

*After* DARK  
MAYHEM EROTICA

# knots

CHANSE  
LOWELL

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# **KNOTS**

**Chanse Lowell**

**Mayhem Erotica Publishing**

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**CONTENT WARNING** — This story contains scenes of an explicit, erotic nature and is intended for adults, 18+.

Story includes anal sex, crude language, and a Dom/sub arrangement involving consensual sex. Characters portrayed are 18 or older and of a sound mind.

This is a work of fiction. All names, characters, places and incidents are created solely from the author's imagination and any resemblance to actual persons, living or deceased, locations and businesses, along with events, are entirely coincidental.

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This book can only be dedicate to the  
two people who inspired these  
characters and so many others I write:

To Sir and his girl

You have opened my eyes.

May they never be closed again...

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# Chapter 1

*Summer . . .*

“I can’t do this,” Jeanie said, sitting in her car.

She slumped over the wheel.

There were people passing by all around outside her vehicle.

She had to move—had to get out. They were all waiting for her, expecting her to . . . *what?*

Have some words of comfort or sympathy?

After several deep sighs and her hideous, dry eyes barely blinking, she stepped out of the car. There was no point in locking up, so she left it as it

was and dragged her way to the entrance.

The cool California breeze reminded her of what would never be.

As she trudged her way up to the church doors, his sister assaulted her.

“Oh God! Jeanie,” Marly cried, wrapping her arms around her.

Jeanie’s numb heart thumped for the first time today, but only enough to get her to drape her arms over the teenager.

“I . . . Are they already inside?” Jeanie managed to whisper.

Marly nodded, and Jeanie patted her back, then maneuvered out of her sister-in-law’s hold and opened the door.

They stepped in together, Marly wiping away the tears, and Jeanie most likely looking half-dead.

She kept her head down and wandered toward the chapel. Marly mumbled a few things about where they were sitting.

Once inside the main doors, the somber music had Jeanie's jaw tightening.

The room was filled with aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, work colleagues and whoever else Kapono knew, or Pono as his friends and family called him.

He was well-liked, and this room, bursting at capacity, was a testament to that fact.

She hunched over and shuffled over to Pono's mother, who was waving her forward.

The second she was within reach, she was yanked down to sitting.

"How're you doing?" his mother, Toloa, asked with her thick Tongan accent.

"I'm . . . Well, I'm ready to do this." Jeanie shrugged.

She already felt out of place when she realized the women from his culture were dressed in white and wore ta'ovalas, while some also had over their mats a fakaaveave—those beautiful green skirts made of pandanus strips.

*Stupid, Jeannie. You knew this—and you showed up in black without*

*your large wrap mat around your waist! You disrespect them!*

She blinked when she realized all the women related to him had chopped their hair off as well. But not Jeanie.

Oh God. She was already failing. Her entire back tensed up. She sniffed and kept her chin tucked to her chest, ignoring the pile of small gifts that would later be presented to the *widow*.

A chill ran down Jeanie's spine, and her fingers flexed.

"Oh my!" Toloa gasped when she turned her head toward the door.

"Get over here!" her father-in-law, Kueili, said in a loud, chipper voice and greeted a tall man dressed completely in black like the rest of the men. He had an

olive complexion and was standing in the doorway she'd just entered through, greeting Kueili with a warm smile.

Jeanie's insides were tied in knots the second she saw *him*. He always seemed to have that effect on her.

"I'm so glad you invited him."

Toloa leaned into Jeanie's side.

She had to love her husband's family—they were always affectionate, and personal space didn't mean much to them.

Why they ever put up with her, she'd never know.

"Stop that horrid music," Kueili said as he passed by his brother, playing the organ. "Play something happy."

The music changed right away, and

Jeanie couldn't help but smile.

She remembered what Pono told her about Tongans—*everything's a party, and every party has happy music and food.*

“Issshh,” her mother-in-law hissed. “Kueili—sit down. We need to start soon.”

The woman's husband smiled and patted the back of the man he was welcoming. “C'mon. We're getting in trouble already,” he told the man standing next to him.

Kueili's devilish smile made the wrinkles around his eyes so thick it was hard to see his irises at all.

He led the incredibly good-looking, broad-shouldered man over to

Toloa. “Mark, you know you can’t get away with not saying hi to my wife. She’ll kill me if I don’t bring you over here to her at once. She’d probably poison my food.” Kueili stuck out his tongue and pretended to grimace.

Toloa stood up and crushed Mark into a hug.

Mark laughed and hugged her back. “Of course not. I’d never ignore you. The most distinguished lady in the room must be recognized.” He patted her back.

Toloa broke into tears. “It’s so good he had you to look after him for so long . . . So happy you’re here.”

Jeanie stared at them with a blank expression. What must it be like to be so honest about everything?



What must it be like to be so comfortable in her skin to hug people at will like that and actually enjoy it?

Jeanie craved affection, but not with just anyone. *One*. That was all she needed—just one person to have a deep, personal connection with.

Pono was affectionate and cuddly, but she was moody about it. She had to be in the right frame of mind to deal with it.

“Mark, sit here!” Marly said, scooting over and patting the bench’s seat between herself and Jeanie.

Jeanie’s breath caught in her throat, and she couldn’t breathe. Her heart raced—her fingers and toes wanted to curl.

He always did this to her. The few times they'd been around him . . . It never went away.

She leaned away from him, hoping it was subtle enough it wouldn't attract anyone's attention.

*God, please, say no. Sit somewhere else . . .*

Jeanie looked away. He was smiling at her with understanding, and she could *not* handle that. Not right now.

"Thanks, Marly, I appreciate it," Mark said and took a seat rather close to Jeanie.

She shifted away from him as much as she could, but there was nowhere to go.

The leader of the church got up,

and the service started.

Jeanie finally braved breathing again, and right away Mark's incredible scent hit her—it was a clean, slightly citrus and musky smell with a hint of woodsiness. Reminded her of the crispness of the ocean here in California.

She'd visit the beach as soon as she was done. Waves always soothed her.

There was no doubt she'd need its calming influence.

Five minutes of that white noise, and she'd be ready to face the rest of this day.

Mark leaned toward her and whispered, "When'd you get in?"

“Uh . . . An hour ago?” Jeanie shrugged once more. It seemed to be all she was capable of.

“God, you didn’t even have time to settle in. Where are you staying?” he asked, his tone sympathetic.

She paused and cleared her throat as quietly as she could. “Haven’t decided yet.” Over the last few days she couldn’t even face trying to figure out her sleeping arrangements for her stay here. She’d ignored messages from Pono’s family on this very subject. Her thought was she’d simply find some cheap hotel somewhere to crash for the night.

“You’re staying with me.” He wore a look of resolve.

She began to protest, but Toloa patted her thigh to shush her.

Mark leaned a little closer—if that was even possible. “You remember I have a split floor plan, and the second bedroom’s currently vacant. Stay. You won’t even have to see me if you don’t want to.”

She nodded and glanced at him through the corner of her eye.

His smile went from sympathetic to overjoyed.

Her heart raced like she’d just been sprinting around the building.

What was she thinking, accepting this invitation?

Well, she’d tell him after this was over that she’d changed her mind.

“All who knew Kapono Finau were happier because he was the sunshine in a sad day, and that’s saying a lot since he’d chosen to live in the land of the sun,” the minister said.

The crowd chuckled.

Jeanie shifted in her seat. Her palms were sweating, and her insides squirmed.

Why was she left out? Why didn’t these words comfort her and make *her* laugh? What was wrong with her?

She glanced down the row, and everyone else had similar reactions—smiling through their tears.

“This young man was bright and always serving others.” The minister smiled at Pono’s parents. “How many

male nurses do you find that are over six-foot-four?”

More laughter.

And again, Jeanie was the only one unaffected.

Well, she and Mark. He smiled good-naturedly, but he wasn't laughing either, and his eyes were as dry as hers were.

“I'm one of his few friends that he didn't dwarf,” Mark said quietly in her ear. His fingers brushed her long dark hair over her shoulder and sparks flew down her arm.

Her shoulder rounded up to her ear protectively.

“He used to say white boys weren't supposed to be this tall—he

said I was a freaky giant escaped from Hogwarts,” Mark said low and soft, still leaning toward her.

A laugh broke out of her, and it was well-timed, landing at the same moment as the crowd, hooting once more at the memories the minister was sharing.

Without thinking, Jeanie’s hand flew out and landed on Mark’s thigh. She squeezed and mouthed, “Thank you.”

It helped. She was laughing along with the crowd—not about the same things—but they didn’t need to know that.

Had he planned that?

She sighed and settled into the



back of her seat.

Mark's hand drifted over the top of hers, and the heat was oddly electrifying.

What was her problem—getting chills at her own husband's funeral?

“And who could forget his appetite?” the minister continued. “This boy could pack away more burgers than anyone I’ve ever seen.” He wiped away a happy tear. “But then he’d run it off and go play football, mowing everyone down.” His Tongan accent went thicker for a moment as his tears choked him up. “My son told me he would always run the other way when Kapono got on the field—that tank of a boy didn’t care who he took down. And since my boy wanted to be walking the next day, he knew to

clear out. Smart boy.”

The laughter continued, and somehow it was less grating with Mark’s hand trapping hers.

After another story was shared, a few of the family members got up and spoke, including Pono’s parents.

Jeanie had refused the invitation to say anything.

How could she? They wouldn’t want to hear the truth.

When Toloa burst into tears and mentioned how happy her son had been married to their favorite haole, and how this white girl could pack it away and eat with the best of them, a lone tear finally leaked out of Jeanie’s left eye. Of *course* it was the eye closest to Mark.

God, her stomach tightened at the thought of what this man next to her must be thinking about her with how she was sitting here so stoic and empty.

“It’s my fault he’s dead,” Jeanie whispered to Mark, sounding hollow. The tension was gripping her from the inside out.

Mark squeezed her hand, and then cupped it between both of his palms. “No, it’s not.”

Jeanie’s head turned enough so that she could see him clearly. “You don’t know—I’m the one that was feeding him incessantly because it made him happy, and then I didn’t feel like such an awful wife,” she hissed as quietly as she could.

“That’s not what happened, and you know it. He loved you—he was happy. You can’t blame yourself for what he chose to do to his body.”

She blinked and then angled her head back to her mother-in-law, speaking at the pulpit.

“My fault,” Jeanie muttered, and Mark pinched her side that was almost tucked into his.

She leaned her head on his shoulder and let that stupid tear roll down the side of her face.

“Shush,” Mark told her when Jeanie opened her mouth to share more self-deprecating words. “I don’t want you even thinking that. We can talk about it later. But not here—not now.”

She sucked in some air, and it felt like a fist was shoving it down her windpipe.

If not here, then what did that say about her—a wife with no regrets?

The funeral service wrapped up with a song performed by some angelic choir consisting of Pono's family members.

This was it. Jeanie would be alone again—no family, no place to feel welcome.

Sure, she still carried their last name of Finau, but what did that mean without Pono at her side?

“Where's your car parked?” Mark asked her as people began to exit the chapel.

“Around the south side,” she answered.

“Leave it here. I’ll drive you to the burial. We’ll come back and get it afterward,” he said.

“But what about Tia?” She released his hand and crossed her arms over her stomach. The pit inside was eating away at her.

“She knows I’m here for you today.” His jaw flexed. “C’mon. I’m sure you’re in no condition to drive.”

Her mouth watered as she inhaled his rich, fragrant, masculine scent. Why couldn’t her husband have smelled this good?

Out of nowhere, visions assaulted her of Pono rolling into bed, stinking,

sweating and messy after work. She cringed.

“Please, Jeanine,” Mark said, breaking her out of her thoughts.

“Okay,” she answered softly.

He placed his palm at the center of her back and steered her out to his very expensive, very pristine, sleek black car.

She snorted.

“What’s so funny?” he asked.

“Black. Definitely a California boy. You’d never want to have a black car in Phoenix—you’d fry your hand in the summer if you touched this thing,” she answered.

“Yeah, I remember from my college days.” He wore a lazy, amused grin.

She huffed for a second. That was the last thing she wanted to talk about.

“I . . . I wanted to make a short pit-stop on the way to the burial site,” she said, turning to him.

They stopped walking a few feet from his car.

“Whatever you need—I’m here for you. You know that, right?”

Her eyes dried out as she stood there unblinking with her mouth gaping a little. “Why?”

“Why question it? You need me right now, and I’m happy to help.” His smile shifted, and it looked like he was hiding something.

“O-kay.” She took her time walking toward his car once more.



He helped her in and asked where she wanted to go.

“Oceanside beach, please,” she answered.

He sighed, and his knuckles popped when he shifted the gear on his car. They were driving in the opposite direction of everyone else.

“I know this is . . . Well, I realize how this’ll look to them—me showing up late to the burial, missing the procession—but I have to do this,” she said, eyes pleading with him.

“I’m not one to question what a woman wants . . .”

She squirmed. What was that supposed to mean? And why did it sound so dark and alluring when he said it?

Oh no, no, no, *no*!

Her thoughts drifted to a conversation she'd had with Tia not that long ago.

Dark and alluring was what Tia called Mark behind his back.

Jeanie never shared her own title she'd made for this man—*piercing and biting*. His looks and everything he said lanced right through her heart.

Dangerous? Oh, was he ever.

She avoided him for those reasons.

And here she was, trapped in his car, driving to a beach when she should've been headed to the place her late husband would be laid to rest.

“Thanks for helping me get through that service,” she said, her throat

constricting on her.

She cleared it and swallowed.

Why was she always such a mess around Mark? What was it about him?

“Thanks for allowing me to do that for you.” He smiled once more, and his eyes were so soft when he looked at her, she melted into her seat.

Her head drifted to the side, and she took in the sights out her window. It was better than staring at that gorgeous face and those cerulean blue eyes of his. Her light blue eyes seemed so dull compared to his vibrant, electric color. They reminded her of the beautiful ocean pictures Pono had framed and put up in their bathroom from his previous homes—Tonga and Hawaii.

Mark's chiseled jaw and strong cheekbones reminded her of the carbon-looking ocean cliffs in those same photos.

She took in a deep breath, allowing her lungs to fill to capacity, hoping it would clear her head, but it had the opposite effect.

Inhaling his scent was doing things to her.

Her right hand was stroking her black leather seat. Had Mark ever sat over here?

Had he been intimate with other women in this car?

Oh, God, she was depraved. Why was she imagining him having sex on this very seat with someone other than

Tia, his girlfriend?

Then again, why was she imagining him having sex with anyone at all?

She closed her eyes, and the vision of some nameless woman, sitting here in this seat with her legs spread, morphed and became herself.

It was Jeanie, gripping the seat as he thrust his way inside her and stared deep into her eyes with that trademark smirk he usually wore.

When she opened her eyes, he was staring, not like in her vision, but in concern. “You okay?”

“Yeah, fine. Just thinking . . .”

“What about?”

“The ocean.” She ran her fingertip

along the seam of her seat. “We always said we’d move here someday, but then he started saving every penny for another goal, and that dream had to wait. I’ve always liked the sound of the ocean and the feel of the spray on my face when we went sailing those few times.”

He smiled. “It’s not too late to do those things. You should move here.”

She blinked so hard, her eyes scrunched up for a second. “Yeah, I’ve been considering it. I like the idea of being closer to his family, but I worry they’ll be all over me, and I like having my space.”

“Think about it. I could help you out,” he said.

A lump slammed down in her

stomach. “How?”

“However you need,” he answered.

“Would Tia be okay with that?” Her eyes narrowed a little, and her brow slanted toward the bridge of her nose.

“It’s not her call to make, but you’re welcome to check with her if you want.” He pulled out his phone and extended it to her.

She shoved his hand away. “I believe you—it’s fine.”

She pulled her hand away from the seat, since it was starting to feel OCD in nature—the way she was caressing it like an old lover.

His eyes followed her hands as she clasped them together and rested them in

the center of her lap.

They arrived at the beach, and she slipped her heels off.

“I won’t be long,” she said, turning to him.

“I’m coming with you.”

Before she could protest, he was out of the car and opening her door for her, helping her out.

Once her hand was in his for assistance, it managed to stay there.

They roamed out onto the black and white marbled-looking sand.

“This is my favorite beach. I always thought the sand was so crazy here, but I loved it. Pono would joke if he looked at it too long, it would blind him.” She crossed her eyes. “Then he’d



make dorky faces at me.”

“Is it hard to remember those times?” he asked.

“No, not really. It’s the good times that I remember most. What hurts is that I . . .” she trailed off.

He squeezed her hand. “Since we don’t have a lot of time, I won’t press it, but I want you to finish that thought later tonight with me.”

She nodded and stared out across the ocean.

The waves lapped at the shore, and there were a few surfers out there, silhouetted in the sun.

Her feet edged on the moist sand, and she sighed. God, it felt so good to have the cool granules gripped under her

toes.

“Better?”

She sighed even louder. “Better.”

“I can tell. Your cheeks colored almost instantly, and your pupils dilated. It’s like it made you slightly high.” He chuckled.

“Oh great . . . Another issue to deal with,” she said, mocking herself.

“You don’t have any issues other than letting go.”

“Exactly—and that’s pretty damn huge.”

He exhaled, and it was loud and husky. “Jeanine, just stop. Stop doing this to yourself. You’re an amazing woman, and he knew that, his family knows it, and so do I. Stop pretending

you're anything other than wonderful.”

She swallowed down the dirty words she wanted to vomit up and then let go of his hand.

He stayed where he was, a few feet back from the shoreline, since he had on his nice dress shoes.

She roamed deeper down the beach, entranced with the sunlight sparkling off the water.

When the waves washed over her feet, she gasped.

“Oh, fuck! I always forget how cold this water is!” She yelped and jumped.

He laughed. “I’ve never heard you swear before.”

“Yeah, it’s not often it slips, but it

happens when I'm surprised or angry. Pono didn't like it, so I was constantly trying to keep from doing it," she said, grinning and biting into her top lip, then rubbing her bottom teeth across it. "It mostly came out in the bedroom . . . Well, when things would heat up." She turned away. Guilt crushed into her once again, more forceful than the waves pushing at her legs. Things had been anything but hot between her and Pono over the last few months. She couldn't even recall the last time they had sex.

A few minutes later, she looked back over at Mark.

He smirked, and there was a naughty glint in his eyes. "Well, aren't *you* full of surprises."

She squeaked like a mouse and tucked her chin to her chest. “Why do I wind up saying inappropriate things every time I’m around you?”

He offered half a shrug, then she looked away.

“You have a habit of disarming me, too, so I don’t think I can take full blame on this one.” He took a step closer to her.

She smiled, and though her feet were frozen already from the cold water, her insides were heating at an alarming rate.

“We should probably get going. Thanks for letting me do this,” she said, making sure her skirt had stayed out of the water, and then sloshed back out of

the receding wave.

He held his hand out to her and gave her a look that said there was no way she was going to contest taking it.

Without a word, she grabbed it and her heart sped up upon contact.

He walked close at her side, his stride slow enough so she could keep up. She was taller than most women she knew, but this guy was six-foot-five, like Pono.

Her five-foot-nine frame usually managed, but not as well when she was bare foot like she was right now. When her heels were back on it might be different.

Once they were at the car, he helped her in, shut her car door and they

were driving away from the one place she longed to be right now.

The drive to the cemetery was quiet. Her cell phone rang once, but she ignored it.

After they parked and got out, instead of taking her hand, he put his arm around her shoulders and guided her to where the mourners were gathered.

“I love how the women all wear white,” she whispered as they approached.

Mark chuckled. “I do, too. I like how they choose to celebrate the deceased person’s life rather than focus on the death.”

Her head tipped back, and she beamed at this man at her side.

Why had she been so scared to see him today?

He somehow seemed to say all the right things to her. If it wasn't for him, she'd be a mess and barely functioning by now.

"Sorry we were late. I needed to run an errand real quick," Mark told Toloa when they found her seated at the front, waving them over the same way she had at the service.

"What kind of errand?" Toloa's eyes narrowed at him.

"I forgot to bring this with me, and I wanted you to have it," he said, pulling out a picture of Pono and Mark two years ago from their graduation at Arizona State University.



“Oh, thank you!” Toloa cried and jumped up, smothering his cheek with a kiss and then hugging him.

“You’re welcome. He’ll be missed,” he replied.

They all sat down, and the minister was before them once more, speaking about the burial site and going on and on about how Pono was in a better place.

Jeanie tuned him out and stared at the tan-colored coffin covered in tropical flowers that smelled so fragrant it almost made her nose itch.

There were more songs shared, but of course, Jeanie didn’t join in. A few of them were familiar, but her internal strength failed her.

Before long, Pono was lowered

into the ground.

Tears were shed.

There were words shared, and if it hadn't been for Mark taking her hand when she needed it halfway through, she might've bolted.

She'd never felt more of a hypocrite in her life with her few tears she'd released.

"Come home with us. We're having a feast my sister made, and I know you love our food," Toloa said to them both.

"Uh, I'm sorry, but I was driving all night. I really need to crash for a little bit. Can I come over and visit tomorrow?" Jeanie offered.

Toloa's face fell. "What? My

daughter-in-law isn't staying with us?"

Jeanie flinched. "I'm sorry—I didn't want to impose. I know you've got a full house as it is, and Mark's got an empty spare bedroom. He'd already offered, and I accepted."

Oh God! What had she just done? That was her out with Mark, and she blew it.

Her spine went rigid and solidified in place.

Mark gripped her hand tighter. "I'll make sure she gets over to your house by lunch time tomorrow. Sound good?"

Toloa smiled, but it was stiff. "I will see *you* tomorrow no matter what." She pointed at Jeanie.

“Of course. I’ve got a few things of Pono’s I brought back for you anyway.”

Jeanie sniffed back the tears.

Toloa’s eyes softened.

“Thanks for everything,” Jeanie said, and out of nowhere, she let go of Mark’s hand. She felt obligated and awkward, but she managed to lunge forward and hug the woman she’d called mother over the last three years.

The group of people surrounding the burial site were still singing.

“Let’s get you home,” Mark said.

Warmth built up inside Jeanie at the sound of those words. It was like a ray of sunshine somehow seeped through her tough exterior and found its way inside.

*Home.*

Why did that sound so delectable?

She said her goodbyes, and a few people gave strange, judgmental looks at her fingers entwined with Mark's.

They could think what they wanted. She'd explain later he was only a friend, and somehow, his presence, his *touch*, anchored her and made her feel more right than anything else ever had—including Pono.

Did that even make sense?

It didn't to her, but she wasn't in the frame of mind to fight it.

Not now.

## Chapter 2

“So, why is this room empty?” Jeanie asked.

He set her bags inside the door for her.

“It’s a long story,” he said, gripping the edge of the door frame.

God, those powder-blue eyes framed against her dark lashes and pale skin about did him in.

He was leaning toward her and was a moment away from grabbing her and kissing her pouty lips.

“I’ll share what you wanted to know earlier if you tell me,” she said.

He paused and backed away.

“Dinner first,” he insisted. “You’re

starving, and so am I. I'll order in. Any preference?"

"Anything's fine—I'm not picky." She took a seat on the edge of the bed. Her shoulders fell forward.

"Rest. I'll come get you when the food's here." He closed the door behind him.

Five minutes later, he checked on her, and she was sound asleep, dressed in something more comfortable.

She must've been completely exhausted, since she'd told him on a few different occasions about how she was a poor sleeper and how it took her a long time to shut her mind down before sleep would come.

He hadn't ordered the food yet,

since he knew she needed to rest first. The only reason he told her he was going to order was so she'd unwind and stop worrying about every little thing.

He pulled out his phone and dialed Tia.

"Hey," he said before she could say anything when she answered her phone. "I need a minute of your time."

"Yes, Sir. What can I do for you?" Tia answered.

"She's here. She might call you. I'll tell her tonight what happened, but if she does contact you, I don't want you saying anything more than what happened between us. I know you like to matchmake, and I'm telling you right now—*don't*." He pulled a shot glass



down and poured himself a drink. God, he needed it with her in the other room, asleep in what was once . . .

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. It was better if he didn't think about what that room was once used for and how he wanted that with Jeanie more than he should.

"I can do whatever you want, Sir, but she's going to figure it out soon enough," she said.

"Don't start. Just listen to me on this one." He took a gulp of his drink and rolled his neck from side to side.

"What is it this time? You don't think she's ready to hear it?"

"Jesus! Her husband just died. Of course she's not ready, and just because

you think she's interested doesn't mean you're right." He took another swallow. "All I want is for her to be happy and find her way. Be her friend, and don't interfere. She may never want to see me or you again."

"Fine, Sir. I'll do as you ask, but I think you're wrong."

"You usually do." He chuckled with the glass tipped against his lips. One more sip and he ended the call. "You better listen this time, Celestia," he muttered to himself.

He set the glass down, checked on Jeanine one more time and then made his way to the living room.

His mind was made up.

There were some things that

needed to be said for her benefit—not his. She might not like it, but there was no way he was going to keep this shit to himself.

An hour later, he could hear her moaning in her sleep.

He went ahead and ordered some food, then went to wake her up.

When he opened her door, she bolted upright and yelped. “What the fuck?”

“Sorry,” he said, chuckling. “I wanted to let you know the food was on its way.”

“God, I . . . Okay,” she sighed, releasing her shirt she had clutched up under her chin like she was afraid she’d been indecent and thought she was

covering up with the bed sheets.

She rubbed her eyes a second later.

“Can you give me a minute? I’ll be right out,” she said, slouching back against the headboard.

“Sure. I have something I wanna give you when you’re ready.”

He left and closed the door.

Each time he heard movement in her room, his heart sped and his stomach threatened to drop out of him.

Fuck. He needed to get this over.

She exited the room about a million years later, dressed in one of Pono’s college jerseys and some boxers—clearly not her husband’s since they actually fit her and Pono weighed well

over three-hundred pounds when he passed away.

Her hair was mussed, and his mind immediately wondered if this was what it would look like after fucking her senseless, fisting at the roots, and pulling on it. His groin tightened when her tits bounced as she rubbed her arms.

“Cold?” he asked.

Her nipples poked at the fabric as if to answer his question.

“I’m fine,” she said, padding her way into the room.

“Jean—tell me.” He looked her straight in the eye, and she froze. “Are you cold?”

“Yeah, a little.” She went back to rubbing her arms.

“Thank you for sharing that. Now, take a seat. I’ll get you a blanket and a drink.” He went to the closet and took down a fleece blanket, then headed back to her. After the blanket was given to her, he was back in the kitchen, pulling out two wine glasses and grabbing a bottle of wine from the fridge.

She tucked her hair behind her ears and sat on his sofa, stiff as could be, with the blanket loose over her legs.

“Make yourself at home.” He opened the bottle, got her a drink and brought it over to her.

She had the look of a cornered animal when he sat next to her and handed her the glass.

“If you don’t feel comfortable

here, we can move to the living room,” he said, motioning to the area he was talking about.

“No, it’s fine. I always liked your family room.” She was almost inaudible when she said *family*.

*Fine*—there was that word again. “It’s not fine. You look like I sat you on top of a cactus. What is it? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, I . . . It’s just, I’m trying to take in the surroundings, that’s all.”

“What is it about them that’s making you uncomfortable?” He glanced around.

She took a big gulp of her drink, and then he realized it wasn’t the room—it was *him*. He was what was

agitating her.

Instead of giving her space and backing off, he scooted closer.

“Am I upsetting you?”

She averted her eyes away from him and took another drink. “No. Why would you say that?”

“Because you looked like this the moment I stepped into that chapel today, and I’ve seen you get like this the other times I’ve been near you as well. Am I doing something that rubs you the wrong way? And *please*, no bullshit—I wanna know the truth so I can stop whatever it is I’m doing wrong.”

She pinched the center of her bottom lip with her right index finger and thumb. It drew his gaze to the sexy



dip there. Her Kewpie doll lips always caught his attention, and they begged to be kissed by him.

“Did I look like this at the beach?” she asked.

Good point, but still . . . The majority of the time he was around her, she looked so uptight he worried the brief hour she just slept might be the most sleep she was gonna get if she didn’t find a way to relax.

And he wanted her to rest. She needed to get better. He wanted her happy and healthy—dammit.

“No, you didn’t. Do we need to go back there?” he teased.

She smiled and hiccuped a silent laugh. “Maybe.”

His left brow popped up. He hadn't expected her to say that.

“Hey, I’m serious—please make yourself at home. Prop your feet up, feel free to eat anything you want, and if you need more blankets on your bed, I can get them for you. Or you can grab anything you like out of the linen closets.” He reached out and absentmindedly caught her hand in his. “How long are you planning on staying in town?”

“Two more days. I was thinking about looking at a few places to possibly rent here.”

His insides lit up, and his chest lifted. “That’s a great idea. A fresh start.”

“Exactly.” She tucked one leg up under her.

Better.

“If you need a good Realtor, let me know, and I can hook you up.”

She sighed and looked away. “I’m just looking. I’m not committed to moving here yet.”

“What’s stopping you?” He rubbed his jaw and set his glass down, untouched by his lips.

The doorbell rang, and he excused himself.

He paid the delivery guy, brought her a plate of food and handed it to her.

“Is it okay if I . . . I mean, should I move to the table with my dinner?” she asked, her voice soft, eyes hesitant.

“Nah, it’s good—stay where you are.” He sat back down next to her in the exact same spot he was before.

She dug in, and he couldn’t help but watch how enthusiastically she ate.

“God, I love how you don’t hold back,” he said.

She blushed and leaned her head to the side. “Oh, sorry.”

“Don’t be.”

She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. “I have the worst manners when it comes to food and I’m ravenous like this.”

He chuckled. “It’s refreshing to find a woman that knows what she wants and isn’t afraid to take it.”

“Well, *yeah*, that woman’s not

me.”

He smiled and brushed her hair over her shoulder, remembering how she'd reacted during the service when he'd done that.

Predictably, she shivered a little and her shoulder bolted up to her ear. So damn cute.

He retraced the edge of her ear for one more adrenaline rush.

She scrunched both shoulders this time.

He needed to back off, but it was so fucking difficult when she was sitting next to him—braless, boxers on and actually talking to him.

And there was no way he was going to let her go until he gave her what

was hers and talked to her about a few things she needed to hear.

She set her food down. “Thanks for letting me stay here. I’ll be out of your hair tomorrow. I’ll find a hotel so you don’t have to worry about—”

“No, you fucking won’t,” he said. “You’re staying here. Period.”

She held her breath, then exhaled slowly. “I can’t take advantage like that. You’re very generous, but I don’t—”

“Jean, I swear to God, don’t even say it. I want you here.”

“Look,” she started, “I know you were his best man three years ago, and you made some promise to him to take care of me if anything was ever to happen to him—but you can’t possibly

believe he actually meant that.”

“Yes, I do. But even if I hadn’t made that promise, I’d still be here to take care of you.”

Her shoulders melted about three inches and then pulled back. Her tits were jutting out. It was obvious she was trying to look intimidating.

Made him smile. Fucking cuter than should be possible and making him hard as hell.

“I don’t need you or anyone else to take care of me, all right? I’m fine.”

He ran his finger over her ring. “The fact you keep saying ‘fine’ repeatedly states otherwise.”

She huffed and looked past him, over to the window. Did she feel

trapped?

Shit, he really needed to get this over with before she bolted.

“I’m not trying to piss you off, I swear, but answer me this—were you happy, Jean?”

“Why do you keep calling me that or saying Jeanine?” she asked, voice escalating.

“When you first met me, you said to call you Jean. Later, you changed it to Jeanie, and I noticed that only your really close friends call you Jeanie. Obviously, you don’t trust me, and you only backpedaled because you realized I’d notice everyone else was calling you something else. So, I’m gonna earn that trust.” He ran his finger up the back of



her hand, then ghosted it over her wrist and let go when she whispered a hint of a moan.

Fuck, she was amazing—her reactions so acute from tiny actions. He could own that body in no time. But what was the point if she was afraid of him and lacked trust?

She hummed for a second.

He set his hand on his own leg. She was vibrating with nervous energy, and he didn't want to touch her and make it worse.

“You didn't answer me—were you happy?”

“No,” she said, turning red. Her head jerked toward him, and her eyes were tearing up. “How's *that* for

honesty? I don't even know how to be happy. You asked earlier what hurt the most from my memories when I think about Pono, and I stopped talking . . . You wanted to know what I left out. Well, there's a reason I cried so little today."

"I know why you didn't cry as much as the others, but I wanna hear you say it—that's why I said I'd want you to finish that thought later when you were here in my home, alone with me." His eyes softened, though his hand gripped his thigh hard.

"I don't know if I ever really loved Pono. I mean, I thought I did when I married him. I had this list of all the qualities I wanted in a husband, and he

fit all of them. He was the only guy I ever met that acted so damn ecstatic to even be near me. His whole face would light up, and he would . . .” Her shoulders lost whatever elasticity they had, and she crumpled forward. “God, I’m a horrible wife. I mean, I tried to do anything I could to keep him happy, but I . . .”

“You weren’t happy though, were you?”

“No. I was . . . God—I can’t believe I’m saying this . . .”

“Say it, Jean. You need to,” he said, his forearms flexing as his hands itched to reach out and comfort her.

“I was bored. After two months, I was sick of it—sick of *him*. He never

got angry—nothing ever bothered him. But I thought that was why I'd married him. Consistency. Reliability. Laid-back man."

"I remember you said your dad yelled all the time and was verbally abusive. It makes sense you were looking for the opposite." His voice deepened and shook a little when he thought about anyone harming her.

"But that wasn't even it—not completely," she went on. "It was his family. I mean, you saw how loving and welcoming they are. My family was never like that. My dad practically disowned me when I married Pono, my mom's a doormat and they ignored me most of my life. We don't keep in

contact. I hated that my family was so disconnected from each other. I guess I found a family that would take me in.”

“Is that also a part of what hurt the most today?”

She bit her top lip and nodded.

“What if they don’t want me around now? I didn’t even feel like I had a right to be there today—already I don’t belong.”

“You belong in my life no matter what,” he said, his heart enlarging and speeding up in tempo.

Her face paled. “How? And why would you even say that?”

He took a deep breath. “Because there are few women in my life I actually enjoy being around, who’ll tell

me the truth no matter what. That's one of the qualities about you Pono admired—and I do, too.”

“Yeah, if I'm asked directly. Otherwise, I lied to him every day, pretending to be happy.” She slapped her hands on her thighs and groaned. “I should've never married him. He deserved someone better—someone who would've loved him so much, she couldn't wait to get home to him.”

“It's not your fault.”

“Whose is it, then? Huh? Is it his? Is it fucking yours?” Her voice broke.

He pulled her into a hug, and at first she went rigid, but as he stroked her hair, she melted into him.

“Yeah, go ahead and blame me. I

want you to,” he whispered, holding her tight.

“Why would I do that?” Her tears moistened his shirt.

“Because I told him if he didn’t marry you, he was the stupidest son of a bitch on the planet.” He kissed the top of her head twice, and then she snuggled into him, tucking her head under his chin.

She fit perfectly—in his arms, and in his life.

His chest heated, and his lungs expanded as he tried to slow his breathing down. Her sweet, subtle scent hit him, and he hummed to calm them both down, swaying them back and forth a little as if dancing together.

The first time they’d danced was at

her wedding, and he never forgot how she felt in his arms. He hoped there'd be another chance to do it again in the future, but with a different groom.

She choked on her breath for a moment, then fisted his shirt and climbed into his lap, curling herself into a small ball.

“Do you think he knows—now that he’s in Heaven—do you think he knows I was deceiving him?”

“What you’re really asking is—do I think it’s hurting him,” he said, his hands tangling in the ends of her soft hair.

He couldn’t help himself. It was so long, soft and tempting. Absolutely stunning—glossy, thick and dark.



His nose burrowed into it for a moment. He inhaled deeply and as quietly as possible.

“Oh God!” she groaned. She sniffled back her tears and then was suddenly moving up his body, wrapping her arms around his neck.

“No, honey, I don’t think he’s upset or hurt. He knows your intentions were good and that you *did* care for him.”

His heart clenched, and he fought off the urge to kiss her, to make her body feel so good she’d forget about this heartache and past pain.

She tucked her head up under his chin even tighter. Christ, she smelled so good—he couldn’t get enough of her scent. No woman had ever felt so right

for him before. He shouldn't want this, but he did—more than anything.

From the moment he met her, there was this unreal, animalistic attraction he could never shake no matter how hard he tried.

Sharing the same air with her was like an instant aphrodisiac.

“But . . . He told you we were saving all our money, right? And how I sometimes didn't want to?” She moved impossibly closer—her entire body entwined around his.

She was like a baby animal, seeking protection from an adult. And he was like a predatory animal, ready to pin her down, bite and fuck her—*hard*.

He held her as tight as he could

and rained kisses on the top of her crown. “Yeah . . . He told me. Stop beating yourself up over it. It’s in your nature to try and please the people you care about, but that doesn’t mean you’re not allowed to have an opinion and feelings.” His fingers plunged into her hair at the roots now, and his lips were nuzzling into her scalp, almost making love to her. He wanted to cry. He wanted to love her. He wanted to make them both feel better.

Christ, this was killing him, being this close yet having to restrain himself, rather than her.

It wasn’t supposed to be erotic—the way he was holding and kissing her. It was supposed to be comforting, but

somehow he was still completely erect and struggling to keep his hands from exploring and touching more.

She squirmed in his lap.

“I love the way you care so much. It’s beautiful. Never apologize for it,” he told her. He shifted her back a little, since she was seated with her pussy right on his straining head.

Uncomfortable.

Throbbing.

Wanting.

Damn near leaking.

Not good.

“I want you to eat now. Finish your meal, and if you start picking at it, I’ll feed you myself.” He pulled her off his lap. God—he had to before he couldn’t

stop himself at all. “While you eat, I wanna show you something.”

She wore a dejected expression and then wiped it clean when she reached for her food.

Oh, bad move. She needed to cuddle more, but before he lost control, he needed to share this with her.

He walked over to his bookshelf, grabbed the letter and returned to her side.

“Please listen without interruption. I know it’ll be difficult, but I want you to try,” he said slowly and clearly, making sure she was listening intently.

She nodded, and her breath hitched.

“Eat, okay?”

“Okay,” she agreed. She grabbed a forkful and filled her mouth.

“This was dated a month before you two got married. He wrote to me when I was in South America and in an area where I couldn’t get cell phone service. This is what he shared with me.” He licked his lips and began.

“Mark, I’m stuck. I don’t know what to do. I proposed to the girl of my dreams a few months ago, and she said yes. But there’s this nagging feeling in the back of my head I can’t get rid of—that I’m not what she needs. She shared her list of a dream man with me, and I’m not him. I can feel it. I have the qualities she listed, but there’s something off.

“She said she wanted somebody

calm, even-tempered, fun to be around, good sense of humor and willing to help others. I'm all those things, but there's something missing. I can tell she needs more, but when I asked her, she blew me off. What should I do?

"She's so incredible. I'm crazy about her. She's all I can think about. My family loves her, but her family hates me. She says they hate everyone, so I probably shouldn't take it personally, but it bothers me.

"Not that everyone has to like me, but, God . . . I don't know why I don't really fit in her life like I want to. What should I do? Should I cancel the wedding until we can work through this? Do you think it's just pre-wedding

nerves? I'm asking you because you always seem to be able to cut through the bullshit.

“If you say ‘Yes, do it,’ then I will. But, just so you know, that means if I go through with it, I want you to be my best man. That also means you need to stay put for at least two weeks before the wedding and be there on the date. No more traveling all over the world. How many offices do you need? You trying to take over the entire planet? Stop being a pretentious prick and be around so I can call you when I need advice. Pono.”

She sat motionless and mute. The only way he knew she was present at all was because her hand twitched on her thigh.



“You see? You didn’t do anything wrong,” he said.

“Even if that were true, I have no idea what the hell I’m supposed to do now.” Her eyes welled up.

“Stay here with me until you figure it out. I’m going to be selling this place soon, and until then, this part of the house’ll be empty. It’s yours. You can have it.”

“What about work and my friends?” Her voice shook.

“Come here,” he said. He tucked her back into the position she was in before. Only *this* time, he leaned back into the cushions, propped his feet up and wasn’t going to let go until she pushed him away. Even then, he might

not release her.

“You’re working at an office in Phoenix, right? Secretary?”

“Sort of. I do secretarial work for a law firm, but I also do a lot of data entry—typing up contracts for them since they’re short staffed.” She sighed.

“I can help you find a job here. In fact, there’s an opening in my office for a secretary-type position.” His breath caught.

“Jesus, no, Mark. I can handle this myself. I’m not a baby.”

“No one said you were. You’re a confident, smart woman, and everyone needs help from time to time. It’s not like it’s a handout. You’d have to interview like everyone else.” He

smiled. She couldn't see it since she was hidden in his chest. "And it's not like you couldn't go back and visit your friends there like you used to frequently visit your friends here in California."

She snorted. "Like Tia?"

"Yeah, like Tia, and . . ." he got choked up for a minute "... *me*."

"I always thought you hated me," she said so quietly he almost didn't hear it.

"Why did you think that?" His gut twisted.

She released a stuttering exhale and then relaxed into his body.

It was evident she was really tired. He ought to let her rest, but she was being so open since her guard was

down.

When she failed to answer, he grimaced.

“Did I say something to make you think I didn’t approve of you?” His fingers drew circles on her back.

“No, you just . . . You always kept your distance, and you looked like a woman, wearing a thong shoved up her ass and too-tight heels. It was like I was causing you pain somehow.”

His grin grew wider. God, she was way more observant than he gave her credit for.

She was pretty accurate. *Pain?* Yeah—if she considered an eternal, uncontrollable erection around her, straining at his zipper to be painful, then

fuck yeah, he was in constant pain when she was near.

It was manageable, but the ache in his chest was not.

How was he supposed to tell her that the moment he met her, he was insanely jealous and wanted her for himself? Keeping a safe distance was necessary so he wouldn't tear Pono apart just to get at her.

“Funny, I could’ve said the same thing about you. I was giving you space, echoing back to you your needs, since you were unable to state you needed me to keep my distance,” he said.

He moved to get out from under her when she whimpered, “No, please stay!”

“Anything . . . Anything for you.”

She stiffened, so he tacked on, “To help you feel better.”

He leaned over, keeping hold of her with one hand, grabbed her food and fed her slowly, one bite at a time.

When she'd eaten it all, she snuggled into him and breathed deep and heavy.

In no time, she was asleep, and though he knew he should put her to bed, he simply couldn't.

So, he held her, sang to her and stroked her back and hair. He kissed her forehead, cheek and temple repeatedly.

It wasn't until he considered the fact that she could wake up and realize he was putting his mouth all over her and

his hands were starting to roam closer to her breasts, that he reluctantly put her to bed. He didn't need her feeling violated on top of everything else.

It took him a good hour to get to sleep afterward. He couldn't bring himself to jack off, and he was restless, his mind failing to focus when he tried to read or get some work done. What if he woke up and she was gone?

His heart pounded and ached at the thought, and his eyes stung with tears, threatening at the corners.

Had he cried today at the funeral?

Oh, fuck. She had to have seen him.

The only time he cried was when she blamed herself.

*It's all my fault . . .*

Christ. It ripped him to pieces to hear her say that.

He concentrated on how her warm body had felt on him while sitting on the couch, on how her hand had been in his so many times today, and most of all—the content expression she wore when she stood on that beach.

He wanted to see that look on her face again, and he'd do anything to put it there once more, even if it meant building her a goddamn beach house in that exact spot where she stood today.

In the end, he lay in bed and listened to some music until sleep finally claimed him.



## Chapter 3

Dark. Oh Jesus, it was so dark a chill ran down her spine.

She reached out to touch Pono, but he was missing.

Her heart wrenched.

*Alone.*

This was how it might be from now on.

Her bed was empty, and it smelled like Mark.

The guilt was back like a suffocating wet blanket. She took off her wedding ring and shoved it in her purse on the floor next to the bed.

After a few steadying breaths, she tiptoed down the hallway to the other

side of his house.

His door was slightly open.

It creaked when she pushed it open wider.

It was cracked, so that meant this was okay, right?

Her feet slid over the floor, and instead of feeling foreign and scary, it felt so right that it was even more frightening.

She climbed into bed with him, slipped under the covers and found his body heat right away.

He was always so warm, putting a permanent smile on her body and into her heart.

“What’re you . . .” He shifted closer to her, half-asleep with a groggy

voice as he mumbled something about how she'd had a long day.

"Shit, sorry. Can I . . . ? Is it—I'll go," she said, ungluing her body from his and turning away.

His hand reached out and pulled her back. "No. Stay." He swallowed and licked his bottom lip. "I'll be a gentleman, I promise. You need this, and so do I."

"I'm sorry, but I . . ." Tears spilled down her cheeks. "You helped me so much earlier today, and I . . . God, why can't I stop crying now when I didn't even do this at the funeral?"

"You've been through hell. It's understandable, and you don't need a reason to cuddle with me. I like it." He

nuzzled his nose into the top of her hair. Christ, she loved it when he did that. “Mmm . . .” He hummed and tightened his arm around her.

Her insides exploded with a heat to match his body. “You’re so warm. I know this sounds crazy, but you’re the exact body temperature I seem to need. It’s so weird. Pono would make me sweat, and I’d get annoyed. I never told him that, though,” she blurted, sounding mortified with her admission at the end when she realized what she’d just shared.

He probably thought she was incredibly calloused to say that about her husband and his deceased friend.

“It’s fine, Jean. You never have to

worry I'm going to judge you. I understand completely." She started to say something else to justify and defend herself, but he covered her lips with a finger and shushed her. "No more talking. You need your sleep. I'll help you relax."

A moment later, he had her half-draped over his chest with his hands caressing her back and combing through her hair, making her scalp tingle and zing. He did it over and over while he hummed.

Her body was a sponge, soaking up every drop of affection he gave her.

He took several deep breaths, and she sighed as she melted into him.

So comfortable to sleep on for a

man that was nothing but slabs of finely honed muscles.

He whispered something about how glad he was she was here, or at least that was the last thing she remembered before falling off to sleep.

\* \* \*

When Mark woke early the next morning, the sheet was tied in knots around his legs, but he didn't care—she was still here with him, her body all over his.

Her scent permeated the air, and her hair was fanned out across him. Her lips were smooshed up against his chest and somehow, sometime in the night, his

shirt had disappeared.

Good Lord—had he done that?  
And why couldn't he remember it?

If he'd done *that*, what else had he done?

Did he touch her and make advances on her?

He exhaled and blinked.

What was he going to do? Keeping away from her was going to be damn near impossible after sleeping next to her last night. He wanted more—*had to* have more of her.

He glanced at the clock and fought off a groan. Four-thirty—the usual time he woke up and headed to the gym before work.

Well, today he'd skip it.

Work, too.

And for as long as she was going to stay, he'd start working out in the small fitness center located at the other end of the office building, during his lunch hour, rather than go to the big fancy one he paid a large monthly fee for. He wasn't going to waste a minute being without her, including early morning hours.

He blinked and stared at the clock.

Hopefully it wouldn't wake her when he called the office in a few moments.

He had already debated calling in last night to tell them he wouldn't be in today, but he wasn't sure if she'd stay or not.



Now, with her in his bed? There was absolutely no way he was going in.

She needed him.

His fingers walked down her spine, ghosted over the expanse of exposed skin on her lower back, and then tickled at her Venus dimples. She had an amazing ass—so curvy and tempting.

She was what every woman should be—feminine, soft and round in all the best ways. He didn't feel like she would break if he unleashed on her.

Tia was tiny, and he always worried he'd inadvertently hurt her. He was always cautious with his touch when they'd played together.

His throat constricted as he thought

about how Jeanie would react if she knew all the shit he was into and all the dirty things he wanted to do to her beautiful body.

Her pale skin would probably pink easily under his hands.

His mind wandered into dangerous places, and his hands seemed to follow. They were under her shirt, stroking across her shoulder blades, drifting over her ribs toward the edge of her tits.

She sighed and trembled under his touch, and his hands automatically pulled back out.

He stuck to over-the-shirt for the next few minutes, and then she stirred awake.

“God, I slept like the dead,” she

said, then suddenly cupped her mouth. “I shouldn’t have said that.”

She muffled her voice as she cursed herself for being so insensitive to her dead husband’s memory.

“When you’re around me, I don’t want you to worry about or censor anything you say, okay?” He tilted his head down with his chin angled so he could see her reaction.

“Kay,” she agreed.

“Good. I’m gonna go make you breakfast. Go shower if you like, and then we’ll plan the day.”

No one moved.

He kept touching her, and she stretched a little.

He wanted to bark out orders to get

her to move since he was clearly incapable of doing anything other than be as close to her as possible.

“Why are you being so nice to me, Mark?”

“Why? Are you sick of me already?”

“No.” She chuckled and patted his arm. “I just don’t like being a burden.”

“Don’t you ever think you’re a burden to me. I want you here. It can get lonely in this place, so it’s nice to have you here. I want you to stay.” Jesus Christ, he sounded like a desperate woman begging—but, *fuck*, she really needed to quit worrying about this.

And if this was what it took to get her to stick around, then he’d do it.

“Really?”

“Yeah.” He kissed the top of her head. Shit. He needed to stop doing that when she was awake.

“You’ll tell me if I start to annoy you?”

“Never gonna happen,” he said, his voice low and husky.

“Never gonna tell me, or never gonna get annoyed?”

“Never gonna get annoyed. Impossible.”

“Why? Because you have such amazing control over your emotions? Pono used to tell me that . . .”

“What did he say?” His head moved to get a better look at her.

Her cheeks pinked. “Well, he said

you were too rigid at times—like a robot.” She blushed a little on the apple of her cheeks.

“Do you think a robot would let you snuggle in bed with him all night long?” he teased.

“No,” she chirped and looked away.

He laughed. “Okay, breakfast. Lighter conversation would probably be better as well.”

“Control—it’s back,” she said.

Was she mocking him?

He smacked her right ass cheek and chuckled harder. “Breakfast—it’s important.”

“Yes, Sir,” she said, sounding like she was taking military orders.

Oh, fucking Christ. He was throbbing now. She had no idea what she'd just done to him.

He swung himself out from under her and left the room in a rush.

The second he was locked in the bathroom, he turned on his shower. And before he could even consider washing up, he had to stroke one out, imagining her saying those two words to him over and over again as he made love to her and showed her what she meant to him.

When he was done cleaning up, he could hear the water running through the pipes in the wall. She was showering in her bathroom on the other side of the house.

He got dressed, called in sick at

work and made them breakfast.

Twenty minutes later after the water had shut off in her bathroom, she still hadn't emerged.

He went after her even though he knew it was really early in the morning and most people weren't as energetic as he was at this time of day.

*Rap, rap, rap.*

"Jean, you okay?" he asked through the door.

"Fine."

"Fuck," he growled to himself. There was that accursed word again. "Let me in so I can see for myself."

"No, really, I'm okay."

"Open the door," he repeated, leaning into the door frame.



The door opened, and her eyes were red-rimmed, her hair wet and a tangled mess, and once more, her nipples were poking through her shirt.

Cold. Again.

He could warm her up.

Fuck, that would be bad.

The only way he'd be able to control himself was if . . .

“What can I do to help?” he asked softly.

His hand reached out, and the backs of his fingers traced down her cheek, chasing after a tear.

“Nothing.”

“I can hold you—would that help?”

She nodded, bit her upper lip and

limped her way over to his waiting arms.

“Did I make you cry somehow?”

“No,” she said, her voice tight.

“Liar. What did I do? Was it because I got out of bed and left abruptly?”

“Why do you have to be so direct and ask me such piercing questions?”

She smacked her hand on his chest and slid her forehead across his left pec.

“Answer me first—what did I do?”

“Yeah, I thought . . . Well, you took off, and I thought you regretted allowing me to sleep with you last night.” She gasped and covered her mouth again like she had earlier, then released it. “I

didn't mean, fuck—I mean, goddammit, it was—well, it was *not* like *that* . . . I meant sleeping, not *sleeping* with you . . .”

He imagined her luminous eyes going wide in mortification. Once more, she made him smile.

“It’s okay.” He pulled her back into a tight hug. “I knew what you meant, and you’re really cute when you get flustered.”

“I am?”

“You are.” He kissed the top of her head again.

Fuck. He needed to be muzzled or some shit.

His mouth was wet from her dripping hair.

When she pulled away, giving him a weak smile, he wiped the back of his mouth.

“Oh, shit! Sorry—I’m making a mess all over your pristine hardwood floors and getting you wet, too. I should’ve blown dry my hair.” She reached out and ran the pad of her thumb across his lips.

Her touch, even as slight as it was, sent the majority of his heated, very *male* blood, directly to his dick, making him ache uncontrollably.

His right eye twitched, and then his lids went heavy—his breathing went shallow.

“I don’t mind my floor getting wet. It happens . . .” His mind flooded with

dozens of ways he'd like her dripping fluids onto his floors and elsewhere in his house.

He swallowed.

"Breakfast?"

"Breakfast," he agreed.

He took her hand, pulled her toward the kitchen, and after she sat down, a guilty expression swam in her eyes.

"You made all this?" she choked out.

"Too much?"

"No, not too much for a former football player, but I'm just . . . My God—I'll be eating this the entire week I'm here," she said.

"Week?" he blurted.

“Oh, I . . . Well, I’ll be here a few days . . . Right? Is that okay?” Her voice was soft and faint at the end when she was asking his permission.

He grabbed the two plates off the counter and started to serve her up some breakfast. “I already told you—I’d love you to stay as long as you want.”

“Even if that’s indefinitely?” she joked.

“Sure—why not?”

Her tongue darted out and moistened that dip on her bottom lip. She pressed her mouth into a tight line, then exhaled through her nose. “Uh, because you’re a bachelor with needs, and no man wants to have a female roommate around when he’s bringing chicks back

home to his place for—”

She cut herself off, swallowed and stared with a blank expression at her breakfast.

“Continue.” He smirked.

“I don’t think I should,” she said, reaching for the generous plate of food he dished up for her. “Eggs? Wow. I love them, but Pono was allergic.”

“I know.”

“You do?”

“Yeah, you ordered them once at a restaurant, which I thought was odd. You almost drooled on them, then inhaled the things, and he told me why you did that afterward.”

“God, why am I so ill-mannered around you? You must think I’m

disgusting,” she said with a groan and rolled her eyes, then covered them with her right palm and settled her head into her hand.

He pulled her hand away and kissed the back of it. “Not. At. All. I told you—you’re honest and refreshing, and you go ahead and inhale those eggs. See if I stop you.”

She shoved the toast aside off her plate. It landed on the dark granite countertop. After an outburst of adorable giggles from her, she curved almost protectively around her plate like a starving animal and ate those eggs so fast he hoped she was still breathing.

He plated her up some more.

She ate those, too.



“Did you want some bacon?” They were still in the pan. He didn’t want to offend her because some women were horrified if he even mentioned bacon around them.

“God . . . bacon? Are you fucking kidding me?”

He grinned and cocked an eyebrow at her. Dirty mouth was right—when she was shocked by something. Oh, how that made him want her even more.

“I love bacon!” She leaned over, tried to grab two pieces and his instincts kicked in.

*Swaaaat!*

He smacked the back of her hand.

Her face immediately dropped.

“You hit me.”

“You deserved it.” He smiled bigger.

“To be hit?”

“To be taught.”

“With hitting?” She leaned away from him.

“With correction. Did it hurt?”

“My feelings, yes.”

“Did I hurt your feelings when I smacked your ass in bed?”

She turned dark red instantly.

“Well, no, but . . .”

“But what?”

“Okay, yes, it did hurt my feelings because right after that is when you ran away.” She frowned. “Sometimes I don’t understand you.”

“Ask me when you don’t

understand, and I'll explain."

She crossed her arms over her chest and stood up, moving off the breakfast stool.

"You know what, it's fine. I made a mistake. I can see that now. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude. I just thought that . . ." She started to walk away. He grabbed her by the arm, then pulled her back for round three.

She was in his arms, pressed up against his chest.

"In my world, when something's not right, it's corrected. I didn't want to hurt you, just teach you. Can you understand that?"

"I guess."

"Not I guess. This is not a multiple

choice question. It's a simple yes or no. Can you understand that?"

"Yeah, I can. But I don't want to be smacked that way."

"Okay, how about this—next time, I'll give you a warning. If you disregard my instructions, then I can smack you like that if you do it again." He bit his bottom lip and bared his top teeth at her while he growled. Fuck if he didn't want to bite her more than anything. Tear into her and take complete control.

She nodded. "I guess I can deal with that."

"No more guessing." He pinched her ass playfully to test her in this situation. Her breath hitched, and she jumped a little, but she didn't get upset

about it. This was good, so he kept explaining, “That’s your first warning. And in my kitchen, if I’m the one cooking, you may ask for more food, but you don’t simply take it out of the pan.”

“Okay.”

She sniffed and gripped his shirt.

God, he’d upset her that bad? How had he misjudged?

“Shit—too much—I’m sorry.” He leaned over, scooped her up and managed to grab two strips of bacon along the way.

“What’re you . . . Put me down,” she squealed and tried to wiggle out of his arms.

“Do I need to warn you on this, too? When you need affection, I’m gonna

give it to you. Which means if I hurt your feelings, you'll automatically receive a hug if I'm not in the middle of correction."

"What kind of . . . I thought you were an agent for singers—nobody said anything to me about you correcting people. Did Pono know you were . . ."

"Yes, he knew."

"Are you . . . ?"

"Am I what?" He held his breath and then sat down, taking her with him, securing her in his lap.

She went silent.

"If you're not going to answer me, which I would normally address, then I want you to eat what you wanted so badly," he said, placing a strip of bacon

at her lips.

Her mouth sealed shut, and she turned away.

“Oh, gonna be difficult, huh?” His jaw clenched. He wanted to spank her so badly, but it wasn’t the time. She was raw emotionally and needed time before he showed her what he really was. No sense in scaring her off.

She balled up into his chest, hiding her face away in his shirt.

“You’re gonna eat it, because I know you want it. Your pride isn’t going to get in the way of what you want—I won’t allow that under my roof.”

“Then I should probably find another place to stay for the next few days,” she said, muffled by his clothing.

Oh, fuck. Spanking. Lots of them. She needed it.

His hand flexed, and he gripped her tight into him. “No, you fucking won’t. You’re safe here, and I know you want to stay.”

She went silent, and the tears started up. Her back shook, and she cried for several moments.

“Do you think you disappointed me?” he asked softly. He stroked her hair like he did last night when he’d held her.

She shook harder and nodded.

“You didn’t, sweetie. I just . . . Fuck, I thought you could handle it, and I figured this was a basic rule most people had. Did I scare you?”



“No.”

“Then why are you crying so hard?” He cupped her cheeks, tilted her head back and kissed her forehead.

“I . . . I don’t know.”

“Yes, you do. Tell me.” He kissed the corner of her right eye. It was moist.

She reached up and wiped the salt water off his lips like she had after her shower when her hair had moistened his mouth. His eyes drifted closed, and he licked his lips after her finger was gone. *Fuck. Do that again . . .*

“I want you to like me,” she said, her voice tiny and full of dread.

“I do—so much. You don’t have to worry about that.”

“People don’t hit when they like

somebody,” she said.

“You’re telling me, in grade school, when little Timmy Jones pulled your pigtails, you didn’t punch him in the arm? You didn’t play around like that ever?” He yanked her hair to prove his point.

She gave him an exasperated look—her head tilted to the side a little. “I . . .”

“Did you?”

She blinked, and her expression went from annoyance, to shock, a tinge of rage and then finally morphed into mortification.

“I thought so. And didn’t you ever get in the mood with a guy you really liked, to bite him or pinch him or even

pull his hair?”

“God, this is . . .”

“Tell me,” he insisted.

“Yeah, of course I fucking did, but

...”

“But what?”

“I don’t do that with my friends,”

she said, pulling away.

“Why not?”

“Jesus, I didn’t even do that with Pono.” Her hands flung up in the air. She scooted back to the edge of his lap.

His hands flew out and gripped her waist.

“Be my friend, right now.”

“What?” She blinked and her mouth formed an O.

“Slap me for fun.”

“No!”

“Do it. See how much better you feel.” He grinned.

“No, I can’t . . .” She turned her head away, but not before he saw the heated look in her eyes.

“You know you want to,” he said, pinching her right hip.

She jerked away and smiled. “Stop that.”

“Stop what?” He did it to the other side.

Same reaction, only a little smaller.

“You’re gonna fall off my lap if you keep that up,” he warned.

He pinched the opposite hip.

“I said stop it!”

“Why?” He smirked.

“Because I don’t like it,” she said, but it came out voiced like a question.

“You mean, you’re not supposed to like it.” He baited her.

“Yeah—I mean, no—I mean, fuck! You’re confusing me.”

“Ask me—ask me so you’re not confused.”

Her cheeks pinked. “I wouldn’t even know what to ask you.”

“Set your palm over my heart right now,” he said.

She did it without a second’s worth of hesitation.

Fuck, she was killing him. Her left hand was on his chest, and her ring finger was missing her wedding band.

Oh good God . . . How was he supposed to keep from stripping her and fucking her now? “Feel that?”

“It’s racing.”

“Damn right it is. That’s what playing like this feels like it when it’s done right. Gets the blood pumping so fucking good, it’s a rush. Nobody’s getting hurt—not really. We’re having fun, and it gets better the more you do it—makes you feel almost high.” He took her hand off his heart, and he nipped at her index finger, then bit the tip, placing just enough pressure to make her question if he’d back off or bite harder. And of course, he also hoped it would remind her she had removed her wedding ring all on her own, and *that*

had to mean something.

Her eyes went wide, then scrunched directly after. “I don’t know if I want to hear this.”

She squirmed on his lap.

He sucked on her fingertip, then let it fall out of his mouth with a loud sucking sound.

“Jean, you’ve been telling people the truth your whole life when they ask you questions. You avoided the important one Pono asked you before you married. Wanna try it again? I’ll ask you for him—in his place. Was he the right man for you?”

She gulped, and a hiss of air escaped her. “No, he wasn’t.”

“Why?”

“No fire.”

He smiled so wide, his jaw was almost aching. “And have you ever met a man that was as honest as you are?”

“Well, Pono tried to be, but he—”

“No, that doesn’t answer the question. You’re diverting. Answer it truthfully. I’m asking you a direct question—have you ever met a man as honest as you are? When you ask a man a question, does he satisfy you by telling you the absolute truth?”

“No one except you,” she said, averting her gaze.

He tipped his chin back, and his eyes slid up in his head. Was she getting this?

“And what does that mean to you?”



he asked, his voice low, heavy and filled with grit.

“What *should* it mean?”

“Uh, uh. Answer.” His head fell back down into place, and she was looking back at him once more. He gazed into her light blue eyes—now slightly darker.

“I don’t know—but it scares me.” She wiggled on his knees a little.

“Now, ask me what you want to know about me.”

She bit her top lip, and her gaze moved down his body. “What are you?”

“Be more specific.” He gripped her chin when she tried to look away.

“I can’t. I don’t know how to ask it.”

“You do, and you can. You’re not getting off my lap ‘til you ask it.”

“Are you a Dom or something?” she asked in a rush.

“Do you already know the answer?” He leaned forward—his face an inch away from hers.

“Yes.”

“Then why are you afraid to ask?” Her breath spread out over his lips, and God, his mouth was watering.

“Because then I can pretend not to know, and it hurts a little less.”

“Why does it hurt at all?”

She shifted away. “Because I want to know more.”

He released her.

She got up, murmured she was

tired and wanted some time alone.

He watched her retreat to her room, and he went to the kitchen, had breakfast, cleaned up the mess after and waited for her to decide she was ready to hear more.

He had so much to tell her.

## Chapter 4

Jeanie closed the door and sat on the edge of the bed, fumbling with her phone, debating placing a phone call to the only person she could think of that might be able to help.

She wasn't even sure what she needed help with at this point, but she needed someone and something to make sense, dammit.

Jeanie set the phone down on the bed and refused to look at it.

Instead, she held her forehead in her hands and held back the tears of emotional exhaustion.

*Bzzzzz . . . Bzzzzz . . . Bzzzzz . . .*

Her phone bounced around on the

bed.

When she looked at the caller ID, she sighed and her shoulders dropped.

“Thank God!” she answered the call.

“Jeanie? You okay?”

“I . . . Jesus, I don’t know if I’m all right or not.” She reached back and pushed her hair up off her neck. It was sticking to her. How had he set her body on fire in such a short amount of time? She got up and turned the ceiling fan on.

“Well, maybe you can just listen for a few minutes. I called Rodney and got permission to speak to you about this . . . You sound like you need some support, so I . . .”

Jeanie shook her head.

“Permission? I don’t understand.”

“Yeah, I know you know . . .” Tia paused and something rustled on her end. “I used to be Mark’s submissive, and now I’m Rodney’s. I had to get permission.”

She said this like it was all so normal.

“Permission to speak to someone you already know? I’m your friend. I don’t get it.” Jeanie sighed. Her head was aching, and she was thirsty.

She got up, found her water bottle on the nightstand and gulped down a few mouthfuls.

“I can explain all this as we go along—the lifestyle, and how it all works—but for now, why don’t we

concentrate on what's bugging you?" Tia's voice was soothing, and already Jeanie's knotted-up stomach was relaxing.

"Okay, so you were his submissive—whatever that means," Jeanie said, her free hand flopping onto the bed. "I have no idea what I'm doing or what he wants from me."

"He wants you to be yourself," came the quick reply.

Jeanie glanced over at the door, making sure it was locked. Her shoulders hunched like she needed to keep this secret.

"Hey, I'm just glad he finally did something about how he feels about you. It's about damn time." Tia took a breath.

“I’m sure I’ll get in trouble for saying all this, but I figured you already knew—I mean, it’s not like he’s very subtle about it when he’s near you. The way that man hovers around you, it’s like you’ve got a gravity field made specifically for him.”

“You knew he had feelings for me when you were . . .” Jeanie swallowed, though her throat was still dry “. . . *with* him?”

Tia chuckled. “Yeah, I knew. It’s why we broke up. I was fine with sharing, but he didn’t want that.”

“Sharing with whom?” Jeanie’s whole face scrunched up. “Share? I don’t get it—God, I feel like you’re speaking a different language.” She ran her hand across her forehead and up into



her hair.

“Well, of course you’re confused. You’re so stuck on him, you can’t see anything *but* him—I’d be confused, too. I’m happy for you both, though. Like I said—‘bout damn time.” Tia laughed.

“*What?* I am not stuck on him! I just lost my goddamn husband,” Jeanie said as quietly as she could. She sounded mad, but really, she was terrified. Was she that transparent his ex could already tell she was completely wrapped up in Mark?

“Okay, stop with the ‘you’ve just insulted me’ routine. It’s not you, Jeanie. I know who you really are, and so does he. We’re not fooled. We talked about Pono and you all the time and how much

happier you'd be if Pono was a Dom. You were just begging to be dominated every time Mark was around."

"Why the fuck would you think that?" Jeanie flung herself back on the bed and draped an arm over her eyes. This was a nightmare.

"I'm sure you didn't even realize you did these things, but I thought it was adorable. Anytime we hung out with you guys, you'd stay as far away as possible from Mark and no one else. Then you'd start to gravitate toward him, but you'd look conflicted about being near him. Eventually you'd be hanging on his every word. You were constantly looking at him whether you were nearby or staying away, and if he was looking

right back—which he almost always was, since he’s obsessed with you—your eyes would immediately fling to the ground like you were busted and knew it. And if he gave you any command at all, you’d jump and immediately comply. You always looked relieved once that happened, like you were dying for the chance to do something—*anything* to serve him. Christ, he’d have to hide his hard-on after that. I should’ve been jealous and pissed since he never reacted that way to me, but I couldn’t. I just wanted him to be happy—and around *you*, he always is. He can barely breathe after he’s been near you for any length of time at all. He’d fuck hard after . . . I loved that part.”

Jeanie groaned. “Oh Jesus, *please* . . . I don’t want to hear this.”

The image of him doing anything even remotely sexual was simply too much for her to handle right now.

“Well, tough shit. I can hear it in your voice—you’re dying to know what you do to him.” Tia paused and gulped down some drink. “Do you know what he did three months ago after he saw you?”

“Do I want to know? I mean, *really*? I know you think I do, but . . . Ugh, I’m not sure I do.” Jeanie moaned and wiped her eyes. Her insides were in so many hideous twists and bends, she had no idea how she’d ever relax again.

“Yeah, you really, really do.” Tia

took a breath. “He was almost in tears, so fucked up over you, and I knew he felt guilty as hell for wanting his good buddy’s wife so desperately. He was about to burn the few pictures he had of you. I shoved them in his drawer, and I told him he should approach you and see if you’d join us.”

“A threesome? That’s what you meant by *sharing*?” Jeanie’s throat constricted and went drier still.

“Yeah. I thought he’d jump all over it, but instead, his eyes were filled with absolute turmoil. He gagged me, tied me up, and kept me there like that for several minutes as he ranted to himself about how you’d never want that—how he’d never do that to you.”

“To *me*? I . . . Sorry, Tia, but you’ve lost me . . .” Her heart clenched. He really sounded like he was torn up over her.

“He was damn near close to screaming at me for suggesting such a thing. I could tell he wanted you more than anything and was ready to claw his way out of here to get to you. But he’d never do that to his friend.”

“I still don’t get it,” Jeanie said in an exhausted exhale. “Why does this have to be so complicated?”

“I know it sounds crazy, but it’s really very simple. He craves you more than you know. And what I meant by he’d never do that to you . . . Well, let me just say, he’s extremely intense, but

he always holds back. I don't think he'd be able to do that with you since he wants you so much. He's probably more scared than you are."

"Fuck—what am I supposed to do about this? I . . . I don't think I'd ever be able to be what he needs."

Tia laughed so hard it sounded like she was choking. "You already are, hon. Just enjoy it. I *am* actually a little jealous, but only because I can imagine the crazy, sexual things he's going to do to you."

"Jesus Christ—I haven't said yes to anything, and you make it sound like it's already decided." Jeanie rubbed her eyes.

"Your body's decided even if you

haven't. Just see if you can resist him. It's a losing battle—the hormones always win with that man. There's no point in trying to resist him. Give in—you'll be glad you did."

"*Celestia . . .*" Jeanie sighed.

"How can you talk this way about your ex? I mean, you guys were a couple for quite a while."

"I never loved him. He certainly never loved me. He was sick of rotating subs all the time, and I felt the same about my situation with never finding the right Dom. It was convenient, we liked the same things, but I'm a switch, and he didn't really want that. He wanted a sub solely devoted to him. I'll tell you this, though—you never have to worry about



that man straying. He's so fixated on you, there's no way he'd ever even look at another woman again if you said you wanted him, too. I'm not kidding—when you were around—his eyes were only on you, unless he was dealing with me, and then only briefly. Or if Pono was talking to him. Other than that, he revolved around you. I might as well not have been there . . . It was almost frightening the way he spoke of you with such reverence afterward. And if I said anything even remotely negative? Holy shit, I'd get the spanking of a lifetime."

"He spanked you because of *me*?" Jeanie's voice cracked, and she shoved up to sitting. Her heart about dropped into the mattress. She could never be

okay with someone else being harmed because of her. How was that even something to consider? Why would he do that? Her eyes cut to the door once more.

Then something tightened inside her, and her clit actually throbbed.

Oh God . . . This sounded scary. And *way* too erotic for her own good. Why was her body reacting this way?

Her nipples tightened, and her breathing deepened.

Mark. *Spanking*.

Jesus—kill her now. Preferably with a paddle, since that was what she was now visualizing—she was *that* demented.

“Yeah.” Tia laughed again. “He

knew I was baiting him. I was pushing him on purpose, being a brat. He never spanked me in anger. Actually, he thought it was fun. He got out his aggression, and I got exactly what I wanted.”

“You *wanted* him to do that to you?” Jeanie’s throat was painfully dry. She searched her dresser once more for that water bottle.

She blinked and realized she’d never set that thing there right next to the lamp. Mark must’ve done it. But when?

She ripped the lid off and gulped the rest down in several thirsty swallows.

“Of course I wanted it. I may not be in love with him, but he’s such an

amazing man, and a fabulous Dom, that I wanted to help him. He was about to come unhinged. He needed an outlet, and since I knew he didn't really want to be fucking me, it was the next best thing for him. He's got the most incredible control. God, you'll be so happy with him. Please, don't . . .” Tia's voice was strangled with thick emotions “ . . . just don't hurt him, okay? He really loves you.”

“How can you say that? He barely knows me . . .” Jeanie shut her eyes and tipped her head back. Night. Mare. And she was stuck in the quicksand, already unable to get out. How had this happened to her? She came here to bury her husband, not get tangled up in a sexy

man's need to control her.

“He picked Pono's brain about you anytime he could. He was constantly calling him and asking how you were doing, what you were both up to.”

“He did?”

“Yeah.” Tia swallowed. “But thankfully, Pono never picked up on what he was really doing. Mark would be in a pissy mood after—feeling guilty again for doing that to his friend. But he couldn't stop himself. He wanted to protect you, even though he knew you weren't his. Mark has this deep need to keep you safe. You probably didn't notice this either, but last time you both came to visit and had dinner with us, he moved your second glass of wine away

from you. You were drinking too much and—”

“I had to. Mark made me extremely nervous, and the only way I could be around him was . . .” Jeanie trailed off. Christ—she’d just admitted to being . . . *what*? Insanely attracted to this man? Well, who the fuck wasn’t? He was gorgeous, and his intimidating demeanor meant she’d want him even more. Yeah, she could barely breathe around him either—he was that overpowering with his presence. And she craved it probably more than he craved her. But how would she ever admit that after her husband had barely passed? This was sick! She was a twisted bitch!

“I know, hon. I know. You were a

nervous wreck around him, but he took your drink when you weren't looking, dumped most of it into his glass and then he didn't touch it."

"Pono didn't notice this?"

Tia chuckled. "That man was oblivious to everything going on around him. Besides, I'd distract him, chat him up so Mark could talk to you. But you would almost clam up and blush, and stammer. It was adorable."

"I did?" Jeanie choked on her words. She was never any of those things. In fact, with Pono, she always worried she was being too bossy. Her entire life, she came across as confident and put-together. How did Mark turn her into this simpering fool without even

trying?

“Think about it, Jeanie . . . Think about how you could barely look at him. Why do you think that was?”

“I . . . I don’t know.”

“You do too. You want him more than you can possibly believe. And you know he returns it. It’s like a fucking inferno being near you two. I kept thinking at some point you’d leave Pono and come after him, but you never did.”

“Dammit! I thought Mark hated me. I thought he couldn’t stand being around me, and he was looking out for his friend’s best interest.”

“Why would he do that?”

“Because it was obvious I wasn’t the right woman for Pono. I didn’t make



him blissfully happy,” Jeanie blurted.

“Ahh . . . Now, we’re getting there. This is what I kept telling Mark. You felt guilty. God, you two are quite the pair—Mark feeling guilty for taking any piece of you he could, like a greedy man, and *you* pushing Mark and Pono away because you’re insecure and think you can’t satisfy either of them. Stop doing that to yourself. It’s time to let yourself be happy, and I have no doubt you’ll be so happy with Mark, you won’t even recognize yourself anymore.”

“Hey . . . I can’t . . . I need to . . . I’ll talk to you later, ‘kay? I need to go to Pono’s parents’ house. But I . . . I’m sure I’ll need to,” Jeanie stammered. She was a mess, and her tongue was heavy and

barely moving.

There was so much to take in, and her mind was spinning—unraveling fast. And now she had to deal with his family, when guilt already clouded around her.

But why? Why would she feel guilty? She hadn't done anything wrong.

“Anytime, sweetie. Call me whenever you want. I’m here for both of you. He’s still my friend.”

Jeanie released a stuttering sigh. “Talk to you later.” She ended the call, and her mind raced almost as much as her heart.

How was she supposed to face Mark after this? And oh, dear Lord—Pono’s parents? How could she be near them when her head was now filled with

images of Mark, staring at her during past get-togethers and him watching out for her, doing what was best for her?

The wine comment. Fuck! That really got to her. It hit her straight in the gut and funneled down to her pussy, making it clench and moisten. What kind of a man would take the time—give that much attention to a woman he might never have?

Her eyes misted, and her heart clamped down like those knots in her body were encroaching on its space.

She got up, turned the knob and took several deep breaths before walking out that door.

He was standing in the hallway a few feet away, staring at her door with a

concerned look on his face.

“You okay?” he asked, his voice low and steady like the thrum of a heartbeat.

Even those two words from him did something to her. She braced her hand on her stomach to keep herself steady and from possibly throwing up.

“Did you hear my conversation?”

His nose wrinkled. “No, Jean. I respect your privacy. I kept a few feet away so I purposefully wouldn’t hear. I’m not a controlling asshole.”

“I know that,” she said, her chin tucked down and her gaze barely on him.

“We need to talk,” he began.

She held up a hand and swallowed, shaking her head. “It’ll have

to wait. I need to get over to the Finaus' home. If you don't want to take me, then I'll catch a cab."

"No, you won't. I'm going with you."

She smiled for a second and reflected on what Tia had said.

*Protective.* Yeah, he was. And it made her pulse speed up—a lot.

"Okay." She blinked and shuffled toward him two steps.

"You're not going to fight me on this? You seemed worried yesterday when I kept holding your hand and touching you." His eyes searched her face.

"I was worried it looked like we were together as a couple," she

answered, her stomach flipping when she remembered her hand in his.

“And what if we were?”

“Gaaaawd,” she groaned and turned her head away from him. “I can’t handle this right now . . .”

“You need to tell me—what’s so wrong with it? I get you want to keep his family happy, but do you think they’d be upset if you found someone else to take care of you?”

Her head snapped toward him, and so many emotions bubbled up out of her that she had to clasp her hands behind her back so she wouldn’t lash out at him. Why was she feeling so violent? What was he doing to her? “Pono never took care of me!”

“I know, and it pissed me off to no end. He should’ve.”

“It’s none of your goddamned business,” she all but shouted.

“You *should* be angry. It was his job as your husband to take care of you, and he failed in that regard.”

“How would you know?” Her voice lowered and filled with painful longing, but not for Pono.

He took a few steps closer and stopped far enough away he couldn’t reach her with his hands. Was he doing this on purpose—acting like the proverbial carrot before the stubborn horse’s face?

Dear God, she was sweating again. It was like she was back in sweltering

Phoenix instead of breezy, cool California.

“I know because I talked to him all the time. I told him he needed to step up and be a man—take care of you. You did too much for him and your marriage. He knew I was right, and he . . . Forget it.” His fists balled up. “Whenever you’re ready, I’ll take you over.”

“Okay.” She dipped her head down, moistened her lips and said, “Thank you, Mark, for everything. I do like knowing I have a friend here that’s looking out for me.”

“I’ll always look out for you,” he said, his voice firm.

She nodded, went to grab her purse and decided she only needed a few



bucks to buy herself some dinner afterward, so she left it behind.

When she went back in the hallway, he had one hand cupped over his forehead and looked deep in thought.

“Hey, you okay?” she asked, stepping forward and without thinking, running her palm over his thickly muscled shoulder and down his side. He trembled for a second, then his piercing eyes swung on her.

“You’re touching me.” He stopped breathing.

“I am.”

“I . . . If you want . . .”

She was panting. God, she was so aroused, it wasn’t even funny. And here, all she’d done was touch his shoulder

and ribs.

“I . . . don’t know what I want,” she admitted.

He turned to face her directly. “I know you’re scared and confused, but I can help you, Jean. Let me.”

“Help me how?”

“Give me two weeks. I can do this—I can show you things—open you up to love again.” His fingers flexed, then softened.

She blinked and her mouth gaped.

“Mark . . . I . . .”

“Say yes. You need this, and so do I. Two weeks. You can even house-shop during that time, and I’ll help you with that as well. Just stay, and say two weeks are mine.”

“What does two weeks even mean?” Her forehead creased.

“It means you’re mine for two weeks—devoted to me.”

“I’m not a sub, and I need some time to myself. I know I was always working hard to please Pono, but I—”

He covered her mouth and looked completely anguished. “Please me. That’s all it means. Do what I say, and ask questions when you need to, but you focus on me entirely, and it’ll release you. You’ll be free—I *promise*, and I *never* lie.”

She swallowed, pressed her lips tight and when his hand fell away, she inhaled, then a barrage of words tumbled out of her—“I want the mornings to

myself. I want to be able to cook dinner for you if I'm staying here for free for two weeks."

"Oh, it won't be free." He smirked.

"I'm not a damn call girl."

"Hey, I never said that." He gripped her chin and gazed right in her eyes with so much focus and determination, there was no way she could look away, though she desperately wanted to. "You're the most innocent, pure woman I know—and it's one of the many things I love about you."

"Love?"

"Yes, fucking love. I don't know what Tia said to you, but I'm sure she mentioned that at some point. And just so

you know, she reports back to her Dom anything you tell her, and most likely, he'll inform me of what was said as well, so she—”

“Are you kidding me?” Her eyes narrowed. “So everything I just told her in confidence . . . ?”

He sighed hard and heavy. “I’m not trying to be a jerk here, but she knows what a Dom needs. She’s trained to know.”

“And *I* don’t know. I don’t know what the hell I’m doing here . . .” Her eyes drifted down, and he tipped her head back.

“Don’t do that. Look. At. Me.”

Her eyes popped back up, and she bit the insides of her cheeks as her feet

shifted around. “I’ll give you two weeks, but you’ll be disappointed. I’ve never been able to make a single man happy in my life. I try—I try really hard, but I always get it wrong.”

“You won’t with me,” he said, his gaze steady, his voice husky, “because you’re not going to be leading—I will. And I’ll make sure both our needs are always met. That’s another promise.”

“That’s a lot of promises.”

“Sir.”

“*What?*” Her forehead creased so tight it almost stung, and her head jolted back a little.

His grip tightened on her chin, and his other hand cupped the back of her neck. “You call me Sir, and it begins

now.”

“But we’re going to Pono’s paren  
—”

“Kiss me, Jean. No more discussion right now.” He leaned in and swallowed up her bleating cry of protest.

Her arms immediately wrapped around his broad back. Before she knew it, he pulled her hands off him, had both her wrists clasped in one of his, thrust above her head and she was glued up against a wall.

Sweating? That was . . . She was on fire.

She whimpered when his erection pressed into her stomach. His tongue invaded her mouth, took over and his

other hand ran softly down her side. The contrast between the rough and soft made her knees buckle.

She was slipping down the wall.

His hand went to her ribs, then moved down and wrapped around her waist. He pulled her hips into his and made this hungry, devouring moan. Her pussy clenched.

Shit. He was so hard and breathing like he was about to come undone.

“Do you know how much I want you? How long I’ve waited for this . . . Christ, Jean . . . You drive me absolutely fucking nuts for you.” He nipped at her neck, sucked at the curve and then his breath washed down her shirt. “So many times I thought about just throwing you



over my shoulder and taking off with you—that's how insane I am over you."

Goose bumps flowed down her chest, and her nipples tightened.

Her words were tied up inside her, lost in the millions of knots he'd created inside her.

"Two weeks will never be enough with you," he said, his voice husky and deep.

His tongue washed over the dip at her throat.

A split second later, he let go of her and she swayed in her spot.

"Fuck . . ." she breathed.

"Yeah, I want to, but we've gotta be somewhere." He adjusted himself in his pants, and for the first time ever, she

braved a long hard look at his crotch.

He was fucking gigantic.

She swallowed. And her throat, that had previously been dry, was now drowning in saliva.

What the hell was wrong with her? She was staring at Pono's friend's dick.

"Let's go," he said, voice raspy.

She was propelled forward by him, and it wasn't until she was in his car, speeding away, that she realized this was insane.

She'd just agreed to be his, and they were going to her in-laws right now. He'd behave, right?

She glanced over at him, and his jaw was set tight, but there was a look of smugness in his eyes.

Shit. This was going to be . . .  
awkward? Amazing? The end of the  
Jeanine she'd always known and  
disliked?

Ah God, he'd already turned her  
life upside down.

## Chapter 5

Jeanie was holding her breath.

“I’m actually glad to be here,”  
Mark said.

He pulled into Pono’s parents’ neighborhood, and she made a face when he parked the car.

“What’s wrong?” He turned the car off.

“It’s just . . . I’m sorry.  
Everything’s so different now. Every time Pono and I ever came here, he’d take five minutes to park the car. He couldn’t ever decide which spot would be the best.”

“Well, seeing as how you’re wearing heels, I didn’t want you to have

to walk far. I can always move the car if his family needs me to.”

She smiled.

His heart lifted like the corners of his mouth.

“So beautiful,” he said. “I can’t stop looking at you.”

“Yeah, me too—I mean with you. You’re . . . Well, you’re very distracting with how good-looking you are,” she said and ducked her head down with a shy glance his way every few seconds.

He wanted to lean over and kiss her so badly, but there was no way he could do that here.

“Jeanie! Jeanie!” Marly screeched and flew at the car.

“Looks like the president of your

fan club is here to greet you,” he said, grinning.

He got out of the car before Jeanie could make a comment back.

Marly jumped around behind him as he leaned in to help Jeanie out of the car.

Jeanie’s white summer dress was modest and had petite navy flowers all over the skirt, but something about it turned him on so much he wondered how he was going to get through this without a giant erection.

“Smell good, too,” he told Jeanie, leaning in right as he pulled her all the way up.

Another pink-cheeked look and innocent smile, and he was even harder.

He locked up the car and closed it up.

Jeanie glanced at him once more over her shoulder, eyes soft and seemingly captivated by him.

Jesus, fuck—she was killing him with those furtive looks of hers. How much did she think he could take before he'd snap and do that caveman shit where he chucked her onto his shoulder and took off, never to return?

He swallowed, watched Jeanie hug Marly and when they were done greeting each other the way women did with chirping voices and excited gestures, he expected her to leave him behind.

“Mark—this way. I wanna show

you something,” Jeanie said, holding her hand out for him to take it.

His smile doubled in width, and he took it without even thinking about it.

Marly’s eyes narrowed for a second, then she smoothed out her expression.

“What does he need to see?” Marly asked, voice tight.

“The garden . . . I always loved your mama’s gardens. They’re so peaceful, and she grows things here I’ve never seen anywhere else.”

“Taro,” Marly said, clucking her tongue at the end and rolling her eyes.

“What’s wrong with taro?” he teased her.

“No one likes poi. That’s old



people food. But Mama insists on making it anytime we have a gathering. I think she made some for you today. Bluck! I'm not eating it." Marly loped away.

"Wow, she made me poi? That's . . ." Jeanie put a hand over her throat.

"What's the big deal? She's made it for me before," he replied.

She tugged him along toward the backyard. They entered through the side gate that was wide open.

"It's considered a sacred, hallowed tradition. Pono told me I shouldn't ever turn my nose up at poi when it was offered. It's part of their culture from long ago, and if it was presented at a table, they thought of it as

a way to bring in the spirit of Haloa.” She paused and inhaled sharply, her eyes glazing over as she stared at the ground, unseeing. “Oh God . . . They’re summoning Pono for me.” Her head dropped further. “Haloa is the spirit of their Hawaiian ancestors. Why would they do that? I wanna move forward, not wallow.”

“I’m sure it’s not what you think. I mean, they’re not even Hawaiian—they’re Tongan.”

“Yeah, but they lived in Hawaii for quite a while and adopted a lot of their customs. I thought you knew this . . .”

He cupped her chin, tipping her head up to him. His stomach flipped

when she licked her lips like she was ready for a kiss. He glanced around, and when he saw there was no one around, he stole a quick one. “I was teasing you. I did already know that about them. But you taste good, too. Very distracting. Mmm . . .”

“Stop. You’re giving me a big head, Sir,” she said with a soft giggle.

“Yeah, I’ve got a similar problem right now.” He dropped his eyes to his groin.

She clapped a hand over her mouth and giggled a little louder. “You’re so bad.” She averted her gaze.

“Not for you I’m not,” he said, leaning in and whispering in her ear as he brushed her long, dark hair over her

shoulders. “I’m very, very good for *you*.”

“That remains to be seen.” She sauntered off, leaving him behind.

He chased after her. “Always wanted to re-enact the Garden of Eden. Sounds like absolute Heaven to me to make love to my woman in a lush, green garden of sin.” His voice was low, gritty and completely filled with longing.

He brushed the back of his index finger down her arm.

Her jaw clenched for a second.

All right—he wasn’t that big of a dick. He needed to cut it out before he pissed her off, or worse—scared her away.

She jerked her head toward the

garden. Was she hinting she wanted him to take the lead?

Well, fuck . . . Of course that was what he wanted.

He stepped forward, and she almost matched his stride, lagging just barely behind him.

A rush of adrenaline rippled through him as visions hit him of having her on a leash, following along this exact same way.

He took a deep breath, and they moved into the garden surrounded with berry bushes on all sides.

Reminded him of the story *Secret Garden* with how secluded it felt.

His arms flexed, begging him to hold her and kiss her again, but instead,

he turned to her and said, “What do you like best about this place?”

“I like how I’m surrounded with a feeling of love and peace, like nothing else matters. Birds fly over, and sometimes they squawk. It even gets a little humid in here at times if I sit in here too long, but my mind is always clear in this place.” She moved toward a love swing at the far corner.

He caught up to her and set his palm on the middle of her back. Not overly intimate, but he needed this connection, the feel of her body on his skin somewhere, even if it was small.

He sat and guided her down to his side—their thighs brushing against each other’s.

“So, when your mind is clear, it’s much easier to make decisions. While I have you here and you’re in this state, tell me what you’re thinking about our little arrangement.”

She stiffened at his side. “I’m thinking two weeks isn’t going to be enough.”

He smiled. “I agree. What do you suggest we do about that?”

She turned to him, and he smirked.

“That’s not what I meant.” She sucked in some air, and her abs contracted. A moment later, she shifted away from him a little. “I’m feeling like I’m at a disadvantage, Sir. You’ve been finding out all sorts of things about me over the last few years, and I only know

what I was able to find out in our brief, sporadic encounters, or if Pono shared something with me about you.”

“Ask me anything—I’m open about my life, especially with you.”

“I don’t want to do it this way,” she said, her lips trembling. Was she frightened? He took her hand and ran his thumb along the edge of it with soothing strokes. “I want a solid week of talking like this—of us getting to know each other in a natural way, organically, before I let you do whatever you want to me.”

“I would never just *do* what I want with you. It doesn’t work that way.”

“Okay . . .” She blew out a huff of air and stared up at the sky. “I’ll tell you



my understanding of how this works, and you tell me if I'm right or not."

"Go ahead." His thumb kept caressing, and a hum tingled in his hand from the contact.

"I don't know why, but for some reason I think of this lifestyle in terms of architecture." He chuckled, and she continued on. "I envision myself as the designer of a home." His insides warmed a little at the thought of her saying something as cozy and inviting as a home, instead of a building or something else a little more impersonal. She swallowed.

He nodded. "Okay, I'm with you so far. Keep going."

"So, I set up the parameters and

give the guidelines of what the home should look like after it's built. You're the contractor, and you get to build the scene or the home, with whatever materials and tools you choose. If I think it'll mess up the outcome, then I can stop the building mid-process, and you'll rebuild the scene another way." She exhaled like she was exhausted and her shoulders slumped forward. "I know it's dorky, but it's all I got."

He smiled, and his thumb trailed up to her wrist. "Not dorky at all. You're a very perceptive little one—yet another thing I love about you."

"It's hard for me when you say that, because I almost get jealous."

"Jealous of what?" His brows

pushed together.

“That you have a head start on all of this. You’ve been trained, you know me, and I want to know everything about you and your world, but I’m so far behind I worry I’ll never catch up no matter how hard I try,” she said, her voice low and slightly scratchy.

“You don’t ever have to worry about that. I’ll carry you.”

She snorted. “I just don’t know who I am with you . . .”

“You’re the woman you’ve repressed for so long—she’s a stranger to you. Tell me this—when you were married and you sacrificed everything for his happiness, what kept you going?”

“I don’t know. I kept thinking

someday I'd get it right, and it would all make sense." She gave a half-shrug.

"You're submissive all the way, deep down to the bone, so it's in your nature to sabotage yourself at times by giving away too much of yourself. I'm going to make sure both our needs get met. That's never going to happen to you again."

"You know, some people would say that's what a controlling asshole would say."

He chuckled low in his gut. "Some might say that, but you know better."

Her brow popped up. "I do?"

"Yes, you do." He brushed her hair over her shoulder with his free hand again. Her shoulder tightened, then

shivered directly after contact. He set his hand over hers to settle her. “A controlling asshole would take no thought for what’s best for you. I would never do that to you. Pono may have, but I won’t—*ever*.”

She choked on her exhale. “He cared about what I wanted.” Her voice escalated.

“Go ahead and shout it, little one. I’m fine explaining to his family we’re back here and that your husband held you back.”

“How do you figure?” Her hand yanked out of his, and she crossed her arms over her chest, making the most delicious cleavage imaginable from his vantage point.

Fuck, she was so curvy and sweet.

“He went to school and finished, and you did what? Remind me . . .”

“I worked to help pay for bills and get him through, but we decided that together,” she said, her right eye twitching like she was barely holding back the tears.

“You never decided that together. You didn’t have a choice, sweetheart,” he said, his tone going soft and his eyes full of empathy. “You couldn’t have. You want to serve—to please. You saw that he needed this, and even if he’d told you that you should both go to school simultaneously, there’s no way you would’ve ever done that.” He reached out and stroked her hair for a second,

then dropped his hand.

He already missed touching her.

“Did he tell you that?”

“No, why?” His brows pushed together again, and his eyes searched hers.

“Because you *just* said exactly what happened, except . . .” She looked away.

“*Except?*” He leaned toward her and inhaled the scent of her hair. Lovely—so feminine and subtle with her mix of clean, sexy and sweet. Very alluring.

“Except when he told me he thought we should both go to school together, I almost shut down. I couldn’t even think about what he was saying, so I had to walk away. We talked about it

later after we . . . Well, you know.”

“Made love?”

“Yeah.”

“And how was that? Was it emotional?”

“No.” She tightened her arms around herself and still kept her eyes off him. “And not that it’s any of your business, *Sir*,” she said this word like it was a curse, “but it was stable.”

He exhaled in a slow, steady stream. “That’s another way of saying it was predictable and polite.”

“It was quiet and nice. There’s nothing wrong with that.” Her head finally snapped back at him.

“There’s a reason it’s called vanilla. Not just because it’s safe, but



because when a relationship first starts out, everything's exciting, hot and heavy. Then things die down over time. He touches the woman *there* X many times, she comes. She puts her mouth on him *there*, he gets hard. He pumps inside her quietly. No one says a word, and no one really gets what they want but a meager orgasm they could've attained at their own hand. Vanilla gets old real quick, gets bland and it doesn't even matter if it is still a basic, staple flavor. No one wants to have vanilla every day."

"It's boring," she supplied.

He smiled and leaned into her, his lips at her ear, parting through her hair. "Exactly . . . And I don't fuck a woman into being bored, nor do I do boring

anywhere in my life at all.”

She turned to him, her lips mere inches from his. “You’re right. It was exactly like that.”

“And you don’t want that anymore. It’s not you—never was. I can see the real you, lurking under that calm surface of yours.”

“How do you know?” She blinked, and her soft breath pelted his lips.

He licked his lower one and paused. “Because I know you. When you breathe, it’s like you’re dying to break out of your mold. It’s intoxicating to watch, while simultaneously being my own personal torture, because I always knew you wanted more.”

Her chest expanded, her arms went

lax and her hands went to her lap. “We should go in now. They’re probably wondering where we are.”

“Marly knows,” he said.

“Yeah, she does, but I don’t want them suspecting anything.” Her face suddenly paled. “You will behave, right, Sir?”

“I’m not a creepy bastard. I respect their family, but it doesn’t mean I won’t touch you in innocent ways. Now that you’ve told me you’ll give me three weeks, since you’ve added a week to our already agreed two, I have to touch you any chance I can get.”

She smiled, but there was worry in her eyes. “I think as long as you’re discreet, I’d love that.”

“I know you will, and I will, too. I’ll take care of you. I’ll make sure you get through this as painlessly as possible.”

She hugged him and then backed away. “Oh, sorry . . .” She offered a shy smile.

“It’s fine. I’m glad you did that. It’s gonna be hell staying away from you in there.” He kissed her nose, stood and helped her up.

They walked out of the garden, and he whispered, “Such a sweet little thing, you are. I’ll want to eat you instead of the food.”

Her shoulder rose up, and he smirked when she shivered.

He quickened his pace, she

followed along and when they got to the house, Marly was right inside, speaking to her mother.

“—and he stands really close to her all the time. Don’t you think that’s wrong? Pono just died!”

Her mother was stirring something on the stove. “He’s friendly. Mark’s a good kid. Pono probably told him to watch out for her. Now stop fussing. Go feed the ducks.”

“But she’s Pono’s!”

“She knows who she is—and right *now*, she doesn’t belong to anyone,” her mother said, tone sharp. “She’s a grown woman, and you need to mind your own business.”

Marly stomped out of the kitchen

and didn't even see them as she headed down the hall. A few seconds later, they heard her door slam shut.

Mark took Jeanie's hand and led her through the living room into the family room.

Pono's father was shining something in his hand.

"I've brought your guest of honor," Mark said.

"Oh, hi, Mark . . . Jeanie." Kueili looked up from his task and smiled.

"Lunch should be done soon."

"Smells great," she said.

"Yeah, my wife's always cooking something that makes my pants shrink on me. I haven't needed a belt in years." Kueili laughed.

“Is it okay if we take a seat?” she asked.

“Sure, help yourself.” Kueili frowned. “You’re always welcome here—this is your home just as it is ours.” He looked at Mark. “You too.” His face pinched for a second. “You were always there for our son, and we’ll never forget that.”

“And he was there for me. We’ve always been very different from each other, but we respected and admired those unique traits that made us so opposite.” Mark smiled, and Jeanie scooted a little closer, making his belly warm.

“Mark’s good at protecting those he cares about,” she added.

“Yes, he is.” Kueili set down the polishing cloth, stood up and walked over to Jeanie. “And I’m always grateful for that.” He extended his hand out to her—his fist closed tightly over some object. “This is for you.”

She held her hand out, facing up, palm cupped, and he placed something in the center of her hand.

“I thought you should have this,” he said.

Her eyes welled up, and her face contorted. “Pono’s wedding ring? How did you . . . ?”

“I took it. I wasn’t supposed to, but when his mother wasn’t around and I was left alone with his body, I slipped it off his finger. I thought you’d need it.”



“I don’t know what to say.” She gaped at the object in her shaking hand.

“You don’t have to say anything.” Kueili beamed down at her. “All that matters is that you find happiness, and you take hold of it.”

He stared at her for a moment, his eyes misted and then Pono’s dad left the room.

Mark’s hand immediately went to hers.

She ripped it out of his. “You’re trying to take the ring?”

“No.” His brow slanted into a V. “I would never do that. You just went through”—he groaned—“and I wanted to help you feel better.”

“I’m fine, okay? I don’t need you

to coddle me.” She stood up and looked like she was going to go after Kueili. “Are you coming?” she asked, craning her head over her shoulder, then looking disappointed. Had she expected him to automatically follow? Obviously, she failed to understand how a Dom operated. He was fine with her showing him the garden, taking his hand initially, but that was about the extent of what he’d allow.

“I’ll be there for you no matter what, but if you ever need space . . .” He gave her a firm look.

“I know,” she said softly. Her right shoulder rolled forward, and she rested her chin on it for a second. “I’m sorry I acted like that. I’m not sure what

happened.”

He came to her side and kept his distance. “It’s completely understandable. You don’t need to worry about me.”

“But I will.” She took a shuddering breath. “You protect people you care about, and *I* worry about the people I care about. I can’t stop that part of me any more than you can yours.”

He brushed her hair over her shoulder, his new favorite innocent gesture around her in public, and inhaled her beautiful, spine-melting scent. God, he wanted her wrapped around him right now—to be able to embrace her and free her soul from years’ worth of guilt she never should’ve had.

She handed him the ring, and her eyes softened. “Will you keep this for me?”

He had pockets—she didn’t with her dress and no purse on her. A beat later, he hid it safely away. “Of course I will. I’d be honored to do that.”

“It’s not because I don’t have a place to keep it safe right now—it’s because I trust you, and I’m sorry I snapped a few moments ago.”

His stomach flipped so hard, he had to lean back into his heels to steady himself. God, she had his eyes welling now, too, because he was so touched by her statement and show of faith. He tried to swallow down the thick emotions swirling in his body.

“You’re forgiven, Jeanie,” he said, finally feeling like he’d earned the right to call her that.

She smiled, and her eyes glistened with water like Pono’s dad.

“*Jeanie*—I’m glad you called me that, Sir.”

“I am, too.”

She blinked, and her gaze went down to the floor. The moment was intensely intimate as they stood in the hallway.

“And, just so we’re straight—I’ll only let you worry about me and others unless it’s hurting you, then there’s no way I’m gonna allow it.”

She smiled and looked him in the eye once more. He put his hand on her

lower back, and instantly, he felt at home again.

She sighed. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, my sweet little thing.”

She moved with him and whispered, “I don’t know why I like the sound of that, but I do.”

“It’s because you like the sound of us being together.” He led her into the kitchen.

She gave him a questioning look, almost like she was asking him how he knew she wanted to be taken to this exact spot.

“Can we help you with anything, Toloa?” he asked.

“Just set the table, would you?”

She pointed at the plates, cups and silverware she had set out on the counter.

“Sure,” Jeanie answered.

“Whatever you need.”

Mark maneuvered himself behind her as she went to grab the stack of plates. “*No, that’s your line to me.*” He ran his fingertip down her spine, then pulled the plates out of her hands.

She gave him a mock pissed off look, fighting off a smile, then grabbed the cups and utensils instead.

“It’s going to be a nice lunch,” Toloa said loudly as they were on their way out of the room.

“It always is when you’re cooking,” Kueili said as he walked into

the room.

Jeanie smiled and followed Mark into the dining area.

As soon as the table was set, the family filtered in.

“Oh, Jay—I didn’t know you were here,” Jeanie said to Pono’s younger, eighteen-year-old brother.

He was only two years older than Marly, but he was a foot and a half taller than her. He’d probably be taller than Pono’s six-foot-five in a few months—the kid kept growing and never seemed to stop. Hell, that would mean he’d dwarf Mark as well.

Not many people managed that.

“Yeah, I was outside. I just put all Jeanie’s gifts from the funeral in a box



by your car,” Jay told Mark. “Plus—it gets hot in this house—I keep telling Mom to turn the air conditioning on in the summer, but she never listens. At least Pono used to be able to talk her into it, but maybe it’s because he was the favorite.” He nudged his mother.

She glared at him, then snorted. “He was older than you, not the favorite, and I listen to all my children.”

He sat down next to Jeanie, and Marly entered the room, eyeing Mark right away.

She scowled when Mark sat on the other side of Jeanie. Really, he ought to see if she wanted to sit next to the guest of honor, but at this point, he didn’t give a shit what Marly wanted. He was here

for Jeanie—to get her through.

When he glanced over at Jeanie's hand, he expected to see her wearing her wedding ring again, but it was absent. She hadn't put it back on.

A warm, honeyed feeling drifted through his body and then coated the insides of his chest at her bravery to show up here without wearing it. It sent a clear signal to Pono's family she was moving on.

*She doesn't want to wear it. She wants me . . .*

"Sit down, please, so we can say the blessing on the food," Toloa told her daughter, standing a few feet away, looking rigid and mad as hell.

"How about I go get the food

first?”

“Not today. We’ll all serve ourselves. The food stays in the kitchen,” her mother said.

“Then what was the point in setting the table?” Marly crossed her arms over her stomach.

“There are reasons you don’t always need to know.” Toloa pointed at the seat beside her.

Marly slunk over, plopped herself down in the chair and huffed.

Kueili acted like his daughter was fine, ignored her little tantrum and blessed the food.

When it was all over, Toloa announced, “When my papa died, this is what we did. We all sat around the

table, said one nice memory we had of him and then when we went to get our food we took only what we thought he would've eaten and his portions as well."

Jeanie shifted in her chair toward Mark. He did the same in her direction.

"What a thoughtful gesture, only Jeanie's a small woman. There's no way she could eat as much as Pono did. She can take half of what he would've eaten, and I'll make up the difference for her." Mark beamed at Toloa.

"Oh . . . W-well, I guess that would be . . ." Toloa's face reddened.

He knew what she was thinking. They had always bragged about how this white girl Pono married could pack it

away like the rest of them. He also knew Jeanie only did it to please them, not because she wanted to down that much food. Well, today that stopped. She was to please *him*, and him alone.

“That’s not fair! I don’t wanna eat like a pig like Pono did. You know I’ve been trying to lose weight for dance class when school begins in a few weeks,” Marly whined.

“You’ll eat it,” her father said. “Get your plate, and no more complaints. One day of eating something substantial won’t hurt you.”

She frowned but did as she was told, leading the way as the first to leave the room with her plate.

The rest of them got up and did the

same, only Mark made sure to keep in front of Jeanie.

He plated up her food for her, breaking the rules Toloa set, but he'd be damned if Jeanie felt obligated, and he knew she would take as much food as the rest of them.

He'd seen her eat when she was in her comfort zone. She did it with gusto, but she'd already balked at the amount of breakfast he'd made her just this morning, which meant she really didn't eat that much. More than most women, perhaps, but not a ton where she went psycho and overfilled her stomach. The woman was sensible about it, and of course, he loved that about her, too.

He smiled at her when he could

feel how uncomfortable she was as they made their way past each dish.

When the food was all piled up on everyone's plates, they all went back to the table and took their same spots from before.

"I'll get the poi," Toloa said.

She got up, and Jay grabbed her by the wrist. "I'll get it."

She got all choked up, sat down and nodded. He promptly left the room.

"Always such a good boy," Toloa whispered, her voice hoarse.

"You need to tell me how to raise my future children to be this wonderful," Mark said.

"You have to find a woman and capture her heart first before I'll give

away any secrets,” she replied.

Out of nowhere, a soft, warm hand landed on his thigh under the table. He gripped it.

Jeanie sighed as if in relief.

“Shouldn’t be hard for you—all the women watch you,” Marly told him.

“Watching isn’t the same thing as catching.” Mark softened his smile for her, hoping to tone down her animosity. “And I’m not about to settle for just anyone.”

“Yeah—we noticed.” Marly stabbed the pork on her plate and bit into it like she was a savage, keeping her eyes on him.

“So, I heard you’re taking summer dance classes right now. How’re they



going?” Jeanie asked Marly, breaking the tension.

“Good. I’m one of the top dancers. Mrs. Jolson said I could go professional the moment I graduate. I hope so, but I still know I need to lose more weight. They don’t tell me that, but I can see they think I’m fat. And I definitely wanna go pro.” The tendons in Marly’s neck were less noticeable now.

“What’s your specialty?” Mark asked.

“I pretty much do almost everything, but I prefer hip hop, jazz and contemporary.” Marly looked smug now.

“She’s amazing—I love attending her concerts if there’s one when I’m in town,” Jeanie said.

He could easily imagine going to one with Jeanie after she moved here. That was assuming she was serious about taking up residence in California. He'd do his damndest to persuade her to do it. He needed her here, and it was obvious Pono's family felt the same.

"Why don't we dance like we used to after dinner? I think Pono would like that," Marly said, her remarks aimed solely at Jeanie.

"Sure. I'm not as flexible as I used to be, but I'll dance with you if you'd like." Jeanie smiled.

"I would!" Marly radiated with full joy back at her.

It was clear this young woman idolized his sweet little thing. He

couldn't blame her. Jeanie had this warmth, this glow about her that sucked people in. She was always genuine, and it was obvious she cared deeply about the people she was surrounded by.

“Should be fun to watch,” Mark mused.

When he looked over at Jeanie's plate, she was halfway through her meal. He'd been too busy touching her under the table to bother with the food, so he took his hands back and began eating.

“See?” Toloa said, pointing at Marly's and then Jeanie's plate. “This is why we love this haole, and why she belongs with us. She knows how to eat!”

They all chuckled, including Jeanie, but it didn't touch her eyes.

Something was off, and she even looked almost sick about it.

“That was the first thing Pono told me about you,” Kueili said. “He said, ‘Papa, you gotta see this white girl dig in! She eats as if tomorrow there’s gonna be no food left.’ I told him right there, ‘Sounds like a dream girl. Marry that one.’”

Jeanie set her fork down and brought her other hand under the table. Mark’s hands automatically did the same. Her fingers sought his hand out, and she cupped his hand between both of hers. His heart fluttered at her turning to him for comfort.

Mark cleared his throat. “Pono was always a smart guy. I’m glad he

enjoyed the good times with Jeanie. We all should be so lucky.”

Toloa wiped a tear out of her eye. “Yes, he was always smart. I was happy he finished school and worked so hard at his job.”

“He’s the only man I know that wanted to be a nurse, working in the ER,” Marly said, an odd expression on her face as she stared at Jeanie.

Was it because both of Jeanie’s hands were under the table, and she was angled toward Mark? Did she know Jeanie had a death grip on him?

“It was a demanding job—the poor boy. He was always exhausted. Every time he called me, I asked him if he was eating enough,” Toloa said.

A choked sob emanated out of the back of Jeanie's throat.

"He tried his best to take care of himself," Kueili said. "We all worried, but none of us knew . . ."

Jeanie's head dropped.

"Knew what?" Mark asked.

"About his heart condition," Marly answered. "If he had done something about it, maybe taken the proper medication, he never would've had that heart attack and died." She shot her eyes at Jeanie once more.

"I didn't know until the day before it happened that he had any health problems at all," Jeanie said. "If I had, I certainly never would've allowed him to . . ."

Mark's gut tightened. Oh shit . . . He wasn't aware his friend had any heart condition, but Mark knew about all sorts of shit Pono had done to himself in college, and he never told anyone about it.

"It's no one's fault. He was a good man, and sometimes we can't control what happens to the ones we love." Mark gripped her hand tight. She squeezed back as if to say she appreciated the gesture and the words.

"No, but he didn't have to eat so damn much," Marly said, her voice rough. "He gained so much weight once he started working in that hospital, I barely recognized him anymore. He looked like a complete couch potato."

Toloa turned on her and said through gritted teeth, “You may leave the table now. You will not disrespect your brother like that. And no poi for you!”

“Good. I hate that stuff,” Marly said, pushing off the table and getting up while the chair was still in motion.

It tipped back and hit the floor.

She left a moment later, and Jay entered the room. “Where’d Mar go?”

“She’s being a brat,” his father answered. “She gets no respect today, until she apologizes and earns it back.”

Mark’s heart swelled for this family—for Marly, too. She was a mixed-up teenager, hurt by her brother’s death, and it had to be scary for her to think that Jeanie might move on and



never give her another thought.

He swallowed.

Yeah, he understood completely.

That fear was very real for him as well .

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## Chapter 6

Being back in the car was . . . God, she didn't know, but she was breathing easier, and Mark's scent enveloped her the moment he was in his seat, taking hold of the wheel.

Everything about him was powerful and spoke to her.

It was scary how she already wanted to do anything she could to please him. If he said, "Jeanie, scrub my toilet," she probably wouldn't hesitate for even a second.

"What's going on in that beautiful mind of yours?" He ran a fingertip down her arm.

"Thinking about how scared I am

already over how much sway you have over me. I never would've gotten through that without you, and as scary as that is to admit, I almost can't remember what it was like before I felt this way."

"Boring, most likely." He chuckled.

"This isn't funny," she said, turning her turbulent eyes on him. "When I care about someone this deeply—*fuck!*—it doesn't go well." She grimaced, and her eyes went lifeless.

He turned toward her briefly, then backed the car out. His eyes scrunched. "You're gonna need to explain what you mean because what you just said not only makes no sense, but there's not a speck of truth to it."

She groaned. “You heard back there what I did—how Pono died. I already told you it was my fault, and I meant it. My love killed him. I’m the reason he put on all that weight and died.”

He growled. “Don’t say that. It’s not true.”

“It is.” She knocked her head into the headrest. “And I wasn’t even wearing my goddamn wedding band. They must think I’m the biggest cold-hearted bitch ever.”

“Let’s think for a moment . . . Gain some perspective.” He paused and gave her a look that said this was for her own good. “Close your eyes. Tell me what a normal day was like in your home

together. Go back three months ago, and tell me what I'd see if I was you." His grip tightened on the wheel.

"All right." She exhaled and closed her eyes, settling into the seat. "I would get home at six from work, Pono would arrive at unpredictable times, but it seemed he was being run ragged."

"Pick a specific day and tell me."

She sucked her lips in for a second, then they popped when she let them go. "Okay. So, there was one night, I had dinner waiting, I was tired and hungry, and I kept waiting for him to call to say how much longer until he'd be home. He never called. I didn't want to eat without him, so I put the food away and lay down on the couch. I fell asleep.

Pono got home around eleven that night, and I had thought his shift would be done around seven-thirty.”

She blew out for a moment, and he glanced at her.

“He didn’t say anything,” she continued. “He knocked into the door jamb when he entered our apartment. He tossed his keys down and stripped along his way to the kitchen like he always did. I got up and picked up his clothes and put them in the hamper. While he was rummaging in the fridge for dinner, I felt really guilty. I should’ve had his meal ready to go. I should’ve left it on a plate so all he had to do was pop it in the microwave.”

Mark turned up the air

conditioning.

“I made my way into the kitchen, offered to get him a drink at least, but he already had a beer in his hand and his food was heating up. I followed him into the living room. He fell down onto the couch, and some of his beer sloshed onto the furniture, so I cleaned it up. He turned on the TV, watched some stupid show I couldn’t stand, but I sat there anyway, in case he wanted me for some reason. No matter how tired he was, he would eat. He always ate. And when he finished what was on his plate, I offered to get him seconds.”

“And why did you do that?”

“I don’t know . . . I guess because I felt helpless and wanted to be useful.”

She gripped her hands together. His hand landed on top of hers. It was incredible how quickly she relaxed due to his skin on hers.

“That’s not why. Tell me the real reason,” he said.

“He was always happy when he ate. And I wanted him to be happy, dammit.” Her jaw clenched.

“Did he stop after seconds?”

“No. He always went for thirds, and I got them for him as well. I thought it was my job to keep him happy that way, and the only time he looked like he was overjoyed was when I was feeding him. He loved my cooking, and that meant a lot to me since, as you experienced today at lunch, his mom’s



an amazing cook.” Her hands suddenly flopped to her sides and then she gripped the edges of the seat.

“That wasn’t your fault. Like I told you earlier, you can’t help it. You have a need to serve the one you love.”

“I could serve *you*, but what if I fail?” Her eyes opened.

“Impossible.”

“You say that now.” Her voice cracked.

“You won’t. Know why?” He smiled and glanced at her as he turned a corner a little faster than he probably should have. She leaned toward him, and his grin went wider.

“Because I won’t ignore you the way he did. It won’t grow old or stale. I

don't do vanilla, Jeanie. I do *me*. I do *you*. I do *us*. I will always call when I'm gonna be late. I'll always let you know what I need and want, so you know exactly how to please me without having to guess. This is what I do, and I do it *right*. You do, too—you know how to please someone. You were just with the wrong person, and that was never your fault. Submissives marry other submissives all the time."

"Hold on—*what*?" Her eyes widened.

"You know what I said." His jaw snapped shut.

"You think he was a submissive? But he . . . But I wasn't and he—he wasn't gay!"

“I never said he was. There are men with submissive natures—it doesn’t mean he was gay. I know he was straight. He loved you, but when you had sex, like we discussed before, it was always the same, right?”

“Yeah.” Her head almost lolled on the headrest as she stared at him in awe. It was crazy how he could almost see into her soul and see her past. How was he this observant? And why did it thrill her he could say these difficult things and make it seem easy? God, he set her blood on fire by merely talking to her candidly.

“He kept it the same because odds are, he didn’t know what to do. He probably kept hoping you’d take over,

and when you didn't, things kind of stalled and it was probably awkward for both of you at times."

"How the hell do you know all this? Did he tell you this stuff?" Her voice was all breathy, and she hated how obvious it was she was aroused by him. It wasn't all about the physical either. It was the mental more than anything—the way he got in her head.

"No. He never talked about your sex life, and if he'd tried, I wouldn't have let him. It would've killed me."

"It would?"

"Yeah." He slid his teeth over his bottom lip, and the gesture was innocent enough, but to her, it was potent and obscene. Her thighs slid together to quell

the throb building between them.

“Most of the time it was fine, but yes, I admit, there were times neither of us seemed to know what to do, and forget about talking during. If either of us tried to dirty talk or say what we wanted, we’d wind up laughing or it would just kind of fizzle. God, this sounds pathetic, and it really wasn’t. He was a good lover, and I thought I was okay at it, too, but maybe I’m in denial.”

The car rolled to a stop.

She blinked and glanced around.

“Is there a reason we’re back at this beach?”

“Neutral territory. You said you were already afraid of the kind of sway I have over you. We need to discuss it,

and if I bring you back to my place, I'll have no choice but to show you why that's a good thing."

She fought off a visible shiver and wrapped her arms around herself.

"You said you wanted to get to know me better first, so let's start this by taking a walk. I'm gonna share with you the first time we met—and what you did to me."

"What I *did* to you?" Her mouth dropped open, and her eyes widened. She failed to blink.

"And what you've continued to do to me every day since. You're a part of me, and I can't let go of that part, because it's the best fucking piece of my soul. Before you, I don't know if I even

had half a one. But now, I look at you, I breathe in your scent, and I know I have one because I only want what's best for you—to see you smile, hear you laugh, watch you come undone with pleasure.”

She slid away from him an inch. Her clit tingled. How the hell did he know exactly what to say to make it throb like that?

She looked away.

“Come—walk with me,” he said.

He got out of the car, helped her out, and they both took their shoes off and chucked them into the foot well.

She waited for him to lock up, and the moment his hand was extended, she lunged for it.

He chuckled, and right when she

thought he'd kiss her, he leaned in and ran his lips across her forehead. "I have power over *you*? I can't even tell you what it does to me to see you react like this—to want to be near me—want to touch me at all."

Her cheeks heated, and she stared at him with a lazy smile. "Really?"

"I already told you—I never lie, and you, clever girl, have a way of making me damn near close to being speechless and breathless. That's quite a talent you have."

He tugged on her hand, pulling them toward the beach.

"Story time—listen carefully, because I don't know if I'll be able to say this more than once." He squinted



once the sun hit their faces, and he turned them away from the harsh rays. The sun wasn't quite setting yet, but it would be soon, and there was something about a day ending, with him at her side, that heated her insides into a smooth, silky feeling.

"I don't know if you remember the first time we met four years ago, but I remember it better than anything that's ever happened to me," he began.

She nodded and squeezed his hand to encourage him to continue.

"You were wearing this black little dress, and your legs went on forever in those matching black strappy heels. I was caught up in how sexy you were right away, but I could've gotten

past that. I was with another woman, and she and I got along great. But then Pono introduced us, and the second I shook your hand, there was this heat between us—like a spark of something dormant inside me came to life. You smiled, spoke with the softest, sexiest voice I’ve ever heard. And then when Pono left you to go get drinks for both of you, I was taken aback at how readily you followed my lead. I gripped the back of your elbow, led you over to the table where my date was and chose where you sat. You were so comfortable with my touch right away that I wanted more.”

She swallowed, and her steps slowed a little. Could they walk this beach forever? The low, sensual timber

of his voice had her so aroused she was free-flowing between her thighs.

*Breathe—in and out, Jeanie, like the waves.*

*In.*

*Out.*

*Tide comes in—washes it all away.*

Only nothing was being washed clean with her.

The more he spoke, the dirtier she felt, only she wanted to stay dirty with him. And he wasn't even saying anything naughty—*yet*.

Would he?

God, her heart clenched and filled with hope.

What was wrong with her that she

wanted him to talk dirty to her?  
Somehow, she knew he could say things without reservation most men wouldn't dare speak.

She stared at the breaking waves on the beach, trying to scrub her mind clean.

“I sat you next to my date, and you were polite, listened to her attentively, but every time I spoke, you almost jumped to attention. You didn't even seem to notice that I watched your every eyelash flutter. Within seconds, I knew you were hungry, saw what food you were eyeing, and I ordered you a meal. Not once did you give me a dirty look, but my date did—several times.”

“Fofoohhhhhh,” she exhaled long

and slow—slower than the eventual setting sun.

Her insides were bursting with riotous sensations because not only were his words inciting her to a frenzy inside, but his free hand was drifting up and down her arm, making it burst into inseparable chills from each motion and each sound he made.

“You kept looking over at me while you ate, as if for permission or feedback. I’d nod, and you’d dig in. It was the oddest thing—the way you were synced to me almost immediately. And when Pono returned, it didn’t seem to matter.”

“Did he notice?”

“No. He had his drink, ordered his

own plate of food and he started joking around with the other guys at the table. You were gracious with him, and at one point, not only did you lean over and refill his glass with the pitcher of beer on the table, but you looked to me, I nodded and you filled mine as well. All wordless exchanges, but you didn't have to say a fucking word. I was harder than a rock for you, and when I got you to speak to me later, engaged you in conversation, it was worse. I found out how talented, accomplished and lovely you are. I could tell Pono didn't appreciate what he had in you—that he was taking you for granted and holding you back. God, I wanted to fly into a rage at him, but instead, I saw to it your

needs were met that night.”

She swallowed harder, and her throat went dry. He took care of her, and she didn’t notice?

“What happened the next time Pono and I met with you?”

“You don’t remember?”

“Not really—I’m sorry, Mark. Most of the time when I was near you, it was like a blur. I couldn’t think—all I could do was chase my breath and try to calm my speeding heart. I didn’t know why I always felt that way around you, so I told myself you frightened and intimidated me, and to stay away. I tried to stop looking at you, but instead, I found myself sneaking fleeting glances when I thought you were otherwise

engaged.”

“I saw—probably almost every single one. I always knew where you were, what you were doing, and if Pono was near you, I tried to respect him and keep my distance, but dammit, that was hard to do.” He rubbed the inside of her arm—the sensitive flesh prickling.

She rolled her head forward and closed her eyes, trying to absorb the electric vibe his flesh gave off.

“That second time I saw you, I knew I was gonna have a hard time keeping away from you, so I made sure to sit you in the center of the booth, far enough away from me that you were out of my reach. You looked miserable for a split second when I sat you down, and



that's when I knew . . .”

“Knew what?”

“You felt it, too,” he said, stopping them from walking and gripping her upper arms. “You needed that fierce connection.”

He loomed over her, his hot breath fanning over her forehead. “You knew I wanted to be closer, and you didn’t know why you were upset, but you knew something was wrong.” He licked his lips.

She frowned. “I sound like the worst wife ever—cheating without even realizing it.”

“But you didn’t cheat, and that was part of the reason you were so miserable. You didn’t want to feel that

way about another man, but it was inevitable.”

“Great.” She shoved her right foot deep into the sand and stared at it. “How can you even trust me at all—knowing all this about me?”

“Hey—don’t do that.” He cupped her chin and tilted her gaze up. “You didn’t do anything wrong. We can’t help it if we have a chemistry that defies understanding. The reason I can trust you is because you were always careful around me, and you made sure not to take any risks. That’s a woman I can admire. That’s a woman that makes it known with her body language she won’t ever cheat. I love that about you. I respect that you have such a strong

conscience. I probably wouldn't have been so insanely attracted to you if you'd been any other way. I could get other women easily if I wanted to. But it's not because you were the forbidden—it was always because you were the right one for me. I need you to trust I will always respect your wishes, like I did then, and I'll do it now. I won't ever hurt you."

"I thought pain was the whole damn point of your lifestyle," she said, the left corner of her mouth slanted down.

"The whole point is to push further than possible, feel more than what's expected and find that deep connection that can't be found any other way. Untold pleasure is what I want to give you, and

a love that makes your bones ache, it's so good. That's what I'm offering, and what I ask in return is for your unending trust and devotion—and I know you can do both of those because I've seen you do both with Pono and me, albeit in increments and in minute ways. But when they were there, my fucking God—I about died to have you. Say yes again, Jeanie. Confirm you want this.” He pushed out an explosive-sounding exhale. “Give me a week to get to know you, do small things with you from my lifestyle to introduce you, then two weeks to take it further, explore and see where we land together. There's no way you'll regret this. Say yes—I need to hear it once more.” He cupped her hand

in his, then placed her palm over his heart.

Her mind raced almost as quickly as her heart. The sun was setting behind him, and it cast the most ethereal amber glow around him. He looked like an angel.

“But what do I do when it’s over? What if I decide this lifestyle isn’t for me, and I’m already too deep? You’re so easy to love, Mark, and I can already feel myself under your spell. What if I can’t ever resurface and get out?”

He cupped her cheeks, stroking the apple of them with the pads of his thumbs. “You trust me right away to always know what’s best for you, and know that I’ll always listen to you.

We'll sign a contract so you'll have a safe way out. We'll have safewords to keep you on top of your fears and anxieties, and you'll never need to wonder . . .”

“Wonder?” Her brows scrunched.

“How utterly amazing it could be with me. You'll know—and you'll have a peace inside you that you've never had before.”

Her eyes misted over. “You say this like you know it all to be fact.”

“Can I show you how I know?”

“Yeah,” she said, biting the insides of her cheeks, because she had the overwhelming urge to kiss him.

“Let's go back to my house, and you'll give me an hour to play this my

way. After that, I'll go back to taking it slow and allowing you to get to know me all you want." A tremor of excitement edged its way down her spine and landed at the base, then sat there until he said, "If you want more, of course, you can always say, but it doesn't mean I'm gonna grant it."

He grinned, and her toes curled into the sand. "Yes, Sir. You wanted to hear it, and I want to know more. Yes to an hour tonight, and then yes to three weeks with you."

Damn. She was already wishing they were back at his place.

She fidgeted in the car on their way to his home, but he was calm and untroubled based on his smooth

breathing and relaxed posture.

What the hell had she agreed to? Was this foreshadowing how it would always be between them? Would she always be the scattered mess while he remained impossibly placid with steely control?

She glanced over at him, and his jaw flexed for a moment. Did he dislike her momentary ogling? And why did that thought turn her on so much she was having a hard time sitting still?

“Something on your mind?” The liquid-sex timber of his voice stirred up her senses even more.

“How . . .” She looked away as a sense of stupidity filled her up. “Never mind . . .”



“Say it, sweetheart, or it’ll eat you alive, and I wanna do that part.” His dark, throaty chuckle set her belly on fire, and it moved down to her pussy.

“How is it that the little things about you are what get to me most? You’re just sitting there, all focused and relaxed, and I feel like I’m going nuts. Each second that ticks by, I want you more. What’s wrong with me?” She clicked her tongue and gripped her thighs.

“The only thing that’s wrong with you is you need a good, strong man to take control of your passions and channel it into something you can understand.” He grinned.

“I thought you were going to say

something completely inappropriate,” she mused.

“Like the fact I’m going to channel all that energy into a fucking like you’ve never had before? You’ll be as raw inside as you are on the outside, and you’ll never feel more replete.” His eyes roamed over to her, then raked down her body. “Was that what you were expecting, gorgeous?”

She blinked, and her throat got so arid, she couldn’t even swallow. “Uh . . . I . . . Y-yeah, I guess that’ll do.”

He chuckled. “Need more? Was that too tame for you?”

“Save it for later. I don’t think I can take much more before I combust.”

“You only get to combust when I

command you to do it. Just want to make sure we get that straight—up front.” He smirked.

He parked the car and told her, “Stay here. Don’t move.”

She tucked her hands between her knees and sucked both her lips in, then pressed them together.

What was he planning now?

She quirked a brow at him as he ran inside.

The few seconds she was left on her own were sheer torture. Her imagination went berserk. This man was a mystery—one she was dying to unravel and feared she’d never be able to do it in this lifetime.

When he returned, he was smiling

so wide, he looked like he had already gotten laid.

He popped the door open, grabbed her hand, kissed and stroked it, then helped her out of the car.

“Ready?”

“You’re the one in charge. You tell me,” she replied.

“Good answer, only you forgot to address me with the proper title. I’ve let you get away with it this afternoon since this is all so new and you’re obviously nervous, but that stops now. I want you to call me Sir at all times except when we’re around other people in public.”

She nodded and choked on a giggle.

His eyes darkened.

Fuck her on the beach—he was serious. Her smile faded away. “And what are you going to address *me* as, Sir?”

“Whatever suits me in the moment, and whatever title you earn. Right now, I’m in a generous mood since you’re taking a chance and giving me an hour, which I don’t want to waste.” He guided her inside, propelling her with his hand on the small of her back.

Her eyes kept shifting to his. She looked as if her gaze was locked on his.

“Should I be concerned about whatever it is you ran inside to do while I sat out here, stewing in my juices?”

“Oooh, I like the sound of that, but you’ve already forgotten the proper

respect.” He smacked her ass, and she yelped.

Then a flash of heat hit her between the thighs. God, that stung a little, but it was . . . My Lord, she was even more turned on. How was that possible? And she was already planning on leaving “Sir” out on purpose so he’d do that again.

“Don’t even think about it—get your ass inside—time’s a wasting.” He opened the door and prodded her forward.

In the middle of the living room sat a single kitchen table chair—a plain wooden one with an attached pad on the seat.

She gave him a questioning look.

“Strip and wait for further instructions,” he said.

She narrowed her eyes at him, wondering if she should glance around the room and make sure there were no windows that were opened where a passerby could see what they were doing.

Instead, she swallowed, and without doubting him or wondering if she was free of possible voyeurs, she did as he told her. Now was the time for trust.

It was odd how his burning gaze only seemed to fuel her on, rather than make her want to hide. She really was sick. Where was her sense of modesty? This man wasn't her husband. He'd

never seen her naked before.

What was she thinking?

*Slip . . . Slip . . . Slip . . .*

One at a time, she peeled out of her dress, her bra, and then her . . . panties.

“I love how you can’t look away for more than a few seconds at a time,” he commented as he yanked his tie off, then slid it through his right palm.

The act made her stomach clench deliciously.

“I love how you make it impossible to do anything *but* look, Sir.”

“Very nice. Now . . . What should I call you? Hmm? I’m kind of partial to sweet little thing, since that’s what you’ve always been to me.”

She raised an eyebrow and her lips



pursed. “Call me naive, because I have no idea what I’m doing, Sir.” She frowned.

He was still dressed, and he didn’t seem to be making any move to get naked.

The only thing he’d removed was his shoes, socks and tie.

What kind of nonsense was this?

He picked up a bottle of lube off the coffee table. “I’m gonna need this for you.”

“Why? I’m already unbelievably wet, Sir,” she blurted.

She groaned, and her eyes slid up into her head as she tipped it back. Could she crawl out of the room in shame now?

She was already nude and now saying incredibly stupid things.

“I know you are. I could smell it in the car,” he said.

She choked on a whimper. He could *smell* it?

“I’m sorry,” she said in a low whisper.

“I’m not, and don’t you ever apologize for obeying what my body’s telling yours to do. You’re a beautiful woman with needs, and I’m here to fulfill all of them.” He sat on the chair and pointed at his lap. “Starting today. I’m going to watch you come—up close. And you’re going to give in with every bit of yourself. That’s all you’re allowed to do.”

“But I . . . What does that even mean, Sir?”

“Sit, and I’ll explain exactly what your body will do.”

She bit the insides of her cheeks and took a seat. For some reason being on his lap this time felt right to her even though her ass was bare.

“These are pretty, soft cheeks,” he said, caressing her curves.

Her eyes grew wide when he moved to her crack.

He fingered along the seam, then removed his hand and went to her pussy in front. His fingers toyed with her curls. A moment later, he pulled his fingers up to his nose, took a deep whiff, and his pupils dilated so wide, his eyes looked

almost black. His entire face relaxed like he was high on some heavy narcotic.

And now she was gushing. She was going to drip all over his nice slacks.

She looked away and bit her cheeks harder.

“If you don’t look at me right this instant, I may have to bite your slender neck,” he said, leaning in and nipping at the column of her throat. “And then your tits.”

She gasped quietly, and then her eyes shifted, peering into his.

“I love your eyes—they speak directly to my soul. When you’re not hiding, I swear they could damage me beyond repair—that’s how much they

affect me.” He dragged his hands down her shoulders.

Her breathing was ragged in an instant, and her eyelids went heavy. She inched up his lap, closer to his prominent erection.

“I was going to reward you before I showed you how I knew we were right for each other, but since you said you might combust . . . I’ll throw you straight into it.”

“Into what?”

“Into what it means to be submissive and why you fit that role for me perfectly.” His eyes sparkled.

She could barely catch her breath before he hefted her up. He turned himself around in the chair and said,

“Try to seduce me. Do anything you think I might like.”

Uh . . . Was this a test? He was turned away from her. What was she supposed to do?

Fuck! She would never be able to play with his crack and pubic hairs like that and get high off the smell, no matter how appealing that all sounded. The thought of doing that to this alpha male about killed her.

Combustion sounded like a better option at this point.

## Chapter 7

Becoming a seductive woman should've been easy, but it wasn't. He knew it wouldn't be simple for her, and that was what he was counting on.

He moved behind her.

Mark knew her so well, that without looking at her he knew she was all wide-eyed and panicking.

He leaned forward and whispered, "You have two minutes to figure out what you're doing, and if you don't start trying to seduce me, you're getting a bacon slap."

"Bacon slap, Sir?" She giggled.

His cock bobbed.

"You know—*correction*. Only this

time, you didn't grab what you should've." He propped his arms up on the back of the chair, dropped his head and waited.

She moved up behind him, her movements stiff and choppy. Her breaths were staccato and filled with dread.

"Any suggestions, Sir?"

"You have very beautiful breasts that are bared—I'm not averse to feeling them on me," he offered.

She leaned forward and at first, without supporting them, dragged them up and down his back. It was a clumsy attempt.

He smirked.

She huffed and then retreated.

He removed his shirt to help her



out. His intent wasn't to be a douche, but to show her something about herself.

The next second, she was cupping her tits and tracing her nipples along his shoulder blades one at a time. Better, but still lacking any kind of fire.

"How's this for you?" he asked.

"Um . . . Sir?"

"All moisture evaporated from between those legs yet?"

"I . . . Well, it's complica—"

"*Complicated*? Fuck complicated. Sex with you should never be anything but primal—slice me right to the core and nothing but brain-melting fucking. You're confused. You're flailing because I've put you in charge. You're not meant for this," he said, breathing

hard.

She backed up, and when he turned around and settled back into the seat, tears were welling in her eyes. “I’ll try harder to please you . . .”

“You can’t try harder at something you’re not meant to do without hating yourself—it’ll destroy you. And I’d never forgive myself if that happened. Now . . .” He leaned toward her, gripped her wrist and dragged her between his legs. “This is how it’s gonna go. You sit here on my lap. You let me direct this.”

She nodded and bit her lip as a smile formed. “Should I try to touch you, Sir?”

“No.” He grabbed his tie he’d

pulled off and placed her arms behind her back. In a matter of seconds, her wrists were bound together. “Your only job is to feel, to absorb every sensation, every fucking nerve impulse I pass through your body.”

“What if it’s too much, Sir?” She squirmed.

“It better be so damn much you’re ready to fall apart. I want you falling apart every time I breathe on you—it’s what you were meant to do, just like my lips were meant to be on you at all times.”

He dipped his head down, sucked in her right nipple, and right away, she was purring with these sexy moans as her neck angled back. He released it

with a teasing slide of his tongue.

“Let’s talk about how I see this happening,” he started. He leaned to the side, got a squirt of lube on his left index finger and then it disappeared behind her.

The moment the tip of his slick finger hit her anus, she jerked away and yelped softly.

“You’re going to learn control—see how long you can last. I’m going to touch you however I see fit, and if you come, you’ll be introduced to anal.”

“But I . . . Pono never did that to me,” she squeaked.

“And he never deserved to be called Sir either, did he?”

Her eyes darkened and her breath

hitched. “No, he didn’t, but . . . Sir, will it hurt?”

“The minute you figure out that the kind of pain I’m gonna give you is the kind you can’t live without, the better off you’ll be. Now, no more talking unless you have specific questions about what I’ll do.”

She just blinked and stared at him with an expression of awe.

“Okay then . . . I’ve explained the rules. When I want you to come, I’ll tell you. Break the rules, and your ass is mine.”

She exhaled long and slow, and her pupils enlarged as her lids went heavy.

Fuck yeah—he knew she was

meant for this type of play. This sweet little thing loved challenges, and this one was going to push her more than she may have ever experienced before with a man while being intimate.

He greased up her puckered hole at the back and circled it as he pinched her clit with his other hand.

She wiggled a little in his lap but seemed to be handling it well.

He bit along her collarbone as his fingers kept working. His tongue would trace the path his teeth would leave behind, and as her skin pinked to his every touch, he grew harder and more impatient to have her.

But she needed to accept who they were first before he'd push his way

inside her tight little body.

The idea sent a thrill rocketing through his gut.

Panting.

Sweating.

Thrashing beneath his tight hold.

Thighs pinning her down.

Eyes burning into hers as he fucked his way into her head and her heart.

Could she feel how desperate he was for her? It seeped out of his pores.

This was nothing new for him around her, only this time he was allowed to do something about it, albeit in a strained manner.

“Deep inside that pussy, there’s an ache for me, and I’m gonna find it . . . You’re gonna give me every breath as I

fuck you with my fingers,” he said through gritted teeth, then pushed two fingers inside her cunt.

She tightened right away.

He groaned, “That’s it . . . Be greedy. You want more. This pussy doesn’t want shitty fingers. It doesn’t even want my tongue. It wants my long”—nip to the neck—“hard”—tongue sliding up her jugular—“cock so deep you can’t breathe at all.”

She stiffened, then her pussy spasmed with a tight convulsion around his fingers.

“Don’t come—not like this—not on my fingers.” He bit her earlobe and pushed his two fingers in as far as they could go. With small jabs, he tested her



resolve. “Wanna come yet?”

“N-no, Sir.”

“Liar.” He chuckled. “I’m gonna teach you how to control this feeling, threatening to burst inside you, or combust as you so aptly put it.” He licked the outer shell of her ear. “When I slip past your G-spot, you breathe by exhaling low and deep. Slow it down as much as you can, and you can even push down with your sphincter muscles.”

“I’ll try, Sir.”

“I know you will because you’re my sweet little thing I love to touch.” He smirked. “Find a calm memory or place you want to visit when I push really deep. It’ll help.”

Before she could speak again,

since he didn't want to hear anything more from her, he curled his fingers up and rocked them into her G-spot. He didn't go easy on her either—he pushed directly into it, and she gushed right away.

“My cock wants to be in here—doing this. My sexy little thing wants to be fucked hard—to have her rights stripped away as I pin her down and take what's mine. When I smell you this turned on, I know it's all for me.”

She closed her eyes and her chest rippled on a stuttering inhale.

“Breathe out,” he told her as he assaulted her G-spot. And when she was about to come, he pushed the tip of his left finger into her ass.

She stopped breathing and went rigid, her shoulders flinging back.

“I warned you—gonna come now, little one?”

Her eyes were heavy, then she whimpered as her shoulders slumped.

“You’re not even halfway there,” he warned. His fingers worked in circular patterns, slicking and engorging her vulva deliciously. The scent of her was driving him mad. His erection pressed up into her ass cheeks as he pulled her tighter into his body. “This is mine. My pussy—made for me. When you come right now, you’re gonna see it belongs to me because I’m gonna own it while you thrash around on my lap. You won’t get away—there’s no hiding it

from me. You want me, want my cock and the untold pleasure I can bring you.”

“Gaaaawd,” she moaned, and her arms struggled to break free.

He pushed his finger a little deeper into her ass.

He glanced at his clock on the wall. “I’ve got you for forty-three more minutes. How long can you last for me? Better fucking be forty-three.”

She sucked in a tight breath, so he backed it off until the tip of his finger was barely grazing inside her asshole. Her stuttering breaths were keeping her from speaking. Either that or she didn’t know the answer and was nervous she’d answer incorrectly.

He grinned and let it go. She didn’t

have to reply to his question.

“When I’ve got you cuffed to my bed, this will be much easier. I don’t generally like being trapped under the weight of a woman, but for you, I made an exception. I knew you needed to feel a little control, so what’re you gonna do when I do this?” He picked her up by the haunches, placed her on her back on the floor, spread her legs out wide and dropped down, his tongue latching onto her clit right away.

She inched around on the ground until he hooked his thumb into her asshole and pushed his tongue up under her clit hood. He sucked the pink nub of nerves inside his mouth, and when her breath went shrill, he sucked it even

harder.

Her lower back bowed, so he let go.

“Want me to fuck you?” he asked.

“Mmhmm,” she said, her eyes all sad and pathetic as she nodded. She was on top of her arms—he knew it was uncomfortable, so he rolled her onto her side and untied her.

Big mistake. She reached for him, but thankfully his reflexes were quick.

He managed to pin them down and then he slid his body up hers, nailing the tip of his clothed cock into her clit.

“Is it swollen?”

“Mmm,” she hummed.

“Is it ready to make you come?”

Same reaction.

He bit her breast.

She moaned with such an edgy guttural force, he was leaking.

“You’re not ready yet.” Another look at the clock. “Forty-one minutes to go, sweet thing.” He took both her wrists into one hand, then shoved two fingers back inside her pussy.

She whimpered and closed her eyes. Her head lolled to the right.

“Grip them . . . Until you show them how tight you’re gonna be for my dick, you’re not gettin’ it.”

“Please, Sir . . . God, I need you!” Her eyes flashed open and they swam with sheer lust.

“And you’re breaking rules. No talking.”

He ran the tip of his tongue across her lower lip.

“Torture,” she mumbled.

“Oh, you wanna see real torture?”

His lubed finger was finding its way back to her anus.

“N-no!”

“What did you say? Who’s in charge here? Who decides when you’re ready for more?”

“Youuuu, Sir,” she said, shivering for a second.

He fingered her entrance. “You want more, Jeanie. You’ve told me, and I know how to make this so unbelievably good, you’ll wonder how you ever lived without anal.” He licked his lips and waited for a reaction.



“Promise it won’t hurt, Sir?”

“There are different types of pain, as I’ve been trying to explain to you, and the best ones take you to the edge of bliss and then toss you over the top. The most explosive orgasms involve some level of pain, and I can bring you the culmination of pain, pleasure, and eye-opening experiences.”

“O-okay,” she whispered, and her eyes were bright and shiny—filled with trust. “I want it.”

“Okay,” he agreed and released her. “To my bed. I’ve got something else for you before I let you come.”

“More?”

“Always more with you,” he said, smiling.

He pointed.

In a twist of her hips, she went onto all fours and without being told, crawled her way back there.

Good God, he was stuck in place, unsure if he needed to just fuck her now, or spank her ass for being so sassy.

How did she have it in her at this point? She seemed broken down mere moments ago.

This was what he loved about her—that resilient, spirited woman that never gave up.

He enjoyed the view as her hips waggled and she made her way into his bedroom.

His cock enjoyed the invitation, too, and it was twitching.

Once she was far enough ahead, he moved into the bedroom and pulled out several long black scarves.

The idea of creating a makeshift collar overwhelmed him, and he couldn't stop himself.

"On the bed," he told her.

She slipped up there with ease and gave him a predatory look as she sucked in her bottom lip.

"Keep it up, and you'll be tied while you learn about what I like to do with my crop," he said.

He shook his head since he was getting way ahead of himself. They needed to compare kink lists and discuss soft and hard limits. She also needed to pick a safeword so he'd be able to keep

her protected.

“If I do anything you don’t like, I want you to say scarf for this session, okay? Then I’ll know you’d like to stop.”

He gauged her reaction. She confirmed she would use that word if she needed to.

A second later, and she was grinning with mischief in her eyes.

She giggled and settled into a relaxed kneeling pose.

“Perfect—I can reach that pussy easily in this position.” He dragged the black silk scarves through his right hand like he had earlier with his tie.

Her eyes followed the length of fabric as it flowed through his grip, and

her chest colored a lovely shade of pink.

“Every little girl needs a leash so they won’t get lost or be trampled on in this lifestyle,” he said. “Pull your hair up and out of the way.”

The motion of her arms lifting made her tits sway, and his breath caught.

He stepped over to her, set all but one of the black sashes down, and then draped one across the back of her neck. “This will kiss your skin—remind you of how we’re connected.” He bent down and kissed her neck at the hollow of her throat before tying a knot there. He lengthened the end of the sash out as long as it would go. It wasn’t tight, but he spread the fabric out around her throat

anyway to make it as comfortable as possible.

“You may release your hair.” He cupped her tits so this time he could feel their natural motion as she did it.

He bit back a groan as they moved in his palms. Her nipples tightened when they brushed up against the inside of his hands.

“Ready for more?”

“Yes, Sir. I’m interested in seeing exactly what you have planned for the remainder of your hour,” she said, her eyes sparkling with mischief.

“If I didn’t know better, I’d think my subbie was challenging me.” He smirked.

“Never, Sir.”

He smacked her mons, and when she moaned and curved her body into it at the end, well, fuck . . . he simply had to do it again. So he did.

The louder she got, the harder he did it.

He leaned her back, using the sash by curling his fingers around the loose knot at her throat, making sure it was slow and wouldn't harm her.

Her legs were spread wide the instant she was on her back, and she was just so damn open to him. Fuck . . . It was all he ever dreamed about—having her like this, waiting for him.

Jesus—she was such a natural at this. He knew she would be.

And he was harder than he'd ever

been for her, gazing at her pink, engorged folds all damp and spread wide for him.

“You like being smacked on the pussy with my hand? I’ve got something better . . .” He exhaled with a rough, dark sound.

Her head whipped around as he went and retrieved his crop.

“You’re gonna fucking love this, and I’ll even let you cream it if you want because I’m about ready to come myself just watching you all spread out like this for my enjoyment and being here—mine for the taking. You have no idea how edible you look right now.”

She smiled.

He took a deep breath, licked the



end of his crop, and *slaaaaap!*

“Ssssfffffffff,” she sucked in a ragged, erotic sounding breath.

“You okay?”

She nodded.

“I want a verbal confirmation this time,” he said.

“Yes, Sir, I’m good . . . You can keep going, and I really . . .” She was breathless and looked slightly dazed. “I *really* like that. Jesus—that’s . . .”

He slapped that pussy again, harder this time, grinning as he did it.

“Fuck!” she cried out and her back arched off the bed.

“You wanna fuck—it’s that good?” He landed another blow, but this time lower down.

“God, I . . .”

“Should I let you come? I said you could, but I might want to draw this out after all,” he said, cocking his head at her.

Her hands flew to her tits and she cupped them.

“Uh, uh, uh . . . I didn’t say to cover those, did I?”

“Sir, I . . . Christ, I need to grab something,” she said, even more out of breath.

“You don’t need to grab anything but your lead,” he said, handing her the end of the scarf around her neck.

She glared at him for a second, until he slapped the crop over her clit.

She bounced, and so did her tits—

exactly why he didn't want them covered. Besides, they needed to join in on the fun.

He pulled the crop up to her lips.

“Your turn to lick it,” he said.

“Open and extend that tongue for me.”

She gave him a wary look, then did as he asked.

He swiped the crop over her tongue, and as it retreated back in her mouth, he smacked the crop over her left breast, followed directly after on the right.

She gasped, yanking on the scarf so hard, he worried it might restrict her airflow, but suddenly she got this look on her face like she was drugged, but in a good way.

“Tongue,” he said.

It poked out, and he wetted his implement again.

*Slack, slack, slack, slack!*

He hit her pussy four times in rapid succession, and her breathing amped to about ten times louder.

That was it. He had to have her.

“Tell me right now you want me to fuck you, and I’ll do it, Jeanie,” he said, dropping the crop and then pulling his clothes off.

*Fuck, please say it!*

His dick was throbbing.

Her eyes glazed over, but they followed his motions. She was pulling tighter on the lead. Her eyes went frantic and pleaded for more. What the fuck?

She was already into erotic asphyxiation? He wasn't a big fan of it —*risky*.

“Sir, I want you so bad, my head's fuzzy and my pussy's drenched for you,” she said in a low, almost slurred manner.

He groaned, and his eyes slid up in his head. Fucking pussy was so ready for him, he probably wouldn't last long. He opened his heavy-hooded eyes only enough to see what he was doing.

“Grip my cock tight with your pussy's muscles like you did my fingers —show me how much you love having me inside you,” he said, dragging his body up hers.

Right as he was lined up, ready to

go, he realized he was missing something.

Shitty condom. God, he hated those things, and never in his life had he wanted to feel flesh-on-flesh this badly—with his cock sliding without a barrier inside her. No one else made him feel this unfettered and animalistic, but she—oh fuck, did she ever call to his dick to be in there bare. But they hadn't discussed going bareback, and he wasn't about to piss her off by being a dickhead and going without one.

He got up, grabbed a condom and put it on quickly.

She groaned as she watched him roll it on.

“I didn't get to taste it,” she

whined.

He chuckled. “We have time.”

“The hour’s almost over,” she said, her hold still tight on that scarf.

He’d have to remember her inclination to choke herself like it was a noose.

No, not a noose—a lifeline—a tether to him.

*Drip . . .*

She was oozing down her inner thighs.

There was nothing sexier than that sight.

He got in her face, barely brushed his lips across hers, his forehead hovered an inch away from hers and he maneuvered himself up over her,

dangling his body above hers.

“Say you want this, Jeanie. Say you can’t breathe unless I make love to you right this instant,” he murmured, his lips ghosting over hers.

“Mark, you know what I want, but I’ll tell you anyway, so there’s no doubt. I won’t survive this night if you don’t do this and fuck me now,” she said, her eyes scorching.

“Thank God,” he said and inched his way inside her so slowly, he was able to feel her muscles clench down in response to him penetrating her.

“So big,” she whispered in a tight gasp.

“All for you—all for my girl I couldn’t ever stop thinking about all



these years,” he said, then wrapped his hands around her neck.

When her eyes went wide like she was about to protest, he shushed her.

He pulled the scarf off, and his fingers curled back around her neck.

“The threat of danger excites you, and I’m so turned on watching the way you react to it. So fucking delicious, just like your pussy,” he said, picking up the pace now and thrusting deep and powerful.

“I want you to control my body, my breath, Sir,” she admitted, her eyes pleading.

“Fuck, you’re gonna kill me,” he said. He let go of her, pulled out and moved her so her head was hanging off

the edge of the bed. This would help to trap the air in her throat and give her a nice head-rush.

“This is a lot safer. Hold on to my shoulders so you don’t feel like you’re falling, unless of course you’re even more of a thrill seeker than I’d anticipated,” he said, smiling.

She grabbed his shoulders, and then her neck went lax.

He was back inside her in the next breath, and instead of putting both hands around her neck, he cupped it with one hand, his thumb over her trachea, and the rest of his fingers supporting the back of her neck. There was no pressure on her throat from his fingers.

He sucked hard, nipped at her

jugular and then worked his way toward her windpipe.

The harder he fucked her and the rougher he was, the more she'd curve up into him and moaned like she was about to go off.

Her nipples hardened when he bit particularly hard at the top of her throat.

"More, oh God, Mark, I . . . Sir, you said I could come?" Her head tossed from side to side.

"You may come when you're ready," he said. Frankly, he didn't want her to black out from having her head hanging off the bed like this and him compromising her air in little ways by pressing his lips firmly into her pulse point.

He was being careful, but still . . .

“Oh, oh, God, I . . . I’ve never felt this kind of . . . rush!” she moaned and started shaking a little beneath him.

He angled his upper body so he could get better leverage. This needed to end soon for both of their sakes.

So he pumped his hips hard and wrapped both hands around her neck. When his thumbs pressed down with the slightest hint in the middle, she climaxed with a scream, and her cunt gripped his cock so hard he lost it immediately.

He flung his arms around her, pulled her sagging body up so she was wrapped up in him and he kissed her everywhere he could while he came.

“I love you, Jeanie . . . I wanted

you to see,” he breathed through wetness.

Was she crying?

He brushed her messy hair back out of her face—that was damp, too.

She was misted in his sweat, but there were definitely tears.

“Oh, fuck—did I hurt you?” he asked, putting her at arm’s length so he could examine her neck.

She sighed and went completely limp—a smile plastered across her face. “You hurt me in that I’m scarred . . . I hate vanilla now, Mark, and it’s all your fault for ruining something that was good.” She stifled a giggle with the back of her hand, then brushed a few last stray hairs off her face.

“That’s the shit I wanna hear all the time—fuck yeah, you’re ruined—for *me!*” He laughed and tackled her into the mattress. He kissed her long and hard, twisted his limbs all up in hers and never let go until his arms gave out on him.

“So, whattaya say? Still wanna get to know me and my fucked up idea of what lovemaking should be?” He spooned her from behind. How sappy of him, but he didn’t care. She smelled like him, all except her hair, so he alternated tasting her shoulder, inhaling at her neck, then burrowing his nose in her hair.

He probably looked like a mama cat cleaning her offspring.

His pussy. *His!*

He removed the condom, tossed it in the small trashcan next to his bed, then lay back down. She was glowing.

He cupped her breast and smoothed his thumb back and forth in slow strokes. So many soft spots on this woman's body, and he wanted to know each of them intimately, and unless his tongue got involved, he would not be satisfied.

“How many times have I dreamed about having you in my bed? How many times have I wished you were here, and now that you are, I can barely believe it. You mean so much to me it's ridiculous how willing I am to do anything to keep you. Stay with me as long as you can, and when you go, I want it to be because

you absolutely have to, not because you want to.”

“Well, that’s not demanding or anything,” she said, giggling.

He rubbed her shoulders. “I’m a selfish bastard with a permanent hard-on for you, so sue me. Fuck—if I have to watch you go, I may go ballistic. Stay, Jeanie. I’ll make your every fantasy come true—I’ll take care of you. I want to. Find a way to stay. I’ll help you move here if that’s what we have to do,” he said, his voice breaking each time he said *stay*.

She stroked his thigh. “If I stayed here with you I’d never leave this bed, and how would I survive if I don’t make a living?”



“Let me figure this all out—just don’t go back to Phoenix. There’s nothing left there for you, right? You’ve said as much, and there’s everything here for you. Closure with Pono, you’ve got a man who adores and worships you, and you can find work here easily.” He plucked her hand off his thigh and pressed it to his lips. His soft, open mouthed kisses on her hand were arousing him again. Her fingers smelled like her come.

When did she have her hands on her pussy?

He got up, grabbed a hand towel and a wash cloth, then moistened it with some warm water.

When he came back, he cleaned

her up and kept smiling at her.

She looked amazing—all glowing and pink everywhere.

When he was done cleaning them both off, he chunked the linens aside and then massaged her arms, shoulders and back.

She took a deep breath and hesitated for a moment, then looked at him over her shoulder. “Mark, let me ask you something . . . How do you think Pono’s family’s gonna feel when they find out I’m with you?”

“I don’t give a shit,” he barked with a wheeze.

“Yes, you do, and that’s what I adore about you—you care about everyone. You come across as gruff and

commanding, which admittedly is a huge turn-on, but you've got the biggest heart of anyone I know. When you acted like you were going to choke me during sex, it wasn't because you like that, was it?"

"Shhhh . . ." He didn't want to talk about that just yet.

She flipped over in his arms and tucked herself up in his chest but kept her head tilted back so she was looking in his eyes. My God, she looked so tiny and vulnerable like that, and his arms automatically surrounded her.

"I saw the look of fleeting horror in your eyes when you realized I was serious, and I really did want you to restrict my airflow."

"I was worried," he admitted.

“But you did it anyway, at least enough to get me really going because I really wanted it. I don’t even know where that came from or why it took over, but there was this moment when my head was buzzing, and I knew you were the only man I could ever trust to take me further, and to not judge me for being wild and casting caution aside for a few moments. It was better than I ever could’ve imagined. So thank you.” She blinked and kissed his chest, then patted that spot afterward. “I’ve never felt as free as I did when you had me at your mercy that way, but I think it was because I knew I could stop it any moment.”

“It was reckless—we didn’t go

over safewords or a contract,” he said, kissing the top of her head. “A mistake I intend to fix first thing in the morning.”

“But only after bacon.” She smirked.

“I think you want a whooping, little one,” he said, rubbing noses with her.

“Only if it comes with a side of strangulation,” she teased.

“Not funny.” His voice went hoarse.

“It is when it gets a rise out of you.” She bucked her hips into him.

Okay, yeah, he would probably be hard again soon just from recalling the way she looked when she came and screamed so loud that he hoped Pono’s family heard it from miles away.

“So, I’ll ask it again—how am I going to deal with Pono’s family and not feel guilty?” Her eyelashes actually fluttered at him.

He groped her ass and squeezed. “You aren’t to worry about that. You just stay right here with me, and I’ll take care of all of it.”

“But I don’t want you to suffer alone. I mean, if I’m saying yes and consenting to this . . .” she paused and looked concerned “. . . *arrangement*—then I should take some responsibility, too. I can’t stand the thought of you suffering at all.”

“Listen.” He placed a velvet kiss on her forehead, then smoothed it away with the pad of his thumb. “If I can

pretend to strangle the woman I love, stepping way outside my comfort zone, then I can sure as hell handle his family. Believe me, I've been thinking about this for years, hoping this uncomfortable situation would happen someday. I'm ready to deal with it."

"Will you tell me if it gets to be too much, Sir?" She frowned.

"I'll tell you only what you need to know to please me, and right now what pleases me is for us to get some sleep. We can discuss this more tomorrow as I let you into my psyche and allow you to get to know me more."

"I'll plan for several bacon slaps since, no doubt, I'll have all sorts of probing questions," she said.

“Like how much longer ‘til I fuck you again?” He kissed her and hugged her tight.

“Maybe . . .”

“Maybe is good. Maybe means you can’t stop thinking about what we did, which means I’m not alone.”

“God, I hope not—wouldn’t ever want to be on my own in this.” She smiled, kissed him and they snuggled down into the covers.

His mind relaxed the second she was asleep, but never shut down completely.

Thoughts of how to deal with Pono’s family flitted through his mind but never crowded out thoughts of her completely. Nothing would ever be able



to do that.

She was always at the forefront—  
and always on his mind.

## Chapter 8

All night, Jeanie was cocooned in Mark's warmth. He seemed to need her close as much in sleep as he did when awake. She was surprised at how she reflected those same sentiments, and they struck her with such force it made her breathless.

She had never slept all tucked up in Pono like this.

If Mark moved, her body seemed to shift accordingly and find another nook to curl up into. The man was all hard slabs of steel-muscle, but somehow it was the most comfortable she'd ever been while sleeping. His bed was really inviting and luxurious, too, but then he

had money at his disposal—or more so than she did.

She stretched her neck, and as Mark breathed quietly beneath her—she was sprawled across him more than the blankets—she tried to find a way to get out of the bed. A daunting task for so early in the morning. Blinking was already taking too much energy.

No matter which way she moved, it would most likely wake him, so she gave up and just rolled right off him in one quick flop.

She snapped her head back at him once she was clear. He continued to sleep peacefully.

Good.

She needed a few moments to

herself to digest all that had happened last night.

He'd "made love to her," as he put it. She was scared to call it that, so in her mind, to make it seem less scary, he had *fucked* her three times. Once when they were playing initially and neither of them could withstand any longer, then twice in the middle of the night when he woke her. One of those times, he was already inside her before she was aware of what was going on. How twisted was it that out of those three encounters, the unexpected, half-asleep fuck, was the one that in this moment was getting her blood pumping so furiously? Plenty disturbing—or should've been.

The idea he had to have her no

matter what, even if she was barely aware of what was going on, sent a delicious shiver of sheer lust down her spine.

She tiptoed out of his bedroom and headed over to the guest room where she was supposed to be sleeping.

A shower would be nice, but for now, she needed to talk to Tia before he roused.

Just in case he woke and came looking for her, she locked her door, went into the bathroom and turned the shower on, then adjusted the temperature.

“Pick up, dammit,” she muttered, clutching the phone to her ear. “I need help!”

Three times. Oh God, she was a total whore. She always knew deep down she was a closeted, insatiable slut. Three times, and Pono had only been gone for a week. Fucked three times and already dying for more.

What did this say about her? How could Mark respect her at all?

Her throat constricted the minute Tia answered the phone with a groggy, “*Whaaaat?*”

“Tia, thank God! I’m a wreck, and we fucked three times, and I can’t believe I just told you this, but I need some serious help! I think I’m losing my mind,” Jeanie rambled.

“Slow down. Tell me about the fuckings first because that might be

easier to handle until I've dumped some caffeine into my veins," Tia replied.

There was some shifting of fabric on Tia's end.

"Hurry up and get your buzz—I need you coherent," Jeanie said.

"Enough to at least tell me how to get out of this mess."

"Mess? What're you talkin' about? You're totally into each other, and I'm sure the sex was mind-blowing, knowing Mark. Tell me you had screaming orgasms, at least." Tia yawned, and Jeanie could hear her friend's feet shuffling about her home.

"Yes, several, but that's beside the point."

"Then what *is* the point? Why are

you freaking out?” Tia moaned. “Fuck! Out of caffeine!”

“Oh, sorry . . .”

“It’s . . . I’ll bust someone’s kneecap, and then it’ll all be perfect,” Tia said with a dry scratchy chuckle floating out of her. She sounded so carefree, and a tight pang of envy hit Jeanie’s gut.

“It’s just all moving so fast. Pono died six days ago, I shouldn’t be this happy, and in another man’s bed, tangled up in his arms and five-hundred thread-count sheets. We spent the entire night cuddling, and I *don’t* cuddle.”

Tia barked a wooden laugh.

“Neither does Mark. Hell, sounds like he’s freaking out, too. He was probably



worried you'd disappear on him in the middle of the night."

"What am I supposed to do? He says he'll deal with Pono's family, but I wouldn't wish that on anyone. They'll be devastated if they find out I'm already sleeping with one of Pono's closest friends. Oh, God . . . They'll hate me—they'll hate *him*. This is so wrong! What is my problem that I allowed this to happen?" Tears slid down her cheeks, and she gripped her hair at the roots, then yanked. The crazy thing was, her mind immediately envisioned Mark pulling it hard as he fucked her from behind, and warmth spread through her stomach, then moved south.

She slumped against the wall and

slid her way down to the floor.

“You’re always so afraid to be happy. All you have to do is remember how you felt when you were with him—alone, just the two of you—and you’ll have your answer.”

“Don’t. Tell. Me. *That!* I can’t stop thinking about it as it is. He’s incredible—the things he says, the things he does and the way he looks at me. I could burn in those eyes for the rest of eternity and be content to never move on.” She ground her teeth together.

Tia exhaled but was silent.

“What if I just need some space? He’s so intense, he takes over and I can’t even blink without his say so. It’s too much, too . . .”

“Okay, big breaths, hon. Take a bath. Relax. Read a book, and take a nap.”

“That’s it? That’s all you’ve got?”

“Yeah, well . . . Tell him you need to slow down. He’ll listen. That’s what a Dom does. He takes care of you. Take advantage of him being there for you.”

Tia said a few more things about rules, but Jeanie barely heard her with her head spinning so fast.

Jeanie tried to slow her breathing so she could calm down. “I think I’m getting that. Or I’m trying to, at least.”

“Eat breakfast. Take a shower. Tell him your friend Tia says hi, and she wants to spend some one-on-one girl time soon.”

“Okay, I’ll see what I can do. Maybe we can go do something tomorrow. He wants to sign contracts this morning over bacon slaps,” Jeanie responded in a knee-jerk reaction.

“Bacon slaps? Now he’s into food fetishes? Maybe it’s good I got out when I did.” Tia laughed. “Bacon’s greasy, and that shit takes forever to wash out. Maybe you should stock up on dish soap. Dawn cuts grease, or so I’m told.”

“No, it’s not that . . . Never mind. I’ll see you later.” Jeanie ended the call, mortified over the thought her friend might actually think they had done kinky things with raw meat.

She quickly stripped, hoping there was still some hot water left. When

she'd turned it on initially, she had set the temperature to lukewarm.

Her insides clenched and shivered while she stood under the water, even though the water was warm enough. Mark—he might be waiting. How was she going to manage to leave? And was she even sure she wanted to?

It was all too confusing.

She shook really hard from her firing nerves as she soaped up carelessly and faster than she ever had before.

It was less than relaxing.

A moment alone was good. Or that's what she repeated in her head to keep from falling apart completely. So why did she feel panicked inside, craving him to be near again?

This was out of control. What good could come of being so dependent right after the death of a spouse?

Jesus—she couldn't stop thinking of those heated looks Mark constantly gave her, and the raw, passionate things he said to her. They never stopped.

It was who he was. This wasn't an act. It wasn't all a cheap come-on. He meant every damn word.

And that made her insides tingle and then explode until she was so slick between her thighs, she had to wash off again with some generous soap-action.

Her fingers explored, roamed a little, but it wasn't the same. Less satisfying, and she felt wrong somehow, like she was cheating on him.

“What the hell, Jeanie? He doesn’t own you.”

Yeah—she needed to tell that to her pussy . . .

She turned off the water, but before stepping out, she considered turning it back on and maybe shaving her pubic area bare.

But what if he didn’t like that? He’d specify, wouldn’t he?

Why was she even questioning this?

She stepped out and dried off.

Thinking about shaving herself down there had to be one of the stupidest things she’d done in a while.

More than sleeping with Mark almost directly after a funeral?

Her chest clenched with shame.

*Fucking*. It was just *fucking*—and people did that when struck with grief. It was a way of celebrating being alive.

Only that wasn't what happened, and no amount of lying about it would make her feel better.

She felt something for Mark and always had from the moment she first talked to him. He listened attentively, engaged her in conversation and was mindful of what she liked and didn't like.

She ran her hand over her pubic bone, imagining what it might look like bare if he asked her to do that. Like a moron, she inhaled directly after with her palm placed before her nostrils.



Whoa! Why did it smell so strongly of arousal? She just washed thoroughly with soap. What the hell was this all about?

Fabulous.

She hung her towel, walked into her room naked and shrieked in horror when she bumped into something large and dark that hadn't been in her room earlier.

“Aaaaaahhhhh fuuuuuuck!” She jumped.

“It’s just me,” he said, grabbing her by the arms.

When she looked up into his eyes, they were focused on her face.

“I heard you called Tia.”

She nodded, and her breath caught.

Did Tia call and tell him?

“Her Dom, Rodney, called. I’m dropping you off over at Tia’s this morning so you can talk to her. I can tell you have questions, and you obviously don’t feel comfortable right now asking me. Rodney’s agreed this would be fine for Tia to take on a mentor role if that’s what you want.” His breath was minty as it washed over her face.

“I’m not sure, but I do feel comfortable talking to her . . .” her voice trailed off as she envisioned what it would be like telling Tia in person all these sordid details—all the nitty gritty items, weighing down her mind.

She went straight to her bag to get dressed. His eyes followed her.

She put on her underwear, and still his eyes were on her.

Oddly, it was comforting to have him watching. Somehow it felt familiar even though Pono never paid attention. That man wouldn't notice if she chose to be nude all the time at home. He was so comfortable and oblivious he was more like a roommate, peeing with the door open.

She never liked that it had gotten to that point.

“You’re fine with me being in here—I like that.” His eyes softened.

“It feels normal somehow.” She shrugged, slipped into a bra and then a tee shirt.

“That’s because you know I want

to be in here. It's not shameful to let a man watch that adores you."

"Yeah, but society would say it's indecent. It's breaking rules of some sort," she said, pulling her shorts on.

"I've got much better rules, and I think you'll enjoy them much more than the boring, vanilla ones you've lived with your entire life." He grinned.

"So far I seem to be breaking rules right and left without even realizing. It's one of the things I worry about in this arrangement." She sat on the bed and stared back at him.

"Rules are a good thing. You act like they exist to repress you. They're actually there to free you up so you don't have to worry about them. How many

women are frustrated when they start dating a new guy because there are no clear cut plans or rules to follow? Will he call? Won't he? And why?"

"A lot of these rules you have are built on your whims, so how's that any different?" She slid her toes across the cool wood floor. So different from back home. She was used to carpet and tile.

"They're not based on my whims. They're based on what you want, and then I make sure you get it, but I do it my way. That's how there are assurances that it's equal. What good is any relationship if only one person gives and the other person takes? We both get something out of this."

"If we're both automatically giving

and taking, then remind me—I guess I’m not seeing why rules are even necessary? That part seems kind of stiff and unnatural to me.”

“In the beginning—yes, I admit—it can feel that way, but it fades quickly, and then we both settle in and know what’s expected. In the long run, things go smoother and there are fewer issues with miscommunication and misunderstandings. They’re meant to protect your heart, Jeanie. Why’s that a bad thing? Why’s it wrong for me to correct you?”

She swallowed and went mute. Her brain went blank. What was she supposed to say?

He stepped right up to her. “Stop

worrying about breaking the rules. It's going to happen sometimes, and it's okay. I'll be here to remind you and keep explaining them if you need it."

"Sounds exhausting for you," she said, rolling her eyes and her head in the process. "Why bother with me when I have no clue what I'm doing? I'll be a klutz and make this less than fun for you."

"There is nothing klutzy about you. You're beautiful, and there's this elegance about you I admire." He gripped her chin and tipped her head up so she was forced to look at him. "Tell me the idea of rules, when exacted by me, doesn't turn you on."

Her breath caught somewhere

between her ribs and pussy, where this pressure was building.

“I don’t know why it does that to me, but, yeah . . . I’m not sure if I should like it or not, though. It sounds like I’ll be trapped somehow.”

“You won’t.” He leaned the back of his knees into the edge of the mattress. “You have a say in everything, so you’ll never feel trapped. If you decide a certain rule doesn’t work for you, well, then we revise it or get rid of it.”

She exhaled a shaky breath. Her diaphragm was freaking out a little with him this close. It was like he commanded her very breath.

“I’ll need a lot of reminders. Won’t that bother you, Sir?”



He smiled when she used his title.

God, he was gorgeous when he was happy—eyes all lit up like that.

“It’s simple—I love you enough to care about giving reminders, but I don’t expect perfection. I do expect you to care, though, just like I do. It should be important to both of us. And that’s all that matters—we’re both invested. That’s how this works. That’s why the fears go away. You know I’m completely devoted to you and your happiness, and I have the satisfaction of knowing I get the same in return. What about that doesn’t sound like everything you’ve ever wanted right down to your marrow?”

“Yeah, I . . .” She glanced over at

the bathroom door. “I think I’m starting to get it. In the shower a little bit ago, I was considering shaving my pussy for you, but then I wasn’t sure if you’d like that or not, so I didn’t. It would’ve been nice to know what you preferred. In a way that kind of goes under the category of rules, right?” She braved a glance back into his piercing gaze.

He smirked. “See—you’re getting it already, and yes . . . That falls under the rules. I’ll be inspecting your body regularly to make sure you’re keeping your end of the deal.”

“Oh, gaaawd,” she groaned. “Inspecting?” Her pussy clenched in response to that word.

“I’ll show you the position I’ll

expect you take on, and I'll perform inspections randomly."

Her mouth watered. "So, I'll be naked for this?"

"Stark." He smirked.

"But you'll be dressed?"

"Of course." He ran his hands over her shoulders, then up the sides of her throat. His hands cupped her jaw, and his thumbs ran over the edge. "You'll be naked quite a bit."

"And you'll be dressed quite a bit?" Her eyes narrowed, though she smiled. "Already I'm seeing an imbalance here, *Sir*."

"Tell me how unfair it is—please, and I'll show you the cracks. I'll always make sure you're soft limits and hard

limits are understood and honored.” He grabbed her hands, ran his lips between her fingers and kissed her palms. His eyes went really heavy and dark. “You have your scent on this hand.” He dropped her left hand like it was useless and landed several spine-melting, open-mouthed kisses on the inside of her right. Her fingers twitched several times, in time with her clit.

Were they rigged together somehow? Was this normal for her to react this way?

He was so disarming, and everything came across as so new, she almost felt like she was a virgin, and he was experimenting with her. He moved slowly, too, like he knew she was

feeling this way.

Her breath leaked out as her mind whirled.

She didn't deserve this kind of tenderness from this seductive, skilled man. He deserved better.

"It's okay, sweetheart," his soft voice said, comforting her.

He leaned over and kissed her forehead.

"*How* is it?" Her tone was a little biting.

"This is a lot to take in." His hands were back on her shoulders.

"You called me sweetheart," she said, her voice flat.

"I did."

"Don't call me that—I don't

deserve it.” She shifted her eyes to her lap. Every inch of her gut told her he wasn’t going to agree to this, and it would probably make him angry, but if he wanted to know upfront what made her uncomfortable—*this* did. Pono didn’t use soft endearments like that.

She hadn’t with him either.

“You *do* deserve it. You didn’t do anything wrong,” he told her, and with soft, but firm hands, he cupped the sides of her head and tipped her gaze up again.

“How can you say that? I have the worst—” She cut herself off for a second, but he gave her a look that said to continue, so she went on. “I betray Pono’s memory by comparing him in my head to you. It’s not fair to him because I

was married to the guy and he doesn't compare. You do things to me—I feel things for you I never did with him. My body reacts in ways I can't even explain.”

“You'd end this for him?” His voice broke and went up in pitch significantly.

“No. I don't care what he thinks about me anymore—why would I when he's gone?”

“Then why? Because it sounds like you're talking yourself out of being with me, and if that's the case, I'd at least like to know why—what's getting in the way.”

“I feel completely out of control—have no idea what to do with myself.

You move an inch, and I jump in the same direction. It's repulsive the way I practically kiss your feet when I barely know you." She ran her sweating palms down her shorts.

"You should be proud of yourself, Jeanie, not ashamed of how you've managed yourself in all this. It's normal to struggle and want to feel in control. Pono had put you in a position where you were forced to make most of the important decisions with no regard to if you wanted to do that or if it hurt you."

She exhaled in a slight huff. He stroked her cheeks. That small, tender action made her breath hitch.

He kept explaining, and she settled into place.



“This feels foreign to you in some ways, yet so right in others, so it’s confusing you.” He stroked her jaw once more with his thumbs. “This is where the rules come in and strip those warring feelings away. You weren’t afforded the opportunity before now to explore those parts of your basic nature—where you didn’t have to be in charge. I’m telling you now—your entire body lights up when I take over. It’s like a switch goes on inside you, and it’s the most breathtaking thing I’ve ever seen.” He stood staring with that confident posture of his, voice smooth and warm like butterscotch, melting over a sundae on a rough weeknight.

Why was it like this?

It made no sense to feel this attached so quickly.

Her head spun from nothing more than the scent of him.

“I need some space to think. I can’t hear my own mind when you’re near me—you’re *that* overwhelming, and before I do something stupid—”

“That’s why you’re going to Tia’s for a portion of the day. You can clear your head—get a little distance so you can regain your perspective.” He inhaled and then held his breath for a long pause, then exhaled in a husky, guttural burst.

“It takes a lot of communication to be in a committed Dom/sub relationship, but I promise it’ll be worth it. You’ll feel more alive than you ever have. And I

want you to know, I'm more than willing to do anything you need to feel comfortable and safe."

A warm smile from him, and her heart melted slowly like ice left on a countertop.

"Thank you," she said through a satisfied sigh.

"You're welcome, sweetheart. Take your time with her. I want you happy."

He ran his hands down her neck and then left her alone in the room.

She took a few moments to soak in all his kind words.

When she left her room, she found Mark in the kitchen, attending to breakfast.

She sat at the breakfast bar, kept her hands in front of her, *off* his bacon and smiled at him without another word.

This was comfortable—this was what she craved.

Bacon slaps or not.

\* \* \*

“Well, you look better than you sounded on the phone,” Tia said, welcoming her into her home.

Mark squeezed Jeanie into his side, said goodbye, released her, then got back in his car and drove off.

“I feel better. We had breakfast, and he explained a few more things to me. I’m still a little restless, but not as

freaked out. He has this calming presence that's hard to explain." Jeanie smiled. "It feels wrong to be this happy when my husband just died." Tears tickled at her lashes.

"All right—come inside before you have a breakdown in my doorway. My neighbors only like to see the kinky men I bring home, not sad, sexually repressed women that are having a reawakening." Tia barked a hiccup of a laugh and led her in the rest of the way.

Tia sat her down and brought her some tea. She sat across from her with her own mug. Tia's legs tucked up under her as she studied Jeanie.

"I don't know what I'm doing," Jeanie said after several minutes of

sipping at her drink.

“You always acted like you knew *exactly* what you were doing, but can I share something with you?” Tia set her own cup aside, eyeing her like she knew something important that Jeanie was oblivious to.

Jeanie nodded. “Please.”

“You didn’t know back then either. Wanna know why that was the case?”

Oddly, Tia’s words sounded arrogant, but there was a look of regret over having to be the bearer of this news.

“Yeah, I do, actually. Please tell me. I need to hear this from someone other than him.” Jeanie gripped the edge of the sofa where she was sitting with

one hand and tightened her hold on her cup with the other. It rattled her a little to have Mark, and now Tia, telling her who she was. The most difficult aspect was she knew both of them were right.

“You’ve always been good at being the doting wife, the quiet one in the background—keeping it all together. But no matter how good your little act was, it was there in your eyes the first time I met you. There was no peace. You knew this wasn’t supposed to be your life. You have this fire in you, and your well-meaning husband was systematically extinguishing it. After a while, you probably didn’t feel it anymore, but I saw it from the first, and so did Mark. He hated seeing that fire in

you being suffocated. He tried to find ways to bring it back through simple means, and let me tell you this—it always worked. You’d leave a little more edgy, jumpy even, but you were more alive after being near Mark, including the times when contact was short-lived and extremely limited. There’s this connection between the two of you that I envy. I’ll probably never have something like that.”

Jeanie’s brow wrinkled and then she rested her forehead in her palm. What was she supposed to do now? What *could* she do?

“I understand completely why you’re freaking out. The scariest thing in this world is finding a love that burns



you from the inside out,” Tia said.

“Why?” Jeanie’s haunted voice echoed beneath her chin since her head was tucked down. “Please tell me, because I feel like an idiot. Here I was married and didn’t have that. Shouldn’t I have already had that and experienced it?”

“Not necessarily. Married couples lack spark all the time. It just happens.” Tia’s voice softened. “But things have changed for you because you realize you could be hurt worse than ever. You have something more than worth living for now, and if it’s ever taken away . . .”

“I’d be destroyed. If that had been Mark lowered into a grave, I would have heaved myself into that hole with

him, and no one would've been able to remove me," Jeanie blurted.

Her eyes clenched closed, and her heart, that had been numb and splintered before now, warmed, and the pain of admitting it seemed to pull it back together.

"How hard was it to say that?" Tia asked. Her legs uncurled from under her.

"Harder than walking out of his house today. I didn't really want to leave and get away from him, but he and I both knew I needed this." Jeanie took a deep, shaky breath. "What am I supposed to do?" She shook her head. "My deep emotions for him scare me to death. I worry like crazy that I'm not nearly good enough, and he'll be wasting his time

with me. And then there's how intense he is . . . Jesus, how will I ever really be able to fully please him?"

Tia laughed so hard, her leg swung out and kicked the couch, right next to where Jeanie was sitting.

She gave her friend a puzzled look. "What's so funny?"

Tia smirked. "*You!* There's no way you can fail. You have the easiest task before you—be yourself. That's all he wants."

"He wants me to *submit*. What if I can't? I'm not a trained sub."

"You already do it naturally. You're over-thinking this so much, you've probably already given your brain an ulcer, woman. It's hurting me to

watch you spin yourself into a mess of womanhood.” Tia stretched out her legs and sighed like this was all amusing now. “He’s so fucking in love with you, it probably won’t matter at all what you do.”

“Nothing seems to bother him. I say all sorts of stupid things, and he dismisses them like it’s nothing. I don’t know how he deals with me. I feel so selfish, and my head is all over the place. I’m sure I’m coming across to both of you as a flighty prude of a basket-case.” Jeanie tilted her head to the side and looked at Tia through the corner of her eye.

“One of the reasons I love him, and I’m sure you do, too, is because that

man's got the patience of all the saints from every age known to man. He's understanding and open-minded, so if you explain it to him like you just did to me, he'll be fine with it. If he isn't, he's honest and forthcoming enough, he'll say so." Tia rested her hands on her thighs, looking every bit the patient saint she was describing.

"How *much* do you love him?"

Jeanie squeaked.

"Not enough. You think *you're* selfish? Pffft!" Tia rolled her eyes and her shoulders bolted up to her ears. "I talked back all the time when I was with him. Sometimes I did it because I loved watching him punish me, but most of the time I did it because I was annoyed I

wasn't right for him, just like Pono wasn't right for you. Mark was the exact Dom I wanted and needed. You were the exact wife Pono wanted and needed. There's no way that didn't get to your husband."

"It did. Mark told me. He read me something Pono wrote to him about that very subject right before we wound up getting married," Jeanie told her.

"And if you felt awful for him when you realized how difficult that was for him to live with, and why he probably slowly gave up trying to be what you needed, then you—"

"It's not the same!" Jeanie's hands flew up in the air. "It's totally different! Marriage is difficult. We both had to

compromise.”

“Yeah, that’s true, but there’s nothing worse than realizing you married someone that makes you incredibly happy, but that you’ll never be what they need in return. Being inadequate is a rotting influence on the soul. No wonder he got lazy, apathetic and packed on weight.”

Tears—fat, spoiled, mocking ones—rolled down in pairs along Jeanie’s cheeks. She knew it was true, and she couldn’t really be mad at Tia for saying all this.

She gasped a few times and then finally was able to respond with a simple, quiet, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, hon. I just want

you to be happy, and even if you can't see it now, I've never seen you happier. It's because you're finding yourself, and you're with the man you belong with."

Jeanie smiled, and so did her heart. She did belong. For the first time ever, she belonged to herself and to someone else who loved her for exactly who she was.



## Chapter 9

Every time he took a goddamn breath, it ached.

She was away from him, and he was dying to be with her again. He hoped she was having some epiphanies and doing some serious soul-searching.

There had to be some way to help her see they were amazing together and how right this all felt.

They had been together the entirety of last night in his bed, and she was constantly touching him, even when she was asleep. But then this morning, she freaked out and he knew if he didn't give her some space, she might leave for good.

He ran his fingers over the contract and kink list he'd hoped she would have filled out over breakfast.

But no . . . He had to change the plans.

Breakfast had been polite and they talked about other things, like what she was currently reading, how she felt about living in California in the near future and what she might miss about Phoenix when she moved here.

Her answers were brief, but respectful.

She needed to let loose, and clearly he was setting her on edge by moving too quickly. A fun, carefree night would do them both some good.

He pulled out his phone and dialed

up Marly.

“Hi, Mark,” she answered.

“Hey, kiddo. I was wondering if you know of a good dance club that we could bring Jeanie to?”

“*We?*”

“Yeah, she loves dancing, and I know she wants to spend some time with you while she’s in town the next few weeks,” he said.

“Oh, *I* know!” Marly then rambled on about several places they could go.

“Why don’t you pick one, text me the address and I’ll have Jeanie there at seven. We’ll meet you there.” He stared at the paperwork.

She agreed, and he ended the call. Time was up. Jeanie had been at

Tia's for over four hours. There hadn't been a text saying she needed more time, so he was going to fetch her and bring her back to his place.

*Their* place. It already felt like they'd been sharing it for years.

He grabbed the papers and his keys, then locked up the house.

Thirty minutes later he was outside Tia's place.

His fist pounded lightly at the door—his control barely in existence. He was on edge, his mind racing over every possible scenario of how things might've gone while Jeanie was here.

Tia answered the door, smiling. "Thanks for giving her some breathing room. She's doing much better—clearer.

You'll be glad you put yourself through this."

"She's been struggling. Thank you for being there for her so she could ask her questions and vent some." He rested his hand on her door, an inexplicable panic hitting him—worry flooding his mind that Tia might try to keep Jeanie here and close her door in his face.

Tia nodded and smiled warmly.

"Hey, we're going clubbing tonight—dancing and drinking. Why don't you ask Rodney if you guys can join us? I think Jeanie might be more comfortable with you there. Pono's little sister will be there, too. She's been really judgmental with Jeanie, so another friend there for support would be good."

“Sure, I’ll ask.” Tia opened the door wide and let him in.

“Mark!” Jeanie’s eyes lit up, and she clasped her hands in front of her pubis.

God, she was stunning right down to her perfect little hands and perfect posture.

“Hi . . . Ready to go back home and have some lunch?” His eyes traveled over her once more.

She grinned, nodded, and before he knew it, he had his hand on her lower back and was guiding her out the door.

Perfect.

She was relaxed and no longer fighting this.

They said their goodbyes to Tia,

and once they were in the car, he cleared his throat. “I was thinking, that in order to get to know each other better, we should be out in public, doing something we both enjoy. So, I’ve arranged for us to meet Marly at a dance club tonight. I’ve invited Tia and Rodney along as well.” His eyes followed her body movement to gauge for any rigidity, signaling she was uncomfortable, since at this point he figured she might not state her preferences. “We’ll leave at six-thirty, and I promise—I won’t push you into doing anything tonight you don’t want to do. Just dinner, some drinks and dancing—nothing more.”

“That sounds perfect—just like you.” She set her hands in her lap and

continued to look at him like he was a welcome sight.

Thank God! His chest expanded and he started the car, taking her home—where she belonged.

\* \* \*

Mark had a hard time keeping his eyes off Jeanie. She was quiet, pensive even, but the most important part was she appeared more relaxed here in his car with him, and she was willing to be with him tonight.

Out of nowhere, she turned to him and said, “God, Mark. I don’t know how you do it—but in a matter of seconds, you overwhelm my heart and take my



breath away, so much that there won't be any breath left to listen for."

"Is that a bad thing?" His eyes shifted back to the road as they drove to the club.

"Absolutely not. It's one of the things I adore about you, but it's hard to take sometimes. I'm not used to it, Sir. If Pono noticed anything I did outside of bringing him dessert, I was usually shocked and wondering if he was okay."

"I can see how it would be jarring, but I won't stop doing it unless it bothers you enough it gets in the way. You need to be told often what a wonderful, stunning creature you are." He smiled, and his eyes were soft. "It would be really unnatural for me to keep those

comments to myself when you're here with me, being so sweet and looking like the most divine woman I've ever seen."

Her breath caught. "My God. How can you even talk like that so freely without any reservation? I'm in awe of you."

"Don't be. It's all you, sweet lady. You inspire all of it."

When he looked at her, she gave a shy smile and flushed.

So beautiful.

"Will you be dancing with me tonight, Sir?"

"Definitely—try and stop me," he replied.

She chuckled, and for some reason it made his heart swell. It was so

feminine and innocent-sounding, it sent a thrill tumbling through him. This was the type of stuff he wanted to encourage.

Already, she sounded at ease and so herself. He couldn't help but beam at her.

“And should I try to stop you from complimenting me all night, Sir?” Her lips curved into a delicate smile.

“Sounds like that might be something I'd fail at miserably, but I feel obligated to tell you I'm nothing special.”

“The fact you think that makes you even more special in my eyes.”

She made an O with her mouth.

He chuckled.

“So damn cute.”

“I'm not trying to be,” she replied,

her mouth still agape.

“And that’s exactly why you *are* so damn cute.” He reached out and caressed her hand set on her thigh.

“Can I ask you something though before we arrive at the club, Sir?”

“Go ahead,” he answered.

“One of my issues with this whole Dom/sub thing is I never know if I’m doing it right. Tia told me I’m not supposed to touch you without permission. That feels really, really”—her face scrunched in pain—“*wrong* to me. I was already worried I was botching it all. Now I’m hyper-aware and stressed out that I can’t please you, and that I’m bad at this. And I have a hard time not touching you when we’re

alone like we are right now.”

He swallowed his sharp inhale. “Jeanie,” he said, his voice firm, “you can touch me for now whenever you want until you get a little more used to being with me. Once we’re done with our three weeks you’ve given me, if you choose to stay, then that’ll need to change. For now, if I don’t want you to, I’ll remove your hands off me, or I’ll tell you what I’d rather have you do. I want you to do what feels comfortable at this point, and stop worrying. You’re a very natural submissive woman. Don’t make yourself crazy over it. I know it’s all new to you, so do what feels good, all right?” He arched an eyebrow.

She nodded, and her breathing

evened out along with her shoulders, relaxing back into the seat.

He smiled. Good. He said something to alleviate a few more of her fears and worries.

Hopefully tomorrow they could go over the kink list and contract, and she'd be more open to it.

They arrived at the club a few minutes later, and for a brief second, he wondered if she'd struggle with him taking control of the simple things like opening doors, pulling out chairs for her, or even guiding her with his hands by touching her.

That question was put to rest quickly when he helped her out of the car, and she not only thanked him, but

stood, waiting graciously for him to take the lead.

His heart swelled and thumped in his chest.

Without hesitation, he took the back of her elbow, directed her where to go and made sure she was always at his side.

They found Marly inside fairly quickly, and he received a text from Tia, stating she and Rodney were on their way.

A hostess seated them, and as he ordered for Jeanie, this time, Marly's gaze on him was friendly.

"I can't wait to dance with you!" Marly told her.

"Me, too, though I'm really out of

practice. I'm not in horrible shape, but I still worry I won't be able to keep up with you and your infectious energy.” Jeanie smiled at her with pride.

“You're beautiful, and it's obvious you keep in good shape,” Mark told Jeanie.

“That's true,” Marly agreed. “I always wished Pono would start exercising again after he started working. I could tell he was really unhealthy, and I wished he wasn't. When I'd ask him to dance with me, he stopped accepting. It always bothered me since I knew how much he loved dancing—it was in his blood.” Her eyes were moist. “I really miss him.”

“We all do,” Mark replied. “He



was a good guy and a fabulous friend to have. I'm sure he was the best brother in the world."

Marly swiped a few tears away, but her smile remained. "He was. He liked to occasionally email me these dorky jokes, but they always made me laugh."

Once the food came, they both let Marly take over the conversation. She talked a lot about school and some guy she was interested in. According to her, he was the best dancer she'd ever seen, and he had a great voice, too.

Mark listened attentively and asked thoughtful questions. Each time Jeanie would look at him with this soft light in her eyes he'd smile at her, and

her breath would hitch like he'd said something that touched her. He'd squeeze her hand under the table, and she'd squirm a little.

Her reactions were so genuine. God, he couldn't get enough of her.

"Where is Tia?" Jeanie finally asked.

"Text her while I go settle the bill," he said, excusing himself.

While he was taking care of the payment, he was approached by Tia and a dark, bulky, short man. He carried himself with confidence.

"You must be Mark," he said. "It's good to finally meet face-to-face."

"Yeah, it's great to meet you, too, Rodney. Especially after talking to each

other on the phone a few times,” Mark replied, extending his hand.

They shook. Mark smiled at Tia.

“Sorry we didn’t join you for dinner. I decided you needed some time with Jeanie without Tia there as a crutch. We got our own table over in the smoking section,” Rodney said.

“Thank you. I’m sure Jeanie’ll be happy to have her friend at her side for dancing, though,” Mark said, smiling wider. “If that’s all right with you, Rodney.”

“Sounds good,” Rodney said.

“We’ll follow you back to your table.”

Mark nodded, finished taking care of the bill and then led them back.

Jeanie’s face lit up right away, and

she was all teeth and sparkling eyes.

“You came!” Jeanie said, sitting up straighter.

“Wouldn’t miss the dancing,” Tia said. She did a little shoulder bounce and started dancing on her own.

Rodney caressed her shoulder and looked at her like he was ready to pounce.

Mark was pleased she found a Dom that obviously adored her.

He always felt bad there hadn’t been a deep connection between him and Tia, but there was no way to force chemistry. It wasn’t there. They made great friends, but not much more, even if they did play well together.

Marly bounced up out of her chair.

Mark made introductions to everyone, and before he knew it, Marly was dragging Jeanie by the hand onto the dance floor.

He followed them out and danced several songs with them. It didn't take long for Marly, the precocious teen that she was, to find new friends her age on the dance floor and forget all about Jeanie.

Rodney and Tia were dancing on their own somewhere else far enough away that he wasn't worried they might overhear them or see anything they shouldn't if he decided to do more than dance with Jeanie.

Mark took over in the middle of a dance, pulling his girl into him, keeping

their bodies in constant contact. She was misted with sweat but smelled incredible. His mouth was on her every few seconds, and he groped her at will.

With all the gyrating bodies around, no one noticed, and each time he ground into her, she would stop breathing and her pupils would dilate. She gripped onto his arms like she was anchoring herself to him. It made it hard to control himself when she'd give him a begging look and make these broken gasping moans in his ear. Damn, it made him impossibly harder for her.

“When you look at me like that and make those soft pleased sounds, I can barely keep from fucking you on this dance floor,” he whispered in her ear.

She groaned, tucked her head into his heated chest and fisted his shirt with such force, it was obvious she was feeling the same way.

“I love the way you dance. It hints at how sensual you are in the bedroom,” she replied, muffled by his chest, but he heard it clearly. “I keep replaying last night in my mind—can’t stop thinking about it.”

“And you, little girl—when you dance, you let go, and you’re free. You stop thinking and give in to yourself, just like you do when you submit to me. It’s sexy as hell, and I can’t get enough of it. I’ll take you dancing every night if it helps you loosen up and unleash, and I’ll fuck you directly after in the shadows

because neither of us can wait to get home,” he said.

She went rigid.

He chuckled. “Soft limit?”

“I have no idea, but damn . . . I don’t know if I could do that.” She looked up at him, her big doe eyes searching for some sort of reassurance he wasn’t expecting her to be indecent in public right this minute.

“We’ll work up to it,” he said, stroking her hair. “You’ll love it, and I’ll make sure you’re going out of your mind, ready to explode with passion so you won’t even be concerned about anything other than pleasing me. I’ll take care of you—always.”

She nodded and tucked herself



back into his chest. “Christ—you’d do that in public?” she murmured.

Even though he knew she was talking to herself, he tipped her chin back. “I do whatever I want to give you what you need, sweetheart, and that’s all you need to know.”

She blinked and then a lazy smile spread across her mouth. “Okay, Sir.”

“Okay?”

“Whatever you say. I’ll try to be more open-minded.” She stroked his chest, and his skin prickled beneath his shirt.

He smiled, and his heart swelled. “Oh, such a good girl. You have no idea what it does to me when you give me your trust freely like this.” He cupped

her chin and caressed it with the pad of his thumb, staring at her lips.

Her breathing went ragged, and her eyes heavy while she wore a lazy, sated-looking smile.

“Let me know when you’ve had enough dancing tonight because I’m dying to have you all to myself.” He kissed her forehead. “Especially now—since you’re choosing to be *open-minded*.”

She sighed, looked like she was fighting off a shiver, then her expression went to one of contemplation.

“Whenever Marly seems done, we can go. I don’t want to hurt her feelings, Sir.” She glanced around for her sister-in-law.

This time it was his turn to say okay, but he didn't. He searched for her, too.

After several minutes of looking for the teen, they both started to worry. She seemed to be missing.

Jeanie texted her and a few minutes later received this reply—**Got a ride home with a new friend. I had fun with u. Let's go dancing again... Mar**

“That's dangerous. She shouldn't have done that,” Mark said, frowning.

Jeanie started to shrug but then stopped. Did she think it would aggravate him if she made light of this? “She's always been kind of reckless. It's my fault. I should've kept a better watch on her.”

“She’s not a toddler. She has some common sense. Sounds to me like she’s pushing buttons on purpose. If she blames this on you, I’ll be having a word with her parents about how she knew better, acted like a brat and didn’t tell us she was leaving and with whom.” He brushed some of the messy, loose hairs off her face. “Okay.” He kissed the tip of her nose. “Say bye to Tia and Rodney, and then we’re leaving.”

They both said their farewells, and his chest heated while his heart hammered with anticipation.

Mark took her hand, and they left in a flurry of quick steps and oozing sexual tension the entire retreat.

He needed to feel her body up

against his, tight and bound by him, even if it was a simple hug. Dancing had him all amped up.

She needed it, too—he could feel it.

Tonight he'd be more careful, more tuned into her and her body language so he wouldn't scare her off.

She fidgeted a little as he helped her into his car, but then she responded with a relaxed sigh when he joined her in there.

His body did the opposite, ratcheting up a few notches in his anxiety level. He gripped the steering column when he realized that before he could have her in his hands again, he really needed to go through that paperwork so

he could verify they were on the same page.

Shit. He'd agreed they'd get to know each other for a full week before they did anything physical. But did that still apply after they'd already had sex three times? They hadn't really said if they wanted to stick with that original plan or not. As far as he was concerned, that was null and void at this point.

He could keep talking, and keep touching. They'd both get everything they wanted.

He turned to her. "So, before things go any further, we'll be going through the kink list and contract when we get home. No more misunderstandings. I want to know if you

have any questions,” he said, his heart racing.

His white knuckles told of hidden turmoil inside as he strangled the steering wheel with his fists. It even creaked a little under the pressure. He rolled down the windows, hoping it would help cool him since he was overheating with concern she was going to ditch him tonight.

“Mark . . . Are you sure you wanna talk about this right now . . .” She caressed his hand and then his wrist. “We had so much fun tonight. You were a godsend, keeping me laughing and enjoying the atmosphere, helping me to relax and quit worrying. But now *you’re* doing it. I don’t want that for you.” Her

voice was softer than the breezy, perfect night, surrounding them. “Can’t we just enjoy the peace for a little bit?”

With the windows down, her hair would lift every few seconds and settle when a rush of air would zip through.

She was mesmerizing. How could he not want more?

“If you don’t want me to worry, and you want to enjoy the peace, then we need to go through this step. I know it’s foreign to you, but I’ll guide you through the entire thing. And then we can play. That’s always fun and relaxing—even better than dancing.” His voice was playful and light. The right corner of his lips twitched up into a dirty smile.

He started the car and headed



toward the exit of the parking lot.

“Is that so?” She smirked, and her hands kneaded her thighs.

Damn, that was seductive. His eyes followed her fingers for a brief second and he wished those were his hands there doing that.

“Yes, it is, and we’re going to get this done and out of the way for the sake of both our sanities,” he replied.

“Okay, I’ll do it. I may be in and out of your room tonight though as I adjust, and I’m sure I’ll drive you nuts, but I—”

He pulled over with a jerk of the steering wheel.

She stopped talking mid-sentence, and her eyes went wide as she stared at

him.

He parked the car, and his mouth latched viciously onto hers. His breathing was raspy, and he licked across the seam of her lips, commanding that she open to him and allow him inside.

She did, and he groaned the second his tongue entered. *Home*—inside some part of her body, where he should always be.

Ah God, hard and wanting, but finding some sense of calmness and balance.

“Thank you,” he whispered between sliding strokes of his tongue across hers and tasting her unique flavor. “Thank you, sweetheart. I need you at my

side from now on. You won't regret it."

"I know I won't." She clutched his shirt at the collar. She held onto him like he was keeping her afloat.

"Don't let go," he said. He moved his seat back and then slipped her onto his lap.

"Trapping you again, Sir?" She eyed him.

"Whatever it takes to keep you comfortable and with me, I'm willing to do," he growled and nipped at her jaw. "I'm gonna hold you all night long, and I know you like that, too, but this time, if you wake up feeling out of sorts, I expect you to tell me right away. Don't just take off. I don't care how tired I am, or how deep asleep I am—wake me up. You're

more important to me than anything else, and I need to know what's going on. Communicate with me.”

She nodded and kissed him.

She. Kissed. *Him*.

Too fucking good.

A feral, pinched sound emanated out of his chest. “Kiss me again,” he said.

She smiled and leaned in, taking his bottom lip first and then slowly consuming him like she was savoring every inch of him.

“I love the way you kiss me like it all makes sense,” she said, her tone reverent and heated.

“That’s because it’s exactly what happens. You and I both feel so right

when we come together it makes all our past relationships seem ridiculous. And that's why you get scared. It makes you feel like a hypocrite, like your marriage was fake."

She began to speak, but he covered her mouth gently with two fingers.

"You did your best, and so did he. Your efforts were commendable, but there was something missing. It lacked the deep, impenetrable connection you and I have. Don't fight it. Don't feel guilty. The past isn't something you can change. It's nice to try and figure out how it can navigate your future, but it's not going to help you, other than realizing who you are and that I want all of you—every last fucking bit of the

authentic you, not who you think you should be.”

She breathed heavy and low. It sounded husky. He twitched in his pants and let go of her mouth.

His hands stroked through her hair. “Talk to me. Am I already freaking you out?”

“I . . . When you say stuff like that—I know you’re right. I can feel how true it is deep down in my bones, and my heart reacts instantly, but it almost makes me feel stupid, like I should’ve been able to figure this out on my own. Why don’t *I* have this kind of clarity? I mean, I love that you’re so insightful, but I always considered myself observant, so why don’t these”—she gripped his shirt

again—"great moments of understanding hit me on their own? Why do I have to be dependent on you and Tia for them?"

He chuckled and held her hands tight on him. "You already *are* figuring it out, and I only ever tell you what you already know but are too nervous to say. It's there. I'm picking it up from you, reading your eyes. I'm not making this shit up as I go along. You're the smart one, Jeanie. It's hard to see what's directly before us when we're standing too close to it."

Her grip lessened, and then she settled her palm on his chest, under his hands. The warmth of her skin, penetrating through his shirt, felt good.

"That's when we need a second

party to figure out what's going on because they can see the whole picture," he said. "There's nothing weak or dumb about that. It's smart to ask for an outside perspective, and since Tia and I have been studying you for years and praying you'd find your way into this lifestyle, we can spot what's bothering you quickly. When you've been in this life longer, you'll be able to do the same for others as well." He kissed the corner of her mouth gently, and her breath hitched. "Besides, we know what it's like. You seem to think we never struggled with our identities in this lifestyle. We both had to find our way and navigate around stumbling blocks."

"I love you, Mark. I keep telling



myself I can't know that, and it's too soon—I shouldn't, but I do. I can't help but be absolutely crazy about you. How can I keep you interested, though? You'll grow bored of me and my boring vanilla flavor. I don't know how to be seductive or—”

“Stop.” He let go of her hands on him, gripped her shoulders and massaged them lightly. “What interests me, and has had me begging for morsels of your time for years on end, is you. It's *all you*—watching that tender heart of yours go about caring for the people around you. Let your true nature come out—be *you*. That's all I want, and it's what I'm so attracted to, there's no way I'll ever grow tired of you. I want you to

let me be the creative one, to find ways to lavish attention and kinky adoration on you.” He ran his fingertip across her lush bottom lip. “Does anything about that sound disgusting or boring to you?”

He grew uncomfortably hard as ideas ran rampant through his head of all the wicked things he wanted to do to her.

“No. It sounds . . . Oh God, it makes me so wet and tingly, it’s hard to do anything but squirm in your lap.”

“Squirm, sweetheart. I wanna see it.” He smirked. “You do it so well.”

“Not funny, Sir.”

“It sure as hell is. I’m smiling, aren’t I?” He pointed at his grin.

She smacked his chest playfully.

“You’re smiling because you think I’m a

silly little girl.”

“Nope.” He yanked her chin up. A kiss was what she needed. She listened better to his body. When his tongue moved in and took over, she curled into him and melted into his touch.

It was breathtaking, the way she gave in and surrendered so beautifully.

More. God, more of that.

He broke the kiss. “Come home with me now and go through the kink list and contract so we can move forward.”

She nodded, so he put her back in her seat, adjusted his own, then took off before she changed her mind. He drove like a demon in the night, ready to ravage the woman seated next to him.

She was silent, but the atmosphere

was relaxed.

When he pulled up to his house, he turned the car off and took a deep breath. “Once we’re inside, we’re gonna go over the contract and your list right away. Then you can get comfortable in my bed while I hold you. I don’t want you to worry about anything else tonight other than sleeping with me in my bed. I’ll only make love to you if you ask me since you’ve already told me you wanted to get to know each other more before we get physical again.”

His neck tightened, hoping she’d realize he would keep talking to her, hashing this stuff out even if they did start playing together. He wanted to know all of her, and that wouldn’t stop

because he was up in her pussy.

“*Ask?* Um, I could never do that,” she said, her eyes widening.

“*See?* You belong in this lifestyle. You’re not supposed to ask. I dictate when and how sex happens, and you take it all because you’re concerned only with my pleasure. That’s my Jeanie—the little girl that makes me shiver at her touch like a man in desperate need.”

She laughed. “*I do that, Sir?*”

“All the damn time. Made it hard to dance with you,” he said. “Stay here. I’ll get you in a second.”

She nodded and tucked her hands into her lap.

He took his time exiting his side of the car and opening her door. “Perfect.

You do this so well.”

“Do what, Sir?”

“Wait on me patiently, and sitting poised and ready so beautifully, my cock’s leaking for you. There’s no way you can do this wrong. I want you to know I’m constantly impressed by you.”

She swallowed, gave a watery smile and reached for him.

He picked her up and held her crushed to his chest as the emotions overwhelmed both of them. He held her tight and rocked her back and forth.

“God, I fucking love you so much, and I’ll always be here for you,” he said, his voice sounding hoarse. She had him breathless again.

“I know, and I trust you because I

love you, too.” She kissed him. “We can do this all your way.” She blinked and nodded a little, confirming it visually.

His heart felt like it was bared for all to see because she was opening up to him, and it meant everything. Finally, she was allowing them to navigate through this together. He would help her every step of the way.

No more fumbling, and no more scaring her off.

She was his. No more running.

## Chapter 10

Each time Mark moved around her, this spark inside would jolt her awake. The delicate flesh between her legs would tingle and steal away her attention.

It was like he was hooked to her very core.

This was completely new, and it invaded her senses. But tonight, she'd allow it to coat her skin, permeate her pores and saturate her soul.

One night—she could give in once more without worry and see where this went.

The last time she did that, she about melted into nothing but a puddle of hormones—he was *that* good at



commanding her body.

He glanced over at her, a wicked glint in his eyes.

“Pull out that list you just filled out. Let’s go over that first,” he said, kicking his shoes off, then he bent down and removed hers for her. He massaged her feet for a second, and like a whore being pounded into oblivion, she moaned with an obscenely loud, grating sound.

“Your hands should be auctioned off—they could end third world hunger, they’re that skilled.”

He chuckled and then ran his hands up her legs and landed them on her thighs. His fingers kneaded into her muscles. “Ah, yes, but if they were

auctioned off, who would be touching you tonight and soothing those sore dancing muscles?”

He crinkled the corners of his eyes, and they were filled with mischief. My word, he was gorgeous, and she was so drawn to him, she realized she was leaning toward him.

How did he not think of her as a sleazy whore?

“Stop it—too much thinking,” he said, pinching her thigh, and then he pointed at his bedroom. “I think you need to get comfortable before we get started. Go change into a tee shirt of mine. Panties are optional, but no bra. Then you get back in here, I’ll feed you dessert and we’ll discuss the list and

contract. Only then will I take you into my bed. Questions?” He gave her the brow.

She swallowed and her nerves resurfaced. “What shirt should I choose, Sir? Any preference?”

“None at all. Whatever appeals to you for sleeping in. If I can remove it easily, I’ll be thrilled, but if not . . .” he grinned so wide, his jaw tightened “. . . I’ll find a way to get it off if you decide you want to play a little tonight.”

She shifted in her spot, then floated in a daze back to his room. This was some other girl, not her, taking orders and reveling in them. The Jeanie she’d been the last few years was the one that handled everything and knew what to do.

She was definitely out of her element, but it felt nice to have this change.

She frowned as she entered his room, because it hit her—she was going to have to go through his dresser. He was showing her how much he trusted her and was letting her into his life.

Why would he do this? Was it a small act of intimacy? It sure felt like it.

Her entire body froze up. It felt invasive to rifle through his personal drawers. Why was he okay with this?

Where were the boundaries and personal space?

The only time she ever went in Pono's drawers was to put away his folded, clean laundry, and that was always brief and mindless.

Fear gripped her, seizing up her insides.

But this was absurd.

“C’mon, Jeanie—move!” she told herself, placing one unsteady foot in front of the other.

Her fingers shook as she walked into his closet, and as she opened the first drawer, it jiggled around from her nerves.

This was his underwear drawer.

Shit!

*Slaaaam!*

She shut that door so fast she barely had time to register the way her pussy was trembling and moistening.

Her eyes averted away from where they’d just been.

She cringed, closed her eyes and opened the next one.

When she opened her lids a small crack, she found workout clothes.

Dammit—that was affecting her too. How apropos—the little things about him impacted her on a deep, inexplicable level.

She pulled out an oversized workout shirt and held it up to her chest.

Looked like it would fit and be comfortable, and for some reason the idea of wearing something he sweat in regularly appealed to her more than she wanted to admit.

Her entire body heated.

She glanced around to make sure she was still alone and then stripped

down. It was ridiculous to be this jittery when they'd already been intimate before, but still . . .

She was trying to maintain some semblance of control over herself.

Most likely she'd fail tonight, but at least she'd give it her best effort so she wouldn't feel worse about herself in the morning for being such an uncaring slut.

And he'd left all the decisions up to her of how physical they'd get tonight.

A big responsibility, and actually, now as she pulled his shirt on and it slipped over her skin, she contemplated how she really didn't want this charge to be all on her.

What if she made the wrong

decision?

She shook her head. Not a big deal if she chose to sleep more like best friends rather than lovers tonight.

Then why did it feel like a freaking rhinoceros was stampeding through her heart, stomping it to bits, then parking its heavy ass there, creating this undeniable pressure that made her want to scream?

She kept her head down and pushed her clothes off to the side of the closet with her bra hidden at the bottom of the pile. Her panties were still on and the shirt covered them, so she was modest enough to discuss the papers she'd brought with her without too much embarrassment.

She leaned over and grabbed out



of her jeans pocket the completed papers he'd given to her a little while ago that she'd folded up.

Now he'd see what a closeted sex deviant she was. There were a few things on the list she didn't want anything to do with, once she looked them all up on her laptop real quick and then was able to understand what they were. Most of them intrigued her and inflamed her skin, making it sensitive and tight to the touch.

With the papers in hand, she walked out to the living room.

Mark sat on the couch, looking scrumptious and perfectly disheveled as he drank a glass of wine. Dancing really agreed with him—messing up his hair

and making his skin remain flushed for a little bit.

He had a glass of wine ready for her as well, along with a bowl of ice cream.

“You’re carrying those like they’re about to explode,” he observed.

She smiled but remained quiet. Her shoulders were becoming permanently involved with her earlobes. That was a love affair she was going to have to break up.

“Take a seat next to me, and let’s discuss what’s got you all tense,” he said, patting the cushion.

“I’m fine, Sir. Just unsure of what to talk about, and worried I won’t know what types of questions to ask,” she

admitted.

She glided over to his side and sat down with uncharacteristic fluidity. There was something about him that made her feel like she was floating along in a fog.

“Anything that comes to mind I want you to share so we can be thorough, all right?”

She nodded. “I can do that.”

“I know you can.” He cupped her chin and rubbed below her bottom lip with the pad of his thumb. “Okay, I’m going to give you my list. You review mine, while I look at yours, and then we’ll talk. Feel free to eat your dessert while you’re at it.”

She nodded once more, and with

jerking, spastic hands, traded papers with him, then grabbed the bowl.

Ice cream sounded perfect, just like him and his amazing body all stretched out and comfortable on the couch next to her.

“Please don’t judge for this,” she squeaked as she watched him begin reading her document.

“*Jeanie*,” he gave her name with that warning tone and swatted her thigh. He followed it up with a growl, then immediately turned his attention back to the paper before him.

She went back to his list while she demolished her ice cream in less than five minutes. Her hands set the bowl down on the coffee table, but she never

let go of that paper in her hand with his list of likes and dislikes in regard to kink. What had she gotten herself into?

Would he really not judge her?

She grabbed the wine, took a few gulps and then set it back down.

Her insides tightened as she mentally beat the shit out of herself for saying something so pathetic about her fear of what he might think of her after seeing her desires laid out on paper and for upsetting him about it. She exhaled and let her shoulders drop. It was time she learn to start letting this stuff go. That's what he'd expect and want her to do, and ultimately, there was no reason to get hung up over the little stuff. If she did, she'd never survive this night.

Her eyes roamed over the page again. She tried to be thorough and take it all in.

Excitement hit her repeatedly in a very palpable way, and she kept choking on her breath. She pulled at the collar of his shirt she was wearing, even though it was nowhere near her neck. Was she suffocating from desire? Sure as hell felt like it.

This man was more intoxicating than she ever imagined.

He was heavy into bondage, flogging, really liked wax play, and had a freaking neon wand. Oh God, her stomach flipped.

That was one of the toys she'd looked up online because she was trying

to figure out what exactly a violet wand was, and the neon wand popped up. She'd watched this very brief advertisement video that had her damn near salivating. It looked like something she wanted to try immediately, and he had one.

She gripped the edges of the paper so tight, the paper trembled.

"Something bothering you? You can say now if you want," he offered.

"Bothering? No, Sir. More like anticipation crippling me. It's like Christmas at Santa's shop, and I have no idea how I wound up here." She smoothed the paper out over her lap.

"Something in particular fascinating to you?"

“So much, but the wand . . . I’d love to experiment with it wiii-ith you . . . s-someday,” she stammered, her tongue heavy and uncooperative. She had to duck her head to swallow because her throat was constricting on her.

“I bet you would—with your fiery personality hidden inside you, I bet you’d come unleashed,” he mused, his eyes burning coals as he penetrated right through her defenses.

She squirmed in her seat.

“Was there anything there that concerned you at all—frightened you or made you want to run screaming?” He settled back into his comfortable couch, crossing his left ankle atop his right knee. His gaze held an unmistakable



look of patience and understanding.

There wasn't an ounce of judgment in those eyes.

"Tell me," he insisted.

"Well, nothing that really stood out to me. I think I'm good with most of it, but for some reason . . ."

"Yes?"

"Well, I don't know why, but blindfolds I'm fine with, although masks and hoods kind of scare me. I think that would probably go on my hard limit list," she confessed.

"Yeah, I noted you put those in that category. That's fine. I can do without those. Anything else you want to discuss?"

"The wax and fire play—they

intrigue me, but how safe is that? It sounds kind of dangerous, Sir.” Her lips pursed, and she sucked in small morsels of air. It was hard to breathe due to him staring with that hungry look now focused on her.

“They’re safe when a Dom’s been trained and knows what he’s doing. I have experience with both, and when I have a sub that enjoys them, I’m happy to pull out my bag of tricks.” He smiled.

It eased the tension in her shoulders, and she relaxed into the cushions behind her like he did.

“Anything else?” he asked, reaching out and running his fingertips over her knee.

“I don’t know. What do you think I

should know, Sir? I'm so inexperienced . . .” She fought the urge to say something self-deprecating.

“The most important aspect of all of this is you have complete trust in me, and that you know I'll stop immediately when you safeword. We'll change what we're doing by fixing whatever's bothering you, or if it's not for you at all, we'll ditch it altogether and discuss if it needs to be a hard limit or possibly a soft limit to be revisited later. I have to know you'll safeword if you need to as well. This is going to require tons of open communication, so your statement earlier about me not judging—you realize why that's not a factor? I'd never hold anything against you when you're

being so vulnerable by sharing your fantasies with me. If I judged you, there'd be no room for trust. I'd be sabotaging myself—and besides—I rather doubt you can come up with something that would shock me. I've been in the lifestyle for close to a decade.”

Damn. Almost a decade? They were both twenty-seven. That would mean he started doing this when he was possibly eighteen or nineteen? Holy shit. He knew at that young age he was a Dom at heart?

“Good to know. I'll keep that in mind, Sir.”

“Ready to look at the contract?”

“Yeah,” she answered, the

beginnings of a smile forming, then she handed him back his own kink list.

“I tweaked it quite a bit so the time frame is left open. It says a month or until one of us wants to back out. Were you okay with that wording?”

“It was good, Sir. I had no problem with that.”

“Was any of it alarming to you, or did anything bring up red flags?”

“No, not really. I signed it.” She jerked her head toward the paper. “I did add an addendum at the bottom. I hope that’s okay?”

“Let me see,” he said, and she handed it to him.

He read through it and smiled when he got to the end. “Not a problem.”

“Are you sure?”

“I’m actually not that hard to please when it comes to you, sweetie. I love that you thought of these few fine points to make it your own and to assert your independence in your own way. That’s exactly what I want you to do.” He tugged her into his lap. “God, I love how brave you’re being about this. I know it’s intimidating, but you’re so strong and resilient—it’s obvious in the way you filled these out you thought everything through completely.”

“I want to cook for you down the road, but after what happened with Pono, I realized I had to change my mind. I can’t trust myself to feed you, so no cooking. Soft limit for now, but we’ll

act like it's a hard limit until we think I'm ready to do that again," she said, bowing her head.

He tipped it right back up. "I understand, and I agree one hundred percent."

"What about the waxing of my vagina?"

He chuckled, and it was dark and erotic-sounding, making the organ she was talking about swell and throb.

"I leave that up to you. I actually don't have much of a preference as long as you keep it neat and trim so I can eat you anytime I want without anything getting in my way."

She rested her palms on his chest. "You're sure? Tia said that was a big

deal to some Doms.”

“It is for some. If or when you feel ready to try some wax or fire play, we’ll definitely have to remove hair from the area we’ll be playing with. For now, I’m fine with it being either way. Having my tongue on your pussy often is what matters most to me, not making you uncomfortable if you don’t like waxing.” He swallowed and watched her facial expression intently. “It can be alarming for some women to go bare and be spread open for her lover to see all of her. That can take some adjustment, and since you and I are barely starting out, I understand completely why you’re hesitant.” He paused, then gave her a possessive look. “And I really don’t like



the idea of anybody else seeing that gorgeous pussy except me, so, yeah, just keep it trimmed.”

“Thank you for listening to me.”

Her eyes averted for a moment, and she flushed. “I’m completely ready now to do this your way and submit to you, but sometimes I’ll need some space until I feel really comfortable in the relationship.” Her chest squeezed over speaking this honestly about such sensitive topics. It was odd, but somehow she’d never felt so free before.

“That’s all I can ask. You’ll have your own room, and anytime you need space, you can lock the door, and I won’t come in.”

She grinned. “You entered while I

was showering just this morning, and I'm fairly certain I locked the door, Sir."

"That you did, but I knew something was wrong, and I was worried."

Her face pinched, and her head angled back. "Then how am I supposed to feel secure and know you won't enter if I lock it?"

"You need to tell me briefly that you're okay but need some time to yourself. As long as I know you're okay, then I'll back off. I won't ever leave you alone if I know you're hurting and need me, but are too afraid to ask for me to be there for you. You're not used to asking for help, and I knew that about you, so I stepped in so I could assess where you

were at. I wouldn't be a good Dom if I'm not doing everything in my power to make sure you're okay." He cupped her cheeks. "We good?"

"Yes, Sir."

"This is when you can use safewords like 'green,' to let me know we can proceed. 'Green' means you're good and keep going, 'yellow' means slow down, something's not quite right, and 'red' means stop. So, tell me, Jeanie . . . What color are you right now?"

"Green. Definitely."

"Thank God." He swallowed, and his eyes lit up. "Come on. I wanna play with you, and you need it."

He helped her up, and she waited for direction.

“Wait for me, naked in my room.”

He motioned his head toward the hallway. “Stand at the foot of the bed.”

She hesitated for a second, opened her mouth like she wanted to say something, but closed it instead.

“That’s my beautiful girl. I’ll take good care of you,” he said, pointing to where he expected her to go.

Oh God, her legs actually weakened as she roamed back to his bedroom.

She was doing this. She actually gave him the green light to do something—or hell, maybe everything that was on that list.

One month. She’d signed it and said that was fine. She’d still get to

know him, but already they'd be getting physical. No more waiting—and thank God, because she didn't think she could last much longer without feeling his naked body on hers again.

But in her heart, she already knew—not nearly long enough.

That thought scared her more than the idea of any whip, flogger or chains ever could.

Once she was in the sanctity of his room that smelled exactly like him, she inhaled a few times, letting it overrun her senses.

She closed her eyes and removed her shirt. The cold air pelted her at once since his ceiling fan was on.

The white noise of it helped to

soothe her nerves as well.

Her panties she took a little longer to remove because once those were off, she wondered if she'd even know who she was anymore.

He wasn't even in the room, yet it crackled with this electricity in the air. The anticipation of his touch—his touch the way *he* wanted it to be—painted every breath, every move she took.

It was like being watched or followed, but in an exciting way. Like playing chase, only she wanted to be caught.

She wanted him to tackle her, pin her to the ground and show her how much he wanted her.

“I love watching you, Jeanie.” His

voice traveled from the doorway. “I doubt you realize how often I’ve watched you over the years, but I never tire of it. You’re the sexiest woman I’ve ever known.”

She turned slowly toward him. “And you’ve known a lot of very sensual, beautiful women, right?”

“I have. But probably not as many as you think.” He stepped into the room, fully dressed in his jeans and tee shirt stretched tight over his finely toned chest. His eyes roamed over her from head to toe. “And not one of them was nearly as captivating as you are. Fuck—it’s alarming how bone deep I feel it whenever you’re around.”

Her face heated at the hungry stare

he was giving her. “I feel the same with you, Sir. I always knew when you were nearby without even looking, and even though I naturally was compelled to be near you, I ran the other way.”

“That’s because you didn’t want to be unfaithful.” He stalked toward her, his movements predatory but never frightening. “Another thing I’ve always admired about you. It was your way of being a good wife, and I’m sure Pono never even knew you were keeping a safe distance from me. I doubt he noticed how often I was watching you across the room.”

“He didn’t know at all. He was oblivious to anything other than the food and drinks in the room—even me.” All



of Tia's words flooded her mind about Pono and her previous interactions with Mark.

"A blind man." Mark stepped closer to her and whispered his index finger across her right shoulder. "Such a shame he didn't know how to fully appreciate you." He leaned in and inhaled at her hair. "But I do . . . I won't let any of you go to waste, including here." His finger dropped to her butt cheek. He cupped it.

Her ass clenched. "I . . . I don't know what to say to that."

"You say, 'Yes, Sir,' and you lean over so I can see you. Inspection starts now."

*"Now?"* Her voice shook and went

up about an octave.

“Yes. Bend. I want to see every opening to every fucking gorgeous orifice you have.” He grabbed her by the hips, turned her around, then he sat down on the edge of the bed with her buttocks directly in front of his face.

“Oh, God . . .” She dropped her voice. Wouldn’t the smell about kill him this close up? They’d just gone dancing and got all sweaty.

“*Now* . . . or do we need to learn about discipline so soon?” There was a sound of delight tinkling in his voice.

Shit. “I . . .”

“Jeanie, I want to know every piece of you, including your asshole. Now spread, lean and thank me for

wanting you in a way you've been dying to have your whole life."

She swallowed, doubled over, grabbed her ankles and closed her eyes.

"Very nice . . . Sweet little puckered anus—all for me. It'll welcome my cock soon." His fingers spread her cheeks further open. He leaned in and licked a line from her clit to the top of her crack.

Oh fuck . . . It was naughty. It was erotic. It was making her drip.

"You like that. I know, little girl. I can tell by the way you're breathing and by how your cunt's trembling." He stroked his index finger over her asshole—the one he'd run across her shoulder a few minutes ago. "Tell me what color

you are before we proceed.”

“Green, I think.” Or maybe yellow? Her head was all over the place due to nerves. What was the right answer?

“You think? There is no think. You can only be one color. Which one is it?” He exhaled, and it felt like her spine was being crushed.

“Green. Yes, Sir, green.” Her stomach clenched.

What would this mean? Would he do more to her ass?

“Open your mouth wide and turn your head toward me.”

She stopped breathing, stopped thinking and did as he asked.

“As wide as you can go,

sweetheart.”

Her jaw loosened and she went wider until it ached a little.

“My, what a good little girl I have.”

His fingers were inside her mouth a moment later, probing all over.

It was strangely hot as hell.

“Inspection’s over.” He pulled his fingers out of her mouth and patted her inner right thigh.

“Did I pass?” she sassed.

*Smaaaack!*

A solid slap landed on her left butt cheek.

“I think I may need to bind you already.”

She squeaked, and he chuckled.

“And, yes, you did pass, for the most part.”

“What did I do wrong?” She slid her hands up to her knees.

“I want those hairs shorter. They’re okay where they’re at, but I don’t want anything getting in the way. I’ll let you borrow my beard trimmer tomorrow. Until I have time to go buy you your own, you’ll use it every three days. Keep it short.”

“God, why does that sound so dirty?”

He grabbed her by the hips and pulled her down into his lap, effectively getting her out of that stooped over position.

“Because you know why I want

those hairs short—it's so I can explore, use toys on you, and see my come all over your clit and inner lips, shining with my love for you. That's why it sounds dirty and forbidden. Every time I come from now on, I want to fucking see it. I want to know I put it there. I'll be touching it after, playing in my come that's drenching you. And I'll be taking pictures so I can see it over and over and over again.”

She gulped and her stomach knotted violently. “You won't show anyone, will you, Sir?”

He laughed and rubbed his nose on her shoulder. “Fuck no—little one. I want that all for me and my viewing pleasure. I don't share you. With.

Anyone. That's my pussy. You don't even get to touch it anymore other than washing it unless it's under my command. Clear?"

She sighed, but still . . . Pictures of her most private areas, swollen and glistening with his semen? Holy shit! How would she ever survive this man?

"Yes, Sir. I can do that." She turned to him and was barely able to look him in the eye. She wanted to ask some more questions, but was unsure if that was acceptable or not.

"When our time together is over, I'll give them to you if you don't want me to keep them, and you can do whatever you want with them. We can put it in the contract if you like, but I'm



taking pictures—lots of them. Unless you make that a hard limit?” His right brow rose in question.

“No . . . Not a hard limit, but I’m not sure I wanna see them after you take them. It might make me sick to my stomach.” She stuck out her tongue a little and pretended to gag.

“Too cute.” He gripped her chin, turned her lips to his and he took them.

Before she knew it, she was drowning in his powerful lips and tongue, and he had her pinned down on the bed.

He stopped kissing her abruptly, and her head swam.

*Swwiiiip.*

*Swwiiiip.*

Straps were being pulled out from under his mattress, and her wrists were already bound.

“Oh fuuuuck!” She yanked for a second to see how secure they were. Oh, this was real. This was happening.

She wasn't going anywhere.

“Ready for the ankles?”

“Only if you promise me you don't keep knives under your mattress as well and intend to pull one of those out.”

He frowned and ran his hands down her calves. “I don't do knife play. Did you see that on my hard limits list?”

“Only teasing, Sir.” She looked away.

“I know, but for now, I don't want you making statements like that. It tells

me you don't fully trust me, and while I'm fine with earning your trust, I don't want you undermining it. Know that your safety is always highest on my priority list when I'm playing with you. I won't endanger you, just fuck you onto your knees every chance I get." His eyes softened. "You're not an experiment for me. You're my life—my entire mindset revolves around you, little one. The sooner you grasp that, the sooner you'll be able to really give in to me."

"Sorry, Sir. I'll be better about how I . . ." She choked off the words as emotions bubbled up. My God. She was his *life*? What did that even mean?

"What is it? Did I upset you?" He stroked her leg that was closest to him.

His eyes were focused energy, consuming her every breath and thought. It was hard to know what to do or say. How to explain this?

“It’s not that. I just . . . I use sarcasm as a coping mechanism when I’m nervous. I don’t know how I’m going to shut that off. I want to trust you—I do, but I’ve never done these things before, so I actually kind of like the idea of being gagged. Then I won’t be spouting off stupid shit at inopportune times. I won’t have to worry my filter’s gone, and that I’ve ruined the moment.” She blinked hard, hoping it would knock some sense back into her.

“While I like your idea in some ways—for tonight, you need to be able

to communicate with me openly.” He sat next to her and ran circles around her navel with two fingers. His eyes followed his hand. “And I might want to shoot my come in your mouth anyway. Need you as fucking dirty as I am, and as soon as possible, little girl.”

“Well, what should I do then? I’m already worrying I’ll say something wrong, Sir.”

He nodded. “Here’s what I want you to do. When you feel the need to say something biting or funny, I want you to hum instead. In the back of your throat. It’ll choke off your words, tune me out a little and give you a moment to regroup.”

Not only did her eyes light up, but her entire body did, too. “I love that

idea, Mark. God, you're . . .” Tears surfaced in her eyes. “I don’t know how you do it, but you always seem to know what I need.”

“That’s because I know you, my sweet thing. I know enough about you to see you get caught up in your mind. So, to free your head—we’re gonna train your body. Starting now.” He pulled out a strap at the lower end of the mattress and hooked it around her left ankle. He slipped a finger inside to test it. “Is it too snug?”

“Actually, I’d like to have it tighter,” she replied.

“Not today. I want it comfortable, not constricting.” He smiled. “But I do love your enthusiasm, and it’s obvious

you love being tightly bound. Don't worry, angel. I'll have you pinned down with my body weight in no time, and you won't be able to move at all. That means I can paint your fucking sexy body all over with my come—anywhere I choose. And there are so many places on you, begging for my come.” His eyes glinted with all sorts of bad boy hints of devious delights.

His words had her toes curling. Her mouth dropped open as if painting a nice target for his trigger-ready cock.

He did the same to her other ankle—checking each cuff again by slipping a finger inside, running it around and asking for another verbal confirmation that they weren't too tight and that they

were comfortable.

A moment later, he was up off the bed, heading to his dresser and opening a drawer.

He pulled out a flogger.

“This is the way I kiss your skin,” he said, teasing it over her nipples, “before I hose it down with all my come. Pink and white. Fuck—love those colors on you. And this is going to be the best you’ve ever looked with your skin all flushed and coated with me. Can’t wait to see it—to take pictures of it. More fucking beautiful than ever. And that’s saying something since there’s no one on this goddamn earth as stunning and breathtaking as you.”

She gasped when it roamed down



over her pussy.

“This is how you know I’m watching you.” *Swaaat!* He flicked it at her mons.

Her legs tensed.

“And that I know what you like. Because you love having me lavish attention on your tits, but more so on your pussy. Your sweet, wet pussy I want to devour. I had that brief lick, a little taste, but it wasn’t enough. I have to have more. Pink and throbbing—that pussy’s gonna throb uncontrollably, and you’ll give me what I want, sweet thing. You’ll give me all I ask for,” he said, voice thick with lust.

She licked her lips.

“You’re dying to bend and be

molded by my strong hands. Fuck—been waiting to do this to you forever!” He growled so low and deep, she could see his abs contracting in waves beneath this shirt.

Shit, she was already throbbing based solely off his words.

She lifted her head to glance down at her own groin directly after. Was she already leaking on his bedspread? Shit. Shit. Shit! Was this allowed? Should they have put a towel underneath her?

“Already worrying?” He chuckled.

He moved back over to the dresser, picked up a remote and turned on his iPhone docking station. Music came on—soft, sweet, and yet with a driving beat.

It was like nothing she'd ever heard before. It was definitely dubstep, but there was a violin taking over.

Such a strange but potent combination. Kind of like them?

They shouldn't really mesh, not really, but somehow they fit perfectly.

"Listen to the music. Think about drifting away as I show you how much I love you." His right hand rested on her left shoulder and then . . .

*Swaaaaat.*

*Swaaaaat.*

*Swaaat! Swaaat-swat!*

Blows were raining down on her, never in the same spot, and her back tried to arch, but it was hard to move with the restraints.

He released his hand off her shoulder, and then this rhythmic slapping took place—on her pussy, on her breasts, across her abdomen, thighs and shins.

“That’s it. Pink. Girl. I want more. I want it all. Pink. Raw. And begging.” His breath pelted her as he leaned over and looked ready to bite into her flesh.

He went back to flogging her again.

The order of each strike was always random, so there was no way to anticipate where he’d strike next, but each one felt amazing.

A zing to her skin, and it was heating, tingling. Even the harder blows were like a burst of erotic energy.

She whimpered when a particularly expert bite hit her clit.

“Warm up’s over,” he said, his voice gravelly and low. “Time for the really good stuff. You’re pink. And I’m hard. Harder than ever.”

He leaned over to the nightstand, and her eyes went wide.

The neon wand?

How had she been oblivious to it being next to her head this whole time?

It was already plugged in and ready to go. He had an attachment on it that looked like a comb.

He removed all her jewelry and groaned. “I wanna lick you so bad, but I’ll wait. I want you to feel this first.”

Her legs trembled, and in that

moment, she was glad she was tied up with her legs taut. Hopefully that meant he wasn't seeing how much her limbs were shaking.

“Breathe, sweet thing. I want you to absorb this, but I don't want you to pass out on me.” He smiled at her, then blew across her face, forcing her to inhale.

As soon as her chest filled with air, the attachment glided along her lower abs.

She jumped at the sensation and moaned louder than she ever thought possible.

“Jesus, you've got me so fucking hard it hurts.” He did it again.

Same thing. Fuck, she couldn't

keep quiet.

“What will you do when I find a really delicate spot? Hmm . . .” He passed it over her left inner thigh, and holy fuck, she about clawed her way out of the restraints. Her hands yanked and pulled, but nothing happened other than making her arms tense.

“Very nice . . .” He leaned in and sucked on her left nipple as he blew her mind with that wand. “I love you pink, squirming and gasping for air. Reach for it, sweet thing. Try to chase it down.”

It skimmed over the top of her pussy, and when it was at her pubic bone, she made this shrill, choking cry that sounded like she was being skinned alive.

“Fucking hell, Jeanie. Tell me you’re leaking. If I touch your slit and feel how wet you are, I’ll be fucking you against your will. Tell me you’re dying to be fucked hard.” His voice shook and his breathing sounded labored.

“I . . . I’m definitely really slippery,” she managed to say. “I’m probably ruining your bedspread by leaving a wet mark.”

“Christ!” He tipped his head back for a moment. “Slippery enough if I take a picture now, it’ll look like you’ve already creamed yourself and come hard?”

“Jeeeeezus,” she bit out. Her neck tipped back like his had a moment ago.

And then . . . Oh my God! It was on



her right nipple. The wand moved over the tip and he was sucking at her left again.

Her pussy clenched so hard, she could swear she heard a soft, gushing sound.

“Wet,” she blurted, “*so wet!*”

“Good. I’m glad. What I’m fucking dying to hear.” He chuckled and bit her nipple.

Sweat dotted her brow and her insides tightened, heated and built in pressure.

“If this doesn’t make you come, I’ll never forgive myself.” He dragged the wand down her body, then moved it straight down until it was between her legs.

The electric vibration, the hum and the sound of his groan had her on the edge.

One touch—that was all it would take. A press of his finger or tongue on her clit, and she'd explode.

“Please, Sir . . . I need . . . A little more.”

“You like this wand, don't you, but you want my cock. I wanna hear it. I'm not gonna give it to you until you use your words like a big girl.”

Shit. She was dying, and he wanted her to actually say it? She couldn't. No way. That really would kill her. She'd die of mortification.

His eyes pierced into her. “You're body's already telling me what it needs.

Use your words. I know you can do it.” He moved the wand over her pussy again, making it jolt her into a mess of moans. “Tell me what you want with words, and I’ll give it to you.”

“You know,” she replied.

“Communication is key.” He turned the wand off, set it on the bed between her legs. “Are you going to tell me?”

She shook her head, her face flaming hotter than her clenching pussy.

With slow, measured breaths, he removed his clothes, folded them and set them on the nightstand where the wand had resided until he had put it into action.

She lay there, staring at his well-

muscled thighs, his washboard abs, and those damned hip flexors that told her he'd had years of practice fucking women into oblivion.

"I won't touch you, not until you ask." He stood motionless, looming over her, his thick arms crossing over his chest.

"I can't."

"You can. All you have to do is open your mouth. We went through the list, you told me what you will and won't do, and now you tell me in this moment—what do you want? Wax play? Nipple clamps? A dildo?"

"I want you."

"*How* do you want me? Be specific. I aim to fucking please." His

pecs flexed, and his forearms tightened.

“I . . . Jesus, I don’t know . . .” She looked away from him.

He stepped up to the bed, gripped her chin and when he turned her head back to him, his face was an inch away from hers. “Close your eyes. Listen to your body. Tell me right this instant.” She shut her eyes, and he continued.

“What. Do. You. Want? What will make this moment complete for you? I’m dying to give you anything you want. Now, say it. Let me spoil you rotten.”

“I want you to fuck me hard, Sir. I don’t want to have to say—I can’t do it. I want you to take charge and do whatever you want to me.”

“Open your eyes, Jeanie.”

When she did, he was smiling, and it was filled with adoration.

“That is exactly why you are the perfect woman for me. You want me to show you what you want. That’s step one with building your trust. You’re already seeing that when I take control, we both come alive. No more second-guessing this. You want me to overwhelm you. You want to give in. Now I expect you to fucking do it. You won’t have to ask, because I’ll already know what you need. I love you.”

He straddled her and slipped two fingers inside her. She almost convulsed on the spot.

“Shit yeah, you’re wet. You’re sopping. You have no idea—this is

barely the beginning.” He had the wand back in his hands, it tingled at her left breast, and then . . .

“Ohhhhhh gaaaawwwwd!” She was . . . She could barely breathe—he was finally inside her, pumping furiously.

So many sensations.

The electric current, his cock pounding into her and the glorious sounds he was making, had her fingers and toes curling.

It was too much.

Her pussy cinched down, and she was convulsing. Her orgasm started in her inner thighs, hit her clit and then throbbed its way through her inner walls.

She was coming so hard and so fast, she was breathless.

“Oh, God, I’m . . . I . . .” She wanted to curl into a ball, but she couldn’t. The straps kept her stretched out.

Mark pulled out a second later and spurted all over her navel.

Her head tipped up and she watched, mesmerized, as he came all over her.

His eyes were focused on her. He didn’t drop his head back and grunt like all the other men had when they climaxed. His focus was still on her, even as he was falling apart. He was present enough to soak up the sight of her.



“Love you,” he breathed. “God, you’re beautiful.” His hips still jerked as he leaked the last few remaining remnants of his come onto her body.

“Having you. Nothing better . . .” His eyes were still focused, hungry, but he sounded almost tipsy. “Fuck, that looks good. You. Look. Good. Tied up and shaking.” He bent over and nuzzled her neck. “Love. You. Love you so much.” His lips brushed across her throbbing pulse, and he inhaled deeply.

The tip of his wet cock brushed on her thigh.

She sighed. Her arms and legs went lax in her bindings. “I love you, too.”

He went up to kneeling between

her legs, smiled, leaned over and kissed her.

Then he slid off her, grabbed his phone, which shut the music off, and he snapped a picture of his ejaculate all over her belly.

“You look so beautiful like this.” He snapped another picture of her entire body, then a few of her face. “Wish I could fucking frame this and put it up all over the house.”

She fought off a frown.

He didn't. His frown and displeasure with her reaction was clear. “No one will see them. No one but me—the *man* that takes your feelings seriously. I'll never do anything to hurt you.”

It was a novel thought—most women expected a man to read their minds. She never expected that. It was impractical, but here, she'd found the mythical creature that wasn't supposed to exist. He was telling her she never needed to ask, but he would know.

How was this possible?

She beamed at him with a lazy grin. Her heart was so full in that moment.

He released her ankles followed her by her wrists, and then he was wiping her stomach clean.

She was in his arms, being massaged and relaxed right into a coma.

“This is playing?” Was she boneless? It sure felt like it.

“This is aftercare, and you deserve every bit of it.”

He fed her, had her in bed in his arms, and before she questioned if she’d somehow died and gone to heaven, he was reading to her from a book he said was one of his favorites—*The Loving Dominant*.

When he stopped reading, she couldn’t contain it. “You’re my loving Dom, Mark. I can see it in everything you do. It’s all because you care.”

“When I find a way to stop caring about you, I’ll let you know. Until then, I want you to sleep in my arms.”

“Love you,” she said, stretched, yawned, then curled into his side.

“Love you, too, sweetheart. More

than you can possibly know. And that will never stop—*ever*.”

## Chapter 11

Sometimes it was in the quiet moments, the mundane tasks, when Jeanie seemed most connected to him.

She'd done their laundry this morning, and these contented sighs kept emanating out of her, making his dick hard.

He rewarded her accordingly—a sash around her neck, him tugging on it a little as he gave her oral until she came on his tongue.

But now, walking inside the grocery store, she kept giving him fleeting, shy glances.

Her eyes roamed down to their clasped hands, and she swallowed with

a guilty look affixed in place.

“What’s wrong?” he asked.

She squeezed his hand with hers.

“It’s nothing.”

“Jeanie . . .”

She stopped walking and exhaled, then allowed her head to sag. “I just noticed that even the small things you do are so different. I hadn’t thought about it before—with every guy I’ve ever held hands with, mine was always in front, leading. Almost like I was treating them like a small child. And it felt odd to have my hand behind yours, but so right that it’s insane. My heart started pounding when I realized you could yank me about wherever you want.”

He smiled and kissed the back of

her hand while keeping their fingers entwined. “That’s as it should be.”

Her eyes welled up. “Why do I get so teary-eyed over the little stuff?”

“It’s all new to you. There’s nothing wrong with being touched by the little things. Those are the threads that make up the fabric of who we are together.”

“God, Mark. I love the sound of that.”

He cupped the back of her neck with his free hand, pulled her into a kiss and then led her inside the store, smiling like an idiot.

“Get anything you want,” he said, grabbing a grocery cart.

She gave him a look of concern.



“You know I already feel guilty about not paying for my portion, but I know it’ll earn me a bacon slap if I try to do that, so I won’t even try. But I don’t know how to get over stuff like this.”

“You’re thinking it’s unequal, but it’s not. Just having you in my home, at my side, is worth paying for a few measly groceries.” He moved them over to the first aisle. “And I’d do more than a bacon slap if you tried to pay for your food. I’d probably have to give you a few forced orgasms.”

She stiffened for a moment, then grabbed an item off the shelf and placed it in the basket.

The more she shopped, the more she relaxed.

It was interesting to see what she liked to eat. He wondered how many of these items she bought were more because Pono liked them, rather than herself.

He'd watch her during the week to see what she actually ate and didn't from the items she picked out.

"Do you like stir fry?" he asked, motioning to some fresh chopped veggies.

"Love it." Her shoulders moved down about an inch as she took a deep breath and blew it out like she was relieved they both had something in common.

He chuckled, grabbed the container and put it in the cart.

“I love orange chicken,” she said in passing.

He grabbed a box of that, too.

Since they’d agreed she wasn’t going to cook just yet, he figured he’d be doing it.

Something told him if he started ordering out every night, she’d feel even guiltier since that would cost more.

Besides, he didn’t mind cooking. Just enjoyed it more when he was cooking something he’d be able to share.

Always seemed kind of pointless to cook an entire meal for just himself.

There was something about the way she moved with ease through the store that spoke to him on a very basic level. She thrived on the day-to-day stuff

—living together, working together in harmony.

Her shy, furtive glances she gave him earlier when they'd first started shopping were turning into heated stares.

Especially when he told her he was going to make her some barbecued ribs with some stuffed peppers and grilled tomatoes.

A few times, her hands grazed across his forearms, and she seemed to be hovering around him, standing much closer than usual.

“You smell terrific,” he whispered and leaned down to take a nip at her ear. “Makes me really hungry for some pussy.”

She smiled and blushed. “You

smell better. Always . . .”

He laughed. “Not possible.” He kissed her ear, then let her go.

She wandered over to the bags of salad, grabbed one and tossed it into the cart.

Someone was smiling and watching them over by the deli.

He came up behind Jeanie, wrapped his arms around her waist and said in her ear, “We have an appreciative audience.”

She gasped, and then her head whipped around as she tried to figure out who it was.

The person at the counter laughed and kept watching.

Mark groped his girl’s ass and

stepped away enough so he could watch Jeanie's reaction.

It went from mortified to completely turned on in five seconds flat.

“You know what I'm doing to that ass when we get home.” He smirked.

She flushed, and her mouth dropped open.

“Yeah—*that*.” He gripped his belt, tugged on the buckle, and she really turned a lovely shade of pink.

A moment later, he picked up a cantaloupe she was eyeing, gave her the questioning eyebrow and put it in the cart since it was clear she wanted it but probably thought she'd already gone overboard, even though she really hadn't

put a whole lot in the cart for herself.

“Love you,” she mouthed, then turned away from him, grinning.

He walked over to her, gripped her by the shoulder, turned her around and said, “Hey, I get to say it, too.” He wrapped his arms around her, kissed her firmly and made a show of it by dipping her.

Their voyeur was laughing loud enough they could hear it really well. Mark’s tongue slid into Jeanie’s awaiting mouth.

She moaned on her exhale so quietly no one but him could hear it.

Instead of fighting him, like Mark expected, Jeanie relaxed into his hold, giving herself over to him.

He growled, brought her back to upright, then let her go with a smack on her behind. “Don’t ever turn away from me without letting me say it back. Got it?”

“Got it, Sir.” Jeanie smirked, and her steps lightened as she moved around him.

*Bzzz . . . Bzzz . . .*

She pulled her phone from her pocket and handed it to him without missing a beat.

He checked the caller ID.

“It’s Marly,” he told her, then handed it back to her.

It was one of their agreements—he checked all her phone calls when they were together, and if he needed to



intercept, he'd answer it for her. If it was someone he deemed safe, he gave it over to her.

Oddly enough, she never seemed to have a problem with that at all, or him having access to all her online accounts and emails. He kept waiting for her to grow upset about it and protest, but she never did. Somehow she must've known it was his way of having some control, getting to know what her life was like and a way to find out more about her.

They were building more trust daily, and it was incredible to see her smiling more and more, laughing and opening up to him.

“Hey, how're you doing?” Jeanie greeted Marly when she answered the

call.

Mark went about grabbing a few more items in the produce section, then braved dragging Jeanie with him over to the deli counter.

The lady that had been watching them smiled warmly, finished her order, then departed with a small wave.

Mark gave a small wave back along with a proud grin.

“Yeah, this is my woman, and I grope her whenever the fuck I feel like it,” he wanted to say but kept it to himself.

No one needed to know that shit except Jeanie. That was enough for him.

“I don’t know if I’m free to go dancing again this weekend . . .” Jeanie

gave him a questioning look. “Yeah, I’m still staying at Mark’s place.”

Mark ordered some lunch meat for sandwiches, and as it was being sliced, he motioned for Jeanie to give the call to him.

She did it without hesitation. His insides warmed at an alarming rate over such a small gesture of trust.

“Hi, Marly, it’s Mark,” he began.

“Oh . . . Uh, hi. Sorry about last weekend. I didn’t mean to disappear on you guys like that, but—”

“Don’t apologize to us—do that with your parents. They should know you left with strangers,” he said.

“I did tell them. They were fine with it.”

He doubted that was the case, but regardless, this conversation was about Jeanie.

“So, you wanna go dancing again? Same club?” He motioned for Jeanie to deal with the guy behind the counter.

She did, and he moved away a few feet so the man helping them didn't have to overhear the conversation. Mark always hated it when people were that rude to be talking on the phone while they were dealing with someone at a cash register.

“A different one. I'm gonna text her the address,” Marly replied.

“We'll be there, but text it to me instead. I do expect you tell us, though, before you take off this time. If you do

that again, Jeanie won't be going dancing with you anymore while she's here for the entire month."

"But I . . . *Month*? Did you say she's staying for a whole month? I mean, you guys seemed great together at the club, but—" Marly stumbled over her words.

"Yeah, she'll be staying with me during that time. We've got some things to attend to in order to help her make some decisions."

Jeanie was done, setting the sliced meat in the baggie into the cart.

She grabbed some bolillo rolls nearby and smiled as she waited for him. He smiled back.

"Okay, gotta go. We're about to

leave the store. Text me the address, and we'll be there at seven. Bye." He ended the call, and instead of giving Jeanie her phone back, he slipped it in his pocket.

Marly might decide to be obnoxious and text the address to Jeanie instead. If that was the case, he wanted to know.

His chest loosened up at the way Marly said they were great together.

If she could accept that and she was the family's worse critic, maybe this weekend would be a good time to break it to the rest of this family that he planned to be in Jeanie's life permanently. She needed them, and he did, too, in some way.

Two nights later, Jeanie nuzzled into his side, and he picked up the other book off his nightstand. “I know I’ve been reading to you from *The Loving Dominant*, but I wanted to share this with you as well,” he began. “It has more of a spiritual nature to it.”

“Sounds nice,” she said, stifling a yawn with her hand.

Of course she was tired—he’d just pinned her down and fucked her until she was screaming out his name. He’d pinched her nipples, her clit and bit her all over.

Damn, he loved it when she got hoarse like that from yelling.

No toys this time. He didn't get that far. But she seemed to love it when he slapped her pussy.

His plans had been to introduce her to wax play tonight, but his body had another agenda.

After dinner, all he could do was throw her over his shoulder, tell her to strip and then he was on top of her, pulling a condom on.

"If you get sleepy, feel free to drift off. It's just something that moves me and reminds me of you every time I read it."

She made this throaty, worked up sound.

"Love it when you get excited," he said.



“You don’t think it’s stupid?”

He set the book next to him and looked down at her, lying on his chest. “If I thought it was stupid, then I should be whipped soundly. No man that knows you would wish for you to repress that side of you. It’s the highlight of my day—that is when you’re not kissing me or letting me tie you up and hose you down with my come.”

She chuckled. “Good Lord, you better read, Sir, before I pass out from the naughty things you say.”

“Only if you make that excited sound again,” he said, cupping his ear and leaning it closer to her mouth.

She shook her head, and her hair flew all over the place.

He tickled her side, and that sound doubled in intensity.

“Uuuuuhhhhhahhhh,” he breathed in relief. “Better.”

“Cheater.”

“Always. Have to get my way—spoiled bastard, remember?” He rumbled a laugh deep in his chest.

She shook on top of him, and her taut nipples grazed his pecs.

“Okay, reading now,” he said, taking one more deep inhale before starting.

“I love your voice—always have. It’s very soothing, so thank you ahead of time for reading to me,” she said.

“You’re welcome.” He settled one hand on her back and picked up the book

with the other. “This is a line I highlighted forever ago, and it always spoke to me—‘according to Vedanta, there are only two symptoms of enlightenment, just two indications that a transformation is taking place within you toward a higher consciousness. The first symptom is that you stop worrying. Things don't bother you anymore. You become light-hearted and full of joy. The second symptom is that you encounter more and more meaningful coincidences in your life, more and more synchronicities. And this accelerates to the point where you actually experience the miraculous.’” He paused, soaking in the way her breathing picked up.

“What’s that from?” she asked.

He picked his chin back up so he wasn't hurting her.

“It's from *Synchrodestiny: Harness the Infinite Power of Coincidence to Create Miracles* by Deepak Chopra.” He rested his chin on top of her head for a second. “Does it bother you if I read something to you with a religious context?”

“No.” She lifted her head and looked at him, her eyes brimming with untold of emotions. “I respect all religious denominations, and I find solace in these types of reflections. Pono never wanted to talk about or even think about this type of stuff. Do you read stuff like this often?” She set her palm on his chest and then propped her chin on top

of her hand while she studied his facial reactions.

“Did you think because I’m a Dom, I don’t have a religious, sensitive side?”

“I don’t know what I thought, but this shocks me. Not because it doesn’t fit what I know about you, but because you’re too good to be true. My heart’s pounding furiously for you. Somehow you find a way to unravel me as a person. It’s incredible how you do it with such ease. Sometimes I think it’s reflexive, like breathing for you.” She blinked and shifted closer to him.

“It is.” He brushed his fingers across her cheekbone. “With you, it’s completely automatic. I don’t have to think about it. There’s no reason to do

that. We simply understand each other on a basic, rudimentary level. I choose to keep that part of us alive and active.”

She wiggled against him. “Mark, I know I said three nights ago I couldn’t bring myself to ask and I’m not supposed to request it, and it seems so ridiculous since we just finished making love a few minutes ago, but I really, really want you to make love to me again right now. I can’t stand it, this feeling bursting out of my heart. It feels like I’ll die if you’re not inside me again—because I love you so much.”

He cupped her face. “I also told you that night I’d only make love to you if you asked, so you’re not really breaking any rules since we never

officially said to take that rule away. No bacon slaps,” he said.

She beamed at him. “Damn. I kind of like those.”

“Oh, but you’ve only had the punitive ones. Wait ‘til I give you the erotic spankings,” he lilted.

She really squirmed now. “Can I earn one right now, Sir? What can I do to get one of those?”

“I’ll be taking my mother to church this Sunday. Join us. I want her to meet you, and I want to share everything with you, including religious experiences.”

“Attending church earns me a sexy spanking?” She pursed her lips. “Wow. Never thought the two coexisted, but if you’re sure . . .” She smirked. “And if

you think your mom won't hate me."

"Impossible. She'll love you."

He got up out of the bed and moved to sitting on the edge of it.

"Crawl to me," he said, voice low and husky. "You've been a very bad girl, Priestess Jeanie. I've heard you've been touching yourself in the temple of Zeus, and that's a sin before our great God."

Her lips twisted up into a humorous smirk. "Well, Seer Mark, even though you are the Oracle and are supposed to be omniscient, let me tell you why I couldn't resist." She crawled at a snail's pace to get to him.

He reached behind him, grabbed her by the right upper arm and dragged her across the bed toward him.



She giggled and struggled a little.

“You better have a good excuse.

Our God doesn't take lightly to his Priestesses entertaining sexual fantasies . . .” He pulled her over his lap, ran his hand along the edge of her panties and his dick bobbed immediately.

Fuck, he'd been dying to spank her for so long like this—his mouth was watering.

His fingers tingled a little with anticipation.

“I have what I'd call my own inclinations of dirtiness to bury. You see, there's this insanely sexy seer. Not only is he hot because he works out all the time, but he treats me with respect and tenderness like no one else has. He

takes care of me, and I always know when he's thinking of me, too, because he gets this look in his heavy-hooded eyes like he's a little high off simple contact from me."

He yanked her panties down to her thighs. "Priestess, why are you wearing panties? The holy women of the temple are forbidden to wear them."

"Because I need something to soak up my juices, dear diviner."

"Ssssffffff Jeeeesus," he moaned after sucking in a tight breath. He tipped his head back for a moment—God, she was good at this simple role play.

She wiggled her behind on his lap, taunting him.

"How am I supposed to keep from

touching myself when he won't touch me? I'm not allowed to ask, but he drives me insane. My lips down there get so engorged sometimes it's hard to sit still through his sermon. So much throbbing. What should I do, Oracle?"

"Tell me who this soothsayer is, inflaming your desires, and I'll discipline him appropriately, because you are never to touch yourself unless I command it."

She hummed. "Hmm . . . Well, I don't know if I should."

He caressed her cheeks, warming them up, and then *swaaaaack!*

"Tell me," he said, voice stern, hand prickling a little.

"How about I describe him

instead? I wouldn't want to cause him any trouble. He's an incredible forecaster. Loves his mom and everything. He takes her to temple each Sunday."

"Is that so?"

*Swaaaaack!*

"Oooooohhhhh," she breathed with a sweeping exhale and wiggled some more.

"I believe you're thinking lewd thoughts about him right now. You sound turned on, and you're arching your cheeks up toward my hand. Are you turned on, Priestess?" He grinned, and his cock thickened.

"I am, Seer. I'm sorry. I can't help it. Just talking about him makes me so

wet, I worry it'll drip onto your calves."

"Oh fuuuuuuck!" he groaned and squeezed her cheeks with both hands.

"Isn't cursing a sin, Oracle? Who's going to punish *you*?" She giggled.

"You don't think seeing your lustful, bared flesh is punishment enough? But I'm made of steel. I can push these salacious thoughts out of my mind swiftly and replace them with chaste ideas."

"Like?" She turned her head to the side and stared at his dick, straining toward her.

"Like, I can envision your pain when you burn in hell for entertaining thoughts about this man penetrating you with his manhood. Is that what you think

about when you touch yourself, my little supplicant?”

“I uh . . . I have many thoughts and don’t you think th—”

*Swaaaaack!*

“I will give you two more spankings, and then you will show me how you touch yourself precisely so I will know the magnitude of your sins. And if you ever touch yourself again without my permission, you will be meted out with a much harsher punishment.” *Swaaaaack! Swaaaaack!*  
“Now—show me.”

“But, Sir, that’s indecent!” She laughed at herself and squirmed a little more, but still stared at his cock.

It was beading at the tip now.

God, she was a delicious creature, the way she took to the lifestyle so readily and with such a great imagination.

“And how do you think I’ll be able to ascertain your penance if I don’t know the extent of your sins, Priestess? Now, two more. You tell me after each smack something you haven’t already told me. I expect full admission, even if I have to force it out of you.” He ran his fingers across her cleft, then swiped across her very dripping, very moist slit. “Seems you like punishment. Tell me why or I’ll add another swat.”

“I like that it reminds me of him. He does not spare the rod for fear or risking spoiling those he is responsible

for.”

“And you are a little bratty child, are you not?”

“Mmhhh . . . But I don’t mean to be. I want to be good. I want to make you proud.”

“Then you stop thinking about him”—he pumped his fingers in and out slowly, making her breath hitch—“and you think about *me*. I am in charge of this temple, and I control everything—down to your unsavory thoughts. Do you hear me?”

“Oh God, that feels . . .”

He pulled his fingers out.

*Swaaaaaack!*

“I said, do you hear me?”

“Yes, my seer, I hear you.”



“Tell me a sin in conjunction with all this lasciviousness.”

His fingers were back inside her again, torturing her.

“I um . . .” She cleared her throat. “Sometimes when he’s speaking to me, my nipples get tight, and I fold my arms over my chest and secretly play with them. It makes my pussy clench for him, and when he’s talking with his cool, slightly raspy deep voice, I think about him whispering naughty things to me as he lies on top of me, pushes his hands inside my toga and then parts it open so he can wash his tongue over my nipples. It makes me really . . . Oh, dear God, I . . .”

He slicked up his thumb and

slipped it into her anus while keeping his index finger in her pussy.

She tightened and made these sharp, gasping noises.

“What else? Tell me, or I’ll make this next one really sting, and I’ll keep my fingers inside you so I can feel exactly how naughty this cunt is.”

She gasped on the final word.  
*Cunt?* Fuck, yes.

“You like that, don’t you? You’re thinking of him using words like fuck and cunt, and then touching himself.” He stroked himself with his left hand while still assaulting her soft tissues, engorging them.

“I . . . God, yes, I like it.”

“Blasphemer! You take the name

of the high gods in vain more than once in my presence? Now I see exactly how entrenched you are in sins of the most scarlet nature. You covet that which is not yours. You belong to the gods as their virgin priestess! No man must have you!” His breathing was so ragged it was making it hard to speak. He leaned over and bit the highest swell of her butt cheek.

She gasped again, then released a thready moan. Her ass was flushed pink and breaking out in goose bumps.

He released his cock and then . . .

*Swaaaaaack!*

This one had a little bite to it, and she convulsed so hard she almost fell off his lap, but he hooked her with his

fingers he never took out of her ass.

It was awkward to use his left hand to spank her, but it worked just fine.

“Don’t you come, Priestess. If you do, I’ll have to really give you a grueling task as form of penance—maybe a human sacrifice—and you wouldn’t want that.” He thrust his fingers in harder and caressed her hot, tingling cheeks with his left hand.

“I w-won’t, Sir.”

“Good. Now, I need to hear another sin. What do you touch yourself with?”

“It’s embarrassing.” And she truly did sound disgusted with herself.

“*Jeanie . . .*”

“You’ll think I’m really sick,” she said, her voice timid and small.

“Must I force an orgasm on you? I need to know, I need to see all . . .” He choked back a cry of pleasure. She was so honest, even while playing this little game.

She hesitated and made this groan of mortification.

He pulled his fingers out of her and pinched her swollen clit.

“Tell me.”

“I . . . When I’m in your shower, and you’re not there, I use the handle of your back scrubber. I put it inside me, and I ride it.” She dropped her head and her arms went lax. “Sorry . . . I . . . You’ll probably want to get a new one

now.”

“The one with the little white rope on the end of it that’s knotted?”

“Yeah.” She blew out a gruff exhale.

It tickled his leg hairs.

“Does it smell like your come?”

“Faintly. I try to wash it with your body wash several times, but I can’t ever get all of it out,” she admitted, her shoulders rounding forward now. “And I know you told me not to touch myself at all, but sometimes I can’t help it. Not when I’m thinking about you, and that’s nearly all the time now.”

He considered forcing an orgasm on her, but that would be overkill. This wasn’t really punishment after all—just

a bit of fun.

“Good girl. Thank you for telling me, but I’m not kidding. No more touching yourself. Those orgasms belong to your master. They are not yours to take on a whim.” He grinned through a gruff exhale of lust. “If you tell me this instant who it is that has you misbehaving this way, then I’ll release your clitoris, Priestess, and I’ll stop keeping it under ransom.” His voice shook. Christ, he wanted her. His balls were aching. “Who is it?”

“It’s . . . *you*, Sir. I dream about you all the time—have for years. Oh, please, don’t hate me. I am married to our great God Zeus, and I always will be, but I’d do anything to have you. I’d

give up everything I know to have you want me that way, too.”

“Priestess,” he said by way of warning, then pulled her off his lap and put her on her knees on the floor. “Your ritual cleansing and purification is thus —”

“Aren’t you upset with me that I’ve objectified you, Oracle?”

“You are young, and your flesh is weak. But I know what is best for you, so if you follow my lead from now on and you take your final correction with grace, then we’ll forget about this. I’ll wipe the slate clean, and you will still be in my service, but you have to vow right now to serve me, for I am Zeus’s instrument for you in all ways.” He



stood, and his eyes went to his dripping head.

She nodded and placed her hands on her thighs. “I will, Sir. I promise. I’ll do anything you say. You always know best. I know that now.”

“And what should you have done when you first started having these evil thoughts?” He wrapped his hand around the base of his shaft and squeezed.

Her eyes grew wide and hungry, her tongue poking out at the tip of her lip like it might absorb what her vision could not.

“I should’ve . . . Um . . .”

His hand lashed out and gripped her jaw. “You should’ve confessed on the spot and asked for my guidance. You

should have told me so I would've known how best to direct you, maybe even distract you and show the right way to handle this."

Her eyes floated up to his, then back down to his cock.

"Greedy, aren't you, Priestess? Is this what you've wanted? My manhood?"

"Yes, Sir. I've wanted it for so long it was hard to say my temple worship prayers at night. That's when it was always the worst. I'd lie in bed, pretend I was with Zeus as my bridegroom, but really, I was imagining you. I'm an unfaithful wife to the mighty ones of Olympus." She cast her eyes to his feet.

“Kiss my feet, then I’ll let you take on the rest of your punishment.” He let go of her jaw and pointed at his toes.

She dropped down to kowtow naturally, all on her own and kissed his feet.

“Just like that, yes, and then you clean another part of my body with your own cleansing—the part you’ve soiled with your wicked, stray thoughts. Learn how to be a humble, sweet submissive girl.”

She kissed his feet with enthusiasm, and his heart was hammering so hard his chest was about to burst.

“Up. Mouth open, and take this as the cleansing of your soul. Wipe your

mind clean,” he said, jutting his hips forward.

She went up to kneeling again, opened her mouth and scooted forward.

He shoved his cock into her waiting lips and pushed really deep. His fingers massaged her jaw. “Relax and breathe deep through your nose. You have to enjoy this, or the gods won’t accept this purification process, and neither will I.”

She smiled at him through her mouth full of him.

He pulled out when she tried to swallow and gagged a little.

“Color, Priestess?”

“Green, Sir. I’m happy to receive the scouring of bliss.”

“I think you are, even though those words are filled with innuendo, but I understand you’re still in training.” He gripped the sides of her head and shoved his cock back inside. “But this will be a harsh rod you will feel. I don’t like spoiled little girls. I want you to be reprimanded so fully you won’t take lightly to sinning against me again.” He thrust and held her head steady. A tight, gut hardening, “Good girl—oh, you suck it so well,” drifted out of the back of his throat without him even realizing it.

He was losing himself to the sensations and to her. The way she gave in and went along was nothing short of a miracle since she was usually so wrapped up in her thoughts and guilt like

it was her blanket for survival.

“So good . . . Those dirty thoughts, fantasies . . . they taught you how to do this?” His fingers caressed around her ears.

She tried to nod her head, but it made her choke a little, so he backed off some on his intense pumping—but not much.

“Open wider. Think about how turned on you get when I teach you of the constellations, of a bright future, and then consider why you feel that way—so turned on you’re dripping down your thighs when you wander through the temple halls,” he said, his tip taking its time to slide across the grooves on the roof of her mouth.

Holy shit, that felt too good.

“Such a good girl with a tight, sweet pussy, and a lovely mouth, too. You’re good at receiving my discipline,” he said, a hum caught in his chest, reverberating low and heating the top of his belly.

She nodded a little and braced her hands on his thighs to keep herself steady.

“You’re touching me. Do you think that’s a safe thing to do for you? Won’t it make you more aggressive? You want to touch my balls, don’t you? Wanna cup them and think about wrapping your mouth around them and sucking so deep, I can barely keep from turning into a whore for you.”

She choked on a deep, guttural moan.

“Touch them then. Push your control and see where it gets you. You allow yourself too much latitude. It’s no wonder you’re unruly and unprincipled.” He smiled at her with a wicked, very unholy look, daring her to do it.

Her hands shook as they slid up his thighs and then with both hands, she was exploring.

“Touch my taint, slutty priestess. Feel how my balls tighten for you?”

“Mmmhmm,” she said, mouth still buried with him inside.

“If you think this is too much, you wait until I turn you back over and fuck your ass. I’ll teach you about what



happens when you want things you shouldn't."

She grinned and then sighed through her nose, making him chuckle.

His hands went from gripping to caressing around her lips, taking him in.

He went from harsh, to tender and worshiping. There was no way to stop it. He loved role playing like this with her, but God, he needed to tell her how wonderful she was.

"Those lips could force all the gods to curse, sweet thing. Do you know how angelic you are when you're swallowing me down and taking on my commands?" His voice lowered and softened. "Do you know how it kills me to have you this way? The best little girl

in the world—on her knees before me, worshiping my cock. I'm the luckiest bastard in the world. You're so beautiful—so sweet. Fuck, too perfect.”

Her eyes softened as well with devotion and admiration.

She tugged on his balls and rolled them around in her hands.

“You realize that even though you're the one physically on your knees, I'm the one begging for you? Because the truth is, I've wanted you since the moment I met you. I've jerked off so many times with your name on my lips, your scent embedded in my brain, and your voice in my head, I've lost count. I've worn my prayer stool down. And it is nothing right now—compared to you.

You. Are. Everything. You are my goddess. You are the one I worship.”

She let out a soft, pleading moan.

His large hands wrapped around the back of her head, and he pushed deeper.

Somehow, she avoided gagging. Her throat was open and inviting in this moment.

“I adore you, Jeanie. Everything about you calls to me—your softness, your rebelliousness, your desire to serve me and make me proud. And you *do* make me proud—daily. I can’t stop thinking about you and how I’m a better man simply by being near you. Sweet girl, I have to keep you. Stay here in California with me permanently. Be

mine.”

Just when he said those words, her jaw dropped open even more and her suction increased, coaxing his come out of him in hot shooting spurts.

“Ohhhhhh fuck! That’s it . . . Make me come, sweet little thing. No one’s ever been able to do that to me before when I didn’t want them to,” he rasped, loading himself into her mouth seconds later with breathless curses of pleasure.

She failed to swallow.

When he stopped rocking inside her and his orgasm faded, he said, “Let it coat your mouth, open so I can see it all over your tongue, and then you swallow it all down.” He pulled out.

She did exactly as he said, but

swallowed it with a flourish, smiling like it was giving her a buzz. There was even a soft, contented sigh afterward.

“Oh *fuuuu-uuck*,” he groaned at the sight. “*You*. Are a perfect little girl.”

She smiled.

“C’mere right now, before I die of shock and a pounding heart.” He reached out for her, and she scrambled into his arms.

He sat down, his back against the bed and put her between his legs, her back to his chest. “Do you know how insanely sexy you are? That was one of the hottest things I’ve ever seen . . . The way you enjoyed it so much. It tells me what I always knew about you—natural born submissive. So eager to please.”

His fingers drifted up her shoulders.

She sighed and went limp as he massaged the sides of her neck and jaw. “I take all my cues from you, Sir.”

He chuckled. “Looks like my religious brainwashing worked. We might have to do that again, and maybe while at church. Especially if you’re going to keep disobeying me and touching yourself. I warn you—I can be very creative with punishments.”

She smacked his thigh in a playful way. “Not happening. I want your mother to like me, not burn me at the stake. Now, if you find some Greek temple on a hill . . .”

“Nope, my church. My way.”

“What on earth . . .” She gave him

an incredulous look, then chuckled. “So wicked. Seriously . . . I don’t want your mom to come after me.”

“She’d have to get past me, and if you get me as turned on at church as you did here tonight, she wouldn’t be getting anywhere near either of us until I’ve had my fill.”

She made this shocked, gasping sound.

“You leave her to me. My mom loves me and believes everything I say. Normally I don’t lie to her unless it’s in regard to my lifestyle, since she wants to be in denial about it, but other than that, I find creative ways to work around her.”

“Oh God, I’m so fucked. You’ll find a way to get us both off at church,

won't you?"

"Bet on it, sweet thing. It's a fact—it'll happen. You just won't know when or where. It's your reward for being so damn good to me."

"Keeping me on my toes with a reward?"

"Yes, exactly. You'll be spread out, toes pointed in those black, fuck-hot heels you'll be wearing, and I'll be so balls deep, you won't even be able to hear the voice of God. All you'll hear is me, coming inside you."

Her hands slid up his thighs, then squeezed at the top. "I may just burn the moment I enter that church."

"I'm counting on it, sweetheart. You're with me—a dirty pagan." He



kissed the top of her head, and the discussion was over.

## Chapter 12

Mark was going to run errands without her after work today, which was really unusual. The last few days when he'd gotten home from work, he'd wanted to see her right away.

Was he sick of her already? It was so silly, but she was growing more attached to him daily.

Although, she still hadn't decided for certain if she was going to move to California permanently or not.

For now, she was trying to simply enjoy the time she had with him.

She had three more weeks.

Working from his home, sitting on his couch and using her laptop, rather

than stuck behind a desk, was frighteningly easy to get used to.

She lounged in her pajamas most of the morning, and that was after he fed her breakfast, fucked her in the shower, then bathed her.

Her entire body seemed lighter somehow.

Nothing was the same.

Everything was calmer inside her.

Should she be so serene when her husband had been dead less than two weeks? She wasn't sure, but according to Mark, this was all fine. And she trusted him implicitly. He was sweet, caring and wouldn't do anything to make her life more difficult.

*Bzzz . . . Bzzz . . .*

She picked up her phone on the couch next to her. Another love note from Mark.

This was the sixth one he'd sent her through text.

This one was a link to something on YouTube.

She smiled, and her stomach did a giddy dance as she hit the link.

Would it be something pornographic, or something sweet?

His love notes had alternated between loving and dirty.

*Miss you like crazy, and this reminded me of you, my sweet little thing . . .*

The link he shared was the song "Because of You" by Ne-Yo.

It was one of the songs they'd danced to the last time they'd gone dancing, and he'd been grinding up against her, making her a panting, sweating mess of gyrating hormones.

She smiled even bigger, and like a dork, put a hand over her fluttering heart as she listened to the entirety of the song.

So sweet, and kind of hot.

She still wasn't sure what to say back, so she gave the usual lame response of "Thanks, that was wonderful," and left it at that.

Jeanie listened to the song once more as she finished a contract she was working on typing up. That had become her role now with the company. Not really a secretary anymore, but a type of

glorified data processor. Her eyes were tired of staring at a screen, so she got up, cleaned the kitchen from breakfast, wiped down the breakfast bar and got so carried away she wound up scrubbing out his microwave, not that it was really all that dirty. It seemed like she was the only one that used the dang thing.

He ate a lot of fresh produce and health-conscious stuff like protein bars and shakes.

She was struggling with the food more than anything.

She sighed as she looked around the kitchen. Hours to go until he was home again.

Next thing she knew, she was mopping, dreaming about peanut butter

Captain Crunch. That was always her favorite cereal, but Mark didn't even buy milk. It was a staple she always had in her fridge, along with several oversized cereal bowls. Pono ate cereal all the time, but he liked the really sugary stuff like Honey Smacks.

She stretched her neck, scrubbing really hard near the oven.

The slate blue tiles were buffed to perfection in no time. Really, it had already looked clean before she started, but she wanted to earn her keep.

Plus, she was a little restless, wondering what errands he was going to run without her.

She vacuumed, washed the bathroom linens and considered cleaning

the windows, but they were already so clear, birds were constantly smacking into them.

Why did he need her in his life at all?

He was a tidy person, and he was doing the cooking along with paying for all the groceries.

She hated feeling like a sponge, but right now, that's all she was.

Jeanie roamed back into the sparkling kitchen and figured she should do something nice for him.

There weren't a lot of recipes she'd memorized over the years, but this one she knew.

She made it all the time for Pono, and it was one of the few healthy things



he'd eat.

Mark's KitchenAid mixer was entirely too spotless, so she dirtied it up by measuring the whole wheat flour and dumping it in, followed by baking powder, eggs and the few other ingredients she needed to make the brownies from scratch.

Thank goodness he had cocoa powder.

Just so it wasn't completely healthy, she dumped in a few chocolate chips she'd placed in the grocery cart when they'd gone shopping.

Once she had the brownies baking, she decided it was time she got over herself.

The poor man made her breakfast,

worked a full day, worked out at the gym in his office building at lunch five days a week, and then came home to make *her* dinner when she'd been lounging around all day.

What kind of girlfriend was she to allow this? She was sickened by herself.

If it wasn't a Thursday and they hadn't already planned to go out dancing tonight with Marly, she would've gone ahead and made dinner tonight if only to gain some self-respect back. She really needed to tell him it was no longer a temporary hard limit for her. It was time

...

Jeanie found herself in his bathrooms, cleaning them top to bottom, then putting the clean towels she'd

washed and dried back in their place.

It still didn't seem enough.

What did men like?

Mark liked sex—all the time.

She loved that, too, but what else could she do for him?

The timer beeped, so she took the brownies out of the oven. It smelled like heaven, and she'd most certainly be in a chocolate delirium tonight after dancing.

She sighed.

What now? Her mind went back to that question of what else she could do to please him without him having to spell it out.

Maybe stop looking like a recovering bag-lady?

Jeanie re-showered after getting

sweaty and grimy from all that cleaning. She got out her supplies she hadn't really used that much since she'd been here and curled her hair, then applied some makeup.

Her next step was to pick out her best booty-grabbing jeans.

They made her ass look really nice, and they hugged her thighs in a way that made it look she was actually toned and didn't have cottage cheese flab.

Next, she found a black tank top and put a stretchy tee over it. She put on some jewelry, a rare occurrence for her, and remembered him mentioning her wearing her black stilettos to church.

Might as well pull double duty for them. She needed to get them dirty

before cleaning them, right?

She put them on, studied her reflection and was actually pretty happy with what she saw. Not too bad.

Maybe Mark would be happy with it, too.

Time to quit smelling like nothing but soap and laundry detergent. She put on a dab of perfume. Not too much—she never liked it when women doused themselves in too much. Hers was a subtle floral scent with a hint of fruitiness.

She slipped the shoes back off, went back to work and tried not to dwell on how slowly the time was going.

Too bad he couldn't work from home as well.

He said it wasn't really a possibility right now since he was meeting with a lot of clients in his office, and his home didn't have a great way to do that, according to him.

She really didn't know why that was the case. He had a gorgeous home, but being an agent for musicians meant they expected a certain standard to be met.

She wasn't sure exactly what that meant.

Sounded like his clientele were snobs.

*Bzzz . . . Bzzz . . .*

Another text, and another smile from her.

*When this day ends, if it ever*

*does, I'm going to show you how much you mean to me. I love you, sweet little thing, and don't you ever forget it.*

\* \* \*

Mark entered the house in a flurry, rushing straight into his room, ignoring her completely.

Her brow slanted into a deep V.

“Well, hello to you, too,” she said to herself from the kitchen.

It was clichéd, but she was preparing him a drink before they left to go to the new club Marly had picked out.

Last time, he was strung out from going dancing with her and Marly, until things calmed down when they got home.

She hoped maybe this would help him relax beforehand.

What was wrong with him? Why did he fly through the place like he had to put out a fire?

She took a sip of the drink and shook her head. Doms. They made no sense sometimes. She took another sip. It tasted great to her. If he joined her, maybe he'd like it, too.

She set it aside, leaned against the counter and wondered once more what the hell was going on.

Several minutes later when he failed to reemerge, she knocked on the door. "Mark? Everything okay?"

She listened at the door. There was a rustling noise like he was gift



wrapping something.

“Mark? Don’t we have to leave in the next fifteen minutes? I made you a cocktail real quick. I thought we could \_\_\_\_”

The door was flung open, and his eyes blazed at her as he took her into his arms, pinned her up against the door frame.

He tucked her hands behind her and held both her wrists in place with one hand as he fondled her right breast with his left hand.

“God, you smell good. Missed you today,” he breathed, then slid his lips down to her neck. He was inhaling at her pulse point like he was getting high off it. “Turn around.”

“But we . . . Don’t we have to leave soon?”

“I said, turn the fuck around. Now,” he said through his teeth.

He released her wrists, and she turned around.

His hands undid the button on her jeans, he unzipped and shimmied her tight jeans down her thighs.

“Oh, God, a thong. You’re trying to torture me, aren’t you? I’ll know it’s slipping inside your crack while I’m dancing with you, getting slick from your arousal. How am I supposed to be polite to Marly when I know this is going on, and all I’ll be able to think about is getting rid of her so I can get you alone?” He yanked her by the hips,

creating some distance between her and the door frame.

“Hang on—this won’t be gentle. Next time, I’ll slow down enough to appreciate all of you.” In the next breath, he dropped down, had his tongue on her pussy and his fingers were inside her, then alternating with her clit.

She gripped the edges of the frame and wobbled in her heels as she tried to stay steady.

*Snap! Ziiiiiiip.*

His pants were undone, pushed down to his thighs like hers, and he stood, lining himself with her entrance.

“You’re entirely too clean—time to dirty you up before I take you out. I want you smelling like my come, so

when you're dancing, all the dicks around smell me and know you're taken." He pushed her hair aside, bit her neck and whispered a menacing, "Mine! *My* Jeanie. *My* pussy to fuck and control. *My* tits to grip while I ride you." His hands went to her breasts and groped her as he rammed his cock inside her, taking her breath away.

Her head almost hit the wall, but she managed to angle her head to the side and miss it.

She could barely breathe as he bit, dug his fingers in and even fisted her hair at the roots.

For some reason, she didn't care he was messing up her hair and acting violent.

He was so savage in his brutal intensity all she could do was mew his name over and over, along with a few cries for God.

“That’s it—come on my cock like a sweet little girl. Make me smell like you, too. The same goes for me. All those women will smell you all over me.” He pulled out and ran his entire inner hand across her wet vulva.

She craned her head over her shoulder and watched with wide eyes and her breath trapped in her throat as he licked his palm, then smeared her juices over his Adam’s apple. His eyes were on fire and devouring her.

“Oh Christ!” She choked back a sob of pleasure at the sight of him so

undone.

What had he done today to put him in this state?

“Tell me you missed me,” he said, gripping her behind the neck. His moist hand was on her skin, marking her with both of their scent there now, too. “Tell me you were dying to have me inside you again. Once in the shower—a quick morning fuck isn’t enough.”

“It’s never enough, Mark.”

“God, please, call me Sir. I need to hear it.”

“Sir . . . I missed you more than you’ll ever know. I was stir-crazy without you,” she said.

He was back inside her, pummeling her insides hard, groaning

like a feral animal behind her.

With one hand on the back of her neck, the other reaching over and rubbing her clit, she came, her knees buckling on her.

His hand was off her clit, wrapped around her waist, supporting her dead weight as he kept pounding into her.

“Mine! All mine! I’ll fuck you whenever I damn well please, including in that club tonight, and you’ll let me. I’ll figure out a way to have what’s mine so you’re not worried about Marly. Say you’ll trust me.”

“I do.” She inhaled in a rush as he pushed himself in harder—yet, pushing her off balance again. “Sir,” she tacked on.

“Jesus—love the sound of that—love the feel of how creamy my cock is now with your come, but it’s not enough. I don’t wanna stop. I don’t give a shit if we have somewhere to be. Just wanna be inside you, feel how tight you are even after you’ve already come.”

Her nails scraped into the wall for a moment when his thrusts went from a methodical rhythm to erratic and more desperate.

“Can’t stop. Jeanie—tell me to stop or we’ll never leave. I want to eat you, taste you while you come on my tongue and drench my lips with your flavor.”

“You can do whatever you like, Sir. But I do hope you’ll at least drink



the cocktail I made you before we go.”

For some reason, he grunted through a forced-sounding moan and then he was on his toes, shoving his cock in as far as it could go. He pulled out and let his cream spurt all over her lower back. His fingers rubbed it into her skin as his orgasm faded.

A drink? Really?

That was all it took? For her to remind him she'd done something for him?

Shit—what would he do when she actually *did* start cooking?

He dragged her top half up to standing. His left arm stayed around her waist and his right wound over the tops of her breasts, slanted at an angle so his

right hand was right under her armpit. She was caged up against him.

“Fuck, I can’t get enough of you, and buying you that shit today got me all worked up. I can’t wait until we’re done tonight and I get you back here—home with me. I’ve got something special planned for you. So, no wearing yourself out tonight dancing. You save some of your energy for me. You’re gonna need it.” He kissed her ear through her hair, let go of her and smacked her tush.

“Oh no.” She sniffed herself.

“What?”

“I smell like sex. We’re gonna see Pono’s parents when we pick up Marly and afterward.” She turned to look at him, expecting to find a guilty

expression.

Instead, he was smirking and putting his clothes back together like he'd planned this.

“Did you do this on purpose?”

“As my submissive, you don't have the right to ask questions like that, but since you're new at this, I'll say I only ever do what's for your own good.”

She hobbled to the bathroom, yanked down his clean towel she'd washed and dried for him today and wiped her sopping vulva off on it. It would serve the asshole right for doing this to her. He wanted to smell like pussy tonight? Well, now he'd smell like pussy every damn day when he was at work—the fucker.

She pulled her thong back up, though it was already disgusting with how wet and cold it was. Ugh! How was she supposed to dance like this and not chafe?

Though they had little time, she pulled off her shoes, jeans and thong, then grabbed a pair of sensible white cotton panties and put them on. Let him be pissed when he put his hands down her jeans later and found something unappealing.

She slipped her jeans back on and her heels.

When she left his bathroom, he was in the kitchen, finishing off the drink she'd made him.

The bastard was smiling, and for

some reason, her heart melted at the sight of him.

She shifted and looked away.

Right now she wanted to be angry at him for setting her up for failure with Pono's family.

No way the Finaus wouldn't notice they both reeked of sex.

Shit.

She walked back into his room and took a few deep breaths to keep under control.

No tears. No way.

"Time to go," he called out.

She took one last mind-cleansing breath and marched back out to him.

He took her hand, kissed the back of it, then grinned as he walked her out

to the car.

“At least you have the peace of mind that Marly won’t realize what she smells,” he observed.

“Hardly comforting,” she said, fighting off the urge to call him a dickhead.

She was in no mood for correction, and if he gave her a bacon slap right now, she might claw his dick off.

The drive over to get Marly was silent. She was hiding her frustration from him, and he was still smiling.

“Stay in the car,” he told her, then exited.

She gaped after him as he went to go get Marly.

Was he protecting her from Pono’s

parents, or did he sense how upset she was?

Either way, gratitude washed through her from head to toe, and every sense was somehow heightened.

Did he figure they would maybe guess he was sleeping with someone else? But why would they think that when they knew she was staying in his home as his guest?

Questions continued to pour into her mind with no answers in sight.

A few minutes later, he let Marly into the backseat.

She hugged Jeanie over the headrest and immediately started babbling about a new boy she was seeing. Marly hoped he'd be there

tonight. Apparently, this was his favorite hangout spot.

Fabulous.

This meant if Scott, the guy she was blabbing about, was there, Mark wouldn't have to do anything to get rid of Marly.

He'd probably lock Jeanie in the men's bathroom with him and have his wicked way with her.

Her safeword *red*, floated in her mind.

Although she hadn't used it yet, tonight she might.

She wasn't ready for this type of thing, especially not when her emotions were so raw over the idea of Pono's parents suspecting she was Mark's



lover.

The next hour was a blur with dancing, drinks and Mark's hands all over her while they gyrated into each other on the dance floor.

Scott was with Marly, dancing circles around her—a difficult achievement. Marly was a dancing machine. The girl never tired.

He was doing flips, all sorts of air acrobatics and even krumped some.

Jeanie could see why Marly was so into this guy. His talents were impressive.

Marly was oblivious of Mark and Jeanie from the moment they entered the club. Good thing, too . . . Considering how things were going.

Mark capitalized on Marly being distracted, pulling Jeanie into corners, molesting her and whispering dark, filthy things in her ears, into her cleavage and even her navel as he'd lift her shirt and lick her belly button.

She could barely think—he was keeping her focused completely on him.

His tongue was in that sensitive spot again, rimming her navel in the naughtiest way imaginable. It reminded her of how he'd come in that spot on her body a few days before.

He kept her senses on high alert the entire time.

When he stood up, he wrapped her arms around the back of his neck, ran his nose up and down her pulse point at her

throat, and licked behind her ear, then bit there.

“Having a hard time not fucking you—right *here*, right *now*. But you don’t want that, do you, sweet thing?” he cooed.

She shook her head, but barely.

“Okay,” he said through a dark chuckle. He took her hand and pulled her back out to the dance floor.

She straightened her shirt out, and it stuck to her moist belly, his saliva having dampened it.

Oh well. It looked like perspiration from dancing, so it wasn’t like anyone would really notice.

He was attentive to her as they danced their way into a dark corner once

more.

Out of nowhere, his eyes grew tired and clouded with mixed emotions.

“Marly’s having fun, and I’m hard as hell for you. Can’t wait much longer, so you’ll need to make some decisions, or you won’t have a choice—I’ll fuck you across a table if I have to.” Mark put her hand on his crotch as they danced so obscenely close, she hoped her sister-in-law wouldn’t look over and see them. “You cleaned my house today—made me dessert, didn’t you? I smelled it when I walked in the door.”

She nodded and pressed her lips together.

“Jesus Christ. You have no idea what that does to me—knowing you

were thinking of me and serving my needs without being asked.” He groaned. “Thank God I got you dessert, too. I want you to see what you mean to me, and I swear you’ll love what I got you.” He kissed the tip of her nose and growled, “Can we get out of here now?”

“It’s up to you—you’re in charge,” she said, her tone mocking. “Go fetch Marly and we can get home.”

“What’s wrong?” Mark stopped swaying to the music and took her hand off his hard-on.

“I don’t understand why we came here.” Her nose wrinkled and her mouth twitched into a frown.

“We came here to have fun, so you could spend time with Marly,” he

reminded her.

“Uh, yeah, but she’s off with Scott. I’m with you. How is this any different from being at home? I wish we hadn’t come. I smell like a locker room where guys jack off. It’s gross.” She cocked her head at him. “And people have seen us dry humping each other all over this dance floor. You don’t think Marly’s seen how we’ve been acting like cats in heat?” Her throat tightened.

He studied her like he was trying to figure something out, then took her hand and dragged her over to Marly.

“Time to go,” he told Marly, standing behind her.

“Not yet. We’re not done,” Marly said, standing in a circle, watching Scott

get down.

“Time to leave, *now*. We’re done here. Jeanie isn’t feeling well.”

Marly turned and gave him a scathing look. “Just go. I’ll get a ride home.”

Oh, shit. He was using *that* tone—the one that said he’d pick her up and carry her out if she tried to defy him.

Mark gripped the back of her arm. “You’re my responsibility—I brought you here, and I’m not about to pawn you off to someone else. We. Are. Leaving. Say bye to your boyfriend.”

Marly rolled her eyes, and her head followed as she groaned. She clomped her way out into the inner circle, said something in Scott’s ear,

hugged him and then glared at Mark.

She dragged her way out to the car, scowling at Jeanie now, too.

“This blows. It’s not even close to my curfew.” Marly slunk into the backseat and kicked the back of Jeanie’s seat with her right foot.

“Young lady, you will keep from acting like a spoiled brat, or you won’t be going out with us again in the future,” Mark told her, then shut her door.

“Fuck you—bossy prick!” Marly mumbled.

Jeanie kept quiet.

Mark slipped into the car, and there was an uncomfortable silence the entire ride back to Marly’s house.

Once they were there, Mark



ordered everyone out.

Jeanie's veins froze in her body because she was icy and numb.

"You can't be serious," Marly said, "I can walk myself inside. It's not like I'm gonna run off."

"I want to have a little chat with your folks before I go," he said, stony-faced.

"You're serious? You're gonna tell them I was misbehaving when all I did was complain a little when it was time to go? What the hell?" Marly raced up to her door, opened it and ran inside, straight to her bedroom.

Mark turned to Jeanie. "You need to know—I'm going in there right now, and I'm telling them about our

relationship. It's time. And if you recall, I told you the night you first turned your body over to me, that I would take care of this situation with his family. I know you've worried, and you have guilt over this, but telling them is the only way we can continue and move on. This is what's best for both of us. There's no need for guilt, and there will not be a discussion. You've chosen not to tell them—I accept that, so I'm dealing with this—*now*.”

She swallowed hard, and her eyes popped open wide.

Mark stepped inside, stringing Jeanie along behind him.

“No, Mark. I can't face them,” she whimpered at his shoulder blade. “Not

when I smell like this . . .”

God, please no!

“I’ll do all the talking.” He roamed into their living room where both Pono’s parents were watching TV.

“Everything’s going to be fine.”

She tugged a little for a second, then relaxed her hand in his. It was too late to do anything now. He was right—she could’ve told them already but chose not to. It didn’t mean this was going to be painless.

She winced as soon as he spoke.

“Hey, can I have a moment of your time?” Mark stood tall, casting an ominous shadow from the light of the TV across their living room floor.

“Sure.” Kueili turned off the TV.

“Everything okay?” Toloa asked, her dark brows inching up on her forehead. She stood up like she was going to approach them and give a welcoming hug.

“Everything’s great. Please, take a seat. No need to get up. This’ll only take a few minutes.”

Toloe sat back down and stared at him with warring emotions clouding her eyes. She seemed happy to see them, yet worried and stressed they were here uninvited.

“Did Marly cause trouble?” Toloe’s voice was filled with suspicion. She stared at Mark and Jeanie’s intertwined hands.

“She was fine. She didn’t want to

leave, but I couldn't blame her. We left earlier than we'd planned." Mark swallowed, shifted his weight toward Jeanie and squeezed her hand. "I wanted to let you know, Jeanie and I are seeing each other. We're a committed couple, and we didn't think it fair to hide this from you. We respect you and your family and honor Kapono's memory, but we're not going to be ashamed for finding love with each other."

A loud gasp rang out in the hallway.

Jeanie's head whipped to her right, and there stood Marly, mouth wide open and tears in her eyes. Her hands were balled up at her sides, and her face was red. "You bitch!" Marly howled. "Pono

would never have done this to you if you'd been the one to die. And now I wish you had!" Marly ran back to her room.

Toloa stood up and went after her daughter, but not without a look of disgust being flung in Jeanie's direction first.

Jeanie hung her head and her throat closed off. When she looked back up at her father-in-law, he only grunted and waved at the door.

"Thank you for telling us, but I think you should go now." Kueili's lips were pressed so tightly together, they were barely visible at all.

Jeanie ripped her hand out of Mark's and took off toward the car.

She flung herself into the backseat and refused to look at him the entire way back to his home.

How could someone that professed to love her and care about her welfare just sever the only familial connection she'd ever cherished?

She swallowed down her tears and stared out the window at the beach.

Was it too late to throw herself out of the car and into the surf? It would be better than being here, trapped in his car with him.

## Chapter 13

It didn't seem to matter what Mark did once they got home, Jeanie was giving him the cold shoulder.

He fully expected her to go to his closet, pull out her luggage and pack her stuff back up.

She didn't. Instead, she was in the kitchen, making herself a sandwich, eating it quietly and drinking some wine.

Afterward, she cut herself a brownie, handed him one on a saucer plate, then cleaned up the mess she'd made.

All without speaking one word.

"When you're ready to talk about this, let me know. I'm not in a hurry," he



said before heading to his room.

She huffed and went back to being a mute little girl.

Time he brought out his gift.

He carried it to her in the kitchen.

She was on her second glass of wine.

He pulled it out of her grasp and traded it for his present.

“Open it. You don’t have to speak to me if you don’t want to, but you’re going to unwrap this.” He set her glass down next to the sink.

She grimaced, then opened it, her mouth pressed into a thin line while she discarded the dark blue wrapping paper into the trash. Her deliberate slow pace was amusing. Oh, yes, a bratty sub on his

hands, having a hard time figuring out if she was truly mad at him, at herself, or maybe at the circumstances.

She opened the box and remained expressionless as she pulled out the naughty school girl uniform complete with push-up bra, white heels with knee-high socks and even some elastic hairbands so she could put her hair in pigtails or braids.

“When you’re ready to talk, put this on, and we’ll begin,” he said, turning away from her, ready to go back to his room and read.

“I’m not wearing this. I’m an adult, and we should be able to have a conversation without puppets being involved.” She set the box down and

walked out of the room.

He grabbed the box and followed after her to his closet.

She'd set the lollipop on top of the clothes in the box he was holding.

Her hands shook as she stripped down and then headed to the bathroom to shower.

He joined her, of course, but she still refused to talk to him.

“Is there a reason you won’t talk to me about tonight?”

“Yes.” She scrubbed her face with the bar of soap viciously.

“Care to share it?” His right brow arched.

She let some water into her mouth, then spit it out. “Nope.”

He pinched her ass. “And you wonder why I bought you an outfit.”

She rounded on him and stepped back, creating a small, but noticeable gulf between them. “I’m not playing games here. Pono’s family means something to me. The Finau family has been there for me whenever I needed them when my own goddamn family wasn’t.”

“I know. That’s why you needed to respect those wonderful people and have faith in them. How much do you wanna bet they were disappointed you hadn’t been forthcoming with this information from the very start? They probably felt betrayed because you were hiding it from them.” He grabbed the soap and

stepped toward her. “Now—I’m washing my little subbie, and she’s going to behave, then get dressed into what I’ve provided so we can talk.”

He had to get her out of her head. She was climbing back in there like a hermit ready to seal herself off for the winter.

“No.” She frowned.

“If you need to safeword, do it, otherwise it’s time for a lesson on who’s in charge . . .” He handed her the soap.

He waited for her to safeword.

“Color, Jeanie?”

“Yellow.”

“Okay, then I’ll give you some time. If you want to tell me why you’re yellow, then we’ll address it. Until then,

wash yourself. Enjoy your shower. When you're done, you'll go back into my room, get on the floor, naked, sprawled out, supine and eyes closed. Any more arguments from you, and we'll have to discuss—"

"I'm leaving, Mark. Tomorrow. I'm not your sub. This isn't working for me."

His heart dropped, and his mouth went dry. "It sure as hell is. Give yourself a chance to breathe. You haven't even let the dust settle enough to see clearly what's happened. How do you know that family won't welcome your being happy with me once the shock has worn off?"

"I'm not kidding. I'm leaving," she

repeated.

“That’s your choice, of course. And you take your chance at being deliriously happy with me out the door with you, but you are in charge of your own destiny.” He grabbed his body wash, lathered up his entire body quickly, rinsed off and got out, giving her some privacy.

It was a miracle he did it without crying, since his eyes were stinging like mad, threatening to gush.

She remained in the shower for quite a while. He listened attentively for tears at the door every few moments between what he was doing as he worked at a feverish pace, but he never heard any.

It gave him enough time to get into his outfit and clear everything else out that would give her a chance to run.

When she came back out of the room to get into some pajamas, they were all missing.

“Where the hell are my clothes? And yours as well?”

“You get to wear this or nothing.” He pointed at the school girl uniform on the bed. “It’s your choice.”

“Fuck you!” Her eyes teared up.

“That’s usually the end result, but that’s not what we’re discussing right now. Do you need more time? I’ll give it to you.”

“Yes.”

“Okay, I’ll be in the other room.



Open this door back up when you're ready to talk." He left the room and took a position in the living room on the couch where he could see the door.

He watched her march through the house back to her room.

A few moments later, she was stomping back to his bedroom, rummaging through empty drawers again. His closet housed his work clothes, but that was it.

He'd prepared for this event while she was in that long, soaking shower. They needed to talk.

He'd removed them all so her loss of options would keep this contained.

After a few moments, she came out in the outfit he'd provided.

She stood at the edge of the hallway and living room. “Nothing ever touches you. Nothing matters? Of course not. I have to tell Pono’s family the truth, while your own dear mother remains in ignorant bliss of what you are.”

“It’s not the same. I didn’t tell the Finaus you’re my submissive. Those are private matters.”

“Pfft! You probably would’ve told them that part too if Marly hadn’t gone ballistic when she did.” Her voice went quieter at the end.

“Hey . . .” He got up and moved over to her, then stroked down her cheeks with both thumbs while his fingertips dipped into her hairline. “I would never out you like that. It’s rare

you find extended family that can be open-minded about this lifestyle.”

“How’s this, huh? I put on this get-up. I even put on makeup for you.” She’d applied some bright red lipstick, put on some obnoxious powder blue sparkly eyeshadow, then it appeared she’d used the lipstick as rouge for her cheeks.

“Maybe I can get something right for once. Clown whore for hire at your service, Sir. Where should I bend over for my spanking so I can get this over with, get out of this ridiculous outfit and go to bed so I can forget about this nightmare?”

He took a deep breath. “Red.”

“What?” Her eyebrows looked like they were pitching a fit on her

forehead.

“You heard what I said. I’m safewording on you. This has gone too far. You’re not in a place to say it, so I am.” It killed him to stop this. He wanted her to see, but she was clearly hurting. “No bending over—no spanking. Just a conversation.” He wanted to pace in front of her, but instead, stood motionless, observing her. “Then I’ll give you back your clothes and purse.”

“What is there to say?” Her voice cracked and her lips pressed together.

“There’s plenty to say. Like I love you. Like I don’t want this to be a nightmare. I want it to be your freedom.” He took a deep breath.

“I do, too, but right now it doesn’t

feel that way.” Her face fell.

“It doesn’t feel that way because you’re used to hiding and running, and I’m helping you to take control of your life. It’s scary to face these overwhelming feelings when you’ve been so numb to your life for so long. Think about back at the funeral, Jeanie. You didn’t even want to face me then. It was in your eyes. I scare you—the honesty, the feelings you have for me—it frightens you.”

She huffed.

“You’re not a trained sub—and knowing how you’ve handled most of your life, I knew you were a flight risk, so I had no choice other than to tell Pono’s parents for you—for *us*. You

couldn't move on until they knew, and I was removing a stumbling block. It had to be dealt with."

"But how can I trust you now?"

Her eyes fell to the floor, and her voice was soft.

"I promised you from the start I'd deal with his family on this issue, and I have. I kept my word. What will it take to earn your trust completely? I did this as a way to earn it. To show you I'll always help you and take care of you. When something bothers you, I'll be there to assist. I see glimpses of your trust here and there, but then there are times I can tell you . . ." Had he misread her somewhere? Was he assuming she wanted this as much as he did? God, the

pangs in his chest ripping through him over the thought he might've been wrong, just about crippled him.

“I don't think I can talk right now. Just show me what you wanted to, and then we can talk afterward,” she said, eyes pleading.

“You're sure? I don't want to scare you.”

She moved back into the bedroom, and he followed after her.

“Yeah, I'm sure. Do it. I'm already dressed up.” She motioned at her outfit. “No point in stopping now.” She slapped her hair into two ponytails with the hair-bands she'd laid out on the bed.

“There's a point to stopping if you're hurting. That was never my

intent.” His eyes moved over her.

She seemed calmer now.

“I said I’d stay ‘til morning, and I will. In the morning, the dust will have settled, and we’ll both know better what we want. If I can’t handle this now, then there’d be no point in continuing on, right?” She slanted her head to the side for a moment.

Was she second-guessing her decision to even stay tonight?

“You tell me right now—you’re absolutely sure you want to continue, then I’ll do it. Otherwise, this is over for the night.”

“I’m absolutely sure. Show me what you’ve got in store for me.” She placed her hands on her hips.



“Okay, little girl. Color?”

“Green. I’m ready.” She nodded, and her eyes softened.

“You say red if it gets to be too much, and I’ll stop. Promise me right now you will, or we won’t proceed,” he said, jaw flexing.

“I promise, Sir. I can handle it. I’ve done role play with you before, and I really liked it last time.”

Ah, but this time was to be more of a learning experience.

He reached over to his dresser and grabbed the ruler on top, then smacked it on his left palm.

Her eyes lit up momentarily, then they went back to being a little anxious.

“Miss Lane, I heard you’ve been

naughty. I'll be forced to call your parents and tell them about your indiscretions. What do you have to say for yourself?" he began, his chest still tight.

She roamed over to the bed, unwrapped the lollipop with a lazy pace, then popped it into her mouth and gave him the eyes that said, "I don't give a fuck."

"I understand you don't want to talk, and that's a shame. There's a lesson to be learned here." He smacked his palm several times and paced before her again.

Her eyes were riveted on him as he smacked the ruler louder and louder.

"You want to see what happens to

naughty girls that ditch class and then lie to their parents about it? They're labeled as brats for a reason."

"No." She sucked on the end of the bulbous sucker like she was sucking delicately at the tip of his cock.

She made all sorts of loud, squishy sounds with her lips.

"How about you get rimmed then? Would that show you what the boys want to do to you when you alter your uniform like this?" He grinned at her tits, pushed up inside the skintight white button up shirt. They sat like they were on a shelf as they spilled out the opening at the top.

She leaned over, putting her breasts even more on display as she pulled up her white knee-high stockings

as high as they would go and wobbled in her white heels for a moment.

“I have no idea what that term even means,” she said, standing back up and then smacking her lips back over the red sucker.

“Like hell you don’t.” He yanked his bow tie off and dropped it to the ground.

“Such language, Mr. Taylor. I thought, as the principal of this private school, your job is to set the example. And right now, with that boner bobbing around in your pants, you’re anything but reserved and a model of appropriate behavior.” She set the stick of the sucker in her cleavage, bent her head down and made vulgar sounds while she swirled

her tongue around the top of the candy.

“And how many orgasms have the boys given you today?”

“Five, and all of them were better than anything you’ve ever experienced.” She stuck her tongue out at him and then laced her fingers together behind her neck. A smirk and a breath later, and she was back at licking that lollipop tucked in her breasts.

He rolled his sleeves up, removed his belt and set it on top of the dresser.

“You see me as the bad guy—little Miss. I’m anything but. I’m your best friend in the whole world, because unlike your peers, your teachers, and even your parents, I care about your success.” He circled her, his eyes

tracing over every line, dip and curve.

“Yeah, I’m sure it keeps you up at night, thinking about where I go from here.” She sucked the candy into her mouth until her lips concealed the entire thing and then her cheeks puffed out as she kept it inside her mouth.

“Color, Jeanie? Are you okay to continue?”

She nodded and released the sucker from her mouth.

“Color,” he demanded.

“Green. I’m playing the part,” she intoned.

“Okay.” He widened his stance.  
“Safeword if you need to.”

“I don’t need to.”

“But you might,” he replied,

searching her face.

She looked aloof, and her body was relaxed in this moment, so he went back to their role play.

She was suggestive again with her sucker. “Mmm . . . This is good.”

“It definitely serves a purpose. That candy’ll keep you quiet so I can show you why those boys don’t care about you. Why they don’t matter, but I do.” He stepped into her and raked his fingers down her back.

She wiggled her shoulders and breathed hard enough he could tell she was turned on.

He leaned close enough he was breathing in her ear. “Lucky for you, I planned ahead—worried you might act

like a delinquent.”

He pulled his toy out of his pocket.

*Click, click.*

Her wrists were now secured in cuffs, behind her head.

“Color now?”

“What the . . .” Her head angled to the side.

“*Color*, Jeanie?”

“Uhh . . .” Her eyes went glassy for a second. “G-green.”

Was she fully aroused? She certainly looked a little buzzed with her neck and chest flushing and her pupils dilating. Her ragged breathing seemed to indicate the same as well.

“Good. We can proceed then.” He inhaled deeply—his chest loosening up a



little. "Time for lesson one on why misbehaving is unwise." He ran his hands over the curves of her ass, under her short, pleated skirt.

She turned her head toward him and puffed out through her nostrils.

"Didn't think about consequences, did you? Well, that's all right. I'm here to teach you all about them. There's no reason to ever think when I'm around. I'll teach you exactly what you need to know to have a happy, fulfilling life." He bent down and pulled the Hitachi magic wand out from under the mattress, plugged it in and waved the bulbous head of it in front of her face.

She pulled the sucker out of her cleavage with her mouth and then spit it

out onto the floor. “You’re not using that on me.”

“Oh, but I am. You’ve had five orgasms—mind blowing ones at that—according to *you*. Well, honey, they weren’t anything compared to what I can do to you.” He licked his lips and set her down so she was sitting on the edge of the bed, legs spread wide.

He waited to see if she’d try to close them, but she didn’t.

“Color, Jeanie?”

“Red.”

“Why?” He waited. “Do you think I’ll hurt you?”

“N-no, I . . .”

“Are you afraid?” He stared in her eyes, looking for some reaction.

She huffed, “Because right now I don’t want to be here with you like this. An orgasm is the last thing I want. I’m tired, I’m frustrated and I feel sick to my stomach over what a massive disappointment I am to everyone in my life that matters. Including you.”

God, that stung. He flinched for a moment as his heart was dashed to pieces. “You are *never* a disappointment to me. You’re everything I’ve ever searched for and wanted.” He gripped her chin. “Are we clear?”

“But how? I’ve let you down repeatedly, and now the Finaus, too.”

“You did what you thought was best. We’re fixing a mistake—that’s all this is. No one’s going to abandon you

over this—least of all me. I love you, Jeanie. You're a bright, beautiful woman, and I love being in your life. That hasn't changed."

"Okay." She sniffed, and her eyes were watery.

"Do you want to keep going? Or should we stop?"

"Green, Sir. Let's finish." She nodded with small head bobs.

"I love you. Just remember that. I don't expect perfection. I only expect you to desire this—to want to make me happy because you love me, too."

"I do. Your happiness means everything to me. That's why this hurts so much. I let you down, and I hate myself for it." Her fingers flexed.

He cupped her cheeks. “Listen to me now—you are not a failure.”

She blinked, and her lips parted.

“Repeat it. I want you to say it until you believe it. Tell me, ‘I am not a failure.’”

Her eyes scrunched up in pain and she whispered, “But I am.”

“You aren’t. Do I lie to you—*ever*?” His voice was firm.

“No, but I could see I hurt you by not telling Pono’s family.” She opened her eyes, shining with water in them.

“You were trying to protect them. I get that. You’re intentions were good, and I love you for that. We just needed to find a way to let them know, and I was willing to do that for you so you

didn't have to do something that I knew was going to be incredibly difficult for you. Do you see now why I told them?" His fingers caressed her cheeks, her jaw and even along her hairline.

"I think so." She hiccuped, then sat motionless.

"Better? You believe me?" He leaned in and kissed the corner of her mouth.

"Better. Green, Sir. Keep going." Her eyes were filled with innocence and trust.

Goddammit, he loved her more than ever. His heart was pounding—swelling for her.

Her eyes followed him as he turned the magic wand on.

“You’re going to get those orgasms now. Tell me before we begin—does anything hurt?” His chest was aching. He didn’t want to do this to her right now, but if he was too soft on her, it wouldn’t help her. It would harm the relationship, and there would be problems later because he babied her.

She shook her head and whispered, “No.”

“Good. Then we keep going unless you decide to safeword.”

She exhaled a nasally, “I’m good.”

“Yes, you are. I know you are—such a good girl when you stop fighting me and listening to those voices in your head instead of me.” He paused and rolled his tongue over his bottom lip, the

way she'd been taunting him with her sucker on her lips. "This is a back massager. No one uses it that way—it's a joke, really." He rolled it up and down her spine.

She relaxed into it.

"Feels good," she said.

"Yes, it does." He flipped the switch from the low setting to high.

He moved in front of her when she was nice and settled.

Her legs were still spread wide. He moved the vibration across her right calf.

When he glanced up at her face, her eyes were closed.

He pulled the spreader bar out from under the bed. In seconds, her



ankles were bound and those legs wouldn't be coming together anytime soon

Her eyes popped open. "What is this?"

"A lesson," he answered.

He needed to get this going, though, before her arms went numb in that position behind her head.

*Bzzzzzzzz . . .*

He dragged that vibrating head straight up to her clit.

"I'll give you two orgasms, much stronger than the ones you got today at school. And when they're over, we're going to discuss how I'll handle your family."

"Are you serious?" she asked

through her teeth.

He smiled. That was all the response she was going to get to that question.

“Sounds like three might be in order.” He rubbed her clit with the tip of the vibrating head the size of a tennis ball but shaped more like a large marshmallow. “You know, I’ve always loved how flexible this head is. It means I can put it inside your pussy, or inside your ass, and move it at an angle that’s comfortable for me. How about I fuck your ass with this thing? My cock’s not quite as big as this monster, but since you’ve been whoring yourself out to the boys and taking their shit up your ass already, I’m sure you can handle it. What

do you say, little Miss?" He yanked on her left ponytail and kept moving the vibrator over her clit. "Wanna find out what truly dirty fucking is all about?"

She was probably in that slightly itchy, almost numb phase by now.

"No, thanks. I don't do anal." She turned her eyes to the wall.

"Fine. I'll make that decision based on your performance with this toy. If you yell my name when you come, then I'll consider keeping it out of your ass."

She stood up, but had to keep her legs spread. He parted her cheeks, then moved the head of the massager to her puckered asshole to give her clit a moment to throb and swell.

She made a squealing noise when

he bent over and slurped her clit into his mouth.

Her legs jolted when he let go with a pop.

He moved the wand back to her front, then kept that mushroom-headed wand on her clit.

“Hold out as long as you can,” he lilted. “Don’t you dare give in and actually enjoy what I’m doing to you. Makes you happier than you were before, right?”

He blew across her pussy.

She made this throaty, whimpering sound.

Without warning, and like a violent eruption, she squeaked and then bit off a scream when her orgasm hit her.

Evidently it was unexpected, because she was breathless, her chest rolling with each heaving breath and her eyes wide and filled with shock.

“There you go . . . Knew you’d pick this right up. Two more,” he said, keeping it on her clit.

“Get it off me!”

“Oh, no, no.” He puckered his lips and shook his head. “That’s the point. That’s how this works. Hurts—doesn’t it?”

“Yes, it fucking hurts! Get that fucking thing off my clit!”

“Such language. Should I wash your mouth out with soap in addition to two more orgasms?”

She whimpered and gave him a

hangdog expression. “Please, Mark. I don’t want to . . .”

“I know, sweetie, but you must. You can safeword if you need to.”

“But I . . . I can’t,” she whined, her voice faint, sounding exhausted.

“How about I release your arms, lay you down, and you can close your eyes. Zone out,” he suggested.

“No, nooooooooo.” Her voice shook in time with her head.

“Yes, sweet little thing, yes.”

“My body won’t do it again. It just hurts,” she said, her voice choking off at the end.

“It can. It will.” He stared in her eyes. “Want your hands free—yes or no?”

“I don’t care what you do,” she said, withdrawing from him again. Her bottom lip jutted out.

“So adorable when you pout.”

“Fuck adorable. You’re evil.” She took a stuttering breath, then shivered for a moment.

He stood up and turned the ceiling fan to low.

“I’m not cold, you fuckhead. I was fighting off something else,” she growled.

He chuckled.

“Then I’ll put it back on high.” He yanked the chain and then went back to assaulting her poor clit.

A few minutes of silence and she was shaking, biting her bottom lip with

her eyes clenched closed. “You fucker.”

“I love you,” he responded. “This is for your own good.”

She exploded a beat later and cried as the orgasm wound down.

“I didn’t hear my name in there, but I think you’ve had enough.” He couldn’t take it when tears were streaming down her face and her chest was shaking.

He turned the magic wand off and rolled it under the bed.

Next, he undid her cuffs and then the spreader bar.

He told her to lie down, and she dropped like a weight onto the mattress.

When he went to massage some feeling back into her wrists, arms and shoulders, she jerked away from him and



rolled into a ball on her left side, facing away from him.

Her back shook as she keened, barely making a sound.

He stroked her back from behind.

“It’s all going to be fine, Jeanie. They’ll understand. They love you and they want you to be happy. Eventually this would’ve happened anyway. If not with me, then with someone else.”

“Just stop talking,” she mewled.

“Okay, sweetie.” He snuggled in behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist. “But I will take care of his family once more. You don’t have to worry about them.”

“I want them in my life,” she said.

“But not me . . . ?”

There was no reply.

“Tomorrow, you’re going to spend the day with them without me.”

“But I . . .”

“I’ll arrange it. I’ll make sure you’re not uncomfortable or embarrassed when I drop you off before I go to work,” he said, hoping his heart would agree later. Right now, it was wringing itself like a sponge about to be used to mop up something disgusting—like this bullshit. But she had to see he did this for her—out of love and respect.

She didn’t want to admit it, but it was fine. Everything was changed, and for the better.

They had to work together on forging the kind of path they wanted, and

he wanted this more than anything with her but knew she'd never give herself to him completely if she kept using the Finau family as a barrier.

He stroked her back once more through the silence.

She fell asleep a few minutes later, while he remained wide awake.

He removed her shoes, her stockings and released the clasp on her bra so it wouldn't be too constrictive. At one point, he even managed to release her hair from the haphazard ponytails she'd created.

While she dozed, he gently massaged her ankles, her calves and her back.

When he got to her shoulders, she

whimpered so he stopped.

“I love you, Jeanie. I’m sorry you don’t believe me, but it’s true,” he whispered, kissed her shoulder, then lay there, wishing she’d listen. “This will help us move on.”

\* \* \*

Jeanie ate breakfast, still silent as ever.

“I know you said you’re leaving, and of course that’s your prerogative, but I want you to know, my mother’s excited about meeting you. She’s never met anyone that’s significant to me.”

Her mouth twitched, and she swallowed her food. She took a sip of

her drink and then opened her mouth as if ready to speak, but refrained.

“I’d love it if you’d stay two more days. That’ll give you the weekend to say goodbye to the people you care about here before going back to Phoenix. I’m sure the Finaus will want to see you as much as possible, even though you’ll be there all day today.” His heart crashed and fell as he thought about her leaving.

“You told your mother I was coming?”

“I did. When I last talked to her, you didn’t think I was an asshole.” He nodded and put away the bread from breakfast. “She was so excited she got choked up over it.”

“Fine. I’ll think about it. Let me get through today, and then I’ll let you know.” She gulped like she was choking back tears. Her spine slouched as she got up, threw out half of her breakfast and put her dish in the dishwasher.

While Jeanie locked herself in her room, he placed a call to the Finaus.

“Hullo,” Toloa answered the call.

He was grateful she picked up the phone.

“Hi, Toloa, this is Mark—I want to apologize for that shock last night and hope you can forgive me for laying it on you like that. I only wanted to make sure everyone knew what was going on.” He grabbed his keys and waited in the living room for Jeanie to reemerge. “And

honestly, it seemed the best way to go about it.”

“Is she okay?” Her rough, choppy breath pounded through the line.

Her concerned voice allowed him to breathe easier. He’d been right all along. They loved her—wouldn’t cut her off. It was her deception they were upset about.

“She’s struggling with what happened, but I told her I’d bring her to your place today so she could spend the day with you and your family while I’m at the office. I’ve gotta work late tonight anyway. I’ll be dropping her off in a half hour if that’s all right with you.” He glanced at Jeanie’s doorway again.

There was nothing but silence

coming from that direction.

Every instinct in him said to go in there and check on her, but she'd already voiced her fears before about him breaking into her room when she needed space.

He swallowed down what amounted to an anvil as he waited and watched.

Had he broken her trust so completely she couldn't bounce back?

God, his chest stung.

No. She was smart, she was strong—she'd see this was the right thing to do. After all, he loved the Finau family, too. He did it to help keep them in her life along with himself. How were they to exist as a couple any other way?



“That’s fine. I planned to be in the garden some today, but she doesn’t have to help me if she doesn’t want to,” Toloa replied.

“I’m sure she’d love to do that. She’s always eager to help her family out.” He smiled at the thought of family—their *own*. Jesus, he needed to keep from thinking about shit like that. Kids—a sensitive topic for Jeanie.

“Yes.” Toloa got choked up and coughed to clear the tarry, sticky emotions out of her throat. “She is very good at helping her family out. And we love her for that. She’s a sweet girl. Always has been.”

“I agree . . . Okay, so I’ll make sure she has some clothes she can work

in, and we'll see you in a little bit. Is there anything I can do so there are no hard feelings in your family toward Jeanie or me?"

"No. They're fine. Only shocked . . . Marly told me after you left she was sorry she said those things. She likes you, and I think she already knew you were together. Only she didn't want to admit it."

"I can understand that." He paused and looked up because Jeanie had her door opened, and she was standing inside it, staring at him. He smiled at her. She ducked her head and swallowed. No smile, but the frown was gone. "She'll be there today. Thanks, Toloa. We'll see you soon." He ended

the call after Toloa said goodbye.

His phone was slipped into his pocket, and he was approaching Jeanie with caution.

“They’re gonna let me come?” she asked, voice timid.

“Yeah. You need to bring some clothes you can get dirty in though if you want to help her garden. That’s her plan for today.” He rested his hand on the door jamb.

Jeanie’s eyes went there immediately, and a look of longing overtook her.

“Come here,” he said, his voice tinged with sadness.

She flew at him, and he wrapped her up in his arms, then swayed with her.

“It’s all okay. They’re not mad—only shocked.”

“They think I betrayed them. They have to be mad,” she corrected him.

He stroked her hair and didn’t bother to counter her statement. She’d see soon enough.

“Get what you need. We’re leaving in five minutes,” he told her.

“Everyone will be there?”

“Not Kueili. He’ll be at work, but you’ll see him at dinner. I’ll be working late. I’ll pick you up around seven,” he said, then let go of her.

She went into her room, and drawers were being opened and shut with speed and rough movements as things slammed around. He’d put all her

clothes back last night while she was sleeping.

A few moments later, she was behind him at the door to the garage with a grocery bag filled with the clothes she needed.

He grabbed her laptop and carried it out with them as well in case she wanted to work from their place today.

Her breathing was shallow on the ride over, and instead of trying to quell her fears, he let her stew. Odds were she didn't want to talk. He'd seen her like this before, and he knew when she was shutting down.

When they got to the Finau home, he got out, helped Jeanie from the car and stepped right inside their home.

The door was never locked, and he wanted to prove a point to Jeanie.

She gawked behind him at his rudeness.

“Hey, Toloa, we’re here,” he called out.

Toloa rushed out of the kitchen, flapped her way over to Jeanie and hugged her so tight about the shoulders, it looked like Jeanie might get whiplash at this awkward angle. Jeanie was stiff in her mother-in-law’s arms and was barely patting her back in return.

Mark came up behind them, hugged them both, turning it into a group huddle and then kissed them both on the head, leaving directly after.

No “Bye, see you later,” or “Love

you.” He figured Jeanie needed to feel what it would be like to continue hiding their feelings for each other. It was unnatural to do that, and he meant for this to be permanent. She needed to figure out if that was what she wanted as well.

He drove to work, focusing on the things he needed to get done today, rather than dwelling on her.

Those thoughts would no doubt plague him sporadically throughout the day, but he’d do his best to keep them in the back of his mind.

No love texts today.

No phone calls.

This was her day to make decisions and see what her life could be.

A plan formed in his head.

If she stayed the weekend with him, he knew what to do to help drive his point home.

When he parked in his covered spot, the security guard waved at him like he always did.

He stepped out of the car and managed to smile, though his chest was tight and banding his heart like steel girders.

“Hey, howzit?” he said to the Samoan guy in uniform, Apelu.

“It’s hanging,” Apelu replied, smiling and relaxed as usual.

“Nothing to report?” Mark stood at the entrance, waiting for some smart-ass reply to come.

“Heading back home to the big



island in a week. Gotta go see my sis. She had another baby.” Apelu gave him the shaka sign, his thumb and pinky extended on his right hand, the rest of his fingers curled into his palm. He shook his hand and head at him, signaling everything was cool.

“Take it easy, brah. Say hi to your braddah for me, and remind him da offer’s still open,” Mark said, smiling.

“Yeah, I told him tons of times. He says he doesn’t want to be no security guard and doesn’t need your help. He’s still givin’ me shit about takin’ your help to get this position.” Apelu went cross-eyed and laughed while he pretended to strangle his brother.

This was exactly why Mark made

sure they hired this man. Not only did he remind him of Pono, his buddy, but he was easy to get along with, and his massive size was intimidating as well.

“Don’t work too hard . . .” Apelu called out. “Not good for you. People die from stress or somethin’ like dat.”

Mark laughed, waved, then went inside.

Maybe he needed to show Jeanie how well he fit in with Pono’s family? She wasn’t aware he understood and loved their customs and culture. She’d never seen him there with Pono and how well he integrated.

He sighed, waved at the usual people and went back to his office.

His first appointment was due to

arrive in fifteen minutes.

He booted up his computer, went to the small corner table, straightened up the puzzles from yesterday, then checked on the mini fridge to determine if it had some juice boxes and bottled water available.

Next, he made sure the stuffed animals, cars and various toys were in the toy box and the bean bag chairs were fluffed up. Couldn't have a saggy bean bag.

He smiled as he stared out the window.

Lindsey was early with her daughter, Ashlen. The little girl's blonde, curly head bounced along as they made their way through the parking

lot.

God, he loved his job.

The minute they were inside his door, he greeted the little girl with a fist bump. She hugged him right after like she always did, and then he shook hands with her mother, Lindsey, putting his other hand on her shoulder, squeezing as he helped her over to a cushioned seat in front of his desk.

Rather than sitting behind his desk, he sat next to her in the other cushioned seat.

Ashlen was already playing with a baby doll and pretending to change its diaper.

“How’s the commercial shoot going?” he asked Lindsey.

“Fine. I told them you didn’t need to be there, but they kept hassling me.” She rolled her eyes.

“You’ve done this so many times already—don’t they know you’re a pro by now?” he said, shaking his head and laughing.

“Apparently not. Such amateurs,” she said, shaking her head now as well. She snorted. “We were early, so I helped get Ashlen ready and everything, and they acted like I was some kind of ogre, spewing green toxic waste from my nostrils. What’s their problem?” She looked over at her daughter, playing contentedly on the ground.

The natural light from the window made her hair look like it was filled

with pixie dust.

He smiled. Ashlen loved glitter. She wore it in her hair, on her hands and sometimes on her clothes.

It cracked him up. She was sweet, though, not one of those diva brats.

“What can I do to help? I can definitely be at the shoot today. I planned on working late to help out with this,” he said, setting his palms on his thighs and leaning forward a little.

“Yeah, maybe you should be there after all. I know they’d relax, and if they saw you trusted me I’m sure they’d back off. I don’t know why I got lazy on this one. It works every time.” She threw her hands up in the air, then held them there for a second with her shoulders wrapped

up by her neck, like a scarf. “Every stinking time. I bring you on day one and then it goes smoothly the rest of the time. How do you do that, and why did I think we could skip that step this time?”

“I don’t know . . . Confidence, and you deserve to be self-assured. You’ve done an amazing job of raising her, so she’s not like a lot of the other kids I see that I refuse to represent. Not once has she been demanding on set, thrown a tantrum or anything, and she’s almost five. Even when she was a baby, doing this, she was always calm. She knew you were there—never leaving her side. It’s admirable the way you’ve managed it all.” He clapped his hand on his leg and stood. “We’ll show them there’s a

reason you're on set and you don't just leave her there for them to handle. They need you—they just don't know it yet.” God, those words stung because that was his situation with Jeanie.

She didn't know she needed him yet.

“You're right!” She stood and went over to Ashlen, petting her hair. “They haven't even let her sing. They're forgetting that's why *she's* there.” She gazed at the top of her daughter's head, then looked back at him. “When are you gonna have one of your own? You've known Ashlen since she was a baby, and you were never afraid to hold her, help change her diapers, or anything. You're so great with kids. What are you waiting



for?”

He swallowed lightly and puffed out his cheeks for a moment. What to say? “Need a willing partner, obviously, and so far haven’t found one. I’d love to have a big family someday with tons of kids running around.” His eyes wanted to mist, but he refused to let them.

The only woman he could ever see doing that with was Jeanie.

“You’ll find her soon. I can feel it.” Lindsey put a hand over her heart and sighed as her shoulders slumped. “I know you’ll have that family soon. You’re too good a man to not have that.” She inhaled quickly, and then her face lit up.

Oh no! *Not* that.

“Hey, you’re not setting me up.”

He cut off her thoughts he could see churning in her head.

“No, not that.” She shook her head and laughed. “No one wants that.”

Another laugh and a tilt of her head, and she said, “You need to let the next woman you’re interested in see you at work. They’ll melt into a puddle of ovarian goo once they see how well you protect these little guys and girls. You’re the best in the business, and that’s why we chose you. I wasn’t going to let just anyone be Ashlen’s agent. I knew you’d protect her—and you have, every single time without fail. If that doesn’t make a woman beg you to procreate with her, then I don’t know what will.”

His smile tightened, along with his ribs, squeezing his breath out. “Yeah, I’m sure it would work like magic pixie dust.”

He glanced at Ashlen, smiling up at him, and he strangled the hope in his chest, leaking out into his thoughts.

*Kids*. They got to him every damn time.

He’d adopt if that was the route Jeanie wanted to go, but then . . .

He groaned under his breath and turned back to the window. Jeanie had to stop fighting him on every fucking thing before they could even broach that subject.

There was a reason he didn’t bring his work home. He didn’t want it to hurt

Jeanie and have her feel inadequate with her fertility issues she'd struggled through over the last few years.

Christ—did she even know he was aware she was dealing with this?

He wasn't sure. And would it even matter?

Right now, at this point, he wondered if she'd even stay in California past tonight, let alone remain in his life, so it was all a moot point anyway.

If he never had a family of his own, he'd keep getting small doses of children at work, and doing his damndest to keep them unsoiled by the industry.

It was what kept him going—

knowing he was doing a service for them most other agents ignored. Children were innocent and needed protection. He provided that and protected the parents as well.

The shit could cover his hands to keep theirs clean.

Fine with him.

At the end of the day, he knew how to get rid of it—burning off the excess with some bondage and play.

Only he might need a new sub soon

...

His heart ripped at the thought—and once more, he fought to keep his eyes dry.

“Ready?” he asked Ashlen.

“Yeah. We get to sing now?”

“Yep!” He started singing “You Are My Sunshine,” to get her going.

Like all the previous times, she took over, and he listened to his heart’s content.

And somehow everything was better, even if it was temporary and the glitter would wear off soon.

## Chapter 14

Jeanie stretched her back and massaged the lower half as best she could. The ducks were quacking incessantly, but she ignored it even if it was giving her a splitting headache.

She twisted her spine to get it to unkink once more. What she wouldn't do to have Mark's hands doing the job justice.

She was always weak at massages. Her hands were little and never seemed strong enough, but then she'd be digging her hands in, trying to knead Pono's sore muscles, and he was a big guy.

She glanced around and tried not to feel like she was a nuisance to them by

being here.

Marly was inside, watching TV.

Jay was working on his car, changing the oil or something. She wasn't sure.

They said hi like she was nothing more than the postman.

Her breath stuck in her throat and seemed to lodge there permanently.

No one was angry, but she was being ignored.

Was this how this family was on any given day? Was this why Pono ignored her most of the time?

He grew up this way?

Even Toloa, working in the garden beside her, failed to say much.

She grunted a few things here and



there, but kept quiet for the most part.

It was awkward, and Jeanie had no idea what to do with herself.

Toloa didn't give much instruction, so Jeanie would pull weeds and do whatever she thought was helpful.

Helpless and feeling utterly useless, she kept berating herself mentally for not speaking up.

"I'm sorry," she wanted to say, "for not trusting you to handle the truth and accept me. I was afraid I wasn't good enough, and you wouldn't have a reason to keep me in your family." If Mark was here, he'd say those things for her, opening up communication.

Her inept body scratched at the soil, failing to get much done. It wasn't

as bad, though, as her feeble mind, coming up with excuses for why she was coated in guilt over taking charge in the garden at times without permission, and then plagued with the repeating question of why she couldn't simply ask Toloa what she wanted her to do.

The words wouldn't come. It was the damned roadblock in her throat, she told herself.

But honestly, it wasn't. She knew it.

She'd never been good at asking. That was why she did the same with Pono. She guessed what he wanted, took over and did it, and all the while felt like shit for being so overbearing and bossy.

She hated being that type of woman, but there didn't seem any other way to handle it.

If she was brave, she'd help each of them. She'd reach out to Jay, help with his car repairs.

Find out what Marly was watching and join her.

But no. She lurked in the garden, skulking around like a creepy little gnome or something equally disturbing.

"Ma! Lunch!" Marly demanded from the doorway of the house.

"Just a minute," Toloa huffed back, then struggled to her feet.

Jeanie scrambled over to help her but wasn't fast enough.

They were both coated in mud.

“Here—let’s go wash off,” Toloa said, heading over to the hose.

Those few simple words set Jeanie at ease.

Why?

Why did she crave someone else holding the reins?

What was her problem that she couldn’t figure this stuff out for herself?

Jeanie didn’t know the answer, but she beamed at Toloa when her mother-in-law grabbed her hands and then helped her wash them.

“Thanks,” Jeanie said. She was tiny like a small child, begging for more of this type of interaction. Or, at least, she could tell her eyes were doing that for her.

They stomped the mud off the bottoms of their shoes as they tromped through the yard up to the back door.

Toloe removed her still slightly soiled shoes, and Jeanie followed suit.

Once inside, she wasn't sure what to do with herself. Did she help in the kitchen with lunch? Did she hang out with Marly? It seemed kind of ungrateful to do that, so she followed Toloe into the kitchen.

Toloe swung around to grab something on the counter, unaware Jeanie was there, and stumbled back, slamming her hip into the counter.

She flinched on impact.

“Oh my God! I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to . . .” Jeanie tried to help her off

the counter.

Toloe was out of breath, and though she kept her eyes down, there was pain and frustration there.

“Why don’t you go rest? Take a break,” Toloe offered.

“O-kay,” Jeanie squeaked and skirted out of the kitchen. She was the biggest waste of space around.

Couldn’t she do anything right?

Before she realized it, she was back out in the garden, barefoot and sitting in the spot she and Mark had chatted in almost two weeks ago.

Thoughts of him calmed her.

Why was she so lost without him?

She pulled out her phone and shot him a quick, mindless text.

*Hope your day's going well . . .*

That was it? That was all she had to say?

And then it hit her—he hadn't attempted to contact her at all today.

She groaned and her head fell back. Her eyes moistened as they followed the few puffy clouds floating by.

Why did she need guidance like a small child?

Other adults didn't need this, so why did she?

She relaxed into the swing and wished her life made more sense.

A few minutes later, she roamed back inside and changed out of her grubby clothes so she wouldn't get their

furniture dirty.

When she entered the dining area, they were eating without her at the table.

Oh crap. They probably got sick of waiting on her broody PMSing attitude.

Jay patted the chair next to him, wordlessly telling her to eat up.

The food might not last.

She knew how it went. They would eat all of it whether she was there or not.

So why was she shocked? They weren't being rude—just giving her space.

A part of her knew Mark wouldn't have done that. He would have found her, sat her ass down, fed her by hand if needed and then waited patiently for her to spill her guts on what was bugging



her.

A swelling in her heart had her breathless and seizing up inside.

She wanted that. She wanted to matter and feel like she was the whole world to somebody.

And Mark did that all the time.

So why did she fight it so much?

*You're unworthy . . .*

Yes, she was.

She dipped her head, grabbed a tuna sandwich and put it on her plate.

They ate in silence—well, except Marly.

She was begging to go out tonight, but Toloa refused and avoided the topic.

“Please! I’ll be good,” Marly whined.

“No. You didn’t behave last night. Mark said you were fine, but I could tell he was just being polite. You behaved rudely even though we were nice and let you out on a weeknight. I could tell with the way he told us . . .” Toloa drifted off and went back to eating.

“You’re blaming this on me?”

“No. We’re not talking about it,” her mother said.

Jeanie swallowed hard and wished she was anywhere but here.

The fault was all hers, not Marly’s.

If she’d told them herself, instead of forcing Mark to do it, maybe things wouldn’t have blown up like that.

Jeanie lifted her stiff head, set her palms on the table and inhaled before

blurting, “It’s my fault. I was a coward, and Mark wanted you to know since we both care about you. I’m sorry it had to come from him instead of me.”

“It’s fine,” Toloa said, pretending like it didn’t matter.

“It’s not fine. I’m . . . I still want to be part of this family. I love you guys, but I’m . . . I guess I felt guilty for being happy with Mark so soon after . . .” God, her throat cemented shut.

Tears rolled down her cheeks.

“It’s not your fault.” Toloa turned to her. “And you’re entitled to do whatever you like. You’re a grown woman. We can’t dictate your life for you.”

“Sometimes I wish you would,”

Jeanie squeaked out, swiping her tears away with the backs of her hands. Her stomach was a mess, filled with angry hornets based on the way it was stinging and going nauseous.

“Don’t you worry about us. You only tell us what you want us to know. We want to be part of your life, too,” Jay said, smiling with a fond, affectionate look.

“Thanks.”

Jeanie shrugged off her embarrassment and wished she had some finesse with these types of things. She sucked at sharing her feelings. It was so much easier to let it stay trapped inside her.

This inexplicable feeling of pride

lifted her out of her seat. “I’ll be right back.”

Jeanie went into the living room and texted Mark right away.

*I managed to fumble through an apology and tell them I wanted to stay in their life. It was messy, and I sounded stupid, but I did it. Are you proud of me?*

The moment she sent it off, she regretted it. Fishing for compliments and approval now?

Ugh! Pathetic had reached a new level.

She went back into the dining room. All but Marly were done eating and clearing their dishes off the table.

Jeanie patted Marly’s back and

then sat down. She finished off her sandwich and told Marly, “We’ll figure out some way so you can still have fun tonight.”

“Thanks, Jeanie,” Marly said, tossing herself into a fleeting hug.

“You’re welcome.” Jeanie went back to eating, unsure of what else to say.

Mark was the eloquent, insightful one, and once again, she craved his presence and wished she hadn’t been such a silly snot last night.

Hopefully he’d forgive her. Though, she wouldn’t blame him if he didn’t and if he was sick of her childish antics. No wonder he got her a school girl uniform. She acted more like an

adolescent than Marly did at sixteen years old.

When they were done eating, Jeanie was lost again.

Toloea was snoozing on her bed in the back, Jay was on the phone in his room and Marly had headphones on as she watched something on her iPod.

Jeanie thanked Mark silently for grabbing her laptop and dropping it off along with her.

She sat down, tried to work, but her thoughts kept getting in the way.

Had she been mistaken about what Pono's home life was like?

They were always laughing like it was a party whenever she and Pono came around. There was always lots of

yummy food, maybe some dancing and tons of joking around.

But then she had never hung out all day long.

She realized now this was normal home life.

They weren't going to single her out every time, even though she'd always had mixed feelings about it.

A part of her soaked it up like Vitamin D from the sun, seeping in through her pores and making her body sing, but another part of her shrunk away.

She closed her eyes, stretched her neck and remembered the last time they'd been here together—Pono and Jeanie—the seemingly happy couple.



As usual, she'd hung back and faded into the wall, while he was being a goofball, heckling his brother while Jay showed them his latest dance moves along with his new stereo system.

The entire family gathered around. They clapped, sang along and danced with him.

It wasn't until several minutes later Pono gave her that familiar irritated look, like she should just jump right in. As if it was her right.

This wasn't her blood-related family.

That's when it hit her. She'd never be blood related, didn't have an actual claim since she never had children with her husband, but his family cared about

her.

This was her adopted family, and that didn't have to change.

Out of nowhere, Jeanie had her phone out and was calling for a cab.

Time to go home.

"Hey, who're you calling?" Jay asked when he walked into the room. "Is it Mark? I need to ask him something about my car."

She shook her head. "Cab."

Jay grabbed her phone, ended the call, then handed it back. "You're not callin' a cab. I'll take you home."

"I don't want to inconvenience anyone," Jeanie began.

He held up his hand. "Shit, Jeanie. We love having you here, but we know

it's boring as hell to be here all day long when nothing in particular's goin' on."

He grabbed her hand and pulled her up to standing.

"But . . ."

"No way. Mark would take me out with my tire iron if I let you take a cab home when I'm not even doing anything." Jay smiled.

"I thought you were working on your car today?" She blinked a few times. What was she missing here?

"I say that all the time. It gets me outta stuff I don't wanna do." He laughed. "I do need to make some repairs, but I probably won't get to it until right before school starts up again in a month."

She nodded. “Oh . . . Okay.”

She followed him out to his old faded blue Chevy Corsica. It was a junker, and he knew it, but he treated it like it was a car worthy of royalty. The paint was peeling all along the hood, top and trunk from sun exposure, and there was a big dent in front of the passenger’s door.

She smiled because she recalled there was no air conditioning either.

His dates probably loved having their hair windblown into their face while he drove them around town.

Jay chatted about his dreams for his car—how he wanted to pimp it out.

She nodded along, kept smiling and enjoyed listening to his prattle.

He was fun-loving like his older brother, and his laid-back attitude made him easy to be around.

Her heart warmed whenever she was around him long enough to talk about what was going on with him.

Before long, she was in front of Mark's house, standing before his front door with her laptop and realized she'd left her soiled clothes behind at the Finaus' home. Great.

She didn't have a house key either.

Jay popped out of his car he left idling on the driveway. "Locked out?"

"Yeah. Forgot I didn't bring a key."

"I got ya," he said, wrangling a key out of his pocket. "Mark gave us a spare

key forever ago. I thought you might've forgotten one this morning so I grabbed it before we left."

She smiled and hugged him.

"Thank you. You're a terrific brother, you know that?"

"Yep." He popped his P, and unlocked the door for her.

Before she'd even stepped through the door, he was waving and running back over to his purring lover in the driveway.

He drove off.

She stripped down the minute the door was closed and headed straight for the shower.

Mark's shower. Not the one in the guest bedroom.

She never did ask him about that—why there seemed to be two master bedrooms with attached bathrooms.

It was unusual to say the least.

Oh Jesus.

She'd been told the guest room used to be something else entirely, only it seemed to be a topic of discussion left out.

This had been his playroom, hadn't it?

He'd fucked Tia, and various other women, back there.

Her stomach curdled on the spot, and she vowed she wouldn't be showering in her bathroom again since in all likelihood that was where these other women had bathed. And maybe

Mark with them.

Maybe she could cite her excuse as being embarrassed over using the handle of the back scrubber in there as a dildo like she'd confessed during one of their play sessions. My word, that seemed like forever ago when she'd told him she'd touched herself in that shameful way.

Her thoughts went back to him with other women. Showering with them. Touching them. *Pleasuring* them.

No way would she stay in the guest bedroom anymore or use that attached bathroom.

But then, who was to say they hadn't done those same things in *his* bedroom, bed and shower?



Her stomach rose and hardened.

Why did she care about these types of things? She never had in the past.

It wasn't like Pono was a virgin when she married him, and she hadn't been either.

They'd been with people before, and she certainly didn't tell him to burn his mattress when they married and they'd adopted his queen-sized bed.

Her chest flamed as she continued to think of other women fawning all over Mark's gorgeous chest, wrapping their hands around his cock and doing things to him she wasn't brave enough to attempt unless he demanded it.

She huffed, marched the rest of the way into the shower in his personal

bathroom and proceeded to scrub her entire body, growing more rigid by the second.

Her movements were stiff and her teeth were grinding like caught gears. Must've been mimicking her mind, caught in this cycle of self-deprecation.

They were all prettier than Jeanie, even if she didn't know what any of them looked like other than Tia. But then Tia was probably an indicator of what he went for, and Tia was beyond gorgeous with those big brown eyes, her flawless mocha skin, and her wide, infectious smile with high, strong cheekbones. Her little button nose, plump lips and curvy body with the tiniest waist known to man were all enviable.

She also had killer legs with petite feet, always perfectly pedicured. Her skin glowed all the time. Even her long, dark curly hair was glossy and thicker than any models.

Jeanie couldn't compete with all that perfection.

What was she thinking—she could somehow satisfy this man, way too good for her?

She washed in a way reminiscent of a hurricane, sucking in her lips, keeping the torrential tears from coming and lathering quickly.

When she was done, her diaphragm kept spasming in twisted pain like it was rejecting her, too.

Jeanie dried off, threw on one of

his shirts and some baggy shorts, then sat in the living room, propped up on his lounge.

She managed to get some work done between checking her phone.

Still no response from him.

She sent a text, realizing she'd forgotten to tell him he didn't need to pick her up from the Finaus.

*Hey, got a ride home. Don't need to get me.*

That was it. Should she have said she loved him?

She did love him. It was undeniable she was completely obsessed and in love with this man.

How the hell had she fallen so fast and so easily?

Before long, she was half asleep on the couch without a clue of how to proceed from here.

She hadn't even thought about making dinner.

What did that say about her?

Careless slob, probably, but she could change that tomorrow when she had some better direction.

Mark would have some idea of which way to head.

\* \* \*

Mark ate right after work.

“Grabbed something on the way home,” he told her in passing as he handed her the grocery bag of her soiled clothes

she'd accidentally left behind at the Finaus' home.

She ate a sandwich while he was away, but still, her chest ached . . .

Something was clearly wrong.

“Are you staying for the entire weekend?” he asked her as she followed him into his room.

He undressed in front of her with casual ease.

Why was that so hot?

Her eyes roamed over him in anticipation of more skin, toned muscles and hopefully hard-wired male reactions to her ogling his naked body.

“I'd like to,” she said, her voice soft and weak.

She gripped the side of her thighs.

He was making her knees weak with the looks he kept casting her way—heated, slightly pissed off and edgy, like he was dying for some confirmation from her that she still wanted him.

“Good. I’ve invited some friends over to dinner tomorrow night. You’ll cook. Make enough for a dozen people. I expect you to join us and take credit for the meal.” He nodded and stepped out of his pants. No underwear underneath?

Oh God . . . He had something around his dick at the base. Was it a cock ring?

She’d never seen one before.

He was flaccid, though, and he took off the stretchy black band, then put it on top of his dresser.

Shit. She was turning him off completely.

She turned her head. It seemed rude to watch him when he wasn't turned on by her looking at him.

“Sure,” she replied. “What do you want me to make?” Her spine deflated when she realized he was done with her wimpy attitude. He'd told her before no cooking since she didn't trust herself in that area, and now he was downright demanding it. She'd never had the chance to tell him she wanted to start cooking, but still . . . The fact that he was acting this way meant even though she'd been against it, he didn't give a shit anymore.

“Cook your favorite meal or



whatever you think they might like,” he said as he put away his shoes in the closet.

The distance was small, but it seemed forever away.

He was in the closet—she was in the doorway. Why wasn’t she begging him to forgive her? Throwing herself at his feet?

She wanted to, but for some reason, her feet were nailed to the floor and her mouth barricaded shut with certain words.

He said what they might like—not what *he* might like. Did he no longer care about her pleasing him?

She was a burden.

Her shoulders caved in on her

chest like she was folding in on herself.

“Okay, sounds good.” Her voice barely traveled past her lips.

When he came out of the closet, he was still naked. He hadn’t put on any underwear or anything at all. What did this mean?

“I’m sleeping now. If you want to talk about your day, that’s fine, but I’m wiped out.” He went over to the bed, yanked down the covers and climbed inside.

Without asking, she approached him. “I’d like to tell you all about it if you’re not too tired to listen, Sir.”

He patted her side of the bed but didn’t turn the covers down for her.

She sat down and drowned out her

strong reaction to the bit of rejection she was feeling.

“I was disillusioned, Sir.”

“By?” His piercing, electric blue, all-knowing eyes blasted right inside her to her soul.

Her lips went numb as she spouted off all sorts of gibberish. “I thought their family was the opposite of mine. I thought they were always helping each other out—involved with every little thing. I was expecting us all to be together and laughing and carrying on, but it wasn’t like that.”

His eyes softened a little, but the muscles surrounding his jaw remained etched in stone—they weren’t budging and were tighter than she’d ever seen

them.

She sighed and nausea crept up on her. “Everyone was kinda doing their own thing, and I didn’t know what to do with myself.”

“I think you’re under the impression each family has to be better than the one you lived with. And while that might be true in some instances, you’re expectations are skewed. They’re people like you and me. They have things they enjoy doing on their own.”

“I know . . .” She dropped her head and picked at her cuticles, riveted by them suddenly.

“Jeanie—it’s not wrong to want a better home life than the one you were given, but you’ve gotta be realistic.

Families aren't always peaceful and full of life. They have down times and moments they can't stand each other. If you ever moved in"—she gulped down the bile threatening to erupt into her mouth as he kept going—"I wouldn't expect you to always be ecstatic to be around me. I'm a pain in the ass, and I know it. But I would hope you could love me enough to let the small things slide. You know living with someone can be frustrating and even exhausting sometimes, but I would also hope I'd be able to make it worth your while by loving you with every fiber of my being."

Her eyes rippled into a wave of tears. "I believe you, and I . . ."

“We don’t have to talk about that now,” he said, the mood shifting with the topic. “Get some sleep. Decide tomorrow how much longer you want to stay.”

She wanted to ask him if he even wanted her around anymore, but she didn’t have it in her to brave that question.

Her legs swung off the side of the bed so she could get up and go to her room, but something wouldn’t let her leave.

A voice inside her heart said she was being a coward again.

“Staying?” His voice shook.

“I’d like to, Sir, if that’s all right.” She stared at her feet, her unpolished toe

nails and her pale skin.

What did she have to offer him? She racked her brain to come up with something. Nothing came to her, other than her heart.

“Of course it is. I wouldn’t have it any other fucking way.” He reached out, dragged her by the waist across the bed, shoved the covers out from under her, then wrapped her around his side so she was halfway draped over his chest.

She inhaled, making his chest hairs move because she was so voracious with her whiff.

“I missed you today, Sir,” she managed to choke out between her all-consuming need to take in as much of his masculine scent as possible.

“Glad to hear it, now sleep.”

That was it?

“Have I screwed things up beyond repair?” she asked, her voice failing her.

He grabbed the remote off his nightstand and flicked off the lights with it.

“Nothing’s ever beyond repair with me. Never think that, little girl, or I may have to punish you more than I did today,” he said, then snuggled into her.

“How’d you punish me?” She wrinkled her brow, and her lips touched each other.

“Ignoring your texts. Ignoring every thought of you. I gave you space like you’ve intimated you needed, but I knew it would be difficult for both of



us.” He sighed and stroked his fingers down her back.

“I think it worked, Sir. I’m practically foaming at the mouth to be with you, and I’ll stay in your home with you for as long as you’ll let me.”

“Tell me that tomorrow after you’ve had a bacon slap or two, and then I’ll believe you.” He burrowed his nose in her hair and kept touching her in innocent, relaxing ways.

It wasn’t enough. She wanted more.

She wanted a hell of a lot more from him.

She wanted it all. How would she make him trust her when she worked up the nerve and shared that revelation with

him later?

\* \* \*

Sweaty clumps of hair clung to the back of Jeanie's neck as she rummaged in the fridge for the last few ingredients she needed. No time to fix her lopsided, drooping ponytail now.

They'd be here in twenty minutes. It was a Saturday night, and his friends were going to spend their night out here, instead of somewhere else like a club or a bar.

She grabbed a bowl, cut the avocados into chunks and whipped up some guacamole.

What if his friends didn't like

Mexican food?

She was second-guessing her choice to make green pork enchiladas and was cursing herself for putting Mark in a position where he no longer trusted her to take his opinion and honor it.

Before she'd freaked out over him telling Pono's family they were together, Mark would've told her what to make without a qualm if they'd agreed she'd be making meals.

She missed that already, and it hadn't really happened yet since he'd been cooking up until now.

Shit, she was going to screw up this dinner for him—embarrass him in front of his friends.

Oh God! She groaned when it hit

her—these were probably his BDSM friends. Other Doms might be showing up with their well-behaved, very trained, very sexy subs.

She had no idea what to wear. Black latex cat-woman suit? She didn't own one of those. All she had that might fit in was her black stilettos. How about she answer the door in nothing but an apron and those heels?

Would that create the right impression?

Her stomach flamed, and hot blood pushed into her cheeks.

No way. She didn't have a toned enough body to pull something off like that. And Mark said he didn't share, so he probably wouldn't want her to bare

that much skin.

She went back to work, getting everything set up.

Once she had all the fixings set out on the counter for the guests so they could top their enchiladas how they liked, she went back into Mark's room. She pulled down one of his white dress shirts and went back to her room.

She changed into some comfortably tight jeans, put on a dark blue tank top, set his shirt on over it, buttoned the middle and tied the bottom tails into a knot.

Then she pulled her hairband out, flipped her head down, tousled her hair and went to her bathroom, spraying it into that fun, sensual look.

She applied some light makeup, unsure of how much was too much. The last thing she wanted was to unknowingly mock their lifestyle by putting on whore red lipstick and too much eye makeup.

She slipped into the heels, and oddly, she was incredibly confident in that moment and happy to be in her own skin.

Everything was in place.

Mark should be arriving a few minutes before the guests.

He said he had to pick up some dessert. That was left up to him—not her.

He definitely didn't trust her any longer.

Her throat bobbed as she swallowed down some air along with her sporadic waves of uncontrollable emotions.

She was all over the place today.

*Chiiiick, chiiiick.*

The front door was being unlocked.

She squared her shoulders, lifted her chin and wandered out to the kitchen, but it wasn't Mark.

"Hey—you look nice," Jay said.

"Uh . . . What're you doing here? We're expecting company," she said, her voice cracking.

Was it okay if she was dressed like this in front of Pono's brother? It wasn't revealing or anything, but it

definitely had a slightly sexy appeal to it.

He smiled. "I'm your dinner guest, silly." He went over to the table and plopped down into a seat. He rubbed his right ear, then sighed. "They'll be in here soon. Marly's pouting about something stupid." He rolled his eyes.

Should she run for it and change real quick?

"No problem." She stared at her daring heels.

Had they even seen her in anything other than bland, conservative clothing and shoes?

"So, Mark didn't tell you he'd invited us?"

She smiled and went mute. "I'll be



right back.”

There was little time, but she could at least take off the shoes. Those seemed like overkill.

She combed her fingers through her hair a few times to tame it down a little.

A disappointed sigh tugged its way out of her chest. Somehow she'd imagined a very different night, and somehow it had excited her to think of being introduced more into his dark world.

When she came back out barefoot, Mark was walking in the door, a grocery bag weighted down in his left hand and his right arm around Toloa's shoulders.

The oddest sensations overwhelmed her. Peace. Elation.

Belonging. Family.

With him in the equation, the numbers added up.

Pono wasn't here as a buffer with his family to make sure she was included at some point, but Mark was.

He looked up at Jeanie and smiled so brightly it took her breath away.

She set a hand on the waistband of her jeans and slowed her breathing.

"Shoot. I made enchiladas," she said under her breath. They weren't overly fond of Mexican cuisine. Or at least she didn't think they were.

"Enchiladas? Love those!" Jay said, slapping the table with his hand.

"Oh, good . . ." Jeanie went and got the plates out, set the table as Mark

helped seat everyone.

He put away the ice cream he'd bought, then got them all something to drink.

He pulled out a Gatorade from the grocery bag and handed it to Jay.

Mark took a seat next to him.

“Howzit?”

“Good. Good.”

In a blinding flash, they both slipped into pidgin talk. Pono would do that when there was a lot of family around, and half the time she could understand them, but the other half, she was confused.

“Girls been good to ya?” Mark shoved Jay in the shoulder.

“Yeah—got da kine wit da cho cho

lips, and she fine.” Jay bounced his eyebrows. “She give me plenty of good time.”

“Jay!” his mother scolded, her eyebrows uniting and making a front against where this was going.

“She got a grip on da—” Jay tried to keep going, but Toloa hissed so loud it sounded like wind had broken in through the cracks in the doors and windows.

“Hshhhht! You stop it!” Toloa barked another word in pidgin, Jeanie didn’t understand.

“I was talkin’ ‘bout her bike,” he said to his mom, smirking. He turned back to Mark. “Cool bike. Her bambucha okole fits real good up against

my—”

“Shhhhhhtk,” his mother cut him off again, then smacked him upside the head.

“Only teasin’. I don’t haf da girls—you know dat,” Jay said, chuckling.

He shoved Mark.

They bantered back and forth in broken English, and then Jay was back at it again.

“Yup! She always had doze tasty cho cho lips! Nevah grow tired of ‘um.” Jay snickered.

Oh my God in Heaven. Was Jay insinuating in front of his parents this girl had given him head more than once?

Mark shoved him harder this time. “Nah, braddah. Talk ‘bout dat later.” He grinned. “You wanna shoot hoops dis

week?”

Jeanie almost dropped the casserole dish as she pulled the enchiladas out of the oven.

When did Mark become so fluent in Hawaiian slang?

Mark glanced at her, wearing a smug expression.

“Can’t. Fixin’ da car, brah,” Jay replied, shrugging.

Jeanie giggled to herself now that she knew that was Jay’s code way of saying he didn’t want to do it and he was trying to get out of it.

“How ‘bout catchin’ da waves?” Mark pointed at him. “You too busy for dat?”

“Nah. No wheels though. How’m I

s'posed to get there?"

"I'll pick ya up." Mark got up and helped her start plating up the enchiladas. "Jeanie'll go with us. She's good."

"Yeah—I 'member," Jay said, giving her the chin tilt and slight eyebrow raise of approval.

She beamed at him—at both of them.

It was a slice of heaven to hear them talking this way like buddies.

Mark set a plate before Kueili first.

Jay was chattering away with Marly, and their rapid fire way of speaking pidgin had Jeanie lost almost immediately. They spoke at supersonic

speed until their mom said it was rude to speak in slang at the dinner table and to knock it off.

Jeanie was sad it had ended, but glad she could understand everything being said once again. It was nice to listen to it while she served food.

Once they all had their enchiladas, they went after refried beans, Spanish rice, guacamole, salsa, chips and sour cream, only taking what they wanted.

Her heart floated as she watched them fill their plates. No one seemed disgruntled over the meal she'd prepared.

Before Jeanie sat down last with her plate, she gave Mark a one-armed hug from behind.



He turned his face to her with a shocked but pleased expression. Without thinking about it, she kissed his cheek.

His lips spread into the most delicious smile.

She grinned back and took a seat next to him. He was sandwiched between her and Jay.

Marly was between her parents.

Seemed like a cozy, smart setup.

Mark talked to each person at the table, and made them all laugh, repeating jokes or funny stories Pono had shared with him over the years.

He was hilarious, and she was at ease.

“So, you’re staying in California, right?” Marly asked Jeanie.

“Yeah, I am.” Jeanie nodded and gulped.

Mark’s hand gripped her thigh under the table and squeezed.

Tingles flooded her legs.

“Where’ll you stay?” Jay asked.

“Here with Mark, if it’s not too much of an imposition?” Jeanie wanted to duck her head and hide it in shame for putting him on the spot, but she was unsure of how else to handle this since he was so closed off lately.

“Not at all. In fact, I thought we’d go back to Phoenix in a few days, box up her belongings, rent a U-Haul and bring it all here. She’ll be moving in permanently.” Mark gave her a look that was a cross between pleading and

questioning.

“I need to set some things up with work, but I think that’ll be great.” Jeanie shot him a vibrant, reassuring smile.

He expelled a breath like he’d been holding it for ages.

His hand squeezed her under the table once more.

“Then we can see you more often?” Marly sat straighter in her chair and searched Jeanie’s face.

“Absolutely. I think we can go dancing at least once a month,” Jeanie offered.

“Or maybe every weekend,” Marly shot back, her eyes hopeful.

“We’ll see . . .” Jeanie forked some rice and popped it into her mouth.

“This is delicious,” Toloa said.

Out of nowhere, Toloa’s husband clapped. “Good food. Good people and happy choices. Good for you.” He bowed his head a little, then radiated nothing but acceptance at Jeanie.

“She’s a smart woman. Always admired how when she made a decision, she followed it through,” Mark said, his tone gushing and oozing with pride.

She could’ve levitated out of the chair, until Jay reached over the table and flicked her shoulder. “Well, now that you’re rich, with nothing to do with that money, why don’t you buy me a new car, sis?”

Her face went cold and so did her blood.

“Rich? She’s not rich. What’re you talkin’ ‘bout?” Marly gave him the “You’re stupid!” eyes.

“You know—she and Pono were saving every penny to get fertility treatment, for her problems.” Jay went back to eating.

“Shhhhh!” Toloa shot him a look of death and mortification.

“No, it’s fine,” Jeanie said, setting her fork down. “We saved around nine thousand. After we sold our other car, it made a big difference. We were going to try to have IVF soon.”

“What was your problem called again? Poly popping ovules or something?” Jay chugged his Gatorade down.

She watched him go. How like his brother he was. Pono loved sports drinks. She hated them—only bought them for him and never drank them. They had awful aftertastes.

“It’s polycystic ovary syndrome,” Jeanie told him, her voice firm but kind and patient.

“I thought that only happened to fat ladies.” Jay was demolishing his enchilada.

“Not always, but sometimes it’s a problem for heavier set ladies,” Jeanie said.

“You should eat more, definitely then, since it’s not a problem. Skinny’s ugly.” Marly stared at her with a bitter look in her eyes.

“Marly!” her dad barked.

“Enough!”

“What? That’s what everyone in the family tells me—too skinny—eat more so I won’t be ugly—when all I want to do is lose weight.” Marly picked at her food, her expression one of being ganged up on.

“It’s our way,” Toloa tried to explain.

“I know. I remember. It’s not a bad thing—I get it.” Jeanie remembered Pono had told her that skinny girls were looked down upon. It was a sign of being well-off and taking care of themselves to have some decent meat on their bones. It meant good childbearing. But Jeanie was slightly paranoid about

gaining weight since she already had PCOS. She didn't want to make it worse. Not that it really could be any worse since as far as she knew, she hadn't ovulated in months.

“You're beautiful,” Mark told her.

“Thanks.” She reached under the table with her right hand and squeezed his left. “I was going to be put on Clomiphene next month, actually. I was kind of worried about having a pregnancy with multiples, but Pono liked that idea.” She tried to shrug, but only one shoulder raised and it looked like more of an odd twitch than anything. Her nerves were jumping like crazy as her stomach curled into several knots.

Mark shifted in his seat.



Was he unaware of this issue with her? Would he be relieved she might not ever conceive, or would this make him turn against her? They hadn't even discussed birth control because he wore a condom the times he came inside her, otherwise he was either being sucked off, or ejaculating all over her body. She figured that meant he was ignorant of her situation.

"I thought you were going to have surgery?" Jay was up, grabbing more food as he waited for her response.

"Yeah, we considered getting my ovaries drilled, but it was going to mean I'd have to take more time off work, and since we'd be using some of our savings for these treatments, it was going to have

to wait. We figured we'd try the shots first." She played with a tortilla chip on her plate, swirling it in the refried beans but failing to actually bring it to her lips.

"Eat. I'll handle this," Mark whispered in her ear.

She dropped the chip, picked up her fork and somehow obeying him lit something up inside her.

Her back relaxed into the chair and her mind quit racing.

"I'll help you fix your car," Mark told Jay. "Just like last time. What's going on with it now?"

He turned to face Jay, though he kept his hand on Jeanie's leg.

"Oh, a ton of stuff. Need to replace the motor mounts and replace the timing

belt. Those are expensive parts. And I'm not sure I have the right tools to do the motor mounts," Jay answered then returned to the table with a hefty serving of seconds.

Jeanie smiled inwardly. Even though her secrets were spread out like the buffet of food, at least everyone knew what was going on. No more hiding.

No more shame.

She was infertile, and she wasn't sure she cared anymore.

## Chapter 15

After the Finaus left, Jeanie moved to the kitchen and began cleaning.

Mark moved past her and filled them both a glass of wine.

“You were marvelous,” he whispered in her ear.

She jumped. “Jesus—you scared me.”

“I’ve been right here watching you and helping some. You didn’t see me?”

“No—I guess I was caught up in my thoughts and cleaning.”

“Well, you’re sexy as hell when you’re that focused. I may need to watch you scrub out the shower sometime.”

She smirked. “What on earth about

that is sexy?”

“Clearly, you need to be around me more to understand why that turns me on—why you turn me on, wearing my shirt without my permission.”

He took the dishrag out of her hand, passed her the glass of wine and went about undressing her by starting with his shirt.

“Tell me to stop now if you don’t want this, because you’re moving in here—at your own declaration, not mine—which means I have full access to you once again.” His brow was up, testing her. Would she contradict her earlier statement?

It felt like forever since he’d been inside her, telling her how insatiable she

made him.

“Green, Sir. I want it. All of it.”

She gulped down her drink, set it aside and her eyes were transfixed on his hands, undressing her.

“Dinner was delicious. Thank you for that. And you were perfect.”

“Except for when I lost track of what to say and do when my goddamn fertility issues came up.”

He stood up straight and set his hands on her shoulders. “If you have something to say about it, say it now, but don’t you dare put yourself down for something you can’t control.”

“How is this going to work, Mark? I mean, does it even matter if I can’t have kids? I doubt you even want them

anyway.”

His brow furrowed and his eyes narrowed. “What does that mean?”

“How am I supposed to be a submissive and do kinky things with you if we’ve got a baby around, and that’s even assuming I could ever manage to conceive?”

He smiled. “Babies aren’t a problem for me. I enjoy them. Besides, submissives get pregnant all the time. I’d love to have that with you.”

She pushed his hands off her. “That’s just it. I’m not even sure I want kids. I kind of gave up hope a long time ago. I was saving all that money because Pono wanted it so badly.”

He hummed for a second, took in a

scraping breath. “I want kids, too, but if you don’t, that’s fine. Maybe someday you will. Maybe it would be good for you to take a break from worrying about it. It sounded at dinner like you were exhausted by even thinking about it. Do what feels right to *you*—what works for us. Don’t go off your past, Jeanie. That stuff has no bearing on us since it’s up to you now. Your choice.”

“That’s it?”

“Yeah.” He nodded and went back to undressing her. The sleeves were falling off her shoulders, so he yanked them off.

“You say it’s fine, but I can see in your eyes it’s really not.”

“What do you want me to say?”



That I adore kids? Yeah—okay, I fucking do. I love ‘em, and you’d be an amazing mom, but I can’t stand hearing you beat yourself up and making yourself crazy over it. I already knew of your fertility issues before, so this wasn’t news to me tonight. I love you no matter what, and this doesn’t change anything for me. You realize even if you had those shots, you might not’ve gotten pregnant? Pono did anabolic steroids in college. I told him not to do it, but I couldn’t stop him. So odds are his sperm count was low or maybe non-existent.”

Her lashes shook as her eyes actually squinted and trembled. “What?”

“Yeah—steroids, and lots of them.”

“But then . . .” She gripped his wrists for support, and her head fell. “Could that be why he had that heart attack? It wasn’t completely my fault for overfeeding him and enabling him? He had a heart condition he didn’t know about, and he was taking steroids possibly for a few years?”

“Two years I know about,” he answered.

“Not my fault,” she said, sounding stunned—her voice far off and distant.

He grabbed her hips, then pushed his own hips into her. “No. Not your fault. None of it was. That’s what I’ve been telling you.”

Her head lifted. She gaped, and her eyes glazed when she looked at him. “I

don't know what to say.”

“Let's go lie down. The kitchen can wait 'til morning. You've cleaned most of it anyhow.” He pulled her into the bedroom, undressed her the rest of the way and set her on the bed, naked.

“Why don't you tell me what you liked and didn't like about dinner tonight?” If he distracted her for a moment, then he could get in bed with her and they could hash out her feelings for as long as it took, but first he wanted to be in bed with her, naked, too, so she could have skin-to-skin contact.

He undressed as fast as he could, then joined her.

She collapsed into his side with an exhausted sigh.

“Did Pono’s family know? Can you answer me that first? Did they know about the steroids?” she asked, stroking his chest with slow passes.

“Yeah. They knew.” He grimaced for a second. “I’m not sure if it’s what caused the heart condition or if it already existed. I’m not sure if they know either.”

“So, they covered stuff up, too. They lied to me, and I should’ve known he’d been doing that shit when he met me. But no one told me.”

He sighed and tipped her chin up with his index finger knuckle. “They probably should’ve, yes, but I knew it as well, and I didn’t tell you. Pono was ashamed of it, and honestly, I thought

he'd told you before he ever married you. He stopped using them not too long after he met you."

"Well, they probably were aware I didn't know. They should've told me." She exhaled with a shaky sob.

"Sorry, sweetheart. I know how hard this is to find out this way." He kissed the top of her head and pulled her in for a tight hug.

"Thank you for telling me," she said, muffled by his chest.

"Anything for you, my sweet little thing."

He felt her lips curl into a smile against his chest. "I missed hearing you call me that."

"It hasn't been long, but I missed

saying it, too,” he agreed, planting a few more kisses on her forehead. He made a humming, grunting sound and then relaxed his hold on her.

“Okay, so what I liked least about dinner tonight?” She was looking up into his eyes, and her eyes glazed a little. “I think you know—being outed about my fertility issues. I wish I would’ve talked to you about it sooner. That seems to be a repeating theme with me—waiting too long to speak to the people I love about sensitive topics and then having someone else tell them for me in a way that’s less than flattering.”

“You think I made you look bad by telling his family we were together?” He rubbed his stomach—it was bunching up

on him. Was she going to flip out again and want to leave?

His instincts were to literally chain her to the bed, but he waited and listened, hoping he was maybe misunderstanding.

“No, not really. I did feel that way tonight with Jay, but he’s so young, he doesn’t get that tact can go a long way.” She blinked, and her chest rose as she sighed with a heavy, burdened sound. “I guess I wish I could stop being a coward.”

“You know what I’m going to say about that as well, don’t you?”

“Yeah, I suppose I do. You’ll say I’m brave.” She slapped her palm softly on his chest. He grabbed it and then

settled his palm over the back of her hand.

“Because you are.”

“Compared to what? You always speak your mind, and I couldn’t even ask Toloa what she wanted me to do in her freaking garden when I was there most of the day. Why? Why does my mouth close when my mind’s in overdrive? No one else seems to struggle with that but me.”

He chuckled. “That’s not true. There are some submissives who feel like that from time to time. So when they don’t ask for sex or much of anything else, it’s not necessarily because it’s being imposed on them, but more so because it feels wrong to do it. They get



their needs met by their Dom because he finds out what she's thinking and decides if what she wants is good for her or not."

She smiled softly with a small sigh emanating out of her and her shoulders sagging.

"What *did* you like about tonight?"

He waited, holding his breath so he could gauge her body language and sounds.

"It's going to sound stupid," she started.

"Try me. Nothing you say is ever stupid." He caressed the back of her hand she'd set on him. He loved the feel of this kind of intimacy with her—the softness of her skin, that sweet breath of hers washing over his chest.

“Well, this one is.” She exhaled with a frustrated sigh. Her fingers twitched under his hand. “I used to hate it when Pono would grope me in public, and especially at his parents’ house. He’d do it when no one was looking, of course.”

His stomach dropped. Shit. “Why didn’t you tell me that? I grope you all the time in public.”

She chuckled. “No, no . . .” She lifted her head and stared him in the eye. “It’s not the same at all when you do it.” Her tongue poked out and moistened the crease at the left corner. “When he did it, he was messing around, being a dork. I never liked how it felt like I was the butt of his joke.”

“How did you respond when he did that?” He stroked up her hand to her wrist, drawing lazy circles and zigzags.

“I usually laughed and shoved him off me while I was scowling.”

“You didn’t think that was sending mixed signals?”

“I didn’t know what else to do.” She lifted her left shoulder. “I didn’t want to be mean and hurt his feelings, but I never enjoyed it when he did that. It was degrading somehow, like he didn’t respect me. When you grab me”—her eyes went heavy—“I know it’s because you can’t keep your hands off me. Because you want me more than anything, not because you’re acting like a pre-pubescent boy who laughs when he

hears the words wiener or boobies.”

Mark smiled. “I really like your boobies. Tell me you like my wiener, or I might need to show you mine without you ever showing me yours.”

She giggled. “Uh . . . You’re already naked, Sir.” She paused and gave him a sobering look. “Honestly, though . . . does any of this even make sense? He didn’t mean to bother me. He was having some fun.”

“Potty humor and adolescent groping is anything but sexy, especially when it’s done at your expense. I can understand completely why you hated that.”

She sighed and then collapsed back into his chest. “Thank you. I was

always swamped with guilt for feeling that way afterward.”

“There’s nothing to feel guilty about. He was always playing jokes and teasing, but that’s something he should’ve checked on with you before doing. Women can be sensitive about those types of things. They don’t want to feel like they’re a piece of meat to be exploited and flung around, then made fun of.”

“I only like being your piece of meat you bite and growl at. That’s always fun.”

He gripped her wrist and held it tight. “Good to know. And I like my meat to be bound to something while I lick, taste and eat it.”

“God, Maaark,” she groaned.

“How do you make everything sound so sinful and exactly what I want?”

“It’s a gift.” He smirked. “But I’ll tell you . . . I wasn’t into potty humor even as a twelve-year-old, hon. I was too busy pulling pigtails and tying those girls to a tree.”

“But only if they wanted it, right?” She was smiling. He could feel her cheek rounding on his chest.

“Of course. I wasn’t that bratty.” He laughed. “Nah, you know I wasn’t that way. I had friends that were girls. I enjoyed talking to them and finding out what they were interested in. I figured if I could get in their head a little bit, it would be less work down the line if I

could get them to be interested in me. It's the mental game that's harder to master, and that's always been a challenge to me, but I loved it."

"I do, too," she murmured and kissed his chest. "The best part tonight for me was kissing your cheek and just having you at my side—it all felt so comfortable, and I felt at home. At peace."

"Thank you for telling me all this." He went back to caressing her wrist, her arm and then her neck. "In your head—that's where I always want to be. And not in the way that pisses you off because I'm treating you like you're a joke. You're never a joke to me. You're my life's breath, the reason I want to be

the best man and Dom possible. It's all because of you."

She went silent.

"Love you," she said a few minutes later.

"I love you, too, and I'll always take care of you." He closed his eyes, and a blanket of peacefulness settled in the air, making him breathe so easy, he fell asleep in no time.

Yes, finding peace with her was easy.

\* \* \*

Something had shifted between them. After the dinner with the Finaus, she was settling in.



Her things from her room were all located in his, she said she'd only shower in his bathroom from now on and she seemed comfortable all the time.

“Today’s the day for Jeanie J,” he teased.

“J?”

“Yeah—it rhymes. I heard that once somewhere,” he said, pulling his tie around his upturned collar.

“Oh my God!” She covered her mouth and giggled. “You heard that on the *Simpsons*. Jay used to watch that show all the time, and I remember Homer saying once—‘Today’s the day for Homer J.’ It was the space launch one.” Her eyes were still laughing hysterically at him.

“Okay, so maybe I used to watch the *Simpsons*, too.” He smirked at her. “Get over here and show me how well you can manage my tie.”

She smirked right back, and within moments, she’d tied a perfect Half Windsor knot.

He tugged at it a little while staring in the mirror. “Fucking perfect, like everything you do.” He turned to her with a lopsided grin. “My perfectly sweet little thing.”

His eyes roamed over her.

She wore her pretty, casual white summer dress with a small navy flower pattern across the skirt she’d worn to lunch at the Finau home the day after the funeral. The one that made his erection

about a mile long—she was so innocent and sexy as hell in this dress. It was nice enough and entirely appropriate for Sunday worship, too, and it was the only dress she had with her other than her black funeral mourning dress. She looked sweet and completely fucking tempting.

Should be an interesting day of worship all around . . .

“Remind me again why your mom wants to meet me?”

“Because . . .” he fixed her hair once more since he’d gotten carried away a few moments ago with kissing her until she was breathless “. . . she loves me, she loves church, and she wants to imagine me being married. So

my telling her about a woman I'm seeing is huge, and she naturally thinks of watching you walk down the aisle toward me."

She rolled her eyes. "That's a tad presumptuous, isn't it?" She set her right hand on her hip, jutting out. "For all she knows, I could be a hideous person with the worst manners ever. How does she know I'm not some gold-digging whore?"

He laughed and walked over to her, bending over and helping her put her heels on. "For one—she already asked me that exact question, and I told her how you barely let me pay for groceries without having a conniption, and two—she knew Kaponu. She'd met him before

you guys married. And she figures any woman that was with him can't be completely evil."

"Only a little evil." Jeanie smiled at him when he looked up at her.

"You're on your knees. I think I kind of like that."

"Little one, I'm on my knees constantly, eating you out. So you see me down here all the time."

"Yeah, but this time you're dressing me, rather than undressing." She wobbled for a second when he gripped her behind the knees.

"I dress you every now and then, but it's just so damn depressing, I can't stand the thought of covering up all this gorgeousness." He kissed her lower

belly through her dress and ran his hands up her thighs, under her skirt, heading toward her panties.

“Are you going to stay down there all day, standing up your mother? She’d really love me at that point when you have to explain you were late because you were eating me out for the second time today.”

He sucked in his lower lip. “Good point. Okay, fine. I’ll save that for after services. I’ll need to do something bad so I don’t feel too clean. Can’t take too much purity. It sickens me.”

She laughed, stroked his jaw and avoided touching his hair. “I know the feeling.”

“Do you?” He stood up, looming

over her and gave her a tiny peck on her forehead. “Stop being so damn delicious, and then we can be out in public more often. As it is, you give me little reason to want to leave the house for anything other than work.”

She rubbed her lips together like she was coating them more thoroughly with her lipstick. “You rarely talk about work, but when you do, you get this look about you like you can’t wait to go back. Tell me about it.”

He took her hand. “Later—  
temptress. We have somewhere to be.”

The next moment, he was taking her out to the car and helping her in.

She fidgeted some in the car, her nervousness apparent. So, he talked a

little bit about work to get her mind off things, but failed to talk about the children. He mostly mentioned dealing with surly camera crew and backstage assistants with attitudes the size of the Rocky Mountains.

When they arrived at the church building, she was more at ease.

“Anything I need to know so I don’t offend her?” she asked before they escaped the confines of the car.

“Don’t mention whips and chains?”

“Yeah, thanks, Sir. That’s very helpful.” She stared out the front window and ducked down so she could look up at the massive, peaked roof. “I think I’ve already figured that part out



for myself.”

“I’m sure you did.” He got out of the car, went to her side and helped her out, then locked up. Once the door was closed, he had her hand in his and he smiled. “Nothing to worry about. She’s like any other mother. Likes to guilt her son into doing what she thinks is right. Most of the time it works.”

“Mama’s boy, huh?”

“I think the proof is in my being here at church.”

She laughed and moved alongside without too much hesitation.

They stepped inside the bright building. There were massive windows that let in a lot of natural light.

She caught her breath a few times.

Clearly, Jeanie loved big open spaces with natural, light-colored wooden floors and soft palettes.

He'd have to remember that for the future when they were making a house together.

Her heels clipped along as they entered the chapel.

The pews were half-full, and as usual, his mother sat in the second row, center.

Jesus, couldn't she break tradition for this one occasion?

Jeanie would most likely be more comfortable if they weren't being showered by the pastor's spittle. It was probably why his mother wore a hat—protection from free-flying spit.

He pointed, leaned into Jeanie and said, “That’s my mom right there.”

“The one with the dark hair and the fancy hat?”

“Yeah.” He smiled. Oh, she was already wondering why his mother was so proper, wearing a hat. Should he share his theory?

Well, she’d find out soon enough.

They shuffled into the aisle for her pew, and once they were at her side, Mark introduced Jeanie, “Mother, this is Jeanie Finau. Jeanie, this is my mother.”

“Call me Mrs. Pierce.” She wore a tight grin that resembled a constipated, uncomfortable, snappish woman.

Her eyes hardened as she inspected his girl.

“Thank you for inviting me to come here,” Jeanie said, her voice filled with hope.

“I invited you because Mark needs to remember that God comes first, not women. He has so many different women in and out of his life, they never stick around long enough for me to meet or approve of any of them,” his mom said, jerking her head away from Jeanie as she continued to study her.

“God always comes first, and your son is an excellent example of that. He’s shared some of his spiritual joys with me. It’s been a pleasure to discuss his ideals.” Jeanie went a little rigid, and her speech was morphing from casual into formal.

Yep, his mother did that to everyone. She cut her eyes back to him. “And what could those spiritual joys possibly be?”

“Oh, there are too many to name.” Jeanie moved past Mark and sat next to his bristling mother. She leaned toward her, holding onto the edge of the padded bench and looking her in the eye. “I’ve always wanted to be a more devoted Christian woman, but until now, I didn’t really have anyone else interested to join me. And knowing and caring about God is always more enjoyable when you can share it with a friend or someone you love. Don’t you agree?”

His mother patted Jeanie’s hand on the bench next to him. “It’s not the end of

the world if you attend church alone.”

“You’re right, it’s not, but it’s always good to have someone keeping tabs on you, helping you to stay motivated. I think it’s wonderful you do that for your son. It shows how much you care.” Jeanie swallowed and her eyes glistened. “My parents never cared about anything but themselves, so it wasn’t until I found Pono’s family that I understood families didn’t have to be that way. It’s obvious you love your son very much, and he loves you. I think it’s one of the most touching things I’ve ever seen or heard about, and I only just met you.” Jeanie nodded. “By the way, I always wished I could pull off a hat as well. You do it with style, Mrs. Pierce.”

His mother gaped, plucked her hat off her head and put it on Jeanie's.

Mark's legs about gave out on him. He had to sit his ass down so he could take this all in. His mother—the one that disapproved of pretty much everything—was smiling and sharing something of hers with Jeanie.

“You have plenty of style, and with fabulous cheekbones like yours—you make this hat look much better than I ever could. I insist you wear it throughout the service. It'll help you get used to the feel of it and gain confidence as a hat-wearing woman.” His mother nodded in approval, her smile still affixed in place.

“Are you sure? I wouldn't want to

deny you the privilege of—”

“The service is about to start,” his mother cut her off. “Mark”—she leaned forward so she could see him, and he did the same—“hold this little girl’s hand to keep her in place, and to keep her from turning coward. She won’t be removing this stunning hat off her beautiful head.” His mother gripped Jeanie’s other hand.

Jeanie beamed at his mom and squeezed her hand, then Mark’s in turn.

There his girl sat—tucked between them, bound by the hand, hat on head and in the second row for all to see.

“My girl,” he whispered in her ear.

Jeanie simply hummed and wore a content smile as she sighed into her seat.



Family.

She was already a part of his, just like his mother.

He'd do anything for both of these women to keep them happy.

Anything at all, as long as it meant he could keep being himself.

And right now, they both seemed happy with who he was.

This. Was. Heaven.

\* \* \*

Mark woke up sweating. Jeanie was on top of him, and somehow he knew—she'd been that way all night long while they slept.

His mother wore her out.

Jeanie did get an expensive, dark blue suede fedora out of it. Odd how the navy applique flowers around the base of the hat matched the flowers on Jeanie's dress. It was like it was meant to be.

But that wasn't enough to keep her from almost tanking on him once they were home.

He knew the feeling. Being on his best behavior around his mother for hours was exhausting.

So, Jeanie was a little clingy after. No complaint here, other than he was thirsty as hell because of it.

He rolled her off him very gently, and as he exited the room to go get a drink, he decided to move her heels out

of his way. They had been dropped off her feet in the doorway when he crushed her to the door and fucked her before she could remove the hat.

He picked up the shoes, smiling at the memory and set them next to her jeans in the closet on the floor. For some reason, she hadn't thrown those pants in the laundry. He picked up the pants to hang them up and a note fell out of her pocket.

He picked it up, unfolded it and read all sorts of demeaning words she'd written about herself. It made his heart clench, and pangs of sadness ripped through him.

He read it twice and growled. Why had she written this?

He crumpled up the note and leaned against the door frame, running one hand over his face.

Shit. She beat herself up so much, it was heartbreaking.

Surely, she didn't feel this way anymore after her triumphant slaying of his dragon-mom?

When had she gone off like this, and why?

Yesterday?

After he'd told Pono's parents they were a couple a few days ago?

He approached her, sleeping on the bed and took a seat at the bottom right edge of the mattress.

She was so peaceful and beautiful, lying there in his bed naked.

He took his hand that now was misted with the sweat of his brow and ran it down her leg closest to him.

She stirred.

In the next moment, an idea hit him.

“Up, up, up,” he said, jostling her leg.

“Whaaaa . . . ?” She rolled over and looked at him through a half-lidded eye.

“We’re going to the beach for breakfast,” he said.

“Why?” Her eyes squinted into suspicious slits before she rubbed them.

“Why not? I like the idea of watching the sun rise behind my girl while we eat.”

“Are you trying to say the sun rises

and sets with my naked ass?” She coughed out a laugh.

“No, it’s my ass.”

“You know, when we were at church yesterday, I was thinking about how a Dom/sub relationship isn’t too different from what God asks of us in his commandments. He tells us to worship him and no one else. And he says repeatedly in the Bible he’s a jealous God.” She paused and then her face lit up. “In return, he keeps protecting us, guiding us and giving us all that we need to survive. A Dom asks and does the same. All I have to do is worship you.”

“You’re very insightful at the ass-crack of dawn.”

She covered her head. “And not all

of God's children play by his rules." She groaned. "I'm sleeping in." She pulled the blankets up over her face.

"No, you're not. You're coming with me, my little worshiper." He yanked the covers off her head.

She glared but chuckled when he tickled the bottom of her right foot and did as he said.

Her feet went to the floor and she stood. He followed, then jammed the note into his fist and said, "You have fifteen minutes. I'm gonna get our breakfast ready to go, and then we're leaving."

He went back into the closet and got dressed, then shoved the note in his pocket.

When he came back out, she stretched and was going about getting ready.

Within no time at all, he'd secured their breakfast for the trip.

When he went to get her, she was already standing by the front door, ready to go.

"Breathtaking," he said.

"I know you're not talking about me." She chuckled like he was out of his mind.

"Absolutely, it's you." He opened the door and guided her out.

He took care of everything and allowed her to get her bearings.

He was already aware she didn't normally keep these kinds of early



morning hours until she started staying with him, but he did. This was his regular time to be up, getting things done, and he wanted her to see what she was missing—along with the sunshine she enjoyed streaming in through the church windows yesterday.

Once they got to the beach, he helped her out, had her pick a spot for their meal and before he let her sit down on the blanket he brought along, he pulled the note out.

“I found this,” he said.

She frowned. “Oh no . . .”

He gave her a penetrating gaze.

“You wanna talk about it?”

“No, not really, Sir.”

“Most women find talking about

these kind of self-deprecating feelings helps them.”

“And most women are not dealing with grief over a spouse passing away when they are only twenty-seven,” she threw right back.

“You realize I’ll have to punish you for talking back like that, and for hiding these feelings from me? I’m not bothered you’re struggling with them. I’m *bothered* you didn’t tell me and seek me out for my help. Now . . . Tell me why you’re being punished.” He waited, staring into her gorgeous, luminous eyes.

“If you want to punish me, okay, I’ll take it, but you’re not spanking me on the beach,” she said, sucking in a tight, guarded breath.

“No. You’ve already had one of those, and I don’t wanna share your sweet ass with anyone else’s eyes.”

She glanced at the paper. “Right —’cause the sun rises on your ass, not mine.”

“Is there a reason you’re upset about this?”

“I didn’t mean for you to see that. Sometimes when I feel lost, like I did the other day, it helps to get all that shit out of my head. It helps me stop fixating on all the things I do wrong. At least for a little while. So, I wrote that before I met your mother at church the other day. I wanted it to stop circulating in my head so I could concentrate better.”

“I understand it’s helpful to write

it down, but these kinds of emotions I need to know about. I expect you to share them. So, I repeat—why are you being punished?”

She groaned. “I kept it to myself and didn’t ask for help when I was feeling depressed.” She stared down the beach, past him.

“I’ll give you to the count of ten, and then your eyes better be on me, or I’ll show you how creative I can be with punishments,” he said.

She paled a little, crossing her arms over her chest. “I uh . . . God, Mark.” She bit her lip and dropped her head. “I didn’t want to share all that garbage with you I had in my head. No one wants to hear sad sack shit like

that.” She ground out a sigh, her shoulders rolled forward and she bent her head to the left.

“*I* do. I want to know everything. From now on, you share this ‘sad sack shit’ as you’ve put it, because I’m looking out for you.”

“Okay.”

“Okay, you remember that when you’re dealing with the discomfort, which is nothing compared to how I felt when I read this horrendous note.” He crumpled the paper back up like he’d done after originally reading the damned thing. He pulled her toward him by her jean’s belt loop and then spoke softly. “You’re gonna wear this shame since you seem to enjoy letting it scrape up

your insides, rather than give it to me to deal with. You talked about the parallel between a Dom and God's requirement for worship? Well, Christ asks us to give him his burdens. Matthew 11:28 says 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He expects us to give our cares and burdens over to him. I want the same from you, Jeanie, otherwise I don't know what you need help with, and this"—he put the note right in her face, then dropped his hand—"is a big deal. Let's match how you feel on the inside with the outside and see if it frees you, shall we?"

In the next instant, he had the paper shoved down her jeans, nestled between

her pussy and her underwear. “Ahhh!” she squealed at the sensation of it once his hand was out of the way.

“Let’s take a walk.” He took her hand.

“But what about breakfast?” she squeaked.

“It’ll be here when we get back. You need to talk about this, and I’m ready to listen.” He wrapped an arm around her waist and propelled her forward with a slight push.

“Why did you think I wouldn’t want to know this?” he began, his steps slow to give her time to adjust to the feel of the scratchy paper on her most delicate tissues.

“Why would you? Like I said, it’s

a bunch of depressing feminine crap.” She squinted in the sunlight for a moment.

He smacked her pubis with his free hand, the paper making a fantastic rippling sound. “I *think* you’re forgetting who’s in charge here.” He walked with a quicker pace so she could really feel the movement of it. “There’s such a thing as sub drop. Ever heard of it?”

“No.”

“It’s not fun. It’s where after intense play sessions, a sub later experiences out of control emotions, varying from depression, a feeling of loneliness, or unworthiness. Some of them cry a lot at the slightest provocation, and others become



lethargic and have a hard time focusing or functioning even. The only way I can help you avoid going through that is for you to be open and honest with me. It's not a sign of weakness—before you start going down *that* path—it's a sign of trust and understanding for you to share these things with me.” He tugged on her arm to get her to move a little faster. The paper rustled in her panties with each step. “So, tell me—why am I punishing you like this right now? I wanna hear it again.”

“Because you care, Sir. And because you want me to realize I was pissing all over what you care about most—*me*.”

“Exactly. For the rest of the day,

you are to refer to yourself in third person. You may use, ‘this girl,’ or ‘your girl,’ but I don’t want you to use ‘me’ or ‘I.’ It’ll help reinforce you are my responsibility—*my girl*. You’re under my charge and authority, and I don’t take that lightly.” He stopped walking, turned to her and smiled, then kissed her with a soft, open mouth so she would know he loved her no matter what, and that he thought her note was completely wrong in regard to her.

“You are everything I want, and you do belong with me. There’s nothing stupid about you,” he said, referring to her message. He pulled the note out of her pants, flattened it out, licked it and stuck it to his forehead so the words

were facing out. “Read it to me, and I want you to listen to how ridiculous these lies are you told yourself.”

Her voice shook, but she read it aloud—“You are stupid, Jeanie.” She sighed. “So fucking thick. No matter how many times your friends and Mark—people that clearly care about *you*!—tell you you’re holding yourself back to your own detriment, you don’t listen.” She inched closer to him, her voice softening and filling with emotions. “Why? What the hell is your problem? His mother isn’t going to like you. You don’t belong. You’re not good enough. Are you afraid you might be so damn happy, you’ll die from it? And so what if you did? Maybe you deserve it after what you did to

Kapono. Mark deserves a real submissive woman, not someone pretending. Mark deserves a real woman. Period.” She said the last few lines in a rush.

He nodded. “There are two more lines, aren’t there?”

She closed her eyes and said it without looking, “Tell him this. Stop pretending to be a good person, and tell him!”

“Now you know. You told yourself I needed to know. That was the only part of that note that was right.”

When she opened her eyes, they sparkled with life. “This girl’s sorry, Sir. What can she do to make it up to you?”

He pulled the note off his forehead.

“Where do you think this note belongs?”

“In the ocean?” She pleaded with him in her eyes like she was hopeful she got this part correct.

“I think that’s a good idea. Let it wash away from you. Think of it as a type of baptism—a renewal of sorts, because now you’re a different girl, aren’t you?”

“Yes, Sir. Th-this girl . . .” she swallowed “. . . knows she’s yours. She won’t mess up like this again.” She fumbled with her words a little, but her voice was growing in confidence.

“That’s right. Good girl.” He nodded. “You’ll write something else so this doesn’t happen again—a journal.

Daily, you'll write in it. I don't care how much you write, but you will tell me exactly how you feel. We'll read it every Sunday before we attend church with my mother." He pointed at the ocean. "Now . . . I'll let you do it." He handed her the note, and then he went with her down to the shoreline.

She rolled up her pant legs, then stepped out into the waves, and instead of just dropping it in like he'd expected, she dunked it in the water, then wrung it out, turned it into a tight ball, and then flung it out as far as she could get it.

Admittedly, it wasn't very far, but his heart was bouncing around in his chest.

Everything she did was

spectacular when she was being honest with herself.

“I love you. Tell me you feel better from doing that than you did writing that note to yourself.” He walked up to her and looped his hands around her lower back.

“This girl feels a ton better. Thank you, Sir.”

“You’re welcome.” He smiled—wide and free. “Now, tell me what I really want to hear so we can eat and then get home. I’ve gotta get to work.”

“This girl loves you, and you’re the best Dom ever.”

His heart pounded and shoved all the blood in his body into his groin.

Making love on the beach . . .

Maybe there was time for that after breakfast?



## Chapter 16

Jeanie was so high off Mark it was hard to walk straight.

And today he was being extra sweet.

He surprised her when she woke up with a bouquet of flowers from the Finaus' garden.

How on earth could she breathe when she was this choked up?

She looked at him, and her eyes teared up when he wore that soft, adoring expression on his face.

“Okay, so you’ll pack us up today, and we’ll be leaving early tomorrow morning,” he said, keeping his eyes on her.

She nodded. “Yes, Sir. I’ll be happy to pack us both up.”

Oh, God, she was glad her punishment from a week ago was over. He had her do it for a few days since he liked it so much. She kept thinking about how difficult it was to refer to herself in the third person, and how it strangely turned her on beyond belief.

It would be too much today to deal with it. Her nerves were already fried.

“Are you ready to meet my parents?”

“You met my mother. It’s only fair.” He flashed her a grin.

“Yes, but your mom loves Jesus and thinks God’s good. My parents would probably burn the America flag at

the pearly gates while smoking weed if they could. And that would only be after they said, ‘Jeanie who? We don’t know anyone by that name.’”

He cupped her cheeks. “It’s going to be fine. Breathe deep. I’ll text and call you a ton today to make sure you’re doing okay, and then I’ll distract you tonight. So take a nap. I want you alert when I’m fucking your brain into sedation.”

She nodded and smiled.

“Good. Girl.” He bopped the end of her nose with his. “I’ve handled everything. I’ve set up the U-Haul, contacted the people we need to so we can move you out of there and get you in here with me permanently.”

Those words filtered straight into her heart and made it squeeze hard.

“Sounds good. I’ll make sure we’re ready, Sir.” She made the bed, went about straightening up the room and then set out his toothbrush with the exact amount of toothpaste on it he always used.

He was getting dressed in the closet. They had a rhythm now. It was necessary for her to do as much for him as possible, since he liked to spend every spare moment of his morning loving on her, which left less time for getting dressed, grooming and the other mundane daily stuff life required.

They swapped places a moment later.

He was in the bathroom brushing his teeth while she got out his tie for the day.

She brought it and his shoes and joined him in there. He finished rinsing and spitting, then sat on the toilet seat.

Like clockwork, she set his shoes in front of his sock-clad feet, and while he slipped them on, she was knotting his tie for him.

He kissed her, checked his hair real quick and then he was out the door.

God, she loved mornings with him.

She had a role—she knew her purpose. And she fit in his life so effortlessly now, there was this all-encompassing sense of peace that remained with her all day long.

As soon as he was gone, she vacuumed, swept up the kitchen, unloaded the dishwasher and cleaned up from breakfast.

When that was over, she pulled their clothes out of the dryer. It wasn't like her to let them sit in the dryer overnight, but last night he wanted to scene with her, so the laundry had to be switched right before bed, left to dry while they slept.

She folded it on the couch while she watched TV and then went to go pack them up.

What was she supposed to wear to see her parents? She hadn't seen them in a few years.

Actually, not since the wedding

three years ago.

Ugh—she was *not* looking forward to this.

But Mark would be there. Pono had no idea how to deal with her parents, and it was so uncomfortable around them, they just avoided her family. Her parents seemed oblivious to their existence anyway.

And here Mark had already talked to her mother on the phone.

Brave man.

She swiped her loose hair out of her face and then tucked it behind her ears.

Okay, packing up Mark first would be easier. She knew what he wanted to wear.

She pulled out the luggage from his closet, and within twenty minutes had him all packed up.

Her heart warmed as she thought about how much easier her life was.

No guessing. No questioning if she was a good girlfriend to him because he told her she was constantly.

The interesting part was she didn't think it was going to stop.

It didn't seem like it was all about the early days of dating. This was him—Mark as a Dom.

He gave honest feedback on everything. And if she screwed up, it wasn't a big deal. He'd correct her in a loving way—no condescension, and then her guilt was wiped away.



For the next several minutes, she rummaged through her drawers and her back heated, then grew sweaty.

Her head ached and spun as she considered what the hell to pack.

They were going to be there for a week. Hopefully that would be enough time to get the place all packed up, visit her parents and rearrange things at work.

The good news so far was they were fine with her moving to the California office. It was a thirty-minute drive from Mark's place, so it wouldn't be too bad.

After another ten minutes of huffing and sweating, she finally just picked the top five tee shirts and shorts in her drawer, then shoved them in their

suitcase.

A text had her phone rattling in her pocket. Already?

*Love you so much! Tomorrow you join the mile-high club.*

“Yeah, right.” She snorted and smiled huge.

She texted back, *Remind me why we're flying and why you wouldn't let me pay for my ticket?*

His reply was quick. *Don't make me come home and spank you. ;D*

*You're just looking for an excuse, Sir.* She giggled.

The texts stopped. She could imagine him laughing in his office.

Out of nowhere, she got the brilliant idea to go pay him a visit and

give him his surprise now. She had something she planned to give him once they were in Phoenix. Something to let him know he meant more to her than anybody ever had.

She put her shoes on, brushed her hair, then put it into a ponytail and grabbed her purse and keys.

Her chores were done, and she could finish packing herself up when she got back.

What harm would it do?

Was this allowed? They hadn't ever discussed her stopping by unannounced.

She knew the address. It was plugged in on her phone, so she got directions and hopped in her car.

He only worked five minutes away anyway. Why not?

When she pulled up to the guard shack, her nervousness spiked until she saw the big islander guard, smiling at her.

“Howzit?” he asked.

“Good. I’m here to see Mark Pierce.”

“He’s not here.”

“Do you know where he is?” She fought off a frown.

“He went to the studio. He’ll be back in a few hours.” The guard shook her hand and showed her where she could pull over and turn around.

She sighed and went back home.

That sinking feeling, the one in her

gut, was frustrating. If Mark was with her, he'd find a way to get rid of it.

Oh well.

Once inside, she finished packing. The good part was now she wasn't thinking about her parents and dreading the visit.

She was wishing Mark had been there and that she could've surprised him.

Why did her failure on this tiny thing hurt so bad?

The rest of the day, she busied herself, getting the house ready for being vacant for a week.

Mark may have handled everything in Phoenix, but she'd handle everything here at their home. He wouldn't even

have to throw out the trash. She'd let him focus on the things that mattered.

*Handling* people. Her and her parents.

\* \* \*

The flight was uneventful.

They both slept a lot of the way, her tucked into his side.

Thank God he'd only been teasing about the mile-high club. She might've had to safeword on him if he really had wanted to make love to her on the plane. Her bravery was growing daily, but she wasn't quite at that level yet.

The idea of public sex still scared the shit out of her.

When they landed and had gathered their luggage, she about burst.

“Sir, I was going to wait until we got to my place, but I can’t wait any longer. I have something I want to give you.” Her voice shook harder than her hands.

It was amazing he hadn’t seen it earlier when they had to go through the metal detectors and they’d made her empty out her pockets.

But then he’d been putting his shoes back on while she was being scanned.

He’d seemed in a hurry when that had happened anyway, so he was less observant than usual.

Good thing, too.

“You have something for me?” He smiled so hard, his eyes squinted.

“Yeah. May I give it to you now?”

He nodded his head and watched her every move.

“Put out your hand and close your eyes, please,” she said.

He smirked but did it.

A moment later, she plopped it into his palm and then curled his hand around it.

“Open, Sir.”

His piercing blue eyes took her in for a moment, then shifted down to what he was holding. He gasped as he stared at it.

“Holy shit! Sweetheart, how much did this cost?”



“It doesn’t matter. I wanted you to know that I may have given Pono a wedding ring, but you have my heart—absolutely. And I know this seems kind of dumb, but there’s a heart engraved on the inside with my initials inside it.” She beamed at him.

The ring was black gold with five black diamonds inlaid in a row.

His eyes twitched and teared up.  
“Fuck, Jeanie, I . . .”

“It has five stones, representing the five ways you own me—body, heart, mind, soul, and my will, or my submission, as you would call it. I know it’s cheesy, but—”

He covered her mouth with his palm. “Shhh . . . I absolutely love it.

There's nothing cheesy about it." He pulled her over to a bench, tugged her down into his lap as soon as he sat down, then wrapped his arms around her. "It's perfect. And, actually, I have something for you, too. But I want to wait until we're at your place."

"Okay. I trust you, Sir."

"I know you do, and it's the best feeling in the world." He kissed her nose, and they both giggled.

He set her back on her feet, and then they were off to get the rental car.

They drove in a happy silence.

She wound up holding her breath, though, when he parked in her parking spot for her apartment.

It seemed like forever since she

was here and had left with a few days' worth of clothing.

Over the past few weeks, she'd bought more while at Mark's place so she wouldn't have to keep doing laundry every four or five days.

But it would be nice to have a full wardrobe again.

All she'd brought with her had been her underwear and three bras, two dresses, two pairs of heels, two sets of pajamas, a pair of jeans, five shirts and shorts along with a bathing suit. Oh, yes, and some flip-flops.

Now she'd have several different pairs of shoes, work clothes, winter wardrobe for mild weather and church clothes, though she still needed to

supplement that wardrobe since weekly church attendance was going to be a new thing for her.

She looked forward to that part the most—the comfort of her own clothing, hanging in the closet, even though she always hated clothes shopping. She never knew what to get.

Part of the reason she wanted these was so she wouldn't have to shop more.

Mark helped her out of the car as usual, and she took several deep breaths as her stiff legs carried her inside.

He stroked her back and hair—already sweaty since it was August in Phoenix, the muggiest time of year.

It had to be pushing one-thirteen. Her skin remembered these high

temperatures.

Without a word, he unlocked the door. She'd already given him the house key before they left his home.

Already her chest ached to be back at his place.

The old weighty feeling of being a disappointment hit her the moment she walked in the door and smelled the mixture of her cleaners and Pono's cologne.

It hung in the air like an unanswered question—*why didn't we work?*

Mark turned to her as soon as he shut the door and kissed her slowly and tenderly. His hands were gentle in her hair.

When he broke away, he said,  
“Your turn to close your eyes.”

She did, and when he told her to open them, he had a necklace in his hands. “Jeanine, you’ve offered me a ring as a sign of your devotion to me, and now, if you’ll accept my collar, you’ll wear a symbol of my ownership of you.”

He’d explained to her before what a collar would mean. They’d talked about it, but it sounded like something that would take place a long time down the road. It sounded very close to the commitment of marriage.

Without having to think twice, she whispered a choked up, “Yes, Sir. I’ll be yours in all ways, and I will cherish

this collar along with anything else you see fit to give me.”

“You realize what this means?”

“Yes, I do.”

“And you are fine with calling me Master now, rather than Sir?” His right brow crawled its way up his forehead.

“I’ve already been saying it in my mind every now and then to try it on, so yes, Master, I’m ready. This girl’s ready to move forward with you.” She smiled and her heart did, too.

He looked ready to jump her, but instead he stepped back a little. “I love what your ring stood for. Your collar has meaning, too. These are waves. The ocean calms you, and you do that for me in the exact same way. Just being near

you, hearing the sounds you make, I find myself again, even though I already knew who I was.”

“I love it. Thank you.” She leaned forward to get a better look at it.

She smiled. It seemed he was trying to hide his surprise at the same time she was hiding his. This must’ve been why he was in a rush and making sure to go through the metal detectors when she was taking her shoes off. She missed seeing her collar in those brief moments it would’ve been exposed and pulled out of his pocket.

Without permission, she ran a fingertip across the filigree design. It was breathtaking and the silver gleamed, like his eyes.



He choked on a gasp and then looked ready to leak a few ecstatic tears himself. “You have no idea what this means to me.”

“I think I do, because I’m already dying to touch it while it’s nearer my heart and kissing my skin.” She bit her lip and smiled through it, her legs shaking.

She blinked away a few happy tears, and then he was putting it on her neck, kissing her harder, deeper and undressing her.

The next moment, she was on her back, on the couch, frantic for more.

She never even considered feeling guilty over making love on the second-hand couch she and Pono had bought

together.

She only considered pleasing her new Master and doing whatever it took to make him happy and feel loved, because that's what he did for her. All. The. Time.

\* \* \*

Packing was grueling, but Mark was always going, always moving. One more box. One more thing to move.

She cleaned in between boxing up her stuff, and he went with her each time she made a run to Goodwill with some of Pono's things she knew his family wouldn't want to keep.

Had they really been at this four

days already?

Sweat dripped between her breasts. Ick!

It seemed really wrong to have her pretty collar near all this grimy perspiration and dust coating her body.

“Hey, we need to meet your parents in about an hour. Why don’t you go shower? I’ll finish this up,” Mark called out as he finished packing up the box he was working on filling.

She fingered her choker, stretched her back, then went to the shower on her own.

As she soaked and scrubbed, the memories came back.

Up until now, she hadn’t showered alone in her home.

Mark was always with her in here, kissing and touching her, whispering sweet things in her ear as he made love to her.

The vision of Pono assaulted her mind from before he'd gained all that weight, chatting with her while she washed.

He was excited about how well he was doing in his classes with his final semester.

*"I saw Mark today," Pono said.*

*"Oh, yeah? How's he doing?"*

*Her heart rate spiked and her throat constricted a little on hearing his name.*

*"He has another girlfriend, and she seems nicer than the last one,*

*though kind of quiet. I think maybe he intimidates her, but what do I know?" Pono shrugged and groped her breasts, made a clown-like honking noise, then laughed.*

*She ignored it.*

*"He asked how you were doing," he said, his voice teasing.*

*"And what did you tell him?" Her voice rose in pitch and was cracking like crazy. Her gut yanked in a spasm.*

*"I told him you work. I go to school, and then you play football with me so I'll get my fat ass off the couch on the weekends." He patted his stomach that was developing a little pooch.*

*"Next time you see him, tell him*

*I'm good, I fed you and watered you, and we're happy." She tried to smile, but it felt more like a grimace.*

*"Why would I do that? I like making him think I'm a pussy. It pisses him off. So damn funny." He snickered.*

*"Po-no! Don't instigate and rile up your friend. Mark's really nice. He's one of your closest friends, and you know he'll do anything for you."*

*"You mean for you." He laughed and shoved her in the arm.*

She opened her eyes and rubbed her arm where he'd shoved her so long ago, just like the way Mark shoved Jay.

That was the difference. Pono treated her like she was one of the guys. And while it had been familiar and

comfortable—when she honestly thought about it, she never wanted to be put in that role.

She wanted to be his lover, his confidant and his whole world. Not a joke of a woman he ripped farts around and then pinned it on her as he doubled over with howling laughter.

She leaned against the wall for a second and smiled.

Those days were gone, and though she'd remember a lot of it with fondness since Pono had been her best friend and constantly made her laugh, she was going to have the life she always wanted now.

She was a woman, not a tomboy. She was Mark's, and that meant more

than she could ever express.

A moment later, Mark joined her, and those bad memories, the uncomfortable ones that made her feel worthless, washed down the drain where they belonged.

\* \* \*

“I talked to your dad this morning,” Mark told her as they stood on the doorstep of her parents’ home.

“You did?” Her heart caved its way into her knees, locking them up. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I knew you’d worry about it and keep obsessing.” He knocked again, harder this time.



She clicked her teeth together and stood slightly behind his right shoulder. Somehow that little action loosened up her constricting chest.

“She’s here,” her mom yelled behind the door and then opened it with a beer can in her hand. “Jean, you look a mess.”

“Hi, Mom.”

Before Jeanie had to decide if she should hug her, wave, or do nothing at all, Mark stepped forward and took her mother off guard. He gave her a firm handshake.

Her mom’s eyes grew big, and she paled.

“I’m so glad to meet you, Mrs. Latham.” Mark let go of her hand and

took Jeanie's.

“Remind me what your name is again?” Her mom scowled.

“Mark Pierce, and we only have a few hours to spend here since we're still packing up Jeanie's place. There's a lot to do. If you'd like to visit us there while we're working, we'd love to have you.”

Her mother's lips twisted into a mocking smile. “Code for—get your ass over there, you lazy bitch, and help us pack up.” She waved them in.

Jeanie's shoulders dropped when she heard her dad call out to them.

“What's taking so long?” her father grunted.

When they entered the living room, he was plastered into his La-Z-Boy as

usual.

It was older and rattier, the leather worn in some spots, but then what had she expected?

“Hi, Dad,” Jeanie said, quieter than she wanted.

“Get your ass in here. Let me see you,” her dad said, voice gruff.

His ashtray on the TV tray next to him was overflowing.

The room reeked of smoke.

She went to stand in front of his chair, but Mark moved faster than she did and stood before him instead, keeping her tucked behind him a little to his right.

“Nice to meet you, Mr Latham.”  
Mark startled him as well as he lunged

forward and shook his hand.

It was gut instinct she supposed, to just jump and do Mark's bidding. He had that type of command, even over her bastard of a father, caring only about himself.

“Jesus Christ, Mr. *Latham's* my fat, bloated ass of a father, dying of cancer. Call me Zane. And call her Deb, or woman. I don't care which.” He snorted and then reached for his pack of cigarettes next to the ashtray. In the next moment, he lit up and inhaled his cigarette, blowing the smoke at Mark's crotch.

Oh God.

The blood in Jeanie's body rose like a thermometer and went to her head,

making it pound in her ears.

“Speaking of which . . .” Her dad jerked his head to the side. “Woman, get me a beer. Mine’s empty.” He chucked the mostly empty can at her mother, sloshing the remnants of it on her legs.

She groaned, picked it up and left the room without a word.

Her father wore a smug smile and flicked the ashes of his cigarette toward Jeanie.

“So, you’re a full-fledged whore now, huh? You kill your husband, and then take on one of his friends. That’s smart. The friends never suspect, do they?”

Before Mark could say anything, she exploded. “Shut up! You don’t know

shit, you son of a bitch. You don't care about anybody but yourself, and we're leaving now."

Mark turned to her and grinned. "Good girl," he whispered, his brow cocked at her.

"Thank you," she said.

"What did he call you? *Girl*?" Her dad chuckled and slapped his leg. "*Good*? In what world? She can't please anyone. She was a lousy daughter and an even worse wife. No wonder her husband gained weight. He had to find some way to cope with dealing with her lazy ass."

Mark leaned forward. "I suppose you're right. What kind of wife works her ass off night and day, saving money

to start a family because her husband wants that more than anything, and then comes home, cooks and cleans for him when he's a slob and never says thank you. Yes, definitely lazy and selfish.” Mark took the ashtray, walked it over to the small trashcan a few feet away and dumped the butts and ashes in. There was garbage scattered all along the outside of the bin. Obviously, her father would chuck stuff over there and miss, then never bother to pick it up.

Mark shoved the ashtray back into her dad's hands. “Thanks for seeing us. We've got things to attend to in her house that was pristine the moment I entered it. Yes, definitely a lazy, horrible wife.” Mark stretched his neck.

“She’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me. This woman does everything she can to care for and nurture the people she loves. Evidently she did *not* gain that trait from you.”

Her mom entered the room and when she handed the beer to her husband, he smacked her ass, growled and grabbed it, hard.

She yelped, flushed scarlet and then scooted away, hugging the wall like she was frightened of him.

“Remember, Mom, if you ever need me, call.” Jeanie hugged her mom but was pushed away.

Her mom refused to look at her, and Mark took Jeanie’s hand and got her the hell out of there.



The moment they were both in the car, he hugged her, and they both cried.

“I’m so sorry . . . No one deserves to be treated that way,” he said, sniffing, his tone heavy with regret.

“It’s okay. I’ve never stood up to him before, and I did it because having you with me gave me strength, Master. Can we leave now?”

“Absolutely.” Mark started the car and backed out of the driveway.

She tucked her fingers around her collar and breathed a sigh of relief.

“Things have gotten worse. Mom used to be the exception to his nasty treatment, and around the time I moved out, it shifted from me to her. She became a casualty of his ever-present

anger.” She dropped her hand, then twisted her fingers together and prayed her mother would get out of there someday soon. “She didn’t used to talk to me so rudely either, but that was steadily declining as well. The meaner Dad was to her, the less kind she was to me. I never knew how to help her.”

“You can’t help someone that doesn’t want it, not really. If he was beating her, then . . .”

He swallowed hard.

“I have no idea if that’s the case, but I sure hope not.” She blinked and blew out a puff of air. “As hard as that was, I’m glad we did it. I wanted to say goodbye in my own way.”

“Well, you definitely did that. I’m

proud of you, and you continually amaze me at how strong you are.” He smiled, reached for her hand and kissed the back of it. “I love you.”

She sighed. “I love you, too, Master.”

A few minutes later, she was breathing hard again like the adrenaline in her body spiked once more. The thought of her dad acting that way in front of Mark made her blood heat.

“Spit it out. Don’t keep it inside. I wanna know,” Mark said.

“The other reason I was able to do that”—she looked up at him and stopped breathing—“I knew you would do it for me, telling him to go to hell, but this time, I wanted to do it for myself. I’m so

glad it didn't offend you."

"Are you kidding?" He stretched his neck to the left, and his knuckles popped as he gripped the wheel harder. "It was awe inspiring to see you go after it like that. If it hadn't been so heartbreaking to see how dysfunctional your family is, I would've had a hard-on for you."

She curled back into her seat and her head lolled toward the window. "Well, they can stay here and rot in this infernal heat, and I'll be in the waves, in the perfect weather with my Master."

"You deserve happiness, and I'm beyond thrilled to be a part of that."

She leaned into him, stroked down his shoulder and said, "You deserve

happiness, too. We won't ever be like that, will we?"

"Never. And now I can see why certain things have been difficult for you as a submissive. You're dad's an emotionally abusive asshole. When he bosses, he takes no thought for how it makes anyone else feel. When I boss you around, you'll always know I do it with guidance and love, not spite and disgust. That will never happen."

She kissed his shoulder. "I know. I know . . . You don't have to compare my dad to you. There's no comparison. Never was."

During the rest of the drive back, she was contemplative, and though her heart was still racing and the adrenaline

draining from her veins, she felt clearer than ever about her family.

They didn't need her, and she wanted to be useful. She needed to contribute and make a difference.

Her family never allowed for any of that—only criticism and built-in failure because everything she ever did was wrong.

When they got back to her place, she realized Mark was deep in thought and had been over the last few minutes.

It wasn't like him to be so silent while introspective.

“Where's your head at?” he asked her, moving over to her bathroom.

She followed after him without being instructed to do so.

Maybe he wanted her kneeling?

She was unsure of what was going on with him, so she went ahead and stripped, then moved back into the bedroom and knelt at the foot of the bed, head down, arms clasped behind her lower back. This was the waiting position he'd shown her a few days ago, and it was how he wanted to find her when he came back from work.

She couldn't see him, but she could hear him getting something out of her medicine cabinet.

"Jeanie? I'm waiting—tell me," he called out.

She took a slight breath, then said, "It's calm right now. I don't know how, but maybe it's that sense of closure,

Master.”

He entered the room, and his breath caught.

She didn’t dare look up.

“Color?”

“Green, Master. I’ll be glad to focus completely on you and forget about my dickhead father. This girl’s ready for anything you see fit to inflict on her.”

“Inflict, huh? Well . . . I have something else in mind.” He stepped toward her and while she stared at his bare feet, he undressed, leaving his pants before her eyes in a pile on the carpet.

Her eyes tried to follow his path, but he was behind her now, looming over her shoulders.

“You look so beautiful like this.



Your parents have no idea what idiots they are, and how eager you are to please. You please me every goddamn day, and I barely have to ask for anything at all. You anticipate all the small stuff, all except . . .”

She heard the unmistakable sound of a flip cap on a bottle unsnapping and then something being squirted, most likely into his hand.

Her stomach fluttered, her heart raced and her pussy tingled.

“Glad to see you had some lube—and some decent stuff,” he said, his foot nudging her bottom. “Up. All fours.”

She did as he asked.

“I’ve been holding back, waiting for this moment,” he said, lowering

himself to kneeling behind her and then dropping his voice as he growled. “I want everything, my sweet little thing. Every thought, every breath, every hole in your body—I want to possess it all. You’ve accepted me and now you’ve faced a big fear—your parents. Time to give yourself to me completely. Because unlike them, I see you. All of you. And I love every fucking inch.”

Flares of excitement and lust ricocheted their way down her spine and made her wet. “What did you have in mind, Master?”

“Time to break in that ass. I’m going to spread your hole, fuck it until you’re begging for God to save you. I want your mind wiped clean of anything

but me.” He kissed her lower back.

When his hand went around her jaw and lips, she kissed his ring she’d given him.

All at once, she realized he was wearing it on his ring finger.

When had he put it on *that* finger? Her eyes went wide and dry because she refused to blink. “Your ring,” she whimpered as the emotions overtook her. “Master!” She thrust her hips back. He could do any damn thing to her he wanted.

“This ring means everything to me because it’s from you, and you are all I want.”

She moaned as his lubricated fingers toyed at her anus.

“So good—so right for me, my sweet little thing. And a sweet little ass all for me. I’ll show you what you’ve been missing, and what you do to me.”

“Sssuuuhhh fffffuuuuuck!” She sucked in some air as a finger slid inside her ass.

Her pussy clenched at the thought of him hovering over her, naked and hard, wanting her even though he’d seen what a mess her family was, and her shameful origins.

Those things didn’t seem to matter to him, even though he was close enough to his mother to see her once a week.

“Master . . .” Her voice went high-pitched as another finger joined the other one. He pumped slowly, taking his time.

“Push out—against my fingers. I’ll go slowly. Let your body open to me. I promise the slight burn will go away, and when it does, holy fuck, you’ll be amazed at all the sensations your ass creates at my hand and at my cock.” He exhaled with a coarse grunt like it was taking everything in him to avoid fucking her in that tight hole right now.

She pushed a little and the sensations changed. The sphincters swelled some, then relaxed and accommodated the intrusion.

“Color, little girl? Are we still green?” His breaths were rough, choppy.

“Green. As long as you keep this pace, green, Master.” She bit her lip and dropped her head with eyes closed as a

third finger slipped in.

He scissored his fingers slowly apart on each retreat, taking his time to spread her tissues and prepare them for his cock.

“You have no idea how gorgeous this ass is, and how breathtaking this entrance is from this view.” He dropped his body lower and his tongue joined his fingers at her back opening. “Christ—Jeeeeeeanie.” His groans of restraint made her pussy, and consequently, her ass, cinch down.

“Holy fuck!” she cried out, her back arching into the thrusting and the pulsing feeling deep in her canal. She’d never felt anything so intense inside her body before.

Everything inside her tingled and tightened.

“Don’t come yet—don’t you even think about it. Count backward from one-hundred if you have to, but no coming. Not yet—I’ll tell you when.” He pulled his fingers out and his tongue was back on her asshole, probing inside.

Was it gaping? She’d heard of that before.

Did that really exist? Would the hole actually remain dilated open for a moment before closing back up?

It certainly seemed like it.

All his slurping, humming, hungry sounds had her building up in pressure again.

*One-hundred . . . Ninety-nine.*

And then lube was being presumably slicked over his hard shaft behind her. She could feel the motion of him jerking it, and it sounded slippery.

“Slow—angel. Slow for you, this time at least. Next time, we’ll use other toys to help, and you’ll get used to being an anal player with me because there’s no way I’m ignoring this sexy ass anymore. Not a chance in helllllll,” he said, his voice strained, and then he was slowly inching his way inside her ass.

She held her breath and tried her hardest to push against the larger mass entering her.

“Breathe—little one. Take a breath now,” he said.

She shook her head.



*Swaaaaack!*

He slapped her left cheek, then his hand was in her hair, yanking her head back. “I said breathe, dammit. Who’s in charge here?”

“Puuuuuuuuh!” She released a sharp breath. “You, Master. Sorrrrrry.” She groaned when his dick was as far as it could go.

The burn . . . Oh God.

“Relax into it. Bear down and breathe deep. I promise this’ll feel good very soon, and you’ll curse me out for waiting so long to do this with you.” He leaned over her, kept his hips motionless and rubbed her clit.

A moment later, he rocked slowly but in short increments. He didn’t pull

out very much. Maybe an inch at most, and then he was pushed as deep as possible again.

“You feel how far I am in you? Concentrate on all those nerve endings deep inside, sweet thing. They’re gonna throw you into a spiral of fucking amazing explosions.”

His fingers were off her clit and then they were inside her vagina, pushing on her G-spot.

Oh shit! He thought she could withstand *this* onslaught? Every damn time he touched her there, it didn’t take much time for her to be gushing and coming hard. It was overwhelming.

“Feel that? I’m gonna change my angle, and you’re going to see how I can

push on it through your rectum wall.” He pulled out of all of her orifices, and pushed her down flat onto her stomach, then spread her legs as wide as they could go.

His fingers were being lubed again, and now they were back in her anus, pressing down on that wall, stimulating her G-spot. It was muted, but the combination of the nerves in her asshole, high up inside and that spot inside her pussy had her mewling and panting hard.

Her voice went hoarse, “Maa-ahhhh-aaaster!”

“You like that, and you should. It’s me—I’m touching you. I own your ass, I’m loving every part of you, even a part

you might think disgusting. Whose ass is this?”

“Yours,” she managed to claw the words out of her constricting throat.

“How long can you hold out? Long enough for me to get back inside there and make you squirt?”

“I . . . I d-don’t knooooow.” She bunched her fists. His touch was more aggressive now inside her body. Clamping down—trembling groin muscles. “Jeeezus—I . . . Sir, I’m gonna . . . Please!”

“Not yet.” He smacked her ass, and that made it worse.

Her pussy clenched.  
“Mmmmmhhnnnnnnuuuuuh,” she whimpered.

*Ninety-eight . . . Ninety-seven . . .*

“Take me inside, and keep concentrating on those sensations I created. I’ve got you gushing already, and you’re so fucking wet for this—for me. Good girl. I fucking love that. So beautiful and so sexy.” He parted her cheeks and slid back inside with a stifled grunt.

His hands were slimy from the lube as they held her lower back down, but she didn’t care.

The weight was delicious. And the pressure inside her ass, along with that angle . . . Christ almighty . . . Counting wasn’t going to get her through this.

“I can’t!” she said through her teeth.

“You can. Breathe slow and deep for me—your Master. I own you, and I tell you when you can fly apart. Not. Yet.” His upper body pushed his weight hard into his hands, set on her back, right above the swell of her cheeks, and it forced her hips back and her ass up in the air.

“Ohhhhhhhh gaaaaaawd! No, I can’t!” she cried out.

His tip was somehow hitting her G-spot through that wall, and there was the craziest pulsing going on right above that area.

“I have to . . . I have to!” She smashed her forehead into the carpet as her pussy took over and forced her ass to clinch down on his swollen cock.

“Yes, sweet girl . . . Squirt and come. Let go.” And then, fluid was squirting out of her with these powerful, uncontrollable rhythmic contractions inside her pussy—a lot of it. Was she peeing herself?

Oh, fuck, she didn’t care, because she was coming so hard, her head shut out all sounds, all thoughts. All she knew was this explosive force wending its way out of her asshole—high up inside, and the rhythmic pounding, tightening, and releasing of both her pussy and ass.

Her head went fuzzy and buzzed as she went breathless through her screams of utter pleasure.

“Hhhhhuuuuuuuaaaaah  
hhhhhuuuuuuaaaaah . . .” Was that grating,

hoarse breathing coming out of her? It was rough—it was primal, and it was too high pitched to be Mark. When she opened her eyes, her chest was gasping for air, and it was most definitely her making these raw, ravaged sounds. “Oooooooooohhhh God!” She couldn’t catch her breath.

When she stopped reeling, her senses returned, and Mark was making the exact same sounds. High pitched wailing with stilted breaths.

“Fuuuuuck, Jeanie . . .”

When he let go of her lower back, her pubic bone throbbed a little. She melted into the floor.

“Come like that when we get home, and I’ll keep you chained at my



side at all times. Fucking hell—sweet thing. You were the most glorious creature ever!” He flipped her over, pulled her up into his arms, cradled her in his lap and he kissed and stroked her all over her face. Moments later, he kissed and massaged her entire body head to toe.

Could she feel any more loved than this? It was a surreal experience after that shit at her parents’ home.

Tears exploded out of her, and her chest heaved from the intensity of it all.

He curled his body around her, rocked her and cooed, “That’s my girl. Get it all out. I love you, and you’re safe now. No one will ever treat you wrong ever again. I promise you that.”

She nodded, kissed his chest with a weak, boneless neck and had never felt better about herself in her life.

This was what it meant to have a family. This was what it meant to be whole and loved.

“I love you,” she said and those broken, jagged tears, her chest caving in—it was all worth it. Because she knew what it meant now to be with the love of her life and to have a real—loving family.

## Chapter 17

*Two months later . . .*

Mark was sweating. It was a wonderful autumn day, and he was sweating like a stupid bastard.

His stomach was crashing harder than choppy waves, even worse than when he'd entered the church three months ago for Pono's funeral and knew Jeanie was a single woman—available for *him*.

Jeanie smiled at him as she put her hair back into a braid.

The sand was cool on his feet, and he stepped behind her, then zipped up her wet suit the rest of the way.

“We should have done this as soon as we got back from Phoenix,” he said.

“It’s fine. We’ll be warm enough, Master. You can quit fussing over me.” She finished securing her hair back and out of the way. He stroked her cheeks.

God, she looked amazing in this suit. It was making him uncomfortably hard.

His left fist knotted around the object in his hand.

She reached inside the neckline of her suit and stroked her collar. “Is Jay on his way?”

“Yes, and he’ll be here soon.” Mark gulped and stared into her sweet, soulful eyes. “You look beautiful.”

“You always say that, Master. But

thank you all the same. I'm sure I resemble a porpoise in this god-awful suit."

"You look fuckable as always, and you're making me crazy." It was now—had to happen before Jay arrived.

He dropped to his left knee, opened his palm and presented it to her. "Jeanie, here at the beach, where you're open and intoxicating as hell, I have to ask this—you're already mine, wearing my collar, but I want more. I want you as my wife. Will you accept me as your husband, to love you 'til the day you die and be there with you through everything?"

She smiled and her eyes moistened, then twitched. "Is that even a

question?" She bit her lip for a moment with watery eyes. "Of course I will, Master."

"And you'll trust me to deal with the Finaus if they say this is too soon?"

"Honestly, I don't give a fuck. Yes, it's only been three months since Pono passed away, but they already see how I can't live without you. And why would I ever want to? Thank you, Master." She dropped to her knees and gave him her hand when he motioned he wanted it with his fingers.

He slipped the engagement ring on.

"It's a little big."

"I don't care. I love it," she said, blinking back tears and smiling bigger than he'd ever seen. Her cheeks were

dimpling and so was her chin. God, could she be any more beautiful and radiant?

“I’ll have it resized, and no wearing it in the ocean. It might fall off.”

“Yes, Master.” She leaned in and kissed him, but kept her hands in his, even though he could tell she was dying to throw her arms around him.

“If you don’t squeeze the shit out of me with those arms, I’ll be forced to spank you through your rubber suit, woman.”

She chuckled, kissed him once more, then clung to him like he was her life preserver.

“Better . . .” He nuzzled his nose into her pulled-back hair and whispered,

“My wife. My lover. My Jeanie. Fuck, I love all that, and I’m harder than ever for you. Can we leave before Jay gets here and just tell him we forgot?”

“No,” she said through a good-natured laugh. “Master—you never flake on anyone, and he’d know you were lying.”

He sighed, pulled back, took her ring off—his as well—tucked them into their beach bag and startled when Jay yelled behind him.

“She’s got you on your knees already?” Jay laughed and smacked Mark’s shoulder.

“Always, my friend. Always . . .” Mark stood and helped Jeanie up.

She beamed at him, and the little



thing pinched his ass when Jay wasn't watching.

He pinched her ass back, harder than she had, then clasped her into his arms so hers were trapped. His kiss was bruising and possessive, but she gave in to him and melted at his body binding hers. "Mine!"

"Yours, Master," she whispered so Jay couldn't hear. "This girl is the property of Mark Pierce." She dropped her head back.

Mark licked his way down to her collar, took it in his teeth, tugged with a growl, then released it and her.

"Get your ass in the ocean before I devour you."

She jogged after Jay, already

paddling out on his board.

Mark was right behind her. Once in the waves, he fastened the board to his ankle and helped her on top of it, then took them out deep so they could catch the waves.

Her skin glowed, her smile warmed his already frozen feet and he grinned.

Nothing seemed to scare her anymore. This was the Jeanie he always knew lay inside her. The fearless woman with a heart bigger than the never-ending ocean.

\* \* \*

Mark was vibrating his way out of

his skin, his legs bouncing with energy and his hands clutching onto Jeanie anytime she was within grabbing distance.

“All ready, Master.”

He kissed her engagement ring.

She picked up his hand and kissed his ring back.

His dick twitched. Every. Damn. Time.

He loved it when she did that.

It made his heart tug hard.

“Love you.” He kissed her and then roamed over to the guest room that used to be hers.

It was back to the way it used to be.

“Tempting me, Master?”

He wiggled his ass at her and chuckled. “Always, little girl.”

“When are you going to let me peek in there so I can see what you’ve done?”

“Soon . . . Very soon.” He sighed and closed the door.

“Fine. Be that way.” She stuck her tongue out at him.

Oh, the brat. She knew they had guests due for arrival any moment.

“At least tell me if it’s a playroom?” She arched her left brow at him with a hand on her hip.

Intimidating? Not even close.

He tossed his head back and snorted. “I love your imagination.”

“So, it’s not a playroom? Why’d

you lock the door then?”

“To keep you out until the timing’s right.”

“It’s a playroom.” She nodded to herself.

“You think so, huh?”

“Yes, Master, I do.”

“And you’ve seen for yourself?”

She paled. “No! I would never. You said not to go in, and I haven’t, Sir.”

She reverted back to calling him Sir whenever she was tense or flustered.

“Relax. I was only teasing. Go tend to the kitchen. Our party will be starting soon.”

She straightened her fairy wings.  
He fixed his pirate hat.

She loved Halloween, so they were having a party. Or at least that was what he told her.

“And you’re not going to tell me who you’ve invited?”

“Nope.” He checked his phone. Someone was texting him.

It was Marly.

He shot her back a quick reply and grinned.

“Master? C’mon! I’m dying!” His fairy was turning a lovely shade of pink as she fumed.

“You’ll see soon enough. Patience, little one.”

*Knock, knock, knock, knock.*

Mark threw her a wicked grin and she huffed, then went into the kitchen to

get the witch's brew ready.

“Hi, Mark!” Ashlen cried out and bolted into his arms as he dropped into a full squat to give her a hug.

“Hi, cutie!” He picked her up and carried her into the kitchen.

Jeanie's expression went from blank to absolute shock. Her eyes were wider than the wings on her back, and her mouth formed an impressive oval. It looked like she was holding a high note, but nothing was coming out.

He smirked.

“Jeanie, this is Ashlen, one of my clients. I represent her.” He approached his girl with a tiny one in his hands.

“She's pretty,” Ashlen said, smiling.

“She’s the most stunning fairy ever, isn’t she?” Mark stared at Jeanie.

“Oh, is this your fiancé?” Lindsey asked, following right behind.

“Nice to meet you,” Jeanie said, extending her hand to shake with the little munchkin, but he knew Ashlen wouldn’t allow that.

Ashlen frowned and leaped into Jeanie’s arms. She patted her cheeks, then hugged her.

Jeanie hugged her back and then when the girl wiggled to get down, Jeanie lowered her.

“I want into the playroom!” Ashlen hopped at Mark’s feet.

Jeanie’s eyes widened for a moment and her breath caught.



“Toys, please!” Ashlen’s sweet voice carried well in the kitchen. “I want into the room.”

Jeanie leaned in and whispered, “And I’ve changed my mind. I want a little fairy of our own.” She pulled back, smiled and her eyes welled up.

His heart clenched and then thrust its way into his throat.

Really? She wanted kids? What had changed? Was it that she was comfortable with him, and it didn’t sound so insurmountable? Was it that she’d had time to stop worrying about her fertility issues for a while?

They stopped using condoms weeks ago, but as far as he knew, she hadn’t done anything to find out if

anything had changed on her end.

He gave her a tender-hearted smile back, reached for her hand and squeezed it.

The doorbell rang, and he let go of her, then signaled for her to get it.

He needed a moment to get his heart back behind his ribs.

“Playroom!” Ashlen cried out again, yanking on his pants.

He grinned at her and followed her over to the door.

She knew where she was going.

While he unlocked the playroom and let Ashlen in, three more kiddos entered their place and they were all rushing him as well. Some of them were trying to get on his back for a ride and

others were tugging on his sleeve, asking if they could go play in the toy room as well.

He led them all back there, but one of his favorite little guys, Jeremy, clung to his back, so he got a piggyback ride as Mark went back to check on Jeanie.

She was meeting parents, serving them punch and being the perfect hostess.

When she had a moment, he brought her, with Jeremy tagging along, into the playroom. “Not what you thought, huh?”

“Uh, no . . .” She stared wide-eyed and breathless. “Is this what this room used to be before I moved in?”

“Yeah. I work with children, and I

used to have certain clients come here. It was a warmer, more inviting space than the office, so if I had a skittish kid, this was a better option. It felt like their own home, so it helped set them at ease.”

“Wow,” she breathed, her eyes darting around the room. “You work with children? How did I not know this?”

“Didn’t want to upset you when you were so fragile, but now I know you can handle it, so I’ll be bringing you into work with me occasionally so you can see how wonderful these little munchkins can be.” He grinned, and his stomach filled with butterflies over the thought of her being involved with every aspect of his life.

“*Our* munchkin would be even more perfect,” she whispered and grabbed his hand tight.

“Only because you’d be the mother,” he replied. Damn, his heart was swelling so much it was almost painful to breathe.

He kissed her on the cheek and then wiped it away with the pad of his thumb as he cupped her jaw.

“So beautiful.” He stared into her powder blue eyes.

She laughed softly and then her attention went to the rambunctious children floating around the room.

The kids were laughing in their cute little costumes.

“Mark!” his mother called out.

He turned around and greeted her. “Hi, Mom,” he said, taking his hands off Jeanie and hugging his mother.

She hugged him back briefly, then all but shoved him aside and tackled Jeanie. “I’ve heard you have a ring with a diamond the size of a stray asteroid, creating craters with unheard of space. Let me see.” Mom grabbed Jeanie’s left hand and she smiled so hard, he actually heard her jaw’s rusty hinges squeak. “Perfect. At least he got that part right. Proposing at the beach? Who does that?”

“My perfect Mark does, and it was magical. Exactly right for this plain girl.” Jeanie dropped her shoulders and her wings dipped with the motion.

Mark stifled a chuckle when she

snuck in referring to herself in third person and as “girl.” God, he’d love to smack her ass right now for being so naughty, chiding his mom that way without her even realizing it. A growl of ferocious need to pin her down and take her was building low in his gut.

She looked like she might fly away as his mother continued to fawn all over her and the ring.

The doorbell kept ringing and some of the other moms were letting guests inside.

Jay’s roaring laugh carried, and Mark excused himself as his mother continued to dote on Jeanie.

The woman was borderline obsessed with the prospect of a future

daughter-in-law, calling him daily to ask when they were going to stop by and see her.

He could see the words “Grandkids now!” etched into her lined brow.

She never said anything about it, but he knew it was in her blood, bubbling right below her thick hide.

“Hey, man!” Mark shook hands with Jay. Next, he hugged Marly, kissed Toloa’s cheek and helped Kueili bring in his two monstrous bags of sweets. He’d told him repeatedly that he and Jeanie had the treats covered for the kids, but they wouldn’t hear of it.

When he opened the bag on the counter, there were dozens of candy



apples inside.

“You shouldn’t have,” he told Toloa, grinning.

“Yeah, now you tell her that. I burned my hands several times dipping those stupid apples.” Marly rolled her eyes.

“Well, as long as it didn’t break skin, I think it was worth it.” Jay laughed and grabbed an apple. He was chomping on it before anyone could protest.

“Marly, you’ll be in charge of music for the kids and dancing.” Mark pointed at the sound system, but when Jeanie reemerged from the tidal wave that was his overbearing mother, he pulled her next to him.

She caught sight of the Finaus and

her eyes exploded with several emotions—panic, fear, excitement.

Right behind them, Rodney and Tia were entering his home and they quickly gathered around the small circle forming around Mark and Jeanie.

Several seconds later, Apelu, his friend and the security guard at the office, entered, along with his brother.

Mark knew exactly why Jeanie looked this way—alarmed and speechless. They hadn't told any of them the news yet.

For good reason. He figured in an environment like this, they'd be less likely to go ballistic on her. "I'm telling them right now. Relax." He took her left hand and spun her ring with his finger

inside her palm.

She gulped. “We have something to tell you,” she started before he could even blink.

Apparently, this was more of the kick-ass, brave Jeanie he adored.

“Go on . . . You’ve already begun—tell them,” he whispered into her ear, leaning into her.

“We’re getting married in three months,” she announced so loud that even the parents of the children he worked with were gasping and getting teary-eyed.

Everyone was congratulating them, asking to see her engagement ring, and even Toloa hugged her.

Kueili, however, stood back,

studying Jeanie.

Mark approached him. "I'm sorry. I realize I probably should've asked you permission since you're her father now, but—"

"Mark, you're just as much my son as she is my daughter—I'm amazed you waited this long." Kueili clapped him into an encompassing hug and when he pulled away, he was swiping tears of joy.

"Thank you, Dad," Mark said.

He hadn't ever spoken those words before.

"If your father was still alive, he'd be so proud of you. You've found a terrific woman, and she'll take good care of you. I know she will. You better

do the same, or you'll answer to me.” Kueili wore a stern look, his lips stretched thin.

Mark would've found it funny, only he'd never seen this man look this fierce before. “Yes, sir. I'll take the best care of her every day of my life. I love her more than anything.”

“I know that. And she feels the same about you. Make sure it never comes to the point where love isn't enough. Be her best friend. Listen to her. Do what she says. Make her feel like a queen every day, and you'll be the happiest man alive.” Kueili nodded toward Jeanie. “That's what my daughter deserves.”

“I will—I promise. And you're

right—she deserves it more than anyone. I'll make you proud.” He hugged his “father,” and tried really hard not to cry.

Kueili gave him a giant hug in return and patted his back.

He let go and radiated warmth and sunshine at Mark. “You’re a good boy. Always were.”

“Thank you, sir.” Shit—Mark was on the verge of tears. He sniffed. “I appreciate you saying that.”

“You met her family?” Kueili was watching Jeanie again, beaming the way only a loving father could at a daughter he cherished.

“I have. And it was as bad as she warned me. I didn’t even tell them we’re getting married, and I knew then I was

going to propose, but it took me two months to work up the courage.”

“Wimp,” Kueili teased, patted his back and then he was off and hugging Jeanie, crying again.

She broke down and cried in his arms. Her father rocked her back and forth and whispered words of what could only be encouragement and praise into her ear like he’d done briefly for Mark.

She was so happy, she was almost levitating like an angel. And if he had wings, he’d be right behind her.

Maybe not an angel since he had an overwhelming urge to tie her to his bed, knot her to his bedpost and have his wicked way with her, but still . . . This

was the closest to Heaven he'd probably ever get, and it was all because of her.

\* \* \*

*3 months later . . .*

Mark's feet stumbled as he roamed up to his spot.

He checked his bow tie again. Fuck—Jeanie was better at tying these damned things than he was.

His chest tightened as the same man that played the organ at Pono's funeral sat in that same spot and played the "Wedding March."

There was a sea of people, sitting, watching, waiting, and then . . .



“Jesus,” he hissed under his breath.

She was the most gorgeous woman to ever walk the earth. He was sure of it.

She looked like an absolute angel as she floated down the aisle toward him.

He barely noticed Ashlen throwing red rose petals down on the white path that led directly to him.

Jeanie stared right in his eyes, her veil behind her, not covering her face—exactly as he’d specified.

Nothing was going to fuck with his vision of seeing her—his bride, marching straight to her Master.

Her necklace had been shined to perfection along with his ring Jeanie had

given him, and her engagement ring fit perfectly now. He was glowing from the inside out as he watched this perfect woman coming straight for him.

The pastor behind him chuckled. “You’ll pass out if you don’t start breathing.”

“Huuuuuhhhh,” Mark released a breath. She was so goddamn perfect, his chest ached just looking at her.

She stopped next to him, and Jay laughed at his side now as his best man. “Man, she’s dying to touch you. Grab her hand, you idiot.”

Mark’s eyes flung to Jeanie’s hands. They were shaking though they were clasped in front of her pubis.

At some point she’d already

handed her bouquet to Marly, her maid of honor, standing behind her.

Rodney and Tia were right next to the best man and maid of honor. They understood that family came first. And, really, even if they'd made this a small affair, if they could've chosen only four people to attend, it would have been the Finau family there, witnessing their marriage.

Mark took her hands—held them tight.

His breath was taken from him again as she beamed and her eyes teared up.

“Love you,” he mouthed at her.

“Love *you*,” she mouthed back.

His ears damn near rang when the

Pastor was shouting the words for the ceremony.

The man's voice carried better than any singer Mark had ever worked with.

He snickered when at one point the Pastor slipped into some pidgin English.

Jeanie giggled too, and even snorted a little.

It was perfect. That was the one word that kept flitting through Mark's mind—perfect. All of it was exactly what they wanted.

The minister cracked a few jokes—talked about how in love this couple was in front of them, and before long, Mark was curling his fingers around Jeanie's left ear, tucking a few stray

hairs away and then it was time for him to say his vows, after slipping her wedding band on.

They'd written their own vows. He cleared his throat, then began, "Jeanine Anne Latham Finau, I love you with every breath in my body. There's not a moment of the day that goes by, or ever will, when I'm not thinking about you and how much joy you've brought into my life. I am the luckiest man alive to have you. And If I were ever to hurt you, may God forgive me, because I sure don't know if I could ever forgive myself. I will love you, honor, cherish and respect you until my dying breath and beyond. This I vow."

A few "Amens" rang out in the

crowd.

Jeanie sniffled, and then it was her turn. “Mark Daniel Pierce, you are the author of my soul, the creator of my heart. When I breathe, it’s with elation, knowing I’ll see your smiling face each day when you wake up in the morning, and I’ll be the last person to see you each night before you go to sleep. Those are the simple things in life, but they’re what I care about more than anything, because they all revolve around you, as do I. This I vow—to always be faithful, true, and solely devoted to you and your happiness. I love you, sweetheart.” She took his hand to her lips and kissed the spot, hallowing it before she slipped his ring on—the one he’d been wearing for

months now. The one that was already a part of him.

He kissed her hand in return, covering the ring with his lips but keeping his glistening eyes on her.

The final words were spoken, which Mark was oblivious to, and then he was kissing her.

There were claps and praise heard throughout the chapel.

They turned to the crowd, smiled and then he whisked her away.

They would get through the reception, and then on to Hawaii.

There was something about that place that called to them.

Maybe it was the spirit of Haloa and Pono was calling out to them from

across the ocean.

When Mark had her in his arms, sitting on the plane the next morning, he whispered, “I brought some gifts for you, Mrs. Pierce. You won’t get away from me. I’m gonna show you love like you’ve never experienced.”

She turned to him, eyes heavy.  
“And I have a surprise for you . . .”

She bit her lip with a coy smile.

“Tell me.” He nudged her leg.

“Why should I?”

“Because I’m your Master and your husband, and I refuse to wait, because I’m a bastard like that.” He smirked.

She rolled her eyes with a soft laugh. “We’re on our way to the land of



fairies—Hawaii’s a magical place.”

“Yeah . . . ?” He grabbed her hand and settled it on his thigh. “Go on.”

“And every magical land needs munchkins.” She was bursting with happiness. “I’m ovulating. Today. I’ve been charting, and if you wan—”

He cut that shit off with a searing kiss. “Mile. High. Club,” was all he had to say.

She had her ass up and was heading to the bathroom where he knew she’d be waiting for him—*naked*.

Lucky for him, he was wearing a tie. Every fairy needed to be tethered around the neck, before they could be led to the land where magical creatures roamed free. Every submissive wanted

to be bound in knots by their Master.

He yanked the tie off, slipped it through his right hand and smirked as he stood.

His sweet little thing was no exception. She would be knotted to him in every way.

And these knots would never fade away.

## Afterword

I realize *Knots* is completely a work of fiction, but I tried to make these characters as true to life as possible. That being said, I must state some of the Tongan traditions mentioned in this story are based off information I learned while growing up around Tongans. I was told here in Phoenix, at Tongan funerals, all wore white. But when I did some research, it seemed other places did not always observe that, so I compromised and put the women in white and the men in black. I've also been told some places the women cut their hair off before the funeral service, while others wait until ten days after the burial. The choices

used in the story, involving their culture isn't intended to offend if it's not accurate to other areas, but share the richness and variety of this culture. I love their vibrant personalities, and colorful way of life. I was told emphatically, funerals were a way to celebrate the life of the person that passed on and always involved lively music, dancing and tons of amazing food.

I've also been warned by my advisers' for this novel involved in the BDSM lifestyle that what might be true for one Dom/sub couple is not true for another. Experiences and styles vary somewhat, so this is up to interpretation as to what a Dom or sub might do in these types of circumstances.

No disrespect is intended. I admire people in this lifestyle and those I've gotten to know. I can honestly say, they are some of the best people I have ever met and they have the most loving, enduring relationships I've ever seen. I try to take what I learn from them, capture it in a story so I can share this ethereal beauty with those around me.

It can be argued there is beauty in all types of relationships. I agree, but I cannot deny that the most beautiful relationships are the ones with open communication. And the BDSM lifestyle has that in copious amounts. If it didn't, it wouldn't work at all. I admire the rawness, the honesty of sharing dreams, fantasies, kinky toys and most of all, the

core of who they are.

Also, be aware, that when I write about Doms or subs, I make sure to mention if they are trained or not. Any man can call himself a Dom, but unless he's been trained and has done more than read a few BDSM novels, it would be best to avoid playing with that person. This is an art form, but one that must have an education through reading and hands-on training before ever entering into an agreement. There is absolutely no substitute for a mentor trained Dom. Believe me, an untrained Dom can be dangerous.

Just do your homework first before jumping in if this is something you intend to try.

Keep playing. Keep loving. And  
keep pushing hard.

That's my wish for every person  
that reads this work of fiction—  
happiness inside and outside of the  
bedroom with someone that loves you  
for who you are.

Like Jeanie—you're worth it!

## More Works from this Author

### Current novels:

*Sleeves* (scifi erotica)

<http://bit.ly/SleevesErotica>

Kel isn't at all the animal locked in a cage that he appears to be. Secrets keep him there, hidden from those who hunt him. But what does a man do when he needs physical contact to survive, but can't stand the burning pain that comes with another's touch? He's found a way to get a small fraction of his needs met at the nightclub, *Sleeves*. What happens when he lets in an unknown woman with a healing hand? Casey can see past the



vulgar mouth to the affection-starved man hiding inside. When she does, all hell breaks loose, and the past finds him. Will he be able to avoid the agency, or will they add Casey to their twisted experiments? She entered the cage with him, and now it seems there's no way out.

*Slick as Ides* (scifi erotica)

<http://bit.ly/SlickAsIdes>

What happens when a germophobe, elusive computer hacking genius has to stop to fuel up her car and it's stolen right from under her nose by a handsome vagrant? Revenge of course. Only he's no vagrant. He's a computer hacking

genius, too, and her competition. Curses along with inhibitions—fly out the window and through the phone when he calls repeatedly to harasses her. Who will win the upper-hand, if there is such a thing, between these two stubborn, obnoxious people?

**Coming November 22, 2013**

***SHROAG 50*** (scifi and historical erotica)

Symptoms of time travel are never fun—ask Guy Moore. He just returned, and now he's being thrown back in time. His assignment? To impregnate Anne Boleyn. As an agent of SHROAG, he's completed more assignments than any

other agent and is ready to retire. Too bad Elizabeth I needs to be born to preserve history, and his DNA is the only one to do it. How will Guy seduce Anne, the woman who kept Henry VIII at arm's length for over seven years? And how will he keep from falling for her in his efforts?

**Coming Winter 2013**

***See Rick Run*** (contemporary BDSM)

Rick's a professor, teaching Deviance and Social Control. Lacy's his student. He's hot, she's smart. A little experiment in a BDSM chat room after the semester ends starts a race to figure out which

dick he is. He's not the boring middle-aged man that his students think he is, and Lacy is determined to find him. She might have to flog him for making her crazy for him, but that's only if she can catch him. Rick's got skills, and hiding who he is, that's one of them.

### ***Pearl on Cherry*** (historical BDSM erotica)

Clarissa Stone never thought she had a chance to make it on stage, but a strike in 1907 at the music hall opens up a door, and Clarissa races to it. The path isn't easy, and especially not after catching the eye of William Berling Ferrismore III. Money and power have gone to his head and he uses that to his advantage—

sating his sexual appetite with the women on stage. Clarissa won't be caught so easy, but William doesn't play by the rules. How can she prove her worth as an actress with his defaming ways?

**Coming Spring 2014**

***Scrapping Tin*** (scifi erotica)

Combat isn't easy, sacrifices are made. When Allie wakes up in a hospital after an attack and being shot, she's shocked by the doctor overseeing her. He's too good to be true, and maybe he is. Tins look just like humans, after all, and are the dregs of society. Is Mitch Seaward

more robot than man, or is he really that perfect? Allie's father, a military commander, seems to have something up his sleeve. With Mitch, she dives in to uncover the truth, but will she be able to handle the heartache of the truth?

## Author Bio:



Chanse Lowell grew up in the desert southwest and still lives there with her husband, children, and pet cactus. She's addicted to three things—reading erotica, writing erotica and sandwiches with a side of erotica to aid with digestion. She grew up watching

programs with science fiction and historical fiction themes, and is determined she can combine her three favorite genres, creating a new breed of novel with scifi, historical and smut sandwiched in the middle.

The last thing she ever thought she'd do was pursue her dream to be a writer since her family tends to keep her busy. When she was introduced to fan fiction, she realized she wanted to see more science fiction and historical fiction to fill in the gap with lots of naughtiness thrown in, of course. Her true passion is creating her own worlds from scratch, letting her imagination go and take her to another place.



Having recently entered the BDSM lifestyle and discovering she's a submissive herself has opened her eyes to how few stories there are exploring the softer side of the lifestyle. She enjoys chatting online with others with similar kinky interests and has advisers in the lifestyle that help make sure her stories remain true and don't veer off into outer space. Although aliens probably enjoy kink, too, since they like to dress in rubber fetish-wear while traveling. At least that's her argument for why her new genre she's created is valid.

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