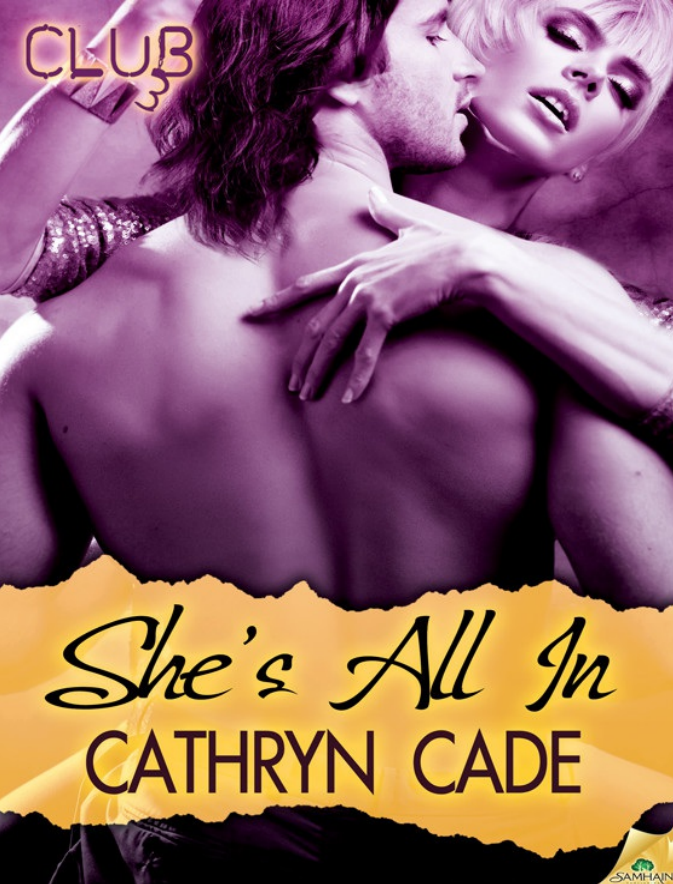




CLUB

She's All In
CATHRYN CADE

Dedication

To Tammie King at Night Owl Reviews.
Thanks for providing such a fabulous
showcase for readers
to discover great books and authors.

To all the women who have gone
through
Daisy's health ordeal in one form or
another,
May God bless and keep you in the
hollow of his hand.
You are beautiful.

Chapter One

Daisy Charles dropped the weight bar on the mat and straightened. Geez, could she get any more out of breath? Fifteen repetitions and she was panting like a puppy chasing a ball. Her arms were trembling from the strain of lifting the twenty-five-pound bar.

She was getting stronger, she reminded herself. A week ago, she'd only been able to do twelve of this lift.

She grabbed her small towel and dabbed at the perspiration running down her temples. As she did, her gaze strayed to the big, dark-haired man lifting before

the mirror that ran across the back of the gym.

Hmm, now there was six-feet plus of pure eye candy, with broad shoulders, a broad chest and taut, corrugated abs. He obviously worked out a lot. The glossy ponytail clubbed at the back of his neck didn't hurt either, gave him that modern-day pirate vibe. As did the brown-lensed sunglasses that always seemed to be perched on his face. The sporty kind that followed the angle of his high cheekbones, they looked great on him, but she didn't think he wore them for show, like some of the younger guys. And he wasn't visually impaired, because he moved around the gym with quick confidence.

She wondered what he did for a living to be that tanned.

She wondered a lot of things about him.

His name, she knew—his first name and nickname anyway. The receptionist called him Dack. His weight-lifting buddies called him Hummer, which made her want to giggle, because he was built like one of the big vehicles. In fact, the Big Iron Fitness Center could have been named after him. He was big, and those muscles looked as if they'd been sculpted from metal. She'd bet another part of him was equally big and hard.

He turned his head toward her. Even across the expanse of the brightly lit

gym, with people coming and going between them, she could tell he was looking at her. Awareness zinged straight down into her middle. Down low, where her girly parts were.

He grinned slowly, white teeth flashing in his short dark beard and mustache. He paused, holding his weights at rest on his thighs and just watched her. She froze, realizing that while she stared at him, she'd been swiping the towel absently into her cleavage after an annoying trickle of perspiration. *Oh, geez, Daisy, why don't you just showcase your boobs for the man?*

Her cheeks now even hotter than her exercises had made them, she wrenched

her attention away from him. Not only did that shaded gaze of his make her squirm, she was not comfortable with her breasts. Not yet... Maybe not ever.

Under the pretense of dabbing her damp forehead again, Daisy hid her discomfort behind her towel. She peered between the gleaming silver-tone weight machines, searching for an escape route. Every time the man looked at her, it seemed that mysterious gaze of his was peering deep inside to her private sexual fantasies. Which were twisted enough that she'd probably never follow through.

Pretending that she wasn't scuttling away like a coward, Daisy bent to

retrieve her hot pink water bottle from the carpet, turned and walked around a corner to the nearest drinking fountain. Away from that intent gaze, she relaxed with a whoosh of breath.

As she waited for her water bottle to fill, she eyed herself in the mirrored wall. Could he tell she was embarrassed? She was definitely flushed. But then this was a gym. Everyone was rosy and sweaty. Well, most of them. Some women seemed to leave looking as Barbie-doll perfect as they'd arrived.

Her short, platinum blonde hair was sticking up in the front where she'd toweled it. She screwed the cap back on her water bottle and reached up to finger

comb her hair. It was finally long enough to be worn in a boy cut instead of baby fuzz. Her stylist had been right, the color and cut showcased her eyes and her high cheekbones. She'd been afraid she'd look like a teenage boy, but with mascara and shadow highlighting her slightly tilted green eyes, she looked very feminine.

Especially with the girls. She looked down at her breasts as she tugged her snug turquoise tank into place. Every time she saw herself in a mirror, she had to remind herself this was really her. Size thirty-four C and perky as hell.

She gave up trying to get the tank to meet the low waistband of her black

shorts and turned away from the mirror with a last glance over her shoulder. Sara had been right. She might as well have bought the turquoise shorts that matched the top—black didn't make her butt look any smaller. Heart-shaped on a good day, bubble-butt on a bad one. Today was not good on her personal bun-o-meter.

She scanned the big, bright workout area. Her two friends were here somewhere. When this new gym opened right across the street from Sara's condo here in Beaverton, Oregon, the physical education teacher had chivvied Daisy and Carlie until they agreed to join with her. Sara being Sara, she'd even shared the tell-a-friend discount she'd gotten on

her membership.

Their Saturday-morning group training session had quickly become a habit. On workdays, they came when their varying schedules allowed, usually separately. Daisy had a long way to drive on Saturday from her own apartment on the west edge of Portland, but on weekdays it was right on her way home from work.

Daisy spotted Sara's auburn ponytail and green bra-top and shorts through the rows of machines and gym patrons. Her slender friend was coaching, while Carlie sat at the chest-fly machine, slowly pulling her bent arms toward her full breasts.

Daisy made her way between the rows of equipment, dodged around a pair of high-school-age boys showing off for two girls, and stopped beside Sara. She grinned at Carlie. The statuesque blonde, clad in black tights and a pink T-shirt, grimaced as if she were pushing the weight of the world instead of thirty pounds on each arm.

“You’d think Sara’d get enough of being a drill sergeant at work,” Carlie huffed as Daisy stopped before her.

“With all those little kids to boss around in her PE classes. But no-oo, she has to come and torture me every weekend.”

Sara snorted, making notes in a small notebook. “You need me, if you want

results. I'm on my feet all day. You're not." She slanted a sly look at Carlie, her pretty, freckled face solemn. "Or you could ask Jake for help."

Carlie's blue eyes widened, and she worked the weights so hard the two pads slammed together in front of her. "No way in hell. That man is scary." She cast a hunted look around the gym.

Daisy looked too. Dack was lifting again, huge biceps bulging as he hefted two humongous barbells. Jake, his equally large friend, who wore his hair buzzed so short she could hardly tell what color it was, stood nearby spotting for someone lying on a bench.

"Oh, he is not scary," Sara said.
"He's just big."

“Yeah,” Daisy chimed in wryly. “Just because Jake hasn’t smiled once since we joined.”

“Dack smiles, though,” Carlie said breathlessly, her rounded face flushed as she finished her set. She wagged her brows at Daisy. “I saw him smiling at you.”

“I saw him checking Daisy out,” Sara added without looking up from her writing.

“Not. I saw that blond guy checking you out,” Daisy shot back, knowing the best defense was a good offense. “Dack and Jake’s friend.”

“You mean the suit?” Carlie asked. “Gawd, he’s so handsome. He looks like

he should be on one of those spy shows.”

Sara shook her head, brown eyes uneasy. “Trace? He’s the scary one, if you ask me.”

“Must be a rule that you have to be intense enough to lift weights with your teeth to own a gym.” Carlie twisted between the arm pads as she rose from the machine.

“Own a gym?” Daisy gaped at her.

“This gym?” Sara added, stabbing her finger toward the mat-covered floor.

“Big Iron Fitness?”

Carlie tossed her thick blonde braid back over her shoulder, eyes wide with excitement. “Oh, I forgot to tell you, I overheard the receptionist on the phone

when I was waiting to sign in earlier. She said the owners, Dack, Jake and Trace, would have to agree to whatever the person on the phone wanted.”

“And you forgot to tell me this in the hour we’ve been working out?” Sara demanded.

Carlie smirked at her. “Ha. Your first words to me were, ‘You’re doing that machine wrong. Do thirty more reps, this way.’ So, yeah, I forgot.”

“Well, that explains why he’s always here,” Daisy said.

“Who, Jake?” Carlie asked. “He’s the manager. Of course he’s here.”

“No, I meant Dack.” Her friends turned to stare at her. “What? He is

always here when I'm here.”

“Yeah,” said Sara dryly, bumping Daisy with her shoulder. “Think about that.”

Daisy followed her friends toward the mats laid out in one of the smaller Ts that bracketed the huge space, her mind whirling. Was it possible the big pony-tailed weightlifter made a point to come when she did?

She caught sight of him across the gym, bending his head to listen attentively to a redhead in skimpy purple Lycra. Dack nodded at something the woman said and then grinned as she hugged him, not seeming to mind his sweaty tank top.

Yeah, right. Gorgeous women

plastering themselves all over him, and he was going to notice her, Daisy. Only when she practically played with herself in public, like that move with her towel. He was used to women with confidence in their bodies, not a weenie like her.

Turning her back on him and his fan-girl, she sat down on the mats beside her friends.

“So how was your date with that cute Realtor last night?” Carlie asked her as the three lay back in unison.

“You went out with what’s-his-name?” Sara asked. “Sam, right?”

Daisy winced. She’d told her friends about the handsome Realtor she’d met at a barbecue thrown by the Beaverton

office of WorldWide Realty, where she worked as a receptionist. “It started okay...”

“Oh, darn. What happened?” Carlie’s voice was breathless as they raised their heads and shoulders off the mats, following Sara in a series of swift crunches.

Daisy curled upward, her abdominal muscles straining. She waited until the man stretching on the other end of the mats left before answering. He gave her a smile as he rose. She looked away, breathing hard.

“Sam took me out to a really nice dinner,” she told them. “We had drinks, and he brought me home. He kissed me, and I thought I was ready, you know?”

But then he touched my breast and...I freaked. Shoved him away.”

“Why?” Sara asked, looking over at her while she continued to crunch. She wagged her hand at Daisy in a command to get moving. “Your breasts don’t hurt anymore, do they? Carlie, c’mon. Five more.”

Daisy concentrated on the burn of her abdominal muscles. “No. It’s just... I don’t know. I’m not ready for anyone to see them.”

“Wow, that’s rough,” Carlie panted, leaning back on her elbows as Sara finally let them pause. “But I thought you didn’t have much scarring with the new procedure?”

Daisy wrinkled her nose. How to explain that the scars were faint and tucked into the crease under her breasts, but just the thought of anyone seeing them sent her into a breathless panic. And she couldn't even figure out why.

“Maybe he's just not the right guy,” Sara interjected.

Daisy grimaced at her. “I'd better find the right guy pretty soon, or I'm going to do something desperate. Do you know how long it's been since I had sex?”

“Same here,” Sara agreed morosely. “The only guy who's asked me out lately is the new baby teacher at my school.”

“Baby teacher?” Carlie repeated.

“Fresh out of college. Not sure he

even has to shave yet.”

“Well, it’s not like I’m getting any.” Carlie sighed. “I’ve had my eye on a hot guy who stops at the same Starbucks I do every single morning, but all he does is chat me up and then...nothing.”

They exchanged frowns of commiseration.

“Oh, my gosh, look at us.” Daisy snickered at the sheer ridiculousness of their situation. “You’d think we were all ancient trolls.” Instead of attractive women in their late twenties. She was twenty-six and the other two were within a year of her own age.

Her friends laughed with her. Daisy winced, a hand on her belly as her tired muscles protested.

“Okay, one more set and then we can go shower,” Sara said when they had control of themselves.

Carlie groaned. “I may not survive. Make sure I look good when the EMTs arrive. Those guys are usually hunks.”

Sara rolled her eyes. “You’ll make it, I promise.”

Daisy set her jaw and threw herself into the exercise. Her workouts were her lifeline. She was able to sublimate all her anxiety, anger and fear in hard, continued action. She didn’t have to think or feel here, just move. Besides, the better shape she was able to get in, the more at ease she’d feel with her body—at least that was her working

theory.

Finished with their routine, the three of them stretched and then walked together to the women's locker rooms a short distance away.

“Are we meeting for lunch?” Sara asked.

“Sure,” Daisy answered, working on her combination lock. “Zellaby's?”

The popular restaurant was just down the block from the gym, and Daisy loved their chicken sandwiches. Although she should just have a salad today.

Nah, she'd throw together a salad for supper. She didn't like to cook when it was hot. And she really wanted a Zellaby's chicken sandwich. She was always starving after a workout. If she

wanted a certain huge weightlifter to feed it to her bite by bite, that was her private business.

“Okay, see you at the restaurant,” Sara called over her shoulder as she opened the glass door to the shower room. “First one there gets a table.”

“That’ll be you, Ms. No Makeup,” Carlie teased, following her with shower bag in hand. “Get a table by the window, okay?”

Daisy collected the blue plasticized tote with her hair products, skin lotion and cosmetics. She stripped off her sweaty workout gear, stuffed it in her duffel, wrapped a towel loosely around herself and headed back for the showers.

The locker room had been split down the middle by a long partition, with banks of lockers and benches on one side and sinks on the opposite side of the room. Mirrors and long counters lined both sides of the middle partition, which T-ed at both ends, adding another layer of privacy to those using the mirrors.

Daisy skirted around two women chatting while they blow-dried their long hair at the mirrors nearest the lockers. They were both in their undies, skimpy lace garments that showcased their fit bodies. Daisy smiled at the pretty Asian when their eyes met in the mirror, and slipped around the stonework partition that shielded the entrance to the showers.

The other one was the redhead who'd been hanging on Dack, so while Daisy glanced at her curiously as she passed, she avoided eye contact. Which probably made her a jealous bitch, but she couldn't help her visceral reaction.

The Big Iron bathrooms and shower areas were well-built, with beige stone tiles and good lighting. It was one of the things that had helped her decide to pay for a membership here—bathrooms mattered to women, and whoever had built this place understood that.

Her favorite shower cubicle in the corner was empty, so she stepped in, drawing the curtain shut behind herself. She sighed with pleasure as the warm water sluiced the sticky perspiration

from her skin and hair.

Most of the women dried off in the open area between the rows of showers, but Daisy wasn't ready for that yet. She whisked her towel into the shower. After drying off, she applied her favorite almond lotion and then dressed in one of her new undies sets, this one raspberry lace. The bra had sturdy underwire, but was light and comfortable.

After stepping out of the shower, she pulled on a ribbed tank top that was nearly the same color, a short flowered skirt and her favorite flip-flops of beige leather. She regarded her toes with satisfaction—her new pedicure looked great, her nails gold with dainty flowers

on her big toes.

On the way out of the showers, she negotiated the glass door, but dropped her wet towel. She scooped it off the tile floor, then froze with it in her hand as she heard a familiar name.

“Did you hear Dack wants to do theme nights at the club?” a woman asked in a hushed tone. The two were still at the mirrors.

“Seriously?” Her companion drew the word out in a tone of awe. “Oh my God, that’s so cool.”

“Yeah, I can totally see him in western wear.”

“Trace is the one I wanna see... In chaps and nothing else. That man is hot.”

The two giggled. Daisy frowned,

bewildered. Theme night here at the gym? No way, they must be talking about some other club.

“Are you going tonight?”

“Of course. I asked Jake if he’d...you know, play with me.”

“Seriously?” That seemed to be the chick’s favorite word. “You’re going to let him take you upstairs? That’s the only way he’ll do you.” Upstairs, where? Sounded ominous, the way she said it.

“Hey, I’ve always wanted him to spank me.” Spanking? What the hell?

“Sh-shhh.”

Daisy froze. Oh, geez, she was totally eavesdropping. Had they realized she was just around the corner?

To her intense relief, she heard voices growing louder from the other end of the locker room. The newcomers were the reason the two had stopped talking. They didn't know she was here.

She tiptoed around the other side of the partition by the sinks and hurried to her locker. She tossed her things in her duffel, and then nearly ran out of the locker room.

Catching sight of herself in the mirrors that lined the hallway, she stopped. Her hair stuck up in short spikes on the top of her head like a rocker wannabe. She dropped her duffel and combed it with her fingertips. Fortunately, that was all it took to

restore her chic hairdo.

Her eye makeup was waterproof, thank God, because she really didn't think she could fix it without poking her eye out. Her hands were shaking.

Dack and his friends not only owned this gym, they were also involved in another club...and it sounded like an entirely different kind of workout went on there. Spanking? Leather? The mysterious "upstairs"? Holy freaking sex fantasies.

Oh God, if she had to look any of the three men in the eye right now, she'd probably trip over her own feet—or her tongue. She dug her sunglasses out of the side pocket of her duffel and thrust them onto her face. There, her expression was

less of a giveaway. Worked for Dack, could work for her too. All she had to do was keep her mouth closed, and she was ally-ally-all's in free. Or out.

The locker rooms were near the rear of the gym. As she walked the length of the big room, Daisy passed an attractive couple coming in. The guy had his hand on the woman's ass, and they were leaning on each other, smiling.

Definitely lovers. She repressed the urge to stare after them. Were they members of the other club too?

And, oh holy crap, Dack stood inside the open ellipse of the gym's front desk, along with the perky blonde day receptionist, Brittany. He turned as

Daisy neared the desk, and her hand tightened on the strap of her duffel.

He leaned his hands on the counter nearest her and smiled slowly, his teeth flashing white against his neatly trimmed facial hair. “Looks like you’re ready for the sunshine,” he said. His deep voice curled down inside her.

“Yup.” Her mind was a fizzing blank. Leather, on that big, brawny body? She could picture that all too well.

His heavy brows arched quizzically over his sunglasses and Daisy’s cheeks burned.

“How about you?” she managed. “Hot day planned? I mean...big day planned?” Oh, she sounded like a total idiot.

He chuckled, a deep huh-huh in his chest. “Nah, just working.”

“Dack, can you look at Joe’s key card here?” Brittany chirped from the other side of the enclosure. “I can’t get it to scan.”

“Sure.” He straightened. “You stay cool now,” he said to Daisy.

“Okay. You too.” As he turned away, she scurried past the man waiting to sign in and escaped into the parking lot.

Chapter Two

If it weren't so hot, Daisy would have walked to the restaurant, but as she emerged from the gym, the sun slapped down on her head and shoulders like a heated blanket. She loved summer but preferred to be by a pool or a lake when it was this hot.

The air-conditioning barely had time to cool her car off before she rolled to a stop in the busy Zellaby's parking lot. She grabbed her small turquoise purse and slung the long strap over her head and one shoulder before locking the car.

As always, she gave her new baby a

pat before she walked away. The cocoa-hued Nissan Altima was a gift from her parents. She knew the purchase had sprung from the guilt and helplessness they felt at being unable to help her through her ordeal, but she hadn't even tried to talk them out of it. She loved the sporty coupe too much.

The restaurant was busy. The small foyer was crowded with people waiting for a table. Air-conditioning, voices and pop music poured over Daisy. She sidled past a pair of small boys tussling while their seated mother ignored them in favor of her cell phone.

Next she had to duck around one of the luxuriant ferns hanging from the restaurant's low ceiling. The decor was

cheerful and old-fashioned with everything from antique toys to vintage movie posters hanging on walls and support beams. Daisy wasn't sure where the ferns fit in the theme, but she liked them.

Her friends were waiting at a table by the street-side windows. Sara wore another Lycra tank and shorts like the one she'd worked out in, these brown, her long auburn hair bundled up on her head. Carlie had taken the time to apply fresh makeup. She wore a sleeveless cotton blouse in her signature coral pink. Daisy couldn't see the rest of her under the table, but she knew her friend, who considered herself fat, was probably

wearing conservative capris despite the heat.

As Daisy slid in beside Sara, Carlie took one look at her and pushed a tall glass of iced tea toward her. “What’s wrong, Daise?”

“Yeah, you’re all...agitated.” Sara eyed her keenly.

Daisy took a sip of the cold tea. Should she tell them what she’d overheard? It was really just gossip at this point. But as she looked into their curious faces, she gave in to temptation.

“You’re not going to believe what I heard in the locker room,” she said, leaning forward to speak in hushed tones. There was a large, noisy family on the other side of them, and the booth

behind her was still empty, so she felt sure she wouldn't be overheard.

By the time she finished repeating the locker-room conversation, Sara's and Carlie's eyes were wide and their mouths open in identical O's of astonishment.

Daisy stirred sweetener in her tea and took a long drink, enjoying their reactions. She was still shocked and, yeah, fascinated herself. It was a relief to share her turmoil with her friends.

"They own a...a sex club?" Carlie whispered. "Oh...my...God."

"Picturing Jake in leather?" Daisy asked wickedly.

Carlie's rounded cheeks flushed a

dusky pink. She pressed manicured fingers to her full lips. Then she nodded, a nervous giggle bursting through her fingers. "With one of those floggers." She mimed cracking a small whip.

Daisy looked at Sara, who was staring at her frosty glass of soda as if trying to remember what it was. Daisy nudged her with her elbow, and Sara flinched.

"So that's why Trace is so scary," the redhead blurted. "He's into that kind of stuff."

Daisy grinned. "They all are, evidently."

"And why does that make you so happy, Ms. Don't Touch Me?" Carlie's words were teasing, but she appeared

genuinely curious.

Daisy took a deep breath. “You want the truth? I’m so freaked out about my body image now and who I am sexually that it would just be nice...” She broke off, stirring her tea, not sure she could even vocalize her fantasies. Not without at least two margaritas inside her, anyway.

“Not to have to worry about what the guy wants, or whether you’re doing it right?” Sara finished for her. She took a long drink of her soda, looking like she too wished it were an alcoholic drink. “Not to be so busy figuring out how to please him that you miss out on all the fun yourself?”

“To let him teach you what feels good?” Carlie added, her blue eyes shadowed. “And have him make you feel special, maybe even treasured?”

Daisy found herself nodding, and Sara echoed the movement. Carlie picked up her own glass of iced tea. She looked at them over the rim, like a naughty little girl. “Maybe we should join their mysterious club.”

“Are you ladies ready to order?” asked a voice at Daisy’s elbow. She started violently, a tiny shriek escaping.

Sara and Carlie snickered. Daisy clapped a hand over her heart.

“Sorry I startled you,” said the young waiter, his eyes twinkling. He didn’t

look sorry. His golden-skinned face was taut as if he were trying not to laugh out loud.

“‘S okay,” Daisy said.

They ordered, and he strode away. She groaned. “That sneak. I thought I was going to have heart failure.”

“Do you think he heard anything?” Sara hissed.

“No, I saw him walk up,” Carlie assured her, snickering again. “He might have heard me about the club, but he couldn’t know what kind of club.”

“That’s good, ’cause I don’t think he’s out of high school,” said Sara.

“Okay, Teacher,” Daisy teased.

The family behind Carlie began preparations to leave, two of the kids

peeping curiously through the ferns between the booths, so the three friends chatted about other things. Then their lunch arrived, and Daisy dug into her sandwich, too hungry to think of anything else.

She finished before the others, so she waved the waiter down for a refill on her iced tea and stirred in a fresh packet of sweetener. “So...I think Carlie’s idea is great.”

Sara stared at her, aghast, a forkful of pasta salad nearly to her mouth. “Her idea about going to their ‘club’?” She sketched a set of quotations in the air with her free hand. “Are you nuts? Daisy, in the first place, we don’t know

what they do there.”

“Well, yeah, we do. They have sex. And sometimes they tie people up to have it.”

Carlie grinned at her, pushing her own empty salad plate away. “You’re crazy, you know that? I wasn’t serious.”

“Maybe not,” Daisy said. “But I’m serious. I’m desperate. I haven’t had sex in months.”

Carlie shook her head slightly, her eyes going wide.

“Months,” Daisy repeated for emphasis, cutting her off. “That’s wa-aay too long, my friend.” She gestured at her breasts. “I’ve got these, but what good are they doing me? Zip, zero, that’s how much.”

“Daise,” Carlie managed, staring at a point high over Daisy’s shoulder.

Foreboding sent a chill down Daisy’s bare back...followed by a deep, familiar chuckle behind her.

She whirled in her seat, her bare legs sticking painfully to the vinyl, and found herself the object of the fascinated gazes of not one, not two, but all three of the men they had just been discussing.

Jake merely gave her a penetrating look, square, clean-shaven face unsmiling. Trace winked at her, his handsome face creasing in a grin.

Dack gazed down at her from his formidable height for a moment, face enigmatic behind his sunglasses.

He'd showered, she noticed inconsequentially. His tanned skin glowed with health and well-being, and his damp hair was combed back from his square face. He wore a faded blue T-shirt and khaki shorts. And when he shifted closer, planting one big, muscular hand on the table before her to lean in, she caught a heady whiff of aftershave and clean male.

"You know," he said in a low, confidential voice. "My day is turning out kinda hot after all, Daisy. Thanks."

Daisy didn't whimper, but she came very close. Holding on to the tattered remains of her dignity by a thread, she sat very still, gazing at his shaded eyes.

Heat scalded her face and throat.

Dack straightened. “Ladies,” he said politely.

The three men moved into the booth directly behind her. Trace said something in a low voice, and Dack chuckled again.

Daisy faced forward in her seat, her lunch rolling sickly in her stomach. The most attractive man she’d met in a long time—okay, ever, had just heard her admit that she hadn’t had sex in months and he’d heard her talk about her breasts. Could she just die now and get it over with?

Dack and his friends might be hidden now behind a row of ferns, but they were still there. And why hadn’t she

turned her back on him or said something witty? She'd just sat there, for God's sake, peeking up at him like a naughty puppy.

“Check, please.” Carlie waved her hand energetically at the waiter. Her face was bright pink. Daisy was sure her own matched.

“Restroom.” Sara nudged her.
“C'mon, Daise.”

“I'll pay at the register so you don't have to come back this way,” Carlie breathed. “You can owe me.”

Daisy managed to nod before scooting from the booth and stalking away to the back of the restaurant.

She owed that big muscle-bound

pirate too. And somehow she was going to make him pay.

“Oh, man, you are gonna pay for that.” Trace craned his neck to peer through the ferns as the three women hurried away like they were escaping from a fire.

Dack managed a last glimpse of Daisy Charles around the foliage before sitting back in the booth. Man, she had the sweetest ass he'd seen in...hell, maybe forever. Nice and round and full. His hands curled on his thighs as he imagined gripping that ass and using it to pull her in tighter while he fucked her into next Tuesday.

“Pay for what?” He grinned. “This is a public place, and she was running her mouth.”

“Like that will matter.” Jake’s deep voice was dry. “She’s a woman, you’re a guy, which means you’re wrong.”

Dack shook his head, mystified. “I can’t believe a chick that hot can’t get a guy to do her whenever she wants.”

Her face was real pretty too. He actually liked her super-short hair. The cut emphasized her high cheekbones and big, green eyes. They reminded him of someone—no, something. His mother had a Siamese cat with tilted pale green eyes like that.

He hated that damn cat, but he’d sure

like to make Daisy purr.

“Maybe she’s not into guys,” Trace jibed.

“Oh yeah, she is.” Dack’s grin widened as he recalled the way she’d looked at him at the gym only a few hours ago. Those green eyes had been full of feminine admiration.

“Maybe you should invite her to the club,” Jake said.

“Hi, guys, can I get you anything to drink?”

Dack blinked. Damn, their waiter had practically materialized beside their table. He reminded Dack of the genie in a Disney movie, popping up out of nowhere with a big shit-eating grin.

“Lemme think a minute.” Dack was

still reeling from Jake's suggestion.

The waiter stood relaxed, holding his order tablet. "New club opening in the area?" he asked chattily.

Jake scowled. "Why do you ask?"

The waiter shrugged amiably. "No reason. The ladies who just left were talking about trying to get invitations to a club."

The three men looked at each other. A funny feeling flickered down Dack's spine, like soft fingers.

"Nope, no new clubs." Dack slapped his menu in the waiter's hand. "I'll have an iced tea and a Lifter Special cheeseburger. Salad with ranch."

Jake and Trace ordered, and the

waiter slipped away.

“The ladies were talking about trying to get invited to a club,” Trace repeated. He ran a hand through his perfectly cut blond hair, his eyes twinkling. “What do you think the odds are?”

“Could be Club 3,” Jake allowed. “Wonder how they’d have heard about it?”

Dack was sure he knew. “Vicki came over to me this morning and asked me if we could have another theme night soon at the club. I said sure, and she gave me a big hug. I’ll bet you anything she was running her mouth in the Big Iron locker room.”

Jake nodded. “She was with her friend Bambi.”

“Bambi?” Trace stared at him.

“Seriously?”

Jake raised his brows. “I guess it’s her real name. It’s what she put on her gym registration.”

Dack thumped the table with his fingertips. “Can we focus here? We may have a problem.”

“You don’t have a problem,” Jake said, his eyes cutting back to Dack, amusement gleaming in their icy blue depths. “You’re so hot for that little blonde you can hardly keep it in your pants, Hummer. Invite her to Club 3. If she doesn’t like it, she doesn’t like it. At least you’ll know.”

“He said they were all talking about

getting invitations,” Trace said. “I wouldn’t mind playing with that little redhead.”

“Guess that leaves you with the tall blonde, Carlie,” Dack told Jake. “Lucky for you she’s an armful. You’d squash a smaller gal.”

“I didn’t hear Vicki complaining last weekend,” Trace argued. “Wait—she *was* complaining, but that was because you were using a—”

“Keep it down,” Jake rumbled, his eyes narrowed in warning. “There are little kids here.”

“And a nosy waiter,” Dack agreed.

“Yeah, sorry,” Trace muttered as a pair of elderly women walked slowly past, bound for the empty booth the three

beauties had vacated. “Anyway, I agree with Jake. Invite her. See what happens.”

“Thanks, fellas,” Dack said. “I feel all warm and fuzzy inside at your concern. In case you haven’t noticed, I get plenty of offers at the club.”

Jake looked at him. “We all do. That’s why we opened the place. But we’re not in this just for ourselves, Hummer.”

“Yeah,” Trace shoved Dack’s shoulder with the heel of his hand. For a guy in fancy golf clothes, he packed a mean punch. “We have a duty to the ladies, Hum, to make sure their needs are being taken care of.”

“The kinky needs anyway,” Dack said under his breath, and Jake winked solemnly. “All right. But if she slaps my face, I’m coming after you two.”

Jake bared his teeth. “You can try.”

“Jake first,” Trace reminded Dack. “It was his idea.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Dack assured him.

“What are you worried about?” Jake asked Trace. “He could never catch you.”

Trace, who was lean without any of their bulk, gave him a dark look. “Yeah, you’d probably hold me down for him to beat on.”

“Nah, I don’t second.”

Dack chuckled, and his friends joined in. As the club owners and acknowledged senior doms, none of them seconded or assisted with a scene. That was for baby doms, those new to the lifestyle. They'd shared women occasionally, but it was more to do a scene and to please the woman than anything else.

In Dack's case, it filled another need, one he was very curious to see if Daisy would share. He loved to be watched, loved to have an audience when he pleased a woman and allowed one to please him. He wanted Daisy any way he could get her, but more than that, he wanted others to watch him dominate

her, watch her submit to him and find her sexual pleasure when and how he allowed her.

The waiter set a platter before him with a sizzling cheeseburger and a mound of crisp green salad topped with creamy dressing. Dack's more immediate hunger took precedence. Man, he was starving. He picked up the burger and took a big bite, chewing with relish. Zellaby's had great burgers, and the Weight-lifter Specials were big enough to fill him up after a workout.

The restaurant had started making the new, larger size of burger and a few other meals after the gym opened. He and the guys showed their appreciation by giving away discount coupons to

Zellaby's in their new-member packets, and pretty much anytime the restaurant asked.

Jake had the special with fries, while Trace had a chicken sandwich and a mound of pasta salad. They all ate hungrily, conversation halted for the time being.

Dack finished up the last of his lunch with a sigh of repletion and wiped his mouth carefully. Didn't want to walk out of the restaurant with food in his mustache or beard.

He picked up his iced tea, which had been refilled. "Got an idea to run by you guys. I don't like the quality of that spank—uh, that bench we got from that outfit

in California. I've been thinking about building one myself."

"Sounds good to me," Jake said.

Trace nodded, swallowing. "Hell, you could probably sell them on eBay."

Dack snorted. "Like I have time for another business."

"Give you something to do in winter, when the building trade slows down. Better come up with a name. Gotta brand yourself, y'know."

"Already have a name. Bench Maid."

"Bench Made? What's so great about that?"

Dack spelled it for him. Trace snorted, nearly inhaling his pasta salad.

"Maybe you could get one of the subbies to pose on one," Jake suggested,

a gleam in his eye. “That’d sell ’em.”

Dack pictured Daisy laid out on one of his benches, pouting at the camera, her gorgeous ass reddened from a spanking. He shifted in his seat. Thank God he was wearing a loose T-shirt today. He had his second hard-on in an hour. *Down boy*. He didn’t even know if she was really interested in any kink, and if she was, whether it would mesh with his.

“Seriously, drape a pretty woman on there, dressed in lingerie,” Trace agreed. “Keep it legal but interesting.”

“Yeah, Daisy would look good in lingerie,” Jake put in.

“Oh, yeah.” Trace nodded.

Dack glared at his friends. They were like brothers, but sometimes they just didn't know when to quit pushing. "I'll invite her to Club 3, but not to pose for pictures that would be plastered all over the freakin' Internet."

"Tiffany would do it for you," Jake put in.

Dack leveled a particularly lethal glare at him. "That woman is not doing anything for me, ever again. And if you guys take my advice, you won't go near her either."

Trace laughed. "She ever quit calling you?"

"I finally had to have Mason talk to her with me," Dack said with a groan.

“He pointed out that there are laws against stalking. And don’t laugh, you a-holes. Maybe it wasn’t to that point, but it was starting to feel like it.”

“You’re just such a stud,” Jake said with a straight face. “I’ve thought about asking you to top me.”

Trace laughed so hard people turned to look.

“I’ll shove somethin’ up your ass, all right,” Dack muttered. “But it won’t be fun for you.”

Jake merely grinned. “So, back to Daisy,” he prodded.

“I’m not starting anything,” Dack said. “Until we have the ‘leave it at the Club’ talk. ’Cause I won’t get involved with any woman who expects me at her beck

and call twenty-four seven.”

Trace shuddered. “No relationships. I got your back on that one.”

Trace was the one who’d perfected the chat they each had with new female club member who wanted to have sex with them. Good-looking, always sharply dressed and with money to burn, Trace was a regular chick magnet. He’d actually had two women get into a cat fight over his favors one night at the club.

Contrary to popular male lore, it had not been fun to watch or to break up. Dack got bitten on his left forearm and Jake had some hellacious scratches to clean up. Both women had been put on

probation at the club. The one who'd started it had since quit, thank God.

Not that Dack and Jake suffered from lack of companionship—there were plenty of women who went doe-eyed and weak in the knees for a dom who really focused on them, and the women seemed to like muscles just fine.

Jake just shrugged, but then they all knew he didn't do vanilla dating.

The problem was, Dack was pretty sure Daisy could find plenty of other guys who would happily put a big diamond on her finger to have her. And by inviting her to the Club, he might be providing her with the place to find one.

Just because guys were into domination or submission didn't mean

they didn't want a girlfriend or even a wife. There were several couples with Club memberships.

Would Dack be facilitating another happy couple or gaining a new playmate for himself? Only one way to find out.

Chapter Three

Daisy said good-bye to Sara and Carlie in the parking lot of Zellaby's. She wanted nothing more than to head straight out to the Columbia River and go for a swim, forget her embarrassment in the pleasure of hot sun and cool water. But as she climbed into her oven-hot car and reached over to push the air-conditioning to its strongest setting, she saw the piece of flowered notepaper she'd tucked in the console where she couldn't miss it—her shopping list.

She scowled as she pulled her sunglasses out and slid them onto her

face. Her refrigerator was empty of anything but a half carton of yogurt and some limp lettuce, so if she wanted to eat, she had to buy groceries. She also needed a gift for her oldest sister.

Dana's fortieth birthday celebration was this evening, at their parents' home in Forest Grove.

Dana was a partner in a law firm, her husband a dermatologist, so she could afford to buy herself anything she wanted. Daisy liked her own job as a secretary at WorldWide Realty, but it didn't leave her a lot of money to buy expensive gifts. Luckily, her sister loved to read, so a book was always an appropriate gift and fit Daisy's budget.

Cool air blowing on her face, she

turned north on the boulevard, and of course the light turned red, so she had to stop directly in front of Big Iron Fitness. She scowled at the gym's facade. Next time she saw Dack, the memory of her faux pas would hang between them like a flashing neon sign.

If only she didn't have such a big mouth. She could almost hear her middle-school teacher, Ms. Lumley. *"Daisy, you're a bright girl, but so impulsive. Try to think before you speak."* Come to think of it, she'd heard that from her parents plenty of times too.

A horn sounded impatiently behind her, and she saw that the light had changed, the pickup in front of her

already through the intersection. With a wave of apology, she followed.

Several blocks north, a large sign on the left beckoned shoppers to Cedar Hills Crossing, a mall that contained one of her favorite places. Powell's City of Books main store was downtown in the heart of Portland, but while Daisy got a kick out of the colored staircases that led readers through the maze of books in the creaky old store, she loved the hip, minimalist style of Powell's new satellite.

She found a parking spot in front of the mall entrance and hurried across the parking lot. Heat rose from the pavement as the afternoon sun scorched down. Her tank and skirt were damp with

perspiration, although she'd showered less than two hours ago.

Inside the bookstore, it was cool and quiet, the tall shelves and display racks dividing the big space so that the separate areas had a feeling of hushed privacy. Ignoring the siren call of the romance displays, Daisy went straight to the literary fiction for the paperback version of a new bestseller. Then, gift chosen, she wandered through the racks toward romance.

On the way, she found herself in the self-help section. She'd read two books on healing in the last year, and they'd helped her a lot. Would she find anything interesting today? Addiction? No, not a

problem. Weight loss? No, she wasn't going on a diet regimen to lose those five extra pounds, so why fool herself? Exercise? No, she had Sara to coach her through workouts.

However, she slowed and then stopped in front of the section on sex. A shiny red paperback with black letters caught her eye. *Your Sexuality and You: Normal is Broader Than You Think*. Daisy glanced self-consciously in both directions, but the only other customer in the aisle was engrossed in the book she held.

Tucking Dana's gift under her elbow, Daisy slid the book off the shelf and opened it. The authors were a man and a woman, both with plenty of degrees after

their names, so she guessed they knew what they were talking about. She skimmed her fingertip down the table of contents and stopped on the title of chapter five, a thrill pinging through her. *BDSM: What it is, what it isn't*. That's what they called the kind of play Dack was into.

She flipped to that chapter and began to read. *BDSM. Bondage, domination, sadism and masochism. May also mean bondage, domination and submission.*

We've all heard of it. The term is bandied about in popular fiction, especially erotica, with abandon, but what does it really mean? And what can it offer you in terms of sexual

fulfillment? Is this practice within the bounds of healthy sexual behavior?

First, there are as many levels as there are people involved. BDSM can be anything from a total lifestyle to sexual play in the privacy of a couple's home.

Daisy finished the page, her heart beating faster. She liked the authors' straightforward way of putting things. They understood that maybe a person was intrigued but didn't want to do anything disgusting, demeaning or dangerous.

She looked at the price tag. Twenty dollars, pretty steep for her budget along with Dana's gift, but she really wanted this book.

“Can you put these in separate bags?” she asked at the register.

“Sure, no prob,” the tattooed clerk agreed. “Cash or card?”

Daisy paid, carried her two bags out to her car and tucked them in the trunk. Then she got into her car. She caught sight of her reflection in the rearview mirror and grinned gleefully. She was really going to do it. She was going to explore a little.

She'd known for a long time that she found the idea of being at a guy's command sexually really hot. Of subjugating her will to his and, as Sara and Carlie had said, letting him figure out what would make her come.

Increasingly, it seemed the only way she was going to work through her fears.

Especially after the disastrous end of her last date. Sam was a great guy, and she had tried so hard to want him. But she just didn't. He was too nice. And when he'd asked if he could touch her, she'd been able to say no, so she hadn't had to push through her fears.

Instinctively, she knew Dack was a different proposition. And now she knew why. He owned an actual sex club, holy moly. Bingo's in downtown Portland was a sex club. But it was for swingers, people who wanted to share partners or have public sex, or watch. They didn't have any activities more kinky than those, or none that they billed, anyway.

Daisy had thought about going there but wasn't interested enough to follow through.

But the woman at Big Iron had mentioned Jake spanking her, so Daisy was pretty sure Dack, Jake and Trace's club was a place to find some kink. Her new book probably had some information about the kinds of activities they participated in and maybe even led. In front of other people.

She shifted in her car seat. Her panties were damp with more than perspiration. Just thinking about what might go on at this club turned her on. And thinking about Dack doing it to her turned her on a lot.

The Sunset Highway was backed up with Portlanders trying to escape the city on a beautiful summer Saturday, so she drove winding back roads to her apartment. Past older homes being fixed up by young couples, past small businesses hanging on and new mini-malls tucked amongst apartment complexes.

Her favorite grocery, FG Meyer, wasn't crowded on a hot, sunny Saturday, so Daisy made it around the store in good time. But it was a big store. By the time her cart was full, she had only an hour to get her groceries home, wrap Dana's book and get to her parents' place. They lived a good twenty

minutes from her apartment. If she didn't get there reasonably on time, her mother would be worrying that something had happened to her youngest. She wouldn't say anything, but she'd have that look in her eyes.

She managed to obey most of the speed limits on the way back home, but when she turned off into the parking lot of her apartment complex, it was blocked by a moving van. Two burly men were wrestling a sofa up the walk. Growling under her breath with frustration, Daisy backed up, drove the long way around on the street to the other entrance, and finally made it into her parking spot. Grabbing as many of her groceries as she could carry in one

load, she headed for the outside stairs up to her second-floor apartment.

River Oaks was a typical bland apartment complex, painted beige with lighter trim, a few shrubs in the parking lot dividers. But it was shaded in the afternoon by the huge oaks that grew along the creek bank, there were security cameras in the parking lot, and the manager made sure repairs were done. No loud music was allowed past ten p.m. on weeknights and midnight on weekends.

Usually Daisy took the time to enjoy the view of the creek from her tiny balcony, but today she fumbled her door open, practically threw her perishables

in her refrigerator and dashed back down for the second load.

She left the rest of her groceries sitting in their bags in her tiny galley kitchen. Grabbing the books, she slapped them down on her round oak table, checked to see which was Dana's and then scrabbled in the cupboard for gift wrap and ribbon. She found those, but no scotch tape.

"Dammit, dammit." She jerked open her junk drawer, searching for the tape.

Daisy found the tape wedged in the back of her chaotic utility drawer, with a piece of twine stuck to it. She really needed to tidy that drawer.

She decided to leave Dana's book in the bag, using the bag as padding like

tissue paper. In a few moments, the book was wrapped in chartreuse paper with bright turquoise ribbon, a birthday card tucked under the ribbon. Daisy gave it a pat of satisfaction and hurried into her bedroom to grab her swimsuit and cover-up.

When she pulled into the wide, circular drive before her parent's home in Gresham, there were already two vehicles parked near the front entryway, a cream Cadillac SUV and a blue Lexus. Her sisters and their families were here.

Daisy unlocked the front door of the sprawling brick home and walked

through the cool, tiled entryway and big, open kitchen. The smell of some savory potato dish filled the kitchen, and a large, chocolate layer cake sat on the broad island under a glass cake bell.

She paused inside the french doors leading to the backyard. Outside, the late-afternoon sun poured down, limning in gold the expanse of green lawn, terracotta-hued patio and turquoise pool. Dana's two adolescent girls were splashing in the pool, nearly identical with their wet blonde hair and frilly swimsuits.

Daisy's other sister Deb sat with her feet dangling in the water. Slender in her blue tank suit, she was wet from a swim, as was her husband. Antoine was as

dark as she was blonde. They sat side by side, squinting into the sun, smiling at the people who sat nearby around the large glass-and-metal dining table under a shady umbrella.

Dana and her husband lounged at the table along with Daisy's parents. Brightly wrapped gifts were piled before Dana, poised and chic in a red swimsuit with her dark blonde hair wet. Her husband, John, was as silver-haired as Daisy's parents, though his lean face was unlined.

For a moment, Daisy watched them all, affection and reluctance tangled inside her. She loved her family dearly, but sometimes...it would be nice not to

be the odd one out, the wounded duckling everyone treated so carefully. The baby of the family.

Taking a deep breath, she pasted a smile on her face and slid open the screen door to step outside. “Hi, everybody.”

“Oh, here you are.” Amid a chorus of hellos, Maura Charles rose and hurried around the table, trim in a sleeveless coral shirt and plaid shorts, her silver hair waving about her pretty face. She enveloped Daisy in a hug and looked her over approvingly as she stepped back. “Don’t you look pretty. That raspberry is really your color. Did you get tied up in traffic?”

“I went to the gym and then had lunch

with the girls,” Daisy said. “Forgot to watch the time, sorry.”

“Oh, is that what it was.” Her mother patted her arm. “Well, here we all are. Together. Doesn’t happen that often these days.”

“Aunt Daisy,” shrieked her youngest niece from the pool. “Come swimming with us.”

“I will,” Daisy promised, leaning over to hug Dana, who returned it without getting up. “Happy birthday, sis.”

She set the book on top of the pile of gifts, and Dana rubbed her hands avariciously. “Oh, goodie, a new book. I just finished one.”

“Come here, you,” William “Buzz” Charles demanded from across the table. “I played eighteen holes at Pumpkin Ridge, and I’m too damn tired to get up.”

“Tough life,” Daisy said, rolling her eyes. She walked around and bent to kiss her father’s cheek. He smelled of suntan lotion and cigars.

She gave him a look as she straightened, and he made a face at her. “It was just one,” he muttered. “Had to celebrate scoring under par.”

“Daisy. Come in the pool!”

Daisy turned, scowling ferociously at her youngest niece. “I said I was coming, you monster. Now hush before you break my eardrums.”

Cora hunched her shoulders and giggled. Behind her, Zoe grinned at Daisy. “She breaks my eardrums every day.”

Daisy could believe it, but she happened to know Zoe was equally as loud.

She took her bag to change in one of the guest rooms. She slipped into her new bikini, a black halter. The top was fairly modest. She guessed she’d get back to string bikinis, but...not yet.

Outside, she slipped into the pool to play with her two nieces, both of whom had new school adventures to relate. They bounced excitedly in the water around her, talking over each other as

she floated, enjoying the coolness and her nieces' enthusiasm. All she had to do was nod and smile as they chattered.

"Time for presents," Daisy's father called. Deb and Antoine clambered to their feet and walked toward the table.

"Do we have to get out?" Zoe whined.

Dana waved a desultory hand at them.

"No, honey, you can watch from the pool."

"And let your mother open her gifts in peace," their father added.

"Daddy!" the girls protested in unison, but they giggled.

Daisy swam over to the ladder and clambered out of the pool. Without bothering to dry off, she padded over to stand dripping in the sun near the table.

The sun felt good on her wet skin. She watched as Dana picked up the gaily wrapped book.

“Hope it’s a read I’ll like,” John teased, leaning over to watch.

At that moment, Cora let out a wail like a fire siren. “Daddy! Zoe pulled my hair on purpose.”

“Oh, for—” John shoved back his chair and stalked around the table toward the pool. With her husband in charge of the altercation, Dana continued to unwrap Daisy’s gift. She pulled the wrapping aside. Her eyebrows flew up, and she shot Daisy a look from under them.

Foreboding crawling up her spine,

Daisy stepped closer. The partially unwrapped book had a bright red cover. “Oh, crap,” she blurted. “That’s my book. I gave you the wrong one.”

Without missing a beat, Dana tucked the wrapper neatly back in place and handed the book to Daisy. “Good. For a moment there, I thought you were trying to tell me something.”

The other adults watched quizzically. Ignoring her flaming cheeks, Daisy took the book back. From across the table, Deb widened her eyes at her in a demand not to be left out. Daisy hesitated and then jerked her head toward the house.

Deb rose, satisfaction in the tilt of her chin. “I need another drink. Anyone

else?”

“Hey, what was the book?” John asked, coming back to the table.

Deb laughed as she passed him. “Shh. It’s a secret.”

In the house, Daisy turned on her middle sister. “You have to promise not to say anything,” she demanded in a hushed voice. Sandwiched between an older sister who excelled at everything and Daisy who was fussed over, Deb was quite capable of making a big joke out of Daisy’s faux pas to get attention.

“All right, all right. Just show me, for Pete’s sake.” Her green eyes, so much like Daisy’s own, were avid.

Already wishing she hadn’t given in,

Daisy drew the book from its wrapper. Deb's eyes widened just as Dana's had. "Dacinda Marie Charles, what are you doing reading about sex?"

Daisy rolled her eyes. "I'm not coming out as gay, if that's what you're worried about."

Deb snickered. "Are you kidding? I'm the one who caught you making out with Brent Paxton in the den, remember?" She opened the book to peruse the table of contents.

"I remember." Daisy crossed her arms to quell the urge to grab the book back before Deb saw which page Daisy had dog-eared. "You embarrassed the hell out of me by turning the lights on and asking him what he was doing with

your little sister.”

“Well, he was older than you. Besides, I was jealous that he was in my class but preferred my little sister to me.”

She handed the book back to Daisy, wagging her eyebrows. “Enjoy. And I love, love, love that Dana unwrapped it right in front of everybody. Can you imagine if the girls had seen it? Or Mom and Dad?” She snickered.

“All too well. So do not say anything.”

“I won’t, don’t worry.”

Daisy shook her head. She’d just have to hope for the best. Besides, even if Deb did tattle, she was a grown-up, and

she could read what she wanted. To be safe, however, she tucked the book into her car before she went back to the party.

After a Northwest barbecue supper of grilled steaks and salmon filet, potatoes, salads, fresh berries and birthday cake, Dana paused at Daisy's side in the kitchen. Deb and their mother were outside, clearing the last of the dishes from the table.

“Anything you want to talk about?” Dana asked casually.

Daisy stared at the plate she was rinsing for the dishwasher. Dana wouldn't laugh at her. “Sorry about the switch. I've got a fiction bestseller for you at my place. I just thought this book

might help me think about some things. I'm not sure about sex since...you know."

"I get it." Dana nodded. "I've often wondered how it feels, to know you look like most guys' dream girl, contrasted with everything you went through. It's kind of a weird juxtaposition."

Daisy nodded gratefully. "It totally is. Sometimes I feel like...I'm not real, you know? And I want sex, but I seem to be having trouble jumping back in there."

Dana sighed. "Well, unfortunately, body changes are part of being a woman. And you're real, all right. Everything that matters is still Daisy. Your head and your heart."

She gave Daisy a one-armed hug.
“You’ll be okay, kid. You’re a gorgeous, smart woman. You’ll figure this out.”

Daisy leaned her cheek against her oldest sister’s, touched by the solid confidence in her voice and her words.
“Thanks.”

If only she were so sure.

That night, Daisy finished reading the chapter on BDSM. Her head was whirling with new information as she got ready for bed. Clad in her favorite cotton tank and boxers, she checked the locks, turned out the lights and slipped into her queen-size bed.

She stared at the shifting pattern of the street lights on the wall as her curtains moved in the draft from the air-conditioning. How many of the things she'd read about did Dack enjoy? Did women let him tie them up and use whips on them and insert devices in their orifices? God, she hoped not. That stuff was just too weird. As was anything involving bodily fluids, other than orgasmic, of course.

But she could definitely picture him watching her with that knowing twinkle in his eyes while he held her with those big hands. While he put his cock in her and took her, pushing in hard and then sliding in and out, in and out... With a

groan, she rolled onto her back. She ran her hands over her full breasts, playing gently with her nipples. Thank God they still had sensation.

She stroked down farther, over the concavity of her belly, spearing her fingertips into the fluff of hair on her mons. She was wet with arousal from her reading. She stroked her fingers into her wetness and then circled her swollen clitoris swiftly. Her pussy contracted in swift pleasure, but as soon as she relaxed, she groaned with frustration. Her orgasm had been a relief, but it wasn't enough. It was as if some great, glittering pleasure hung just out of reach, tantalizingly close...and with Dack's name written all over it.

But how did she grasp hold?

Chapter Four

Daisy called Carlie on her way to the gym after work on Monday. She made the call sitting at a red light, stuck her earpiece in and listened to Carlie's phone ring.

It had been a long day emotionally—definitely a Monday. She was as frazzled and frustrated as the proverbial cat on a hot tin roof. Sam of the failed date had shown up for meetings with Daisy's Realtor boss. He'd said hello and smiled each time they saw each other, but she'd been uncomfortable with him in the office most of the afternoon.

He was a big, handsome reminder that she was seriously bent not to want him.

“Hey, you,” said Carlie in her ear.

“Hi. You know the club that the guys own? I want to go,” Daisy blurted. She had a feeling Sara would lecture her about personal safety or something, but Carlie was the one who’d brought up the idea, and even though she’d been joking, Daisy had seen the way her friend looked at the taciturn Jake.

“Oh.” Carlie was silent as Daisy accelerated carefully through the intersection. “Um, I think you have to have an invitation.”

“And how do you know that?” Daisy checked her mirrors as she spoke. She knew talking on the phone could be

distracting even hands-free, so she was extra vigilant.

“We-ell... I may have looked into it a little bit.”

“Tell me,” Daisy demanded, her hands tightening on the steering wheel.

“They have a website,” Carlie told her.

“Really?” Daisy listened eagerly as she followed traffic along the winding boulevard. Carlie was an account manager for EbiTeck, a computer software firm, and she worked with some serious computer geeks.

“Yes, really. I had to buy lunch for two of our guys to get them to find this information,” Carlie added. “So I hope

you appreciate it. They were giggling like girls over my interest in it, but they said they'd keep quiet if I fed them."

"I do appreciate it. Now gimme."

"The URL's too complicated to tell you over the phone. I'll e-mail it to you. And then you erase my e-mail, got it?"

Daisy smirked. "Yeah, in case Big Brother is watching, got it."

"I'm serious," Carlie said sternly.

"They may have one of those programs set up to ping them every time someone searches the club name. Some of the new programs are so powerful they can follow it backward, kind of like caller ID."

"What is the name of the place?"

Daisy asked curiously. She hoped it

wasn't something gross like Whips 'n' Leather or something, because if that was their attitude, it wasn't for her.

Carlie giggled. "Club 3. That's what they call it."

"Huh." Well, that was short and to the point. Three owners of the club, so they named it that. "At least they didn't call it 3 Dicks, or 2 Dicks & a Dack, or something."

She grinned at her own awful joke.

Carlie's giggle turned into a belly laugh. "You are terrible. I hate that word—dick. That's what guys call their thing."

"Well, what do you call it?" Daisy asked. "Their penis?"

“That’s what it is,” Carlie mused.
“But that does sound kind of clinical. I like the word cock myself.”

“Ooh, yeah,” Daisy teased. “That sounds big and firm and commanding.”

Carlie cracked up again. “It must, it seems to be what my favorite romance writers use.”

Huh. That was true. Daisy’s favorite authors used it too. “Thanks for the info, sweetie. Which I didn’t get from you.”

“If you’re still interested after you look at their website, then you’ll have to get an invitation,” Carlie reminded her. “Although the way Dack was looking at you, that’s not gonna be a problem. I think he wanted you for his lunch on

Saturday.”

Even though her friend couldn't see her, Daisy felt her cheeks heat. She made a noncommittal noise. “Thanks, girlfriend. I owe you.”

“Yes, you do.”

Daisy promised to let Carlie know what happened next and clicked off her earpiece.

What would she find on the Club 3 website? Was it graphic and gross, like some of the stuff she'd read in her book? She had a hard time believing that. The three men just didn't seem like they'd be into the really hard-core BDSM.

But what did she know? Sometimes murderers didn't look like they'd do the heinous crimes they were jailed for

either. But Dack especially seemed so good-natured, happy with himself. A guy with a twinkle in his eye like that just couldn't be into seriously hurting people—women.

He was sex on a stick, but he wasn't scary. She refused to believe their club was either.

Brittany was on duty at the Big Iron Fitness front desk. A short blonde whose shoulder-length hair was streaked with hot pink that matched the tips of her nails, she smiled sunnily as Daisy handed over her membership card to be scanned. Daisy smiled back.

“Hey, how’s it going?” she asked.

“Good. Not very busy this evening, so I’m catching up on some membership stuff.” The receptionist indicated a pile of papers by the computer. “How about you? Have a good weekend?”

“It was okay.” Daisy shrugged, hoping the gesture hid the fact that her heart was racing under her thin black bra top.

“Kinda boring, you know?”

“Oh, too bad.” Brittany made a sympathetic face.

Daisy glanced around, but no other gym members were lined up behind her, and none of the Big Three, as she’d taken to calling Dack, Jake and Trace, were anywhere in sight. “So, I hear

there's a fun club near here," she said casually. "You know anything about it?"

Brittany blinked and then looked down, shuffling papers. "Can't help you, sorry. I'm not really into the club scene, you know?"

"Oh, no problem," Daisy said. "Just thought I'd ask." She turned away.

"Have a great workout," Brittany chirped.

Daisy walked through the club to the locker room. Brittany knew something. Her body language had mirrored classic avoidance, with her refusal to make eye contact and touching the nearest object. The gym employees must have been told not to talk.

Damn it. Looked like she was going to

have to pull up her big-girl panties and ask the big guy himself for information. Maybe after a nice hard workout, she'd actually have the courage.

Of course, she could just ask him out on a date. See if he was interested in getting to know her. That would be safe, and then maybe they could segue into the sexual stuff. After spending time with him, she'd know if she was going to freak when he touched her breasts.

Much better idea. She wasn't really in the habit of asking guys out, but she could do it, for him.

But, on the one night she was actually looking for Dack, although the gym filled up with lots of people like her, stopping

by after work, none of the three owners were around. Instead an older man with a silver ponytail and the physique of a serious bicyclist seemed to be managing the place. He strolled around the club, stopping to speak to members and giving pointers to some of the lifters.

Daisy was nearly through her workout before Dack strode into the gym. Her heart sped up even more. From her vantage point on one of the treadmills on the balcony overlooking the main gym floor, she watched him stop at the front desk. He wore a baseball cap, T-shirt and jeans. Every part of him was liberally covered in some kind of pale dust. Didn't hurt his looks, though. He could strip that tight, faded T-shirt off

and pose for a Working Man calendar.

He talked with Brittany for a few moments, scanning the gym and nodding. Then he looked up, his sunglasses-shuttered gaze locking on Daisy with a click so solid she felt it in her chest. He didn't smile or wave, but somehow, she knew he was staring straight at her. Finally he tipped his head down, the bill of his dusty cap hiding his upper face, and walked back through the gym, passing under the balcony and out of sight.

Daisy looked around. Really, he could have been looking at anyone up here. There were women on treadmills on either side of her, most of them young

and attractive. Two of them were women Carlie had dubbed “fitness Barbies”, lean and fit with perfect tans, hair and makeup. She sighed to herself. Dack may have flirted with her, but who the hell knew what his type was?

Well, whatever. It was nearly seven o’clock, and she was starving. She had to shower, get home and eat. Luckily, her mother had sent leftover scalloped potatoes and barbecued salmon home with her, so she wouldn’t have to cook.

She showered, slipped back into the black capris, sandals and sleeveless white-and-black polka-dot blouse she’d worn to work. She loved the blouse because it was like a dressy tank with a cute tie around the waist. She fixed her

eye makeup, put on some fresh lip gloss and took a deep breath. Now or never.

Of course Dack was nowhere to be seen. Daisy wanted to kick the reception desk on her way out. Instead, she stalked out of the gym into the hot, hushed evening.

“Daisy!” Just as she reached her car, his deep voice called her name. The trunk lid opened, and she dropped her gym bag in and turned.

Dack jogged across the parking lot toward her. He’d showered. His wet hair was pulled back severely from his face, and he wore a low-cut white tank and gray shorts, soft workout shoes on his feet. The heavy muscles of his legs

worked like pistons, his stride smooth and easy.

He stopped, looking down at her. Mmm, there was that smell of clean, warm male. He should not be allowed within ten feet of any female after a shower, for her safety.

“Hi.” His voice was low, intimate. “Almost missed you.”

“Here I am,” she said, spreading her arms.

“Yeah.” His slow smile was appreciative. “Here you are.”

And here he was, all six feet plus of male-liscious real estate. His tight tank top was somehow naughtier than any garment she’d ever seen on a guy. It bared the broad, hair-dusted cushions of

his pectoral muscles, and one of his small brown nipples peeked at her, the other hidden by thin white knit. And his biceps? Works of freakin' art. She wanted to pet them and then just have him curl some weights while she touched him, felt the flex and bulge of those powerful muscles. The tank hid his six-pack, which was a crying shame. And the baggy shorts obscured his groin, but she bet the fabric would feel soft and slick if she cupped him with her hand.

Oh God, she was getting hot just looking at him. In a parking lot.

He shifted nearer, and she swore heat arced between them. She locked her knees to keep from swaying forward to

lean against him. Or melting in a puddle at his feet. The currents tugging at her were so powerful she was vaguely surprised they weren't visible.

“I heard you asked about Club 3,” he said, his voice a low, sexy rumble.

“Huh? Oh, well...not really,” Daisy mumbled, her gaze skittering up to his and then away. Oh, why had she said that? She did want to ask about the club. She desperately wanted to know everything about it.

“Where'd you hear about it?” he asked. His tone held only friendly curiosity.

She shrugged. “Oh, just some girls in the locker room.”

He nodded. Lifting one hand to the

edge of her open trunk, he enclosed her loosely in the vee of his body and the car. She wanted to kiss the smooth skin on the underside of his arm. Even the dark hair curling in his armpit was sexy.

“It’s a little more than just a dance club,” he drawled.

She blushed. “Um...I kind of got that.”

He nodded. With the evening sun shining through his sunglasses, she could see his eyes. They were gorgeous, a light color with thick, dark lashes, narrowed with sensual intent. All for her. Was it possible to combust from a guy looking at her? If the heat curling inside her burned any hotter, she was going to find

out.

“I’d love to see you there,” he told her. “Anytime you want to come, just tell them who you are at the front desk.”

“Really?” Crap, her voice was all soft and breathy. She stared up at him.

“Oh, yeah.” He nodded slowly. “I’d like you to be my special guest. Would you wanna do that?”

Mesmerized by the intensity of his focus on her, Daisy nodded. Oh my God, he was asking her to have sex with him. And she was agreeing. Her head spun, and she sucked in warm, Dack-scented air. *Breathe, Daise. Breathe.* Swooning at his feet, not cool.

He smiled, one side of his mustache pulling into the crease of his cheek.

“Good. Oh, you’ll have to read and sign some papers—in the club or online. Make some choices. You okay with that?”

She nodded again. He was going to kiss her with that mustachioed mouth. She was going to feel that beard against her face, and hopefully other places.

No, wait. Geez, where had her brain gone? She wanted to get to know him first.

She jerked her gaze away from his mouth. “Um, I was thinking maybe we could...” She looked up at him, and he raised his eyebrows quizzically.

“We could...?” he prompted.

“Go on a date first,” she blurted.

“You know, get to know each other. Find out if you like to bowl, or shoot pool, or swim or...whatever. Have dinner.”

His smile faded, and her heart sank into a chilly pit in her middle. Oh God, he didn't want to spend time with her, just have sex. He cocked his head and regarded her.

“Well, you see,” he said gravely, “I think you're really hot, Daisy, and I'd love to do other stuff with you, but...I gotta tell you, if it's not gonna go where I need it to, then it'd be kind of a waste of your time. And you are much too fine to waste.”

She frowned up at him, knowing her hurt was evident in her pink cheeks and set jaw, but unable to hide that. “So you

want to have sex first, and then date, *maybe?*”

He cocked his head. “Daisy. Why are you interested in the club?”

She shifted, cocking her hip and planting her hand on it, pursing her lips in irritation. “Because...I want to explore.”

He smiled at her as if they had a naughty secret. “I’d love to help you out with that. And if it works for you, then hell yeah, we’ll go on a date.”

Well, he had a point. She could date anyone she wanted, pretty much, but she wanted to explore with him. No, with someone like him. Obviously he wasn’t the only dom at the club.

Fine, she decided. She'd go to his club. And she'd try it out. And who knew, maybe she'd find another guy who wanted to spend quality time with her, as well as have sex. Dack wasn't the only big, hot guy in Portland.

Shoving the hurt and embarrassment away for later, Daisy nodded breezily. She just needed Dack to get in the place.

His brows drew together, but he nodded back. "Good. Got your keys?"

Keys? What keys? She had keys? Daisy blinked and then looked down at her hands. She held her key chain with the blue dolphin bottle opener she'd gotten in Maui. "Got 'em." Shit, was he laughing at her?

“Good. Keys are important.” Smiling as if at a private joke, he stepped around her car and opened her door for her. She stepped in, and he closed the door on her, then leaned down, one hand on the open window. “Drive safe, you hear?”

Then he patted his hand gently on the window frame and stepped back.

He was still standing in the parking lot as she drove away.

She didn't hit any other vehicles on her way out onto the street, although she had a close call with the guy in the old black pickup truck who turned right in front of her and then laid on his horn. Jackass. Couldn't he see she had things on her mind?

It wasn't until Daisy's cute little brown car had rolled out onto the street that Dack remembered she hadn't asked and he hadn't told her exactly what they did at the club. Oh, he'd said it was more than a dance club, but she might be thinking it was like Bingo's downtown, where people could just watch or do group scenes if they wanted.

Of course that pretty much described Club 3's main floor. The back bedrooms had a few restraints, but upstairs was a different matter. That's where the fetish equipment was, and the playrooms. He thought about the new spanking bench he

was working on and imagined Daisy bending over it obediently for a spanking for some transgression or just because he felt like getting his hands on her pretty ass.

He had to stop between two SUVs to adjust himself in his athletic cup. He shook his head as he turned to walk back into the club. There was something about that pretty little blonde that just turned his cock to iron and his brain to steam.

Hell, he'd barely escaped her sweet request for a date. Yeah, he wanted to date her and do all the everyday vanilla stuff people did. But though he'd bruised her feelings, he'd needed even more to be up front with her.

She would be wasting her time with

him unless she craved the same kink he did. Because he wasn't going to spend time with a woman he wanted this much, not unless he knew that at the end of a date, he'd get to have her...his way.

Although he had a bad feeling about that little smile she'd given him there at the end of their conversation. He rolled his head to loosen his tight neck and shoulders as he threaded his way through the parked cars to the main doors of the gym. If she was thinking she'd breeze into Club 3 and find another guy to play with, that was going to be a problem. Because he wanted her all for himself.

Outside the club, she could date as many other guys as she wanted, because

he didn't do relationships. Shit, that was another talk he was going to have to have with her. No relationship, no demanding to know where he was all the time. What the hell had he been thinking agreeing to date her, anyway?

His phone vibrated in his pocket, and he palmed it and checked the display irritably. His gut tightened even further. His mother. He could let it go to message, but then he'd just have to call her later. And she might need help with something. He was an only child, so she was his responsibility.

He stopped under the shade of the roof overhang to lift his phone to his ear. "Hi, Mom. What's up?"

She made him wait, the way she

always did, so that he gritted his teeth to keep from telling her he was kinda busy if she didn't really have something to say.

“Nothing's up,” she said finally.
“Can't I just call to hear your voice, sonny?”

He leaned back against the front wall of the gym, willing himself to relax. To be polite. She was his mom, and she loved him. “Sure you can. Anytime.”

“So how was work?” she asked brightly.

He thought back to the day he'd spent sweltering in the sun at the building site, cussing the substandard trusses he'd received from a company that had been

reliable in the past, and working without his best truss man, who'd been home sick from the bender he'd gone on after his girlfriend left him—again. “It was, uh, hot.”

“Oh my, wasn't it though? My thermometer in the backyard read ninety-eight this afternoon. Did you drink enough water?”

He rolled his eyes. “Yeah, Mom, I down about a gallon on days like this. You know, from that insulated jug you got me.”

“Good. Well, I haven't seen you for two weeks. I thought I'd fix barbecue this Saturday if you can come over.”

He groaned silently. “Ah, I have something going on Saturday, Mom. A

date.”

Oh shit, why had he said that? Now his mother would want to meet her. And he wasn't bringing Daisy anywhere near the Drama Queen.

“Oh.” She sounded equal parts disappointed and intrigued. “Well, how about Sunday?”

Trapped. “Ah...sure. Sunday's good.”

“Oh, good. Frank will be here, and you can meet him.”

“Great,” he managed through gritted teeth. “Can't wait. Bye, Mom.”

“Bye, son.”

Dack shoved his phone into his pocket and stalked into the cool, air-conditioned gym.

Yeah, he couldn't wait to meet the guy who thought he could take his dad's place. Well, he hoped the guy had a hearing aid he could turn down when she got rolling. Because she'd probably treat this Frank to the same bullshit she had his father. *"Where have you been? What have you been doing? Who were you doing it with? You missed supper again"* and on, and on.

He nodded briefly at Brian, the Asian-American kid they'd just hired to watch the Big Iron desk part-time, and headed on back to the weights. He needed to pump some major iron and get the endorphins flowing, shake off the tangle of resentment and exasperated

affection he always experienced when he spoke to his mother.

He'd rather think about Daisy. Even if it did give him a major woody. He was wearing a cup and baggy shorts.

Man, he'd wanted that little blonde the minute she first ventured into Big Iron. Wanted to arrange her on one of the shiny machines, naked, and have his way with her while everyone else watched, lost in admiration. A twisted fantasy, but it was a damn hot one.

But he'd kept his distance, because he knew from bitter experience that his sexual desires scared the hell out of most women. Not only was he a big guy, he was a dom. That carried a heavy responsibility. One he was comfortable

with and had been for years. But a lot of women weren't.

Some women weren't into guys who had an ugly scar on his face either. He'd taken a falling piece of rebar in the face a year ago and ended up in the ER for stitches. It had left a hell of a scar through his eyebrow and over his cheekbone. The doctors made a big deal out of how lucky he was to keep his eye and his vision. Yeah, he was thankful for that, but the woman he'd been dating at the time had been repulsed by the look of his black eye and the swollen red scar tissue and backed out of their date to the wedding and reception of mutual friends.

He'd gone to the wedding with some

buddies, wearing a pair of new sunglasses with amber lenses to hide the mess, and danced with all her friends instead of her. Took one of them home afterward too. She'd told him he looked hot in his shades, like a movie spy, and let him do her on her balcony, so that had ended well.

After that, he'd just gotten in the habit of wearing shades pretty much all the time. On sunny days he wore darker lenses; on cloudy days and indoors he wore amber lenses. With the lightness of the new styles, he forgot he had them on half the time.

He wondered what Daisy would say if she saw his scar. It was white now, and Trace had told him he didn't need

the damn shades anymore, but what did he know? The dude had *GQ* good looks, the kind girls creamed for.

Dack made out fine himself, but he'd keep his shades on. Didn't want to spoil his record now.

Chapter Five

Daisy stepped out of her car in the small parking lot hidden behind Big Iron Fitness. She slung her tiny purse over her shoulder and shut the car door. As she smoothed both hands nervously over her hips, her damp palms stuck to the buttery soft leather of her short skirt. She took a deep breath, and her breasts fought against the confines of her leather halter top.

She looked down at herself. She couldn't quite believe she was really here, dressed in brief black leather from her halter to her platform sandals. The

summer night was warm, and she wore a lot less to the beach, but this little ensemble screamed *I want to have sex*, and part of her wanted to dive back in her car and hide. But another part of her was so excited she wanted to jump up and down and squeal like a cheerleader. She was really here, at Dack's club. For Leather Night, no less.

All by herself. Carlie had waffled and then confessed she wasn't ready to dress in sexy leather. "I'd look like a piglet in a sack," she'd wailed miserably. Daisy wished her friend would get over her insecurities, because she was voluptuous, not fat, and because Daisy could really use some moral support. She hadn't even had the courage to ask

Sara to come with her, afraid the no-nonsense teacher would lecture her. Or hand her a pile of books about BDSM and demand she read them before they met again.

And speaking of paperwork, where was the signed release form? She dug in her tiny black purse and felt the reassuring crackle of paper. She felt like a kid going on a field trip—did she have a permission form signed by one of her parents? Ooh, thinking about parents, not good right now. They would so not approve of this excursion.

Dana might think it was okay. Maybe someday if this worked out Daisy would share with her.

Slowly, taking calming breaths, she walked across the parking lot toward her destination. The big old house loomed among the trees planted around it, a pocket of mysterious quiet illuminated only by the old-fashioned globe streetlamps. They rimmed the parking lot and lined the walk up to the broad veranda of the Craftsman-style home. Which was now home to fantasy.

The only indication that she was in the right place was the large brass number three to the left of the entry door. Daisy pushed on the old-fashioned door, half expecting it to be locked, but the handle moved smoothly under her hand, and she pushed the door open.

She stepped into a foyer lined in dark gleaming wood and burgundy paint. A pretty brunette wearing a leather bustier, miniskirt and choker smiled at Daisy over a concierge desk. “Good evening. May I help you?”

Daisy curved her own lips up, hoping her smile didn’t look as false as it felt.

“Hi...I’m Daisy. Dack, um, invited me.”

“Welcome, Daisy. Dack said you’d be coming in. I’m Rochelle. I have some paperwork for you to sign before I take you in.”

Daisy held up the paper. “Already read it online and signed it.”

“Okay. Wow, you’re the first to do that. New website.” Rochelle took the

paper from Daisy, perused it quickly and then set it on the desk, smoothing it out with her hand. “In that case, I just have to inform you that we have a new tradition at Club 3. The keys. If you—”

The door opened behind Daisy, and the receptionist glanced past her. Oh geez, that’s right, there were going to be other people here tonight, strangers. Doing things, and watching. This was real—no more imagining.

Rochelle stared at the newcomers, her mouth open, frozen in midspeech.

“Hey, Rochelle.”

Daisy looked over her shoulder. A tall, handsome man with coffee-hued skin and short black hair crossed the foyer, his arm around a buxom redhead.

He wore black leather pants and a vest, while the woman wore a red leather minidress and a choker much like Rochelle's, only the redhead's had an old-fashioned key hanging from it.

The redhead eyed Daisy and the receptionist with narrowed eyes, but the man smiled and winked at both Daisy and Rochelle, his white teeth flashing. He paused to tap a few numbers into an electronic pad beside a beautiful carved wood door. The door swung silently open, and the couple passed on.

Daisy's tummy jumped with excitement. In a few moments, she was going to walk through that door, and her night would begin.

She turned back to the receptionist, only to frown in dismay. Rochelle's café-au-lait face had gone pale, her lipsticked mouth quivering. "Hey, are you okay?"

The girl nodded quickly. "I'm—I'm fine," she quavered. She stared down at the desk as if she'd forgotten Daisy was there. Something about the other couple had disturbed the receptionist. Ex-boyfriend, Daisy would bet. Only maybe Rochelle hadn't known he was ex, quite yet.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Daisy asked gently.

Rochelle gathered herself with an obvious effort. "Yeah. Um—you can go

in, if you're ready. Dack should be here soon. The bar is—is in the main room. Margaritas tonight.”

She pushed a button under the desk, and the big wooden door opened again.

“Enjoy y-your night,” the receptionist said with a shaky smile.

“Thanks. I hope yours gets better.”

Wow, just like that, she was in. She'd expected more of a spiel somehow. Maybe Dack would give her that. Dack—was he inside?

Daisy walked through the door, her heart thumping in tune with the music pulsing through the room beyond. She was in a large, shadowed room, the main reception area of the old house. At the back of the room, a staircase slanted up

across the wall. The middle of the room had been turned into a dance floor, with several couples moving to the beat of a dance number. A DJ hovered over a small station with colored lights pulsing. Small tables ringed the dance floor, while a long, art deco bar straight from the 1920s lined the wall on the left.

There were two bartenders, a man and a woman, both attired in brief leather vests and white collars with little bow ties attached. Two couples perched on stools at the bar, while three single men leaned against it, one of them flirting with a barmaid. Daisy blinked and looked again. The barmaid wore only a bustier and a thong. Her ass was

bare. It was a toned, tanned and really small ass, but it was bare nonetheless.

One of the men at the bar, a handsome blond in jeans and a leather vest, started across the room in front of Daisy, then veered toward her, a smile dawning on his face as he looked her over.

“Hey, gorgeous,” he said. “Here by yourself?”

She nodded, enjoying his admiration, especially as she had a lot more clothing on than the barmaid. “I am.”

“Great.” He dug in his jeans pocket and produced a key. But not just any key, it was large and curved at the top with a long narrow shank. Old-fashioned, as if it had been used to open this house when it was a home. He held it out to her on

the palm of his hand. "I'm Kevin."

Daisy looked at it. What was she supposed to do? Admire it? The receptionist had mentioned something about keys, but she hadn't finished.

"Go ahead," he urged, stepping closer. "Take it."

With a shrug, Daisy took the key. "Um, thanks. I'm Daisy."

"No, thank you, Daisy," he said, his grin widening. "Listen, don't go anywhere. I'll be right back."

He strode past her toward the right side of the room. She tracked him. Oh, right. Bathrooms were in that corner.

She strolled on toward the bar. She had to walk around a large bowl on an

illuminated stand. The crystal bowl was partially full of small cellophane packages. At first glance Daisy thought the jewel-toned contents were candy. Then she blinked as she realized that the bowl contained condoms. She bit back a snicker. Okay...that was good, considering why they were all here.

Another of the single men, an extremely fit guy with his head shaved, walked toward her. Strutted was more like it. He was attractive, and he knew it, but it was the twinkle in his eyes that made her smile back. That, and his dark goatee. It suited him perfectly.

“I’m Mason,” he said in a gravelly voice. He sounded like a rock star after a concert.

“Hi, I’m Daisy.”

“You are the most beautiful thing to walk through those doors tonight,” he told her, his eyes still on her face. “How about I buy you a drink?”

She started to nod. She liked this man, liked the fun dancing in his gaze and the way he was focused on her face and not her boobs. She wouldn’t mind having a drink with him until Dack showed up. Then she remembered the blond guy, who was going to be coming back, expecting to have a drink with her.

She opened her mouth. Mason lifted his hand and laid one forefinger over her lips. It was warm and calloused against her skin. She stared at him over it,

shocked. He was certainly the bossy type. Was he a dom?

“You like margaritas?” he asked. “It’s margarita night.”

Daisy nodded slowly. He took his finger from her lips. “Good. Have a seat over there, and I’ll bring you one.”

Daisy looked in the direction he pointed. The lights in the room were mainly discreet wall mounts over the bar and colored lights pulsing around the DJ. The back of the room was wreathed in shadows, but Daisy could make out a sitting area with big leather sofas and chairs.

“Here.” Looking back at Mason, she found him holding a key out to her. It was black.

A petite, curvy blonde in a tight blue leather dress was walking toward them. She paused, looking from Daisy to Mason to his key. Her full mouth sliding into a disappointed pout, she turned and walked away.

The key thing again. Daisy took it with a shrug, since he didn't seem to want her to talk, and he winked at her. "Go on. I'll be right over."

Daisy put Mason's key in her small purse and skirted the dance floor, looking for Dack. He wasn't on the dance floor or among the people seated at the small tables beside it.

She wandered back, passing two more of the condom stands. She sank

onto one end of the sofa facing the back wall, since a couple was making out on the other. She looked at them and then away. She'd seen worse than that at college parties. She tugged at her short skirt, which had ridden up nearly to her crotch when she sat down. Not much give to leather, and although she was wearing undies—sort of, under the skirt—she really didn't want to flash everyone.

The pretty blonde sat in one of the chairs, swinging one of her crossed legs. She looked bored. She gave Daisy a halfhearted smile, and Daisy returned it. She wondered if the other woman would answer some questions, like what the deal was with the keys.

But she heard a deep laugh behind her, and her heart thumped with excitement. Dack. She turned, her leather skirt swishing on the leather sofa. He was walking toward her through the tables and swirling lights on the dance floor, listening to a younger man in jeans and a leather jacket, who was gesturing and speaking quickly, telling some story.

Dack wore leathers too. Daisy looked him over, excitement flooding her. He looked dangerous in a way that thrilled her clear to her core. Tight pants hugged his muscular thighs and outlined his impressive package in a way baggy shorts and T-shirts never did. He wore a leather vest, this one hugging his

impressive torso and highlighting his huge shoulders and arms. His long hair was tied back.

Daisy waited for Dack to see her, acknowledge her presence. But he was wearing another pair of those damn sunglasses, and she couldn't see his eyes in the dim light. Still talking, he stopped beside her sofa, and then turned and perched his ass on the broad arm of the sofa, right at her elbow.

He was ignoring her. Hurt and pissed, she scowled at his long back. She wanted to elbow him right in the kidneys. Catching the blonde's eye, Daisy gave her a what-the-hell look, and the blonde giggled, her hand to her mouth. Daisy grinned back, shaking her

head.

Dack was talking now, his deep voice a pleasant rumble. “Tony, I know, man, but you’ve got to take your time with it. Can’t rush some things.”

Daisy eyed his tight, leather-clad ass, wondering if she should go ahead and give him a smack for being rude. He could have said, *Hello, how are you, don’t you look pretty*, or something. She’d gone to a lot of trouble and cleaned out her next month’s fun budget to buy this outfit. The other guys certainly liked the way she looked in it.

Dack had something sticking out of the single back pocket of his pants. One of those keys—this one silver-toned.

Suddenly, she wanted it, much more than the two others she'd received. Even more than the margarita Mason had promised, and she loved margaritas.

Grasping the ornate head, she tugged on the key. It slid free, but then Daisy realized it had an attachment, a thin, stretchy silver chain of some kind. Oops. She didn't want to keep pulling if it meant breaking the chain.

Still talking, Dack reached back with one big hand, tugged the chain from his pocket, and offered the key to her in his cupped palm. A giggle bubbling up, Daisy took the key from his hand. She held it up to get a better look at it. It was like the others, but lighter, of delicate make. The chain, now that it was not

being stretched, had sprung back into a wide, ornate band about the right size for a choker. Pretty.

Seeing a sharp movement, she focused on the blonde, who was gazing at her with evident consternation and what looked like anger too. The other woman shook her head as if in warning and then sat back, her eyes wide as Dack turned on his perch. He crooked one leg up on the arm of the sofa, reaching behind Daisy to plant his hand on the sofa back, his warm forearm brushing her bare back. She caught a whiff of his delicious scent—that soap, clean man and shaving-cologne scent that was uniquely his, now combined with the faint scent of

leather.

He looked down at her, unsmiling. “You sure?” he asked, his voice deep and rough.

Daisy peered up at him. Then she scowled. It wasn’t fair that he could see her eyes, watch every nuance of her expression—not to mention down into the deep vee of her halter—and she couldn’t do the same. She looped the key chain over her wrist to free her hands, rose onto one knee and twisted to face him. The blonde and her silent warning were forgotten.

“Enough with the shades,” she told Dack. She reached up and pulled them off his face, carefully, because it could hurt to have sunglasses yanked off,

especially with long hair. “I can’t talk to you if I can’t see you.”

She lowered the sunglasses, forgotten in her hands as she gazed into his eyes. He had beautiful eyes, deep set under his heavy, arching brows, with thick lashes. The white slash of an old scar ran through the outer end of his left eyebrow, down his eyelid, then appeared again on his high cheekbone to disappear into his short beard.

But it was the look in his eyes that held her transfixed. Heat and danger glowed in their depths, a scary-sexy combination that made her heart race, her legs quiver with the urge to run and hide, or maybe just collapse at his feet.

Still holding her gaze, he lifted his hand, his warm, calloused fingertips brushing the back of her neck. What was he doing? Holy crap, he was going to untie her top, right here.

Daisy's eyes widened in alarm. She grabbed his brawny wrist. "Hey, wait a minute."

His brows snapped together. "Why?"

She couldn't believe he needed to ask. Heat flooded her face and throat. "Because, in case you haven't noticed, we're in public here."

That didn't seem to impress him much. Daisy blushed even harder, her cheeks scalding as she remembered some of the things she'd checked on the

Club 3 questionnaire. *Sex in public—possibly.*

“I—I have scars,” she mumbled.

“Yet you wanted to see mine.” His voice was cold.

“Yours?” Daisy stared at him.

His brows rising in a look that said she was possibly dumber than rocks, he pointed at his left eye.

Daisy gaped. He actually thought that scar was disfiguring? “Hey, that’s sexy,” she blurted.

He looked taken aback, and then a slow, wolfish smile spread across his face. “Maybe I’ll think yours are sexy.”

She shook her head, looking away. “Trust me, they’re not.”

“Hey, Dack, what’re you doing

chatting up my girl?” It was Mason, appearing at Dack’s elbow, a frosty salted margarita in each hand. He was scowling.

Daisy blinked. His girl? She’d agreed to have a drink with the guy, that was all.

Now Dack was scowling. At her. “Daisy?”

She could only handle one disgruntled male at a time. “I’m not sure why you’re upset,” she said to Mason.

He gave her a what-the-hell look. “Because you accepted my key,” he bit off.

“What? She took my key.” Oh, great, now the blond guy, Kevin, was back at Dack’s other elbow, and he was looking

daggers at her as well.

“Hey, I don’t know what all this fuss is about,” she protested, her voice quavering embarrassingly.

“Daisy.” Dack cut her off, his deep voice full of authority. “Explain.”

She wanted to quail before the three alpha males glaring at her. Stiffening her knees, she faced them, glaring back defiantly. “Explain what? I don’t even know what you’re so mad about.”

“Yeah, right.” Kevin shook his head in disgust.

Mason eyed her, his head cocked to one side. “No, hold on. I think she’s telling the truth.”

“Daisy.” She looked at Dack, willing the tears clogging her throat not to fall.

She'd finally gotten the courage to follow through on her fantasies, and now her exciting adventure was going to hell for reasons she didn't even understand.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the pretty blonde sitting with her arms crossed, watching. She shook her head as if unable to believe how much trouble Daisy was in.

Dack took her hand in his, lifting it so the key hanging from her arm was displayed. "You don't know what the keys mean? Rochelle didn't explain that to you when you came in?"

"No. Wait, she mentioned keys, but she—she wasn't feeling well." Daisy didn't want to get the receptionist in

trouble. Seemed like she had enough. “She didn’t finish whatever she was going to say. I thought she was going to faint. She waved me in and ran for the restroom.”

Dack grimaced. “I’ll deal with that in a bit. Now, where are their keys?”

Daisy handed him his sunglasses and dug the other keys from her purse. They lay in her palm.

She tried to hand them to him, but he shook his head, shoving his sunglasses on the top of his head. “Daisy, when someone—a guy or a gal—offers you their key, it means they’re a dom. And they’re asking you to be their partner, to submit to them for the evening.”

Her breath froze in her throat, her

tears forgotten. He held her gaze, his quizzical. “And when you take it, you’re agreeing.”

“Oh.” The work came out in a squeak. Holy crap, all three of these guys thought she’d agreed to—to let them do stuff to her, with her?

Dack rose, towering over her. “Now choose. And hurry your ass up about it. I’ll be back in a minute.” He turned and strode away.

Oh God. Daisy watched him go. Was he coming back? Did she even want him to? Well, one thing was for sure, she had to deal with these two guys first.

She turned to Mason and held out his key. “I’m really sorry.”

He nodded, looking as if he were trying not to grin. “’S okay. Put it in my pocket, eh?”

She looked at his tight jeans and blinked at the size of his male package. She was not going there. Instead, she tucked the key in a small pocket of his vest.

“You’re not getting one of my margaritas,” he teased, waving the drinks enticingly.

Daisy smiled back, feeling a twinge of regret. “There’s a blonde behind you who looks like she needs a drink.”

His eyes gleamed. “Good idea.” He turned away.

Daisy turned to Kevin. He gave her a

cocky grin as if sure she'd choose him. He was handsome, but he was not someone Daisy would consider actually hooking up with. With an inward shudder, she held out the black key to him. "I'm sorry," she said. "I, um, hope you have a great night."

"Oh, I will," he said, grabbing the key from her. "Hope you can say the same." He turned his back on her.

Well, okay. So he wouldn't be forgiving her anytime soon.

She sank onto the sofa, leaned her forehead on her hand. Geez, what a night. Was this going to work for her? She felt like there was a whole secret rulebook someone had forgotten to show her.

The music started again, a bluesy number with lots of saxophone. Daisy leaned her chin on her hand and looked around. Mason was perched on the arm of the blonde's chair, his back partly turned to Daisy. They were sipping margaritas and smiling at each other. The woman's eyes were sparkling as if her dreams for the night had come true.

Daisy felt Dack's presence before she saw him—a kind of electric awareness. She sat up straight as he resumed his former perch on the arm of the sofa. He said nothing, and her nerves sizzled with anticipation. Finally, she could stand the wait no longer and looked up at him.

He was looking down at her over his

crossed arms, like a potentate regarding a recalcitrant harem girl. His sunglasses had disappeared. Oh, man, the pose highlighted his huge shoulders and gorgeous biceps. She wanted her hands all over those arms.

“Still here, I see,” he rumbled.

She shrugged. That was a no-brainer.

“Stand up.”

Scooting forward off the sofa, Daisy rose and turned to him. Was he going to ask her to dance?

“So, now that you know what my key means, you gonna wuss out?” he asked her, one corner of his mouth pressing in, as if he was trying not to grin.

She scowled at him, planting her hands on her hips. “No.”

“Good.” He uncrossed his arms and crooked his forefinger. “Then c’mere.”

Daisy took the single step that placed her between his spread knees. He took his key from her wrist, stretched the choker with both hands, and lifted it over her head. The warmth of his big hands ruffled her hair, ghosted over her cheeks.

The choker settled into place around her throat, a light caress, the key dangling in the hollow of her throat. He eyed it with satisfaction, his hands spread on his knees.

Disappointment trickled through her. She’d hoped he would put his hands on her, maybe kiss her.

He looked up into her eyes. “Now, since you won’t take your top off,” he said, “let’s have your skirt instead.”

Chapter Six

Daisy's almond eyes widened, and Dack could practically see his command bouncing around in her pretty head, as if she couldn't quite believe she'd heard it. Her soft lips formed an 'O' of surprise. He'd ruffled her short, platinum hair slightly when he'd put his collar on her, and it reminded him of flower petals. Daisy petals, he thought whimsically.

"Take off my skirt?" she echoed.

He nodded slightly. "If I have to repeat myself, I'm not gonna be happy." And if she wussed out, he was going to howl like a hound dog tied to the porch.

Man, he'd wanted this little blonde since he'd first seen her. Wanted her and resigned himself to settling for other playmates. Tonight, her gorgeous tits and ass barely shielded in leather, knowing that she was ready to play his way, he was so hard it was a wonder his cock hadn't torn a hole in his leathers.

She swallowed visibly, her hands smoothing down over her little skirt. She was a study in contrasts. Spunky, always ready with a quick smile or retort and a body that wouldn't quit, but with a shadow in her eyes, as if she weren't sure she dared to follow through on the interest in her gaze, her response to him.

A woman shrieked behind him, her

laughter ringing over the music. Daisy's gaze snapped to the side, and Dack looked over as a little redhead darted past from the dance floor, naked except for a pair of tiny panties and her high-heeled sandals, her breasts bouncing. Behind her followed her date, grinning, her red leather dress hanging from his hand.

D'Aurien—the reason Rochelle was so upset. She'd been back behind the reception desk when Dack went to check on her, but her eyes had been swollen with tears. Women had a bad habit of falling for the first dom who spent some time focusing on them. He'd reprimanded her for her lapse with Daisy's introduction, but he'd kept his

voice mild and ended up giving her a hug.

Trace had promised to spend some time at the front desk with her and make sure she was okay to work until her relief showed up at midnight. Probably do a scene with her before the night was through, if he thought it would help her.

The redhead and her dom headed for the empty chair back in the corner. Dack watched Daisy carefully. Would the display scare her off, or would it reassure her that she wouldn't be the only female with a bare ass?

She reached down and grasped the tab at her left hip. Ah, she was going to do it. He watched, his attention so focused

on her slender hand that a bomb could've gone off behind him and he wouldn't notice as she slowly pulled down the zipper that ran from the waist to the hem of her little skirt.

But then she froze, her head down, the unfastened skirt still clutched around her. Time to call her back.

“Daisy. Look at me.” She peeped up at him, her gorgeous eyes shadowed with doubt. Whatever she found in his gaze seemed to steady her. “Do it for me.”

Do it for me, he repeated silently, willing her to obey. *Show me you want to submit to me, you want me to take you on the journey of your lifetime. That you want to blossom for me. Be my*

little sub, and let me suck all your sweet nectar. Shit, he was turning into a regular poet here.

She let go of the zipper, and the skirt came away in her hand. She dropped it in the corner of the sofa with her purse, and her hands went back to her sides. Dack barely noticed, because now she stood before him clad in her halter top and a tiny leather thong.

He looked down over her, slowly, memorizing every inch of her from the bodacious breasts cradled in leather, to her little waist, and down over the smooth plain of her belly. The thin straps of the leather thong bisected her slanting hips, biting slightly into her soft, pale

flesh. The small triangle of leather shielded her mons in the sweetest tease he'd seen for-fucking-ever. He'd already known her legs and thighs were pretty and toned, but they looked even better with nothing but her strappy little platform sandals on her feet.

She shifted, flexed her fingers nervously and then pressed them into the sides of her thighs, her palms flattening into the swell of flesh.

“Goddamn, you’re gorgeous,” he said slowly, his voice rasping from his dry throat. His fingers dug into his thighs. More than his next breath, he wanted to command her to turn around for him, so he could see her gorgeous ass bared. But if she turned, she’d see Mason scoping

her over his date's shoulder and D'Aurien checking her out from the corner, even though he had a naked woman kneeling between his own legs. Dack wanted to roar at them to turn the hell away, that he wanted to see her first.

But his cock was swelling even harder at the knowledge that while they were watching, he was the only one who got to touch. And he knew just how this was going to go down. He'd scanned her consent form on his tablet on his way in tonight, to see if she had filled it out.

Not only had she done that, she'd checked yes to two of his favorites—spanking and public sex. She'd marked two and a half out of five possible on the

interest scale for both, but what that told him—he hoped—was that she was interested but wasn't sure she should admit that.

And he knew the whole mess with the keys hadn't really been her fault, but it had caused an altercation between him and two club members. So he wanted some satisfaction, and he planned to take it out on his date's ripe, round ass. While she was draped over his lap, like a good little sub.

But first, he needed to make a few things clear. “Daisy, what are the club signals?”

She blinked. “Um, green means go, yellow means slow down, let's talk, and red means stop.”

He nodded, smiling approvingly. “So red and yellow are your safe words. You trust me to listen if you need to use them?”

She nodded.

He nodded back, acknowledging her trust. “Thank you. And I gotta tell you, you say ‘red’ and every dom in hearing distance will take notice, be at your side if you need them. Okay?”

She nodded again, smiling tentatively.

“What’s the second club rule?”

“Safe, sane and consensual.”

“And?”

“What happens at the club stays at the club.”

He nodded again, letting her see his

approval. Time to roll.

He stood and moved to the side and sat down in the center of the sofa. Then he patted his thigh, holding her gaze with his. “Come here, Daisy.”

She stepped forward, tilting her hip gracefully to sit, as he’d figured she would. He shook his head, smiling slightly. “Over my lap, Daisy Petal.”

He watched her stiffen in shock. Shit, if he gave her time, she was going to bolt. Reaching out, he took her slender wrist in his hand, wrapping his hand around it, grounding her with a firm touch.

“Daisy,” he bit off. “You can leave. But if you want to stay, do as I say. Now.”

Her breasts quivered in their harness as she let out a huff of air. Her slender wrist trembled in his grasp. Then she nodded quickly and looked down at his thighs. He could see her getting set to go for it. She leaned forward to plant one hand on the sofa beside him. He let go of her wrist, and she lay down, over his lap, bracing herself on her forearms on the sofa.

Dack's chest swelled, and his cock seized up so hard he hoped it wasn't poking her like a rock. She was a warm weight across his thighs. Her gorgeous, bare ass curved up at him, bisected only by the thin line of the thong, disappearing between her round, full

cheeks. Sweet Jesus, all his fantasies, bared for his hands and his touch.

“Mason, buddy,” he said without looking up from her ass. “Grab me a Number Four, would you?”

The other dom chuckled. “I’m on it.” He excused himself to his date and strode away.

Daisy twisted to frown up at Dack over her near shoulder. “Number four what? What are you going to do?” she demanded, doubt all over her pretty face.

He bit back the grin that wanted to spread over his own face. He laid his hand on her ass. Ah, she was like warm silk under his touch, soft and resilient. He squeezed and then stroked down over

the full globe to the tender crease below. Let his fingers trail up the crease, reveling in the way she jerked slightly and then arched up into his touch. Her eyes widened, and she sucked her lower lip in with her top teeth.

“Well, Petal,” he said, fondling her. “I know you didn’t mean to, but you caused hard feelings between me and two other doms. You need to take care of that.”

She tensed under his hand, shifting as if to rise. “How? I’m not letting them touch me.”

He squeezed her, pleased by her answer. She hadn’t said he couldn’t touch her, just them. “No, no. No one’s

getting his hands on you tonight but me.”

Mason reappeared, a wide wooden paddle in his hands. He held it by his side, low where Daisy could see it as she turned, following Dack’s gaze. Dack acknowledged his friend with a wink.

The woman draped over his lap let out a squeak of distress. “What is that for? You are not—”

Dack reached under her face, pressing his fingers lightly over her mouth. Her lips were soft, her breath a warm, nervous huff on his fingers. “Shh. Now, Mase, I think three smacks should do it for an apology. How about you?”

“No!” Daisy bucked under his hands, shaking her head vehemently. He held her down with a firm hand on her thigh.

Mason squatted to look her in the eye. “Sweetie, if I hurt you, you can punch me right in the kisser. If I don’t, then we’re square. How about that?” The guy had a way with women, no doubt about it.

She stared at the other man. She was trembling, whether from anger or nerves or embarrassment. Dack figured all three. She was new to all this.

“Daisy. Use your safe words if you need them,” he reminded her, squeezing her thigh. “We’re listening.”

She quivered in his hands, but finally, she nodded once.

Pride swelled inside Dack as she accepted his edict. He took his hand from her chin, sliding his arm under her

throat so she could lean her head on it if she wanted. She held herself away from him. She was pissed, then. Well, he could live with that—until the other two were through. When it was his turn, she'd get over it, or he'd know the reason why.

Mason stood up, and Dack nodded to him. Mason hefted the paddle. Dack had chosen the widest of the paddles they kept here, because the broader the surface, the more the sting of contact was displaced. Mason brought the paddle down, smacking Daisy's bare ass lightly. She jerked but didn't struggle. Again, again, and then Mason handed the paddle to Dack and squatted down to look Daisy in the eye.

Her ass looked even prettier decorated with a bit of rosy glow as blood rushed to the surface where Mason had spanked her. Dack cupped her there, stroking her gently. “What do you say to Mason, Petal?”

He couldn't hear her voice over Stevie Ray Vaughn's blues guitar, but Mason nodded to her, conferring his forgiveness, and said something back.

Then he rose and turned back to his date, watching wide-eyed from the depths of her chair. She looked up at Mason with lust and admiration. Dack grinned to himself. Those two were going to have a good night.

But his lady still had Kevin to deal

with. He stood at the end of the sofa, scowling. Dack gave him a look as he handed him the paddle. “Not too hard, Kev. She’s brand-new.”

The other dom smirked. “Brand spankin’ new.”

Daisy tensed at the sound of his voice, and Dack cupped his hand over her thigh, telegraphing his reassurance. “Kevin’s turn, Petal.”

She nodded, pressing her forehead against his forearm this time. That pleased him no end.

Kevin swung the paddle, and it thwacked her ass so hard Dack felt as if the other dom had hit him. She jerked, crying out.

Dack thrust his hand protectively

between her and the paddle, glaring ferociously at the other man. “All right, that’s more than enough, Kev. You and I will be talking later. Daisy, are you okay?”

Kevin, still looking pissed, shook his head. “Forget it, man.”

He tossed the paddle on the carpet by the sofa and stalked away. Dack glared after him. That had been completely unacceptable. The dude was perpetually pissed off about something. None of the women had complained about him taking it out on them, but he’d bear watching. Part of being a good dom was control. A man or woman who couldn’t control their own emotion couldn’t control a sub

compassionately. And Daisy had shown zero interest in pain on her questionnaire. That was good, 'cause he was not the man to cause it intentionally.

“Are we done now?” Daisy demanded, scowling at him over her shoulder.

He smiled down at her, his good humor restored. Damn, she was cute. “Nope. It’s my turn, Petal.”

She glowered at him. “What do you mean, it’s your turn? I chose you, didn’t I? And what is that name you keep calling me?”

“Petal. Your hair reminds me of flower petals, especially when it’s ruffled like it is now.”

She blinked. “Oh.” Good, he’d

distracted her with the pet name. He liked it better when a sub was off-balance emotionally, especially this one. She needed to rely on him here, not her own decisions.

He let her watch his smile disappear.

“And now it’s my turn to spank this pretty ass,” he told her. “For not obeying me when I told you to take your top off, and for not choosing me first tonight.”

He smacked her ass with his palm, taking care to stay away from the bright pink spot across her left cheek where Kevin, that asshole, had hurt her. What Dack planned would sting, but he’d let some sadist tie him up and whip him before he’d hurt his little sub.

As Dack's broad, calloused hand smacked down on her bare ass, Daisy yelped. That stung—not as bad as when that asshole Kevin hit her with the paddle, but worse than Mason's playful taps. At least Dack was using his hand. Although maybe it was worse in a way, because his palm felt really...intimate connecting with her bare ass.

Smack. Dack was spanking her for not choosing him first? The thought bounced through her mind as he spanked her again, in a different spot. Again, and again, until her ass was on fire. Okay, enough. She was done with this whole

thing. She'd come here for sex, not discipline.

Smack. Daisy opened her mouth to scream at Dack to let her go, but instead a gasping hiccup emerged, and then another. Her eyes filled with hot tears that overflowed, down her cheeks and onto his arm, so strong and warm under her face.

Oh crap, she was crying like a little kid. This was so not sexy. But she couldn't help it.

It had taken all her courage to admit that she wanted this and then to walk in the door. And then he'd just kept pushing her harder and harder, past new boundaries, one after the other. Accept a collar, Daisy. Recite the club rules,

Daisy. Take off your skirt, Daisy.

Lying down across Dack's lap, a physical admission to him that she wanted him enough to let him dominate her sexually, had been difficult enough. And now this. She'd let those other men spank her like a naughty little girl, all for a stupid mistake that hadn't even been her fault. And now he was doing it—and it was starting to hurt.

Her shoulders hunched as her tears dammed up in her throat and then burst free in a muffled sob, her tangled emotions, needs, fears and desires breaking free.

Dack's hand settled on her ass, but in a caress this time, soothing the flesh he'd

punished. He leaned sideways, his body shifting protectively under and over hers, his face close to her ear. “Hey, it’s okay, Petal. I’ve got you. All done now.”

Humiliated by her tears and the way she’d let Dack see her vulnerability, Daisy burrowed into his lap, hiding her face in the crook of his huge arm. It seemed the only safe place to shelter from the storm raging in her. Why had she even let him—all of them—do that to her?

Hair brushed the nape of her neck, below the tie of her halter, and then his warm lips as he pressed a soft kiss there. He kissed her again, his beard and mustache a counterpoint to his mouth.

Daisy shuddered at the pleasure of the

gentle caress after the spanking. She wanted him to keep going, all down her bare back. She loved having her back stroked. Turned out being kissed there was even better, even when she was scared and furious at herself and at the guy doing it.

“You want up?” he asked, his voice a soft rasp in her ear as he petted her ass again.

She nodded. Of course she wanted up, the big muscle-bound...dom.

He made a low hmm-ing sound, as if considering, and kissed her shoulder.

“I’ll make you a deal.”

“What kind of deal?” she demanded, sniffing. It better not involve more

spanking of any kind whatsoever.

“I know you’re shook up,” he said. “But I think you’re turned on too. I’m gonna check on that.”

Oh God, his fingertips were sliding down into the crease between her ass cheeks. Daisy froze, her eyes wide. Her pussy contracted in a shock of excitement.

Dack chuckled wickedly. “If you’re not turned on, Petal, I’ll let you up. But if you are...”

He slid his fingers deeper, following the line of the thong riding into her crack.

“If I am, what?” she choked, hanging on to his arm. He held her, his arm curling protectively, his hand cupping

her far shoulder.

“If you are, I get to make you come...
right here.”

Chapter Seven

Dack found the edge of the triangle of leather over her labia and probed his fingertips under the edge. Which wasn't difficult, because she was so wet the leather was soaked, and his broad, calloused fingertips slid right into her swollen folds.

Oh, she was glad it was so dark back here. Mason and his date were smooching, and no one else could see her, could they?

Daisy caught her breath, arching in his arms as Dack thrust his long finger right inside her pussy. "Ahh." Oh, God, she

couldn't believe she was letting him do that—not that he'd asked. He'd simply told her he was going to do it and then done it. And that was so freaking sexy.

She could feel his penetration clear to her toes. As if he'd found the hot, molten center of her need and want and opened the floodgates.

He gave a low groan of satisfaction that rumbled through her like a warm glow of approval. “Oh, little Petal, you're so wet. So tight, squeezing my finger. Can you take two for me?”

Daisy found herself squirming on his lap, even opening her legs a little farther. Yes she could take two fingers for him. Oh please, oh God—yes. He thrust two fingers inside her this time,

plumbing the depths of her pussy, which felt every single callous and knob on his fingers. She couldn't believe how good it felt. Somehow the pleasure of his caress was all tangled up with the embarrassment of letting him spank her and hold her down.

And then he twisted his hand enough to probe one finger under her thong and find her clitoris.

Daisy whimpered into his cradling arm as he circled her swollen clitoris with a light slippery touch, still fucking her with two fingers. Oh, God, that was so much better than when she did it herself. Oh God, she was going to—

“Isn't our little club virgin pretty?” he

asked. Daisy froze as she realized that he was no longer speaking just to her.

“She is, Dack.”

“She’s gorgeous.”

Holy crap, more remarks. A chorus of male and female voices answered him, above and behind her. Club members were gathering around, just to watch him play with her pussy.

Her eyes flew open, and she saw Mason directly across from her, the blonde curled in his lap. They were both watching while Mason stroked the blonde’s thigh under her short skirt. He winked at Daisy, his eyes heavy and intent. He was turned on. He was enjoying watching Dack play with her.

And the others watching maybe had

that same look. They were excited because they could see everything Dack did to her. Not every detail, because the lights were dim back here, but they could see that he had his fingers inside her pussy, that it was wet and swollen, and that when he petted her clitoris like that it made her toes curl in her sandals, made her arch her back as the pleasure grew too great to bear without moving.

“That’s right,” he approved, his voice a low and intimate growl, just for her. “Everyone’s watching us, Petal. They see how pretty you are right now, with your gorgeous ass pink from my discipline, and your pussy creaming for my fingers.”

Daisy turned her burning face into his arm and opened her mouth against the hot, smooth skin of his forearm.

“Do you want to come now?” he asked her, his finger stilling on her clitoris.

With a whimper of dismay, she nodded quickly. It wasn't just that she wanted to. It was that she had to come, right now.

“Good,” he approved. His finger rubbed her clitoris with a swift, firm touch. “Come now, Petal. Let everyone see you come for me.”

The pleasure coalesced under his fingertip, around the two plumbing her pussy, until his touch was the only

important thing in her world. It built and built until Daisy could no longer contain it nor stop her hips from moving, riding his fingers.

She moaned, a high, breathy sound as her pussy imploded with bliss, squeezing his fingers, and then burst outward, flooding through her body in waves of pleasure. She bit down on firm, smooth flesh, reveling in his taste.

Then she relaxed and sank into his sheltering arms, feeling him cradle her close as if he knew that was what she needed while the last echoes of pleasure shivered through her.

But then he spoke, his voice hard. “Come here, Petal.” Not offering her an iota of choice but commanding her.

He tugged her up on her hands and knees, and before she knew it, he was showing her exactly how he wanted her, and she was obeying. She perched astride his hard thighs, facing him.

Daisy tipped her head down, squeezing her eyes shut, trying to catch her breath. She was as exhausted as if she'd been working out or running. She braced one palm on his leather-covered chest, just needing a moment to get herself together, deal with the shock of letting her naughty, twisted side take over...in public. Her pussy was still pulsing with need, wanting more of what he'd given her, and that was just so wrong. Had she really just allowed him

to do that to her?

But his hands, big and hot and calloused, closed on the sides of her head. “That’s a really pretty pose for a sub,” he said. “But your ruffled daisy-petal hair is not what I want to see right now.” His hands tightening, Dack tipped her head up so she had to face him. She opened her eyes, stared at his bearded jaw, biting her lip. Was that a smug, snarky grin that said she was easy prey and he had her number?

“Look at me, Petal,” he commanded. “No, really look at me.”

She did. He was smiling, all right, but it was a look of...pride. In her? His eyes were warm, and his thumbs caressed her cheeks, a slow, tender sweep as he

looked into her eyes.

“I’m proud of you, Petal. You did good, real good. You have no idea how hot and sexy you are when you come.”

Daisy searched his eyes. “I—I am?”

He raised one heavy, arching brow, his smile slipping. “You doubt my word?”

Before conscious thought could drive it, her head shook quickly. “No.”

He nodded, once. “Good. Now look around you. You see anyone who doesn’t look like they got off on watching you come?”

Daisy froze. She’d actually almost forgotten they were surrounded by other people, watching. And he was taking his

hands away, lowering them to her bare thighs, so she couldn't hide in his grasp.

“Look, Petal.” A direct command.

Her face flaming with embarrassment all over again, Daisy turned her attention away from his bearded face.

A couple stood behind him, to the right. The man smiled at Daisy over his date's head, while he—oh, geez, he had his hand up inside her short leather dress, and he was playing with her, her legs spread, her head arched back against his chest, her eyes glazed. Okay, they'd enjoyed watching her.

Daisy looked farther and blinked. A guy, a dom, obviously, was unzipping his date's skirt. As Daisy watched, he bent her over the nearest bar table, and

proceeded to spank her bare, plump ass. She jerked in his grasp, but her face held a look of pleasure, and she was gazing around to see who was watching her.

And, oh God, was that slim little redhead really going to—yes, she was kneeling before her date right at the end of the sofa, taking his cock in her mouth right where everyone could see. He held her head with his fingers speared into her long hair, and he was grinning at Dack.

Daisy heard a smack and a sharp squeal behind her. Clutching Dack's vest for balance, she twisted on his thighs to watch.

Mason had his date draped over his

lap, her dress open, and he was spanking her, on her front. What the hell? He gave her a sharp smack on the front of her bare thigh, and she squirmed, whimpering with pleasure. Smiling at Daisy, he smacked her again, right on her mons. The blonde arched in his arms, opening her thighs farther.

Dack chuckled. “Oh, we’ll try that another time, Petal. But now”—he tapped his hand imperatively on her bare thigh—“I want your attention on me.”

Daisy turned back to him, hiding the fact her world was rocking on its axis, about to topple right off. “You sure are bossy. You really like this dom stuff, don’t you?”

He grinned at her, his hands sliding up

to her hips, his thumbs doing that caressing thing again, this time on the tender bare skin of her groin, just above her mons. “Yes, I do. And you seem to like being a sub. Don’t you?”

She looked down at her hand clutching at his vest. She forced herself to let go. She didn’t need to be hanging on to him like a lifeline. And she wasn’t admitting anything...yet.

Dack’s hand lifted to cup the back of her neck and tightened.

She looked at him in shock. His smile was gone, his eyes narrowed. “I’m getting tired of repeating myself, Petal.” He flicked a look down at her throat and back to her eyes. “When you put that

collar on, you agreed to be my sub. Now, I'm holding up my end of the deal. Are you?"

Daisy fumbled for words, her heart thumping. "Um—what do you mean?"

One side of his mouth lifted in derision. "Answering a question with a question doesn't cut it. Daisy, if you can't be honest with me, and with yourself, this isn't gonna work. Now I'm gonna ask you one more time. Do you like being my sub?"

His hand gentled, caressing her nape as if he couldn't have his hands on her and not pet her. Pleasure rippled through her skin. She nodded shyly.

"Out loud for me, Petal."

Daisy took a deep breath. "I like..."

being a sub.” Oh God, she’d said it. Heat flushed down over her throat and cleavage.

“Whose sub?” he pushed, his hand tightening.

“Yours.” Her mouth trembled, and she bit her lip to hide the sudden, visceral reaction

“And do you like it when I make you do what I want?”

“Yes. I...I like it when you—when you tell me what to do.” Oh, crap, she was going to cry again. How the hell had her emotions gotten tied up in this? It was just supposed to be fun sex.

“Ah, come here.” He tugged, and she obeyed, leaning forward to lie on his

chest, her head on his shoulder, her face against his throat.

She wriggled closer, soaking in the heat of his smooth skin. He smelled so good, and he was so big, so powerful, he made her feel small and feminine and safe. No longer exposed, as she had been while admitting to her desires, and having him fulfill some of them.

He hugged her close, his big hands stroking her back, her ass. Ouch, even though it hurt when he stroked where he'd spanked her, she loved being held this way, her face buried in his throat, where she could inhale his scent. He smelled so good she wanted to lick him up, starting with the strong column of his throat.

Behind her, more smacks and more whimpering.

“Mason, buddy, you’ve got a treasure there,” Dack approved over her head.

“I know it,” Mason agreed. “She’s gonna come in a minute, aren’t you, baby?”

Dack squeezed Daisy’s ass, soothing the sore places he’d spanked. He cocked his head, his mouth close to her ear, his voice a deep, sexy rasp, his breath warm and moist. “I’d love to make you come again, Petal. With me buried deep inside you.”

She shivered, and he nipped at her earlobe, his beard tickling her ear. “You gonna let me fuck you, little sub? Nice

and hard and long, the way we both want it? Gonna let me pound into you until your pussy creams around me and you can't say anything but my name?"

Holy geez, he was a poet. An extremely naughty one, but Daisy swore he could make her come just talking to her this way. She was tight with need again, and she couldn't resist moving subtly on him, rubbing herself against the huge, rigid shape under his leathers.

She nodded.

He smacked her ass, stinging her tender flesh. "Out loud, sub."

Oh God, she was so bent to love him ordering her to voice her desires that way. She lifted her head, her mouth close to his ear, bared by his ponytail. "I

want you to—to fuck me, Dack.”

She didn't even care where, just some dark room in this place where they could be alone.

Behind them, Mason spoke, his gravelly voice commanding. “Come, baby. Come for me.” A high wail rose in answer, a raw sexual sound of release, of ecstasy. Daisy's hands clenched on Dack's shoulders, her nails digging into his skin.

He went rigid under her, his broad chest expanding with a deep breath. He let go of her ass and thrust one hand between them.

Oh God, he was going to unfasten his leathers right here. Daisy sat up

abruptly. “Oh no, I didn’t mean here.”

The look in his narrowed eyes froze the words in her throat. A hot, dangerous look that matched his short, quick movements as he unfastened his leathers and tugged them open, baring his groin—to her and to anyone else who wanted to look.

“You liked being watched,” he told her. “So do I. I like it a lot, Daisy.”

He stroked his hand over himself, and Daisy could no more help watching than she could help breathing. Oh, he was beautiful. Raw, male power, rampant and unashamed. His cock thrust out of the dark leathers and the nest of dark hair dusting his groin. He was huge. Huge and hot and sexy. She hadn’t seen

any cock up close for nearly a year, and never one this big.

Without asking, without thinking, she reached for him. His hand grabbed her wrist, and he held it, inches away from him.

She looked up, surprised. Guys loved having a woman's hands on their equipment.

"Ask before you touch, sub," he ordered.

Okay, that should piss her off. It was obvious he wanted her to touch him, or he wouldn't be letting the big guy out to play. But once again, his complete control excited her, pleased the new, bad Daisy.

She looked at him through her lashes. “Please, may I touch you, Dack?”

He gave her back the same roguish look. It was funny and sexy on his hard, bearded face. “I don’t know, Petal. You haven’t even kissed me yet, and you want in my pants?”

Her heart leapt even as she giggled, surprising herself. Kiss him? She loved kissing, and she’d been wanting to feel that beard on her skin since she first saw him. The fact that he was willing to stop for a smooch when he was obviously so ready to do more was just sweet.

She leaned forward and then stopped, remembering. Well, heck, if she had to ask for whatever she wanted from him,

might as well have fun with it. She put out the tip of her tongue to lick her lower lip, teasing him. “Dack, may I please have a kiss?” she asked in her best Marilyn Monroe voice.

He yanked her toward him, his eyes on her mouth. She fell against him with a huff of laughter. Then he cocked his head and kissed her, and her amusement disappeared in a fog of heat.

His lips were warm and firm, his mustache and beard soft and a little scratchy against her face as he tasted her.

He drew back enough to give her a glinting look and then cocked his head the other way and came back for more. Then he opened his mouth and really

kissed her, hot and slow and thoroughly. He sucked gently on her lips and then her tongue, sucking it into his mouth to play before sliding his own into her mouth and plundering her thoroughly.

Daisy hung in his arms, dizzy with pleasure as her breasts rubbed against the leather ridges of his vest, her nipples feeling the abrasion even through the thin leather of her halter.

She rubbed herself against his groin, moaning as she felt the hot silky length of his cock on her bare belly and the crease of her thigh.

He pulled back just long enough to speak. "Put your hand on me." Then he took her mouth again, his tongue

demanding entrance.

Daisy slipped her hand eagerly between them, closing it around him. Oh, so hot and thick and smooth, with all that hard, quivering muscle underneath, just ready to slide deep inside her pussy. She stroked him luxuriously, rubbing her thumb across the broad, silky head, slick with a drop of arousal, and then down to the root, running her fingertips through the short, curling hair on his groin while she sucked on his tongue.

He drew back and looked at her, his face hard, almost cruel with desire. It was a look that made her pussy melt, her mind along with it.

“I’m gonna fuck you,” he told her.
“I’ve been waiting for weeks, ever since

you walked into my gym.”

“Okay.” Oh God, she couldn’t wait.

He looked down at her breasts. “You have a choice, sub. You can either take that top off, or you can fuck me right here, where everyone can watch.”

Daisy froze. She couldn’t take her halter top off. She couldn’t. But, have sex here, with other couples all around them, some moaning and carrying on as they did things Daisy had only seen on Internet videos?

She started to shake her head and then stopped as his brows drew together in a frown. Oh God, she didn’t want to disappoint him, didn’t want this to be over.

She bit her lip. Could she let him inside her right here? And if she did, would she be able to look herself in the eye tomorrow? Would she ever have the courage to walk back in here and look any of these people in the eye?

Dack sighed, his broad chest rising and falling under her hand. She hadn't even realized she had one hand on the hard, hair-covered plain. "Let me put the question this way, Daisy. Do you want me to fuck you?"

She nodded. "Yes." But not here.

He nodded. "All right. Tonight, we'll go somewhere private."

She nodded, relief flooding her.

"Fasten up my leathers," he ordered.

She did, corralling his rigid cock with difficulty. She nearly whimpered with disappointment as she finally succeeded in covering the turgid length with his leathers.

He smacked her bare ass. “Let’s go.”

Daisy slipped to the floor, and he grabbed her wrist as he stood. She saw her purse and skirt in the corner.

“My things.” He paused long enough for her to grab them.

Daisy turned to follow him but nearly tripped as she caught sight of Mason’s date, straddling his lap, naked. Oh, my God, the blonde was riding him right there, his glistening cock sliding in and out of her as she moved up and down.

He held her round hips in a tight grip, his muscular body sprawled in the chair, still clothed except for his cock. His face was taut with bliss. And somehow, what they were doing wasn't obscene at all. It was hot and gorgeous.

"That could've been you," Dack said, his hand tightening on her wrist.

Confusion and lust warring inside her, Daisy followed Dack through a wide, dark archway under the stairs and past a small room with the door open where a couple was writhing on a big bed.

Dack pulled her into the next room, and the door swung shut behind them. Not all the way, she noticed from the corner of her eye. There was still a good few inches open, so that if anyone

stopped in the hallway outside, they could watch what happened inside.

Dack looked from her to the door. Then he reached back and pushed it open, all the way.

“Pretty quiet back here,” he mused aloud. “For right now. ’Course, that could change.”

She looked up at him. The stinker, he knew the thought of maybe being caught excited her. He prowled past her and turned to face her. She turned with him, her back to the door.

The room was nearly taken up by a big bed with a black coverlet. More soft globe lighting, but so soft that Dack was a shadow looming over her. A big,

muscular shadow, heat emanating from him, holding her captive without a touch. Her pussy was aching as if she hadn't already come once tonight. Maybe more because she had and knew that an even better orgasm awaited her.

He lifted one hand to the clasp of her halter in the middle of her back. This time she let him. It was so dark in here, he wouldn't be able to see much. Besides, she knew logically her breasts were the prettiest they'd ever been. She could do this.

When she stood still, he unfastened her halter, and it slipped away in his hands. She held her breath as he looked down at her and then lifted his hands to cup her breasts, his touch gentle.

He made a low sound of pleasure in his chest as he fondled her, obviously enjoying the weight and heft of her breasts, and the way her nipples speared into his palms. It felt really good.

“Pretty,” he said. “Don’t know why you’re so shy about these, Petal. Most girls would rather take their top off than their bottoms.”

When she said nothing, he shook his head once. “We’ll talk more about that another time,” he told her, still playing with her. “Don’t think you can hide from me for long. Yeah, I’ll want these in my mouth, and maybe get off with my cock between them.”

When she stiffened, he chuckled, a

low, wicked sound. “Oh, that got your attention. I mean it, Petal. But right now, I’m hard enough to pound nails. I need inside that soft, hot little pussy of yours.”

He pinched her nipples and then let go and indicated the bed. “Bend over the end for me.”

It was the “for me” that did it for her. She wanted to do things for him. Wanted his hands on her again and that beautiful cock inside her. Wanted his attention back there and off her breasts.

She turned to the bed and leaned over to plant her palms flat on the mattress. It was firm, supporting her weight without giving.

“Spread your feet apart.” He smacked her lightly on her ass, a sharp little sting.

“What do you say, sub?”

“Yes, Dack.” She moved her feet apart. Oh my God, she must look like a total tart, bent over with her ass sticking out at him, only in a thong.

He put his hands on her hips. She looked down. Her arms and hands were slender and pale against the black plush, and her breasts hung heavy and round between her arms, her nipples hardened into tight points. And beyond that, her waist, and the curve of her hips, his big, powerful hands in sharp contrast, tanned and sprinkled with sun-gilded hair against her smooth hairless skin.

“Much as I like this G-string of yours, it’s gotta come off,” he said and hooked

his thumbs under the thin straps. “Mm, good, the kind with ties. I like that.”

Her heart racing with excitement, Daisy watched him work the little hooks. The thong fell away in his hands, and he tossed it on the end of the bed beside her skirt. Then his hands came back to flatten on her hips and smooth down toward her mons. He chuckled in her ear, his body heat enclosing her as he cupped one big hand between her thighs, giving her a little squeeze.

“You watching me touch you, Petal?” he asked, sounding amused.

“Uh-huh.” Oh God, his hand felt so good there, holding her tight, possessing her. And it looked amazing. So big and powerful against her feminine softness.

“Good. Next time, I’ll watch.” He let her go, and she heard him unfasten his pants, and the small rip of a package. A condom.

He smacked her ass again. “Get up on the bed there, sweetheart. Hands and knees. That’s right, push that pretty ass out at me, and show me that pretty blonde pussy. Damn, I wanted to do this when you were lying across my lap out there. I know you needed that spanking, and I’ll always give you what you need, Petal, but I’ve been waiting to fuck you.”

Daisy sputtered wordlessly even as she let him position her on the mattress on her hands and knees. She’d needed that spanking? Why the big, arrogant a-

hole.

Then he put one hand on her hip and held her steady while something hot and firm—oh, God, his cock—stroked into her swollen labia and then pushed inside.

“Oh,” she gasped. “Oh, Dack, I don’t know if—” If this was going to work.

He held her when she would have crawled away from him, his hands biting into the soft flesh of her hips while he held still just inside her pussy. “Whoa, Petal. It’s okay, baby. I won’t hurt you. We’ll take it easy.”

He retreated and then pushed again, a little farther this time. It was uncomfortable, it was so...exciting.

“Been a while for you?” he asked, his

voice stifled as if he were speaking through clenched teeth.

“Uh-huh.” Daisy nodded, holding herself still with an effort as he withdrew and then slicked the head back and forth in her labia. Oh, that felt so... hot. He was making his cock wet with her arousal. “And you’re so big.”

“Mmm, you’re nice and wet,” he approved, almost to himself. “Fuck, so wet.” He pushed again, this time working his way deep inside her. Daisy strained against his hands. It felt as if he reached clear to her bellybutton.

“Ah, fuck,” he groaned. “So tight. So hot. Jesus, Petal, you were worth waiting for.”

He drew back, sliding against nerve endings Daisy hadn't known her pussy even had, and then thrust back in again. She heard a soft, breathy cry and cringed when she realized it had come from her own throat.

He chuckled, a deep, soft, raunchy sound. "That's right, little sub. Tell me how much you like this."

Daisy clenched her teeth. She'd be darned if she'd stroke his already huge ego. But he gripped her hips with his big hands as he thrust in again and again, moving faster and harder. And oh glory, it was so good. Had she ever been fucked like this? Well, of course not, given where she was, but no other guy's

cock had ever felt so amazing inside her either.

“Let me hear you, Petal,” he commanded. “Don’t hold back on me.”

Then he slid one big hand under her belly and found her clitoris with one calloused fingertip as he fucked her hard.

“God, I wish you could see how beautiful you are right now,” he went on. “Taking me so sweet, like a good little sub. Any minute, Petal, someone’s gonna come walking down that hallway and see me fucking you.”

And that took care of any shred of Daisy’s self-control. Someone might see them—might see her submitting to him, doing everything he told her, letting him

have her like this.

As he pleased her inside and out, jerking her clitoris in time with his strokes, Daisy dug her fingers into the soft coverlet and took what he was giving her. His hard groin and balls slapped against her bottom, his cock slamming into her depths with juicy, sucking sounds. And her own increasingly high, breathless moans rising over it all as he drove her further and further into ecstasy.

She came so hard her pussy seemed to implode around him, and then pleasure burst outward, suffusing her entire body.

He climaxed with a low, rumbling growl that rose into a roar, stiffening

behind her, his fingers digging into her with a bruising grip. He continued to move for a long moment, slower and slower. At last he stilled, heaving a huge sigh.

“Oh, baby,” he muttered, pulling slowly out of her. “That was...amazing.”

He patted her bottom. “Scoot on up there, and lie down for a minute. Be right back.”

Daisy managed to crawl a few feet up the bed before collapsing. Mindful of her breasts, she made sure to land on her side. She tucked her arms up in front of her so her breasts were partly shielded, and just drifted, hearing the sounds of him opening another door and water running. She felt so good...as if she'd

had the workout of her life and sex too. Her mind was a peaceful, foggy blank, all her earlier tension drained away.

Dack was back in a few moments. He looked down at her as he unfastened his vest and pulled it off. His biceps worked with the movement, and she admired the broad plain of his chest. As she'd suspected, the dark mat of hair on his chest arched down across a very fine six-pack and disappeared into his leather pants, which rode low on his hips. God, he was gorgeous. So big and broad, but well-proportioned.

"What are you smiling at?" he asked her, his voice lazy.

"Your biceps," she told him, too

happy to lie. “The first time I saw you, I wanted to get my hands on them.”

“Well, baby, all you had to do,” he said, “was ask.”

He put one knee on the bed and moved onto it, lying back beside her. The bed shifted under his weight but didn't sink. He lifted his arm and looked over at her. “C'mere.”

“I'm comfortable right here.”

He sighed, looking annoyed. “That wasn't a request.”

She lifted her head and eyed him. His key shifted, dangling against her throat. Oh, they were still in the Dom/sub mode? Well, he did look gorgeous sprawled out with his heavy shoulders and arms highlighted by the dark covers.

Even with that slightly scary scowl on his bearded face, she still wanted a cuddle.

She scooted over to him, and he wrapped his arm around her and pulled her close against his side. Shifting in the bed, he put his other hand behind her knee and tugged until her thigh was draped over his groin and her breasts were snug against his side and chest. That felt good and didn't hurt, a welcome surprise.

He grunted. "Now this is nice."

Daisy smiled into his shoulder. It was nice. Coming here had done just as she'd hoped—showed her she could indulge her kinky side a bit and then have great

sex.

“Next time,” he said, petting her ass, “I’m gonna fuck you in public—in the club room.”

Her eyes flew open, and she stiffened, all her beautiful relaxation gone.

“Oh no, you’re not.”

He chuckled, that low, evil laugh that sent foreboding and excitement shivering through her. “Oh yes, I am. And first... yeah, first I think I’ll make you ask for it.”

He tapped her chin, and she turned her head, peering up into his sparkling gaze.

“You can practice this week. Here’s what I wanna hear. ‘Please, Dack. Please fuck me right here, where everyone can watch. Pretty please, let

everyone see you make me come.””

Daisy gasped, outrage firing her.

“You are so full of it. I will never—”

Her words ended in a squeak of shock as he smacked her bottom, hard. She gaped at him, hurt lancing from her bottom to her emotions.

He petted her stinging ass cheek and regarded her with a knowing look, as if he knew a secret she didn't.

“Yes, you will. You're a natural sub, baby. And we both know you checked exhibitionism on your form. You think about it this week, and I guarantee you, by next week your sweet, tight little pussy is gonna be so wet and hot just thinking about riding me out there on one

of the sofas, you'll barely be able to stand it.

“C’mere.” He tugged until she let him pull her right up onto him, lying with her breasts on his chest, her legs tangled with his. She complied warily, but it felt comfortable, still not too much pressure on her breasts. Besides, how could she worry about that when her mind was whirling with his wicked promises?

He looked up at her, stroking her back with slow sweeps. Then he cupped his big hand on the back of her head and pulled her down for a slow, sweet kiss.

“You can play with yourself when you get hot thinking about it, Petal,” he whispered, as if he were generously giving her permission. “Put your fingers

in that sweet pussy and stroke yourself off while you imagine me deep inside you and everyone watching, admiring you and how beautiful you look riding me. It won't be as good, but it'll prime you for the real thing."

Daisy kissed him again, to shut him up. She couldn't stand the way he was able to fill her mind with those dirty, tempting, totally hot images. And besides, she loved his mouth. He tasted as good as he smelled, and his mustache and beard caressed her face, somehow so much more intimate than shaven skin.

"Oh, there you are," said a deep voice behind her. Daisy froze, yanked from the haze of pleasure. Oh crap, there was a

man in the doorway, and he could see her splayed legs, see her pussy.

She squirmed, clamping her legs together. Dack held her still, grinning at her, his white teeth flashing, face crinkled with amusement. “Hey, Jake,” he said, peering over her shoulder. “Need something?”

“Nah, just making the rounds,” said Jake’s deep voice. “Hey, Daisy, how you doing?”

Daisy gulped. Dack raised his brows, and she shook her head, ducking her head into his chest. He was crazy if he thought she was going to have a conversation with another man right now.

The bastard laughed, his chest

rumbling under her. “She’s feeling a little shy, I guess.”

Jake grunted. “She’s gonna hang around the club, you better get her trained to be polite to the other doms, Hummer.”

It was official. She was going to die right now, of humiliation, even if that was a teasing note she heard in Jake’s deep voice.

“I’ll work on that. See you in a few.”

“Yeah. Bye, Daisy.”

Daisy groaned into Dack’s throat. He chuckled again. “Jake likes to watch too, Petal.”

He didn’t have to say another word. As Daisy slipped off the bed to put her

brief clothing back on, all she could picture was Dack having her on one of the sofas, while Jake, surrounded by other club members, watched them.

And despite her two fabulous orgasms, her pussy was clenching all over again.

Chapter Eight

Daisy was having a great dream in which Dack walked up to her and told her to sit on one of the leather sofas at Club 3. When she obeyed, he grinned at her and reached down. She stared, wide-eyed, as she realized he was going to strip for her.

Instead, she saw that he was holding a steel guitar. His gaze locked with hers, he raked one hand down across it like a rock guitarist and played a familiar riff. Then he played it again, and his smile turned to a frown, as if he was waiting for her to respond. Her heart pounded

with the beginnings of panic as she tried to remember what she was supposed to do or say. Was this a new Club 3 rule?

Finally, on the fourth riff, she woke with a start and stared blankly into the bright morning light filtering through her bedroom curtains. Her phone lay on the corner of her white bedside table, burring cheerfully.

Daisy grabbed it, rolling onto her back with a groan. No Dack, just a phone call. Geez, who would be calling her early on Sunday morning?

It was Carlie. “Hello?” Daisy yawned deeply, stretching.

“Daisy?” Carlie said. “Sorry if I woke you. But it is ten o’clock.”

“It is?” Daisy sat up in her bed and

stared at the blue ceramic clock squatting on the bedside table. Sure enough, ten o'clock, straight up. "Oh my gosh, I never sleep this late."

"Are you...alone?" Carlie asked hesitantly.

Daisy's mouth fell open. "Yes, why? Oh."

Her evening at the club came flooding back in a barrage of sensation and heat, tinged with sheer disbelief. Oh God, she'd really done it. And this was the morning after. She waited for the guilt and shame to hit her. Last night she'd been too exhausted to feel any such thing. She'd pretty much washed her face and fallen into bed.

But this morning she felt...pretty darn good. She smiled, hunching her shoulders with pleasure, her tongue caught between her teeth as she remembered Dack pounding into her, making her come harder than she ever had before.

“I’m alone.” She pouted, wondering what it would be like to wake up next to him. Oh well, he was probably grumpy in the morning, all bad-ass ’til he had his coffee.

“Oh.” Carlie sounded disappointed too. “So...did you go to the club?”

“Yup.” Daisy grinned, waiting. She didn’t have to wait long.

“You wanna do brunch?” Carlie

sounded breathless. “Sara said she’d meet us at the Beaverton Revillion.”

“Sure. Eleven o’clock? I have to shower and dress.”

“We’ll get a table. Bye.”

Daisy clicked her phone off and scrambled out of bed, smiling as she walked into her bathroom. She was in for an interrogation, girlfriend style. But there was no one with whom she’d rather share this experience than Carlie and Sara.

She’d met the two at a Portland cancer fund-raising walk the previous winter. The two women had been added to her team with her mother and sisters, and after a day of walking and chatting in their matching pink T-shirts and ball

caps, the three of them had bonded. They'd exchanged phone numbers, had lunch the next weekend, and then agreed to become workout buddies.

Daisy had friends from high school and her classes at Portland Community College, but somehow she felt closer in many ways to Carlie and Sara. Probably because they knew things about her no other women did. Like why she was a little kinked.

She showered, did her makeup and dressed in a beige lace halter bra, matching panties and one of the new sundresses her mom and sisters had given her, a white jersey knit halter with tiny green leaves patterning the fabric.

Checking her phone, she saw that the outside temperature was already eighty-five, so she left her white sweater in the closet, slipped on her orange flip-flops, grabbed her purse and sunglasses, and hurried out of her apartment.

The manual from her realty class lay on her dinette table. She grimaced at it as she hurried by. She'd planned to spend the whole day studying. She'd have to hit the books extra hard this afternoon and evening.

Sara and Carlie had a table by a window in the dining room of the new Beaverton Revillion. The downtown hotel had recently opened this branch on

a hillside overlooking the Sunset Highway and the long sweep of countryside west toward Forest Grove. The room was full, a loud hum of conversation above the people gathered for Sunday brunch. The smells of coffee, ham, potatoes and other savory foods made Daisy's stomach growl as she wound her way through the tables.

Her friends regarded her with identical looks of concern mingled with fascination.

“Hi,” she said cheerfully, sinking into a chair at the small table. “How are you two?”

“How are you?” Sara asked, leaning forward. The redhead had actually worn

a dress, albeit a tan T-shirt style with a large orange Hawaiian flower emblazoned on the front. Her hair hung loose around her slender shoulders.

Daisy smiled at her. "I'm good."

"You look...different," Carlie said, leaning her chin on her hand to frankly stare at Daisy. She wore a navy sundress, her hair held back with a red band, like a grownup version of Alice in Wonderland.

Sara tipped her head to one side. "You do look different. And I think I want some of whatever you had," she added enviously.

And suddenly the three of them were laughing together. "You can have some of *whatever*," Daisy said. "But not who.

I have dibs.” Not for good, she wasn’t that naive, but just the thought of her friends with Dack made her hands clench on her little purse. She unclenched them, smoothing the embroidered fabric.

Carlie gasped, her eyes wide with delicious horror. “Did you do it with Dack?”

Daisy nodded smugly. “Uh-huh.”

“Good morning,” said a middle-aged waitress. “Are you ladies here for brunch? Coffee?” She held up a carafe.

“Yes to both,” Daisy said. She waited until the waitress was gone, having filled their coffee cups and left the carafe on their table. “Let’s go, girls.

I'm starving."

"And then you will talk while we eat," Sara said sternly. "'Cause I want to know everything."

They filled their plates and returned to their table. Daisy dove into the fresh fruit, baked ham, rolls and scalloped potatoes with relish.

Sara had a similar plate, while Carlie had a mound of green salad with a few bites of other foods on the side.

Daisy shuddered. "Ugh, green things for breakfast?"

Carlie sighed. "I know, but I've got to lose some weight."

"No, you don't," Daisy said. "You're beautiful. Isn't she beautiful?" She nudged Sara's foot under the table.

“Yes, and I tell her that every time we work out. Maybe one of these days it will sink in.”

Carlie flapped her hand at both of them. “Enough about me. I wanna hear about Daisy’s very big adventure.” She batted her eyes at Daisy. “With Da-ack.”

Daisy chewed and swallowed a mouthful of sweet, juicy strawberry. “All right. But I’m not telling you... everything. For that, you’ll have to come to the club.”

And how she felt about that, she wasn’t sure. If she was going through with Dack’s plan for public sex, did she really want anyone she knew there? Somehow it seemed easier with

strangers. Which was weird, but it was how she felt.

“Is the club classy?” Carlie asked, taking a mouthful of salad and chewing with her gaze fastened on Daisy.

Daisy nodded. “Very classy. All wood and leather. Very retro, which is appropriate, because it’s in an old house.”

Carlie looked relieved. “Oh, good, no red satin and black glitter?” She shuddered.

“No, that would be awful. Club 3 kind of reminds me of those fancy clubs they have in the movies—you know, where the rich guys hang out while they plot the downfall of small nations.”

“Ooh, like a Bond movie,” Carlie

approved.

“Where is it?” Sara asked.

Daisy snickered. “You’ve been driving by it every day without noticing. It’s behind Big Iron Fitness. There’s a little driveway around back, and a parking lot with trees all around. I’m guessing the house must have been on the property when they bought it, and they left it there when they built the gym.”

“Wow,” Sara breathed. “Right there? Sneaky. I wonder what the neighboring businesses would say if they knew there was a sex club in their backyard?”

Daisy shrugged. “Some of them probably know. Stuff like that is on plat maps. Anyway, you should come with

me next time.” They’d party, and she’d talk Dack into taking her into one of those back bedrooms for their private fun.

Carlie peeped at her over her coffee cup. “So, did you do anything, um, kinky?”

Heat rolled over Daisy’s face and down her throat. “Heck, yeah,” she said breezily. “Got a spanking and did the wild thang.”

“Oh my God,” Carlie breathed, her blue eyes like saucers. She peered around to make sure no one at the neighboring tables was listening. “Dack spanked you? Was it because you, y’know...disobeyed?”

Sara shot her a look of surprise, and

Charlie shifted, looking like a guilty little girl. “Well, if he’s a dom, that means he gets to make the rules, and his partner is supposed to obey.”

“His submissive,” Sara corrected her. She grinned as the other two turned to stare at her. “Hey, I’m a health teacher. I read a lot.”

Both of them seemed to know more about BDSM than Daisy had to start with. And if she couldn’t be honest with these two, who could she share with?

“Dack is a dom, all right. And I kind of screwed up.” Daisy told them about her mishap with the keys. “But I think it was really just because he likes spanking women. I mean, that’s why he

and his buds are there and not down at Bingo's."

"Maybe they should've called this place Spanky's," Sara muttered.

Carlie giggled, shooting Daisy a look. "That's better than Daisy's idea." She looked around before relating Daisy's alternative names for the club. Sara snickered delightedly.

But Sara soon sobered. "Gosh, Daise, you are so...brave. You just waltzed right in and asked for what you wanted."

"Yeah, good for you," Carlie said wistfully. "I want to give it a try, but...I need to work up to it, I guess."

Daisy looked at them. "Thanks," she said, blinking back tears. God, she was so emotional. "I mean, for not judging

me. 'Cause part of me feels so...bent."

"Judge you?" Sara's auburn brows shot up. "Daisy, after all you've been through, neither of us is going to judge you for having sex—any way you want it."

"Unless you have it with Jake," Carlie added. She immediately blushed, waving her hands in negation. "Sorry, sorry."

Daisy shook her head in understanding. "Carlie, if you have your eye on him, girlfriend, there's no way I'd go near him. It's not like I want to nail every guy in the club." Of course, Carlie didn't need to hear about Jake ogling her bare ass, either. That was TMI.

“But if the guys are running this club,” Sara said slowly, “and it’s so they can act out their kink, or whatever you want to call it, doesn’t that mean that they’re all...with other women?”

Daisy drained her coffee cup and reached for the carafe. “Yup, probably does,” she agreed briskly as she poured. “But that’s okay with me, because you know what? I’m just looking for a good time.”

She was not going to fall for Dack or anything stupid like that. She’d let him introduce her to the joys of her kind of kink, and then she’d wave good-bye, and be moving on to some other lucky guy.

The other guy would have to have

some nicely trimmed facial hair, because that was her new favorite thing, and of course he'd have to be a weight lifter, because big muscles were *le sigh*. And his voice had to be so deep and rough it sent shivers through her and made her want to melt at his feet.

Just a few simple requirements. Another guy like that shouldn't be too hard to find, should he?

She looked up to see an elderly woman glaring at her disapprovingly as she passed the table. Daisy smiled sweetly. "Sex," she said. "That's what I want. Lots of great sex."

Carlie and Sara managed to hold on to their snickers until the woman stalked away, her face mottled with outrage.

Daisy's cheeks were hot again, but she laughed with her friends. Life was too short to worry about what some prudish stranger thought.

“Oh God,” gulped Carlie when she could talk. “I love you, Daise.”

Sara held her hand out to Daisy, palm up. Daisy slapped it.

“So did you go upstairs?” Carlie asked when she finally managed to stop giggling.

Daisy shook her head. “No. I don't even... What's upstairs?”

Carlie's eyes widened with pleasurable horror. “That's where they have the, um...the kinky stuff.”

“Like what?”

“You know, places where doms can tie their subs up and do...stuff to them. Like spanking benches and things like that.”

Daisy shook her head adamantly. “No way. I’m not going up there. I just want...sex.”

Carlie nodded. “You’d have to really trust a guy to let him do that stuff. Or be into pain.” She shuddered. “Which I am not.”

“Me either.”

“You know what?” Sara set her jaw, looking determined. “I want good sex too. Why worry about an exclusive relationship? I had one, and look what that got me. Nothing but a blood test to

make sure he hadn't brought any STIs home."

Daisy nodded. She knew from margarita night at their favorite Mexican restaurant that the jerk Sara had divorced the year before had denigrated her sexual attractiveness while he slept with every other woman he could. Now that was bent, and not in a good way.

"That reminds me." Carlie looked worried. "How do we know we won't catch something at the club? I mean, I'm sure they hand out condoms, but..."

"Like party favors," Daisy said wryly, remembering the bowls. "But you also have to be tested before you can join. I went to the Riverside Clinic. They're fast."

Carlie nodded, stirring her spoon absently in her coffee. “That’s good.”

Daisy took another drink of her own coffee, watching her friends over her cup. She’d opened up, but what would they decide? That she’d gone too far for them to follow, or that Club 3 might be the place for each of them to find their own sexual freedom?

She wasn’t even sure what she’d found herself. She’d had great sex and let Dack and Mason—she wasn’t counting Kevin, because that jerk was never coming near her again—roll out their dom moves on her. But would she have the courage to go further?

Sara drained her cup and slammed it

down on the tablecloth as if it were a shot glass on a bar. "I'm coming to Club 3," she told Daisy, her brown eyes narrowed, her lips set firmly. "If you can do it, so can I. I'm breaking out of my good-girl cocoon, and I'm going to... to..." She wrinkled her nose. "Um, I have no idea what I'm going to do. How do I start?"

Daisy reached over and patted her slender arm. "It's okay, little teacher. I'll lead the way."

She wriggled in her seat with excitement. "Oh, we're gonna have so much fun."

"Yeah," Carlie said softly. "You are." She smiled at them, but her lovely blue eyes held a look of frustrated longing.

“Come with us,” Daisy pleaded.
“This Saturday is Western Night.
Cowboys?”

Carlie shook her head. “I...I just don’t think I can. Not yet.” She looked down, rubbing a pattern on the white tablecloth. “There’s that guy I’m interested in and... I’ll see if that goes anywhere.”

“What about Jake?” Daisy asked, then winced as Carlie’s full lips tightened.
“I’m sorry, sweetie. You have to make your own decision. Not my business.”

Sara was watching Carlie too.
“Except we all know you think Jake is mega-hot.”

Carlie blew out a breath. “Yeah, but I

also think he's...out of my league. I mean, if he has hot-and-cold-running women at Club 3, why would he want me?"

She pushed her chair back and stood up, brushing her hands down over her prim navy dress. She smiled at them. "Well, ladies, this has been great, but I really have to run."

"Well...okay." Daisy nodded, when what she really wanted to do was leap out of her chair and hug the tall blonde. "Thanks."

Carlie dropped a bill on the table and gave them both a little wave.

"See you at the gym?" Sara asked, twisting in her chair as Carlie stepped past her.

“Sure. Bye.” She walked away, her blonde hair swaying down her back, her full hips swinging gracefully

Daisy frowned after her. “How can any woman be that beautiful and not see it?”

Sara turned back to the table with a sigh. “I don’t know. We’ll just keep working on her, right?”

“Right. Now, missy, how about Saturday? You gonna come with me?”

Sara nodded. “I’m in. So...what does one wear to Western Night?”

Daisy grinned. “I have no idea. But we’ll figure something out.”

Dack opened the front door of his parents' small, ranch-style home and stepped inside.

"Hi, Mom," he called. "I'm here."

The living room was tidy as usual, the beige carpets and peach-flowered furniture immaculate. He glanced warily at the carpeted scratching post as he walked by. He didn't relax until he found a slim Siamese perched on the back of a corner chair, hidden in the shadows of a luxuriant hanging plant.

As their eyes met, the cat hissed at Dack, and he curled his lip in answer. "Yeah, the lashing tail gave you away there, Sheba. Better luck next time."

The damn cat liked to lie in wait for

him and slash playfully at his ankles as he walked by. His mother frowned on his kicking her cat, so he stayed out of its way.

Dack walked around the partition that divided the galley kitchen from the living and dining room and set his six-pack of Widmer Drop Top on the island next to a big bowl.

He eyed the contents with interest. His mom made great salads, with everything in them from baby greens to different kinds of nuts. This one was chock-full of interesting bits, with a bowl of homemade ranch-style dressing sitting next to it. His favorite.

And the smell wafting in through the open windows was another of his

favorites—barbecued pork ribs. He peered out through her fluffy curtains and saw his mother standing on the spacious back deck he'd built her. She was not alone.

His gut tightened, and he grabbed a cold bottle of beer and twisted off the top, taking a long pull. Time to play nice with his mom's new boyfriend.

He opened the sliding door and stepped out into the warm shade of the huge trees that framed the backyard. Beverly Humboldt turned. His own eyes, hazel with thick lashes and arching brows, gazed back at him, but in a rounded, soft face with a quick, nervous smile.

“Hello, sonny. I didn’t hear you come in.” She met him in the middle of the deck to hug him and smooth down the front of his shirt.

“Hi, Mom.” Dack gave her a one-armed hug, keeping his cold beer away from her. “That’s ’cause your cat missed me this time through, and you didn’t hear me screaming in pain.”

“Oh, you.” She swatted him. “You’d think Sheba was a mountain lion.”

She turned to the short, stocky, gray-haired man standing by the gently smoking barbecue, hands in the pockets of his golf shorts. “And here’s Frank.”

Dack nodded stiffly. “Hey, Frank. How’s it going?” His dad wouldn’t have

been caught dead in those plaid shorts. Hank Humboldt had worn Levis every day, or maybe a pair of old chinos when it was above eighty.

“Hello, Dack. It’s going very well, thank you. And you?”

“Great, thanks. Hot. Makes for a long day of work.”

The other man grinned, his eyes nearly disappearing in the creases of his tanned face. “Yes, I’ve been getting up real early to get nine holes in before it’s too hot.”

He laughed, and Dack’s mother joined in. They beamed at each other, and Dack laughed to show his appreciation of the great joke. Ha, ha. Jesus, if it wasn’t for the smells coming from the barbecue,

he'd feign illness to get the hell out of here.

"Beer, Frank?" he offered. "Got five cold ones in the kitchen."

"Thanks, I will," Frank agreed.

"I'll go get you a cold glass," Dack's mother offered.

"Thanks, Suze." Frank beamed at her. Dack took another drink of beer. Maybe he wouldn't have to fake illness. Kind of turned his stomach to watch his mom smile at the guy that way.

They drank a beer while his mother put supper on the picnic table. Dack tried to help, but his mother pressed her hand on his shoulder. "You work hard all day in the hot sun. I can at least feed

you supper.”

Dack smiled his thanks, but it felt awkward as hell, especially when Frank got up and took the platter of ribs from her to carry to the table. She'd waited on his dad hand and foot, but Dack tried to chivvy her into the twenty-first century when he ate here.

Dack drank another beer with dinner and answered Frank's questions about his current construction project, remodeling an old home in Gresham into offices for a bunch of lawyers.

“I guess even ambulance chasers need a well-built office,” he said wryly.

Suzie frowned at him, her cheeks turning pink. Frank patted her hand, smiling easily.

Dack cleared his throat. “Ah...so, you a lawyer?”

“Retired,” Frank said cheerfully. “Bet I know more lawyer jokes than you too.”

“Sorry,” Dack said. He gave his mother an apologetic glance, but she refused to look at him. He sighed inwardly. How the hell was he supposed to know?

He made his escape soon after, saying that he had to be up at sunrise the next morning. Which was true, but more than that, he wanted to be gone before his mother got any more wound up. He recognized the signs—refusing to meet his eyes, getting up to clear the table with jerky movements and stomping off

to the kitchen. She was revving up to blow, and he didn't want to be anywhere in the vicinity when that happened.

Dack wiped his mouth on his napkin and rose. "Frank, great to see you. Again, sorry about...y'know."

Frank shook his head, his gaze friendly. "No apology necessary, Dack. And don't worry about your mother. She'll calm down."

Dack walked back through the house, where he said good-bye to his mother, stole a kiss on her cheek and thanked her for the dinner. She refused to look at him, and he sighed. Damn, no dessert for him, and he guessed Frank would be getting the leftover dinner too.

The goddamned cat got him on the

way through the living room. Dack felt the white-hot slash on his ankle as he passed the corner of the sofa. “Augh,” he gritted out.

“You leave that cat alone,” his mother called from the kitchen.

“Yeah, thanks, I’m fine, Mom,” Dack muttered as he let himself out her front door. He’d deal with the scratch when he got back to his place.

As for the knowledge that another man had taken his dad’s place in her affections, he’d be damned if he’d think about that anymore tonight. It would only give him heartburn.

He’d think about Daisy and what he was going to do with her when she came

back to the club. Now there was something to make him smile. He was getting those pretty breasts of hers out to play next weekend, or he wasn't a dom.

He grinned to himself as he drove through the summer evening, his windows rolled down and Zack Brown Band singing about his country girl.

Who the hell needed relationships when he could have a gorgeous woman just dying to learn how to let her bad girl loose?

Chapter Nine

“Sara? Where are you?” Daisy stood on the veranda of Club 3, phone to her ear. Sara was fifteen minutes late.

Three other couples and two single women had driven in, parked and walked into the club while she waited. Now she was pacing back and forth on the veranda, in the subdued glow of the globe lamps over the door.

The heat had not fallen with the sun, and even in the shade of the tall evergreens that rimmed the parking area, a trickle of perspiration was running down her cleavage, pooling inside her

bra.

“At home,” Sara wailed on the other end of the line. “My car won’t start. I cannot believe this. Now I have to call a tow truck, if I can even get one this time of evening.”

“Oh, too bad,” Daisy said. “I’ll miss you.” But she was still going in. The faint thump of a bass reverberated from inside. Tonight she was dancing.

“Yes, you go have fun,” Sara said woefully. “Maybe you could call me once in a while with updates.”

Daisy grinned. “Not likely. Good luck with your car. Talk to you soon.”

“Okay.”

Daisy stuffed her phone in the pocket of her faded cutoffs. It was a tight fit.

They were an old pair she'd found stuffed in the back of her closet—from high school, if she remembered right.

Her plaid western shirt she'd found at Goodwill. Dirt cheap, just right for a wanna-be hayseed. She'd ripped off the sleeves and most of the bottom, tying the remainder beneath her breasts and leaving all but two of the pearl snaps unfastened.

She hoped Dack liked the shabby-chic look. She'd been tempted for one crazy moment to buy a pair of cowgirl boots but managed to control the temptation. Not in her budget, and her beige platform sandals were just fine. The other women heading inside had been

wearing everything from dresses to rhinestone chaps over a bikini. That had been a flashy combination, especially on a tall redhead with double-D cups.

Well, nothing was stopping her from going in too. Taking a deep breath, Daisy walked up and opened the front door.

Rochelle was at the front desk, wearing a brief version of an Old West saloon girl's dress. She smiled at Daisy, tipping her head to the side in apology. "Welcome back. I'm so, so sorry about last time, when I forgot to tell you about the keys."

Daisy shrugged. "That's okay. You had a lot going on."

Rochelle grimaced. "You're sweet.

But some guys just aren't worth the time or the tears, you know?"

Then she picked something up from the desk and waggled her brows at Daisy. "But some are." She held Dack's key, dangling from the lacy silver collar.

Daisy's heart thumped with delight. "Thanks." She took the key, closing her fingers around it. This meant Dack wanted to be with her again.

She hadn't seen him all week. She'd been to the gym twice, on Tuesday and Thursday evening, but Dack hadn't been there. Jake had. It had been beyond embarrassing having to look Jake in the eye, but he'd merely nodded both times—although she could have sworn she'd

seen a twinkle in his icy gray eyes. She'd blushed like a teenager but managed to hold her head high and smile at him as if she was cool with his having seen her bare ass draped all over his friend and partner.

Now she slipped the collar over her wrist and headed into the club. Luke Bryan was belting out "Country Girl". Daisy smiled eagerly as she walked toward the dance floor, where several couples were already shaking everything they had. She scanned the bar, the floor and the back area for a tall, broad-shouldered man with a dark ponytail but saw no one who even resembled Dack.

With a shrug, she sashayed onto the dance floor and put her hands in the air,

shaking it as the singer instructed. There were two other single women dancing among the couples. One grinned at Daisy, and they danced together for a moment, until the crowd eddied. Daisy swung around and found herself facing a tall cowboy in a hat, jeans and boots, and no shirt. Grinning, he held out his arms in a look-at-you gesture.

Daisy finally recognized Trace and laughed, shaking her hips for him. They danced together, and the song ended in a guitar riff. He nodded, his smile flashing beneath the shadow of his hat.

“Thanks for the dance.”

“You bet, cowboy.”

He tapped her arm with Dack’s key

dangling from it. “Dack should be here soon. He’s stuck in traffic.”

“Must be the night for it. Sara’s stuck at home with a dead vehicle.”

His eyes narrowed. “Sara, huh? Didn’t think she was into this scene.”

She shrugged. “She wants to try it.”

“How’s she getting in?”

“Dack said I could invite her.”

“Did he.” His mouth flattened slightly.

Uh-oh, she hoped she hadn’t let the cat out of the bag there. Maybe Dack wasn’t supposed to let all three of them in for no charge. Daisy had nearly fainted when she saw how much they charged for membership. She looked at him guiltily.

“I should start paying, huh? This is my

second time here.” How she would afford it, she hadn’t a clue. Maybe they had an installment plan, or layaway.

He shook his head. “Nah, you’re Dack’s guest.” The music started again, Zack Brown Band in a cheerful song about living country. Trace leaned forward to speak in her ear. “I’ll see you later, Daisy. Have a good time.”

Daisy nodded automatically, but she stared after him as he sauntered away. She swallowed hard. What exactly had he meant by “see you later”? See how much of her later?

Daisy threaded her way off the dance

floor straight to the bar. She needed a drink. Seeing another couple holding margaritas, she ordered one. She offered to pay for it, but the bartender shook his head with a smile. Good, maybe she'd have two or three more. Trace's comment about "seeing her" had reminded her forcibly that she was here as the guest of a guy who wanted to see all of her, and probably in the midst of a crowd.

Stepping up onto a bar stool, Daisy turned to survey the room as she took a sip of tart, frosty lime and tequila. Her heart leapt with excitement and trepidation. Dack was striding through the crowd toward her. He wore a battered straw cowboy hat, Levis and

boots and a sleeveless western shirt that flapped open to reveal his gorgeous, hairy chest and the happy trail down over his six-pack.

As he stopped before her, she held up her drink in a toast. “Howdy, cowboy.”

His eyes narrowed in that hot, dangerous look that made her quiver, and she realized with a shock of pleasure that he wasn’t wearing his sunglasses. Had he taken them off for her?

He tapped the wrist his key dangled from. “You gonna wear this?”

She nodded. “Yes, Dack.”

His face softened at her response. “Then put it on, Petal.”

As she did so, he leaned past her, his shirt and then his hairy chest brushing her bare arm. His touch and his warm scent, clean male with a hint of shaving cologne and sweat, filled her senses.

“Gimme a margarita, Julio.”

Daisy settled the choker around her throat and took another breath of warm, Dack-scented air. Being this close to him made her dizzy. Or maybe it was knowing that she was now his for the evening.

He leaned on his elbow, cocking one lean hip, and surveyed her from the shadow of his hat brim. “You look real pretty, Petal.”

“Thanks. You look pretty hot

yourself.” She grabbed her drink to quell the urge to put her hands inside his shirt and pet him. They were at the crowded bar, after all. His clothing appeared worn, not as if he’d run out and bought it for the occasion, like some of the other faux cowboys circulating.

And he was grinning at her, humor dancing in his eyes. “In fact,” he drawled, “I think I’m gonna have to call you Daisy Duke tonight.”

She rolled her eyes. “Great. I guess I can stand it for one night.” She’d been called that in middle school, when the boys were into reruns of *Dukes of Hazzard*.

He picked up the margarita that appeared on the bar before him and

jerked his head. "Come on."

Daisy took a hasty sip of her drink rather than spill it and slipped off her barstool. She followed him through the crowd. The place was crowded tonight, with men and women talking, laughing and dancing as Kenny Chesney belted out a song about a beach somewhere.

The leather sofas were occupied, but one of the chairs was empty. Dack folded his long frame into it and patted his thigh, looking up at her.

"Do I get to sit this time?" she asked over the music.

"Only if you do it quick," he shot back. Meaning otherwise he'd make her lie across his lap again.

She shook her head but perched on his thigh. His big hands on her bare waist, he pulled her closer so she was leaning against his chest. Cold liquid splashed her wrist. She took another drink, a long one, and leaned forward to set the remainder of her drink on the small table by the chair. Lifting her wrist, she licked the sticky lime from her skin.

“You always drink that fast?” Dack asked, watching her mouth as he took another sip of his own margarita. She teased him, giving her wrist another swipe with her tongue.

“No, but I’d rather drink it than wear it.”

He cocked his head, eyeing her

skimpy shirt. “Wouldn’t want that, ’cause you’re already wearing too much.” He took another sip and set his own drink down beside hers.

He looked up into her eyes, his gaze implacable in the shadow of his hat. Heat swirled down through her, tightening her nipples and dropping down deeper inside her. Oh, she loved that look. Was he going to ask her to slip out of her cutoffs? She was wearing a pair of nude lace bikinis that were more of a tease than a cover-up.

“I’m glad you’re here, Petal,” he said, his hand slipping down to cradle her bottom, his thumb stroking her bare thigh under the frayed edge of the denim. Oh, good, he was focused on her ass, not her

breasts.

She snuggled closer, her hand on his chest. “So am I.”

“Good.” He bent his head and kissed her, his lips warm, contrasting with the edge of cool lime and salt on his tongue. Daisy cocked her head, kissing him back eagerly. She slipped her arm around his neck, pressing her breasts against his chest.

He kissed her for a long, heady moment. Daisy sank into the kiss. She’d been waiting all week for his mouth, she realized. The brush of his facial hair on her skin, his warm lips exploring hers with slow pleasure, the tangle of his tongue with her own. She moved closer

to him and shivered with anticipation as she felt him shift beneath her, a long stiff shape poking her hip.

He raised his head, and his hands lifted to pull her arms gently from his neck. He looked down at her breasts. “That was nice, but you have way too many clothes on,” he said. “This time I want you to take your top off for me, Petal.”

Daisy’s stomach clenched. She wriggled her bottom enticingly on his hard thighs. “Wouldn’t you rather I took my shorts off?”

His face hardened, his gaze going cool. “No, or I would have said to do that.”

Daisy froze. Oh crap, this was it. She

swallowed and forced herself to lift one hand to the ties beneath her breast.

Around her, people laughed and danced and played. Someone behind her was getting a spanking, and farther on a man was groaning with pleasure, the slap of flesh rising in the lull between songs.

She fiddled with the ties and bit her lip, giving him a pleading look. "I'd really, really rather not." Not yet.

He brushed her hands aside and began to untie her top himself, his gaze holding hers. His warm, calloused fingers brushed her midriff. He was challenging her, letting her know that this time there was no choice for her.

Her stomach jumped again, fear

squeezing her arousal in its icy fist. Daisy shook her head and shoved his hands away. She scrambled off his lap. “I-I can’t. I just—I can’t.”

Tears blinded her, mercifully washing away the sight of his bearded face, his mouth flattening into a hard line.

Turning, she fled into the crowd. She didn’t stop running until she was in the women’s lounge.

Dack watched his pretty little blonde dodge through the crowd—running away from him. Running from his domination. A few of the people nearby looked at him and then away. He knew every one of them, and they knew him, knew he

was one of the owners, one of the head doms here.

His gut clenched. Took a lot to embarrass him, but this definitely qualified. Daisy had bolted and left him alone and wanting, although his arousal was fast disappearing. She'd challenged him again, and this time she appeared to want to have nothing to do with him. Nothing like rejection to cool a guy off.

Goddamn it, what was it with her? Yeah, her tits weren't all her, he could tell that. Augmented breasts not only looked different than natural ones, they felt different. Firmer somehow. That turned some people off.

Not him. Hell, she was hot and

gorgeous, and if a bigger rack helped her feel sexy, that was fine with him. He had nothing against people having a little work done. But if she'd had plastic surgery to feel more attractive, then why the hell didn't she want him or anyone else looking at the augmentation?

Her breasts were pretty, as much of them as he'd seen in the dimness of the back bedroom the weekend before. And she'd liked it when he put his hands on them and played with her nipples, so she wasn't in pain. She'd mentioned scars, but he hadn't felt the ridges of any scar tissue on her silky skin.

Damn, he'd never understand women. And right now, he wasn't sure he wanted to try. But she was in his club, and she

was upset. And as much as he hated women pitching a fit, the thought of her crying alone in the bathroom or her car brought out the protective side of him. A big part of being a dom was caring for those who were submissive.

He shoved himself upright and went in search of help.

His luck turned for the better. Twila, one of his favorite fem dommes, was at the bar waiting for her girlfriend. The tall redhead had a fake rack too, and she was displaying her D-cups tonight in a tight leather vest, matching chaps over bikini bottoms on her slim hips. She grinned at him as he walked up, but her look quickly changed to concern.

“What’s up, big guy?”

He motioned her aside, away from the crowd at the bar and explained what had happened. With a grimace of sympathy, she followed him to the bathrooms.

“You want me to bring her out to you?”

“Nah, I want you to talk to her, okay? If you can, uh, get her into the locker room.”

She frowned. “You gonna come in there?”

“No, but I was thinking I could listen from the connecting door to the janitor’s closet.”

Twila nodded. “This one’s special, huh?” she asked, acknowledging that he was going to a lot of trouble to draw out of Daisy whatever was bothering her.

She didn't wait for a reply, and Dack was damn glad. How did he answer that? He wanted to dominate Daisy, and he wanted to fuck her. All friggin' week, he'd thought about her when he laid down in his king-size bed at night, and she'd been the first thing on his mind when he woke with his usual morning wood. So, yeah, he guessed that made her special. Or maybe it just made her fuckable; he didn't know.

He was scowling as he ducked around a partition and into the room where their janitorial supplies were stored. The men's and women's bathrooms were spacious, and both had shower facilities and adjoining locker rooms with a

comfortable sitting area for members who wanted to chat without being out in the bar. The women's side was done in soft peach and cream that coordinated with the wood paneling.

Dack would have yanked the membership of anyone caught doing what he did next, but this was an emergency—of sorts. He unlocked the door that led from the closet into the women's locker room. Then he left it ajar just enough so he could see Daisy, huddled in a chair with her head in her hands. Her shoulders were shaking, and he could hear her soft sobs. The sound ripped at his guts.

Twila walked into the locker room and perched on the ottoman in front of

Daisy.

“Hey,” Twila said gently, for her anyway. She had a low, husky voice that was made for raucous laughter and hollering across a softball diamond. She leaned her elbows on her knees. “You must be Daisy.”

His Petal looked up, swiping her face with her hand. His heart contracted. Ah, shit, her pretty face was wet, her eyes already red from crying. She nodded warily, her shoulders hitching with another sob.

Twila handed her a couple of paper towels. “I’m Twila. Friend of Dack’s.”

Daisy hid behind the paper towels, making a noise like a kicked puppy.

“Can you tell me what’s wrong?”

Twila asked her. “If that big bozo did or said anything, I’ll go kick his ass right now.”

Daisy must have given her a look of disbelief, because Twila laughed. “I’m a black belt. I can bloody his nose, anyhow.”

Daisy shook her head. “It-it wasn’t him,” she managed. “It’s m-m-me.”

Twila nodded. “So, you had some work done on your breasts, huh? Me too. Yours look really nice. You should be proud of how you look.”

“I-I am, but I—” She was off again, sobbing as if her little heart was breaking.

Dack clenched his fists, grinding his teeth together. He wanted to bust out of the closet and demand that she stop crying. Hell, he was ready to drop down on his knees and beg her to stop.

“So, are you sorry you had the work done?” Twila asked.

Daisy shook her head again. “No, but I-I had to.” She gulped in a big breath and looked at Twila, her tilted eyes flooded with new tears. “I had b-breast cancer. They t-took both of my—my breasts.”

Dack froze, his blood turning to ice. Very slowly, he leaned his forehead against the doorframe, recoiling when his hat bumped the door. He stood with

his head bowed, his eyes closed. Shit, shit, shit.

“They took both of them?” Twila asked gently. “Radical mastectomy, huh? Girl, that’s rough.”

Rough? It was unbelievable, brutal. How the hell did women live through shit like that? The thought of his pretty, spunky Petal undergoing it made him want to throw back his head and howl.

Daisy nodded and then sobbed into her paper towels.

Twila cast a look of sympathy toward his hiding place, as if she knew what he was going through. Then she scooted over to the sofa beside Daisy and put one arm around her, ducking her head to peer into her face.

“Dack said they’re real pretty,” Twila said. “The plastic surgeons did a nice job for you. And you liked it when he touched you last time.”

As he watched, his Petal nodded. “But-but that was kind of in the d-dark, and no-no one else was looking. It was d-different.”

Twila nodded. “Well, yeah. But, Daisy, if private and in the dark are all you want, then...what are you doing here?”

Daisy took a long, sobbing breath. “I want...I want someone to help me just break through my fears.”

Twila looked frustrated, but her voice remained gentle. “What fears?”

“That...that I’m not a...a real woman anymore,” Daisy wailed. “It’s been months since I healed, but”—she waved a hand at her breasts—“I feel like these are a neon sign, telling everyone that I’m damaged goods.”

“Ah.” Twila nodded. “Gotcha.”

She sighed and patted Daisy on the back and then let her go, leaning back to cross one long leg over the other.

“Daisy, what you have to remember is that everybody in this club has had a fight of some kind to get here. Most of us, we’re fighting what other people tell us we should feel and think and do. Society says one woman, one man, in the dark in a bed with wedding rings on.”

She juggled her booted foot, and Dack could see her own agitation. He knew it wasn't easy being gay, even in this liberal city.

“Maybe they're right,” she went on. “For most people, I guess that works. But for me, it doesn't. I'm not only gay, I'm a domme. Sounds like it doesn't work for you either. Let me ask you this—did you like what you and Dack did together last time you were here?”

Daisy nodded, at first looking down. Then she lifted her head. Dack's chest swelled with pride as she looked Twila in the eye, owning her feelings. “Yes. I did. It was...the hottest sex I've ever had.”

Twila grinned wickedly. “Dack's

pretty hot, all right. For a guy.”

Dack nearly snorted. He knew that dig was just for him.

But although Daisy was smiling, she was also nodding like she meant it.

“So.” Twila’s smile disappeared as she put her *domme* face on. “If you’re going to come to the club, and wear Dack’s collar, you need to be open to doing what’s asked of you. If you can’t do that, maybe this scene isn’t for you. But more than that, think about what you’re doing to Dack. If you come on to him, and then don’t follow through... that’s just a big tease, Daisy. And he deserves better than that.”

Daisy nodded, her mouth trembling.

“Yes,” she agreed. “He does.”

Twila rose, and Daisy looked up at her. “Thank you,” she said.

Twila smiled at her. “Anytime. And remember, you are now more bodacious than the average woman. Use your power wisely.”

Daisy giggled, and it was a sweet sound.

Dack slowly eased backward, away from the door. Then his heel struck the wheel of a mop bucket, which clanged loudly against the wall. The mop in it hit the wall with a thud.

Shit. He grabbed the mop, set it upright, and then thunked a few cupboards for good measure, trying to sound like he was supposed to be in the

room. Then he hustled out and closed the outer door.

“What was that?” Daisy flew off the sofa, staring at the door cracked open across the room.

“Hmm? Oh, just someone getting bar towels,” Twila said nonchalantly. “So you ready to come on out? I’m sure Dack wants to talk to you.”

Daisy nodded, and then sniffled. “Um, sure. I just need a minute to...you know.” She gestured toward the mirrors.

“Okay.” Twila nodded and sauntered out of the locker room.

Daisy watched her go and then

hurried over to the door from which the banging and clanging had come. Pushing it open, she peered into the small room beyond, lit only with a small emergency light. The room was empty.

Of course Twila was right, and it had just been one of the bartenders. Not someone spying on her.

Going to the mirrors, she splashed water on her face and dabbed it dry with more paper towels. Then she finger combed her hair and forced herself to look her reflection in the eye. Which were red and swollen, and her face was blotchy. Oh, she looked like hell. She wanted to sneak out and run for her car.

No, that would really be slapping Dack in the face. Twila was right, he

deserved better than that. She had to face him.

In fact, she realized, with dawning hope in her eyes, she wanted to do more than that. She wanted him to make love to her. Wait, no, have sex with her. Just sex, that was all. Just great, hot, mind-blowing, toe-curling sex.

She took a deep breath and walked out into the club. Another woman passed her coming in. She gave Daisy a curious look but said nothing.

Dack was waiting outside, leaning on the wall like a cowboy in a western bar. He straightened as Daisy walked up to him, and looked down at her. “You have something to tell me?” he asked, his

expression enigmatic.

Daisy nodded, meeting his gaze. Her heart was banging, but now that she'd already blurted it all out to the domme Twila, she felt stronger, more able to tell him.

He took her hand. "Come on. Let's go outside."

Hanging on to his big hand, Daisy followed him out through the lobby. She ducked behind him as he greeted another couple, not wanting to face anyone with a tearstained face. He bent to accept a hug from the woman in the couple and told her to be good. The woman laughed delightedly, and the two walked into the club. Daisy sniffled wistfully, wishing with all her heart she and Dack were just

going in for a nice evening, instead of outside for a...what? Heart-to-heart.

He led her across the parking lot to her car, and turned to lean on the black pickup next to it, laying one arm along the rim of the bed. Daisy echoed his pose, leaning on her car, arms wrapped around her middle.

“I had...breast cancer,” she told him, gritting the words out in an effort to keep her voice steady. “My breasts are...fake. Implants. And I know they look okay, but I have...a hard time accepting that.”

She glared at him, suddenly mad as a disturbed hornet. God, this was hard. She was so ready to be done with all this emotion. “So now you know.”

He nodded. Then he reached out and pulled her to him, willy-nilly. Holding her between his spread legs, hand splayed over the small of her back, he tipped her chin up with his other hand.

“Daisy,” he said in that dark, commanding voice that said *you will listen to me, and obey*. “Listen, and listen good. Your breasts are not fake. Not in any way that matters to me. They’re real pretty, and nice to touch and hold, and I fuckin’ love the way your nipples perk up when I pinch them.”

She stared up at him wonderingly. He really meant it—the truth was written on his hard face. He smiled at her and pinched her chin lightly. “I’m proud of

you, Petal. You're a warrior woman. A survivor."

"I am?" She blinked as her eyes filled with tears again. Her heart swelled. He was right; she'd been through her own war, and survived. "Yeah, I guess I am, huh?"

"Yes, you are. You've been through hell, and you came out smiling. Can I just...hold you for a little while?" he asked.

Daisy nodded. Oh God, if he didn't, she was going to dissolve in a puddle on the hot pavement. He was proud of her. He thought she was strong, and brave. A warrior.

She burrowed her face into his chest, wrapping her arms around his powerful

torso, and leaned against him, savoring his strong arms holding her tight, his hands massaging her back and her bottom gently, like he had all night just to hold her like this.

He was quiet for a long time, the only sounds the thump of the bass from inside the club and the muffled roar of traffic from the street beyond the gym.

“You know, Petal,” he said after a while. “If you want to be with a dom, any dom, you have to put your trust in him.”

Daisy felt a surge of guilt so strong it nearly sent her wailing from his arms. She’d been trying to game the system, show him what she wanted him to see.

Like a Realtor staging a house, playing up the good points and disguising the bad ones.

Well, enough of that. She wanted Dack, so she'd step up and do what he asked. Not because she was wounded and willing to do anything to keep a man, but because she wanted what he offered. And she wanted it with him, not some other dom.

"You're right," she said, turning her face to press a kiss on his chest, hot and smooth. His chest hair tickled her chin. "I'm sorry. I'm ready now, to trust you."

She looked up at him, smiling hopefully. But he shook his head slightly.

"Here's what I want you to do, Daisy," he said gently. "Go home and

think about all this. Make sure it's what you want. And when you decide, let me know."

Daisy stared at him, hurt landing like a punch to her middle. He didn't want her. After all this, he was sending her away.

He lifted one hand to indicate his key hanging around her neck. "I'll need this back."

Her face flaming, Daisy grasped the collar and pulled it off. It stuck on a strand of hair, and she yanked rather than take the time to loosen it. The sharp little pain was nothing compared to the turmoil inside her.

"Hey," he chided, his eyes narrowing.

“I don’t know what’s going through your head, but lose it. I’ll be here next week.”

“Well, good for you,” she snapped, slapping the key in his palm. “I won’t. I have a walk-a-thon for the cancer foundation.”

“Damn. Then maybe the week after that. I’m not goin’ anywhere, Petal.” He stuffed the key in the pocket of his Levis. “Now where’re your car keys?”

Numbly, Daisy dug them from her pocket and handed them over. Dack opened her car door, put her in, and handed her the keys.

“I’ll see you soon, okay?”

She nodded. “Um, sure.”

“Night,” he said. “Drive careful.” He closed the door on her and stepped back.

Daisy watched him amble back across the parking lot. Not until his tall form had disappeared into the club did she remember to put her keys into the ignition and start the car. He was going back in there to find another woman, she just knew it.

And it was none of her business if he did. She'd had her chance with him tonight, and she'd rejected him.

It seemed doms only gave so many second chances.

Chapter Ten

Dack walked back into the club. He managed a nod for Rochelle, who watched him pass with wide eyes, but said nothing. She was a sub through and through, a sweetheart who knew when to keep her mouth shut.

Trace and Jake were standing together, watching the scene as dancers milled about between songs. Things were heating up, with clothing coming off, the smell of various colognes, sweat and arousal scenting the air.

One dom had his sub's arms bound, playing calf-roping. She was giggling as

he unfastened her skirt. Another cowboy knelt before a sub, his mouth busy between her legs while a younger dom held her upright, playing with her breasts and watching.

Mason was playing naughty pony on the dance floor, a pretty dark-haired sub wagging her bare ass while he smacked it carefully with the smooth end of his belt, just hard enough to make her squeal.

“Looks like we’re gonna have us a rodeo between sets,” Jake observed, tipping his head to watch as the belt hit the floor, along with Mason’s knees. The dom unfastened his jeans, ready to take his date there while dancers ringed the floor to enjoy the show.

“Yeah,” Dack agreed sourly. “Looks like.”

“Why are you pissed?” Jake asked. “This is money in the bank, partner.”

Trace elbowed Jake. “Go easy on Dack. He got bucked off tonight.”

Jake waited, brows raised in silent query. While Mason covered his mare in the middle of the dance floor, Dack explained briefly what had happened with Daisy.

“Oh man, that’s rough,” Trace said, shaking his head. “Damn, she’s so feisty, you’d never think she was that sick, you know?”

Dack nodded, his chest aching. He knew exactly what Trace meant. The

thought of her lying in a hospital bed, her hair gone, pale and weak, nearly brought him to his knees.

Jake squeezed his shoulder in silent support. “So, you gonna back off, Hum? Ease her into the scene?”

Dack scowled. “No,” he decided. “I’m gonna push harder. She’s got the courage to do this, if she really wants it, and I think she does. She’s either all in, or she’s out.”

“Yee-haw,” Trace approved. “Will she be here next weekend? I don’t wanna miss this.”

“Neither do I,” Dack agreed wryly. “But she’s busy next weekend. One of those cancer things—walk-a-thons.”

Trace nodded. “Done those with my

aunt and my mom. Raised a lot of money for research.” He grinned at Dack. “Guy can get a lot of brownie points too.”

Dack stared at him. “You troll for women at breast cancer fund-raisers?” That was wrong on so many levels, he didn’t even know where to start.

Trace grimaced. “No, dumbass. I meant you get points with your lady that way. My aunt baked me a double batch of her famous chocolate chip cookies. No telling what Daisy would do for you.”

Jake eyed Dack, tongue in cheek. “Dack’s already tasted Daisy’s cookies.”

Dack nodded, his mind working. Out

on the floor, Mason was groaning with completion, his sub whimpering happily. “But I want the whole fuckin’ bake sale.”

Jake slapped him on the back. “Well, meantime, gentlemen, we got a house full of eager subs, waiting for our services. Let’s get to it.”

“Hey, speaking of that,” Trace said. “Hummer, you gonna charge Daisy a membership fee? None of my business if you want to cover it, but...”

“Yeah, it’s your business,” Dack acknowledged. They owned the club together, and they all had to play by the same rules. One of them couldn’t be inviting all kinds of women for free, or the place would go under. “I’m covering

her.”

At least for as long as she lasted here. Because if she ran again, that was it. He'd make sure they stayed friends, even if it killed him to see her and talk to her without touching, but he wanted her too badly to live on the end of a string like a yo-yo, not knowing if he was going to be up or down.

“She said her friend Sara was going to come too,” Trace went on. “But I haven't seen any paperwork from her.”

“Well, if she does, she gets the ladies' discount,” Jake said. “You could offer Daisy that too, if the two of you don't work out.”

Dack nodded, although his jaw was

tight.

Jake managed the gym, and Trace ran this place. Dack helped out at both places, but with his building business, he didn't have the time to do paperwork. Trace had a background in money management, so he ran their corporation, and they had an accounting firm who made sure the books were in order.

But they made the big decisions together. One of them had been to offer women memberships to the club at half what men paid. Keeping this place open meant keeping women coming back. Men were horndogs—if there were women, they'd follow them here.

Trace and Jake walked away in different directions. Trace stopped to

smile at a woman sitting shyly at a table. Jake headed for the stairs.

With an effort, Dack brought himself back to his surroundings. He wasn't up for sex with some chick he didn't know, but that didn't mean he wouldn't circulate, talk to the singles and try to help pair them with a dom he thought could please them.

It was the ladies who were crucial to business. And if one was crucial to his satisfaction, well, she wasn't here right now.

Daisy called Sara as soon as she got home. Her friend's phone rang several

times.

“Hi,” Sara said breathlessly. “Sorry, I was doing crunches. My car had to be towed to the shop. Since I’m stuck at home, I decided to work my sexual frustration out on an exercise tape. Are you having fun?”

Daisy snorted. “Not exactly. I’m at my place.”

“What happened?” Sara’s voice was full of concern. “Was Dack with another woman?”

Fresh tears filled Daisy’s eyes, and she swiped at them with her damp tissue. “He probably is by now. He sent me home.”

“That ass-hat. Why?”

Daisy told Sara what had happened.

Her friend listened, making sympathetic noises.

“The least he could’ve done was give you an orgasm after all that,” Sara said.

Daisy laughed, surprising herself.

“Thanks. I thought so too.” She sniffled.

“But I guess he has a point. If I don’t want to participate fully...”

“You shouldn’t be there,” Sara finished. “Yeah, I guess not. So is it right for you? I mean, everyone who looks at you sees gorgeous, but can you get past your emotional barriers?”

Daisy stared at the begonia blooming in the corner of her small living room. The creamy blooms rose exuberantly from the shelter of the plant, a delicate

and surprising contrast to the broad, spiky, green leaves.

“I’m going to try.”

“Good. ’Cause I have to tell you, Dack is really hot. I’ll bet he can really show a woman a good time.”

Daisy made a face at her phone. Sara didn’t have to be quite so enthusiastic. “He’s also taken.” At least as far as Sara was concerned. Daisy was all too aware she had no control over what other women Dack was with.

“Oops.” Sara winced audibly. “Of course he is. So-oo, can I ask you a question?”

“Of course you can.” Daisy waited, intrigued.

“Well... Was it really hot last time,

you know..." Her friend hesitated and then finished in a rush. "When you let him spank you. I mean, was it part of the fun, or just something you wanted to get through for the sex?"

Daisy grinned. "Does someone want her fanny warmed?"

Sara groaned, embarrassment clear. "Oh, I'm such a slut even admitting this, but...yeah. It sounds really...intriguing."

"Any special guy in mind?" Daisy asked warily. If Sara said Dack, she was going to rip her red hair out.

Sara hesitated. "Not really. He doesn't have to be handsome, y'know, just fit and sexy."

Daisy made a sound of wordless

agreement. Looks weren't everything. Mason wasn't the best-looking guy at the club, but he was one of the sexiest. If it weren't for Dack, she would've probably accepted his offer that first night.

"Yes, it was hot," she admitted. In fact, she squirmed on her little sofa at the memory of Dack's strong will overpowering hers, of his hand smacking and then soothing her ass. She didn't care if she ever saw one of those paddles again. Or that jerk Kevin.

"So you're going back?" Sara asked. "'Cause if you are, I'll come with you next time."

"Yes," Daisy decided. "I am going back. And that big carpenter isn't going

to know what hit him. Metaphorically speaking, that is.”

She wrinkled her nose. She was pretty sure she wouldn't be allowed to smack his fine ass. But she would love to get her hands on it. Missionary style, in that bed. She wanted to be under him, with his big, hard body pressing her into the bed, while he pounded into her.

“Well, now we just need to work on Carlie,” Sara said. “That girl needs some guy to show her she's beautiful.”

“So do you,” Daisy said loyally. “You have the best body of the three of us. You're so fit.”

Sara snorted. “Didn't impress Jason much.”

“Well, speaking of a-holes, he is the king,” Daisy reminded her. “So who cares what he thinks? There are lots of hot guys at the club,” she told Sara. “In fact, I was surprised how many people not only can afford the fees but are interested in the lifestyle.”

“And you haven’t even been upstairs,” Sara said jokingly.

“Yeah. I don’t know...if Dack goes up there.”

“Guess you’ll find out.”

Daisy swallowed. “Yup. Guess I will.”

She and Sara said good-bye with a promise to meet at the gym on Tuesday evening. Suddenly exhausted, Daisy

hauled herself off the sofa and traipsed into the bathroom for a cool shower.

She eyed her reflection in her bathroom mirror. A woman with a tearstained face, chic hairdo and curvy body in a ridiculously sexy outfit. She smiled crookedly as she untied the ripped western shirt. Daisy Duke, he'd called her.

Well, she could certainly use some of the character's attitude. And she'd do it too. She set her jaw as she unhooked her bra and shrugged it off, baring her full breasts. She stroked her hands over them and nodded decisively.

As the amazing Twila had said, she was now more bodacious than the average woman, and she was going to

use that to get what she wanted instead of being afraid.

Even if the thought scared her half to death.

Daisy stood in the shade of a cluster of tall evergreens near the EbiTeck fitness track. The high-tech company had purchased the Forest Grove campus of a private college moving to newer quarters. EbiTeck had done a great job of making their new labs and offices fit in with the look of the old Main Hall and torn down the ugly buildings the college had added in the sixties. They'd even managed to save most of the towering

trees.

Carlie worked for EbiTeck, the reason she, Daisy and Sara had met at a breast cancer walk-a-thon here more than a year ago.

What a difference that year had made. Daisy looked around her, smiling at familiar faces and enjoying the morning. Women eddied around her, laughing and chatting, clad as she was in light, comfortable clothing and walking shoes. Pink was the most prevalent color, and those who didn't wear pink T-shirts and baseball caps had pink ribbons affixed somewhere on their person. There were men and boys sprinkled in the throng, but most of those who'd shown up today to walk were women. Breast cancer

survivors, friends and family.

She reached up to settle her own pink plaid bucket hat on her head. Then she looked down as she brushed grass from the seat of her shorts. She wore white shorts, a pink tank and her favorite tennies, with pink ribbons tied into the shoelaces. Water bottle, check.

Sunglasses, check. Sunscreen lip gloss, check. She was ready. Later, as the sun rose higher, she'd slip on her long-sleeved sun shirt, but for now she was going to enjoy the sun on her skin and work on her tan for a couple of hours.

She glanced at the big clock set up by one of the booths, selling T-shirts, water bottles and other “pink” paraphernalia.

Eight o'clock, time to get started.

Her mother and sisters would be here at nine with the girls. Carlie was out of town with family, but Sara had promised to come. Daisy's dad had given her a pledge sheet filled out with pledges from his golf buddies, his ticket to freedom for the day. He'd kissed her cheek and told her if he was going to walk in the hot sun, he damn well wanted a club and something to hit with it.

She sighed, wishing she was at the river or out at the coast. It was going to be a long, hot day. Only for such a good cause would she submit to this torture. Walking around and around in the sun with no water in sight just sucked.

“Oh, here comes a cowboy I wouldn't

mind taking for a stroll,” commented one of the middle-aged women waiting nearby. “Hoo-boy.”

Her friend turned to look. “Yum, sign him up on our team, Bernice.”

The others laughed, nudging each other.

Daisy peered past the awning of the nearest booth to see who they were ogling. Someone’s cute boyfriend or son, probably.

Her heart gave a great thunk and began to beat double time. A tall, tanned, broad-shouldered man was sauntering down the track toward her, clad in shorts and a tight T-shirt, a familiar battered straw cowboy hat on his head.

Dack saw her and grinned, his teeth a white slash in his bearded face. He wore his trademark shades, so she couldn't see his eyes, but with that smile, she knew they'd hold a devilish twinkle.

Daisy skirted his admirers and walked out into the sun to meet him, delighted but bewildered. "Morning, cowboy. What are you doing here?"

Dack stopped before her. "Well, y'know that date you wanted us to go on?"

Amusement and delight bubbled up inside her, lighter than air. "Are you kidding me? You're here to be with me?"

Her intense relief made her realize

how tense she'd been all week. She'd been so afraid that after she ran out of the club he'd be tired of dealing with her and her fears. Even though he'd been so sweet, holding her, when he'd taken back his key it had felt like he was taking his...well, not love, but his approval.

He looked around and then bent close, cocking his head near hers. "Yeah, although I have to tell you, the Pink Camo Grammas over here may give you a run for your money. They've been givin' me the eye, if you know what I mean."

Daisy glanced over at the group of elderly women beaming at her and Dack. She smiled back at them and swatted him

on his bicep. “You are so full of it.”

At that moment, a loud horn tooted. “Welcome to the Forest Grove ‘Kick Cancer’ Walk,” an amplified voice called over the field. “Eight o’clock teams, on the track. Let’s kick some cancer butt, people.”

Dack held out his hand, and Daisy took it. She followed him out onto the track, and they started off among the other walkers.

“Slower walkers to the center,” the woman with the megaphone called. “You faster walkers take the long way around. It’s good for you.”

The walkers laughed or protested good-naturedly as they sorted

themselves out on the track. Daisy moved to the outside with Dack, the lane open ahead of them, her spirits lighter than they'd been all week. "How did you even know I was going to be here?" she asked.

"You told me you were doing a walk this weekend, so I did some research. Printed myself off a pledge sheet and started signing people up."

"At the club?" When he nodded, she snickered. Well, the members certainly had money, so this was a good use of it, even if he'd just gotten a few dollars.

"And people I know," he added.

"People you know," she mimicked admiringly. "I'm impressed. Thank you. So, are you from here?"

“Nah, I’m from the Gorge, Hood River. My dad worked on the Bonneville Dam. How about you?”

“Tigard. Go Tigers. My dad’s a retired Realtor.”

He nodded, grinning. “I’m an Eagle, myself. So now you’re a Realtor too, huh?”

She gave him an incredulous look. “Not even close. I’m a secretary at WorldWide Realty. I’m taking classes, though. Gonna get my license.”

“I believe you.” He squeezed her hand. “You’ll be up there smiling on the billboards. ‘Buy my house.’” He pointed an admonishing finger down at imaginary motorists, and Daisy laughed.

“How about you?” she asked. Then she shook her head, turning to jog backwards in front of him. “Wait, wait. Don’t tell me, let me guess. You work outside, I know that, ’cause you’re all tan and buff, and not just from those huge weights you maul.”

“Whoa, careful.” He grabbed her arms and pulled her back beside him, her hand in his again. “You’re gonna trip, and then I’ll have to spend the next hour spreading first aid ointment on your elbows and your ass... No, wait a minute. Go ahead and run backwards. I’ll be your ointment bitch anytime.”

She snickered. “Don’t try to distract me. So, you’re tanned, but when you take

your sunglasses off, you're not as tanned around your eyes, so you don't lie in a tanning bed."

He snorted with disgust, and she grinned. He was such a guy. Probably rather chew nails than go to a tanning salon.

"And you come into the gym all covered in dust sometimes, but it's not regular dirt. More like...construction dust."

He waited, smiling as they walked along. She held up their linked hands and examined his. Big and brown and powerful, with the heavy musculature and tendons of a hand that worked hard. Scars, and a fresh scab on one knuckle that made her frown with dismay. "You

get hit with things—hammers. You're a carpenter," she said triumphantly.

He chuckled and squeezed her hand again. "Very good. I'm a builder."

"Houses?"

"Yup, and small business projects. Do some remodeling too. Just rebuilt a place up on Bull Mountain. Tore down the old place and started over from the ground up."

Daisy nodded. How cool was that? They were in the same field. "I love houses," she said. "What's your favorite style?"

He considered. "Craftsman, I guess. I like a solid, traditional look."

"Built to last," she agreed. "So do you

own a home?"

"Nope. Condo. Easier to take care of. Between work, the gym and the club, I'm pretty busy."

"No hobbies, huh?" she asked dryly.

He chuckled, this time a low, intimate growl. "Oh, I wouldn't say that."

Daisy stared fixedly at the track ahead, her cheeks hot. Oh geez, she'd walked right into that one. He had a hobby, all right.

She cast him a look under the brim of her hat and found him looking back at her. They walked along, a sedate distance between them, but suddenly Daisy felt that familiar tightening in her breasts and heat twining down deep inside her.

He smiled slowly. “I like that top, Petal. I like it a lot.”

She peered down and groaned. Her nipples were hard points, poking through her sports bra and tank.

Dack squeezed her hand, his thumb massaging the back of her hand. She felt it clear to her girly parts. “You get a free T-shirt for participating,” she told him, for something to say. “I hope you like pink.”

He chuckled. “No thanks. I’ll just get an extra one for you.”

“Hey,” she said with mock indignation. “If the pro football players can wear pink to support breast cancer research, you can too.”

He nodded. “You got a point there, Petal. Maybe we could—”

“Dack Humboldt, is that you?”

Dack turned, and Daisy peered around him. A tall woman who looked perhaps ten years older than Daisy had hurried up beside Dack on his other side. She wore skimpy pink shorts and a snug T-shirt, her long brown hair curling around her shoulders as if she were going out for the evening. She was beaming at Dack. With those teeth, she really should keep her mouth closed. Okay, that was bitchy, but did Dack have to look so pleased to see the woman?

“Hey, Shawna,” he said. “How are you?”

The two exchanged a one-armed hug, still walking. Daisy tugged her hand free of Dack's, her smile set on her face. Well, wasn't this fun.

"I can't believe you're here," Shawna exclaimed. "I told Mom that's Dack Humboldt over there, and she said it is not, and I said it is so, and I'll prove it."

She and Dack laughed together. Ha, ha, that was really funny.

"Your mom's here, huh?" he asked.

"Yeah, with Missy." She turned and pointed, and Dack waved to someone.

"You know she had that bout with the big C last winter, so we never miss a chance to do a fund-raiser, but what are you doing here, Dack?"

“Same thing you are,” he returned amiably. “Shawna, this is Daisy. Daisy, Shawna and I went to school together in Hood River.”

“I figured,” Daisy said, upping the wattage on her smile. “Hi, Shawna, nice to meet you.”

The other woman checked Daisy out avidly. “Same here, Daisy.” She looked from Daisy to Dack, her eyes sparkling. “Well,” she said, giving Dack another hug, her arm lingering this time. “Wait ’til I tell Josh that you were here walking the track. Ha! Maybe he can get his butt out here for once.”

Dack smiled down at her. “How’s he doing?”

Hmm, this sounded promising. Maybe the Hugger was married. Daisy listened hard, although she looked around as if scanning the area was all that was on her mind.

Shawna began a lengthy description of the absent Josh's latest business venture. Daisy looked at the big clock as they passed. Nine o'clock. Mom, Dana and the girls should be here. Turning, she walked backwards for a moment, scanning the crowd.

Dack and Shawna were laughing over Josh's first attempts to turn some old Hood River landmark into a viable business. Daisy spotted her mother's favorite pink sun hat and sighed with

mingled relief and regret.

She waved and saw Dana notice her and point, showing her mother where Daisy was.

“Back in a minute,” Daisy said to Dack. “Nice meeting you, Shawna.”

Dack looked down at her, the corners of his mouth pulling in. In regret, irritation—hard to tell with him. He nodded. “See you in a few.”

Daisy ducked around a big group of walkers and jogged over to greet her family with hugs and kisses for her two nieces, who were attired in matching pink ball caps and T-shirts.

“Who was that you were walking with?” Dana asked.

“Oh, he’s...a friend,” Daisy said.

“You can meet him in a little bit. You guys ready to walk?”

She watched her mother and sister exchange a quick look, but neither said anything.

“I am,” Cora agreed, bouncing excitedly. “Daddy signed my pledge sheet.”

“Mine too,” Zoe told her. “He said if we walk for an hour, he’ll take us out for ice cream at the Pink Elephant. They have every kind of sprinkle you ever heard of.”

“And they pile them all on together,” her sister added under her breath. She and Daisy shuddered together.

The morning was still pleasant, but

Daisy glugged some of her water as she walked back out onto the track. She scanned the walkers without turning her head and found Dack on the other side, just waving good-bye to Shawna.

He looked around, and she watched him spot her. She waved, and he nodded, then lengthened his stride. Her heart sped up with him. He'd catch up with her and her family in a few moments.

Hoo-boy. Then what? *Hey, Mom, Dana, girls, this is the guy I had kinky sex with at a club. A club which he owns, by the way.* Okay that was beyond ridiculous, but geez. It didn't matter where or how, this stage of dating or whatever they were doing, was just awkward.

But he had said they were on a date. So that was good, right? Unless he had more old girlfriends waiting to spring out of the trees.

She turned to look behind her, and there he was. He held out his hand, and she slowed to wait for him, putting her hand in his without thinking.

“Is that your family?” he asked, looking at Dana and her mother, who had turned to look back. The girls were way ahead, race-walking each other around the track.

“Yup. Mom and Dana, my oldest sister. Come and meet them.”

“Yeah? Okay.”

She looked up at him, surprised. He

hadn't been sure she'd want to introduce him. Did that mean—oh crap. Better get this out in the open. "If you want to," she said.

"Yeah, I want to." He looked down at her and smiled crookedly. "Now that we're dating, I think I should meet your folks."

"Oh, you." She swatted his arm with her free hand, but she was smiling inside and out as they hastened to catch up with her mother and sister.

Her mom and Dana checked Dack out thoroughly, but they did it with such charm and ease that Daisy didn't mind—much. Introductions over, Dana asked him what he did for a living.

"I own a—"

Daisy's heart nearly stopped. "He's in construction," she blurted.

Dana looked at her oddly. Dack's eyebrows drew together over his sunglasses. "Yeah, and I own a club with two partners," he said, his hand tightening on hers. "A fitness center."

Daisy put one hand on her chest. Holy crap, she needed to go lie down. For one terrible instant, she'd thought he was going to admit he owned a sex club.

"Oh, is that how you two met?" Dana asked. "I know Daisy works out regularly."

"Yeah," Dack agreed, squeezing her hand again. "She likes a good workout."

Blushing furiously, Daisy told them

about joining Big Iron with Carlie and Sara, and Dana asked Dack a question about abdominal workouts. Daisy's mother fell back to walk with the girls, who had caught up and wanted to tell all about their lap.

Sara arrived soon afterward and joined their group. If she was surprised to see Dack, she concealed it well. Very well. Daisy was not thrilled with the hug Dack gave the diminutive redhead or the way she smiled up at him.

But then Sara moved to Daisy's other side to walk and gave her an enthusiastic thumbs-up, and Daisy forgave her.

The morning grew hotter. More of Daisy's acquaintances arrived, women she'd met at treatments and classes, and

some of the oncology nurses. They broke for lunch, boxed lunches eaten on the lawn in the shade of the trees.

Daisy's mother said good-bye, her fair skin flushed with heat, and soon after Dana took the girls off for a swim. Sara saw another group of women she knew and went to join them for lunch. Daisy put on her long-sleeved shirt, and Dack sprayed her with cool water. Then she got to do the same for him, enjoying the sight of his wet shirt sticking to his powerful muscles.

Leaning back on his elbows in the cool grass, he watched with interest as she smoothed sunscreen on her legs. "Damn, wish I could help with that," he

muttered. “Since I didn’t get to do any first aid. Always liked playing doctor.”

She smiled teasingly. “You can do my sunscreen if you take me out to the river sometime.”

He nodded. “Frenchman’s Bar? Deal.” Then he sat up and looked away, arms braced on his upraised knees.

“What?” she asked.

“Don’t interrupt me,” he growled.

“I’m reciting baseball stats.”

She blushed as comprehension dawned. That was what guys did when they wanted to distract themselves from their arousal. “So, how’s that working for you?”

He gave her a look. “Be careful, or you’ll find out...sub.”

And just like that, Daisy remembered the bed at the club, with him behind her, holding her while he pounded into her. She dropped the tube of sunscreen. It landed on the grass, a sploosh of liquid squirting onto her ankle.

He gave her a wicked grin and levered himself to his feet, holding one hand down to her. “Yeah, works both ways, doesn’t it, Petal?”

Daisy looked up at him, which was a mistake, because there she was, crouched at his feet like a supplicating harem girl—which made her pussy throb with need.

She nodded, because he was waiting for an answer. Then she busied herself

tucking the sunscreen into her bag, before taking his hand and letting him pull her to her feet.

Sara caught up and walked with them again for a while. Dack headed off to use the portable restrooms, and Sara grinned at Daisy. “So you two made up, huh?”

“I guess we did,” Daisy said. She told Sara about his calling this their first date.

Sara made the face women usually reserved for puppies, kittens and babies. “Aww, that is so sweet. You know, if he wasn’t into kinky stuff, I’d say he was a keeper.”

Daisy stared at her. “You think the two are mutually exclusive? I mean,

kinky sex and a long-term relationship?”

Sara opened her mouth and then closed it. “What do I know?” she said finally. “I married a vanilla guy, and he turned out to be the opposite of a keeper.”

Daisy shrugged off the odd melancholy Sara’s remark had brought. “We’re not looking for that anyway, remember?”

She nudged Sara with her elbow. “We just want—”

“Good sex,” they finished together. They were laughing together as Dack rejoined them.

“Do I get to know what the joke is?” he asked good-naturedly.

“No,” they said in unison.

It was a hot afternoon. By the end of the last lap, Daisy was ready to melt into a puddle of sunscreen and sweat.

“Oh,” she moaned as she stopped to let one of the volunteers spray her with cool water. “God, I’m glad that’s over.”

“Me too.” Dack mimicked her whine. “I’m hot.”

The teenaged volunteer giggled.

Daisy glared at him. He was damp with perspiration, but he looked as relaxed and full of energy as he had in the morning. “You’re used to it. I get more brownie points than you.”

“Hah,” he said. “Bet I got more pledges than you did, Daisy Petal.”

“You got a lot of pledges?” He’d said so, but she’d assumed just a few dollars here and there.

He looked at her as if she’d lost her mind. Then he spread his arms. “Well, that is what we’re here for, isn’t it?” He looked around, playing the crowd.

“Yeah, you tell ’em, cowboy,” called one of the white-haired women seated in the shade nearby. The Camo Grammas again.

He pulled a folded sheet of paper from his pocket and handed it to Daisy. She opened it and studied the amounts. Her heart nearly stopped.

“You...you made two thousand dollars in pledges today,” she said incredulously.

A chorus of triumphant whoops filled the hot air as everyone around them applauded. Dack merely grinned at her. Daisy stood there, her hot, sweaty misery forgotten as she smiled at him. Good thing she was wearing sunglasses herself, as she had to blink away tears.

It was definitely the best fund-raising walk ever, she decided as Dack put her into her car in the crowded parking lot. She had her new T-shirt in hand, a feminine rib knit with a stiletto sandal on the front and the words Kick Cancer Out. Dack had cheerfully accepted his own

pink T-shirt, in a men's extra-large.

Daisy couldn't wait to see him wear it.

“Since this is our first date, do I get a kiss?” she asked him, only half teasing.

He looked down at her and then shook his head, closing her car door. “Nope. Remember what I told you that night at the club?”

Daisy froze. She remembered all right, every dirty word he'd murmured while he held her naked in his arms.

He smiled at her, a slow, teasing grin. “You been doing what I told you, Petal? Touching yourself when you think about being with me at the club?”

Yes, she had, but she'd sit here and fry in her own juices before she'd admit it—which could happen, because her

pussy was contracting with need, and her panties were soaked with more than perspiration after spending the day with him.

He chuckled, and she realized she didn't have to say a word—he knew. “That’s good, Petal. That’s real good. Yeah, I wanna kiss you. But when I do, I want it all. So me kissing you right now...not a good idea. Unless you wanna head over to the club?”

She wanted nothing more than to follow him anywhere he commanded, but not only was she all sweaty and gross from a day in the sun, she also had a pile of reading to do for class. She shook her head reluctantly. “I can’t.”

“Well.” He tapped the top of her car and straightened. “I guess I’ll see you around, then. Oh, by the way, where do you get your mail? Your apartment or a post office box?”

“My apartment.” She stared at him, puzzled.

He merely nodded and gave her a last grin as he stepped away.

“All right. Drive safe.”

Well, that was mysterious. But she was smiling to herself as she drove away, windows rolled up and air-conditioning blasting.

It had been a hot day in more ways than one. And the air-conditioning couldn’t touch the heat that he generated

inside her.

Chapter Eleven

Saturday evening, Daisy dealt with the sunburn she'd gotten on her legs that day despite all her sunscreen. She buckled down to her studies and went doggedly back to them on Sunday morning, although she did head over to her parents' home in the afternoon to do a couple of loads of laundry, play in their pool and have supper with them.

Her mother greeted her with her usual anxious once-over and then smiled. "I love that hairdo on you, honey. I think you should keep it short like that. You have such a pretty neck."

“Thanks, Mama. I got it from you.”

Her father gave her a hug and then quizzed her. “I hear you had a young man with you at your walk yesterday. Who is he?”

“He’s a building contractor,” Daisy told him. “And he owns a gym.” She told him about meeting Dack at Big Iron.

“So you’re dating, huh?”

Daisy blushed furiously, remembering what she and Dack had done before their “date”. But she smiled gamely. “Yup. We’re dating.”

“Well, he’s quite the businessman,” her mother said. “And he’s handsome, even with that ponytail. Big.” She mimed flexing burly muscles, and Daisy

grinned.

“A ponytail?” Her father frowned dubiously.

“Oh, Dad, lots of guys have long hair.”

“I guess. Well, you’d better bring him by, let me get a look at him.”

Daisy nodded. “I will, Daddy. We just started dating, so...give it a while.”

She and her father discussed work and her class, and then she hugged them good-bye and escaped to fold her laundry and get ready for work the next day.

The rest of the week flew by in a haze of summer heat and a busy work

schedule. Her boss, Joel Barris, let her go with him on two get-acquainted appointments with new clients, and then on Wednesday she got to stage a house with Tranh, the assistant who worked for both Joel and his partner Cheryl.

She worked out at the gym, went to class and walked in the mornings when it was cool.

Friday was not a good day. First, Joel was out sick, so she spent much of the day taking his phone calls while scrambling to get her own work done. A huge amount of paperwork accompanied each property listing and sale, and all of it had to be done perfectly. Any mistake could result in bank loans being refused

or contracts voided, which meant money lost. Daisy was not going to make that kind of mistake.

Second, when her stomach growled, she realized she'd forgotten her lunch. At ninety-six degrees it was too darn hot to walk to the nearest shopping center in a black sundress, so she was forced to eat from the vending machines in the realty office's staff lunch room. She could have driven to the store, but that was such a waste of gas.

She munched on peanut-butter crackers, an apple someone had left on the table and a diet Pepsi, because all the Coke Zero was gone from the staff refrigerator. If someone had told her they drank the last one, she could have

stopped at the store on her way to work.

Joel's partner Cheryl and Trinh were out of the office as well, staging two homes south of Portland, so it was just Daisy and Hervé, Cheryl's secretary in the office, along with the few customers who wandered in. Daisy liked chatting with customers and clients, but today she was so swamped, the quiet was nice.

She wished she were the one out staging houses. Soon she hoped she'd be allowed to do some on her own. It meant odd hours, since her secretarial duties still had to be done, but that was okay since she had no one waiting at home.

To top off her long day, Sam showed up fifteen minutes before the office

closed with papers for Joel. “Hi, Daisy.”

She looked up, smiling extra bright to cover her instinctive wince. “Hi, Sam. How are you?”

The handsome Realtor held up a folder. “I have some papers for Joel. The Stimson deal?”

“You bet. Just put them on his desk.”

She went back to tidying up the final paperwork on another deal, making sure all the sticky tabs were in place for the signing on Monday. Sam came out of Joel’s office and leaned on her desk, watching.

Daisy kept her head down, self-conscious. She was wearing one of her favorite dresses, a black wrap that clung

to her waist, skimmed her hips and veed in the front to show just a hint of cleavage, unless she was bent over as she was now. In which case her cleavage was deeper than she was comfortable flashing a man she wasn't attracted to.

Wishing she was wearing a turtleneck, she doggedly finished stacking the papers, and went in to set them on the counter by Joel's desk.

Sam was still there when she came out. Damn, he looked at her like a hungry man viewing a banquet, with no idea where to get a plate. And she was not the woman with the patience to show him how to hold his utensil. She wanted a

man like Dack, who told her what to do and somehow made her love it.

Maybe Sam should come to Club 3 and find a fem domme to tell him what to do. But then she thought of him watching while she played with Dack. Nope, Sam was on his own, sexually anyway.

“Daisy, you ready?” Hervé called from the other room.

Daisy blessed him silently. “Sure am,” she caroled back. She shut off her computer, grabbed her purse from the bottom drawer and motioned to Sam. “Let’s go. It’s the weekend, baby.”

Sam followed her out into the baking heat of the small parking lot, while Hervé shut off the lights and locked up the building. He’d be back in the

morning, as he worked Tuesdays through Saturdays.

“Bye,” Daisy said. “Have fun at the cabin.” Hervé’s partner owned a small cabin on one of the pristine reservoirs an hour north in Washington state.

“I will, thanks, chica,” Hervé returned. “Stay out of trouble, si?” He winked at her, and she laughed. She knew darn well he’d approve of any trouble she got into. Maybe one day she would invite him and his dark, intense lover to the club. Heck, Raul was probably a dom.

“Bye, Sam,” Daisy said.

But he followed her to her car. “I was hoping you might want to have dinner

with me again.”

Daisy shook her head, trying her best to look regretful as she squinted into the bright sun. She clicked her car locks and opened the driver’s door. Heat spilled out, as if she wasn’t already hot enough. “That’s sweet of you, but I’m...seeing someone special.”

He dipped his head, and was he actually kicking her tire with his toe? Give the boy a stem of hay to chew. “Guess that’s it, then, huh?”

She dug her sunglasses from her purse and thrust them on. “Guess so. See you, Sam. Thanks for asking.”

She drove out onto the street with the air conditioner blasting cool air on her face and arms. Thank God for Fridays.

Of course, summer Friday afternoons in Portland meant one thing—traffic sucked. Everyone was either trying to get out of the city or get somewhere with air-conditioning, happy hour drinks and food they didn't have to cook.

Daisy had no plans for the weekend, other than studying and maybe some quality time at the river or her parents' pool. And hopefully an evening at Club 3. She smiled to herself as she thought of Dack there, wearing his leathers and that commanding stare.

She made it home and stopped in the apartment lobby to check her mail without enthusiasm. She wasn't expecting anything but a credit card bill.

But a neatly wrapped soft mailer had been stuffed in on top of a few envelopes. She grabbed it, eyeing the address label with interest. Was it a mistake? No, it was addressed to her in bold printing.

The return address was a puzzler. Some company called Three Iron Corporation, with a Portland post office box.

She stopped in the middle of the lobby. Three—Club 3. Iron—Big Iron Fitness. A three iron was also a golf club, although what that had to do with Dack and his two partners she had no idea. Maybe one of the other guys played golf.

What mattered to her was that this

package was from Dack—it had to be. This was why he'd asked her if she got mail at home or work.

The package was soft, squishy. Clothing? Hopefully it wasn't his cast-off T-shirt from the walk-a-thon. He might think it was funny to send it to her for a nightshirt or something.

Giddily, she locked her mailbox, grabbed her mail along with her purse and hurried up the stairs to her apartment. Inside, she dumped her things on the table, dug her scissors from the junk drawer and carefully slit open the mailer.

She pulled out something wrapped in silver metallic tissue, sealed with a

glossy sticker in the shape of pouty red lips, pursed for a sexy kiss. Holy crap, it was from the shop downtown where she'd found her leather thong, Kiss Me, Kink Me.

Dack had bought her fetish wear? Okay, that was...scary.

She opened the tissue gingerly, expecting to see black vinyl or garish red satin. Instead, she saw lace. Soft aqua blue lace. Her favorite color—how did he know that?

She touched the garment with reverent fingertips. Soft and silky. Hooking her fingers under the lace shoulder straps, she lifted it carefully. The lace draped from her fingers, pooling on top of another scrap of lace. It was a thigh-

length camisole or nightie and tiny panties. Both were saved from complete translucence by a thin under layer of sheer fabric. The panties had ribbon ties at each hip.

It was the prettiest, sexiest lingerie she'd ever received. And he'd bought it for her.

A small envelope had been inserted into the panties. Her name was printed on it in the same bold hand that had printed the mailing label. She set the cami aside and ripped open the envelope, pulling out the card. The card was inscribed with the store's trademark shiny lips. It said: *Petal, Saturday is Lingerie Night at Club 3. Wear this for*

me. D

Daisy drew a long, shaky breath. Oh my God, he wanted her to come to the club in this? Dizzy with terror and excitement, she picked up the panties and stared at them. So tiny and so sheer.

Underneath lay another piece of fabric, aqua silk patterned with exotic black flowers. Daisy picked it up, and it unfurled into a short kimono.

Aww. She hugged the kimono to her breast. The man might be a dom, but he was also a big sweetie. He knew she'd freak at the thought of wearing lingerie in public. He'd given her an extra layer of armor.

She'd wear the ensemble. And she'd take it off too. For him.

She carried the things into her bedroom, setting the card carefully on her bedside table. Then she took a quick shower, dried off and came back out to look at the frail lace and silk draped over her white quilt. This called for a drink. Draping her bath towel on the rack, she padded naked into her kitchen and poured herself a glass of chilled chardonnay from a local vineyard.

Taking a sip, she walked back into her bedroom. She toasted the lingerie and took another drink of wine before setting down her glass. “Here’s hoping you fit.”

The cami slid on, caressing her skin with a cool whisper of silk and the

scratch of new lace. She tugged on the panties, giggling at the saucy bows riding the front of her hipbones. Then she donned the kimono, leaving it open.

She turned to the mirror and posed provocatively. “Hi, Dack. I’m here.”

Then she danced around her bedroom, too full of excitement to stand still, until she stubbed her toe on her bedpost and came back to reality with a thud.

She sat on her bed and wiggled her injured toe until she was convinced it wasn’t broken. Then she called Sara.

“I’m going to lingerie night at the club!”

Sara squealed with delight. “Wait a minute, Carlie’s here. Let me put you on speaker so she can hear.”

Daisy pouted. “You guys are hanging out, huh?”

Carlie groaned. “No, we’re working out. At least I am. Sara’s cracking her whip.”

Daisy frowned. “Are you where people can hear me?” she whispered loudly.

“No, silly,” Sara said. “We’re on the exercise mats, and there’s hardly anyone at the gym anyway.”

“Yeah, because everyone else is out having fun,” Carlie whined.

Daisy laughed. “Why the Friday-night workout?”

“Because,” Carlie said excitedly. “You’re not going to believe this, Daise.

I tried to call you earlier, and you didn't pick up."

"My boss was gone, and all I had time to do was take his calls and get my work done. What's up?" Daisy asked.

"Remember the hot guy?" Carlie asked excitedly. "He asked me out on a date tomorrow night. And you'll never guess where to."

"He wants to fly you to Paris for dinner?" Daisy asked teasingly.

"No, silly. He invited me out for dinner and dancing."

"That's great," Daisy said. "Where are you going?"

"Who cares? Somewhere downtown. But I found a great little black dress—which I can zip if I do like fifty more

crunches and then don't eat much tomorrow."

"Gotcha." So that was why the emergency workout session. "Well, I hope you have a superb time. And um, after?"

"What?" Carlie asked innocently.

Daisy snickered. "That's what I thought. You gonna go for it if he asks you?"

"I am," Carlie agreed. "And I think he will. He's...the masterful type, you know?"

"What's Mr. Masterful's name?"

"Rafe Sambuhl."

"Ooh, a sheikh," Daisy teased.

"Not. He's a stock trader," Carlie

said. “But he does kinda have that desert-prince vibe going on.”

“Awesome. We can compare notes on Sunday,” Daisy told her. “Tomorrow night is lingerie night at the club. And Dack sent me a little present.”

“He sent you lingerie? I can’t wait to see that,” Sara said.

“Well, I can’t wait to see what you wear,” Daisy reminded her.

Sara groaned. “Now I have to go shopping. I wonder if they make granny panties in my size.”

“Eww,” Carlie protested. “If you go, you are wearing something gorgeous.”

“You can wear a robe or something over it,” Daisy said.

“Okay,” Sara said. “I’ll be there in

something. Don't know what yet.”

Daisy hung up with a promise to talk to Sara the next afternoon and Carlie on Sunday, to compare notes.

Dack was waiting for her when she walked into the club. That was good, because it had taken her ten minutes just to get the courage to step out of her car in the parking lot. Of course, five of those she spent deciding whether to take off her black yoga shorts in the car or in the locker room.

She'd put them on under the kimono, reasoning that with the knit shorts on, she sort of looked like she was going to yoga

class. Also, if she was involved in a car accident, she could pretend she'd dressed casually to drive to the corner store or to her boyfriend's place.

Without the shorts, what the hell would she say to a cop or the EMTs? *Oh, I just felt like going for a drive in my new undies?* And if her folks had to come to the hospital, what would they think?

Probably that the chemo had addled her brains.

And what was Dack going to think if she sat in her car all evening instead of coming into the club? That was easy—that she was a coward. Sara might not be with her, but she could still woman up and do this.

Practically weeping with frustration,

Sara had called her earlier to say that her widowed mother had sprained her ankle badly and needed Sara to come and stay the night with her. Daisy had commiserated with her friend, who seemed to have the world's worst luck lately.

Daisy stepped out of the car and locked it. Then she walked across the parking lot and into the club.

Rochelle was working the desk in an eye-popping red satin bustier. Grinning saucily at Daisy's look of astonishment, she slipped around the end of the counter to show off her red thong and matching stiletto heels. "I have devil horns too," she confided. "Got 'em for Halloween."

“Nice,” Daisy said sincerely. She didn’t know how the other woman could stand around in those killer heels and smile, but she felt more comfortable remembering she was not going to be the only scantily clad female here tonight.

“What do the guys wear?”

Rochelle shrugged. “Whatever they want...as usual.”

The two of them exchanged a look of mutual disgust with that policy, and Rochelle buzzed Daisy into the club.

Dack was lounging on a barstool, chatting with a couple of young women in bras and panties. Daisy scowled and marched into the locker room to slip out of the yoga shorts. She locked her purse

in the locker as well and set the combination. Then she untied the kimono so it hung open. She looked at herself in the full-length mirror and pulled the kimono open farther, so it framed her breasts and let everyone see that she wore nothing on her lower half but a pair of tiny bikini panties.

Taking a deep breath, she smiled at herself in the mirror. Excitement filled her. She was going to do this. Turning, she sauntered out into the club.

Dack still sat by the bar. He wore his leathers and a dark silk tank, his hair tied back. He looked like a sexy bad guy from a movie, maybe an enforcer for a drug kingpin. But when he spotted her, the look in his eye shouted “dom”. Hmm,

he would definitely be the alpha bad guy. The one who ordered the heroine to submit to his appetites or be thrown in some dingy little room on his gated estate.

The two bra-and-panty chicks continued to chat as Daisy walked up. In fact, the blonde had her boobs practically on his chest. The brunette had a giggle like a cheerleader on helium, and where the hell did she think she was putting her hand?

Daisy stopped a short distance away, uncurling her fists. She was not going to get rattled or jealous—much. She was here, so the next move was his. Although he could at least offer her a drink. He

and his bimbettes all had one in their hands.

She slipped past the blonde to the bar and signaled the bartender, who stepped over with his usual smile. “Jack and Coke, please.”

He poured the drink and handed it to her. Slithering out from behind Dack’s fangirls, Daisy sipped her drink as she looked around.

The level of energy in the club was high. The dancers were writhing to a Latin dance number, and everywhere scantily clad women competed with provocative outfits. Geez, she was seriously overdressed. The men had on long pants and vests or shirt, most of them in black, which emphasized the

lacy fragility of the women's lingerie.

“Petal.” It was Dack's voice, growling a command. “Come here.”

She turned to him with a look of mock surprise. The other women had moved away. “Oh, is it my turn...sir?”

He watched her take a drink. The whiskey burned a trail down her throat, the frosty soda a sweet counterpart. But with his eyes narrowed on hers, it didn't give her courage—that seemed to have deserted her. Oh crap, he knew she was jealous.

“Petal,” he chided. “C'mere.”

The highball glass quivering in her hand, she obeyed, stopping at his knee.

He took her glass and set it on the bar.

“Take off the kimono.”

There was no room for hesitation in his look. With a quick movement of her shoulders, Daisy shrugged the kimono off. It slid down over her bare arms, and she caught it in her hands, then held it behind her.

Dack leaned back against the bar and surveyed her with a long, slow look from head to bare toes. “Don’t you look good,” he said with satisfaction.

“She sure does.” It was Mason, moving up to stand beside Dack. He winked at Daisy and cocked his head, looking her over. “I bet her ass looks fine too, if she’d just let go of that little robe.”

Dack held out his hand, and Daisy

handed him the kimono. Heat scorched her skin as Dack made a twirling motion with his hand. She turned obediently, her hands pressed against her bare thighs. As she turned away from the bar, she froze. The two doms weren't the only ones staring at her.

Many faces were turned her way, curious eyes on her, some smiling at her, some checking her out. Jake stood several feet away, arms crossed as he watched the crowd and her. What was going on? Had everyone seen her run away the last time?

She wanted to run now, away from all the curious eyes, the knowing looks. And why was Jake scowling? Didn't he think

she should be here? She flinched, and her courage shriveled, her arms trembling with the need to wrap them around herself, to run and hide.

Chapter Twelve

But if she ran now, she'd never know. Never know what it was like to have the freedom of surrendering completely to a strong man who would tell her what to do, help her reach sexual satisfaction without her having to direct him.

Slowly, Daisy turned back to face Dack. Mason was still there, but Daisy hardly noticed him. Dack was watching her closely. His eyes narrowed in satisfaction as she waited for him to tell her what to do. Then he opened his thighs and held out one arm to her. She flew into the shelter of his big body,

leaning into him, feeling safe and cared for as his arm closed about her, powerful and warm. He smelled of his special scent, clean skin and faint cologne and soap. No perfume, no perspiration as if he'd been getting busy with another woman.

“You all in, Petal?” he asked her, his voice a warm rumble in his chest.

“Yes, Dack.”

“Good.” He pulled his collar from the pocket of his vest, and she took it from him, pulling it over her head and settling it around her throat.

She smiled up at him, her hand on his broad chest. “Thank you for the beautiful lingerie. How'd you know I love this color?”

“Your workout wear.” He fondled her ass, his fingers playing with the lacy edge of her panties. “Grab your drink, baby. We’re gonna go sit down and get comfortable.”

Her hand in his, Daisy followed him through the crowd to the sitting area in back. The sofas were full, but when Dack arrived, one couple rose. The guy nodded at Dack, almost as if they’d been waiting for him.

Dack nodded back. Then he sat, ignoring the couple cuddling quietly on the other end of the sofa. From the scent lingering in the air, and their looks of sleepy satisfaction, they’d just had sex.

Dack sat in the same place he had that

first night and held up his hand to Daisy. She took it, waiting for him to tell her where to sit or lie. Her heart was racing with excitement, and she felt alive in every pore of her being. The DJ switched from the fast dance number to a lazy song with acoustic guitars and liquid Spanish lyrics.

Dack patted his thigh, and she slipped onto it, facing away from the room and toward the other couples in the sitting area.

He took a sip of his drink, so she did too, wriggling to get more comfortable against his chest. Her legs draped over his, her bare feet hanging over his boots. He had his arm around her, his hand on her bare hip, petting her as if he couldn't

get enough of the feel of her under his hands. He set his glass aside on the end table.

“Want another drink?” he asked her.

Daisy drained her glass, breathing through the burn of the whiskey. The Club 3 bartenders mixed them strong.

“Do I need one?” she asked. She was only half joking.

He shook his head once, a half smile quirking his mouth. He took her glass and set it aside. Then he looked down at her, his eyes on her breasts. “Bet you didn’t notice something about your little top,” he said. “Besides that it looks pretty as hell on you.”

Uh-oh, did the lace dissolve when the

wearer got hot? If so, it was time to worry, because he was using his dom voice, all deep and growly.

He lifted his hand to her breast and cupped it, fondling her through the lace. Then he moved his hand to the other one and looked up into her eyes as he squeezed gently. She sat very still, trying not to arch into his hands, but she took a deep, shuddering breath, which had the same effect.

He pinched her nipple and rolled it between his finger and thumb until it was as hard as a pencil eraser. Sensation streaked through her. "Okay?" he asked.

Daisy nodded quickly and then closed her eyes as a familiar heat pricked behind them.

“What?” he demanded. “Talk to me, Petal.”

“I—I wasn’t sure I’d be able to—to feel anything,” she confided. “After the surgery. They said I might lose sensation.”

He flicked his thumb over her other nipple, bringing it to zinging life. “But you didn’t.”

She shook her head, smiling at him. “Oh no. I can feel—everything.”

“Feel good, little sub?”

Daisy nodded, her heart melting. She loved this, being held by this big, powerful man, his deep, rough voice twining around her as surely as rope, holding her where he wanted her.

Satisfaction darkened his eyes.

“Good, then you won’t mind if I do this.” He tugged at the fold in the lace and, to Daisy’s shock, the cami parted so her nipple protruded.

He tugged on the other side, and soon Daisy sat, still wearing the cami but with her nipples and an area of pale skin peeping through the aqua lace.

“Damn, that is hot,” Dack approved, his hand flattening on her midriff, tugging the cami taut so more of her breasts showed. “I want a taste of that. C’mere. Straddle me.”

He smacked her bottom, and Daisy found herself moving to obey, her mind fuzzy with shock. The couple beside

them watched, the man smiling at Daisy as she knelt, facing Dack, her thighs spread wide over his brawny thighs.

Her dom, who was holding her with his big hands on her waist and looking up into her eyes. “I’m gonna lick and suck you, Petal,” he told her. “If it hurts, what are you gonna say?”

“Um—yellow,” she remembered.

He nodded, his eyes on hers. “Good. Now bring me one of your pretty tits, sub.”

Excitement and nerves popping like fireworks, Daisy arched her back to offer her breast to him. Her nipple grazed his warm lips, and she caught her breath with pleasure.

Still looking into her eyes, he parted

his lips and put out the tip of his tongue. He rolled it slowly around her nipple, a delicate, butterfly-soft caress that Daisy felt clear to her toes.

Watching her expression, he licked her nipple into his mouth and sucked on it. Daisy dug her fingers into his bare shoulders, the hard muscles and satin skin giving slightly under her grasp. He winced.

“Put your hands behind your back and lace your fingers like a good sub,” he instructed. “You can dig holes in me later, when I’m deep inside your pussy.”

She opened her mouth in protest. He shook his head, his expression adamant. “I’ve got you. I won’t let you fall.”

Slowly, Daisy let go of him and put her arms behind her back.

“Like this, sweetie,” a familiar voice rasped in her ear, and warm hands grasped hers, demonstrating how to hold her hands laced in the small of her back. It was Mason. He patted her on the ass, his hand lingering on the lower curve, and Dack nodded his thanks.

Daisy felt like a pampered show animal posed for the judges. Groomed and treated with exquisite care, but definitely not in charge. And this show was X-rated.

“That’s right,” Mason approved warmly. “Real pretty.”

She assumed he moved away then. All

her attention was on the man suckling her nipple and areola deep into his mouth, enjoying her like a Creamsicle. Daisy felt the hot, wet suction and the tickling brush of his beard and mustache clear to her pussy. She writhed in his grasp, knowing his big hands on her hips would hold her safe and that he wouldn't let her go, leave her wanting. All she had to do was let him take charge.

He let her nipple go with a pop, admiring her reddened, glistening flesh. He pressed little kisses to the plump curve of her breast. Then he turned to the other one.

This time, Daisy moaned. She couldn't help it. She wanted to cradle his head close to her, run her fingers

through his hair, muss it up.

“I want to touch you,” she told him, watching as his cheeks bowed in as he suckled her, his lashes an ebony fringe on his angular cheeks.

He gave her a dark look and shook his head slightly. Then he used his teeth to scrape gently, and Daisy shivered with pleasure. He did it again.

Her pussy was contracting now with each pull of his mouth on her sensitive flesh. She tightened her thighs on his, wishing she could ride down on one of his thighs and ease the ache of need gathering between her own.

Dack drew back and looked her over before gazing up into her face. “You’re

beautiful, Petal. The hottest woman in this club tonight.”

Daisy smiled tremulously at him. “Thank you. Can we—are you going to...?”

He stroked one warm hand down over her bare hip and thigh, the other one reaching to grasp her wrists and hold them. “Am I gonna fuck you? Oh, yeah. Long and hard. Later.”

Disappointment speared through her. “Why not...now?” She blushed hotly at her own boldness, but what the hell, she wanted it and she knew he did too. And here they were at the club.

“Because you need to trust me,” he said.

“I do,” she protested. She did, really.

She fought down the uncertainty niggling at her.

He nodded, his smile gone. “Then turn around and sit on my lap.”

Slowly, Daisy did as he said. As she turned to face the other couples sitting around, she suddenly remembered that her nipples were poking right out of her cami. She wanted to grab her top and pull it closed, but she knew Dack was waiting for her to do something of the kind. And if she did, he’d send her home. Away from the club, and away from him.

Her gaze collided with Mason’s and then Jake’s, who was leaning on the corner behind the other sofa. Holy crap.

Looking at the floor, she sat quickly on Dack's lap, squirming back into the shelter of his arms. His big body was heat and strength under her, his leathers supple under her legs, the muscle underneath hard.

And the long, stiff shape prodding her bottom through his leathers—she wanted that. He was aroused, and soon he'd be inside her.

He patted her thigh and then took both her hands and held them in his. "Hold on to me, Petal," he said, his voice warm and deep in her ear. "I've got you, and I'm not gonna let you go. All right?"

She shrugged uncertainly. "Okay, but what—?"

"But you need to trust me completely.

When you're here at the club, I decide what's best for you and when you're gonna get it. Right?"

She squirmed pleasurably, loving the command in his voice. "Yes, Dack."

He gave a huff of laughter, his torso quivering under her. "Glad to hear it. But there's still the matter of the last time you were here, sub."

"I ran," she admitted, turning her head to look up at him. "I'm sorry I... embarrassed you."

He stroked the inside of her wrists with his thumbs. "Thank you. Now, Petal, you're gonna show me two things. That you are sorry, and that you trust me."

Foreboding seized her. As he looked beyond her, she turned her head and found Mason and Jake and the other couples all watching her and Dack. Looking at her in the scanty cami and panties, with her nipples peeping out, stiff and aroused. She could feel their gazes like a physical touch.

“Now,” Dack said. “Who wants a turn first?”

Daisy froze, ice pouring through her veins. He didn't mean—he couldn't possibly mean what she thought he did... Could he? Because if one of these other doms whipped out his cock, she was going to scream “red” so loud, the whole city would hear her.

Mason chuckled as he scooted off the ottoman and knelt before Daisy. “Christ, Dack, you could’ve worded that better. I think your sweet little sub expects someone to try to fuck her right here.”

Dack’s body tightened beneath her, a growl rumbling in his chest. “Anyone who tries will have his cock handed to him.” He stroked Daisy’s wrists again and pressed a kiss to her head just above her ear. “Petal, on the club questionnaire, you said you were interested in trying a little ménage.”

Daisy tried to answer, but her throat seemed to be frozen. “M-maybe...?” she whispered.

It had seemed like a good idea at the

time. Now it was the worst idea she'd ever had in her life. She'd somehow imagined herself in a much more private setting, and in control of how much and what happened.

Mason put his warm hands on her thighs, hooking his hands to stroke the sensitive skin behind her knees. "What's your safe word, sweetie?"

Daisy focused on him, trying to control her quick, panting breaths. His eyes were twinkling, his mouth smiling in his square face. "R-red."

He nodded. "That's right. You say it, what's gonna happen?"

"A-all the doms in hearing distance will be here to help me." Saying the words aloud steadied her, reassured her.

“And who’s got you?” Dack asked, his mouth nuzzling her ear.

“You do.” She turned her hands and clung to his big wrists. His fingers closed over hers.

Mason squeezed her legs gently.

“Dack,” he said. “I’d love a taste of your sweet sub’s pretty breasts.”

Daisy felt Dack nod. She drew a shaky breath, willing herself not to whimper aloud as Mason hitched himself forward, leaning over. He smiled at her, his eyes warm with mischief and lust. First his warm breath brushed her nipple, and then his mouth closed over it, warm and wet and strange.

She squeezed her eyes shut, set to endure. But Mason's mouth was supple and expert, his tongue rolling around her nipple to tease the sensitive flesh, alternating with suction and lapping.

She squirmed on Dack's lap, pressing her thighs together, fighting the pleasure as Mason's soft facial hair brushed her skin. Oh God, it felt so good, but it was so...naughty. And she wasn't sure who she was angriest with right now—Mason for doing it, or Dack for allowing it, or herself for loving it.

“Hmm, I think she likes it,” Dack said. “I sure as hell like watching it. I'll like it even more if I get to feel you creaming on my fingers, Petal.”

He pulled his right hand from her grasp, and he and Mason lifted her thigh up and to the side, so her leg was draped wide over Dack's.

Dack cupped his big hand over her mound, and Mason pulled back to watch as Dack tugged on the bow that held her panties closed on her right hip. The bow came undone, and Dack tipped his head over her shoulder to watch as he stroked his fingers over the small triangle of dark blonde curls, and farther, along the wet, swollen seam of her labia.

“Mm-mm,” Mason approved. “Nice and wet. I think your sub likes having her pretty tits sucked, Hummer.”

“Well then, you better get busy,” Dack

said and thrust his long, knobby finger inside her.

As Mason's mouth closed on her other nipple at the same time, Daisy whimpered. She couldn't help it, the pleasure and need of their combined attentions was too great.

"Not yet," Dack chided as she squirmed, inviting his finger deeper inside her. "You don't get to come quite yet, Petal."

Mason sat back and smiled at her, licking his lips.

"What do you say to Mase, Petal?"

Daisy shook her head, not sure what he meant, or if she could even manage to speak coherently.

Dack smacked her inner thigh, a light

sting on her tender skin. “Say thank you, sub.”

Daisy’s pussy contracted sharply. “Thank you, Mase,” she mumbled, peeping up him.

“My pleasure, sweetie.” He patted her knee and then levered himself to his feet.

Dack pulled his fingers from her pussy and lifted his hand to her breast, painting it with her own arousal. Then he pulled free of her other hand to dip those fingers into her pussy, and did the same to her other breast. “Mm, nice and wet,” he said with satisfaction. He played with her nipples as if he had all night. “Now, who’s next?”

When Jake straightened from the wall where he'd been leaning, watching the whole thing, Daisy stiffened even more. This whole thing had been choreographed. Dack's two friends had stayed close, ready to cooperate.

In her...what? Humiliation? No, not quite that. Her submission to Dack's will.

As Jake prowled forward to hunker down before her, his light gray gaze locked with hers. Daisy shivered. He might be polite, and Dack's friend, but the huge dom scared her. The hard line of his mouth, the set of his wide, smooth-shaven jaw proclaimed he'd accept nothing less than complete submission,

from Dack's or anyone else's sub.

“Permission to touch your sub's sweet pussy,” Jake said in his deep, smooth voice.

Daisy's head hurt. Oh, because she was pressing back into Dack's hard collarbone, trying to meld into him. If only she could. She forced herself to relax her neck, and the pain disappeared.

Dack pressed another kiss to her temple. “Granted.”

She was going to die of...something. Fright? Shame? Excitement? Daisy could no more have put words to the blaze of heat and emotion inside her than she could have flown.

Dack cupped her breasts, holding them lightly as Jake laid one huge hand

on her knee, and slipped the other one between her thighs. His hands were warm and surprisingly gentle for their size.

“You look hot and gorgeous tonight, Daisy,” he told her. “A dom can’t help but want to get his hands on you.”

He stroked the back of his knuckles over her mons, ruffling the damp curls, and then he probed one, no two fingers inside her. They slid easily into her sleek depths, and Daisy felt every nuance of his touch as he fucked her with his fingers.

Oh God, she’d never been so embarrassed in her life, so...invaded. Dack played with her breasts at the same

time, kissing her temple and shushing her wordlessly as she squirmed, whimpering as the sweet, devilish torture became too much.

Then Jake hooked his fingers and pressed against her G-spot, and Daisy couldn't help it, she arched into his touch, whimpering in her throat for more. She had to come now.

“Damn, she’s close,” Jake said. “I can feel her pussy starting to squeeze my fingers, so sweet.”

“Nah, you don’t get to make her come,” Dack said. “Not yet.”

“Well, hell,” Jake said. “At least I’ll get to watch.”

He pulled his fingers slowly from her pussy. Daisy glared at him, so angry at

him and so frustrated she was ready to cry. She'd been so close.

Jake lifted his brows at her in a silent demand.

“Thank you,” she muttered.

Jake, who never smiled, did. His tough, square face creased with wicked humor, his eyes twinkling, white teeth flashing. He patted her knee.

“I do like to see a little sub suffer a bit,” he said to Dack. “Makes it all the sweeter when she finally gets to come.”

Dack patted Daisy's tummy and let his hand rest there. He beckoned, and the pretty, slim redhead in a translucent green bra and thong rose from the sofa between Mason and her dom, a slender

man who looked like he should be discussing poetry somewhere, not sitting in a sex club. She knelt before Daisy and smiled at her, her sleepy eyes full of fun.

“Dack, may I please help your sub come?” she asked in a husky voice.

Daisy shook her head, her heart pounding. “Oh no. No, no. Thanks, but —”

The doms all chuckled. Dack gave Daisy a smack, right on her pussy. It stung, so why did it make her want to arch into his touch?

“You don’t get to decide, sub.” He looked at the redhead’s dom, and the man nodded, gesturing his assent.

“Tamara, you are a sweetie,” Dack said. “And it will please me, and the rest

of these horndogs”—all the other doms laughed again—“to watch you with my sub.”

Tamara looked at Daisy, giving her time to protest again, time to say her safe words. “I’ve been wanting to do this since we met, Daisy. You’ll like it, promise.”

Everything around her froze into slow motion. Dack’s chest moved under her, rising and falling with his breath. He pressed his lips to her temple, branding her with a sweet, tender kiss even as his hand stroked up her belly, stroking the cami away from her mons. Baring her completely to everyone’s gazes. Mason smiled at her, and Jake watched from his

post, as did Tamara's dom. All their eyes on her. Behind her, the music throbbed in a slow, sensual love song.

"You wanted to try this, Petal," Dack murmured in her ear. "Do it now, for me."

Daisy nodded. For him. Tamara leaned forward to untie the other bow on her panties. Oh God, she was going to let another woman go down on her so Dack and his friends could watch. She was so going to hell for this. And she was going to come right now just from the heat of the gazes on her bared pussy.

Dack pulled her other thigh up over his and hugged her. Tamara bent her head to kiss Daisy on her belly, just above her mound. The other woman's

long hair swung forward, silky on Daisy's bare thighs.

"Mm, push your hair aside," Dack instructed. "So your dom can watch."

Tamara tossed her head, her hair falling to one side over Daisy's thigh. Then she thrust out her small pink tongue and licked up the furrow of Daisy's labia, straight to her clitoris.

Daisy cried out at the butterfly caress, a high, soft whimper. Dack groaned and played with one of her breasts almost absently as he watched the other woman's face between Daisy's thighs and the look of pleasure in her eyes as she licked Daisy.

"Jesus, that's hot," he approved. "Ah,

Petal, thank you for this. I'll sure as hell never forget it."

Daisy never would either, assuming she survived. She struggled to catch her breath as Tamara used her clever tongue mercilessly, circling Daisy's clitoris with that soft, wet tip.

Dack kissed Daisy's head and spoke in her ear. "Look around, Petal. You have an audience."

Daisy blinked. Focused. Oh God, there were people crowding around the sofa to watch. Had they been invited or what?

"You've got everyone here at fever pitch," Dack said. He pinched her nipple, twisting it, the near pain a counterpoint to Tamara's tongue on her

clitoris. “Come, Petal. Come for me. Let everyone see how hot and responsive you are.”

As if his deep voice were linked to her pussy, all the pleasure of Tamara’s tongue, Dack’s touch, and the eyes watching her, admiring her, arced down deep inside her and imploded. Daisy came, arching into Tamara’s mouth with a high, soft moan as ecstasy surged through her.

Dack groaned, a low animal sound of desperate need. “Oh Jesus,” he muttered. “That is so fucking hot.”

Daisy lay in Dack’s arms, panting, her body trembling with aftershocks of pleasure, and...need? Did she really

want more? Oh yes, she did. Her pussy felt empty. She wanted Dack's big, hard length, the culmination of all of this.

"Petal," Dack said. "You forgot to say thank you."

"Thank you," Daisy croaked. Tamara smiled, looking very pleased with herself as she rose gracefully to her feet.

Someone clapped. Another person joined them. Daisy blinked. The club members crowded around were applauding. Applauding her and Tamara. Daisy turned on Dack's lap, wanting to hide.

"C'mere," Dack said. He shifted her on his lap so she was snuggled across it, tucked up against him with her legs together, his arms around her. "You did

good, Petal,” he praised her, his voice warm. “I’m proud of you. That was one of the bravest things I’ve ever seen.”

It was? She looked up at him. “I did it for you.”

He cupped the side of her head in his hand, his eyes hot and tender. “I know you did. Thank you. And it made a nice apology for last time.”

This had been a test. He’d pushed her to see if she really wanted to be his sub or just play a little. He’d asked her at the bar if she was all in, and she’d sure demonstrated that she was.

Even if she was never going to be able to look some of these people in the eye again. Jesus, had she really let

Mason and Jake touch her that way?

“Dack,” said a man’s voice from nearby. “Tamara tells me she wants me to fuck her here, so Daisy won’t feel she’s the only one on display.”

Dack nodded. “Great idea.”

Cuddled in Dack’s arms, Daisy watched as the pretty redhead tugged off her panties and then knelt on the ottoman in the middle of the crowded area. She leaned over on her hands and arched her back, thrusting her bottom out at her dom, in profile to Daisy. She winked at Daisy as her dom stood behind her and unfastened his black slacks. Someone tossed him a condom, which he caught one-handed.

Daisy watched him don the bright

green condom and then thrust his cock into Tamara's pussy. The crowd around them shifted, murmuring approvingly. Awe filled Daisy at the pleasure on both of the couple's faces. They clearly got off on being watched, but Tamara's dom was attuned to her too, leaning over her to slide one hand under her and stroke her clitoris while he took her.

"You like watching them?" Dack asked, his hand probing between her thighs.

Daisy nodded. Safe in his arms, she could admit that this whole group scene was incredibly exciting.

"Good." He cupped her pussy with his hand, two fingers sliding inside,

hooking to find her G-spot again. “Then come for me again while you watch.”

She did. But even as pleasure shivered through her, her pussy clasp his fingers, Daisy wanted more.

“Dack,” she pleaded, reaching up to touch his face. His beard was soft against her fingers, the shape of his jaw hard and square underneath.

His glittering eyes narrowed. “Daisy, you look at me that way, I’m gonna give you what you need right here, right now.”

She nodded, her heart pounding, a deep sweet pleasure curling inside her. She wanted to submit completely to him, here and now. “Yes, Dack.”

Dack growled, that deep sound in his chest that said his dom was ascendant. “Then I want more than my fingers inside you.”

His warm hand hooked under her bottom and lifted her. For the second time that night, Daisy found herself astride him. And this time, she knew nothing short of Mt. Hood blowing up was going to keep him from having her.

She leaned close to him, her lips parted. “You promised me at the walk-a-thon you’d kiss me first.”

“First, during and after,” he growled. He took her mouth with his, drawing her into a kiss that turned deep and hot and wet. Daisy hung on to him, one hand on

his chest, one in his hair. It was silky in her fingers.

His hand worked between them, and, with a few deft movements, his cock slapped against her belly, hard and hot. Demanding attention.

He lifted her with one arm around her hips, and she gasped. “Condom.”

He grunted. “Petal, I’ve had a hard-on since before you got here. I’m all suited up.”

He guided himself into her wet labia. And the rest was easy, really. After all her worry, it was so easy to let him pull her down on his hard, questing length. So easy to lean into his kiss and let him guide her to ride him with long, firm strokes. He filled her, so big and hard

and perfect, exactly what she'd been needing for so very long. A man to tell her what she needed and give it to her when and where he decided.

All around them, lovers were interacting. She could hear the smacks and whimpers as someone received a spanking, and just over Dack's shoulder, a young man kneeling before his dom to give a blowjob that both men were clearly enjoying. Behind her, Daisy heard Mason laugh and a woman's joyous giggle join in. The air smelled of perfume, cologne, leather and sex.

"Lookin' good, Hummer," commented Jake from behind her.

Oh God, he was watching Dack fuck

her. Her cheek against Dack's, Daisy turned her head to see Trace standing in the shadows, watching them as well. He winked at her.

She turned back to Dack. He was waiting, his hot, glittering gaze holding hers as he held her just where he wanted her with his big hands and drove his cock up into her sleek depths.

Having her here, in front of other people, where they could see everything—see his cock driving in and out of her, thick and glistening, see her pussy stretched to take him. Where they could all hear the slap of their flesh, hear him groaning with pleasure and hear her own moans that rose with the hot, dark pleasure gathering in her pussy. Where

they could all tell that she loved this, loved having him hold her and take her as he wanted. Loved that she couldn't help the pleasure that was building until she would have done anything to keep him inside her.

“You wanna come, Petal?” he asked her, his voice rough.

She nodded, riding him, letting him set the pace that was rocketing her hard and fast toward ecstasy. She knew what he wanted. “Yes. Please, Dack, let me come. I want everyone to watch us come...together.”

He bared his teeth in a ferocious, triumphant smile. “All right, sub. Come for me now.”

His words sent her over the edge, and with a high cry, Daisy came so hard she nearly fainted. She kept coming as he drove into her with long, hard, frantic thrusts and then held her down on him, his big body straining under hers as he groaned with ecstasy.

Daisy fell forward onto his chest, and he lay back in the leather sofa, holding her close.

She lay in his arms, her body quivering with aftershocks of pleasure as her pussy clasped him in secret.

“Thank you, Petal,” Dack murmured, pressing a kiss to the top of her head before relaxing again with a deep sigh. “You’re an amazing woman.”

Daisy smiled into his throat. She felt...ravished.

And cherished.

“Margaritas?” asked a teasing voice over their heads.

“Twila,” Dack said. “You are an angel.”

Daisy mumbled a protest as he pulled her upright on his lap, but he dealt quickly with the condom and then tucked her across his lap again, her panties in place and camisole righted. Then he handed her a margarita, the frosty glass rimmed with salt.

He held his own glass up before her, smiling at her. Her insides melted at the relaxed, sleepy look of satisfaction on

his hard face. “To you,” he said.

“To us,” Daisy corrected. She would never have dared to go this far with any other man. He was the one who turned her to melted butter, malleable to his will. He was the one she craved.

A shadow flickered in his gaze, but he lifted his glass and drank. Daisy drank as well. No drink had ever tasted sweeter.

Chapter Thirteen

On Sunday, Daisy studied. On Monday evening, she had class.

Tuesday, she bolted out the WorldWide Realty door after work and broke at least one speed limit driving to the gym. Since she and Dack hadn't exchanged phone numbers yet—an oversight she planned to fix—she couldn't call him, so she wanted to be at Big Iron Fitness when he arrived. She couldn't wait to see him.

He walked in sweaty and smudged with dirt as usual. Daisy smiled from her treadmill—he was the only guy she

knew who looked sexy even when he was filthy. But although he returned her smile, he merely nodded a greeting as he strode back to the men's locker room.

When he emerged, fresh and clean in the sexy tank she loved, Daisy met him by the exercise mats.

“Hey, you,” she said, smiling up at him.

“Hey, yourself.” He smiled down at her, and Daisy laughed to herself at the inanity of their conversation. Didn't matter what they said aloud, the heat in his gaze spoke volumes.

“Having a good week?”

She nodded. “Great one. How about you?”

He nodded back. “Good so far. You

know—”

“Dack, front desk please.” Trace’s amplified voice interrupted him. Daisy frowned at the man grinning from the desk.

“I’ll talk to you later, okay?” Dack took a step backward, his smile pleasant but impersonal.

Daisy nodded, but a chill slithered down her spine.

She watched him walk away and then turned back to her workout. This was his place of business, she reminded herself as she dropped onto the mats to stretch. He couldn’t very well spend his time flirting with her.

But he could’ve spent another minute

talking to her. Because she hated the memories that were crowding her mind, of the other women here that he hugged and laughed with. He hadn't even touched her. And that really bothered her. Was she just a club playmate to him?

Oh geez. Was she falling for him? "Not smart, Daisy," she whispered to herself as she arched into another stretch.

She could do this, she told herself. She was exploring her sexuality, that was all, and he was helping her do so.

Dack stalked toward the front desk and his irritating business partner, who

watched him with a smirk that made Dack long to plant his fist in the other man's perfect teeth. "What?" he growled.

Trace's smile stayed in place as he keyed in a member's card. "You have a great workout, Wendy."

He turned back to Dack. "Just helping you out, Hummer," he drawled. "You haven't forgotten your club rules already, have you?"

Dack stared at him. Then he rolled his shoulders uncomfortably. "I haven't forgotten."

"Good," Trace said in a low voice. "'Cause Daisy's a nice girl, but I'd hate to see you roped and tied just because

you had one great...ah, date.”

Dack’s cheeks burned. “Well, you can quit worrying, bro,” he said, smiling with an effort. “Takes more than a couple of good ‘dates’ to hogtie this son.”

He walked back toward the weight-lifting area. Why the hell did Trace have to use the word date? Daisy had asked him for a date, and then he’d gone and told her his appearance at the walk-a-thon was a date. Of course, she’d gotten a big kick out of that. His heart warmed as he remembered the delight in her lovely eyes, the way her face glowed when she smiled at him.

He looked over as he walked by the exercise mats and found her kneeling

with her gorgeous heart-shaped ass in the air, her head down and slender arms stretched out before her. A great stretch, but one that looked way too much like a submissive pose for his libido. He groaned as his cock stiffened, and yanked on his baggy tank, making sure it hung over his groin.

Trace was right, he had to stay away from her as much as possible, or she'd start getting ideas that they were in a relationship. And he didn't want that... Right? He stopped before the mirrors, staring blankly at the rows of shining barbells. Didn't want to be tied down to one woman, didn't want her to have expectations, demands on his time.

Then he looked at his reflection in the mirror and scowled, his jaw hardening. If she had no demands on his time, that meant the opposite was true. And the thought of some other dom putting his hands on Daisy made his blood burn in his veins. He clenched his hands into fists and turned away from the mirror.

He strode across the gym to where she was sitting on the mats, one leg crooked up as she twisted over it in a graceful stretch. She looked up, startled, as he stopped, so close he could have touched her.

He fucking loved the look of sweet supplication in her green eyes as she peeped up at him.

“You gonna be at the club on Saturday?” he demanded.

She smiled, that shy, sexy one that turned him inside out. “Yes, Dack.”

“Good.” Now maybe he could concentrate on his workout. He just wanted to make sure she’d be there for sex, that was all. Nothing more. “See you there.”

She gave him a flirtatious look, her eyes twinkling. “Y’know, if I had your phone number, I could call you in case I’ll be late.”

Dack had had other subs ask him for his phone number. Not one of them had gotten it, just a nice brush-off. But hell, if she were late, he’d worry about her

and all that. So he really should have her number and vice versa.

“Three-six-zero Big Dack,” he told her. She giggled, as he’d known she would.

He winked at her. “Hey, it’s stupid, but it’s easy to remember.”

“And it’s true,” she said, and then blushed, her cheeks and throat flushing pink. She tipped her head down on her knee, groaning as he chuckled.

He nudged her foot with his and then stepped back. “Give me a quick call so I’ll have your number, okay?”

She nodded, still pink. “Okay.”

He nodded and turned to go. Walking away from her was hard as hell. But he was humming under his breath as he

grabbed a set of fifty pound barbells. Some Latin song he'd heard at the club last weekend.

“Wow. Someone's in a good mood.”

Smiling, Daisy turned to look over her shoulder as Sara and Carlie approached through the maze of exercise machines. Like her, they wore workout wear, although theirs was still fresh. She was perspiring, having been working out for nearly an hour. Saturday morning, and she had awakened early, vibrating with eagerness. Tonight she'd be with Dack again.

“Hi, gal pals.”

Carlie raised one winged brow. “Gal pals? Ooh, you are perky.”

Daisy giggled. She couldn’t help it. “Yes I am. Because I had good sex and I’m gonna get more. How about you?”

Carlie and Sara exchanged a look of raised brows and widened eyes.

“I sure didn’t,” Sara said dryly. “Watched chick flicks with my mom all weekend.”

“I didn’t either,” Carlie said with a sigh.

“The sheikh didn’t come through?” Daisy asked.

Carlie wrinkled her nose. “I wasn’t quite...ready. Maybe next time.”

Sara set her hands on her hips, a

determined look on her face. “That settles it. I am coming to the club with you this weekend, Daise. And nothing is going to stop me.”

Daisy laughed and held up her hand for a high five. “That’s the spirit.”

“Is it a theme night?” Sara asked warily.

Daisy shook her head. “No, not tonight. Just wear something pretty.”

“Okay,” Carlie said sternly. “I did the big pre-date workout, so you two had better do the same. Come on.”

With a groan, Daisy followed them to the next machine. But she was smiling. She couldn’t seem to help herself these days.

“Hey, boss. Uh, boss? You with me?”

Dack lifted his head. “Hmm?”

His gaze sharpened. He sat on a pile of bricks, plans open on his lap. His foreman stood before him, eyeing him quizzically from beneath his hard hat.

“Sorry.” Dack shook his head. “Zoned out there for a sex—sec.” He grimaced, hoping his own hard hat, sunglasses and facial hair hid his red face. Jesus, his slip of the tongue was symptomatic of his mental state. He’d been looking over the plans for the office building he and his crew were constructing, and Daisy had just sort of slipped into his head. Smiling up at him while she...

He stood abruptly, needing a physical distraction before his body followed his mind down that sweet slope. He'd see her tonight, and that was soon enough. Right now he needed to get his mind back to work. He tried to take Saturdays off, but with the weather this fine and the deadline for the project fast approaching, everyone had agreed to work for five or six hours today. Not only would his crew pull overtime, Dack planned to give them all a bonus when the project wrapped up.

His foreman grinned to acknowledge the joke, but turned back to indicate the framework of the building. "Whatcha want us to do with that corner? Leave it

the way it is in the plan, or make that change we talked about?”

Dack stepped forward, bundling the plans back into a tidy roll as he eyed the structure. “Let’s make that change. The client likes it, and I think it’ll work better with the line of the roof.”

“Okeydoke.” The stocky man headed off, and Dack walked over to grab his coffee cup and have a swig. It was still hot and strong, the way he liked it.

He squinted into the morning sun, admiring the way the building would sit within the tall evergreens on the site. They’d saved all but three, and the plans called for some shrubs and small Japanese maples to be planted around the building and the small parking lot.

Yup, it was going to look good. Maybe he'd bring Daisy down and show it to her when it was all done. She appreciated a well-made building.

He cared about her opinion. He let that realization gel for a moment, rolling it around in his mind while he sipped his coffee and watched his crew working together. He'd only known her for...a few weeks, that was all. But somehow she occupied more and more of his thoughts. Always there, kind of waiting at the edge for a quiet moment.

He held his coffee cup and stared at it unseeingly. She was special, all right. Maybe...maybe she was The One.

A burst of laughter brought him out of

his daze, and he looked over to see his crew members watching him.

Danny, the youngest, set his hands on his skinny, tool-belted hips. “Boss, if all you’re gonna do is stand around, you can just go home and quit wastin’ our time.”

The other guys laughed.

“You in love or somethin’?” Jorge demanded, shaking his tattooed head.

Dack tipped his head down and then chuckled with them. “Like I’d tell you yahoos if I was. All right, let’s get that beam up.”

He set his coffee aside and strode over to help lift the heavy beam, letting Brady give the orders. But Jorge’s good-natured jibe echoed in his head.

Was he “in love or something”? And

if he was, how come he wasn't more worried about it? How come he felt so...happy?

After all her eagerness, Daisy was late getting to the club. She'd forgotten her purse and had to run back up to her apartment, and then Dana called just as she was walking out the door. Daisy stuck her earbud in and managed to chat while she drove.

“You okay?” Dana asked.

“I'm just on my way to meet Dack,” Daisy admitted. “Kinda jazzed.”

“Oooh, fun,” Dana approved. “I was very impressed, I must say. Not only is

he a total hunk, any guy that will show up for a cancer walk with hundreds of women, including your family members...could be a keeper.”

Daisy beamed as she swung her car onto the main boulevard. “I think he might be,” she admitted.

Dana made a pleased sound. “So... may I ask if the book has been useful?”

“Oh geez,” Daisy breathed, hitting the gas too hard and then the brake. “Better not while I’m driving. I’ll, um...tell you later.” A highly edited version. Geez, no way could she tell her big sister she was now a member of a sex club. Maybe when they were seventy-something!

“All right. Don’t want to pry. Have fun, sweetie.”

“Thanks. Bye.”

By the time she walked into the club, Daisy was jittery with excitement and nerves. What would Dack want to do tonight? She was hoping for one of the back bedrooms. She wanted some time with just him, naked in a bed, so she could kiss her way all over his big body. Her panties were damp just imagining having free range of those muscles.

Rochelle was at the front desk, frowning into the phone as Daisy walked up. “Hi, Daisy.” She pushed the button to open the inner door and waved Daisy through.

Daisy paused uncertainly. “Um, Dack didn’t leave his key for me?”

Rochelle scanned the desk. “No. There was a bit of a problem earlier. Just go on in.”

Another couple walked in behind Daisy, so she moved on. She stopped inside the entrance, looking around. She’d tried calling Dack to tell him she’d be late, but he hadn’t answered his phone. A problem? She hoped everyone was okay.

She smoothed down the short skirt of her coral sundress. It had a crocheted halter top, from which the short skirt fell only halfway to her knees. She wore her strappy little white flip-flops and underneath, a pair of coral lace panties she hoped Dack was really going to like.

Looking around the crowded club, she saw Mason by the bar, talking to the bartender. He'd know where Dack was.

Mason was scowling, his handsome face hard. Daisy hesitated before approaching him. Geez, even he could look scary. But he saw her and nodded, so she stepped closer. "Hi, is Dack here?"

Mason nodded. "Yeah, he is. In one of the back rooms. Listen, Daisy—"

"Mase, man, how are you?" Daisy jumped as a deep voice boomed behind her, and scurried aside as a tall, burly man reached past her to greet Mason. He clapped Mason on the shoulder, his ebony face split in a smile. "Been

forever since I've seen you.”

Mason smiled back. “Barron, good to see you, man.” He gave Daisy a look that said *wait*, but as the other man laughed and began to speak again, she edged away.

She made her way back past the sitting area, which, as usual, had a few couples making out. Daisy walked into the dimly lit hallway. Where the heck was Dack?

She heard voices through the open door of the first bedroom. Stepping closer, she peered around the edge of the door. Her heart nearly stopped, and her breath froze in disbelief.

Dack sat perched on the side of the big bed, his back partially turned to

Daisy, and he held a woman in his arms, curled on his lap with her face buried in his black T-shirt, clinging to him. Daisy could see nothing of the woman but bare legs and feet...and thighs. What the hell—was she naked?

“Hush,” he soothed. “It’s okay, baby. I’ve got you. You’re fine now.”

Daisy struggled against the tightness seizing her chest. She couldn’t breathe.

He was using his dom voice, that low rumble that told a woman—a sub—she’d done what he wanted, and it was okay that she was feeling shattered, because he had her safe.

The other woman was talking in a low, quavering voice. “I don’t—I don’t

know if I can do this again.”

Omigod. He’d had sex with this woman. When she wasn’t here, it was business as usual for him.

“Your decision, sweetie,” Dack said in that sweet, soothing rumble. “Take your time, though. Don’t try to think through it now.”

“You don’t think I’m...warped? To want to...you know.”

Wait a minute. Daisy knew that voice too.

She struggled to stay where she was and not do what every instinct screamed at her—rush into the room and confront him, confront them both. Who was he with? Who had he fucked the minute Daisy’s back was turned?

Dack chuckled. “No, I don’t think you’re warped. You’re a gorgeous, sexy woman.”

“If I come back,” the woman asked “will you be here?”

“Sure,” Dack promised. “I’ll be here for you, sweetie. Right here. As long as you need me.”

Daisy clamped her teeth together, biting back the whimper of pain fighting its way up her throat.

She knew that voice, all right—it was Sara. Sara, who admired Dack, who thought Dack was hot. Sara, who had waited until her back was turned before she wriggled right in and took Daisy’s place in his arms.

Bolting away from the doorway, Daisy ran. Back through the club, past Mason, who looked startled and then worried. He held out one hand to stop her, but Daisy dodged around him. She raced past the curious faces turning her way, shoving her way out the front door past another couple coming in. They reeled back, surprise on their faces.

“Daisy!” a deep voice shouted behind her. “Daisy, wait.”

She ignored them all, already keying her car open as she ran across the lot. She dove in, hit the ignition and then the accelerator, wheeling out of the lot with a squeal of tires on pavement, passing Mase, who stood by the steps, one arm

out in a command to stop.

Too bad he hadn't stopped Dack from breaking her heart.

Somehow she made it home without getting in a wreck. Daisy sat for a moment in her car and then slowly, shivering despite the heat of the evening, she clambered out of her car, and trudged slowly up to her apartment. She dragged her soft afghan around her and sat, her mind going over and over what she'd seen and heard.

He'd cheated on her. And with a woman she'd thought was one of her closest friends.

Huddled on her sofa, Daisy did the

one thing she could think of. She had to talk to someone who would understand —Carlie.

“Daisy?” Carlie sounded puzzled when she answered. Daisy could hear noise in the background. “What’s up?”

“She’s with him,” Daisy managed. “I went to the club...and I saw them together.”

“Who? Daisy, what’s going on?” Carlie asked, her voice sharp. “Who did you see?”

“S-Sara. Sara and Dack.”

“You saw them?” Carlie was incredulous. “Together? Honey, are you sure? I don’t think...”

“I saw them,” Daisy repeated, her

voice rising. “Together. On a bed. She was naked in his arms. What the hell more do you want?”

“Oh my God,” Carlie muttered. “No, this is an important call,” she said, her voice muffled. “I have to take this. Wait a minute, Daise.”

Daisy heard the thump of a door closing, and then Carlie’s voice again. “All right, now tell me exactly what happened. Don’t leave anything out.”

Daisy repeated what had happened.

“Oh my God,” Carlie said again. “Daise, honey, I know that sounds bad, but I just don’t think Sara would do that. I really don’t. I mean, you saw what you saw, but maybe...it meant something else.”

“What?” Daisy asked, swiping at the tears that were flowing unnoticed down her cheeks. Her nose was running too. She swiped at it with the afghan. She was so cold.

“Well, maybe he was helping her... with something,” Carlie said. “Oh hell. I wish I was there.”

“Where are you?”

“I’m out at Cannon Beach with my family.”

“Oh. S-sorry to interrupt,” Daisy began, swiping at her face again with the afghan. All she did was smear tears and snot over her face.

Carlie snorted. “Trust me, you’re not. My brother and his fiancée are making

out in front of the only TV, and my parents are playing cards with the neighbors. You got me out of pinochle, for which I'd thank you if it wouldn't be just...wrong, when you're so upset."

Daisy choked on a laugh and then started to cry again.

"Aww," Carlie crooned. "Listen, Daise. I'm hanging up, and I'm calling Sara. I'll call you right back, okay? Okay? Keep your phone handy."

"O-okay."

Daisy lay down, curled her feet up under the afghan and huddled there.

Carlie called back after a while. Daisy was cried out and merely lying there, staring dully at her begonia. The

creamy white blossoms were wilting, the edges turning brown. Some of them had fallen to the beige carpet.

“I can’t get hold of Sara,” Carlie said briskly. “Now, here’s what I want you to do. I want you to go wash your face and get your purse and drive over to her place. It’s not that far from yours. I want you to go and talk to her, Daise, and find out what’s going on.”

“Okay,” Daisy agreed listlessly.

“Good. Then call me when you get there, and talk things out.”

“Okay.”

“Um, Daise? You haven’t been sitting there drinking, have you? ‘Cause I can see how you might want to, but if so, you

shouldn't drive."

"No." But she might, if the icy agony gnawing on her heart didn't lessen.

"Phew, good. Okay. Go on, girlfriend."

Daisy clambered off the couch and went and washed her face. She stared at her swollen eyes in the mirror. She'd cried more in the weeks she'd been with Dack than she had since she'd learned she had cancer. That didn't say much about love.

Oh God. She stood there, in her bathroom, shivering in her afghan. She was in love with him? Was that why she felt like the frozen icicle of misery?

Oh crap. That was all she needed. But, love... It was powerful and

strong, and so was Dack. Surely he wouldn't do this to her, not with one of her best friends. A wavering tendril of hope threaded its way through her heart. Maybe...Carlie was right. She'd go talk to Sara and see what she had to say. Maybe this was all just a gigantic misunderstanding.

But twenty minutes later, when she slowed in front of Sara's tidy condo, Daisy hit the brakes. Her car stopped with a jolt in the middle of the street, rocking her forward in her seat.

Dack's big, shiny black pickup truck sat in Sara's driveway. The streetlight picked out his construction logo perfectly, glimmering off the silver

lettering.

Daisy drove on and took the long way home.

Dack leaned on Daisy's doorbell again. He could hear it bonging inside her apartment, like a stuck video game. He knew she was home, because her Nissan sat in the parking lot, and it was only six a.m., so she probably wasn't out walking.

He peered through the window next to the door. He could make out the corner of a white sofa, with a soft blue afghan thrown over it, and a big green plant that looked like it would like to grab him and take a bite if he got too close. The mood

he was in, he'd bite it back.

Damn it, he was tired and he had a headache. He'd been up most of the night, dealing with the police and making sure Kevin was charged with attempted rape and not just drug use. He wanted breakfast and sleep. But most of all, he wanted to see Daisy and find out why the hell she wasn't answering her phone, and why she hadn't spoken to him when Mase told him she'd been at the club last night. Why had she run out without talking to him? Hell, he could have used her help with Sara. Nothing like another woman after a rape attempt, especially a best friend.

Ten to one Daisy was fine and he

shouldn't be worrying, but he was. Especially after what had happened to Sara.

Finally, he turned away from her door and started down the steps to the sidewalk. And that was when he saw her, sitting on the steps that led to the next apartment, in the shadow of the railing. She'd snuck in behind him, and he hadn't even heard her.

She wore a pair of sweats, a long-sleeved pink T-shirt and fuzzy slippers. Her hair was sticking up on one side, and she looked as tired as he felt. Worse, her green eyes held no welcome for him whatsoever. Damn, was she sick?

“Daisy?” he asked cautiously. “Baby,

what are you doing out here?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. Went for a walk.”

“I’ve been leaning on your doorbell for ten minutes.”

“Why?” she asked listlessly.

He blinked. “What do you mean, why?” She must be running a fever or something. “Because I wanted to see you. I was worried about you. You showed up at the club and didn’t even come and find me, you don’t answer your phone—”

“I showed up all right.” Her eyes narrowed, her nostrils flaring. She wasn’t sick, she was pissed, glaring at him like his mom’s Siamese cat when he

ruffled its fur the wrong way. “I...saw you.”

“You saw me? Why didn’t you come and talk to me, let me know you were there? You could’ve—” He walked closer to stand at the foot of the stairs where she sat. Her seat placed her at eye level with him. The hair on the back of his neck stood up in foreboding. “Wait a minute—you saw what?”

Her mouth quivered. “I saw you with her. That bitch I thought was my friend.” She shot to her feet and looked down at him, holding the railing with white knuckles. “How could you?” she demanded.

Dack reeled back, stunned as if she’d slapped him. She’d seen him holding

Sara, so what? “How could I what? Petal, I was just—”

“Don’t you call me that,” she raged, her face white. “Don’t you ever call me that again. You made me think I was special to you, and then the minute I turn my back, you’re screwing one of my friends. Well, guess what? You can keep her, but not me, because I don’t share.”

“Daisy, are you okay?” A head poked out of the door behind her, a wide-eyed college-age girl. “Do you want me to call the police?”

Oh, for Chrissake. This was going from bad to worse, and Dack was in no mood. He’d go home and call her later, when she she’d calmed down. Hell,

when he'd calmed down, because he was plenty pissed now himself. She actually thought he'd screw her best friend?

This was his thanks for everything he'd done? This was what he got for actually deciding she was the woman for him. Slapped upside his head with accusations and tears she wouldn't give him the chance to refute—his worst nightmare.

“Don't bother calling the cops,” he growled. “They have enough to do, and I'm leaving.”

“You'd better be, young man, because I have 911 on speed dial,” quavered another voice from a lower window. “You can't come around here causing

trouble.”

Humiliation and anger rose in a hot tide, flooding Dack’s face. He set his jaw, willing himself to hang on to his temper by the last shreds.

He backed onto the sidewalk. Daisy might look like a wounded princess standing there with her big eyes full of tears, but she’d just done the thing he hated the most in the fucking universe—thrown a fit, attracted all the wrong kinds of attention. And no way in hell was he going to stick around and put up with that. He wasn’t making any goddamn phone call later either.

“Whatever you think you saw with Sara and me, you’re wrong,” he told her,

his voice booming off the walls of the quiet building. "I'll be at the club when you're ready to apologize, woman. 'Course I might not listen, since you didn't bother to listen to me."

He turned his back and strode away toward his pickup. Another one of her neighbors stood with one foot out of his baby blue Prius, eyes wide as if Dack was a rabid dog who might attack. Dack wanted to snarl at the plump little dude just to see how high he'd jump, but he refrained. Instead, he revved up his truck and gunned it out of the parking lot, away from her.

He couldn't believe this shit. Before his very eyes, his Petal had turned into a freaking drama queen. He shuddered to

himself—and to think he'd been on the verge of making a fool out of himself and telling her he had feelings for her, strong feelings beyond lust.

He'd had a narrow escape. He just wished it didn't feel quite so much like he'd been cast out.

He headed back to the club, where he strode behind the bar and grabbed the nearest bottle. Jack Daniels, fuckin' perfect. He poured himself a double shot, and then on second thought made it a triple. He tossed it back in one gulp.

When he slammed the empty glass down on the bar, the whiskey was already burning in his empty stomach,

the alcohol shooting straight to his head. He shuddered at the burn, shook his head and started to pour another glass. On second thought, that was a waste of time. He grabbed the bottle and took it with him.

By the time Jake walked in, Dack was sprawled on the leather sofa, on the very spot where he'd had her. Damn, that had been the ride of a lifetime. Before he discovered she was his worst nightmare, a suspicious, accusing little bitch.

“Hummer. What the hell are you doing?” Jake asked him.

Dack roused himself from his stupor. He squinted at his partner, who kept morphing into two of himself. “Jus’ having a drink,” he said with dignity.

“I’nt that what a man’s s’posed to do when he gets s-s-sc...fucked over by a woman?”

Jake sighed, hands on his hips. “Oh hell, is this about Daisy?” He sat down on the ottoman and took the bottle from Dack’s wavering hand. He looked at it and then took a swig himself before setting it out of Dack’s reach. “What happened?”

Dack blinked woefully at the bottle, which might as well have been on the moon instead of three feet away. His arms were leaden. Even his neck wouldn’t hold his heavy head up. He let it fall back against the padded leather. “She thinks I s-s-sc...fucked ’nother

woman.”

“Aw shit.”

“Jake? Dack? Where are you guys?” It was Trace’s voice coming from far away, echoing through the fog in Dack’s head.

“Back here,” Jake called.

“What the hell...?” Trace’s voice trailed off, and then a warm hand settled on Dack’s shoulder. “Uh-oh. This is about Daisy, isn’t it, Hummer?”

“Hell, no,” Dack protested, scowling. He would have gotten the hell away from their prying questions, but he didn’t have the energy. “Can’t a guy jus’ have a drink or three?”

“Yeah, but since you don’t usually hole up with a bottle at nine o’clock in

the morning, I'm guessing there's a lot more to it than that." Trace sank onto the sofa beside him.

"Will somebody tell me what the hell happened?" Jake demanded. "I miss one damn night at the club, and all hell breaks loose."

Trace started talking, but Dack was really tired, so he closed his eyes to rest.

The next thing he knew, his friends were hauling him to his feet and into the nearest bedroom.

"You're gonna feel like shit when you wake up," Jake told him.

"Feel like shit now," Dack mumbled. Tears of self-pity filled his eyes. "Want my Petal..."

“I know, man. Sleep it off, and then you can start digging your way out of the deep manure pile you’re in. Since there’s a woman involved, it’s gonna take a while.”

The bed came up to meet him. Dack sank face-first into the comforter, and everything faded to black.

The first thing Dack did when he woke was stagger into the bathroom, where he did his best to throw up everything he’d even thought about eating for the last week.

When he could finally get on his feet without heaving again, he flushed the

toilet without looking, stuck his head in the sink and splashed water over his face, then grabbed a paper cup from the dispenser and downed some. He squinted at his reflection in the small mirror. Yup, he looked as bad as he felt—like death warmed over.

His head was hammering, his stomach still rolling, and he felt like he was dying of a rare tropical disease. Class A hangover, courtesy of his buddy Jack. He shuddered. He hoped he never had to smell, taste or even look at another bottle of that devil's brew as long as he lived.

“You alive in there?” It was Trace, poking his head into the bedroom. He handed Dack a tall glass. “Here, some of

my old man's hangover remedy.”

Dack sank onto the side of the bed and sniffed the murky contents cautiously.

“What is it?”

“Don’t ask. Just drink it. If it stays down, it’ll help.”

Dack took a drink. Didn’t taste any worse than the inside of his mouth, so he glugged it down and then belched. Trace took the empty glass.

“What time is it?” Dack asked, holding his skull in both hands, hoping that would keep it from splitting open.

“No, wait. What day is it?”

Trace chuckled. “Nine o’clock on a beautiful Sunday evening. You’ve been out since this morning.”

Why the hell had he been drinking? Oh yeah. Memory flooded back, and he leaned forward, his elbows braced on his knees. “Shit. I am so screwed.”

“Yeah. Kinda sounds that way. Listen, since you’re back among the living, I’m gonna take off, man.”

Dack nodded. “Sorry I kept you from your day off.”

Trace patted his shoulder, his hand warm and solid. “No worries, bro. Jake and I took shifts. You’d do it for us.”

He walked to the door and paused. “You wanna talk, I’ll be around.”

Dack nodded without looking up. He sat there for a while and then slowly heaved himself to his feet. His footsteps

echoed as he walked out through the empty club. No place as lonely as one that was meant to be full of people having fun.

He stopped in the office to get his spare sunglasses and got the hell out of there.

He went home, showered and changed into clean shorts and a T-shirt. When he pulled open the drawer of his big bureau, the first shirt he saw was the pink one he'd been given at the breast cancer walk-a-thon. He scowled, chucking it across the room toward his wastebasket. He chose a yellow one with a Rogue Brewery beer label and pulled it on.

His stomach growled as he walked back out into the main living area. He opened the refrigerator, found yogurt and orange juice, grabbed a banana from the basket on the counter and threw them in the blender with some protein powder. He took some aspirin with his smoothie and then wandered in to his living room and turned on his big-screen TV to the sports channel. He sure as hell didn't want to think.

He fell asleep in his recliner, woke with a start when his phone burred in his pocket. He grabbed it and squinted at the clock. Jesus, six a.m. He'd spent the entire night in the recliner. The TV was still flickering, a soccer match from

Australia. He hit the remote to switch it off and then finally remembered to answer his phone.

It was his crew boss, wondering where he was. "I'll be late," Dack said. "You guys get started on those trusses, and I'll see you in about an hour."

No good being the boss if he couldn't be late once in a while without having to make an excuse.

He made it through the long, hot day somehow. After work, he got supper from a drive-through, something he tried not to do very often because it wasn't real healthy, but he hadn't remembered to get any groceries over the weekend.

After he ate, he just drove. The

thought of going to his silent condo, or to the gym where he'd have to face people he knew, answer questions, gave him heartburn.

He wasn't really sure where he was going until he found himself idling in the street in front of his mother's house. The street was quiet, just a kid shooting hoops a few houses down and an aging golden retriever ambling along the sidewalk with a skinny, preteen girl.

Dack pulled over and shut off his truck. He was here; might as well go in.

His mother answered the door with an exclamation of pleased surprise and then immediately went into full mother-hen mode.

“Oh, sonny, you look so tired. Come and sit on the porch, and just relax.”

He followed her through the tidy little house, past the bad-tempered Siamese who blinked her Daisy-eyes and gave him a warning growl from her perch on the back of the sofa. He didn't even have the heart to snarl back at the cat.

Dack sank down in the comfortable deck chair in the evening sun and let his mother fuss over him, bringing him ice water and some fresh lemon cookies.

She sat down in her glider rocker and gazed out at her flower garden. Dack munched his way through a couple of cookies and drank his ice water. “These are good, thanks.”

She leaned her chin on her hand on the arm of her chair. “You want to tell me about it?”

“What?” He looked away, scowling.

His mother sighed. “Sonny, I can see you’re hurting. But you’re being all stoic, just like your dad.”

“Yeah, I could throw a hissy fit,” he shot back. “That would be so much better.”

She shot out of her chair, going to stand on the edge of her deck, with her back to him.

Self-disgust rose in a bitter tide. He grimaced. “I’m sorry, Mom.”

He planted his hands on the arms of his chair to rise, but she turned on him.

“You sit,” she said fiercely, her soft mouth in a straight line, tears standing in her eyes. “Dack Humboldt, it is high time we had a talk.”

Oh shit, he was in for it now. Both the women in his life had it in for him. Might as well man up and take it. Wasn't much else a guy could do. At least his mom wasn't threatening to call the cops on him.

“You are just like your father,” his mother exclaimed.

“Hey,” he bit out, glaring at her. If she was going to start in on his old man, he was out of here. She might have Frank now, but his dad was still his hero.

“And in so many ways,” she went on,

rolling right over him, “that is a fine thing. I am so proud of you, how hard you work and all that you’ve accomplished. But you are like him in some not so great ways as well.”

Dack’s mouth fell open in shock as Beverly Humboldt paced a few steps and then turned back to him.

“Do you have any idea,” she asked, hands on her hips, “how hard it is to live with a man who will not talk? Who works long hours and then, to relax, goes to the bar with his buddies and talks to them? And doesn’t come home until he’s ready to go to bed?”

She made a gesture of frustration, throwing her hands in the air. “Dack, I loved your father, but a lot of the time, I

was...lonely. Your dad doted on you and spent time with you, but he really did not have much interest in my life, my thoughts, my feelings.”

“He loved you,” Dack said, defending the man who’d raised him.

His mother nodded. “I think in his way he did. But I never felt that we... connected. And I know that a little less drama would have been healthier for you, but it’s only been in the last several years, with all the self-help and counseling books and articles and TV shows, that I’ve realized that when I ‘threw a hissy fit’, as you so poetically put it, I was just trying to get your dad to see me, to hear me.”

“Whoa. You’ve been doing a lot of thinking, huh, Mom?” Dack grinned at her, and she smiled back as he knew she would.

She sank back into her chair. “Yes, sonny, I have. And I know Frank can never replace your dad, but...” She gave Dack a look full of vulnerability. “He talks to me. And he listens.”

Dack laid his hand over his mother’s smaller one on the arm of her chair.

“Mom, that’s great. You deserve a guy that listens.”

She pressed her other hand over his. “And I’m listening now. So tell me why you look like someone ran over your dog and scratched your new truck?”

He snorted with laughter. “Geez. It’s not that bad.” Then he sighed, giving it up. “It’s worse.”

He told her about Daisy—a highly edited version, because his mom sure as hell did not know he was part owner in Club 3—and how they’d dated, and then Daisy had found him holding her friend after a date tried to hurt her, and assumed he was cheating on her.

“Good for you,” his mother said fiercely. “I hope you broke his nose.”

He shrugged. “I messed it up a little for him.”

“And you really like this Daisy?”

He nodded. “I think it’s...more than that. But, now, I don’t know. If she

doesn't trust me..."

His mother patted his hand. "She does sound rather immature. I mean, after you explained what happened, and she still...?" She paused delicately.

Dack thought about that. "Well...I guess I didn't, not really. I was pretty mad."

"Oh." His mother nodded.

"Nevertheless, she should know you'd never cheat, after all the time you've known each other, and the hours and hours you must have spent talking."

Dack rolled his shoulders uncomfortably. "Uh, we haven't really known each other that long."

"Hmm."

Dack looked over to find his mother

regarding him with a look of such innocent inquiry that he knew he'd been had.

“Ah, Mom,” he groaned.

“What?” she asked in mock indignation.

“I see what you're up to,” he answered, giving her the same look. “I know when I've been mothered.” She'd outmaneuvered him, and she looked smug as hell about it too. But his heart was lighter than it had been since Saturday evening. Because maybe she was right; he just needed to explain himself to Daisy.

He leaned over and planted a kiss on his mother's cheek and grinned

sheepishly at her. “Thanks for listening.”

She smiled mistily at him. “Well, I figured since I have never even heard her name before, you can’t have been dating all that long. So a little more communication might be in order. Now, when do I get to meet her?”

He lost all will to smile. “I don’t know. We’ll see if I can fix this first. Then I’ll let you know.”

His mother gave him a fierce hug and assured him that any woman worthy of him would listen to everything he had to say, so she’d wait for his call.

He left with a package of lemon cookies and renewed hope. Because while he knew damn well mothers were prejudiced as hell in their sons’ favor,

his could be right once in a while,
couldn't she?

Chapter Fourteen

Daisy called in sick on Monday. She spent the day curled up on her sofa, crying and flipping channels on her TV and sleeping.

Her parents were out of town with friends, Dana had a big court case going on, and Deb...would demand every single gory detail of what had happened, “he said, she said” style. Daisy couldn’t deal with that, so she didn’t call either of them.

She finally showered and dragged herself to her class that evening. She copied Dack’s trick of wearing a pair of

brown-lensed sunglasses, and skulked in the back of the room, pretending she had a cold. Even the gregarious bunch of would-be Realtors left her alone with her tissues.

When she got home, it was nearly dark but still warm. The sky in the west glowed with amber light shading into midnight blue overhead. Daisy stuck her shades back on, in case she met any of her neighbors on the walk.

The walk and stairs were thankfully empty. She traipsed up to her apartment and dropped her papers on the table. She needed a glass of wine.

Her doorbell rang while she was pouring. She jerked, and the chardonnay splashed over her counter. Daisy barely

noticed. Her heart pounding with sudden hope, she scurried around the kitchen island and peered out at her step.

Her heart sank. It was only Carlie. She waved cheerily at Daisy and lifted a bottle of something.

Daisy opened the door and was enveloped in a warm, perfumed hug. She hugged Carlie back, a wave of gratitude swamping her. Of course she was glad to see her friend.

“I’m so glad you’re finally home,” Carlie said. “We—I’ve been waiting in the parking lot. So much to tell you. And I brought wine.”

“Thanks.” Daisy sniffled. “I just spilled most of mine.”

Carlie handed Daisy the cold bottle and lifted one hand, beckoning over her shoulder.

“Who else is here?” Daisy asked, mystified.

“Um—someone you need to listen to.” Carlie stepped aside, and Daisy’s eyes widened. A sign was mounting her steps, with a pair of familiar feminine legs and sandaled feet under it.

The huge poster board stopped on the top step, and Carlie gestured gracefully at it, like a game show hostess indicating a choice of answers.

“I love U and I would not cheat with your man,” Daisy read aloud. She set both her hands on her hips and rolled her

eyes, torn between the urge to growl or snicker. Sounded like the chorus of a bad country song. “You can come out now, Sara.”

The sign slowly lowered, and Daisy’s frown turned to a gasp. Sara had a black eye that extended down into a mottled bruise on her cheekbone.

“Holy crap. Who did that to you?”

“A creep at the club,” Sara said quietly. “Dack and Trace rescued me.”

“Can we come in?” Carlie asked. She took the sign from Sara and leaned it against the railing facing the wall, shooing them with her hands. “Nosy neighbors are watching.”

“Oh, sure.” Daisy stepped back inside, and her friends followed her. She

waved at the college girl next door, who was peering out the window by her own door. The girl waved back. Crap, she was more entertainment for the neighbors than a reality show on TV.

Sara stood awkwardly in the middle of the living room, looking ashamed. That was bad. Daisy's stomach knotted. "Did someone...?"

Sara shook her head. "No. Almost."

"Who was it?" Oh God, she hoped it wasn't one of the guys she'd met.

"His name is Kevin."

"Holy crap," Daisy exploded. "That *asshole*. I hope they kicked his teeth in and broke both of his arms."

"They sort of tried," Sara admitted.

“Dack threw him out into the parking lot and let Trace have him. I think the cops had to take him to the hospital.”

“So Dack was...?”

“He was holding me, comforting me,” Sara said. “That’s all, Daise. I swear.”

Daisy walked over and wrapped her arms around her slender friend. Sara was trembling. “Oh God, I’m so sorry,” Daisy whispered. “I’m sorry I doubted you.”

“That’s okay,” Sara said, her voice trembling. “I know how it must have looked. I probably would have thought the same thing.”

“Crap, crap, crap,” Daisy muttered, furious with herself. “I should have been there for you, instead of running away.”

“Okay, wine all around,” Carlie said behind them. “This calls for a little grape therapy.”

Daisy accepted the glass Carlie handed her. The three of them sat down. Daisy raised her glass, smiling through her tears.

“Here’s to girlfriends,” she said. “And I’ll try to be a better one in the future.”

Sara raised her glass as well. “You’re just fine the way you are. Dr. Carlie here pointed out that you didn’t doubt me as much as yourself.”

Carlie shrugged delicately. “It’s true, Daise. You know you’ve been a basket case worrying about whether you’re still

the complete feminine package. That's how you ended up at the club in the first place."

Daisy sipped her wine. "You're right," she admitted. "I was just waiting for Dack to reject me, even after..." She took another fast drink, her face hot.

"Yes, you'll have to tell us about lingerie night," Carlie said meaningfully.

"Sometime," Daisy said. Sometime far in the future. "But that is why I went to the club."

"And how I got there too," Sara said softly. "Although I'm not sure I'll go back."

"What happened?" Daisy asked. "I mean, I met Kevin, so I know he's an asshole, but how did you and he end up

together?”

Sara drained her glass and held it out to Carlie, who took it and went into the kitchenette.

“Well, he just seemed like a handsome, fun guy,” Sara said. “At first. He came over as soon as I walked in and introduced himself. We danced and had a drink, and then he excused himself to use the restroom. When he came back, he was kind of flushed, but I didn’t think much of it. It was hot in there, you know? So he kissed me and then invited me to come into one of the back rooms with him, and I...I went. I thought, what the heck, this is what I’m here for, isn’t it?”

She took her refilled glass back from Carlie and took a long drink, then set the glass down abruptly, lacing her hands together in her lap.

“Trace was glaring at me, and he and Kevin exchanged words, but again, I missed all the signs. Anyway, as soon as we got in the bedroom, I realized I didn’t want to be there. I tried to leave, and he...he grabbed me and threw me on the bed, told me I wanted it and I was going to get it. I tried to get away, and he punched me in the face, and then r-ripped my dress off. I screamed, and the next thing I knew, Trace was hauling him off of me, and Dack was there, and...” She shrugged, and Daisy scooted over to

give her another hug. Sara was trembling like a nervous puppy.

“So while dear Kevin was in the bathroom, he did a line of coke,” Carlie put in. “That’s why he was acting so crazy.”

“That, and he’s a psycho bastard who likes hurting women,” Daisy said. Or maybe he’d been snorting coke the night she met him too.

Carlie nodded. “Trace took care of him. He knows some fighting moves. And,” she added with a significant look at Sara, “he was a little crazy mad himself. I talked to him earlier.”

So Trace was protective of Sara. Hmm, that was interesting. Daisy rubbed her friend’s back, wishing he’d been the

one to comfort her instead of Dack. Then she wouldn't have tripped on her own tongue, leaping to conclusions.

Then she remembered Dack's pickup in front of Sara's apartment. "Um, so Dack was at your place later because...?"

"I thought I saw Kevin outside," Sara said miserably. "There was a car driving by really slow. The driver had blond hair, and I-I freaked. I called Dack, and he and Trace came over. It turned out Kevin was in jail, where he was supposed to be, so it was all for nothing."

"So Dack and Trace were heroes," Daisy said. "And I'm so, so screwed."

She pressed her hand to her mouth, with a quiet moan of sheer misery. She'd screamed at Dack, accused him of awful things and refused to even listen to him. He must be so angry with her he'd probably never speak to her again.

She imagined walking into the gym or the club and having him turn away from her. Imagined never being held in his strong arms again. Never hearing that low, wicked chuckle while he teased her.

"I have to get him to listen," she said. "I have to tell him that I'm sorry."

Sara and Carlie exchanged a look. Carlie reached into her bag and pulled out a small shopping bag, which she

handed to Sara.

Sara handed it to Daisy. “We have a plan for that,” she said.

Daisy looked at the metallic red lips on the side of the small bag. Wide-eyed, she pulled out a tiny scrap of black lace. “A thong? You shopped for me at Kiss Me, Kink Me?”

Her friends nodded, identical little smiles on their faces. “He’ll forgive you en-nee-thang, if you show up in that,” Carlie promised.

“Oh my God.” She couldn’t breathe. “You think I should...?”

“Well, you can wear a raincoat or something over it,” Sara said impatiently. “But you are putting that on, and you are going over to his place,

Daisy Charles. Tonight.”

“Or else we will know the reason why,” Carlie added emphatically, her eyes dancing.

Daisy flew to her feet. “Oh my God. I have to shower. I have to fix my makeup. Oh God, my eyes look like crap after crying for two days.”

Her friends broke into laughter. “He’s not gonna be looking at your face, you idiot,” Carlie hooted.

Sara gave her a push toward her room. “Go on. We’ll let ourselves out. And you can call us tomorrow.”

“Thank you.” Daisy gave her a fierce hug, gave another to Carlie, and then flew into her room, ripping off her shorts

and top as she went. “Love you guys. See you later.”

Daisy showered in record time, finger combed her hair, but then took twice as long as usual to fix her eye makeup. Shadow in the crease, mascara, and some concealer underneath.

She peered doubtfully at her reflection in the mirror. She hoped her friends were right and Dack wouldn't care what her face looked like. She was flushed with excitement, her eyes sparkling with hope, but they were also still puffy from her crying jag.

Well, if he turned her away, she was going to cry for a lot longer.

She pulled the black thong on and then posed in front of her long mirror. Good thing she'd shaved her legs Saturday—she'd probably have cut an artery if she'd had to do it tonight. Good grief, she looked like a total tart, with nothing but the black strings slanting up over her hips, the small triangle covering her pubic hair.

She turned anxiously, her eyes widening at the way the thong disappeared between her ass cheeks. Did her butt look big? No, she'd hardly eaten anything today, or the day before, come to think of it.

Her breasts... Daisy took a deep breath and stared at her bare breasts.

She lifted a hand to touch one full, white curve, wishing desperately she had long hair like Sara or Carlie. They could at least shake their hair forward and hide behind it a little.

But she couldn't. She looked herself in the eye. Was she going to do this or not? Yes, she was. She was in love with him, and if she didn't go to him now, she'd have to suffer for days, perhaps weeks while the two of them jockeyed around and finally had a conversation. And by that time, he might even be with another woman. He did own a sex club, after all.

The thought galvanized her. She turned away from the mirror. Now what the hell was she going to wear over it?

She dithered over the kimono, a long black sweater, but finally did as Sara had suggested and put on her black spring duster with the tie belt. She thrust her feet into her black sandals, grabbed her purse and headed for the door.

Oh, please, God, let him be home.

She punched the address of his condo into the Nissan's onboard GPS and followed the cheerful instructions through the winding, nighttime landscape of Beaverton.

Dack's condo was on the ground floor of a landscaped complex. His truck was nowhere to be seen, but he had an attached garage, so he probably parked inside. She would if her apartment came

with a garage.

Stepping up onto his front step, she could see lamplight glowing through the slats of the blinds on his front window, and the flicker of movement—a TV screen.

Daisy took a deep, shaky breath, blew it out and then pressed his doorbell before she could lose her courage.

Inside, footsteps thudded softly, and then the door opened. Dack stood inside, looking down at her. He wore a dark T-shirt, jeans and a cool look on his hard face, as if she were a stranger appearing at his door. Daisy bit her lip and swallowed. Oh God, he wasn't going to make this easy.

“Hi, Dack,” she managed. “Can I—

can I come in?”

His face inscrutable, he looked her over and then shrugged. “Sure, come on in.”

Daisy walked past him into his condo. She found herself on a tile area, with a spacious living room to the right done in beige and blue, and a hallway and kitchen back to the left. She stopped on the edge of the tiled floor, fingering the tie of her coat.

Dack sauntered past her and sank into the big, leather recliner. He picked up a remote, flicked the silent TV off and looked at her. “What can I do for you, Daisy?”

Call me Petal, she begged silently. He

was still angry. Maybe he wouldn't accept her apology at all. But she walked forward slowly, until she was a few feet from his chair.

"I came to apologize," she said. "I realize now that I was wrong to doubt you, and I...I'm sorry. And I'm sorry for the things I said too."

He looked down, quirking his lips as if considering her words. Daisy waited, her heart pounding so hard she was surprised he couldn't hear it in the quiet room.

"The thing is, pe—Daisy," he said, fingering a leather seam on the arm of his recliner. "That hurt like hell, to have you screaming at me from your doorstep, in front of half your neighborhood. If

there's one thing I hate, it's a scene." He cast her a dark look. "That kind of scene, anyhow."

Daisy nodded quickly, hope beating its fragile wings in her chest. He'd nearly called her Petal. Maybe this could work after all.

With trembling fingers, she untied the belt of her coat. His gaze fell to her hands.

"I really am sorry," she said.

He narrowed his eyes, and the corner of his mouth drew in. "How sorry?"

It was now or never. She let the belt drop and pulled her coat open. It slid off her bare shoulders, down her arms and hit the carpet around her feet in a soft

whoosh. She stood there in nothing but the thong and her strappy black sandals.

“This sorry,” she said and knelt at his feet.

He stared down at her. Slowly, not missing an inch, his gaze travelled up over her bare body, lingering for a long, long moment on her breasts. Finally, when she was about to break, about to grab the coat and wrap it around her, scurry for the door, he looked up into her eyes. Every part of her zinged to attention at the look in his eyes. Here was her dom, demanding her compliance, her submission.

“Sorry enough to wear that to the club...for me?”

She gulped. And then found her

courage somewhere and nodded. “If you want me to.”

His hands clenched on the arms of his chair. He took a deep breath, and his eyes fired with that dark, sexy heat she remembered so well. His hard face relaxed in a smile. “Thank you, Petal.”

Reaching down, he held out his hands to her, palms up. She put her hands in his much larger ones, and he tugged her to her feet. Then he slipped one warm, calloused hand around the small of her back and pulled her onto his lap, astride him in the leather chair.

Daisy put her hands on his shoulders for balance as she settled on his thighs. She searched his gaze with hers.

“Does this mean you forgive me?”

He laughed, a shaken sound. “Baby, I’d forgive you capital one murder when you come to me like this,” he growled, his hands slipping down to cup her bare ass and squeeze.

He bent his head and pressed a soft, warm kiss to the upper slope of her breast, his mustache and beard tickling her skin.

“You have no idea how beautiful you are right now,” he told her, kissing her other breast. “My shy, sexy Petal.”

He leaned his head against her breasts and took a deep breath, his arms tightening so she was pressed against him. She could feel his hot, moist breath

on her skin, the tender skin of his face and the brush of his lashes. His heart thumping against hers. For the first time in days, she felt warm, clear through.

“You break my heart, baby. So scared but so brave.” His deep voice was rough with emotion. Emotion she could feel in the shudder of his powerful body under hers, in the arms around her.

Daisy bit back a sob of pure happiness and relief. “Oh, Dack.” She slipped her arms around his neck and hung on to him, laying her cheek on his hair. He smelled of faint woodsy shampoo and his special scent. “I’d dare anything for you.”

He tipped his head back, looking up into her eyes. “I feel the same way. You

may not have noticed, but I don't wear my shades nearly as much."

With a butterfly touch, she bent to kiss the scar that bisected his eyebrow, and then his cheek. "I noticed," she murmured, drunk on his nearness. "But I didn't know if I should say anything. I was afraid you'd put them back on."

He laughed. "No. I realized you truly don't see my scar when you look at me. It's the same for me, Petal. You're the most beautiful woman I've ever been with. When I look at you, I don't see a woman who's missing anything. I see an incredibly sexy babe that I can't wait to get my hands and my mouth on, that I can't wait to fuck, every place and every

way she'll let me."

"Oh," she breathed. There was his naughty poet side, emerging for her. "I-I love you, Dack."

She kissed him, pouring her heart into it, sinking into the heat and tenderness and taste of him. Dack kissed her back, devouring her with tender lips and tongue, cradling her close as he proved how beautiful she was to him.

Finally he drew back for a breath and smiled at her. "Did I hear you say you love me, Daisy Petal?"

"Mm-hmm," she admitted, kissing his cheek and rubbing her face on his beard, her heart pounding. Oh, crap, she'd done it now. She just hoped he didn't run screaming for the nearest exit.

Dack cupped her face in his hand. “I love you too.” His deep voice was rough with emotion.

Her heart skipped a beat, stumbled and landed at his feet. “You do?”

He nodded. “I know it’s fast, but there it is. Hell, I think I fell for you the first time I saw you walk into Big Iron, looking like a sexy little elf queen.”

“Well, thank God.” She smiled shakily. “I wouldn’t want to be the only crazy one here.”

He smacked her bottom playfully. “Are you crazy in love with me, Petal?”

She nodded, knowing her heart was in her eyes and reveling in the way his shone back at her.

“Good, ’cause then you’ll let me have my way with you.”

She moved enticingly on the long, stiff shape prodding her through his Levis. “I thought you’d never ask.”

His eyes narrowed dangerously, “Oh, I’m not askin’, Petal. I’m tellin’ you how it’s gonna be.”

Her pussy contracted with excitement, and he must have felt her breath catch, because he chuckled. “Hang on tight, baby.”

She did, and he surged to his feet. With her in his arms, he walked across the room, down the short hall, and into a dark room. He let her down onto a soft, cool comforter and reached to flick on a

lamp without letting go of her.

They were in his bedroom. Daisy had a hazy impression of a comfortable, masculine room. The bed was a king. No surprise there, since everything about him was king-size too.

More importantly, he was pulling his T-shirt over his head, revealing the powerful torso she loved. There was that broad, hair-dusted chest and the dark happy trail arrowing down over his six-pack. She watched with eager lust as he shoved his jeans down, and his cock sprang free, flushed and turgid, prodding the air between them as he kicked the jeans aside and knelt on the side of the bed.

“Can you just...stay right there for a

minute?” she pleaded, leaning up on her elbow.

He snorted a quick laugh. “Yeah, I guess.”

She reached out and stroked her fingers down his thigh, over the smooth skin and heavy ropes of muscle, the fine hair that dusted his upper thigh. “It’s just that...I’ve never seen you naked.” She trailed her fingers up over the sharp cut of muscle above the crease of his hip. “You’re so big and beautiful.”

He laughed again, a shaken sound. “Only you would call me beautiful, Petal.”

She scooted closer, her hand slipping over the ridges of muscle on his abs and

then stroking lightly out over the silken length of his cock. She bent her head close and inhaled his musky, masculine scent. “You are beautiful,” she murmured. “And you smell so good. I love the way you smell.”

As her fingers closed around his shaft, firm and silky and surging in her grasp, he shuddered, his hands fisting on the coverlet. “Jesus, Petal, you’re gonna make me come right now. And I want to be deep inside your sweet pussy when that happens.”

He pulled her hand away and brought it up to kiss her palm, his eyes glittering over the edge of her hand. “And I think you want me there too.”

She squirmed, clenching her thighs

together. “Yes, Dack.”

He growled deep in his chest. “God, it gets me off when you talk so sweet to me.” He came down over her, caging her with his big, hard, warm body, his hands cupping her head, his face close to hers. “My own sweet little sub.”

She nodded, opening her mouth for his kiss. He gave it to her, slow and hot and tender, while he lowered himself, brushing his body over hers, teasing them both with the brush of hard over soft, adamant over yielding, raw power over gentle strength. Daisy slid her hands up around his back, reveling in the play of muscle under his satin skin, in the long sweep of him, down to the

rounded curve of his ass, bunching as he moved over her.

His cock was hot satin against her belly, teasing her with the promise of more.

“I want you inside me,” she pleaded as he kissed his way down her throat.

“Mm-hm,” he approved. “Soon, Petal.”

He slid down farther, finding her breast, and drew her nipple into his mouth, suckling first one and then the other until she was writhing under him. “Oh, that feels so good,” she praised him. “But hurry.”

“Oh, we can’t be doin’ that.” He gave her a look from under his brows. “You know, I haven’t tasted your pussy yet,

Petal.”

“Oh.” It was more of a squeak than anything.

He chuckled as he pressed kisses down across the concavity of her belly and along the string of the thong. “You like having your pussy licked, Petal. I know you do.”

“I...” As he smiled knowingly at her, Daisy’s voice broke off, and a blush burned down over her bare chest. Damn him, did he have to remind her of that now? Other hands, other mouths touching her, making her come, all to prove to her that he was in charge. And she’d come when he told her to, and then she’d let him fuck her right there, for everyone to

see.

“You don’t want me to lick you?” he asked, running his fingertip slowly up and down the center of the lace panel, directly over her clitoris on each sweep.

Daisy arched up into his touch. “Yes. Of course I do.” She craved his tongue on her.

He cocked his head to admire her as he pulled the thong aside a few inches. “Well, you know I like you to ask me nice, Petal. Now let’s see, how about this? ‘Dack, please lick my pussy until I cream’—oh, sorry, meant to say scream. ‘Cause you’re already creaming for me, aren’t you, baby?”

“Yes.” She pouted, not caring if he saw. The sadist, he wanted her to beg

him for this too? “Dack, please lick my pussy until...” Her pussy contracted with need as he smiled, clearly enjoying her dilemma. He couldn’t really make her scream, could he? “Until I scream.”

He nodded, absolute confidence in every hard plane of his face, in the gleam of his eyes.

“Just ’cause you asked me so nicely, don’t mind if I do.” Oh God, maybe he could.

He settled himself between her thighs and pulled the thong farther aside.

“Don’t you want me to take that off?” she asked uncertainly.

“Oh, hell no. I’m enjoying the tease too much.”

She waited, holding her breath, for him to attack her with his tongue, but he seemed in no hurry, nibbling his way up her inner thigh and inhaling her scent.

“I fuckin’ love the way you smell, Petal,” he murmured. “I could come just sniffing you. ‘Specially when you’re aroused. Just hot, naughty Daisy Petal, all ready for me.” He nudged the thong aside farther, and she felt his warm breath on her labia and her clitoris.

“Ready for me to put myself in you... My fingers, my cock and my tongue.”

Since he punctuated each phrase with a brush of something—was that his tongue?—on her trembling flesh, Daisy listened raptly.

“I’ll want to put a toy or two in your sweet pussy one of these days,” he mused, spreading her with his fingers.

Her pussy contracted sharply against the move, or perhaps at his suggestion, and he smiled. “And maybe in your ass.” He laughed when she jerked and soothed her with a long stroke of his tongue up through the furrow of her labia.

“Y-you are not putting anything in my ass,” she told him, her fingers in his hair in case he did anything she didn’t like. Or in case she wanted to hold him a little bit closer.

“Petal,” he reproved. “Did my little sub just say no to me?”

She bit her lip, but it was too late.

He'd noticed her gasp of excitement. Watching her, he lifted one hand and smacked her lightly, right on her mons. It didn't sting, exactly, but it made her jerk. He did it again, this time stinging the inside of her thigh.

“Reach up there and grab on to the bed,” he ordered. “Cause I can tell you like this, and I don't want you digging holes in me with your nails.”

She opened her mouth to protest, and he smacked her again, right on her pussy. It stung a little, but more than that, it told her he was in charge and she needn't worry about anything, that he was going to make her come, on his schedule. She reached up and grabbed on to the heavy wooden bar that ran across the head of

his bed, happiness flooding her.

He nodded his approval. “Good. Now just a couple more, baby, for being naughty. Then I’ll let you come for me.”

He spanked her three more times, careful swats of his powerful hand on her tender inner thighs and the last time on her pussy, waiting and open for him. By the time he was finished, she was ready to scream, or cry—with frustration, a bit of anger at him and a treacherous, quaking excitement.

“You ready to scream?” he asked, the tender dom.

“Yes, Dack.”

And, oh God, the first swipe of his soft, tender tongue up over her pussy and

her clitoris, and she did. Well, that was just a whimper, but then he groaned as if she tasted better than anything he'd ever had in his mouth. He licked her with such knowing skill, swirling his tongue roughly over her swollen clitoris until her world narrowed down and down to that small area of her body. She cried out again and again, calling his name, until he thrust two long fingers inside her and hooked them up to press her G-spot, and she came so hard she shuddered, her body arching up off the bed to him, a high, thin cry streaming from her mouth.

As she sank back, gasping from the pleasure still quaking through her, he came up over her.

“God, baby, that was beautiful.” He

tugged the thong off her. Then he kissed her, with her smell and her taste on his mouth, and Daisy wrapped her arms around him, kissing him back and moaning with happiness as his heavy frame pressed her into the bed.

He set the head of his cock in her entrance and paused, his big body trembling with eagerness. “Look at me.”

She opened her eyes, and he stared into them as he thrust, forging into her with a long, sleek stroke. He grunted and flexed his hips, seating himself so deeply she felt as if he owned her. “I love you,” he told her. “And you are fuckin’ *mine*.”

“Yes, Dack.”

“Wrap those pretty legs around my ass and hang on,” he told her, with a hard kiss. “Time to make you scream again.”

As he pulled out and shoved back in, filling her up completely and raking every nerve in her sensitized channel, she moaned with joy. “I don’t think... that will be...a problem.”

And it wasn’t. When he hooked one arm under her, pulling her up tight against him, and pounded into her, rocking the big bed against the wall, he rocked her world as well. She’d loved what he did at the club, but lying underneath him in his bed with him going wild in her arms was the best of all. Her

world narrowed down once again to his cock thrusting inside her, owning her, making her implode around him.

“Ah, fuck, baby,” he groaned when she came. “Yeah, that’s it. So good...so perfect.”

When he strained into her one final time, shouting his pleasure to the quiet night air, she didn’t feel so bad about all the noises he’d gotten out of her.

Afterward, he tugged the sheet and comforter from under her and then pulled the covers over both of them. Daisy snuggled close to his side, her head on his shoulder, her hand on his heart, which was just now slowing along with his breathing. His heavy arm lay around her, anchoring her to his side. She was

so happy, she was floating.

“I’m glad you were home,” she murmured, turning her head just enough to kiss his damp skin. “I don’t know how long it would’ve taken to get my courage up to come back over here again.”

To her surprise, Dack began to laugh, his chest quivering under her. He gave her a squeeze. “Oh, I was home all right. Your friends made sure of that.”

Daisy lifted her head. “My friends did what?”

He grinned at her, stroking her ass. “Petal, my phone hasn’t stopped ringing. First Carlie called me and wanted to know what the hell Sara and I had done to convince you we were getting some

on the side. Then Sara called me, telling me you were mad and I had to fix it. Then they both called me to tell me to be home tonight or else.”

Daisy dropped her forehead on his chest and groaned. “This whole thing was a setup?”

He pressed a kiss to the top of her head. “Fraid so, baby.”

She pinched him. “You made me beg. I thought you weren’t going to forgive me.”

He chuckled unrepentantly, fending her off. “Hey, I didn’t want to miss one second of you kneeling before me in that thong. I may frame that little bitty black lace.”

She pouted for another moment and

then gave it up. She was too happy to hold on to her mad.

“You know, I don’t usually...go off like that on guys,” she told him. “It was just—you were holding her and saying the same things you said to me that first night.”

“I hear you. But, you were kinda freaked the first night, if you recall. And that’s part of the service, calming down a new sub.”

She made a face at him. “Which you will not be giving other women now.”

He held up a finger, silencing her. “No, which you will not misunderstand if I have to.” He tapped the end of her nose. “Petal, running the club carries a

lot of responsibility. We're throwing people together in a sexual atmosphere. We vet members as carefully as we can, but once in a while a ringer like that fuck-head Kevin is bound to slide through. When that happens, Trace and Jake and I have to be there for anyone who's hurt or scared. You see what I'm sayin'?"

Daisy nodded tightly. He was right; the club was a pressure cooker of sexual excitement, some of it kinky. But she needed to make one thing clear.

"Fine. I understand that. But if you're going to...to be with other women when I'm not there... I can't do this, Dack. You're like a big chick magnet."

"Nah, that would be Trace."

She gave him a look. “Every time I look at you at the gym and the club, you have women hanging all over you. And I meant what I said. I won’t share you. I couldn’t. It would tear me up inside.”

He nodded, his gaze tender. “I swear, no worries there, Petal. You are more than enough woman for this son.”

“Are you...are you sure?” she asked.

He moved, turning more toward her and pulling her closer, their bodies flush, still damp from their joining.

“Course I’m sure. Baby, I told you, the minute you walked into the gym—*bam*. That was it for me. I haven’t been with another woman since. Haven’t even wanted one.”

“Really?” When he nodded, evidently ready to reassure her as long as need be, she smiled and kissed him to show her appreciation. It turned long and hot.

When they finally drew apart, she laid her head on his shoulder again, luxuriating in the feel of his body against hers. She couldn't get enough of his scent and the feel of his skin under her fingertips. She was sated but still greedy. But he was all hers, she hoped for a long, long time. And she was going to enjoy every moment of it.

“How did Carlie and Sara get your phone number, anyway?”

“I gave it to Sara after Kevin attacked her. She didn't want to go for sexual

assault counseling, so I told her to call me or you or Carlie if she got scared or didn't want to be alone."

Daisy nodded somberly. "I'm glad you did. Thank you for being there for her."

He searched her gaze with his, tracing the curve of her cheek with his fingertip. "Hey, it's okay. You're there for her now, so quit spanking yourself over it. That's my job."

She turned her head to kiss his hand, fluttering her lashes at him over it.

He cupped her head, waggling it gently. "Tease. I fuckin' love your hair short like this," he said. "Never thought I'd go for butch, but on you it's sexy as hell."

“Butch?” She wrinkled her nose.
“Twila’s butch, and she has long hair and bigger implants than me.”

He laughed at her reaction. “True that. You like her?”

“I do. She was really sweet that night I freaked and ran out on you.”

He watched as he traced her hairline with his fingertips. “She’s a good person. Twila is one of our go-to enforcers at the club. She helps us keep an eye on things upstairs.”

Daisy’s curiosity focused. “Yeah, about that... What exactly goes on up there?”

Dack smiled, his pirate’s wicked smile. “Baby, if you’re real nice to me,

I'll let you find out."

She shook her head, alarm coursing through her. "No, no. That's okay. The main floor has more than enough excitement for me."

"Come on, now, that's what you said about a little ménage, till I made you try it."

"I'm serious," Daisy said. "I'm not into pain and all that stuff. You're the excitement for me."

"Aw, that's sweet. Now come up here so I can give you some more of that."

She crawled up on top of him, desire surging all over again as his cock twitched against the inside of her thigh. She couldn't wait.

“Come on, Petal. Hurry it up, or I swear to God, I’m leavin’ you in the truck.”

Daisy wrinkled her nose at Dack, who stood by the open passenger door of his pickup, scowling. In his long-sleeved black shirt and slacks, he looked every inch the dom. She knew he wouldn’t really leave her, but he was making her fingers fumble even more.

Plus, she wanted to just sit and stare at him. He’d gotten a haircut. Her pirate had shown up at her door with his wavy brown locks cut ruthlessly short, with no part, just a short cap of glossy dark brown. Thank God he’d kept his beard

and mustache.

He looked just as sexy and handsome, but in a much more *GQ* way now.

Although, come to think of it, he kind of reminded her of a sexy Greek warrior too. She could definitely picture him in a short skirt-thing, a shield strapped across his gorgeous chest, a sword in his hand.

When she'd opened the door and then stood and stared, he'd shifted restlessly, run a hand over his head and then grinned at her. Told her if he was going to be meeting her dad, he should probably look like a good prospect and not a biker.

He looked so hot it had been all Daisy could do not to drag him into her

bedroom and have her way with him. Now she wished he'd quit distracting her.

"I'm hurrying. My sandal strap is twisted, and it hurts." She had her favorite black sandals on, to go with her little black sundress. Dack had just grunted when she asked him if it was a theme night, and told her to wear whatever she liked, because he was just going to take it off of her.

"But you like twisted, Petal," he teased.

She made a face at him. "Only you."

"Just leave the damn things here. I'll carry you."

"No, I'm not leaving them here. I want

to dance, and bare feet stick to the floor.” Why was he rushing her so much? She just wanted to enjoy their first night at the club as a couple.

With the sigh of a put-upon male, he leaned in the open door, grasped her ankle gently and tugged. “Here, let me do it.”

She sat and smiled at his bent head, watching the way the evening sun made the short, silky strands of his hair glisten. Unable to resist, she reached up and ran her fingers through it one more time as he straightened the thin black strap.

He looked up at her from under his brows. “You keep doin’ that, and we’re not gonna make it inside.”

She offered her mouth, and he kissed

her. Then he groaned. “Come on, I haven’t nailed a girl in my truck since I was in high school, and I’m too old to do it now.”

Not to mention this was a little too public even for him, she thought with an inward snicker.

“Okay, I’m ready.” She slid off her seat, and he closed the door behind her.

“About time.” He grabbed her hand and towed her with him across the parking lot. Daisy scurried up the steps and into the club, feeling like she was in the wake of a Dack-sized speedboat. They were going to have to have a little talk about letting her go at her own pace, outside the club, that was. Okay, outside

of his bedroom too, because he was in charge there just as surely as he was here. Not that she'd have it any other way.

Rochelle stood behind the desk in a black bustier and a tiny pink skirt. She smiled at Dack and winked. "Hi, boss. All set."

Daisy's nerves kicked up a notch. "What's all set?"

"Never you mind." Dack turned on her, his key hanging from his hand. "Put this on. I don't want any of the other doms looking at you tonight."

Daisy smiled up at him as she slipped the collar over her head and adjusted his key in the hollow of her throat. She knew very well he wanted them looking at her,

just not touching. Unless he gave his permission, the fiend. “As if I’d look back.”

He gave her his dom look. “You remember that, or I’ll paddle your ass.”

“Ooh,” said Rochelle with a wiggle of her shoulders. “Sounds fun.”

“Yeah, I’d threaten to spank your pussy,” he added in Daisy’s ear. “But you like that too much. C’mon.” Dack slipped his arm around her, so that when they walked through the door, she was slightly in front of him.

“Wait,” she said, stopping uncertainly. “Why is it all dark in here?”

Dack chuckled, giving her a squeeze. “Because...it’s Pink Night.”

“Surprise!” As the word burst from nearly a hundred voices, the lights came on. Daisy’s heart nearly stopped. She was facing a crowd of Club 3 members posing like the cast of a sexy Broadway revue. Every single one of them wore pink.

From T-shirts to shorts, dresses to bustiers, and even some rather shocking fetish wear, everyone had at least one pink garment on. From pale to hot, the hues promised frivolous fun, but to Daisy it meant so much more.

“Oh my God,” Daisy breathed, hands to her face. Tears filled her eyes, and she smiled at them. “Hi, everybody. You look...amazing. And hot.” Okay, a few

of them just looked weird, but with such sweet smiles on their faces, who could ever tell them that?

Someone laughed, and the crowd broke up.

Daisy turned to Dack, who was unbuttoning his shirt. “You did this?” she asked, her heart melting.

He grinned at her. “We all did. It’s a fund-raiser. Everyone had to pony up extra to be here tonight.”

“Oh,” Daisy swiped sudden tears from her cheeks. “This is so...sweet.”

“Hey, what about her?” Trace demanded, stepping forward. He looked like a handsome male stripper in tight black slacks, suspenders and a pink bowtie around his tanned throat.

“Daisy’s not wearing pink.”

“Where’s Sara?” Dack scanned the crowd. “And Carlie?”

To Daisy’s shock, Sara emerged from the crowd. Daisy giggled at her friend’s pink outfit, which was, predictably, Lycra shorts and a bra top. She held a shopping bag with a familiar logo.

Daisy took it slowly. “Uh-oh.”

Carlie laughed, following Sara out of the crowd. She wore a deep pink halter dress and a pink flower in her hair.

“Come on, we’ll help you dress.”

Daisy looked up at Dack and then did a double-take. He now held his black shirt in his hand. He grinned at her, smoothing one hand down over his

powerful torso, clad in a snug pink T-shirt with a stiletto heel on his chest.

“You kept the shirt,” she managed.

“Damn straight. Now go on, change into your special outfit.” He wagged his brows, and Daisy felt a thrill of delicious trepidation run through her.

She followed her friends into the women’s locker room. Carlie and Sara wouldn’t sell her out with something that was too skimpy, would they?

From the grins on their faces, she wasn’t too sure.

They sat down on either side of her on the sofa in the locker room.

“Wow, Dack looks really different with his hair cut,” Carlie marveled. “He reminds me of someone.”

“Gerard Butler in *300*,” Sara supplied instantly.

Daisy looked at her. “Oh my God. That’s it. I immediately pictured him with one of those leather straps across his chest.” She mimed a fierce warrior pose and then sighed.

Carlie poked her, giggling. “Look at you, all mushy-gushy. What happened to ‘just good sex’?”

“Dack happened,” Daisy said happily.

“Well, I think you definitely happened to him too,” Sara said wisely. “When a guy gets his hair cut for a woman, that means he’s ready to meet the parents and all that.”

Daisy stopped with her hands in the

shopping bag. “Holy crap. How did you know that?”

Her friends smiled at her, and she blushed. It had been a surprise only to her, apparently.

They watched as she opened the bag. She fished in the tissue paper and drew out a small garment with a pink satin body banded in white. “What is this?” she asked, mystified.

“Does this help?” Carlie dug in the bag and drew out a headband, complete with a pair of pink satin ears. Sara grabbed the bag and added a black bowtie collar.

“Holy crap,” Daisy blurted. “A Playboy Bunny costume?”

Her friends cracked up, and at that

moment, Twila sauntered in. She set her hands on her pink chaps-covered hips and gave the three of them a narrow-eyed look. “Need any help getting her into that?”

“No, thank you,” Daisy said, shooting off the sofa. “Dack didn’t send you, did he?”

“Nah, I just wanted to see what he came up with for his sub.”

Daisy exhaled with relief as she unzipped her dress. She wouldn’t put it past him to have the domme smack her ass for being too slow.

When Carlie and Sara were silent, she glanced down to see them exchanging a meaningful look. “What?”

She stepped out of her dress and picked up the tiny outfit. It wasn't too bad, more like an old-fashioned swimsuit than anything else. She carefully unzipped the back. Thank God the fabric was stretchy, so it would fit... probably.

“His sub?” Carlie murmured, her blue eyes wide. “Really, Daise?”

Daisy could feel her cheeks heating, but she nodded. “He likes to be in charge all the time when it comes to sex.” She smiled wickedly at her friends. “And I like to let him.”

“Oh, good,” Sara said, holding up a pair of dark fishnet stockings with a smile. “Then you won't mind that he

wanted you to wear these with the outfit.”

Daisy rolled her eyes as the other women laughed.

Pink Night was in full swing, with a song by the nominal singer herself blasting, the dance floor full and drinks coming across the bar as fast as the three bartenders could run the big blenders. The night's specialty drink was strawberry margaritas, and he'd get one for his Petal if she ever got the hell out here, but Dack was sticking to beer tonight. He was sipping on a cold bottle of Drop Top.

Jake stood beside him, in his usual Levis and leather vest, a pink carnation

boutonniere his concession to the theme.

Dack tugged at his own T-shirt. The damn thing was too tight, as well as being a girly hue he'd never thought would grace his body, but the look in Daisy's eyes when she'd seen it made it worth digging through the damn Dumpster outside his condo to get it back.

He'd tossed it in anger, but later, after he'd talked to his mom and Jake and Trace and Mason, he'd dug it out again. In the nick of time too, as the garbage truck had come chugging around the circle just as he found his trash bag among his neighbors'.

The garbage crew had not been happy

to find an array of trash sitting on the pavement instead of in the Dumpster where their mechanical loader could handle it. He'd tipped them each a twenty, though, and they'd ridden off with a grin and a wave.

He'd taken the shirt and himself straight to the wash. He'd left his old sneakers outside, dumped his clothes and the T-shirt in the washing machine and himself in a long, hot shower. Smelled like an elephant had died in that Dumpster. The hot wash water might have something to do with the shirt's snug fit.

"Nice crowd," Jake said, looking around the club room with cool satisfaction.

“Uh-huh,” Dack agreed absently, his eyes on the women’s locker room door.

“Nice of Carlie to help us plan this,” Jake went on. “She’s a smart woman. Too bad she looks like she’s a lamb and I’m the big bad wolf every time I get within ten feet of her.”

“Yeah,” Dack agreed. If Daisy didn’t show her pretty ass, and soon, he was going in there, never mind that it was one area of the club that was inviolate to males. Then Jake’s words caught his attention, and he turned back to his friend.

“Wait a minute. Did you just express interest in a woman who wasn’t strapped to a spanking bench or other

surface?”

Jake scowled at him, his square jaw bunching. “What? I just said she’s smart.”

Okay, this was weird. Jake had an absolute policy of no vanilla dating. He interacted with women here at the club, helping them act out their kinky fantasies. He “smacked ’em, cracked ’em, and sent ’em home”, as Trace so laconically put it.

But although Jake was a stern dom and didn’t flinch at inflicting a little pain if that was what a sub wanted, he was careful and tender with them afterward. He also lost interest in subs as soon as he hugged them good-bye and only scened with the same ones twice

because there were fewer brave enough to go upstairs instead of romping down here.

“What the fuck are you lookin’ at?”

Jake took a long pull on his beer.

“Nothin’.” Dack shook his head, biting the inside of his own cheek to quell the grin that wanted to spread over his face. Right now the ex-military dom was giving off defensive vibes that would stop a bullet. Hell, Dack wanted to laugh out loud. Must be because he was happy, but he wanted his taciturn friend to find a woman who would make him feel like a million bucks too. And if it chanced to be the voluptuous Carlie, well, she was one of Daisy’s best

friends.

His spidey sense tingled, and he turned, then froze. Daisy stood in the doorway, the light behind her gilding her bare skin and pale hair with gold.

She looked around. When she found him, she set one arm high on the doorframe and her other hand on her hip and cocked it, posing like a hot, old-fashioned seductress.

“Jesus,” he breathed. “Would you look at that?” She was so beautiful, she stopped his heart and sent need and lust roaring through him, straight to his cock.

The tiny garment nipped in her waist and shoved her breasts up high, soft flesh plumping up over the white band and cleavage spilling down between the

pink vee in the center. Her hips swelled from the high-cut legs, and her strong, rounded legs, clad in fishnet stockings, went on forever. And above it all, her face, high cheekbones, soft mouth and those green eyes that twinkled with sultry, inviting heat just for him.

“The bunny ears are real cute,” Jake said.

“She have a tail?” Trace stopped on Jake’s other side. “Get her to turn around, will you?”

Dack glared at them warningly. Horndogs that they were, his friends were staring at her.

“If she does, it’s mine,” he growled. “Every inch of that belongs to me.”

Trace poked Jake with his elbow, and the two of them chuckled. Hell, let 'em laugh, because he was the lucky bastard she'd be with, not either of them. Dack grinned smugly at his friends and sauntered forward to claim his woman.

She smiled up at him, her eyes bright. Oh man, he hoped she wasn't going to cry. "You like it?" she asked, sounding a little anxious. How the hell a woman who looked like her could be uncertain of her sheer sexiness was beyond him.

"Yes, I do," he said fervently, letting his eyes trail down over her bodacious breasts and the rest of her, just waiting for his hands and his touch.

She sniffled, and he froze. "What,

baby?”

“Oh, Dack,” she said, her voice shaky. “All this... It’s so sweet. But it reminds me, you know, that I-I have to live with the threat that it...might come back. Are you sure...?”

Ah hell. He pulled her into his arms, feeling her firm breasts press against him. He caught a glimpse of an areola over the white band, and it was the prettiest pink in the club tonight.

“Petal,” he said in his firmest dom voice. “We’re gonna live like you never had cancer and it’s never coming back. That’s all we can do. I am all in, baby.”

“Okay, Dack. Me too,” she said softly and stood on tiptoe to kiss him.

With her soft, sweet mouth under his,

he barely heard the applause of their friends breaking out all around them.

About the Author

Cathryn Cade lives in beautiful North Idaho with her husband and a golden retriever puppy named Daisy. She loves to boat on the numerous lakes, bicycle, hike and garden. Indoors, she's usually writing, but plays hooky to read, cook and quilt. She wishes she had time to catch up with her favorite TV series and that she could meet all her readers.

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*Born to defend his people, he will
sacrifice everything...for her.*

Walking in Fire

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Hawaiian Heroes, Book 1

Nawea Bay, a remote Hawaiian paradise, is just the haven Melia Carson needs to escape the chill of heartache. Instead, she finds herself swept up in a tropical heat wave, fueled by her unexpected attraction to a handsome native she meets on a snorkel tour.

He's big, powerful, hot enough to melt her defenses—and he's not all he seems. How else could he survive an

injury that should have killed him...and why does she dream of him garbed in ancient native dress and wreathed in flames?

David “Malu” Ho’omalulu is on the Big Island to find and destroy a cache of dangerous designer drugs before they can be sold to his people. Fending off amorous female tourists is part of the job, but one look in Melia’s blue eyes, and his instincts scream that she is his.

As Melia surrenders to the desire burning between them, she discovers more than a fiery heritage that defies modern logic. She discovers a man who would descend into the molten heart of the volcano to protect his island. And her...if she can find the strength to trust

her heart to him.

Warning: Hot, hot Hawaiian hero with volcanic passion on his mind. Better pack a heat-proof bikini for this island paradise.

Enjoy the following excerpt for
Walking in Fire:

Malu set the cooler down and leaned back on the counter, crossing his arms over his chest. His biceps bulged. Melia realized she was staring again and looked quickly away. Darn it, she had to quit that. She had the mad urge to race out of the house and dive into the water again, to quell the flush of heat under her skin—equal parts arousal and

embarrassment. She always seemed to be flushed around him, as if heat emanated from his very persona.

“You just saying dat because I have to cook so much when you’re here,” Leilani said to Malu, but she was smiling. “Dis man eat for days.”

“Hmm,” Melia answered. Hard not to notice when he sat across from her eating two helpings to the others’ one—he obviously had to fuel that physique.

“Maybe Melia cook for us, yeah?” He was laughing at her again, darn him. Not out loud, but that sensual mouth was tilted up at the corners, and his dark eyes held a suspicious gleam. She’d like to cook for him all right—a nice serving of ipecac. “*Melia paha.*”

Leilani laughed easily, then looked quickly at Melia. “Sorry, not laughing at you. *Malia paha* mean ‘maybe’. Close to your name.”

“Meh-lee-ah,” Malu said, rolling her name on his tongue. “You have a Hawaiian name.”

“Yes. It means plumeria. My parents spent their honeymoon here,” she said. “They liked the name.”

“So, you cook Hawaiian?” he went on, still with that gleam in his eyes. “Know any good Spam recipes?”

Melia frowned, wary of a trap. She knew the canned ground ham product was an island favorite, but she’d never actually eaten it. Malu grinned, and she

narrowed her eyes at him. “I’m sure I could come up with some recipes, just for you.”

Leilani shook her head at him. “She cook fresh, not canned. Anyway, dis girl here on vacation.”

“Yes, I am. Nice talking to you, Leilani.” Without looking at Malu, Melia turned and sauntered out the nearest door, which turned out to be the one to the rear lanai.

Behind her, she heard Malu say something to Leilani. Both of them laughed. She wondered if they were laughing at her, and then rolled her eyes at herself. That was so junior high. And Leilani was nice, even if Malu was a big recipe gone bad.

It was dark on the back lawn, just the light shining from the windows. The only sounds were the rustling of foliage and a few frogs piping in the forest.

Melia flipped her hair off her shoulders and blew out a long breath. Good grief, why did she let him fluster her this way? She wandered slowly along the lanai. The soft caress of the humid air and the sweet scents wafting on it soothed her. Walking on, she stopped to sniff a familiar acrid odor, then wrinkled her nose. Eww, some of the group were smoking pot, right up in the trees. She heard Clay or Jimmer laugh, and shook her head. What a useless waste of time, not to mention

illegal.

She followed the faint sounds of island music around the corner. Frank was perched on the porch railing, playing a small ukulele. He smiled at her as she walked into the light of the tiki torches stuck in the garden. Curling up on one of the rattan loungers, she listened to the soft melody and let her mind drift.

She was bothered and bewildered by her attraction to Malu. She'd better handle it before she was bewitched. The Big Island was exerting its magic on her. That was it—he was part of the tropical ambience, like the lava flows, jet black against the green-and-gold mountainsides, like the turquoise water

in the bay, the surf curling into frothy white on the golden, sandy beach.

Just another Hawaiian native, as beautiful as the fish eddying over the reef, the sea turtles paddling slowly along or the dolphins leaping joyously from the waves, as full of quiet power as the mountain that towered behind them. Hopefully without the menace.

Realizing the poetic nature of her thoughts, she blushed, glad no one else could see in the dim, flickering light of the torches. Good grief, next she'd be putting it to music and playing the ukulele in the moonlight.

She opened the nearest door into a quiet sitting room now in shadows. She

bumped an end table, and something fell with a rustle to the woven floor mat. Melia fumbled for the nearest lamp and snapped it on. A sketchbook lay on the floor, a page poking out as if torn.

Bending, she picked it up and opened it, then blinked in surprise as she gazed at a pencil sketch of the bay, obviously done by someone on the front lanai. The sketch was rough, as if it had been done quickly, but even to her untutored eye, it was very good.

She sank onto the rattan settee next to the lamp and turned the page. Another sketch of the bay, like the first, only a little more refined, the black lava rocks shaded in, the palm trees textured. Were these by the same artist whose work

hung on the walls?

She flipped to the next page and the next. To her disappointment, all were bare, except the loose one. As she pulled the page carefully from the sketchbook, she caught her breath. This sketch was of a woman. She was seated on a rock, foliage behind her, her head bent. She held a single flower in her hands, and she looked down at it with dreamy concentration. Her shoulders were bare, a few vague lines suggesting she was nude.

Melia narrowed her eyes. The woman's hair was undefined, her features only a few tender lines. And yet she looked somehow familiar.

The edge of the paper was crumpled, as if the artist had begun to discard it and then changed his or her mind. A little guiltily, Melia set the sketchbook back on the end table, the sketch of the woman still in her hand.

The artist had nearly thrown it away. Surely he or she wouldn't miss it if she just enjoyed it while she was here. She'd return it before she left.

She went to her room. After setting the sketch carefully on her bedside table, she readied herself for bed, her mind full of the activities and tensions of the day. When she closed her eyes, she felt as if she were still in the water, being rocked gently by the waves. She turned onto her

side and hugged the extra pillow to her.
She dreamed of Malu.

He lounged in the shade of the beach palms, smiling lazily at her, even though Cherie and Jacquie snuggled close at his sides in their bikinis.

Melia walked toward him, drawn by a force beyond her control. His dark eyes slid down over her in a caress as strong as if he had stroked her with his hand. Heady triumph filled her—he wanted her, even with the other women available.

He beckoned her with one finger.

Her heart beat in slow, heavy strokes. She knew what he wanted. Slowly, she lifted her hands to the ties

of her bikini top and unfastened them. The top dangled from her fingertips, then fell to the sand, leaving her breasts bare to his gaze. Her nipples hardened, thrusting toward him, feeling his gaze like a caress as soft as the fresh flower lei she wore.

He gestured again, and, naughty excitement flooding her, she hooked her fingers in her bikini bottoms and slowly pushed them down until they fell in a soft puddle around her bare feet. As his hot gaze fell to her mons, she caught her breath, trembling with the force of her excitement and arousal. She felt daring, free, and so turned on her legs were weak.

In the perverse way of dreams, she suddenly realized that Dane sat nearby, watching her with an enigmatic look on his tanned face. Clay and Jimmer were there too, smiling avidly.

Uncertainty filled her. She looked back at Malu, and he smiled as Cherie and Jacquie pressed close to him, their hands all over him.

With a whimper of sheer humiliation, Melia turned to run.

*She's got the moves. He's got the heat.
Will their hearts catch the rhythm?*

The Princess and the Porn Star

© 2013 Lauren Gallagher

Rachel Taylor's manager has to be kidding. A porn star dancing beside her in her next music video? She didn't claw her way back from near obscurity in the pop music world only to become a laughingstock all over again.

Yet the moment she meets Lee, a.k.a. the infamous Buck Harder, their chemistry sizzles. There's much more to the man behind the stage name than the

obvious attributes that make him so successful, and soon she's fantasizing about sharing more than just a stage.

In only a few steps, they find a perfect, dance-floor groove hot enough to melt the camera lens. But when the video's release blows up in their faces, her record label exercises an obscure but ironclad clause—stay away from each other. Or else.

Meeting in secret seems the most delicious solution. But they can't hide this kind of heat for long...and when the paparazzi sniff them out, she realizes choosing to stay with the man she's fallen for could cause her to fall off the pop music map—permanently.

Warning: Let's just say there's a

reason Buck Harder went into his line of work, and it ain't his pretty smile. Wink wink.

Enjoy the following excerpt for The Princess and the Porn Star:

Thank God Olivia was halfway across the room when I first saw her. And thank God there were people, equipment and cords between here and there, because that gave me half a minute or so to get my tongue untied before I reached her.

It wasn't like I'd never seen her before. Not in person, maybe, but back when she was famous the first time, I'd been a fan. And maybe, just maybe, I'd

kind of had a crush on her. At one time. A long time ago.

So when I found out I'd be working with her, I'd fully expected to be a little starstruck, but this? Holy shit.

The pretty-in-pink image she'd had back then was long gone. Her hair was darker now and longer, tied back in a messy ponytail. And that dress. Christ. It was the kind of look that could be slutty or it could be sexy, and on her, it was definitely the latter. Her breasts weren't falling out of it, and it wasn't so short it looked like it was meant for someone half her height. Sexy and provocative but tasteful at the same time.

Olivia Taylor had grown the fuck up. She looked healthier now too. That

last year before she fell off the radar, she'd been scary thin and pale. Even before that, she'd always been just thin enough to keep eating disorder and—especially toward the end—drug abuse rumors flying. She was still slim now, but her face wasn't gaunt anymore, and the way her hips and waist curved inside that dress made my mouth water. And I was going to be dancing with her? With my hands on her while I wore tight leather pants?

God help me.

I stepped around a ladder and over a cord, and there we were.

“Hi,” I said.

She responded with a thin smile and a

quiet, “Hi.”

“So you’re Olivia.” I extended my hand. “Buck Harder.”

She shook my hand. “I’m Olivia, yes. Well, Rachel.”

“It’s nice to meet you.”

“You too.” She let go of my hand, and I didn’t miss the hint of a smirk. I was used to that. Price you pay for a stage name like mine. I supposed I could have made things easier by telling her my real name, but that was something I kept guarded. The fewer people who knew Buck Harder was really Lee Peyton, the better.

“So, um...” I cleared my throat and glanced at the half-constructed stage. How the hell was I supposed to make

conversation with this woman? Without saying something like, *You're even hotter in person* or, *Holy shit, you look good in leather?*

Just before I could open my mouth and make an ass of myself, Jim, the director, broke in. "Oh good. You two have been introduced." He put one hand on my shoulder and the other on Olivia's. "Pretty straightforward, what you'll be doing up there"—with his chin, he gestured toward the stage—"but we'll also be shooting in front of a green screen. Close-up of your faces. Not too much to rehearse there, though. Mostly just different lighting and camera angles for us." He smiled at her, then at me.

“Isn’t a whole lot for you two to do except lip-synch and dance, but do either of you have any questions?”

Olivia and I shook our heads.

“Good!” He clapped our shoulders, and we both winced. Oblivious, Jim said, “Let’s get this started, then. Everybody onstage.”

As ordered, we headed up to the stage. Olivia went ahead of me and made judicious use of the handrail on her way up the six stairs. I cringed on her behalf; those shoes looked excruciating, and I imagined even the slightest stumble could result in a trip to the emergency room.

She made it onto the stage without incident, though. Front and center,

someone had made a small box out of electrical tape on the bare plywood.

“Need both of you in that box,” Jim shouted.

I eyed the box, then him. “You...*both* of us?”

“Both of you.”

The tape square was just big enough for one person to stand comfortably with their feet roughly shoulder width apart. But two? Not so much.

Olivia stood as close to the front of the box as she could. I stayed as close to the back as possible, trying to give her some breathing room. Fat chance of that, though. Even with the balls of her feet on the front and my heels on the opposite

side, my chest brushed her back, and her whole body tensed. She stood ramrod straight, drawing as far away from me as her center of gravity would allow.

“They don’t give us much room to move, do they?” I muttered.

She turned her head slightly. “Not really, no.”

“Hands on her waist,” Jim called out from below us.

I didn’t think Olivia could get any tenser. I was wrong.

As I rested my hands on her waist, she sucked in a breath, and every muscle in her body stiffened. I gritted my teeth. It was hard to tell if she was repulsed by me, or if she was just uncomfortable with the entire setup, but either way, it

didn't bode well for much onstage chemistry.

And Jim didn't help. "Buck, I need you to move in a little closer."

Closer? Seriously?

I cleared my throat. "Uh, how close do you want me to get? This is about as close—"

"Lean in more," Jim said. "So you're almost kissing her neck but not quite."

Fuck, dude. Really?

Olivia blew out a long breath. Over her shoulder, she said, "It's okay. If he wants us closer, then..." She tilted her head slightly, offering up more of her neck.

I did as I was told. Thanks to the high

heels, I didn't have to lean down very far to get my lips close to her neck. Well, at least that would be easier on my own neck. I'd already scheduled a massage for tomorrow after the shoot was over, but the less I aggravated that old injury, the better.

"Music's about to start," Jim called up to us. "When it does, you know what to do."

Yeah. I do. I resisted the urge to adjust my grasp on Olivia's waist. No point in reminding her where my hands were, even if the leather was already making my palms sweat.

I pulled in a deep breath through my nose and caught a whiff of both leather and either a faint perfume or the

remnants of a sweet-smelling shampoo, and goose bumps prickled to life beneath my clothes. Forget pretending I wanted to kiss her neck. I did want to. I wanted to breathe her in, taste her skin, kiss beneath the sharp edge of her jaw.

Just as well she doesn't like me, I thought, willing myself to focus on anything but lusting after her, or I might be tempted.

The music started. In a heartbeat, the stiff, tense body in my hands was in motion. In fluid, smooth motion, like the tempo was hardwired into her muscles. Her hips swiveled. One shoulder dipped and came up. Then the other. I followed as best I could, and thank God for years

of professionally following women's leads, because my body instinctively complemented her every move. We probably would have been in perfect synch if not for the constant chorus of *don't touch her too much, don't touch her too much, don't touch her too much* echoing in the back of my brain. Or the lingering stiffness in her, the slight hitch in her otherwise perfect motion, which was all too conspicuously an effort to keep our contact to a minimum.

The music stopped abruptly, and our bodies did too. I kept my hands on her waist, but we separated as much as we could, jumping at the opportunity for some breathing room.

“I need to see more motion.” Jim

waved his arms in the air. “I want you two in one place, but I need to see *more motion*.”

“Says the man wearing comfortable clothes,” I muttered.

Olivia snorted. Well, that was a start. At least she had a sense of humor.

Then Jim said to someone, “Cue up the music and let’s start again.” Instantly, whatever minute relaxation that laugh had brought out of Olivia evaporated, and her body was once again stiff and tense against mine.

I tried not to think about the uncomfortable tension between us, and when the music started, I focused on that instead. I hadn’t heard the song before

today, but I'd listened to it a few times since I'd arrived this morning. If the rest of the songs were half as good as "You Ain't Even Kissed Me Yet", this album was going to sell insanely well. Her sound was so much better than her old stuff. The old music was great, but this? This was unreal. Stronger, bolder; her image wasn't the only thing that had grown up.

She's All In

Cathryn Cade

*For her sexy Dom, she'll open up...
but only love will take her all the way.*

Club 3, Book 1

When Daisy joins Big Iron Fitness,

it's to get fit and more comfortable in her skin. But what really makes her sweat is gym owner Dack Humboldt. Watching him pump iron sets off an endorphin rush that has nothing to do with exercise.

Dack isn't looking for love, and doesn't usually waste time on vanilla even when it's packaged in a bombshell blonde. Until he hears Daisy's been asking questions about the goings-on at his private sex club. He'll be happy to show her the ropes...on his terms.

Daisy gathers the moxie to ask Dack out on a date, and gets an offer she can't refuse. The chance to explore some of her most private fantasies and move beyond her fears about her body.

As Dack leads Daisy by the thong into the Dom/sub world, she feels as if she's finally in her element...until Dack issues a command that brings her up hard against her last emotional barrier. And Dack must decide how far he'll go to bring his bombshell back into his arms.

Warning: Body builders showing off their physiques, blondes looking to have more fun, and members of a private club sharing more than conversation.

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