouldn't want to do anything to make you feel uncomfortable working here."

"Then we can take it step by step. I promise to let you know if something makes me feel uncomfortable." To Dana that seemed reasonable.

Jack nodded and stepped closer. Cupping her chin with his hand, he gazed deeply into her eyes. Dana held her breath. "In the middle of a scene, you may not know what you can and can't handle. I need to know you well enough to recognize a situation that's become too intense for you, and anticipate your needs. I don't want to hurt you."

If ripping off her clothes would prove her desire for him, she'd do it. But throwing herself at him wasn't going to convince him of her hunger for exploring the kinky side of herself. "I don't know, Jack. I may not like a D/s lifestyle. I won't know unless I get a chance to try it out. I'm not afraid to find out if this kink is my kink. If you were an asshole, you'd be dragging me to the dungeon and hanging me upside down right now."

He smiled. "Don't tempt me."

"I'm serious. You're concerned about your partner's needs. That's good. How would we start?"

"Another term in the lifestyle is sub or slave. There is a difference, but I won't go into that now," he added. "We'll begin by you calling me Master."

Her stomach did a twirl and her nipples puckered. "Yes, Master."

"Good." The hoarseness in his voice sent a jolt straight to her pussy. God, she wanted this badly. Dana had to know if she was capable of experiencing pleasure through pain. "The music I play on my harp may be sweet and delicate. That's not who I am."

He stared at her with a serious intent that made her breath catch. He was so handsome. His powerful shoulders and chest muscles tensed in the firelight. "Not too many women would chase after robed figures into a forest at night. Pretty ballsy."

"I saw Shannon and figured the others were the entertainers. I was curious."

He rubbed his forehead and sat down at the table. Was this his way of saying no? "Trust me, I'll tell you when a scene is too intense," Dana said. "We only have the summer to explore this. Why waste time?"

He shot her a dark look. "And what happens after the summer?" His words had a sharp edge.

She wanted to kick herself for that. "I have to go back to my old job by September first. Otherwise, I'll lose it. Do you want to spend the rest of your life wondering about what if?" She hesitated when he didn't answer and walked over and plopped down on the bed.

Walking out of the kitchen area, Jack brought with him a ladder-back chair and placed it in front of the fire. "Stand up," he commanded. "Your first lesson begins now."

Chapter Four

Jack was reasonably sure he could handle a summer fling. His gut told him it was a bad idea, having had more than his share of brief relationships in his younger days that had ended in disaster. For months as they chatted online, he'd fantasized about Dana as his sub in a D/s scene and here she was asking to be a willing participant. How could he refuse? He removed his shirt and tossed it onto the bed.

"Are you going to tie me up?" Dana asked as she stood, crossing her arms over her waist. Her words made Jack's cock grow hard.

"For now, no. Stand in front of the chair and place your forearms on the seat. You may grasp the back if you like." She did as instructed, giving him a nice view of her smooth, round ass.

"Like this?" she asked as she bent over and did as instructed.

"That's fine. Keep your legs straight but spread them." Immediately, she complied. "Good. You're comfortable? Warm enough?"

She nodded.

"Respond to my questions with, 'Yes or no, Master'. There's no right or wrong way to do BDSM. Whatever is satisfying, meets the needs of the couple and is consensual." He walked slowly around the chair, getting her used to his presence, and stroked her shoulder, nothing sexual yet.

"Yes, Master."

"A submissive may surrender to her Master but she controls the scene. If something becomes too intense for you, say the word 'slow', and I'll stop or slow down with what I'm doing." This time he slid his hand over her buttocks to register her response. He heard an intake of breath and noticed her wriggle her ass. "If you want to end the scene completely say, 'butter'."

"I understand."

"Dana, I always practice safe sex. And trust me never to hurt you." Moving his hands over her back, he slid them around to her breasts and got a moan from her. She also arched her back and closed her eyes. "Working with a virgin has its own unique charms."

She giggled. "I'm not a virgin, Master."

"To this lifestyle you are. And I did not ask you a question." He swatted her on her ass and she jumped, but didn't protest.

He went to his closet and brought out a few implements: a rope, if he decided to tether her, and a suede flogger.

Was he making a mistake testing her this way? What if she decided the whole scene made her uncomfortable? First Damon and Shannon in the dungeon, then the group disappearing into the forest in robes and now him. What if she freaked out and decided to pack up and leave Ireland? The troupe would hang him. They didn't have the time to hire and train a new harpist especially with their busy season coming up.

It would be a lousy thing to do considering the troupe had helped him out by letting him stay in the cottage so he could save money to buy his uncle's place.

Playing sexual games with a curious novice was setting himself up for disaster. Turning back toward the closet, he put the flogger, straps and ropes back. Then he sat onto the bed. "Dana, you can get up. This wasn't a good idea. It's late. You can sleep on the bed. I'll take the sofa."

"But I didn't say slow or butter. Why did you decide not to..."

He rubbed his forehead with his hand. His cock was still hard but he hoped she didn't notice. "Because we've only just met today." He grabbed a throw blanket and attempted to lie down on the sofa, which was a loveseat. No matter what position he tried, he couldn't get his large body to find a comfortable spot.

"Jack, we've been chatting for months online. Don't tell me you had no idea there was flirting going on between us."

His mouth twisted in a half grin. "Yeah, you're right. We did have a few personal conversations."

"A few? One night you asked me what was my most sexually adventurous encounter."

"No way. I didn't ask... Oh yeah, I guess I did." He rubbed his face with his hand.

"You were fishing, trying to find out if I had been involved in a D/s relationship before." Dana stood and placed her hands on her hips, frowning. "I thought you were flirting."

His sweatpants hung low on her hipbones and threatened to slide off. And he knew she wasn't wearing any underwear. *Oh brother.* He stared up at the ceiling.

"Look at you. You can't sleep on that. I'll sleep there. You sleep in the bed," Dana said.

"No. I'll take the floor."

"And freeze your ass off." She took a breath and lowered her voice. "Jack, we're not a couple of teenagers. I thought we were friends. We don't have to have sex just because we're in the same bed."

He craved to hold her through the night, nuzzle his cheek against her breasts, curve his body against her round bottom, listen to her breathing while she slept. But to do so would be torture. To feel her close throughout the night without fucking her would drive him mad. If he had a D/s scene with her, he might be able to relax and get some sleep. He doubted he'd be getting much sleep.

He'd turned his back toward the bed, so he couldn't watch her but she hadn't crawled into bed yet. She walked across the room and at first he thought she was stirring the fire. Instead she came out of the closet with the flogger, straps and a rope.

She laid them out across the bed then walked over to him and knelt in front of the loveseat and bowed her head. "Please, Master. Show me. I want to learn. I want to understand why I was scared by watching Shannon and Damon and at the same time so turned on. I can't bear the thought of leaving Ireland at the end of summer without understanding these feelings. Every time I think of them, I get horny."

A knot formed in his chest. *Oh hell. She was a sub and didn't even know yet.* He'd have to take extra care with this one. It scared the hell out of him. She might realize this wasn't for her and panic in the middle of a session. He didn't want to do anything to hurt her. He'd never been with a sub who was so green.

She let out a huff, spun on her heels and marched over to the bed. She picked up the leather cuffs and started strapping them around her wrists. "Dana, don't."

She gave him a pained look and unhooked the cuffs. The firelight made her smooth skin glow and he noticed her nipples were hard. Her breasts were beautiful. Not huge, but perfectly shaped. Struggling with the wrist restraints, she managed to secure them to her wrists with the short length of chain dangling between the cuffs. Picking up the flogger, she walked over to Jack and knelt before him again, head bowed, and raised the flogger to him. "Please, Sir, I need to know."

His breath caught as he gazed at her naked from the waist up, wearing his baggy sweatpants that barely hung on her hips. Far from the exotic fetish wear he would see women in at the club Unfettered, but so sexy. He stood and took the flogger from her. "You need to know what, slave?" It took a conscious effort to keep his voice firm and in control.

She let out a long breath. "I need to know if pain gives me pleasure."

He closed his eyes and took a breath. *Oh hell. She's definitely a sub.* His cock twitched in response and rose to attention. Willing himself to remain in control, he pointed to the chair. "Get into your original position."

"Yes, Master."

Heart racing, he had to remind himself, even if she was receptive, she wasn't a seasoned sub. "Remember your safe words?"

She nodded.

"Answer me, slave."

"Yes, Master. I remember the words." His hands stroked her buttocks, her back and moved around to cup her breasts. Then down each leg and up, barely grazing her pussy. She shivered a little and didn't resist. He hadn't removed the sweatpants yet. It wouldn't take much to slide them down. Once he felt the muscles in her back and shoulders relax, he picked up the rope and tied her arms and wrists to the chair.

He checked to make sure it wasn't too tight then picked up the flogger. Her eyes looked up expectantly at him. "Eyes downcast, slave."

"Yes, Master." He took a number of practice swings and hit the bed, watching Dana jerk at the sound. Then he let the tassels hit her back in light strokes. She arched and moaned. As he moved over to her buttocks, he increased the power of his hits. She let out a couple of yelps but nothing she didn't seem she could handle.

"Painful, slave?"

"Not much, Master. More, please."

"Very well." He yanked down the sweatpants without giving her warning, drawing them to her ankles. She gasped but didn't struggle or protest. The flogger swung in circles again and swatted her butt cheeks on one side, then the other. He alternated the hits in a steady rhythm until her moans became shrill, then he brought her back down. He smoothed her reddened cheeks with his hands.

She was panting now and wriggled her ass as he touched her. No whimpers of suffering, only moans of pleasure. Moving to the back of the chair, he raised her chin, but she kept her eyes downcast as he requested. Her mouth was open, but she was breathing normally.

"Are you with me, slave? Look at me."

She locked eyes with him. "Yes, Master. I'm fine. I'm with you. More, please."

He had to smile at that. "Are you wet?"

"Yes, Master."

"How wet?" His hand parted her labia and he slipped a finger inside her channel. Withdrawing his finger slick with her juices, he circled her clit and felt it harden and swell. "Very wet and aroused. More?"

"Yes."

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, Master?"

"Good. Legs spread wide." Her ass twitched so nice for him and when she opened her legs, he got a good view of her pussy. Swinging the flogger like a pendulum, he brought it up between her legs hard enough to make her body jerk. But his lovely slave didn't protest or move away. Her breathing deepened and sped up as he struck her pussy harder.

Moaning, she flinched with each strike.

"You could come like this?" he asked.

"Yes, Master."

"Hold back, don't come until I say. Understand? I must give you permission to climax. Your pleasure is within my control."

"I understand. God, it's so good."

"Tell me when you're close."

"Now. I'll come if you continue like this, Master."

He stopped stimulating her with the flogger and rubbed her ass and back. "You did well, slave."

"Will you make me come now?" Her voice was shaky.

"No. This is the end of your first lesson. It's time for you to rest."

"But..."

"Your pleasure will exceed your fantasies if you can surrender to me." He untied her, brought her to the bed and cradled her in his arms. As much as his body wanted more of her, to make love, he'd wait. Control and trust made a brittle foundation in a new D/s relationship, especially when the sub was inexperienced. Best not to overwhelm his sweet slave. Besides, he'd promised her a safe place to stay the night.

* * * * *

The next morning, Dana woke to the smell of bacon simmering in a frying pan and brewing coffee. Stretching under the warmth of the covers, she gazed over at Jack as he prepared breakfast. Jeans hung low on his hips and he was shirtless and barefooted. His hair looked as if he tried to smooth it down with his fingers, sections were still mussed from sleep. *God, he looked hot.* She was still horny from last night, especially since she'd gotten no release. But she did say she was curious about the D/s lifestyle so she had to go along.

The chair she'd been tethered to stood in front of the cold fireplace. Memories of their bizarre night seemed like a dream now except for her tender bottom. The thought sent a rush of warmth straight to her pussy and her clit throbbed. Yes, pain did give her pleasure. The whole experience was strangely exciting but also unsettling. She didn't know how she felt about the need to be dominated. Was this something she could do in a relationship all the time? Or was she trying something new, just to say she did it? Like parachuting. A thrill-seeking thing. Once she'd done it a few times, she could say she'd had the experience but it wasn't something she'd care to do regularly.

This type of lifestyle required trust. But how could she trust Jack if she didn't know if she could trust herself? She'd taken a break from her well-paying job to be a musician in Europe. A responsible thirty-something didn't do that. That was what her parents told her anyway. "Morning," she called out to Jack. "Smells wonderful."

He turned around. "Morning. Sleep well?"

She got up, not shy about being naked, and enjoyed the up-and-down look he gave her. "Slept good, considering." She smiled as she rubbed her bottom with her hand.

"Sore?"

"A little, but in a good way." She found his discarded sweatshirt and pants and slipped them back on.

"You seemed to enjoy it. Did you feel I pushed too far?" He speared the browned bacon strips in the pan and drained them onto a paper towel, then poured off the grease into a can.

"No, I was fine. I'm ready for the next lesson."

He stirred beaten eggs into the hot pan with a spatula. "Good." His voice became husky. "After the show tonight meet me in the dungeon."

Her stomach clenched. "Where I saw Damon and Shannon?"

"Yes. Wait for me there immediately after the show. And I want to find you completely naked when I arrive. Understand?"

"Yes, Master." After they finished eating, Dana helped clean up and straighten the bed.

"Your clothes are still wet and they still smell like the bog," Jack said. "I'll take a run up to the office and get another key for your cottage. You can wait here."

Dana looked down at Jack's clothes. "Thanks. It would be a little obvious walking around in your sweats."

"Be right back." He pulled her into his arms, gave her a kiss, then released her. "Looking forward to tonight."

"Me too."

When the door closed, Dana folded up a throw blanket and placed it on the end of the bed. She picked up the flogger, wrist straps and ropes and opened the closet to put them away.

Inside the closet was a long, black robe. Like the one she saw the other entertainers wearing last night. She gasped and stepped away from the closet and shoved the door closed.

Jack was part of this secret group too. What was this all about? What would've happened if she hadn't fallen into the bog? What if she'd caught up to them and stumbled into whatever they were doing?

Images of bizarre sacrifices came to mind. She'd seen one too many creepy movies. Walking to the back of the cottage, she peeked between the curtains out the window, trying to see into the forest. She couldn't see anything through trees and shrub growth. The sky was clear and the paths into the woods could easily be seen. She wouldn't fall into the bog in the daylight.

She didn't know much about pagan practices but had a friend who was Wiccan. If the entertainers were a pagan group, she had nothing to worry about unless they were practicing black magic. A black robe didn't mean they were practicing black magic. She laughed at herself but it was a forced laugh.

The door to the cabin swung open and Dana jumped. "It took some persuading, but Donegal finally gave me the key. He couldn't believe you went into the forest at night after he warned you."

"What did you tell him?" She hadn't gotten the nerve to ask him about the robe yet. He was grinning and his eyes sparkled with mischief but not evil. There couldn't be anything evil about him, could there?

"Mr. Donegal is very superstitious. I'm afraid I told him you saw someone walk into the woods and you thought it was Shannon. You followed her. I wasn't lying. He assumed you saw a ghost. He asked me to keep an eye on you and protect you from anything supernatural. 'The forest is haunted,' Donegal says."

"Haunted?"

"No, it's not. I've lived here all my life. Never seen a ghost." Jack handed her the key. "He told me to tell you to stay out of the forest."

"Thanks for the key. See you later." She rushed past him, suddenly wanting to get far away from that black robe.

"You okay? Aren't I taking you to town?"

"Oh, right."

He gave her a puzzled look. "Go and get changed. I have a surprise for you."

* * * * *

Jack gave Dana a tour of the old town and pointed out grocery stores, pubs, restaurants and other shops. She couldn't wait to go exploring and browse through the quaint shops. Before their stop at the grocery store, he brought her to an older part of town where the streets were narrow and the store windows were decorated with flower boxes or hanging baskets. The smell of baked bread and smoked meat wafted in the air. "I'm getting hungry again," Dana said. "Something smells good."

"This is where I got the brown bread for your soup." He pointed to a bakery. "Next door is a good place for meats. My uncle's place is around the corner. I'm trying to get a loan to buy it."

"Your uncle can't hold a loan for you?"

"It would be a hardship for him. He wants to retire. And the place needs some work." Jack opened the door to a shop with a sign that read "Keagan's Wool Shop".

The store was quite spacious inside with several racks of woolen sweaters, coats and wraps. Wooden shelves lined the walls filled with neatly folded colorful knits. "Look at all the beautiful things." Dana strolled around the room, touching the soft knits. "I always thought wool sweaters would be scratchy. These are so soft."

He pulled out a gray tweed wrap and covered her shoulders with it. "Like it?"

"It's gorgeous. It's like a gray cloud with bits of purple in it. I'm sure I'll be back to shop here."

"My uncle will love to see you. This one's a gift."

She was about to argue with him, when a gentlemen came out from a back room. "I heard that. I'll be taking that out of your paycheck," the man said with a wink. He smiled at Dana and had the same mischievous sparkle in his eyes as Jack only this man was about seventy years old.

"Uncle Lee, this is Dana. She's from America and our new harpist."

Lee held out his hand and shook Dana's. "Nice to meet you. I love your shop."

"America? A long way to come for a job," Lee said. His voice held a note of disapproval.

"My cousin lives in Dublin and she heard about the job. She and Jack went to college together. I'm here just for the summer."

"Ah, so you're a student?"

"No, I took a temporary leave from my management job in a security company. I'll be returning to my position at the end of summer."

Lee's face scrunched up. "A manager? You left a good job? Aren't you a little old to be acting like a rebellious teenager?" His voice was tight. Dana didn't know what to say.

"Uncle," Jack cut in. "Maybe she had a good reason to leave."

"When you're young, you can be reckless and have a traveler life, drifting from place to place, job to job like a gypsy. When you're an adult, you stick with a job even if you don't like it. That's how you stay off the streets."

Jack was about to argue but Dana jumped in.

"No, your uncle has a point. If I had a family, I probably would've made a different choice, but sometimes taking a risk opens up opportunities. I don't want to look back on my life and wonder what if, or if only I had..." She glanced at Jack then at Lee. She obviously wasn't scoring any points with his uncle. "I might be making a mistake, but we learn from mistakes and become stronger from them." She should shut up before she dug herself in deeper.

"It's foolish." Lee's face was red. He headed into the other room then glanced back at Jack. "Look around if you like. I have the kettle on if you'd like some tea. Got a letter today. You were turned down on that last loan."

Jack swore under his breath. "Did they give a reason?" He held up his hand. "Forget it, I don't want to know. They're all stupid reasons. Out-of-town banks say the tourist trade has dropped off and a shop in this area is too much of a risk. Local banks say they remember my wild, reckless days in college and don't think I'm a responsible businessman. That was thirteen years ago. Other reasons mention the leather and specialty items are not appropriate merchandise. Certain months of the year we make more on those items than the woolen goods." Jack shook his head. "I've sold everything I own, given up my apartment to buy this place and it looks like it's not going to work out."

Lee frowned. "If I took out part of the loan."

"No. You've been trying to retire for seven years. You've worked hard all your life. I'm not going to have you sacrifice because of me. You could get a buyer for this place and live comfortably. If I can't buy it in three months, then it goes on the market and I find another job."

"Don't worry about it, Jack. There's time." Lee glanced over at Dana and gave her a nod. "I'll get the tea."

After Lee went into the other room, Dana turned to Jack. "I'm sorry if I upset your uncle."

Jack groaned. "You didn't. He doesn't understand. Things were different in his day." He took her hand. "Come on, I have something to show you."

"Is this the surprise?"

"Yeah."

Jack showed Dana into a room separate from the clothing section. It had a sign that said “Adults Only”, which he pointed out to her. Opening the door, he led her through and kept an eye on her expression. He wanted to see her response when she viewed the various items and devices.

Upon scanning the room, Dana studied the display of leather fetish wear and extensive selection of bondage accessories and implements for a sadomasochist’s dream. “Wow, this is amazing.” She walked around and felt the leather floggers, held up a leather vest and frowned at the mask and ball gag. A few contraptions she examined for a long time. By the look in her eyes, she appeared more fascinated than shocked. He was relieved at that.

“What do you think?”

“It looks like Disneyland for the sadomasochist.”

Jack laughed.

“I think I’d need an instruction manual on most of this stuff.”

Jack agreed. “A lot of it does come with instructions and warnings.” She didn’t seem offended by anything in the room, but in the back of his mind he had his concerns. He picked up a flogger and swung it in the air and gave her a wicked grin.

“I like those, I discovered.”

“I know.” His smile faded. “Something my uncle said made me think. Why did you leave your job? Is coming to Ireland a rebellious diversion?”

She picked up a braided cat and ran her fingers through it. “The security business is a job I’ve had since high school. I went to college for electrical engineering and business. My parents are supportive about me playing the harp but not as a career. I always dreamed of playing in a large symphony but it would never pay like my management job. My cousin knows I love Ireland and has been urging me to spend the summer with her for years. When she told me about the medieval show, I knew this was my last chance to follow a dream.”

"So you'll be going back," Jack said.

She let out a breath. "Yes, that's what I had planned."

"If you had the opportunity would you consider staying here?"

She didn't answer right away. "That would be a hard adjustment. I'd be so far away from my friends and family."

He nodded. "And what about this part of your life?" He held up some bondage straps. "Is this a lifestyle you're considering after last night or is this a rebellious phase like leaving your job?" He tried to keep his tone light but could hear an edge to his voice. He'd gotten involved with a woman before and after a year, she'd decided she didn't like the lifestyle and went back to her vanilla sex life. It had taken a long time to get over her. And now he was considering getting involved with another novice. Dana's arrival had set off a rush of emotions he hadn't anticipated. If he had any sense, he'd avoid her.

"I think it's too early for me to make that decision, Jack."

"Fair enough." Was he willing to set himself up for another fall, knowing at the end of summer, she would leave?

She moved up to him, her lips a breath away. "But I am getting wet and horny standing in this room, so that must count for something. Right?"

His cock hardened at her words. "It certainly does." He would probably hate himself by the end of summer but he couldn't resist a willing submissive as beautiful as Dana. "I think you're ready for the next step. The dungeon."

* * * * *

When Dana got back to her cottage, she pulled out the crumpled-up business card and punched out the number on her cell phone. She knew it wouldn't connect to anything anyway. She was in Ireland, 1-800 numbers wouldn't work from her phone as far as she knew. She'd call, and then she'd know the card was a prank of some sort and wait until the prankster decided to make himself known.

But after she punched in the number, it started to ring. She plopped down on her bed and someone answered. "Thank you for calling 1-800-DOM-help. This is the Operator. How may I be of assistance?" It was a man's voice, no accent, calm and formal.

"Hello?" Dana was tempted to hang up but then she wouldn't know what if it was a prank or not. "What's this all about?"

"I see you received one of our cards?"

"Yes. This is a prank, right? Who gave it to me?" She was wasting her time.

"This is a help line. If you received a card, you must need help in your relationship."

She sighed in frustration. "No, I don't need help. Besides, I'm not a Dom."

"Ah, you're a sub then, my mistake, hold on. I can connect you to someone who can help you with your Dom and your D/s—"

"No, do not transfer me," Dana raised her voice. "I don't need any help in my...whatever you said. Everything is fine."

"That's good to hear. Maybe there's something else that's troubling you?" The man seemed genuinely concerned and Dana felt her throat tighten.

"No, everything is fine." She hung up and ripped up the card.

Chapter Five

"Let the banquet begin," Jack announced. With his words medieval-clad servers brought out platters of soup and warm brown bread to each table for the first course while Dana and the other musicians performed a lively renaissance melody and Jack and Shannon sang a duet. They both had incredible voices.

When he'd said he was one of the singers, she had no idea how gifted he was. In her opinion he could be singing in a Broadway show. He looked so handsome in his period costume, the brocade tunic cinched with a leather belt. The tights he wore, she remembered laughing at earlier. Jack's comment had been, "Something wrong, my lady?" The thought brought a smile to her, and she caught Jack winking at her now as if he knew what she was thinking.

Or was he thinking about later, after the show? Earlier in his cottage, he'd instructed her not to wear panties under her costume. This, he said, was a simple test of her subservience and only they would know. After the show, he said he would meet her down in the dungeon for a more intense session.

Heat traveled through her body and her nipples tightened beneath the green brocade dress. The corset-like bodice pressed her breasts in rounded mounds above the lacy trim. Moving her arms while stroking the harp was restraining not to mention difficult for breathing.

Under the long skirt, Dana spread her legs and held her harp in the proper position between them. But without wearing panties, her chemise brushed over her bare pussy, making her more sensitive and wet each minute. And by the added movement of her playing, her clit swelled. She wanted Jack's hand between her legs, touching her slit, rubbing her clit. Her pussy throbbed as she plucked each note in the song.

Jack glanced her way, a slight smile on his lips. Could he tell she was turned on? Would he do the things to her that Damon did to Shannon? Heat traveled to her face and she could hardly focus on her performance.

Halfway through the dinner, Shannon sang a solo and Damon played the violin. No other musical pieces or singers participated. The other entertainers stood and moved to the side of the room.

Jack graciously took Dana's hand and led her offstage for the performance. While they were aside he whispered into Dana's ear. The movements he did in a theatrical way so that it appeared to the audience his conversation was part of the show. "You're naked beneath your dress?"

"Yes." Dana followed his lead for the sake of the audience. They were acting like two peasants carrying on a little mischief while the lead performers entertained the Earl's guests in the castle. Although the guests could not hear the real conversation.

"After the show," Jack whispered in Dana's ear, "take that door down to the dungeon and close it behind you. There's a sign on it that says 'No Admittance, Staff Only'. When all the guests have left, I'll meet you there."

"Okay, I'll wait for you in the dungeon. It's safe?" Her pulse was racing now because many of the guests were nearly finished with their dinner.

"Yes, it's very safe. No one will disturb us. The others have plans tonight. There's a turf fire already in the fireplace so you'll be warm enough."

"Warm enough for what?" Her voice was shaky and she felt a little afraid.

"A lounge is in front of the fire. Wait there. After you've removed your dress and all your underclothing." He patted her bottom, then gave it a squeeze.

She gasped, glancing shyly into the crowd. There was a snicker in the audience, and Dana covered her mouth. Leaning into Jack, she whispered, still trying to play a part and hide her anxiety. "You want me to be completely naked before you come down?"

"Yes. If you're not naked, then I'll know you're not ready for the dungeon scene."

"No, I want to do this."

"Good. Then, my lady, after the banquet, your dungeon awaits." He took her hand and led her back to her harp for the final performance of the show.

After the show, Dana waited for the guests and entertainers to leave the hall then walked down the spiral staircase in her medieval costume. She felt like she'd stepped back in time for a moment, as if she was a maiden sneaking off to meet her knight.

When she entered the dungeon, she smelled the sweet woody scent of a turf fire blazing in the large fireplace. Even though the room was lit by sconces on the walls, the stones were dark, probably layered with centuries of soot. A straight-backed chair stood by the bottom of the stairs and a lounger was placed in front of the fire. The lounger looked comfortable but the rest of the items scattered around the room looked like devices straight out of a Dark Ages torture chamber.

The hammock swing with all its chains and straps hung from eye hooks in the ceiling. Another slanted bench with various pads and straps stood next to the swing. A table contained numerous items like floggers, handcuffs, dildos, condoms, a pitcher of water and a few other things she couldn't identify. Hanging from a hook on the wall was one of the black robes. Her body began to shake. Her pulse thrummed in her ears. *This was going to happen.*

With shaky hands she unbuttoned her dress and let the bodice slip from her shoulders. The cool air whisked across her skin and her nipples instantly puckered.

Bare from the waist up, Dana approached the angled bench with the straps. She knelt on the pads and rested her forearms on the other side of a raised cushion. Ah, now she got it. This was used for either spanking or fucking from behind. Her chest tightened. Would Jack try fucking her ass? That was not something she was fond of. She could always use the safe word if she didn't like what he was doing.

Dana was so hot she didn't care where he fucked her. On this restraining bench, in the swing or on the lounger by the fire. All of it was a little frightening but she was more turned on than she'd ever been in any other relationship. Her pussy was soaking

and throbbing. In the shower this morning, she'd shaved herself smooth and her tender skin was tingling. On the table she found a set of metal clamps with a chain. Nipple clamps. Shannon had worn these when she'd interrupted their encounter.

They looked like they would hurt. Picking them up, Dana tried to pinch them onto her hardened nipples. "Ouch!" she cried out and the clamps dropped onto the table. She tried again and got one clamped. The pain was sharp but after a moment she got used to it. She attempted the other, but it kept slipping off.

"You're not naked," Jack said from behind her.

Dana yelped and spun around, the nipple clamp dangling from one nipple. "Jack." He had his brocade costume draped over his arm and was wearing the white silk shirt and jeans. The shirt was open at the neck a few buttons. Damn, he looked good. "You changed."

"I guess you're not ready for the dungeon." His voice held a tone of disappointment. "Get dressed. Maybe another time." He turned and started back up the stairs.

"No, Jack, wait. I was distracted by all the devices. I was trying the nipple clamps. Without much success, I might add." She laughed, trying to lighten his dark mood. "I guess I need some instruction." She let the clamp hang from one nipple as she gazed up into his eyes.

He came back down into the room. "A slave who doesn't follow her Master's orders is asking for punishment," he said firmly.

"Then I suppose I deserve to be punished." Her voice was edged with defiance. The thought of punishment didn't frighten her at all even though her body was shaking. She hoped he would use the flogger on her again to relieve the ache that inflamed her. "But what if someone had come down here before you did and I was naked?"

"What if they did? Some women like being watched."

An odd answer, she thought. "I don't."

He smiled. "You're safe here."

"Yes, you said." She relaxed a little, glancing around at the other contraptions in the room. "I'm still new at all this. How about you show me how this works? It looks like fun." She pointed to the slanted bench with the pads and straps.

Pressing his lips together, Jack tensed his jaw. He placed his costume on a straight-backed chair by the door. Then he moved closer to her, removed the nipple clamp and tossed the item on the table. Lifting her chin, he gave her a gentle kiss. "This isn't a game. It's true a sub or a slave has all the power, even the control of a scene. One word can slow or stop what's happening at any time." His lips were a breath away from hers. The warm, moist heat of his mouth and tongue drifted over to her ear and down her neck.

"I understand that," she breathed, her eyes closed as she indulged in his touch. His hands skimmed over her breasts and the pads of his thumbs rubbed her already raw nipples, which made her clit throb. "Not a game," she echoed.

His hands moved lower and finished unbuttoning her dress and chemise and let them drop to the floor in a pile of green brocade while his fingers slid up her thighs and over her hipbones, gliding toward her pussy but not touching her sensitive flesh. God, she wanted him to pleasure her there. She resisted the urge to beg for it. He was the Master and she the sub.

"It's more like a dance when two people try to lead. You're tugging each other in different directions on the dance floor. When one person leads, and you both hear the beat of the music, the dance is like magic. Does that make sense to you?" He drew her close and she felt the warmth of his hard body through his shirt.

"Yes." One arm held her possessively against him as his other hand worked her pussy. "That feels good." Dana arched her back and wriggled her hips.

Then he slipped a finger deep into her cunt. She gasped as a jolt of intense pleasure shot through her. "You want more?"

"Yes, more, Master."

His thumb circled her clit and her knees buckled. If he kept moving his hand and finger in just that rhythm, she could come. "That's incredible."

"Your clit is swollen and your pussy dripping. I bet I could make you come like this. Am I right?"

"Yes." She gripped his shoulders to keep from falling.

"Am I your Master?"

"Yes." She rocked on his hand, fucking his finger. When she moved just right, he'd hit her G-spot at the same time. "Please, Master, let me come."

To her disappointment, he withdrew his finger from her cunt and slowed the stimulation of her clit. "Not without my permission. As your Master, I control your pleasure. I'll tell you when you can come. When you do get close to an orgasm you tell me the word, edge. I'll know to slow down, or give you more, depending on my mood."

She nodded as the peak of her orgasm faded. Damn it, she'd been so close.

"We'll go at this slowly."

"I don't know if I can go slowly," Dana argued. "What if I were to come without your permission?"

"Your punishment would be more severe." He turned to the slanted bench. "You need a bit of punishment for not following my order before." He stroked her buttocks in a gentle caress. Was he trying to let her know he wasn't cruel with his gentle touch? His words were firm and they made her pulse kick up a few beats. She longed for the punishment almost as much as she ached for the release of an orgasm.

What was wrong with her? Was this normal?

"Yes, Master. I need to know." Her voice almost broke with emotion. She took a breath and tried to relax. But how could she if she was naked and he wasn't? Her bare pussy was getting more soaked by the minute.

"Need to know what, slave?" A grin twitched at the corner of his mouth. His hand brushed her hair back so tenderly her throat tightened.

She swallowed. "To see if I can feel the intense passion that Shannon seemed to feel while she was in that swing."

He smiled. "I think you will. If you trust me. But you'll need to communicate your needs during and after a scene. If I'm about to do something you're not sure about or you can't handle, use the safe words to slow or stop."

"I'll remember. 'Butter' to stop. And 'slow' to slow things down."

"Tell me when you like what I'm doing too."

She glanced over toward the stairs leading to the great room but she didn't mention her hesitation.

"We won't be disturbed here."

She wasn't so sure but she wasn't about to argue with him. She wanted him so badly she didn't care anymore if someone did come down those stairs. Her body was on fire, and she wanted him now. "Thank you, Master."

"Clasp your hands behind your back." She did and watched as Jack unbuttoned his shirt, yanked it off and tossed it on the chair. Then he stroked her breasts in a gentle, sensuous manner, pinching the nipples between thumb and forefinger tighter and tighter until she yelped in pain. "You'll handle the clamps quite well."

Although he'd told her to keep her hands behind her back, she wanted to roam them over his magnificent chest, down his stomach and take his thick cock in her hand. But she'd submit to him, learn the ways of a submissive because by doing so she might reach that state of ecstasy that Shannon had. More than that, she wanted to please him, wanted to give over the control.

Jack's mouth captured a nipple and tugged on it, and his teeth scraped across the tender skin. He worked the other nipple in the same way until they both were raw and puckered. "Feel good?"

"Yes, very."

He stepped over to the table and picked up the nipple clamps and approached her. "I'm going to clamp your nipples now." Dana bit her lower lip, anticipating the pain. As he tightened the clamp, the pain increased but she tried to work through it. The pain became excruciating but at the same time a jolt of pleasure shot to her pussy. She closed her eyes and moaned, part from the pain and part from the pleasure.

Then the pressure eased up a bit. "Brave girl," he said with a short laugh. "You're not telling me when you're feeling too much pain. But fortunately, you have very expressive eyes. Is that better?" He adjusted both clamps until there was pressure and a slight amount of discomfort but the kind that was pleasurable.

"Better, yes."

She knelt on the slant bench, and Jack strapped her forearms and ankles down. Her upper body rested lower on a padded board so her ass was elevated.

His hand slid over her ass and around to her slit. "I've made you wet." His finger slid inside her cunt, then rubbed over her clit. "Yes, I think you're ready."

Her body quivering, she tugged against the restraints as a climax quickly approached. "You're going to make me come, Master." She hoped. If she didn't come soon or get fucked soon, she'd jump out of her skin.

"No, punish you." He pulled his hand away. "And don't come yet. Not until your punishment is over."

"Yes, Master."

Jack picked up a flogger from the table and caressed her with the leather lashes down her back and ass, making her shiver. "Relax. If you let go the pain can bring pleasure."

Her teeth were clamped shut, anticipating the first hard blow. Jack moved around to the front of the bench and bent to kiss her. He used his tongue to part her lips and deepen the kiss. She moaned and relaxed. Then he stood, moved beside her and

swatted her ass with the flogger. It hurt, a lot. She tensed and bit her lip, determined not to cry out. The tails of the flogger struck again and again, equally on each side until her skin burned. Briefly, he stopped and rubbed her ass.

"Hmmm. Turning a little pink now." His fingers followed the curve of her hip, slipping down the cleft of her ass and probed the opening of her anus with the tip of his finger. "How would you like it if I fucked you here?" He pressed a little harder but her sphincter muscle tightened. Her body jerked.

She didn't know what to say to him, she didn't want to call an end to their evening.

"I would love to take your ass like this but I can tell by the way you're tensing, you're not quite ready for that. We won't go there tonight. Another night then."

"Yes, Master." Her words sounded slurred to her.

The smacks of the flogger began again, she closed her eyes, floating with the pain, feeling her heart throb in her temples. As the pain increased, her skin tingled and her clit swelled. Juices from her pussy dripped down her thighs. She couldn't move. She was trapped. The pounding in her head increased, not a headache, more like a head rush. Any moment she was going to scream, "Fuck me, Jack". It took all her willpower to keep from crying out.

He walked over to the table and dropped the flogger, picked up a condom and slipped it on.

Strapped down onto the bench, she felt helpless, completely under his control. A flutter of panic rose to the surface. But then Jack moved in front of her, claiming her lips again, and kissed her until she gasped for breath. Watching him step back, she felt the heat build inside her and desperately craved his touch. She admired the rigid thickness of his cock and had to feel that fullness deep inside her. His hands slid over her back, her breasts, easing the tension from her body. "Let's see how ready you are for me."

His hand moved over her bottom and between her legs, then he plunged a finger deep into her dripping cunt. "God, yes, Master." She arched her back, tugging on the restraints.

"You're ready for me to fuck you then?" He buried his finger deep. Her body bucked.

"Yes, please fuck me, Master. I want you." Every muscle in her body trembled with need. Jack knelt on the bench between her legs and nudged the head of his cock at her entrance. Easing in just enough to open her cunt, he then stopped. Her pussy clenched, aching for all of him. She whimpered. Sweet torture. Restrained as she was, Dana's pleasure was completely under his control. "Please, Master. Fuck me deep."

Grasping her hips, he eased in and out of her in small movements. Reaching around her hip, he pressed his fingertips onto her engorged clit. The pressure was almost too much to bear but it felt so good. Then he thrust hard into her all the way to the hilt of his shaft.

Dana cried out. Her head spun. The restraints inhibited her ability to move, heightening her pleasure. The pressure and slight movements on her clit and the rhythmic thrusts of his cock sent her racing toward an orgasm. "Master, I'm going to come soon." She felt the tension building in her cunt. If he told her not to, she wasn't sure how she could stop.

"Come for me, come for me now." It was an order not a request, and the command in his voice sent her over the edge.

She screamed as the waves of her climax radiated through her, the intensity more powerful than any orgasm she could remember. "God, yes."

When he let out a low groan, he grasped her hips, and she felt his cock pulsing in her cunt. Moments later, he slipped his cock from her body and leaned over her back. Gently, he stroked her body, shoulders, breasts and ass. His hands moved in slow, sensuous touches. Her mind and body drifted as if she was floating on a raft in the ocean.

She glanced at the black robe hanging on the wall and thought of the entertainers in the forest. What were they doing in there? Was Jack a part of it? Could they be drawing her into some bizarre, evil thing? Or had she watched too many horror movies?

"You're so beautiful." She heard Jack say, but he sounded far away now.

Someone was touching her between her legs and it felt good. Jack? Of course, it was Jack. Were there more than two hands? Or was it her imagination? Shadows danced around the room from the flickering flames. She imagined other people touching and stroking her, bringing her closer to another climax. Almost there.

Her gaze fell upon the black robe again, and she wanted to get away from it. Were there other people in the room? Dana tried to lift her arms, her legs, she couldn't.

Trapped. Panic gripped her. She struggled against her restraints. She had to get out, get away from them.

Far away, she heard Jack's voice, but she wasn't sure what he said. Then the air was sucked out of the room. She had to get out, now!

Then she remembered.

"Butter!"

Like a fire alarm, when Jack heard Dana's safe word, he instantly yanked off the Velcro straps two at a time, both wrists, then ankles and lifted her off the bench. Searching around the room, he looked for a blanket, then cursed himself for forgetting that one item when he'd set up this scene.

Instead, he grabbed the black robe off the wall and wrapped her in it. Although she struggled to get away, he scooped her in his arms, brought her over to the cushioned lounge and cradled her onto his lap. He had to find out what went wrong, if he had hurt her.

"Dana, you all right? Did I hurt you?" He held her close against his chest. Feeling her body shake nearly broke his heart.

"No, Jack, you didn't hurt me. In fact, I was enjoying it. I don't know why I freaked all of a sudden. I'm sorry."

Relieved, he chuckled as he stroked her hair. "No need to be sorry. That's why we have a safe word. Hold still, let me take the nipple clamps off. This might hurt a bit."

As he loosened the first clamp, she sucked in air. "Ow!"

"One more."

"Damn, that hurts."

"I think you might've reached sub space, and it scared you." He took off the other one and gently rubbed the circulation back into her sensitive tips. "Better?"

She nodded and leaned her head against his chest. "Subspace?"

"It's like a light trance. Your perception can be altered and it can be disorienting."

"That must explain it then." She frowned.

His guts were twisting in knots. How the hell did he lose control of the scene? "You have to be honest with me. What was I doing, or what were you thinking that made you panic?"

"Nothing." Squirming out of his lap, she stood, picked up her clothes from the chair and got dressed. "I didn't panic. It just got to be too much I guess. Maybe this lifestyle isn't right for me."

Jack didn't say anything for a moment. He pulled on his pants. "I disagree, I can tell by how you were responding but that's something you have to decide for yourself. I think there was something else bothering you."

As he hung up the robe, she turned away and started up the stairs. "I have to go."

"Stop, Dana, hang on." He slipped on his shoes and chased after her, catching her halfway up the stairs. Turning her in his arms, he raised her chin. "Please tell me what happened." He saw fear in her eyes. *What the hell went wrong?*

"What are the black robes about? Why do the others go into the forest? Where are they going? I saw the robe in your closet. Are you in some kind of cult?" Her voice had a dream-like slur to it.

"It's not a cult."

"They looked like a bunch of Druids or something. It's pretty freaky."

He nodded. He was beginning to understand. "The robe spooked you."

"Yeah."

"The people in this town are very conservative, but they respect Celtic rituals. If they were to see people entering the woods in black robes, they wouldn't think twice."

"Is that what Damon, Shannon and the others are doing, Celtic rituals?"

"They're going to a private club called Unfettered. It's like an invitation-only BDSM club. The robes hide their fetish outfits, which might cause some concern with the neighbors. Bad publicity for the dinner show. The robes are for privacy, nothing overly mysterious. Maybe a little."

She let out a breath. "Have you been to this club?"

"Yes, once you've been there, you're welcome to return."

"Were you going to ask me there?"

"If you were receptive to it."

She glanced away, unable to meet his gaze. "Not now though." The sadness and disappointment in her voice were unmistakable.

"Maybe we went too fast. I know we've talked online, but we really don't know each other that well." He gave her a hug. "Come on. Let me pack up and I'll take you back to your cottage."

She stood her ground. "So that's it? What if I want to try this again? What if I want to go to Unfettered?"

"It's more intense than the scene in the dungeon. This lifestyle isn't for everyone and that's okay."

"No, it's not okay," she snapped at him. "I don't know enough about a D/s relationship yet. And I want to learn more."

"I've never had anyone...call a safe word before." He was going to say freak out during a session but held his tongue. "I should've seen your discomfort before it went too far. That's my fault, my failing. You don't know enough yet to know when to quit."

Concern creased her brow, then she smiled, put her arms around his neck and kissed him. "Thank you for being protective of me. Clearly I was aroused during the session. I just need us to try again."

He groaned. "We will then. If you can surrender as my slave, I'll help you find ecstasy beyond your wildest fantasies."

"So you'll take me to Unfettered?" The thought of a forbidden place even more wicked than the dungeon made her horny again.

"No, you're not ready for Unfettered."

She turned and started up the stairs.

"Dana, stop!"

She couldn't ignore the command in his voice. Turning around, she spoke calmly. "Jack, I'll trust you to make that decision but tonight I'd rather go to my cottage alone."

"That's fine, but I'm walking you back. Wait for me to pack up."

Her shoulders slumped and she sat down on the steps. "Okay. I'll wait."

Back in the dungeon, Jack stuffed all the sex toys and devices on the table into a duffle bag. He made sure everything was cleaned up. The fire would burn out soon, so that was safe, but not the fire burning within him. He knew he would be Dana's Master, if only she'd let go of her inhibitions. He pushed aside other thoughts that might be causing her fears and hesitations — like his own failing in past D/s relationships.

Damn it, he knew how to reach her. He could master her.

Chapter Six

Over the next several weeks, Jack introduced Dana to many aspects of a D/s relationship. During their sessions and lovemaking, she discovered a deeper level of sensuality and pleasure she hadn't expected. By the end of August, she was considering the possibility of staying on in Ireland, but the email from her old boss caught her off guard. It dropped a gloomy shadow over her entire summer. She'd been avoiding the actual decision of what she would do after the musician job ended. Safe and secure had always been her way, and now the email only made the decision harder. He was offering her a raise and a new position if she returned as planned to her job in the security company by September first.

A text message from her friend Karen said she couldn't wait to see Dana or hear about her summer. As much as she loved Ireland and was falling for Jack, she was also feeling homesick. Was she like a kid on summer break trying to hang onto a foolish dream by considering relocating to Ireland? That was a huge decision and not very practical.

The idea of leaving Jack was painful but there wasn't much she could do. She had less than two weeks before her return flight. Jack had offered suggestions on where she might find work, but the prospects weren't hopeful. The security company was the logical choice. Her father was right, performing as a harpist wasn't a real job, it was a hobby, something she should be proud of, but still a hobby, not something she could make a career on. She should stop acting like a gypsy and get her act together. What she and Jack had was a hot summer romance, nothing more.

After the dinner show, Dana bade the guests farewell as she usually did and snuck down into the dungeon to wait for her Master. The dungeon was their secret place for pleasure and pain. And tonight she'd planned a little test of her own. She loved the

strong, Dominant voice Jack used as he commanded her in sensual, reassuring ways through adventurous sexual games.

In the dungeon, she added on another turf brick to the fire that was already burning. With what she had planned, they might be there a while, if not all night. Undressing out of her costume, she got completely naked and slipped on the come-fuck-me red heels she'd bought in town and had stuffed in her purse. She untied her hair from the twist it was in for the show and let her brown waves drape over her shoulders and back. As usual, he had the table filled with hedonistic supplies.

There was something frightening and exciting about being restrained. Her cunt was soaked and clenching. She hoped tonight's session ended with him fucking her because she wanted to feel his hard cock thrusting inside her. The sound of footsteps on the stone steps made tremors course through her body. Quickly, she took the position on the slant bench, legs spread wide, ass high and her breasts resting on a padded board.

When he entered the dungeon, he said, "Mmmm. My slave is anxious. Naked already and in position. I like the shoes."

"Thank you, Master. I wore them to please you."

He shed his renaissance clothing and stood in front of her naked. His cock, hard and erect, swayed in front of her face, teasing her. Licking her lips, she was tempted to lean forward and take him into her mouth. "Why did you choose the bench? I had ordered you to stand by the wall restraints," he asked as he moved closer and stroked her breasts. His cock was an inch from her face, she could smell his musky scent but she didn't dare take him without permission. What she planned later was bad enough.

Shifting position, his hand slid over her ass, down her cleft, then he sank a finger into her cunt. "You're dripping."

She gasped. "I always love to be flogged, Master, but I'd hoped to suck your cock tonight and then feel you fuck me."

He gave a sexy, low laugh. "I like when my slave expresses her needs as long as she doesn't try to top from the bottom. Or maybe you're hoping I'll punish you more tonight."

"Yes, Master, if that's your wish."

"My slave should trust me more. If she would surrender herself completely, her pleasure would be greater."

"I do trust you, Master."

"Not completely. Get up and stand by the wall like I'd asked." His words were firm but gentle. Stretching her arms straight up over her head and spreading her legs wide apart, he strapped her into the shackles that were anchored into the wall and floor. "Comfortable?"

"Yes, Master." Anticipation made her pussy twitch and her nipples harden, erect and sensitive, aching for his touch or the sting of the nipple clamps. Her eyes drifted over to the hammock suspended from the ceiling, the one Shannon had been writhing in and screaming in pure pleasure. She didn't believe she'd reached that level of ecstasy that Shannon had.

Jack lifted her chin and brought his face close. "Where are your thoughts, my lady?"

"I was remembering Shannon for a moment."

Jack let out a breath then squeezed her nipple until she yelped. "Keep your thoughts here and you'll enjoy this much more." He unshackled her ankles and turned her around to face the wall, then reshackled her ankles. "Extra punishment should keep you focused." Grinning down at her.

"Yes, please, Master."

He began with the flogger, swatting her buttocks and thighs and gently stroking the sides of her breasts. The rough, cool stone rubbed against her nipples and heightened their sensitivity. Rocking her hips, she ached to rub her clit against something to ease

the throbbing. If he touched her there, she could come with little effort. The flogging stopped and she caught herself before she groaned out loud.

"We're going to try something different tonight." She heard him pick something up from the table but didn't turn her head to look. His rough hand rubbed her ass then she felt a sharp sting on one side.

She cried out from the sharp pain. "What was that, Master?"

"A cane." *Swat!* He struck her again on the other side and the sting rang through her body. Clenching her teeth, she waited as the pain converted to waves of throbbing in her pussy. Her pulse pounded in her head. She hoped she'd feel another strike because her body was humming. *Swat! Swat!* She groaned. Her hips and knees quivered as her groin craved attention. His mouth, fingers or any stimulation would send her over into a blissful orgasm.

He stopped and rubbed her ass, then slipped toward her pussy. "Edge," she cried out.

He pulled his hand away. "Very good, slave. I hadn't given you permission to come." He put the cane down and picked up something else. When he returned, he worked her nipples between his thumb and forefinger and attached nipple clamps.

Manipulating her already raw and sensitive nipples was pushing her to the brink of another orgasm. What if she ignored his order and allowed herself to come? Would he give her more punishment? Maybe then she'd reach that level of ecstasy like Shannon.

"Is my slave's mind drifting again?"

"No, Master. I liked the cane."

He gave a short laugh. "I could tell. You like the clamps too."

"Yes, they feel good."

Sliding his hand between her legs, he thrust a finger inside her and pressed his hard cock against her tender buttocks. Dana rocked her hips as he fucked her cunt with his finger. She wanted more, she wanted his thick cock filling her.

“Wet, yes. But I don’t think you’re quite ready.” His hand slipped from her body and he moved to the table. A moment later the cane struck her again and again.

Instantly, her pussy was clenching and dripping. Her clit was so hard, it ached. “How about now?” Sliding his hand around, she knew the moment he touched her she would come, but she didn’t warn him this time or fight to hold back.

His fingers stroked her swollen and sensitive clit and she plunged over the edge in an intense orgasm. “Master, I can’t stop it. I’m coming.”

“Fuck.” Jack dropped the cane and pressed his body to her, stroking her clit until the tremors of her orgasm eased. Why hadn’t she warned him sooner? It happened, especially to a novice, but they’d been together for a couple months now. After the spasms from her body ceased, he left her shackled and didn’t say a word. As much as he wanted to fuck her, he had to give her a punishment for defying him.

Walking over to the table, he picked up a black scarf and returned slowly. Dana strained to look over her shoulder to see what he was doing, her eyes wide. He blindfolded her, then left her there. Long moments passed. She kept lifting her head as if trying to hear what he was doing but he was very still. When her body began to tremble he began pacing the room so she’d hear him walking, then he shoved the lounge, the noise made her jump.

“Master? I’m sorry, I didn’t let you know. I was testing you.”

He squeezed his eyes shut and didn’t answer. *Not good.*

Damn, she was so beautiful, and so innocent, it was killing him to do this. When she whimpered, he thought his heart would break but he bit his lip. It wasn’t the orgasm, it was the fact that she did it to defy him. Her safety was in his hands. He couldn’t have a sub “testing” him. He slipped on a condom and picked up a crop. At the lounge, he swatted the brocade material with the crop. Dana jumped and cried out from the sharp crack.

Without a word he unshackled her ankles, and Dana attempted to turn around. He pressed her against the wall to keep her back to him. She didn't protest. When she tried to squeeze her legs together, he roughly pushed them apart. His commands were by touch, and she followed his orders without hesitation.

Legs spread and arms over her head, Dana remained quiet until he struck her with the crop on her buttocks. She let out a yelp and her body jerked. Her breathing quickened. The crop glided up and down each leg, to her pussy, up her back, over her breasts, then arms, like a gentle caress, a tease, then slowly back down and rested on her buttocks. He gave her another swat. She yelped. Her body quivered. God damn, he wanted to take her now, but his lesson wasn't over yet.

Sliding his hand between her legs, he felt her cream soaking her pussy. She was ready for him.

He struck her again, not as hard because he saw she was slumping in the restraints. She never moved her legs even without the shackles. *Good slave.* His cock was so hard and his balls so tight, he didn't know how much longer he could stand not fucking her. Finally, her groans of pleasure were too much of a temptation. His slave loved pain so much but he didn't want to overdo it. He had to be inside her.

Dropping the crop, he spun her around and lifted her legs to wrap around his hips and plunged deep into her cunt.

"Omigod," she cried out.

Her hands gripped around the chains that held her to the wall as he drove his cock rapidly into her. The sight of the nipple clamps on her distended peaks drove him deeper and harder with his thrusts. Tightening her legs around his hips, she let out a groan that told him she was coming again. He felt the pressure build, then let out a bellow as his orgasm exploded inside her.

When the pulsing eased, he slid out of her, unfastened the shackles, wrapped her in a blanket from the table and took her into his arms. He brought her to the lounge and

sat her down. After discarding the condom, he brought her a damp cloth from the table of supplies. Pulling her onto his lap, he gently removed the nipple clamps.

"Ouch. They hurt worse coming off." She gave a chuckle.

"So I've heard."

She held him close and looked up at him, giving him a tentative smile. "I had a reason, Master." There was no defiance in her voice, the gentleness in her eyes twisted in his gut.

"Why, Dana? You're not a novice anymore. You've always told me when you were close before, but this time I think you defied me on purpose."

"Not to anger you, but I do want to be punished, punished harder."

He studied her for a moment. "It's more than that. Tell me."

"I think you hold back. I wanted to disobey an order to receive a more severe punishment to see if..."

"To see if what?" His words were sharper than he'd intended.

"If extreme pain would bring the ecstasy that Shannon experienced that first day I arrived."

He shook his head. "No, slave. It has nothing to do with the level of pain. Something else is holding you back. Lack of trust, fear. I don't know. I bring you right to the point where I think you'll completely surrender and then you backpedal. A lack of communication between a Master and his sub can be dangerous. I'm responsible for your safety."

"I know." She nodded and rested her head on his chest. "Jack, I'm leaving in less than two weeks. I'm running out of time."

"Maybe that's it. You're thinking about leaving." He pulled her back to look into her eyes. "Stay then. You can live with me. I'll help you find some kind of work, maybe where you can play your harp."

She shook her head. "I have a good job at home. There's no guarantee here."

"Who said life has guarantees? Follow your heart."

She looked at him, and he was surprised by the emotion in her eyes. "Why don't you come back to the states with me?"

He shook his head. "I can't. I just signed the loan to buy my uncle's store yesterday. If I were to sell it, he wouldn't have any place to work. Since my aunt died, working is the only thing that gives him joy. I can't take that away from him. What gives you joy?"

She considered that for a moment. "You. My harp."

He kissed her, slow and deep then kissed her forehead. "Dana, stay here with me. We can work out the details together. I want more than a sexual submissive. I want you."

Her heart was breaking. Did she love him? Maybe but she didn't want to give him any promises she couldn't keep. "I'll have to think about it."

"Do that. Like you said, you don't have much time." He got up, got dressed and began packing up his devices and toys in a duffle.

She dressed and started up the stairs.

"Wait, I'll walk you back," he said.

"I can find my way." She continued walking.

"I know, but I'm walking you back. Wait."

She came back down and sat on the lounge.

Returning to the table, Jack stuffed the rest of the items into the bag. *My sub needs to trust me.* He was about to shut off the lights when he noticed a small, white piece of paper left in the center of the table. A cold shiver went up his back. It wasn't there a moment ago. He didn't want to touch it. Finally, he picked it up and turned it over.

It was a business card with the text: 1-800-DOM-help.

He groaned. *What the fuck?* Was Damon around? There were no hidden passages leading into the dungeon, as far as he knew.

"What's wrong?" Dana asked from the lounge. She couldn't see what he had in his hand.

"Nothing. Let's go." He crumpled the card and threw it on the floor. Then he groaned, picked it back up, and stuffed it in his pocket.

Not again. I don't need any fucking help.

* * * * *

When Dana got back to her cottage, she boiled water and added it to the teapot, then pulled out a tank top and jeans to wear. It was late but she couldn't sleep. Jack said he needed to do some work and didn't want to keep her up so he was going to his cottage. Just as well, she needed time to think. Why couldn't she make this decision—go or stay? Probably because she'd never had to make any big decisions in the past.

After the discussion with Jack she should be pouring herself a large goblet of mead. The herbal tea was a better choice. The mead would make her a bit daft and she needed a clear head to sort out her troubles. As she stepped out of her costume a white card fluttered out of the bodice and dropped to the floor. It was the same business card. How could the card have been inside her dress all evening, and then never fallen out in the dungeon when she'd taken it off? This was a new card too. The other ones she'd torn up. This was insane.

She laughed. Was Jack trying to make up with her, cheer her up? She finished dressing and with the card in hand she ran over to his cottage and knocked on his door. No answer. "Jack? You there?" No answer. There weren't any lights on inside either. Odd. She returned to her cottage and took out a teacup from the cupboard.

She was about to pour hot water into a teacup, when she found another business card sitting inside the cup. She cried out and nearly dropped the kettle.

Slamming it down on the stove, she looked around her room. "Hello? Jack? Are you in here?" She checked under the bed, in the bathroom and closet but there was no sign

of him. Next she went outside again and over to Jack's cottage. Still no light inside. What was going on with these business cards?

She was going to find out. Back inside her cottage, she picked up her cell phone and punched in the number.

The phone rang and someone picked it up.

"Thank you for calling 1-800-DOM-help. This is the Operator. How may I be of assistance?" the male voice said.

She hesitated for a moment. It didn't sound like Jack, but the same calm and pleasant voice she heard the first time she called. "Hello, ahmm..." She wasn't sure what to say. She was still trying to figure out how the number could work at all.

"We're pleased that you called."

"Are you selling something? What's going on? Who keeps giving me these cards?"

The Operator chuckled. "No, Dana we're not selling anything. Receiving one of our cards is a special and rare opportunity."

A chill crept up Dana's back. She never told this guy her name. He must have caller ID or something. "Then what's it about?"

"You received this card because you have a need. Something in your D/s relationship is troubling you and we're here to help."

She plopped down on the bed, angry at Jack for talking to strangers about their sex life. "Did Jack call you?"

"No."

"Then how did you —"

"You're a sub?"

"What?" She was pissed now. "Who put you up to this?" Her voice was shaking with anger. *How dare this stranger ask these personal questions?*

"How you came to have the card is not important. Do you have questions about your current relationship? Yes or no? Be honest." His voice was firm, yet

compassionate. A lump formed in Dana's throat and tears filled her eyes. She wanted to figure this out.

"Yes, I do."

"Are you a sub or a Domme?"

"A sub."

"Very well. Hold on and I will connect you with someone best able to assist you." She heard a click on the phone and then a woman's voice came on. "Dana?"

"Yes?"

"Hi. I'm here to help. Do you have something sexy to wear? A club outfit, preferably leather?"

"Can you tell me what's this all about? How do you all know my name? Did Jack put you up to this?"

"We keep a very selective list of clients who come to Unfettered. Once invited, you're always welcome for as long as you remain in the lifestyle. We're also here to help Dominants and submissives work out their very unique problems. You can continue to deny your true nature and be miserable, or sense there is something missing, or you can come to Unfettered with me and let the Master help you break down the barriers."

"Barriers?" She hadn't thought about that. "Is this safe?"

"Completely. I can stay with you the whole time if you wish. Now, do you have something sexy to wear?"

"I have a leather skirt. Jack bought it for me and a tank."

"That will do. Get changed into that. I'll be by your cottage shortly to escort you to Unfettered." The woman hung up before she had a chance to ask any more questions. The voice sounded familiar but she couldn't place it.

Racing out of her cottage, she ran over to Jack's cottage and pounded on his door. It was well past midnight and it was dark inside. He still didn't answer. Maybe he'd gone into town to stay at the store? She doubted it, because his car was parked in front of the

cottages right next to her rental. *Damn. Where the hell was he?* Was she finally going to Unfettered alone without him?

Back in her place she quickly changed into the black leather skirt, a midnight-blue shimmery tank and strappy black heels. As soon as she finished dressing, a knock at her door made her jump. She had to take a couple breaths before she had the nerve to open the door.

"Shannon!"

"Ready to go?" Shannon was smiling and wearing a black robe. She had another robe draped over her arm.

"That was you on the phone?"

Shannon nodded. "Hurry up, the Master is waiting."

"Who's the Master?"

She continued smiling. "You'll see. You'll love Unfettered. Put this on first." Shannon handed her a black hooded robe. "We'll walk. It's not far."

"Can I walk in these heels?" She suspected they'd be going into the forest.

Shannon nodded. "You'll be fine."

Outside there was no breeze, and the sounds of the crickets and frogs had stopped. Dana's heart pounded, taking her breath away. What was she getting into? If only Jack was with her. "Shouldn't we find Jack and ask him to come?"

"Follow me. It's not far." Shannon led her into the forest.

After a few minutes, Dana saw the golden glow of lights through the trees, that same strange glow she'd seen weeks ago. She and Shannon passed through two stone pillars and an open wrought iron gate. The level of excitement was almost overwhelming. *I can do this.* Her hands grabbed fistfuls of the robe as they walked closer to the building. At the end of the walkway was a stucco house with a thatched roof that looked like an old farmhouse. "This is Unfettered?" There was no parking lot, no cars, just forest. She couldn't see any road that led to the house.

"Yes, it's quite nice inside." Shannon showed her to the entrance, a large man stood at the door. He nodded and opened the weathered wooden door for them. "This is Hayden," Shannon explained. "If there's any trouble, Hayden will handle it. But you won't have any problems. You're safe here." Hayden remained at the door like a human brick wall.

Inside Dana was stunned. Unfettered didn't look like an old farmhouse. It was surreal, as if she'd walked into a luxurious hotel with polished woods, overstuffed leather chairs and couches. An elegant bar and tables were at one side of the large room and hallways led off from the main area. Sensual music with a steady beat played in the background. Soft candlelight flickered from tables and the bar. The air was heavy with spicy scented candles, leather and sex.

Women were dressed in scanty leather and lace, boots or heels and the men wore leather or black trousers and black shirts or no shirts. A few people were naked or close to it. "We have something here for everyone's taste. I'm sure you'll find what you're looking for."

Shannon removed her robe and took Dana's and handed them to a petite woman at the door. "I'll hold these until you're ready to leave," the woman with several facial piercings and black, spiky hair said. She wore a black lace body stocking that left nothing to the imagination and outrageously high platform heels. Another attractive woman with long dark hair approached them, holding her hand out to Dana.

"Hello, Dana. Welcome. So glad to have you here. I'm Dru." The woman shook her hand and Dana was stunned by the sexy, black dress. The V in the front came down to her navel and the hem barely covered her ass. She also wore thigh-high boots.

"Thanks, I'm still a little confused." Dana noticed Kevin and Thea, two of the entertainers from the dinner show, at a table by the bar. Kevin wore only a leather vest and a collar around his neck. He was bent over the table and Thea held his leash while she whipped him with a cane. Each crack of the cane sent chills up Dana's spine.

Kevin's cock was hard and swayed with each strike, and a glistening drop of pre-cum dribbled from its tip.

At the far side of the room a woman was hung upside down, her legs spread slightly and her arms bound behind her back while her Dom held a large vibrator at her pussy. The woman moaned and writhed.

Dru smiled, not giving the hedonistic display a second glance. "Unfettered is a special place. There's something for everyone here. By the time you leave, your questions will be answered. You're troubled by your relationship and have a few big decisions to make." Dru's brutal honesty stabbed at Dana's heart.

"Yes, you sound like a fortuneteller."

"Not at all. I'm just well informed. If you want your answers follow me. But first a lesson in trust." Dru walked over to the girl who had taken their robes and was handed something that looked like a masquerade mask. She came up to Dana and handed it to her. "Put this on. It's a blindfold. When you can't see, you have to trust other senses."

Dana glanced at the mask in her hands, hesitating.

"It's all right, Dana," Shannon said. "Hurry, the Master waits."

"But what about Jack?"

"You love him, don't you?" Shannon asked, with a reassuring smile.

"Yes." She realized she'd never told Jack.

"And you want to break down the barriers between you two."

Dana nodded.

"Then Jack would want you here."

Dana put the mask on, then Dru and Shannon led her down a long hallway. The farmhouse didn't seem quite this large from the outside. The cracks of whips and moans and an occasional rattle of a chain were heard as she was guided down the hallway. They stopped then and she heard them open a door and walk her inside. She felt so helpless not being able to see. The familiar smell of a turf fire filled the room, as

well as the scent of leather and another herb, eucalyptus. Just the smell of leather immediately made cream flood her pussy and her clit throb with a sexual need.

"Did you want Shannon to stay, Dana?" Dru asked.

"Yes," Dana answered.

"The Master says no, it's not necessary," Dru said. "Safe words here are 'stop' and 'slow'. Understand, Dana?"

"Yes." Panic was setting in. Did this Master expect to have sex with her? "Shannon? Jack would agree to this? I mean, I know I have things to learn about the D/s lifestyle, but this can't be right me being with someone else."

"Jack would approve, Dana," Shannon said. "You want to understand what's holding you back, right?"

"Yes."

"We'll be leaving you now. You'll be fine," Shannon said. Dana heard the door close and rough hands gripped her and drew her across the room and up against the wall.

"Can you tell me what we're going to do, Master? I'm very nervous." Since Dru and Shannon referred to him as Master, she had better too. "I'm fairly new to this and Jack, my Master, wishes for me to live with him and not return to the states. That's a big decision, I—"

Pressing his fingertips over her lips, he signaled her to be silent. Then he raised her arms and clamped them into shackles. Dana gasped. Her feet were shoved apart and secured into a spreader bar. She was still clothed. Would this experience with this Master help her to break down any remaining resistance she had with Jack so she could completely surrender to him? Would this also help with her decision to stay or return home?

The Master stroked her cheek with his knuckles. If he'd only talk to her maybe this would be easier. Every inch of her body shook partly from fear and partly from anticipation.

She kept reminding herself that this Master was trained and she was doing this for Jack and herself. Right now, her body shook and muscles tensed as she heard the Master moving around a few feet away. The first crack of a flogger made her jump. Her cream flowed but she also tensed since it wasn't Jack. The flogger stuck the wall close to her but never touched her. How could the Master help her?

Moments later, the sound of chains replaced the cracks of the flogger and he released her arms and ankles, but shackled her wrists in cuffs and chains and walked her over to a chair. The heat from the fire warmed her flushed skin and calmed her. He pressed something to her mouth and at first she resisted. The thought of a ball gag made her cringe. "Master, I know I shouldn't speak, but if you gag me we haven't discussed safe signals."

He pressed his fingers to her lips to silence her, and she nodded. Then the object was at her mouth again. It was cool and she opened. He popped it in and she rolled it around in her mouth and bit down. The juice was sweet and squirt over her tongue. A grape. She giggled.

This time another piece with bumps, a raspberry? And several blueberries, then a spoonful of honey. The sweet syrup dripped down her chin and he lapped it up with his tongue. The first intimate touch made her stiffen but she didn't protest. In the back of her mind, she was still worried about where this would eventually lead. She truly loved Jack, she knew that for sure now and she didn't want to be with another man. Still, she was confused.

Tenderly the Master brushed her hair back and stroked the nape of her neck. It felt nice but she wished it was Jack. Images of their weeks together rushed through her mind, all wonderful times but always with the heavy feeling of knowing each day

brought her closer to the time she would have to leave him. Tears flooded her eyes and dripped down her cheeks. And now she knew why she couldn't surrender to Jack.

The Master gently brushed her tears away. Then his fingers roamed down her neck to her shoulder and over to the side of her breast. Dana squirmed. "Stop!"

The Master pulled his hand away. "Why are you crying, my lady?" It was Jack's voice.

"Jack!" Her heart leapt.

He lifted her mask and smiled.

"Because I know why I haven't been able to surrender to you completely." She quickly glanced around the room. It could've been any upscale hotel room with a bed and door to a bathroom except for the eyehooks on the ceiling and floor, various chains and straps hanging from them and also a table of bondage devices and sex toys.

He knelt in front of her looking so hot in leather pants and no shirt, his chest gleaming in the firelight. "Are you going to let out the secret?"

"Because I love you."

He smiled, then frowned. "Then why can't you surrender to me, trust me?"

"If I love you and surrender to you as your slave, it will be unbearably painful to leave you."

"Don't think about tomorrow or next week or leaving. You'll make the right decision when the time comes. Surrender to me tonight. Just tonight."

Her chest tightened. "Okay." She let out a breath.

He undid the shackles around her wrists and ankles. "Undress for me, slave, but leave your shoes on. I like the heels."

Heat traveled to Dana's pussy as she unzipped her short skirt and let it drop to the floor. She hadn't worn panties so she stepped out of the skirt and kicked it aside. Already wet and aroused, she felt a trickle of her juices slip down her thigh. After pulling the tank over her head, she tossed it by her skirt. Completely naked except for

her five-inch heels, she felt exposed and aroused under his inspection. When he removed his shoes and leather pants, her heart nearly stopped. Standing naked, he was so gorgeous, every hard muscle outlined, his cock hard, ready to satisfy her beyond her imagination.

"Good slave. Will you submit to me tonight?"

"Yes, Master."

"Show me." His words were a command but she wasn't sure what he wanted her to do. The walls in her vagina fluttered with need. She wanted to please him but how?

"I don't understand, Master."

"Show me that you will surrender and completely submit to me tonight. Show me."

After a panicked moment of hesitation, she walked up to him and knelt down.

She bowed her head in submission. Her face was inches from his cock. The temptation to take him in her mouth was strong but she waited for his permission.

"Yes," he breathed with a ragged breath. Lifting her chin, he gazed into her eyes. "My beautiful slave, I'm going to pleasure you and fuck you until you beg me to stop."

She smiled and glanced longingly at his cock.

He laughed. "You'd like to suck me first."

"Yes, Master."

"Take me into your mouth, but just for a moment."

"Thank you, Master." Running her tongue up and down his rigid shaft, she took him into her mouth and cradled his scrotum with her hand. He held her head, guiding her up and down. She was rewarded by his groans and loved the musky male and soap scent of him. When she released his shaft, she moved to his balls, gently sucking one into her mouth, and rolled her tongue around. Taking his cock into her mouth again, she slid down to the base in quick thrusts. Pleasuring her Master gave her joy. Hearing his groans warmed her inside and made her cream flow. A salty drop of pre-cum slipped from his slit and she lapped at it, wanting more.

His fingers tightened around her head as he thrust his cock, matching her rhythm, faster and faster, then abruptly pulled away from her. "God, that's so good. But I have to stop," he groaned. He drew her up to her feet, embraced her and kissed her deeply, held her close for a long time. "I love you, Dana. More than you'll ever know. Trust me, I will take care of you, my slave."

"Yes, Master."

"Now over to the swing."

She did and waited. Would he flog her first? Probe her ass with a butt plug?

"Hands behind your back," he ordered. She did, and he pinched her nipples, sucked them and grazed them with his teeth. Then clamps were attached to the distended tips. The nipples were still raw and sensitive from earlier but the pressure and sting made her clit throb and swell.

"That feels good, Master. I liked that very much. I like what you do to me, how I feel so intensely loved. It's a deliberate and powerful loving."

"There are many things in a slave/Master relationship we could explore." He sat her in the swing, then attached the straps to her wrists and ankles, adjusting the rigging so her arms and legs were spread and pointing upward. This gave her Master access to her pussy and ass. "But tonight it's going to be about your threshold of pain and pleasure and trust. You seem to be obsessed with pain and to respond well to it. Still I don't want you to hesitate to tell me when something becomes too much."

"I promise, Jack."

"Good." He kissed her then gave a swat on her ass with his hand. She yelped and giggled.

Picking up another device from the table, he unwrapped a condom and slipped it over a dildo and applied some lubricant. When he brought it to her she noticed the straps. Spreading her labia, he gently worked the dildo into her channel and secured the straps around her waist to keep it in place. Then he turned it on. The vibrations sent

shudders of sensations through her body and her clit began to swell and throb. Even her nipples throbbed as all her nerve endings came alive.

His fingertips rubbed her clit until she was about to shout out “edge” but then he stopped and picked up the flogger.

“Do not climax until I give you permission, slave.”

“Yes, Master,” she answered him through clenched teeth. She wasn’t going to last long like this.

The flogger struck her ass in repeated strikes and her body quivered as she absorbed the pain and it transferred into pleasure. She moaned. Several more times and between her legs. “Edge!” she cried out.

He stopped the flogger and turned the vibrator down but not off. “Don’t come. Hold it.”

She was on the brink of an orgasm, but she held back. A moment later he switched the vibrator to high again and swatted her with a paddle. This hurt a lot. She was still tender from her early lashings and each strike shot waves of sensations throughout her body. She cried out with each smack but didn’t ask him to stop. Her hands gripped the straps and tightened as she tried to control her climax. So close.

Her clit throbbed and her pulse thumped in her head. Two more smacks and the thickness of the dildo in her cunt would push her to a sweet release. “Edge, Master. Edge.” The words were harder to get out.

She tried focusing on something other than the vibrations in her cunt, the sharp pinching of her nipples, then felt a sharp swat on her ass. It was a cane, not the paddle. This hurt the worst. But good too. The pain absorbed into her body and turned to pleasure, an odd sensation that disconnected her from the physical world. She felt as if she was a feather drifting on a warm breeze. When the cane hit her the third time, her whole body hovered in the swing, aching for release. “Master,” she breathed. “Edge. No strength left.”

He stopped. “I need to be inside you.”

"Yes, Master."

He removed the vibrator and then put on a condom. "But I'm going to fuck your beautiful ass tonight."

"Yes, Master." But her words held a tone of doubt. What if she couldn't do this?

"Relax, this is all about pleasure. I won't hurt you."

He lapped at her slit, his tongue worked her clit, bringing her closer to climax. "Soon, you'll have more pleasure than you can stand." His hands grasped her breasts and tugged at the nipple clamps. She moaned and wriggled in the restraints.

"Oh yes, Master. That's so good."

Bending lower, he rimmed her anus with his tongue, then coated his finger with water-soluble lubricant and circled the entrance with his finger. Gently, he pressed slowly through the ring of muscle. She tightened with the initial pain.

"Easy, slave, breathe easy, relax. That's it." He slid in deeper and moved in and out slowly. "How does that feel?"

"Burned and hurt a little before. Feels good now." With his encouraging words and gentle movements, she relaxed a bit. The idea of taking his large cock like this made her nervous but also excited her.

Then he slid two fingers in a little at a time. She sucked in a breath from a twinge of pain. "Easy, breathe slowly. Relax." Once the pain eased and he was moving his fingers freely, he removed them, then picked up a butt plug from the table and coated it with lubricant. "This will help you open some more for me." He eased the plug in and moved it around, in and out. "Good, slave."

"Master, that feels good. Please, fuck me. I need your cock now."

"Not yet. I want to make sure you're ready."

Finally, he took the butt plug out and added a heavy amount of lubricant to his condom. "I'm going to fuck your ass, Dana. Slow, easy now."

"Yes, yes."

He eased in, inch by inch, giving her time to become accustomed to his size. "Damn, your ass is so tight."

"Fuck me. Please, fuck me."

He groaned and sank into her. She gasped, but he wasn't in her all the way. Holding back must be pure torture. He stilled. Was he trying to keep from hurting her or coming?

He glanced at her and the dark look he gave her was so full of love and lust. Her heart soared. The final surrender. "Fuck me, Master. Deep, all the way."

She sucked in a ragged breath as his hand stroked her clit. Shattering into a fierce orgasm, she cried out as the sensations coursed through her body. The climax was so intense, almost unbearable. "Never been so good," she murmured. Afterward, she hung limp in the restraints.

"My pleasure." He closed his eyes and thrust into her ass the rest of the way, then held still as her body accepted all of him. He was so hard and thick, and his slow, easy strokes gradually increased and drew the most exquisite pleasure. Tugging against her restraints, she raised her hips slightly, urging him deeper.

The muscles in his face, his arms and chest were rigid and coated with a thin sheen of sweat. Her muscles strained against the binds, but she found the complete loss of control, and giving her power up to him, elicited the most delicious sensations and joy. "Master, yes," she breathed and wriggled her ass. The movement sent him over the edge. He sucked in a breath and groaned as he reached his climax.

Gripping her buttocks, he held tight until the aftershocks subsided. He slipped from her body, unfastened the straps and helped her down. For a long moment he held her close. She didn't want to let go. She didn't want to think about tomorrow and the decision she had to make.

After they cleaned up, he scooped her up in his arms and sat her down on the bed. "Let's remove these." She cried out in pain as he released the clamps and tossed them

on a side table. "How are you doing?" He brushed her hair back from her face and kissed her forehead.

"Drained but wonderful," she said, smiling.

He chuckled. "Hmmm. I figured that." He gave her a long, loving look that made her heart break. "Are you ready to go home?"

"Home?" She groaned. "I don't want to think about that. I haven't decided yet."

Jack smiled and tapped her nose with his finger. "I meant have you had enough of Unfettered for tonight? Would you like to go back to your cottage?"

"Oh yes. I'd like to go back now."

"Dana, I love you, and you know I want you to stay in Ireland. But I'll understand if you have to go."

"I know, Jack."

Chapter Seven

She awoke in her bed to the sound of birds chirping outside. Sunlight streamed into her cottage and she reached over to the other side of the bed and it was empty. "Jack?" There was no movement in the bathroom and she didn't see any of his clothes on the floor. Had he gotten up and left without waking her? She stood and looked around for a note or something but didn't see anything. It was still early. Maybe he went into town to work at the store. After showering and getting dressed she strolled outside to a warm August morning. She looked into the forest where Shannon had taken her to Unfettered last night. The trail was still there. It wouldn't be hard to find now in the daylight. Her curiosity drove her into the forest. The walk was about fifteen minutes if she remembered correctly.

Dana entered the forest and followed the trail. It was overgrown and narrow. She was glad that she'd followed Shannon last night because she didn't think she could've found her way in the dark. After several minutes, she found the stone pillars with the wrought iron gate and walked through.

She screamed. An icy terror gripped her as she stared at the place where Unfettered should be. It hadn't been but twenty or thirty yards from the gate and now there was nothing. The building was gone, and there was no sign that anything had ever been there.

Had she been hallucinating? Dreaming? Running back to the cottages, Dana knocked on Jack's cottage and when he didn't answer she tried Kevin's and Thea's, Damon's and Shannon's. No one was around. Could it be possible that she imagined Jack and the others too? Covering her face with her hands, she ran up to the castle and it was closed. Checking her watch, she noticed it was too early for visitors.

A crushing weight slammed into her chest. *Jack, where are you?* What if he'd been a ghost all along? What if they all were? She looked up at the ancient castle. A five-hundred-year-old fortress must have many ghosts. Had she lost Jack for good?

Her hand went up to her mouth to smother a sob. My God, it couldn't be. She loved Jack. Yes, she was sure of that now. He was her Master. And given the chance she would stay in Ireland with him and not go back to her old job. She could visit her friends and family or they could come to see her. Why had she been struggling with that decision before? It was so clear to her now. But if Jack was a ghost, he was lost to her forever. Tears filled her eyes and spilled onto her cheeks.

She barely registered the sound of footsteps on the gravel walkway. "Morning, my lady, have you had breakfast?"

"Jack!" She ran over and into his arms.

"Hey, what's wrong? You've been crying?" He lifted her chin and studied her through narrow eyes.

"I woke up and you were gone."

"Sorry, I promised Donegal to help move some furniture this morning. I figured I'd be back before you woke up. It took longer than expected."

Taking her by the shoulders, he held her back. "What else is going on? You're shaking."

"I took a walk into the forest."

Jack groaned.

Dana ignored him and continued. "I followed the trail to Unfettered and it's gone. I found the gate where Shannon took me through, but the building is completely gone."

Jack nodded. "Yeah, it does that."

She looked at him strangely, but then it seemed to make sense. "Will it come back?"

Jack shrugged. "Probably. When it's needed or wanted badly enough." He pulled her into his arms. "Want to tell me why you were crying?"

"I thought I lost you."

"Ah, because you woke up and I was gone?"

"No, never mind. I'm staying here with you. I love you, Jack. Although it scares the hell out of me having to depend on you for a while until I can find work, I can't imagine leaving you. This is where I belong. The security job may pay well but it doesn't give me joy. You were right. Playing my harp gives me joy. Loving you gives me joy. Being your sex slave gives me joy."

Jack smiled. "I love you, Dana. I need you in my life, and I want you as my submissive for as long as you want me as your Master." He kissed her hard, crushing her to his chest. "And I could take you right now."

"Yes, I'm ready for whatever you have in mind, Master."

He chuckled. "Be careful, remember I own a store full of bondage devices."

"Now you're teasing me." Her pussy clenched thinking about the new things he would try with her.

"Go back to your cottage, strip and wait on the bed. I'll come down and teach you a few things about knots and ropes, then feed you breakfast while you're bound."

"I'll be eagerly waiting, Master."

* * * * *

As the guests from the dinner show began to file out of the castle on the night of her last performance, she noticed Jack talking to a few of the entertainers. She was hoping to see him later tonight to discuss her plans for moving out of her cottage and into his apartment over the store. Although depending on Jack for a job and a home wasn't ideal, he insisted she would soon find employment either with her harp or in the security business. She was following her heart, trusting him and their love, even though she felt like she was jumping out of an airplane without a parachute and expecting the ground to provide a soft landing.

Jack's Uncle Lee had been in the audience that evening and after the show he came up to her. "Glory, Dana, you do play the folk harp beautifully."

"Thank you, Mr. Keagan."

"Call me Lee. And can you forgive an old goat for being harsh with you?"

Dana smiled. "Of course, it's all right." He gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"I'm pleased you'll be staying," he declared. "In truth, I've not seen my nephew this happy in a long time."

Dana pressed her hand to her heart. "Thanks for saying so."

"I'll see you at the store. Good night." After a few words with his nephew, he left the great hall.

While she waited for Jack, she strummed out an old folk song Kevin was teaching her. Mr. Donegal walked over to her. "Lovely performance, Dana, a gift you have there," Mr. Donegal said, admiring her instrument. "Like listening to an angel play."

"Thank you. Your other harpist, Jane, should be back this week."

"Wanted to talk to you about that now." He scratched his chin. "Jane has decided to stay home with her babe. She won't be coming back to Rathmore Castle. She'll fill in as needed but I'd hoped you'd considering staying on with us."

"Really?" Her fingers gripped her harp so hard she thought she'd leave permanent dents. Glancing around the room, she looked for Jack. He was going to be thrilled. Or was he? Jack was with a group of guests and entertainers and had just left the room, taking the stone stairway to the lower level. She'd have to talk to him later. "Thanks, Mr. Donegal, I'd love to."

He asked her to stop by the office the next day to make arrangements then left the hall. Shannon came over. "You're all smiles, Dana."

"Jane has chosen not to come back to the show, and Mr. Donegal asked me to stay and replace her."

"And you agreed."

Dana nodded.

"Wonderful. I'm sure Jack will be pleased. Does he know yet?"

"No, could you tell him to meet me on top of the castle? I want to surprise him."

"Sure thing. So glad you're staying with us. I was going to miss you terribly," Shannon said, giving her a hug.

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Standing on top of the ancient castle, she looked out at the glow of lights from the cottages. A warm breeze swayed the pine trees. And the sounds of night creatures drifted up from the forest and bog. No lights could be seen deep within the trees. Unfettered had vanished for now.

Dana wondered how many lovers over the centuries had stood looking out from that turret, a lord and lady, a crusader and maiden, struggling or arguing over some impediment. Jack was in love with her. And she was in love with him.

This would be her new home. The excitement and anticipation tingled through her. Yes, this was where she belonged. The door to the roof creaked open and Jack stepped out. The sky was clear except for a few clouds but it was a warm August evening.

"Shannon said you had some news." He took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Jane isn't coming back. Mr. Donegal asked me to stay on. So you don't have to put me up in your apartment if you don't want to. I can stay in the cottage."

"I love you, Dana. I want us to be together as lovers and friends, as Master and slave." He hugged her then squeezed her breasts through the thick fabric of the costume. Her body heated up. She wanted him right there, right now on top of the castle. Gripping the material of his medieval tunic, she pulled him closer. Time seemed to stand still for a moment. Looking into his eyes, she saw lust and also love. How could she have considered leaving him?

"Would you rather stay in the cottage or at the store?" His face was emotionless but intense.

"I'll stay with you."

"Great. You can still work in the store if you like. I'll give my uncle a good talking to. I'm sure over time he'll get to love you. He's cautious about people and remembers how a woman broke my heart years ago."

"I think we'll get along fine," she said.

He hugged her again. "I'm so glad you're staying with the troupe. When did Donegal give you the news?"

"Right after the show."

"And you didn't come to tell me straight away? I might have to punish you for that," he teased.

"Please, Master, please." Turning around, she raised her skirt, facing out at the forest where Unfettered had once been. Where she learned about glorious surrender. Bending forward, she stuck out her naked bottom to him. "My lord, I'm ready for my punishment."

"No panties? Hmmm." His hand rubbed the bare skin of her ass. "My lady, I do believe a most severe punishment is in order."

About the Author

Kathy Kulig spins stories with passion and adventure. Her characters enter both paranormal and contemporary worlds with steamy or erotic romances woven in. Gutsy heroines and hunky heroes face the unexpected and overcome formidable odds, because with courage, true love can find a way. These are the stories she loves to read and the stories she loves to write.

Besides her career in writing, Kathy is a cytotechnologist and has worked as a research scientist, medical technologist, dive master and stringer for a newspaper. Propelled by her love of travel and adventure, Kathy has visited a few places not usually considered vacation hot spots—and lived to tell about it. When not writing or dreaming up her next story, Kathy enjoys traveling, relaxing by the beach with a book, mountain biking, movies and dinners out. She lives with her husband in a 100-year-old Victorian house in Pennsylvania.

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

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