





E-Books are not transferable. They cannot be sold, shared or given away as it is an infringement on the copyright of this work.

# THE COLLECTORS

**Visit us at [www.boldstrokesbooks.com](http://www.boldstrokesbooks.com)**

# THE COLLECTORS

*by*  
Lesley Gowan



2011

# **THE COLLECTORS**

© 2011 By LESLEY GOWAN. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

**ISBN 13: 978-1-60282-503-1**

THIS ELECTRONIC BOOK IS PUBLISHED BY  
BOLD STROKES BOOKS, INC.  
P.O. Box 249  
VALLEY FALLS, NY 12185

FIRST EDITION: FEBRUARY 2011

THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION. NAMES, CHARACTERS, PLACES, AND INCIDENTS ARE THE PRODUCT OF THE AUTHOR'S IMAGINATION OR ARE USED FICTITIOUSLY. ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PERSONS, LIVING OR DEAD, BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS, EVENTS, OR LOCALES IS ENTIRELY COINCIDENTAL.

THIS BOOK, OR PARTS THEREOF, MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED IN ANY FORM WITHOUT PERMISSION.

---

## **CREDITS**

EDITOR: CINDY CRESAP

PRODUCTION DESIGN: SUSAN RAMUNDO

COVER DESIGN BY SHERI (GRAPHICARTIST2020@HOTMAIL.COM)

## CHAPTER ONE—LIFE DRAWING

I am a collector. If you were to know the most intimate thing about me, it's that I have a large collection of fiction in which the theme is sexual domination of women by other women. It might very well be a world-class collection. But my collection is not housed in protective sleeves and archival boxes. My collection is well used, taken to bed with me on a regular basis. I read from it and it excites me, though my satisfaction is fleeting. I am in thrall to the fictional world of BDSM, while in my real life I've done nothing more adventurous than a three-way with two very tame lesbians.

In my fictional world, I'm a submissive. In my real life, I remain untouched by a dominant. Part of me suspected they didn't even exist; they were solely the product of authors with submissive fantasies who, like me, turned to books for company. They wrote them and I read them. It would never have occurred to me that taking a life drawing class would be my introduction to the real practice of dominance and submission. The student at the next easel began my education. Her name was Adele and we hit it off right away, hanging out after class at a nearby coffee shop, talking about art and fashion and graduate school. She was getting an MFA in painting while I was a PhD candidate in art history.

At coffee on the last Monday of class, our conversation took the inevitable turn to sexuality. I'm as curious as the next person about what a friend does in bed. Adele had a lovely body, lively energy,

and a pretty face that could be made up one day to be vampish, the next to be schoolgirlish. I think people might describe me the same way. I didn't want to sleep with Adele, but I wanted to know whom she slept with. My guess was she liked nebbishy boys and handsome butches.

She was biting into a scone when I asked her.

"Are you dating anyone now?" I said. It sounded stupid. No one says they're "dating."

Adele smiled and washed her scone down with some black coffee.

"I belong to someone," she said.

"Oh." It was a peculiar way to put it. Almost as old-fashioned as dating.

"A he or a she?" I asked.

"A she, definitely."

"Cool. I'm a lesbian. I tried guys. More times than I needed to, really. It just wasn't there."

"I wouldn't call myself a lesbian," Adele said. She sipped more coffee and seemed to be watching me closely.

"A lot of people don't like labels," I said.

"It's not about the labels, and it's not the gender of the person I'm having sex with that defines my sexuality. It's more complicated than that."

"Can you explain it to me?" I said.

"I can." She looked at me for a moment before speaking again. "But if I tell you about me and the woman I belong to, it will probably change everything between us."

"I've just met you. How much can it change? Besides, you have to tell me now that I know there's something to tell. I won't be able to think about anything else."

"I don't know why, but I have a feeling about you. Maybe because you remind me a little bit of myself. But I think when I tell you that I literally belong to another woman, you'll find it interesting."

She watched me as the words sank in. And as they did, adrenaline cascaded through me. I knew very quickly what she was



saying, though in fact she had said very little. She was a submissive like me, but a more advanced, more fulfilled one. She was the person who lived out my fantasy of being dominated, of being owned. At least that's what I hoped she was saying.

"You look stunned," Adele said. "Tell me what you're thinking."

When I opened my mouth and still no words came out, she continued. "Let me describe how I live. Then you can tell me what you think about it."

I nodded. She must have seen I wasn't horrified. I struggled to maintain my composure. I was probably drooling.

"I am a slave to my mistress. Were it not for the fact I am out in the world working as an artist, which she graciously allows me to do, we would have a twenty-four seven mistress/slave relationship. When I am with her, my will is not my own. I do everything she tells me to do, exactly when and how she tells me to do it. I serve her in every way. She provides for me, she creates our world for me, and she also punishes me, both when I have displeased her and when it simply pleases her to do so. She fucks me, of course. Often, and often quite brutally. If she chooses to do so, she shares me with her friends, who use me in any way they want. And I...I absolutely worship her."

This speech did nothing to improve my ability to speak. My heart was pounding, as was the pulse between my legs. I squirmed. Adele, on the other hand, looked perfectly calm, even blissful as she talked about her lover. Her Owner.

I pulled myself together. "I'm sorry. I didn't believe I'd ever meet anyone who lived this way. I've only read about it in books." When Adele cocked an eye at me I grinned and said, "Repeatedly."

"Which books?"

"I have lots. I'm kind of a collector."

Adele reached her hands across the table and took mine. "A world exists that's every bit as rich as what you find in books. I can introduce you to it if you'd like."

Involuntarily, my hands drew away from hers. Fantasies are one thing, and reality, no matter how serene Adele looked, would probably be a much different thing. A much scarier thing. I wasn't

sure what I wanted to do. I pasted on a smile and tried to think what a polite response might be. The etiquette books don't exactly cover this situation.

"Thank you for offering. I guess I feel a little overwhelmed."

"But intrigued?"

"I'm probably not hiding that very well."

"Then you simply live with your thoughts for a while and talk to me about it again if you're curious. I won't bring it up if you don't."

We stopped in the ladies' room on our way out. When I came out of my stall, Adele was at the sink. She looked at me in the mirror as I stood next to her and ran the water. I watched as she slowly pulled her skirt up, turning her rear toward me as she pulled her small bikini panties down. Even before she'd glided them over her hip I could see the streaks of blue and purple that marked her skin. I gripped the edges of the sink, breathing in quickly. Who wouldn't feel horrified to see the evidence of a beating? Me, that's who. And Adele. Now it was her breath that seemed to be growing quicker as she watched me stare at her beautiful, beaten up ass. After another silent moment, she lowered her skirt and left.

The moment I got home I fell onto my bed and came almost as soon as I touched myself. There was no time to grab one of my books and no need to. My mind was stuffed with visions of Adele bound, her arms painfully taut above her, her legs spread wide below. I knew it was not Adele turning me on, but Adele's confinement and helplessness. And even more, the woman who placed her in the bonds. I couldn't picture that woman. She was powerful but featureless, sort of like a god in that way. I believe in some sort of god, but I haven't the foggiest idea how God is manifest. Same with the woman in my fantasies, the one who would make me submit, the one who would have all power over me. She was always nebulous and at the same time, beautiful beyond words.

I came twice more, moving Adele from standing restraint to kneeling before her owner, her hands now bound behind her, forcing every muscle to work hard to keep her steady as she slowly and lavishly feasted on the pussy thrust into her face. The woman, still

featureless, leaned back in an upholstered chair, her long legs spread out on either side of Adele, her eyes alert as she watched her slave service her. She did not make a sound, but Adele moaned loudly, either out of discomfort or excitement, as she brought her mistress closer to orgasm. Each time she made a noise, the woman would flick the cane she held in her hand, landing a blow in exactly the same place on Adele's thigh as the blow before. When the mistress came it was Adele who cried out, not the mistress. Without need of a command, Adele moved to her elbows and knees, offering her ass for another beating, the cane falling on her cheeks over and over again.

I'd come three times by this point in the fantasy. I couldn't go any further. As usually happened after I came, the world I lived in so enthusiastically while aroused slipped away, leaving me uneasy, as if I'd done something wrong. I had been convinced I was the only woman in the world who got off on the thought of pain, even though my books made it clear I wasn't. Because of Adele, I knew there really were people like me. And now she knew who I was.



"I'm glad you came to coffee tonight," Adele said after class on Wednesday. "I was afraid you might not after last time."

So much for not bringing the subject up, I thought. But I was glad she had.

"Did you think I was judging you?" I said.

"I thought you might judge yourself, convince yourself you couldn't possibly explore your desire to be dominated."

I leaned back in my chair. She was right of course. I was so certain my sexual fantasies classified me as perverted that I'd never brought them up with anyone, let alone with a lover. To have Adele address them so directly took my breath away.

"You don't need to feel ashamed, Laura. You should feel proud. So many people don't own their sexuality."

"I don't know what to think," I said.

"Are you afraid?"

I was afraid. Afraid of getting into something that was all wrong for me, certainly, but even more afraid of missing an opportunity to see if it was right for me—as I dreamed it was, as I hoped it was. “No, I’m not afraid. Not really. But I don’t know if you’re asking me about something specific or not. I don’t know what you do; I only know what I’ve read.”

“And you’re a bit like Alice in Wonderland. If you pop through the hole, you might find things much different than you ever could have imagined.”

Now I did feel afraid. There was no character in *Alice in Wonderland* that turned me on in the slightest. “Isn’t what you and your mistress do like what’s in the books?”

“Some of it is very similar. I don’t read the books, actually, since it seems pointless when I’m actually living the life. I guess I’d say you are dealing with human beings and all of their differences and all of the chemistry that goes into their dealings with each other. There’s far less sameness than you find in the stories and novels you’ve made such a study of. You’ll see.”

I dropped my eyes. She hadn’t extended an invitation exactly, but more the hint of one.

“I’ve told my mistress about you. I told her I shared a little about my life because I guessed you wanted what I did. I told her I knew it was true when I saw your face in the bathroom. When you saw my ass you started breathing with your mouth open.”

“You told your mistress that?” I felt like the top of my head would come off.

“She’s told me to ask you to join us at her home. She’d like to meet you.”

All was quiet as I lifted my eyes and looked at Adele once more. I think my mouth was open again. I know my breathing was rapid.

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t want to meet my mistress?” Adele sounded like I was turning down an audience with the Pope.

I could tell Adele was a little worried I wasn’t going to take the bait, but she needn’t have been. I was stalling for time, but I

wouldn't pass this up, any more than I'd pass up a million dollars placed in my lap.

"You're being invited to have dinner with us so we can all get to know each other. She may ask if you'd like to watch a scene, which you can decline. You need to remember that you can always decline."

No, no, no, I thought. If I put myself in this situation, in the home of a mistress, I want all decision taken out of my hands. But I didn't say that to Adele. Maybe I was even more submissive than she was. Maybe I was so low (high?) on the submissive scale they didn't even have a name for what I am. A sub-submissive. But what do I know? I wouldn't know how much I didn't know until I started participating.

"When am I invited?"

"This Friday. We can leave together after class if you'd like."

I hesitated again, reluctant to reveal how insecure this all made me feel, afraid somehow I wasn't good enough to be treated badly. The paradox didn't escape me.

"You can ask me whatever you like," Adele said.

"Who will be there on Friday?"

"I only know of my mistress and me, but that doesn't mean there won't be others. She wouldn't tell me unless it served her some way to do so. She sometimes does have friends over."

I hoped not, at least this first time I was to meet her. As insecure as I felt about meeting her, I was terrified to meet a whole group of dominants. I remembered the long, long scene in *Macho Sluts* where the femme submissive was used and abused by a half dozen snarling butches for what seemed like eternity. I could recite everything they did to her, and I've climaxed many times reading that story. But did I want to be the Roxanne to Adele's mistress and her friends? All I could say was, not yet.

"Well?" Adele said.

"Tell your mistress I thank her for the invitation and look forward to meeting her."



Another two agonizing, masturbation-filled days dragged by. The same mixture of dread and anticipation dominated my thoughts and feelings, my dreams and fantasies. The simple fact that a real dominant, a woman who could control everything about me (I was sure of that much, at least), not only knew who I was but asked to meet me, took all my imaginings to a new level. I was on fire. And I recognized in myself more of my submissive sensibility. The mistress was granting me the favor of her dominance. I wasn't granting her anything. She would only take, and she would only take from those she favored. I hadn't even met her and I was becoming desperate to learn whether she'd give me a second look after the introductions were made. Somehow in this fever, I managed to forget about Adele.

Life drawing class was a nightmare, ninety minutes of fidgeting and breaking bits of charcoal and tearing off sheet after sheet of newsprint. Not only did the instructor give me a withering look, but the model did also, her eyes moving in her perfectly still body, locking on to mine in clear annoyance. Adele, on the other hand, seemed quite composed. She was doing lovely work on her drawing. The only time she took any notice of me was when I sat at the foot of my easel and refused to draw anymore. She looked at me with a little pity and a bit of a smirk.

"Are you nervous?" she said.

"Not nervous. I just wish I knew what was going to happen."

Adele smiled. "It's the not knowing that's at least half the thrill. I never know what she has in store for me."

"What's your mistress's name, by the way. I keep forgetting to ask."

"It's Jeanne."

"Is she French?"

Adele smiled. "I don't know. If she isn't, she should be."

When class was finally over, we changed clothes at the studio. It was eight o'clock and the downtown area was lively with Friday night bustle. Adele hailed a cab, and we soon pulled up to a gray stone building in the heart of the city's poshest neighborhood. The tree-lined street was filled with stately townhouses built a century ago. Whoever Jeanne was, she had a lot of money.

I was a little nervous about my clothes. What does one wear to a flogging? I refused to put on anything that made me look like a tramp. My fishnets and stilettos are fun for a night out with the girls, but to wear them when meeting a real live mistress seemed ludicrous. Perhaps disrespectful. I'd settled on a sleeveless sheath dress and strappy, low-heeled sandals. Simple, and, hopefully, elegant. This was important if the mistress I was about to meet was French, or even French-ish.

Adele used a key to open the door, and we were met in the foyer by a middle-aged woman whose severe face did not move in the slightest as she took in the sight of us. My heart sank, for though I didn't have a clear idea of what my ideal mistress would look like, I did know she wasn't supposed to resemble Mrs. Danvers in *Rebecca*. This woman looked like she'd have a hard time loving a puppy. I didn't want to think what she'd do with a cane in her hand and a bottom within reach. Adele put a reassuring hand on my forearm.

"Good evening, Mrs. Kirchberger. Will you let my mistress know that my guest and I have arrived?"

Mrs. Kirchberger motioned for us to move into the living room to the right before leaving us on our own. I started to speak, but Adele put her fingers to her lips and shushed me. Nothing gets my hackles up like being shushed, and I hated Adele a little bit.

"What?" I said.

"We're always to sit here quietly while we're waiting."

"How long?" I was whispering now.

Adele just shrugged and I could get nothing further from her. I worried we were in for a long wait. I could think of many scenes in the literature (I referred to it as if it were a field of study, like the Victorian novel), where the submissives had to wait endlessly for their mistresses, usually in circumstances far less comfortable than my present one. It had never occurred to me I would actually enter a world where I would regularly have to wait. I was terrible at waiting. Really terrible. What if I were gagged and bound and made to wait on my knees on a hard floor, a blindfold keeping me from knowing day from night? I wouldn't last ten minutes before going

loco, and there wouldn't be anything I could do about it. I would be all alone in an immense room—blind, mute, bound, helpless. I felt a stirring between my legs and started squirming on the sofa. Adele cast a rather doleful look at me.

I soon exhausted my fantasy and began taking in the details of the room. Something told me I shouldn't wander about to admire the fine oil paintings and sculptures that decorated the large room, but I could easily see they were created by very advanced and accomplished artists, some of them recognizable. Every piece of furniture, every fabric, every last touch was gorgeous, yet the room looked more comfortable than decorated, more personal than perfect. Whoever created this room was complicated and talented.

Mrs. Kirchberger reappeared and motioned us to rise. Adele sprang up, obviously eager to see Jeanne. I was eager as well. The long wait had done nothing to lessen my curiosity. Mrs. Kirchberger led us up the front stairs. At the top was an open area with floor to ceiling bookshelves crammed with mismatched volumes of all sizes. It was a well used library. I could see at the end of a hallway there was a formal dining room, presumably with a kitchen nearby. And in between was a closed door that Mrs. Kirchberger opened. This was the point of no return, I sensed. She would be behind this door and I knew my life was about to change.

The room we entered was a luxurious study with a rich mahogany desk and chairs at one end, a fireplace with sofa and chairs at the other. The walls were a deep red, the natural woodwork ornate and gleaming. My gaze covered all of this searching for Jeanne, but Mrs. Kirchberger had shut the door behind us and there was only Adele and I in the room. I was so disappointed! The idea of another long wait almost defeated me.

Before I could complain to Adele, a door opened in the wall behind the desk—a hidden door perfectly camouflaged by one tier of a wall-length bookcase. As if by magic, the woman I'd spent years struggling to visualize walked into the room and my heart seized up. I took a deep breath trying to loosen the tightness in my chest, but she crossed the room and stood in front of me before I found my composure. Adele moved closer to us.



“May I present my friend, Laura Thomas. Laura, this is Jeanne Beaudreau.”

Jeanne took my hand and shook it warmly. “I am so delighted you were able to join us this evening. I’ve been looking forward to meeting you.”

She kissed Adele on the cheek and ushered us over to the fireplace seating area, gesturing for Adele to take one of the chairs while she settled on the sofa next to me. I wondered if this upset Adele at all and realized I hoped it did.

“Adele adores her life drawing class and has told me all about your coffee chats afterward.”

She didn’t have an accent, but I almost believed she did. There was something very Continental about her. Her clothing perhaps most of all. Her slacks were expensive, perfectly tailored, black, and they lengthened her already long legs. Her blouse was a crisp whiter-than-white cotton, with an open collar. She didn’t wear a scarf, but I could imagine her wearing one, or an ascot perhaps. She was neither handsome nor beautiful, but something much more than either. Her face had great character, with signs of a life fully lived. Her brow and her jaw were strong but softened by the thick, glistening hair that fell in layers to her shoulders. She looked to be in her forties, with her body as lean as a much younger woman’s. She was entirely captivating, and I had to concentrate intensely to hear what she was saying.

“Adele is a very talented artist,” I said. “I’m afraid I’m at the cave drawing stage compared to her.”

“Oh, I’m sure that’s not true,” Jeanne said. As she rose to serve us drinks I noticed Adele sat very quietly. She wasn’t relaxing toward the back of the leather club chair, but perched toward the front, her hands resting on her lap. Perhaps she’d been trained to sit like that. Jeanne would know she was behaving appropriately, but no one else would notice she was under Jeanne’s command. I felt a little smug, like a student knowing more than everyone else on the first day of class, thanks to all the reading I’d done over summer vacation. I was feeling like an honored guest and a bit above Adele in station. But I didn’t aspire to be higher than her—only lower.

Jeanne spent the next fifteen minutes asking me all about my graduate studies in art history, and the conversation continued in-depth and with enthusiasm throughout dinner, which was served by the tireless Mrs. Kirchberger. It turned out Jeanne was a serious art collector and our areas of study and interest ran along the same lines. I couldn't help but notice that every time Jeanne exclaimed at something I said, Adele looked a little sad. She picked at her food but drank thirstily from her wine glass.

I was raised in an artistic family, and I've spent much of my life in galleries. I can easily do this kind of talk, and at some point I lost track of the fact I was in the home of my friend's mistress, supposedly, hopefully, being auditioned for an introduction to dominance and submission. I felt instead like I was on a date, and Jeanne was effortlessly seducing me with her stories and attentiveness. There was just the strange presence of Adele, the silent and sulky third wheel in the room.

After the meal, Jeanne finally turned to Adele. "Go let Mrs. K. know we're ready for coffee in the study. We'll meet you there in a little bit."

Adele slid from her chair and left the room. Jeanne's hand moved toward mine on the table and she gave it a squeeze. "I can't believe how much we have in common. It's a thrill for me to discuss art with someone who knows what they're talking about. Would you allow me to show you my collection?"

This smacked a bit of the age-old pickup line about etchings, but would be far beneath someone like Jeanne. She actually wanted to show me what she'd clearly spent years amassing—a very impressive collection of modern art. As we moved from one room to the other, I found myself hoping the pretend part of the evening would soon come to a close and we could start getting on with the business at hand, which was for this woman to act like a mistress. She gently put her hand on the small of my back as she moved us along. She held doors for me. She looked intently in my eyes as I spoke about her pieces of art. When we walked down the hall to go back to the study, she gave me her arm and I took it, as if we were entering a ballroom. Adele was seated in her previous place, poised

at the front of the chair, while Mrs. Kirchberger was placing a coffee service on the large table between the chairs and sofa. She quietly left the room and closed the door. No one spoke as Jeanne nodded to Adele, who stood to pour the coffee and pass the cups around before returning to her chair. I was uncomfortable with the sudden silence after so much lively conversation, but it didn't seem like my silence to break. I concentrated on my coffee.

After a few almost unbearable minutes of silence, Jeanne spoke to Adele.

"Undress, please."

Here was another magic door opening. All seemed normal, and then bang.

Adele stood at once and reached behind her neck to undo her zipper. Her dress was off in a moment, her bra and panties an instant after. Jeanne motioned her over and Adele came to her side, fell to her knees, and remained still while Jeanne reached into the drawer of the end table and pulled out a collar and leash, fastening the collar around Adele's neck. Adele now held her head high and stared at me, even as Jeanne seemed to tighten the collar one notch beyond comfort. Mrs. Kirchberger entered the room just as Jeanne rose from the sofa holding the leash. She turned to me with her other hand extended.

"It's been a delightful evening. I do hope you'll join me for dinner again."

Nonplussed wouldn't describe what I felt. Paralyzed might. It was as if I had been given a puzzle involving a nonsensical sequence of objects and I was supposed to figure out what came next. Jeanne gave my hand a slight tug, not to pull me to my feet but rather to give me a hint as to what I was expected to do.

"Mrs. K. will see you out, if that's all right?"

I looked at Adele. She looked serene, waiting patiently to be led to some darkly atmospheric room furnished with everything Jeanne's excellent imagination could think of to use on her, waiting only for me to get out of her way.

"I had a wonderful time," I said, my voice a little squeaky. "I hope we'll see each other again."

Mrs. Kirchberger led me out of the study, down the stairs, and out the front. As she closed the door on me without a word, I felt my face warm with humiliation. I felt like I'd done something wrong and my punishment was an early exit from the house. It was not the sort of punishment I'd been hoping for.

## CHAPTER TWO—THE AUCTION

I'm a collector myself, I wanted to tell Jeanne. I collect lesbian BDSM novels and stories, and I collect them more out of a desire to be close to the subject than a driving need to acquire this or that piece. My collection was the only thing between me and a complete vacuum, for I'd always been a submissive with no dominant in sight. A world of real possibility rushed in the instant I met Jeanne, and suddenly my collection of books seemed to be merely a collection of books.

It had been three weeks since the dinner at Jeanne's, and I hadn't heard a word from her or Adele. I went to some of the drop-in drawing classes to see if Adele was there, but she never was. I walked by Jeanne's house several times, but found no clue about its owner. I assumed I had flunked my audition and even thought they'd both fled town to get as far away from me as possible. That was a little grandiose, but I was so miserable I invited each and every thought about them to take root in my crazy brain. I pulled out a chair and invited them to stay awhile.

I was supposed to be writing my dissertation on Balthus, and all I could think about was Jeanne and my missed opportunity. I'd gone over and over the different ways the evening could have gone if Jeanne had wanted me. This is the one that excited me the most:

*Mrs. K. enters the study and takes Adele by the leash, leading her out of the room and out of our way. Jeanne locks the door behind*

*them and turns to me, the first imperious look of the evening on her face. The cocktail party graciousness is gone.*

*"You have thirty seconds to take everything off," she says and watches as I scramble to take off my dress and underthings. I don't hesitate; I just do it. I want only to please her. I remain standing in front of the sofa, my hands at my sides, and I watch as she moves toward me. She kicks aside the shoes and dress that lay at my feet and then takes hold of my necklace, pulling me by it to the center of the room.*

*"What is this?" she asks, still holding the necklace.*

*"What is what?" I am frightened by the cold look in her eye. I don't know what she is talking about.*

*She tears the necklace off.*

*"I told you to take everything off. Is there something about those simple words you don't understand?"*

*"I'm sorry." I truly am.*

*Jeanne throws the necklace aside and steps away from me, pouring herself a drink from the cart behind the sofa. I remain stock-still. A long minute passes before she stands before me again.*

*"You'll discover the times you find it necessary to apologize to me are the times I find it necessary to punish you. Do you understand what I'm saying?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Hold your hands behind your back."*

*As I do so, I see her take something out of her pants pockets. It's a long piece of leather, much like a moccasin lace, and she walks behind me and ties my hands together with incredible speed. The binding is tight, slightly uncomfortable, but does not cut into my skin. I feel another leather string going around my upper arms, tying them together also, forcing my shoulders back and my breasts out. I have fairly large breasts. I know they look good like this, and for a second I think my breasts are going to give me some bargaining power with Jeanne, and in the same second I'm reminded that I have no power over Jeanne whatsoever. In one motion, she pushes me to my knees and pulls an ottoman over with her foot. When it is in front of me, she shoves me onto it, my torso draped over the*

*velvet upholstery, my breasts squashed flat, my head hanging over one end, my ass in the air over the other. I hear Jeanne remove her leather belt.*

Sadly, I could go no further in my own fantasy. With Jeanne's face and voice now in mind, I could not presume to know what she would do to me. The fact is I don't create these scenes. That's not my role. Write them, and I'll read them; dominate me, and I'll submit to you. I had no clear idea at all what Jeanne would do to me if I were ever to be summoned by her. I only knew the very thought she would do something extraordinary excited me almost to the point of orgasm.

I picked up a book that had just arrived in the mail and took it into my bedroom, less than enthusiastic about what I would find in its pages.



Autumn was taking hold in the city. The air seemed cleaner, the sky bluer, and my body clock, set forever to the school year, helped me focus and get serious about my thesis. But I was lonelier than I'd ever been, still desperate to see Jeanne. The practical side of me got on with things. The other side was frustrated and sad.

One night as I was entering my building after an evening out with friends, I heard a car door slam behind me. I turned to see Jeanne walking toward the building.

"Good evening, Laura."

I was so shocked all I could say was, "What are you doing here?" How did she know where I lived?

"I'm here to see you, of course. Aren't you glad to see me?" She looked like she knew I was glad to see her. Jeanne did not suffer from lack of confidence.

"I'm sorry. I'm just startled. Would you like to come in?" My mind swept through my apartment. It would be passable. The bed was even made. Maybe she'd throw me down on it.

“Not tonight, but thank you. I’ve come by to ask if you’d accompany me to an auction tomorrow night. I could use your expertise.”

She handed me a thick, glossy catalog. “I thought you might study what’s available in oil, mid-century European or American, and let me know if there’s anything worth picking up.”

I knew from our conversation weeks ago she didn’t need my advice about anything. I knew she could teach me a thing or two. In fact, that’s all I thought about, but not in terms of art, I have to admit.

“I’d be honored to,” I said as if she’d asked me to present an award or something.

“Wonderful. I’ll pick you up tomorrow at seven and we’ll have a drink before we go to Sotheby’s.”

Jeanne kissed my cheek and walked back to her car, a new Saab that looked like it was right off the showroom floor. I watched, open-mouthed, as she drove away.

An hour later, I was curled up on the sofa with my cat and the catalog when Jeanne called.

“Have you reviewed the material?” she said. No preliminaries. No announcing who she was in case I didn’t recognize her voice. She probably knew I heard her voice in my dreams.

“I’ve just started, but so far it looks pretty run-of-the-mill.”

“Yes, well, keep reading. The gems are always hard to find.”

“I will. I’ll be ready by tomorrow evening.”

I wondered what she was really calling about.

“Are you alone, Laura?”

“Yes, except for my cat.”

“Is the cat on your lap?”

“Yes.”

“Take the cat off your lap.”

I put Martha on the floor beside me. She performed some immediate grooming and then sashayed away.

“She’s gone,” I said.

“Good. Do you know what I’m doing now?”

“I can’t even guess.”

“I’m sending you a photo. I’ll call after you’ve had a look.”



The call disconnected, and in a minute I heard a text message whoosh in. The photo attached to the message made me suck in my breath. Adele was on her knees, her hands bound behind her. She wore a wide collar that kept her chin high, and she was blindfolded. Nasty looking clamps were on each of her nipples, linked together with a chain and weighed down with pieces of iron. Jeanne's finger was curled around the chain, pulling on it, causing the look of pain on Adele's mouth.

The phone rang.

"I'm thinking of turning Adele around so I can take a photo of her ass. I think you should see how red it is."

I didn't know the correct response to that.

"But I don't think I will," she said. "I don't want to take the time. I was just about to have Adele pleasure me when I thought to give you a call."

I tried to imagine Adele going down on Jeanne with all of the accoutrements she had on. I didn't feel sorry for her, though. I would have killed to be in her handcuffs.

"What would you like me to do?" I said. "I don't know what you want from me."

"Take your clothes off. Tell me when you're done, and make it fast."

I got up quickly and peeled off my clothes. "Okay. I'm naked."

"Are you on a sofa?"

"Yes."

"Lie down on it. Do not, under any circumstances, touch yourself. Do you understand?"

"I'm not sure I understand anything."

Jeanne laughed. "Oh, you understand perfectly well. Just do as I say. As long as you always do that, there are no worries. Okay, I'm going to put this on speaker."

I kept the phone to my ear and listened, the visual of Adele firmly in mind. I could hear Jeanne's voice clearly.

"Remember, don't touch yourself. I'm taking off my pants and sitting back in my chair. Adele is in front of me, on her knees, just as you saw her."

There was a pause.

"It's a shame you missed what I did to her before I called you. I don't allow Adele to just go down on me. She has to earn the right, and while we didn't have much time tonight, I think I put her through her paces very efficiently. Isn't that right, Adele?"

"Yes, Mistress."

It was the first time I'd heard Adele call Jeanne "Mistress." I'd been wondering about whether she did, but what else was she going to call her? Nothing else fit.

"I'm pulling Adele to me by her nipple clamps. Here, let me give these a final adjustment."

I heard Adele moan. I imagined Jeanne was taking off the clamps and repositioning them. Apparently, that hurts like hell. It sounded like it did.

"Give me your mouth," Jeanne said, and I didn't hear anything more from her for a few minutes. The only sound was a rustling of clothing, Jeanne's shirt probably, and noises from Adele that sounded like she was trying to catch a breath. Then Jeanne said, "More, right there," and her voice sounded strained. I listened desperately for the sound of her coming, but all I heard was a hitch in her breathing and a long exhalation. I wondered if she was always quiet when she came.

Suddenly, her voice was back in my ear, and I could hear she was just slightly out of breath.

"You didn't touch yourself, did you?"

"No, I didn't."

"I don't want you touched by yourself or by anyone else until I say it's okay. Can you do that for me?"

"Yes," I said, purposely holding back calling her mistress.

"Good. I'll see you tomorrow at seven." She hung up. I brought up the photo of Adele on my phone again and looked down at my own pussy. I could practically see it move. I thought I'd go crazy if I couldn't touch it. But I wouldn't. I'd given my word. I just prayed I wouldn't have to wait any longer than the next night.



The next day I was on campus to meet with my thesis advisor, drinking coffee in the student union before the appointment when Adele surprised me by sitting down at my table.

"It was a mistake bringing you to meet Jeanne," she said.

"What?"

"You have to promise me you won't see her again. Please."

Adele looked genuinely shaken. I wasn't any too steady either. A request to not see Jeanne again wasn't what I wanted to hear.

"I don't understand what you're talking about," I said. "We're all supposed to go to the auction tonight."

"No, just you and Jeanne are going to the auction. Jeanne told me this morning I'm not invited. It's just the two of you."

"Oh."

"I've never seen her act this way before."

"What way?" I was so clueless about what to expect from a dominant I didn't know what had happened so far was unexpected.

"She has sex with other women, of course. She likes me to introduce her to women I meet who may be interested in our lifestyle, like you."

"What does Jeanne normally do when you bring someone home?"

Adele looked down at her hands, and I could hear a little hitch in her breathing. When she looked up, I saw the tears.

"Usually, she just plays with them and then sends them on their way, or she introduces them to one of her friends, other dominants, and maybe something happens between them. But she never delays having sex with them, and she never sees them more than once."

I could feel a little skip in my heartbeat as the thought came to me Jeanne wasn't disinterested in me, as I feared, but perhaps more interested in me than I even hoped. Telling Adele how happy that made me didn't seem like a good idea.

"I don't understand what exactly is upsetting you," I said. "Maybe Jeanne just looks at me as a new buddy, someone who knows a lot about art. Maybe she doesn't want me the other way."

"Please don't act as if I'm stupid. I know about art. It's not like we never talk about it."

Personally, I felt there was a big difference between the way artists talked about art and the way historians and curators and collectors did. I could guess which style Jeanne preferred.

“She’s delaying having sex with you because it means something to her. What do you think the whole thing on the phone was all about?” she said.

“I really don’t know.”

“It was teasing, Laura. She’s trying to get you worked up.”

“Clearly, she knows what she’s doing.”

“Promise me you won’t see her again. I can’t lose her. I can’t.”

I stayed quiet for a moment. I wanted to be honest and compassionate and do the right thing. But more than that, I wanted Jeanne. I didn’t know what the right thing to do was.

“It seems to me Jeanne is the one calling the shots here,” I said. “If she wants to see me then there isn’t anything you can say to dissuade her. Or am I wrong about how a dominant works? Maybe you should just talk to her about it.”

Adele looked alarmed. “No! She’d be furious. And the only thing that would make her madder is knowing I talked to you about it. But she won’t know we talked about this if you don’t respond to her calls.”

“But she’s picking me up tonight. I can’t just not be at home.”

“Yes, you can. It would be perfect! She’d know you’d changed your mind about her, and you wouldn’t have to actually talk to her.”

I looked at Adele’s pleading eyes, trying to will myself into helping her out.

“I’m sorry, Adele. I gave Jeanne my word I would go with her to the auction. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have an appointment to keep.”

I left her at the table, the crestfallen look on her face turning to anger.



Jeanne arrived at precisely seven o’clock that evening, flowers in hand. She followed me into my apartment as I went to the kitchen

to find a vase, my heart beating like a trip-hammer. She was courting me, I thought. There wasn't any doubt. But what did she want? If she wanted me sexually, surely she knew she could just have me. It hadn't occurred to me that there would be dating involved.

"I thought we'd stop by Anthony's for drinks on our way downtown and then eat a late supper after the auction?"

We stood facing each other in the living room, me holding the vase like an offering, unable to decide where to put it. Jeanne gently took the vase and put it on the coffee table.

"Martha will just knock those over, I'm afraid," I said.

"Martha?" Jeanne looked a little concerned.

"Martha the cat."

"Ah. Well, there's no place safe for them then. Let the flowers meet their fate."

She stepped close to me. She smelled faintly of something musky and pleasant, and everything about her was crisp, smooth, clean, and exactly her. I could see her leg move beneath the beautiful fabric of her pants and I wanted—almost overpoweringly—to run my tongue up it and...

"You look absolutely gorgeous," she was saying to me. My brain was having a hard time catching up to sensation, as if my audio and video were out of sync. Then she leaned in and kissed me, sweetly, tenderly. Just a claiming kiss. A putting the flag in the ground kiss. A kiss that said "this is mine, but I'll have to come back later to take possession."

"Ready?" she asked. I wished we didn't have to go out for a long evening before we could be together, but this had to be at her pace. Despite her courtliness, I never forgot who was in charge. And I'd completely forgotten about Adele.

As before, the conversation flowed between us as we had cocktails and appetizers at Anthony's. At the auction house we got down to business, going over the paintings in the exhibit room. I remembered a slave auction scene from one of my books where beautiful women were on display blocks, examined by several dozen potential buyers before bidding began. I wondered if such a thing happened in real life. I hoped not. The idea of growing attached to

Jeanne and then being sold off by her was devastating. It took me a moment to realize I hadn't presumed anything other than I would be hers to sell.

During the art auction, I was surprised when Jeanne made a serious run at a Hudson River School landscape. I didn't think of it as her style at all. After she placed the winning bid I asked her about it.

"You're right, of course. I can't stand it, personally. But I know a collector who would gladly overpay for it, so I'll use it to horse trade with her."

I must have had a funny look on my face. She asked me what was wrong.

"I'm just wondering if that's what you're doing with me," I said. "Checking me out for one of your friends who shares your other interest."

Jeanne's eyes narrowed a bit, but I didn't feel threatened. Perhaps I should have.

"I'm not in the practice of screening people for others. I'm here simply for the pleasure of your company. What are you doing here with me?"

What if she thought I was using her? What if I was? I wanted something from her and I was desperate to have it, but what if it made her feel like it was only that I was interested in? "I apologize for my remark. I'm afraid I'm unsure of myself and don't know quite how to behave."

Jeanne took me by the elbow. "Come on. I need to see the clerk about the painting, and then we'll leave."

"Where are we going?"

"My house. No more questions, or I won't be pleased at all."

The house was dark when we arrived. Adele did not appear to be home, nor did Mrs. Kirchberger, who may have been out at some sinister club meeting or up in the attic, pacing back and forth. She was going to be hard to get used to. Jeanne led me up the stairs and into the study, locking the door behind her. I felt a little frisson of apprehension, but of a delicious kind. We had to be on the verge of a scene. I didn't know what she planned to do to me, but I could tell she had planned something. She reached under her desk, and a

moment later the hidden door opened. Before we walked through it, she turned to me and took me by the arms.

“Everything I do has a reason behind it, and everything you do has an agreement behind it. If you walk through this door with me, you are giving your consent to my rules. I will not ask your permission again for anything. But you can always take your consent back. If you ever do, I won’t ask you to reconsider, nor will I change my way of doing things. Our relationship will be over. But you always have that choice.”

I looked into her eyes. They looked clear, relaxed, and unwavering. These were her rules and they were the only rules in her house.

“Lead the way,” I said.



I was learning that Jeanne was never likely to deliver the expected. Still, I was thoroughly surprised to find Adele and another woman in the room we walked into. Surprised and less than delighted.

The room was not unlike what I had imagined it would be. Similar to the study on the other side of the wall, this room had a rich wooden tone and walls painted a deep red. There were no windows, however, and the light came from the various floor and table lamps placed around the room. At one end there was a comfortable furniture grouping—leather sofa and arm chairs, ottomans, coffee table. It was beyond this grouping where the room’s real purpose was revealed. There were what I thought of as the catalog pieces—furniture built with bondage in mind. A St. Andrew’s Cross (who was St. Andrew, I wondered, and was he into bondage?), a pommel horse, a punishment bench, suspension bars, stockades, even a cage in the corner. There were hooks and eyebolts screwed into the walls and ceiling at a variety of heights throughout the room. At the far end was a huge antique armoire.

I was able to take this in almost instantly because of my extensive knowledge of what the Internet has to offer in the way

of bondage equipment, but I'd never seen any of the equipment live. I could feel my arousal, a pure Pavlovian response. Despite my excitement, it was still unnerving to see Adele. She was gagged and blindfolded, her arms stretched above her head, the cuffs on her wrists linked together and hooked to the wall. She was on her knees on the bare wooden floor, naked, a short chain from the belt she wore secured to the base of the wall. She was perfectly still. I understood now that Adele was my rival, and normally, it would be a good thing to see a rival tied up and helpless. Not in this world. Being the helpless one in the room gave her the power in our private struggle.

Jeanne led me to the far side of the room where a beautiful butch woman rose from the sofa and nodded to us. She appeared to have been sitting there reading a book, which she now stuffed into a backpack.

"Laura, this is a friend of mine, Pat. I asked her here tonight to help me with a demonstration."

Pat reached out to shake my hand, as if we were at a cocktail party and not in a bondage room with a naked woman strung up just a few feet away. Talk about your elephant in the room. Pat looked to be in her early thirties, quite a bit younger than Jeanne. Her short, straight hair flopped into her eyes, which were big and brown and accented with a strong brow. Her build was athletic and she wore skinny, straight-leg jeans, a black T-shirt, and a white Oxford shirt, the sleeves rolled up to the elbows. She had intricate tattoos on both forearms. She may have come to the house on a motorcycle or a skateboard. Both would have fit.

"Anything special?" Pat asked.

"Please, whatever you desire," Jeanne said.

Pat smiled. "Got it."

She moved away from the sofa and Jeanne and I took her place. There was a thermos of coffee on the table in front of us, and Jeanne poured us both a cup as Pat unbuttoned her shirt and threw it over a chair. Her T-shirt was tight; it stretched over her small breasts and tapered down her long torso. Her arms were muscular, clearly defined, and surprisingly large for someone so lean. She must have



worked prodigiously with weights to sculpt them. I thought she looked tireless, and I didn't know whether to pity Adele or envy her. No, that's disingenuous. Though I was desperate for Jeanne, I would have thrown myself at Pat's feet at the slightest invitation. It appeared, however, that for the time being I was to have neither of them.

Pat walked over and plucked earplugs out of Adele's ears, removed the blindfold and gag, and reached up to unhook her wrist cuffs from the wall high above her head. Adele fell to her side with a loud moan, still attached to the wall by the chain at her waist.

"How long has she been like that?" I asked Jeanne. I whispered, as if we were at the theater.

"Since six thirty, just before I left to pick you up."

It was almost eleven now. I looked back and saw Adele was having a hard time making her muscles work properly. Pat unhooked the last chain and put her boot against Adele's flank, nudging her toward the center of the room. She let her crawl at her own pace, but she steered her with sharp taps on her butt and thighs. Then she tapped her on the upper back and Adele immediately stopped, rose to her knees facing Jeanne and me, and put her hands behind her back, her shoulders back and her breasts forward. Pat attached wrist cuffs to the chain still around her waist.

Jeanne and I were seated side by side. She was relaxed and leaning back, while I was eager and leaning forward. I didn't want to miss anything. Even though I wanted to be in Adele's place, I was finding watching plenty exciting. I squirmed on the sofa.

"Take your panties off," Jeanne said, pulling my dress up my thigh. "Take them off and then sit directly on the sofa—no fabric between."

I did as I was told, smelling my excitement the moment I pulled the panties away. I worried about spotting the furniture, but lifted my dress and sat back on the cool leather.

"And no squirming."

There was no edge to her voice, no threatening glare, but I obeyed as if she had a gun to my head. I wanted nothing more than to put some pressure on my clit, but I didn't dare. Maybe,

I thought, I could just push downward, ever so slightly, and she wouldn't notice.

"Do not move a muscle," she said. "Just watch your friend Adele."

Pat had returned from a trip to the armoire, one arm holding a number of items, the other dragging along a metal frame. It looked like what I'd seen called a punishment bench, where a submissive is bent over the frame and strapped to it at the wrists and ankles, her ass exposed and held in place with another strap across her waist, two more at her thighs. The breasts are left exposed from below. This bench was about waist-high instead of the knee high ones I'd seen in the catalogs. Pat secured Adele to the frame. Adele's was the easier bondage, I thought. I had been ordered to stay still without benefit of being tied up or strapped down.

Pat picked up a flogger from the pile of toys on the floor. It was a short, multi stranded whip of broad leather strips. It didn't look terribly threatening, and as Pat began to lightly stroke Adele's ass with it I couldn't see it was having much of an effect. I felt a little disappointed, worried that Jeanne's style, and hence Pat's style, was not very intense. I didn't think I was going to be satisfied with a vanilla sort of BDSM. But then I noticed the flogger landing a little more rapidly, with a little more authority, and Adele's ass began to redden. I could see Adele's mouth was held in a grimace, but she didn't make a noise, even as Pat began to put some arm into the strokes. In fact, the only noise I heard in the room was the flogger hitting Adele's skin. When Pat briefly stopped, all I could hear was my own breath, rapid and shallow. I thought I would die if I couldn't press my clit onto something, anything, but I held tight.

Pat moved to the front of the bench and squatted in front of Adele. She reached under and grasped Adele's nipples, one at a time, as she placed clamps on them. Adele's eyes grew bigger and she bit her lip, but she still managed to stay silent. Pat picked up a riding crop and started hitting Adele's breasts, their weight pulling them straight down from the bench, making them perfect targets.

Jeanne must have known I would fail to stay completely still, that my excitement would grow beyond the point I could control it. When I pushed down on the sofa and wiggled my hips, all control

gone, she grabbed the back of my neck and pushed me off the sofa and onto my knees. Then she brought my wrists behind my back and held them there.

"I'm not impressed with your willingness to please me," she said.

"But it's all I want," I said, turning my face toward her.

"I know what you want." She took me by the jaw and pointed my face forward. Pat was unzipping her jeans.

"Remain still. Keep your hands behind your back. Stay on your knees. That's what I want."

I focused my attention on remaining still, and then I became engrossed once again in the action playing out in front of us. Pat kicked off her jeans and reached back into the toy pile. She was wearing a harness, all ready to go but for the large dildo she now slipped into place. As soon as she slapped on some lube, Pat grabbed Adele's hips and entered her. She went all the way in at once, and it looked effortless. Adele cried out, the first sound out of her mouth all evening. There was no doubt it was a cry of pleasure, and as Pat worked furiously behind her, Adele became louder and louder until a sustained cry let everyone know she'd had a bone-rattling orgasm. Or she was an extremely gifted actress. I was quite certain she came, for I was quite certain I would have. I almost did without being touched.

I didn't know whether Pat had come. She never changed her expression from the time of the first lash to the last thrust. She was so handsome, so focused. She took the dildo out of the harness and then pulled on her jeans. She was just slightly out of breath. She looked over at Jeanne. Jeanne looked at me.

"You may stand up now, Laura," she said. "I'm going to have Pat show you out, if you don't mind. I'd like a little time with Adele."

Chaos reigned in my brain. My desire to obey Jeanne was met with an equal desire to punch her in the nose. How could she throw me out again? This was sadistic. She may never take a hand to me, I thought, and I'd still think her the most sadistic woman in recorded history. I was opening my mouth to say something when she put her finger to my lips and hushed me.

“And remember. Do not touch yourself. Not until I say it’s okay. Do I have your word?”

We stared at each other, she cool and remote, me in a tizzy. I took a deep breath and nodded, not willing to end this by telling her how angry and frustrated I was. Pat took me by the elbow and escorted me across the room. Adele was still strapped to the bench, her gaze fixed straight ahead. As we passed in front of her, she peered up at me and smiled. Smugly.

### CHAPTER THREE—TRUTH FEELS BETTER THAN FICTION

I hoped for a call from Jeanne the next day. There was none. Day two, day three—still nothing. I worked feverishly on my dissertation, trying to focus on anything but sex. I wasn't used to not giving myself some relief when I felt aroused. I wasn't into torturing myself, ironically. It hadn't occurred to me the torture I'd willingly submit myself to from another woman might include withholding orgasms. I'm a masochist. I've slowly come to accept that about myself, even without any real experience. But I'm not crazy. No matter what form my sexuality might express itself in, it's still sex. There remains a goal we all seek—the indescribably powerful elixir of an orgasm.

After four days of not doing anything about the constant arousal, I knew I couldn't stand it any longer. I'd taken to smoking cigarettes and stuffing myself with sweets, trying to assuage my craving. I was drinking a bottle of wine every night as I watched my cell phone and waited for her call. I started to feel like a cat in heat. Any second, I would start yowling. On my own, I could not withstand the agony. Once my mind was made up, I literally ran into my bedroom and fumbled in the nightstand for my Hitachi Magic Wand. I fell to my knees to plug her in and then nearly came at the sound of her turned to the low setting. I managed to hold off long enough to rip off my pants and fall on top of the wand. One, two, three seconds...and Boom! Explosive, yes, but one of the most

unsatisfying orgasms of my life. It was immediately followed by guilt, dread, and a telephone call from Jeanne.

I was still lying facedown on the bed, straddling my lover, the Hitachi, when I heard the warbling of my cell phone. I was too boneless to dash into the living room to pick it up, but I knew somehow it was Jeanne. I didn't doubt that among her many powers was the power of omniscience. She knew I'd disobeyed her. I was sure she was calling to tell me my disobedience meant she'd never be calling me again.

I staggered out of the bedroom, naked except for my "Clit-Lit" T-shirt, and stared at my phone. There was a message from Jeanne.

"Laura, it's Jeanne. I'd like for you to join me at nine. Sharp. Just come to the front door as usual. Mrs. K. will see to you. And remember. Don't touch yourself. I'll be disappointed if you have."

If we closely examined it, the truth was I didn't touch myself, nor was I touched by another person. The Magic Wand was the only thing that made contact with my pussy. This may be considered a technicality, but it didn't make it any less the truth. Technically. What if she threw me out because I couldn't follow this one simple order? Despite my orgasm (which was nearly medicinal, something akin to a diabetic needing insulin), despite the disregard of her express wishes, I was still desperate for Jeanne and desperate to please her. I felt miserable.

I spent an inordinate amount of time on my makeup and clothes preparing myself for her. I wanted her to find me delicious. At nine o'clock, I rang the doorbell of her house and the ever dour Mrs. Kirchberger answered. She motioned me to follow her and we walked toward the rear of the house and down some stairs. I wondered if Jeanne had a dungeon down here, something more sinister in feel than her playroom upstairs. I hoped so. Mrs. K. knocked on a door, and within seconds, it was opened by a woman talking on her phone. She waved at Mrs. K., pulled me in by the arm, and closed the door with a push from her bare foot.

"No, no, Margaret," she was saying. "I'll be there by eleven. I'm working, I'm sorry. No, I'll see you there."

She disconnected and threw her phone on the coffee table in front of us. As she looked at me, I took a quick look around and saw we were definitely not in a dungeon. We appeared to be in the small living room of a garden apartment. It was beautifully furnished. The woman in front of me was also beautiful—about forty, with long auburn hair, a dancer's body, a lovely face with simple makeup.

"Hello, Laura. I'm a friend of Jeanne's, and she's asked me to go over a few things with you before she meets with you tonight."

She was friendly, but she spoke very rapidly. Whatever she was going to do with me, I felt like she'd done it plenty of times before.

"I didn't catch your name," I said.

She laughed. "Oops. It's Veronica. Sorry, I'm a little distracted tonight. Let's get started, shall we?"

She motioned me to sit beside her on the sofa.

"I'm not here to talk to you about Jeanne or to try to explain her ways to you. Nor am I going to give you instruction on 'the life.'" She said this while making quotation marks in the air. Her tone was matter-of-fact, sort of like a tired tour guide.

"Jeanne has her ways, as do all of the best tops, and she's asked me to help prepare you so you'll be most pleasing to her."

This was a blow. I thought she was very pleased with how I looked. And if she wasn't, why was I even here?

"I don't understand," I said, and I know I sounded hurt.

"Of course you don't. I'm told you have zero experience. Just try to listen to me and don't get defensive. Your job is to do as you're told, which is easier if you don't have too many feelings floating around. Trust me, they'll just make things complicated."

She took my face by the chin and moved it from side to side.

"You're pretty," she said. "Just a few things to work on up here. We'll get your clothes off and see what else needs to be done."

She led me toward the rear of the apartment and into an enormous bathroom, more like a spa, really. Veronica then spent the next hour going over every inch of my body. She tweezed, squeezed, and pruned. She shaved, waxed, and trimmed, leaving me

with a delicate triangle of pubic hair, unbelievably smooth legs and underarms, and a hairless ass crack. I didn't even know that could be an issue. I was mortified.

It only got worse when she took me into the shower area and I saw an enema bag hanging from the shower faucet. It looked huge and extremely menacing. I've never seen enema equipment and I'd not read much about it in any book in my collection. I guessed men were more into enemas than women. But I wasn't naïve. I knew why a top would want me clean.

By the end of that experience, I was deeply humiliated, but I was also fairly certain nothing Jeanne would do to me later could make me feel worse. And yet, the fact that I was submitting to these indignities reminded me Jeanne was waiting for me. The thought of her thinking about what she'd do to me kept me excited. It was unlikely I'd say no to anything at this point.

Veronica's final tasks were to dress me and put on my makeup. The dress was a classic black linen dress matched with black sandals. The makeup was elegant and simple, like Veronica's. My hair wasn't a problem. It fell to my shoulders with a natural wave. Veronica pinned it up for the minute it took her to put a three inch collar around my neck and then cuffs at my ankles and wrists. They all had rings on them, ready to be attached to something. I felt my pussy tighten. I must have been no more than a few minutes away from seeing Jeanne. From giving myself to her.

As we walked back through the small apartment, I glanced into a bedroom. It was as neat as a hotel room, but photos on the nightstand and a stuffed animal propped on the bed told me someone lived there.

"Is this your place?" I asked.

"Me? God, no. This is Adele's."

I stopped. "Adele lives here?"

"Yeah. I don't know what the arrangement is between her and Jeanne, but Adele moved her stuff in here last year."

I felt devastated, reminded of my insignificance. I had barely been touched by Jeanne, yet I somehow expected to be primary in her life. I'd already been told by Adele that she "belonged" to Jeanne.



Why would I be surprised she lived in Jeanne's house? I should have at least been relieved she wasn't living in the main house.

I was about to ask more questions when Veronica tugged on my arm.

"Come on. Jeanne's expecting you, and you don't want to keep her waiting. I can tell you that much."

Mrs. Kirchberger was on the other side of the apartment door when Veronica opened it. I was passed over without comment and led up the stairs toward the study. As I followed her, I couldn't help wondering what Mrs. K.'s story was. She was the most reserved person I'd ever met. She hadn't said one word to me in any of the times I'd seen her, no matter how polite I was or how direct my questions. She seemed too fusty and weird for someone like Jeanne. But then, I didn't know Jeanne. My imagination had been obsessed with her for weeks, but time spent together in my head doesn't really count. The only things I knew about Jeanne were that she collected art and dominated women. I was intensely drawn to her. What more did I need to know?

The study door was open. Jeanne was sitting at her desk, studying slides on a light board. She looked up and smiled.

"Ah, there you are. Thank you, Mrs. K. That will be all for tonight."

Mrs. K. closed the door behind her and I could hear it lock. I could feel my nerves, wondering if I would please Jeanne, worried about the damn orgasm I had earlier in the day. I worried about Adele living in the house and what that meant. Maybe I was the most inconsequential of trifles for Jeanne, and Adele's position, whatever it was, wasn't at all threatened by me. She just feared it was. I guess I feared it wasn't. I've never been one to break up a home, but the idea of not being part of Jeanne's world seemed intolerable. I would accept second fiddle if that's what Jeanne wanted.

Jeanne came up to me and held me by my upper arms as she looked me up and down. She kissed me on both cheeks, very Continental, and walked me to the sofa. There she poured champagne for us both and sat next to me. She kicked off her shoes and seemed very relaxed. She must have been pleased with what Veronica did,

but she was not making me feel like I was about to get topped, which confused me. She touched her glass to mine.

"I wanted to thank you for your help at the auction. I was able to turn that painting around and sell it for a quick twenty-five percent profit."

"Wonderful," I said. "But you were the one who knew it would be valuable. I didn't do anything."

"But you did! You were with me. You were there for me. You understand this passion of mine for art."

"I'd like to think I understand your other passion as well." I peered over my Champagne glass, trying to gauge her reaction to this. She dismissed my comment with a wave of her hand.

"Oh, that. There are plenty of women who get that."

"There are?"

"You haven't any idea, have you?" Jeanne put her glass down and started playing with a strand of my hair. "There is a very established community who enjoy dominating or being dominated by other women. I've lived within it for a long time. You'll come to understand it soon enough."

"So it is like my books." I couldn't believe my fantasy world might be more real than I thought.

"Adele mentioned you're quite a collector of erotica. I've not read much of it myself, but I can't imagine the real thing is much like the crap written by men."

"Oh, no. I only collect the works written by women, about women." I was a bit proud of this.

"Darling, I don't want to rain on your parade, but a lot of those female author names are pseudonyms for male writers. Hacks, really. They're writing strictly for money and haven't a clue what actually goes on."

I had the deep, sinking feeling that reminded me of junior high school when I would do something stupid in front of all the cool kids. It was becoming clear that those who practiced BDSM weren't really into the books the way I was. I felt like a poser. I switched subjects.

"Speaking of Adele," I said, "I wanted to ask you something."

“I don’t speak about Adele.”

“So I can’t ask you what her living here means?”

“No, you can’t”

I opened my mouth, ready to approach the matter from another angle, but Jeanne spoke first.

“What interests me about you, Laura, is we share more than an interest in pain and pleasure. We share a sophisticated knowledge of art. That, to me, is very sexy.”

She leaned in as if to kiss me, her hand now holding the back of my head. Instead of a kiss she brought her lips to my ear and whispered, “Did you obey me? Have you touched yourself? Has anyone else touched you?” She moved her head back, seeking my eyes with her own. “Don’t lie to me, Laura. Everything ends if you lie to me.”

She held my face until I met her gaze. I knew I’d not be able to get away with any half truth. And I found I didn’t want to. If she was to have control of my body, I wanted her to have control of me, my craftiness, my sneakiness, my evasions. I wanted to be stripped of all the decision making when we were together. That, to me, was sexy.

“I used my vibrator today,” I said, keeping my eyes on her.

Her eyes narrowed. “I see.”

I started to speak, and she put her hand over my mouth.

“Don’t. Don’t make excuses. Don’t make your situation worse than it is.” She took the scarf from her neck and tied it around my mouth. I was crestfallen to have disappointed Jeanne, but excited to know I’d be punished for it. I could see this would be a confusing dynamic.

Jeanne stood and grabbed me by the ring at the front of my collar, hauling me up from the sofa. I soon found myself standing in the middle of the playroom. Jeanne looked at me coolly and told me to get my clothes off. She picked up a remote control and a chain began to lower from the tall ceiling, stopping at shoulder level. She clipped my wrists to it. On the floor were two small trap doors about four feet apart. She flipped those open to reveal chains bolted inside a pocket under the wood flooring. My ankles were tightly secured by these chains.

With remote in hand, she watched as my arms were raised above my head. I felt more exposed than I ever thought possible, and with each stop and start of the chain the feeling grew exponentially. I didn't grow more naked as the bonds grew tighter. I grew more helpless, unable to move more than a few inches in any direction. I could taste the Hermes silk in my mouth. Was I drooling all over it? Was I ruining her scarf?

The few lamps lit in the room cast an amber glow, spotlighting me but keeping the rest of the room in darkness. From where I was bound, I was able only to see the sofa and chairs from which we'd watched Adele and Pat just a few days earlier. I could hear Jeanne behind me at the armoire, rummaging around a bit before the door clicked shut and her shoes on the hardwood floor marked her approach. She walked past me and put some things on the coffee table. Then she turned and took a long look at me.

What did she see? My body was stretched into an inverted Y, but rather than distorting its natural shapeliness, I could see in her eyes that the shape was exactly what she wanted to see. My face must have betrayed my growing discomfort. My shoulders began to ache and my splayed legs could not seem to take much of the weight off them. I looked down to see my breasts, bouncing a little as I tried to find the most comfortable position from a menu of zero options. I could see the tiny, unfamiliar patch of hair between my legs. Was this me? Was any of this me? As Jeanne slowly circled I knew that it was. As I sank into the discomfort I could feel her surrounding me with a net of safety. I'm not sure it made sense, but it was how I felt and it was incredibly exciting. I could feel myself grow wetter. Actually feel it.

Jeanne was behind me. She had not said a word. Her hands ran up both thighs and back down, and then they gripped the flesh and came back up, fingernails scraping along until the hands met at my ass. She skimmed over it and concentrated on my back, rubbing and scraping, the touch sensuous, as if her hands couldn't believe how soft my naked flesh was before she marked it. This process went on around my body, every plane and fold and crease and mound first touched and then scraped, leaving red marks all over. My skin felt

on fire. As she dug into my breasts, Jeanne stared deep into my eyes, a stare I returned fully, despite my eyes watering with tears.

I felt more alive, more turned on than ever before. When Jeanne's hands hesitated in front of my pussy, I moaned loudly through the scarf, trying to thrust myself onto her hand. She smiled with satisfaction.

She removed the scarf from my mouth and then tied it around my eyes. The dark room went black.

"You're not to utter a single word," she said. "Screaming, however, is allowed. Within reason, of course."

I heard her move toward the coffee table and then come back, standing quite close. There seemed to be complete silence. I couldn't even hear her breathe. Then I felt her lips on my neck, gently nipping, then not so gently. And then, yes, thank God, she held my breasts and lowered her face to them, sucking on one nipple and then the other. Sucking harder, so I could feel a direct current between nipple and clit. Biting now, sharp, searing pain. I cried out because the pain shocked me. She bit and kissed and sucked until I felt only seconds away from coming. The pain was bringing me closer to orgasm. Was this me? Yes. As much as I always dreamed it was.

I felt a rope wrap around one breast and then the other, squeezing them, engorging them. I could feel the blood just below the skin's surface and I whimpered. The thought that they might explode crossed my mind.

"Your breasts are glorious, Laura. They are gifts. And now they are wrapped up for me."

I cried out as I felt the first clamp attach to my left nipple, followed quickly by one on my right. The pain was awful until a moment passed and then the pain was delicious. She added weights to each clamp. Sweat started to pop out on the top of my brow.

I heard Jeanne step away and pour herself something to drink. The leather squeaked as she sat on the sofa. I didn't know what she was doing, but I was left standing for what seemed like eternity. The pain in my breasts and nipples subsided as they grew numb. The situation now was more one of profound vulnerability, profound submission. My desperate wish was not that I be released, but that

she find me worthy, interesting, and lovely enough to continue to care for me in this way.

When she returned to me, I felt her hands at my breasts. She removed both nipple clamps and swiftly unwound the rope from each breast, the sensation of their release nearly overwhelming me. I slumped where I stood, taking all my weight on my arms as the blood rushed from my swollen breasts and back into my nipples. Jeanne then stood behind me, wrapping her arms around my waist and murmuring soothingly.

“That’s all now. We’re done for tonight. You were beautiful. So brave.”

“Done?” I said.

“Almost done.” Her hands were roaming now, caressing, gently exploring. “There’s just one more thing while you’re standing here.”

I remembered I wasn’t supposed to talk, and I wondered if she did. Her hand moved over my pussy and she didn’t seem to have punishment in mind. I tried to thrust myself onto her hand. It was involuntary, like one of those sticks that move when they sense water. I needed to come. Jeanne did not bother teasing me. She reached right for me and with less effort than it takes to pop open a soda can she had me screaming out the most intense orgasm I’m sure I’ve ever had. It lasted so long I was starting to want it to end. I thought my body might fly apart.

Jeanne lifted the scarf off me, but I couldn’t raise my head to look at her. It would have required a coordinated effort between muscle and brain, something I was not yet capable of. She held me around the waist as she lowered the chain, my shoulders burning as the pressure was slowly released. Then she unhooked the chains at my ankles and walked me over to the sofa. She handed me water.

“Did I do okay?” I asked. “I want to please you, but I have no idea if you’re pleased.”

Jeanne looked impressed. “How refreshing,” she said. “I am pleased. But we’ve only begun. I can’t take a complete newcomer like you and use all my favorite toys on you the first night.”

“Yes, you can!” I heard the eagerness in my voice. I tried to calm down. Even a dominant like Jeanne wanted a bit of mystery, a little reserve. I shouldn’t throw myself on her completely.

“I know what I’m doing,” she said.

“Of course.”

“There is the matter of you disobeying me, which won’t go unpunished. When the time suits me.”

We sat next to each other. I was still stark naked, while Jeanne was fully clothed. She started to take her belt off and I thought she’d changed her mind about when that punishment would occur.

“This is new to you despite all of your reading, and I don’t want to overwhelm you. But one thing you will learn to do every time we spend this kind of time together is to pleasure me. I insist on it.” She smiled.

I felt another rush of excitement hit my mid-section as I watched her take her pants off. Her long legs were smooth with shapely thighs. She lifted her butt again and took off her panties, black, boy-style, revealing her own neatly shaved triangle.

“Lay down. I’m going to straddle you. Tonight, I’ll do most of the work, but don’t expect such generosity in the future.”

I would consider any opportunity to pleasure Jeanne to be a gift, no matter what position she and I were in. I lay full length on the sofa and she got right on top of my face, lowering herself quickly and finding my tongue. I knew what I was doing here, but she wasn’t interested in any of my tongue gymnastics. I could feel how excited she was. Her drenching wetness. Her trembling thighs, straining to hold herself together. She used my tongue to trace herself against me and told me to keep it still when I moved it to meet her. Then she pressed down hard and moved deeply, and the only thing I heard from her were a few involuntary grunts and then a much longer groan as she tightened up over me and let herself be taken. It was glorious. I drank from her. She moved back and collapsed on top of me, shirtfront to breast, both of us breathing deeply. I wrapped my arms around her back and we lay perfectly still for a long time.

Was this me? God, I hoped so.



I served my apprenticeship over the next week. Every evening, I would arrive at eight and be greeted by Mrs. Kirchberger, who would escort me to the lower level. I never saw Adele. I'd do my best imitation of the ablutions shown me by Veronica. Then Mrs. K. would take me upstairs and leave me with Jeanne in the study. At midnight, I would leave Jeanne, at her command, and find a car waiting outside to take me home. In the four hours in between, I was tested in matters of agility, flexibility, endurance, and pain tolerance. There were no grades, no right or wrong. Jeanne and I were finding out what I was capable of, and it turned out to be quite a lot.

On the first evening of this apprenticeship, we sat in the study and ate pizza and watched a couple episodes of a TV show she liked. She wore jeans and a faded blue button-down shirt. I thought she looked incredibly hot. When the show was over and she clicked off the TV, she had me stand in front of her and take my dress off. I kept my bra and underwear on. Then she pulled some handcuffs from her back jeans pocket and cuffed my wrists in front of me. She pulled me down and across her lap, butt raised, arms stretched out in front of me, panties lowered, and gave me a very long and loud spanking. The sound of her hand smacking my ass was like a thunderclap, but more surprising to me was how incredibly much it hurt. At first I didn't think I'd be able to stand it. After each smack she'd rub her hand over the warm flesh, sometimes snaking her fingers between my legs. I realized with some shame how wet I was. The more she hit me, the wetter I got. When she rubbed my ass for so long I thought the spanking was done, I actually felt sad. Let down. It was too early to stop, I thought. I hadn't come yet. Or if not come, I hadn't hit some mark yet that would tell me I'd had enough. I didn't know yet what that mark was.

Nor did I know yet that from then on, Jeanne wouldn't end a session until she knew I had enough. She rose from the sofa with me still on her lap, sending me tumbling onto the floor.

"Get on your knees," she said.



When I did, she reached into another pocket and brought out a slender collar. She quickly put it on me and then pulled me to my feet, leading me into the play room. From the array of crosses, benches, chains, frames, and stocks, I couldn't guess which area she'd lead me to, but I should have guessed it was Ass night. She brought me to a small bench and had me lean over it, my knees on a shelf and my torso bent forward and pointed down. I was an inverted V. I felt ankle restraints go on, as well as straps around my thighs. The handcuffs were removed and replaced with wrist cuffs securing me at the other end. I couldn't move my body. I could raise my head, which I did when Jeanne stood in front of me with several whips and canes in her hands.

"As you may have guessed, I've taken a lot of care in putting this room together, including having it thoroughly soundproofed. You see, I didn't want to have to curtail my own actions out of worry about how loud my slave is screaming."

She sounded much harsher than she had the night before. Probably this was part of her overall strategy of seduction and dominance, and of course it was working on me. The idea that I wouldn't be able to change her mind about punishing me or influence the severity of the punishment was what kept pulling me in. Do with me what you will, I thought. And she did.

She used a leather flogger with knots at the end of each strand. She used a leather clad cane and then a bamboo cane. At the end, and for just a stroke or two, she used a single tail whip. And I did scream. It was hard to know while it was going on whether I was turned on or not. I was so present, so exactly in that moment of anticipating and then feeling the pain, I couldn't consciously process anything else. When it was over, when I was panting and I could hear Jeanne breathing heavily, when my ass was so hot I'm sure you could have fried eggs on it, when those few seconds ticked by since the last lash, then I could feel how turned on I was. I pushed myself against the bench, seeing if I could get anything in the general vicinity to touch me and bring me some relief.

She wasn't quite done with me. I felt her hands on my ass, lightly smoothing over the welts and bruises before positioning

herself and entering my cunt with a generously sized dildo. She went full in and I was ready, surprised but welcoming. She fucked me slowly and for a long time, and I came at least twice. I wasn't quiet about it. I didn't think I could come by being fucked. I never did with a man. I never did when being fucked this way by the one girlfriend I had who would do it.

Did Jeanne come? If she did, it still wasn't enough for her. She undid my restraints and told me to go kneel by the sofa. She allowed me to drink some water from the carafe on the coffee table and then disappeared for a few minutes. When she returned she was wearing a long silk robe. She sat on the sofa in front of me and parted the robe, pushing her pelvis forward on the seat.

"You know what to do," she said.

I eagerly bent forward, my mouth finding her and the smell of the silicone toy she'd worn. When my tongue touched her, she jerked forward, grabbing me by the back of my head and holding me close to her. It didn't take long to bring her to orgasm, but it was a wild ride. I was bucked around like a rodeo cowboy, and I wondered if my eight and a half seconds on her was a record or not.

"The car will be outside for you," she said. "Be back here tomorrow night."

And that's how it was the whole week. She introduced me to nearly every piece of bondage furniture in her room, each instrument of torture she had locked in the armoire. I have no idea how I performed relative to other newcomers, but she seemed quite pleased. Of course, she would never say she was pleased, but I could tell I was making her happy. She slowed down some and seemed to savor moments, and a few times I saw affection in her eyes. I had scant clues to go by as to her feelings, but that look and the fact that she kept telling me to come back—those had to mean something.

On the last night of the week, as I was attached to the big X they called a St. Andrew's Cross, Jeanne spent a long time flogging me. My breasts were bright red and my thighs had marks crisscrossing them. I showed no sign of having had enough, for I hadn't. I hoped she'd turn me around and do my back.

“You’re a true masochist,” Jeanne said.

“What?” I was gagged, so it sounded more like “Whaoaora?”

“You can take a lot of pain. It gets you off.”

I didn’t think that sounded very becoming, though it was unquestionably true. The pain did get me off, and each day I was discovering new levels of tolerance. But I didn’t really want to be identified as a masochist. They didn’t get much respect.

“Why did you pick someone like Balthus to write your dissertation on?” she asked.

“Whaoaora?”

Jeanne reached up and undid my gag. I had to work my jaw a bit before I could speak.

“What does Balthus have to do with anything right now?”

“I find him an interesting choice.”

“Why? He was a great painter. Plus, not much has been written about him. He’s an ideal choice.”

I hoped I didn’t feel so defensive when I actually had to defend my dissertation before my committee. Chances were I wouldn’t be hanging naked on a cross while they questioned me. I had a hard time with discourse when my skin was on fire and my pussy throbbing.

Jeanne continued. “He was a wonderful painter, I agree. But what do you make of Balthus very pointedly denying having any Jewish blood? Do you approve of people denying who they are?”

She stood before me with her flogger held behind her back, in a sort of at-ease position. I couldn’t think of anything to say.

“It makes me wonder if you gravitated toward him because you too have spent a lot of time denying who you really are.”

“I have not.” I was indignant.

“I believe you have. How old are you, Laura?”

“Twenty-seven.”

“And when did you start having fantasies of a woman dominating you?”

“Uhm. Seventeen?”

“You see what I mean, then. It took ten years before you were willing to act on what makes you happy, to operate from who you really are.”

Jeanne poured herself some wine and came back over. She ran her hand lazily over my body, stopping to feel the weight of my breast in her hand. I decided to hold my tongue and not argue. I could easily dismantle her point about Balthus and his Jewish heritage. He was not an anti-Semite. And I didn't believe I'd said anything indicating I was ashamed of who I am. Jeanne was up to something I didn't know the purpose of, which was her prerogative as a dominant. I just hoped she didn't talk too long.

"Then there's Balthus's subject matter, which has always been controversial. What do you make of *The Guitar Lesson*? Can you deny he depicted a girl in a sexual pose with a grown woman?"

Oh, dear. I felt as Balthus must have. Pilloried for something he never intended.

"Balthus maintained until his dying day that he simply showed the sometimes confused sexualities of adolescents," I said.

"And you believe this?"

"Perhaps you should read my dissertation."

The air seemed chilly now. Jeanne continued to sip her wine, staring at me as if I were a new installation at Madame Tussauds. After several minutes of silence, I couldn't stand the discomfort. Hanging by my wrists on the X-cross was fine. It was the psychological discomfort of the silence I couldn't stand.

"I'm sorry you don't approve of the subject for my dissertation. If you were to read it, I'd welcome your comments."

Jeanne smiled now, putting down her glass. She began to disengage me from the cross.

"It's just the opposite. I applaud your choice. I think it's distinguished and brave, and I'm sure you'll be published."

She took me over to the sofa to sit and drink some water while she rummaged in the armoire. I was convinced there was some magical space behind the armoire large enough to hold every sex toy ever created. When she came back she instructed me to turn and face the rear of the sofa, kneel on the seat cushion, and brace myself with my arms on the back. She put a blindfold on me. She put the gag back in my mouth. Before she put plugs in my ears she said, "I'm shutting down some of your senses so you will feel this completely."

I'm not tying you into place, but you will stay exactly where you are, in exactly this pose, until I tell you to move."

Then she put the plugs in my ears. I couldn't see, hear, or speak. But I could feel. The cold surprise of lube being pushed into my ass by a dildo—I felt that. It was not as large as the dildos she'd used in my pussy. I would have been trying to scream bloody murder if it were. As it was, I moaned the whole time she pushed it in. It was slow, and it hurt, but I also wanted to cry with joy. I completely trusted her. I felt bonded to her. The higher up my ass she went, the closer to her I felt. Perhaps that's not the most romantically worded sentiment, but the entire week of beatings and suspensions and orgasms all culminated in this one act—me, unchained, held in place by nothing more than my desire to give myself to her. It was hard to think of this as just sex. There was something else entirely going on.

When the dildo was all the way in she locked it in place with a belt of some sort and walked away. I didn't hear her leave, but I could tell she was no longer there. I had no idea how long she'd be gone. I thought about Balthus.



## CHAPTER FOUR—ADELE

After a solid week of sweet punishment, I can't say I wasn't glad to spend a night or two at home. I was falling behind on the schedule I'd set to complete my dissertation. And I was late getting papers back to students in the introductory art history class I was teaching. It was time to give real life a little attention, but I missed Jeanne the moment I left her house.

The yearning was intensified by having no idea when I'd see her again. Jeanne seemed to want me. She couldn't get enough of me over the past seven days. But she doled out information on a strictly need-to-know basis, and I had but a low-level security clearance. If an invasion were planned by Jeanne, I'd know about it when the bombs began to fall, and not a moment before.

Jeanne's body language told me a fair amount though. I had no experience in being a submissive, but I did have experience with lovers. You can tell when someone is being truly intimate, whether they're drowning you in kisses or tanning your behind. There was something there with Jeanne. But to give her interest in me some scale, I had to know if she was the same way with others, particularly Adele. But questions about Adele were strictly verboten.

Several days after my last visit to Jeanne's, I ran into Adele on campus. I'd been trying to steer clear of the studio buildings and other areas where art students could be found. Ever since Adele tried to get me to disappear from Jeanne's life, I sought to avoid a confrontation. I didn't know where she'd been over the past week,

but I could only guess she knew I'd been visiting Jeanne. Mrs. Kirchberger probably told her. As I was leaving campus after my afternoon class, I saw Adele running toward me, looking like she'd tackle me if I tried any evasive maneuvers. She stopped in front of me and grabbed my arm, pulling me off the sidewalk toward a nearby bench.

"I thought we agreed you wouldn't see Jeanne anymore," she said. She was pissed off.

"We did not agree." I was a little pissed off too.

Adele looked incredulous. I shook her hand off my arm and stepped back, taking note of the wild look in her eye.

"Adele, I don't want to fight with you about a woman. Can we talk about this calmly?"

"This woman, as you call her, is the person I live with. My significant other, as you might say. I can't believe you've just swooped in and tried to steal her from me."

I sat on the bench and tried to count to ten. It was one of the very small handful of things my mother taught me to do. Restraint of pen and tongue she'd say. I'd had very little restraint of tongue over the past week. In fact, my tongue was very sore. But I was tempted to get into it with Adele, which probably wasn't a good idea. Part of me understood her desire to protect what she thought she had, but most of me just disliked her for it. She was complicating things.

"Here's what I don't get," I said. She remained standing, glaring down at me. "You're acting right now like you and Jeanne are the everyday sort of girlfriends who obey the rules of monogamy and expect everyone else to respect you as a couple. Yet you were the one who served me up on a platter to Jeanne. It doesn't appear that either of you are monogamous. I was there when Pat fucked you silly, remember?"

"That was for Jeanne. It wasn't my choice."

"But you clearly enjoyed it. You're being hypocritical."

Adele slashed her arm through the air in frustration. "You don't understand anything."

"Tell me, then. What am I not getting? I'm not suggesting you stop seeing Jeanne. Why would you suggest I do?"



“Because you’re the first woman I’ve seen her with who is taking her further away from me. The other ones didn’t matter. I told you that.”

Like before, this news sent a thrill through me. If Adele meant this to motivate me to take some kind of high road and exit the scene, she was just shooting herself in the foot. Every hint that Jeanne cared for me made me more determined to be with her in any way I could.

I stood and looked Adele in the eye with as much compassion as I could muster. “I don’t know what to do in this situation, Adele, I really don’t. I’m not going to lie to you. I intend to spend time with Jeanne if it’s what she wishes. I think it’s unfair to blame your relationship problems on me. Surely if Jeanne is feeling more distant than before it’s something between the two of you. Something for you to try to work out together.”

“Yeah, I’ll make an appointment for couples counseling ASAP.”

I could tell this was a joke, but laughing didn’t seem appropriate.

“There’s a lot you don’t know,” Adele said, “so I’m trying to cut you some slack. In our world there are different ways of having relationships. A dominant may have sex with many women, but most dominants eventually take one woman as her Primary. That’s primary with a capital P. It’s a formal relationship, sealed with ritual and ceremony.”

“It sounds like S&M Freemasons. I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

“Of course you haven’t. We’re a private organization. Hasn’t Jeanne told you about it?”

“Not a word.”

“Maybe you’re not as close to her as you think. She’s the head of the Society.”

That stung. Why hadn’t Jeanne said anything?

“Are you Jeanne’s Primary?” I asked. I felt like I’d been dropped into a science fiction novel, where everything was just familiar enough to be understandable but different enough to know you were in another world.

“Not yet. But when she asked me to move into the garden apartment I knew she was planning it.”

“Knew? Or hoped?”

Adele’s eyes flared. “You are a selfish, horrible bitch. I’m warning you to stay out of our life.” Adele was getting right in my face.

“You’re warning me?” I slapped away the finger she was holding up at me.

“I’m warning you. And there’s a world of trouble for you if you don’t get the fuck away.”

She strode away and I could feel adrenaline rush through me, a delayed reaction to the confrontation. I wished I could talk to someone. Someone who knew about the Primaries, who knew Jeanne, knew what was normal and what wasn’t, if normal even existed. I didn’t have a guidebook. Maybe I was pissing off more people than just Adele. Maybe I was in for some real trouble.

And maybe I didn’t care, as long as I could still see Jeanne.



It was another five days before Jeanne called me. There was a Friday night opening at a gallery exhibiting the paintings of an artist Jeanne admired and she wanted me with her. I was to be ready at six the following evening.

I agreed, because it did not occur to me not to. I wondered what would happen if Jeanne wanted me to do something I could not or would not do. Surely, she would find my limits. Or perhaps I would find hers first.

She picked me up in her Saab and we headed to the gallery district. Given how many times both of us had been in these galleries, it was surprising we had not met before. When we walked in, the gallery was already filled with the sorts of people who come to these things—the crowd from the offices downtown, moving from one gallery to the next, filling up on the free wine and cheese these First Friday openings always had; the older and very rich patrons of the arts who sit on boards, prop up galleries, and keep an eye out for

new talent; the artists, half of whom were contemptuous of the work on display, the other half simply jealous; and the friends and family of the exhibiting artist. Looking about at all of them made me think about how there are social rules and regulations within all sorts of groups of people. Why wouldn't there be in the BDSM world also? My only problem was not knowing what they were. It galled me that Adele had important experience and knowledge that I didn't have.

Jeanne steered us to the wine and then began telling me about the artist, a woman named Danielle Prine. We stood in front of a canvas—a huge 5'x4' super realist rendering of a woman next to a house. The house was tiny and the woman was huge, as in *Gulliver's Travels* huge. She had a pained expression on her face as she looked down at the house. A tiny man seemed to be holding the door open for her and tapping his watch, as if he were annoyed with her for being late.

"She likes to tell a story with her paintings, and I always enjoy that," Jeanne said. "But what's even more amusing is listening to people looking at her work and coming up with sometimes ludicrous interpretations of what she intended."

"Such as?"

"This piece was in Danni's thesis show and I heard someone say she thought the artist was married to a man with a very small penis."

"Ah."

"Naturally, everything consequently looks small to her."

"The artist, Danni? Is she married?"

"No, that's the funny part. She's old school lesbian feminist, even though she's only thirty or so. She was a classmate of Adele's last year. I think they were friends. I'm not sure."

I sipped my wine and stole a look at Jeanne as we moved along one wall of the gallery. I wondered if I should tell her about the warning from Adele, but something told me not to. My mother's advice, I suppose. Don't say anything if you think it's possible it will make things worse. In this case, I just didn't know.

I linked my arm through hers and I could feel her squeezing me closer. I tried a different approach.

"If she's old school lesbian feminist, and I don't want to stereotype here, she probably didn't respond to Adele's overture to bring her home to you."

"I don't think Adele even tried."

"Does she have a labrys tattooed on her neck or something? Why would Adele approach me and not Danni?"

Jeanne looked amused. "You sound defensive, Laura. What are you worried about?"

"I don't know exactly. I'm just wondering if I have some look that says, 'spank me.'"

"Listen, you have to get over the idea being submissive puts you in some kind of down position. It doesn't. And if you think only certain people like what you like, you're wrong. All kinds do. I've tied up plenty of feminists. Hell, I'm a feminist. Aren't you?"

I wanted more of exactly this kind of conversation, but it was cut short, as usual. A tall woman in leggings, a purple tunic, and beat-up Frye boots walked up to us and gave Jeanne a kiss on the cheek.

"Danni, this is my date, Laura. Laura, this is the artist, Danni Prine."

Danni shook my hand vigorously and then told Jeanne she was a lucky woman. I liked that. I liked Jeanne calling me her date. Danni looped her arms through ours and pulled us off to a corner.

"I need a five-minute break from talking about my paintings," she said. "My jaw aches from having to smile so much."

"You and your high-class problems," Jeanne said.

"Yes, thanks to you." Danni looked at Jeanne with affection and turned to me. "Did you know Jeanne made all of this possible?"

"What are you talking about?" I asked. Jeanne looked down at her shoes, obviously uncomfortable.

"She introduced herself at my MFA show and provided me the means to work for a year to prepare this show. She paved the way for me to get into this gallery. She's my patron, my Medici."

Jeanne took the opportunity to walk away and start talking to a man she knew nearby, which made Danni laugh. I was dumbstruck.

“She hates hearing people say nice things about her,” Danni said. “But she’s an unusual and generous person. She’s been a patron to quite a few artists who she found promising and needed some help.”

“It’s wonderful,” I said. And I meant it. “It’s impossible for most artists to support themselves in the States. Jeanne tells me you were in graduate school with a friend of mine, Adele.”

“Yeah, I haven’t seen Adele for quite a while, but she’s another one who gets some help from Jeanne. And she needed it bad. I think when Jeanne came across her she was getting evicted from her apartment and thrown out of school for nonpayment.”

“Is that right?”

“Adele told me Jeanne paid for the rest of her grad school tuition and gave her a place to live. She’s amazing.”

Danni got dragged away by the gallery owner and I went to find Jeanne, who’d drifted away. I saw her in the farthest corner from me, with Adele, which shouldn’t have been a surprise. Why wouldn’t she be here? I had a bad feeling. The generosity Jeanne showed Adele could only mean she would give Adele whatever she wanted. And Adele wanted me gone.

I stood frozen where I was, streams of people walking around me like I was a post. It looked like Adele was raising her voice. I couldn’t imagine yelling at Jeanne was a good tactic to use, so I rooted for Adele to completely lose it. I hoped she’d make a big, awkward scene in the gallery and thoroughly disgust Jeanne. But before Adele had a chance to ratchet up the histrionics, Jeanne walked away. I saw her scanning the room, looking for me, so I waved my hand and walked toward her. She scooped me up and we were out the door in a flash.

“What’s wrong? Are you okay?”

Jeanne looked annoyed, but I didn’t think with me. She was striding toward the parking garage a block from the gallery. I was a little annoyed to get the silent treatment.

“Listen, I know you don’t want me to ask about Adele, but it’s kind of hard not to when I see you guys have an argument in a public place.”

“That wasn’t an argument. It was Adele spouting nonsense and me walking away.”

“What kind of nonsense. Was it about me?”

I skipped a few steps to try to catch up with her and saw a scowl on her face. I was pretty sure that one was for me. She remained silent while the car was brought around for us, but once we were on our way she took my hand.

“I know I’ve not talked to you about much of anything other than art.”

“And how good I look tied up.” I was trying for a light tone.

“And you do look gorgeous. But in terms of what it means to me, what it means to you, anything about how we are all in relation to one another? Not only am I terrible at talking about those things, but I also have a stubborn belief the women I have sex with should work out their conflicts among themselves. So far that seems to have worked. Adele has just informed me it’s not working for her.”

I looked at her like she was a foreign species. Or a man. “Are you kidding me? I have to side with Adele on this one. I mean, maybe if you were a sultan, or the Queen of Sheba, you might expect your, uh, harem to fall into line according to your whims. But this is the twenty-first century here.”

Jeanne pulled over and turned off the car. “Adele has refused to fall in line about anything, and that’s the last I’ll say about her. You have not been instructed yet, so I can’t expect you to know what to do and what not to do. That’s fine, because we’re getting to know each other. And you don’t need to know anything else at this point. But you should know at least this. If we are to have something ongoing, something you’d call a ‘relationship,’ it will not be anything like a relationship such as you’ve always defined it. You will operate in my world, and in my world I am like a sultan or the Queen of Sheba. You can reject the idea right now and I’ll take you home. No hard feelings. Or you can come home with me. I would like to be with you tonight.”

I didn’t say a thing. I didn’t use the time to consider options, for I didn’t think there were any if I wanted to be with Jeanne, as I

desperately did. I was silent simply to take in all the new information. She'd never revealed so much before.

"I'd be sad if you left, Laura. You do mean a lot to me."

"I'm not going anywhere, except to your house," I said.

Half an hour later we were in the study, on the sofa, me naked and laying over her lap, my butt in the air. This seemed to be a favorite position of hers. After spanking me for an eternity and a half, Jeanne parted the lips of my pussy and the cheeks of my ass and she put fingers and her thumb in both holes and fucked me for another forever. I could feel her focus on me, her patience. I came again and again. Then she had me lay full out on the sofa and she rubbed herself against my thigh, holding herself up by her arms and staring down at me, commanding me to stare back at her. If this wasn't the beginning of a relationship as I'd always understood relationships, it was already a lot more intense than any "real relationship" I'd ever had. I was willing to see what her version looked like.

Jeanne had me sleep over, in her bed, a first which furthered my confusion. We looked at an art book together and drank chamomile tea. When I woke in the morning she was kissing my breasts, fingering me, making me come before I'd opened both eyes. Then she hovered over my face, bracing herself on the headboard, and rode herself on my tongue to the loudest orgasm I'd heard from her. She actually shouted.

I got back to my apartment before noon on Saturday. When I unlocked the door to the building's foyer I saw an envelope had been left for me on the table, probably placed there by another tenant who found it shoved under the door. I could see it was from Adele and I knew without a doubt I wouldn't be able to do whatever the letter asked me to do. I couldn't leave Jeanne. I was falling in love with her. Or whatever the equivalent of being in love was in Jeanne's world. I opened the envelope and saw a drawing. One thing I can say about Adele is she's an excellent draftsman. There were two figures, one was a very good likeness of me, another of Adele, and we were both naked. The life drawing studio time had clearly paid off for her. I don't know if Adele was uncertain about her skills or

what, but each of us was wearing a collar. One said “Adele” and the other said “Laura,” as if one wouldn’t know who was who simply by looking. But in addition to identifying us, the collars also showed we were submissive, and in that way identical. And I couldn’t deny that was true. The drawing showed me stabbing Adele in the back with a monstrously large kitchen knife, which was a little over the top. I’m not a back stabber. I’m just a woman who knows what she wants.



I devoted the rest of the afternoon to work. I unplugged my Internet router and hid the SIM card from my phone. I couldn’t trust myself to not check my messages every two minutes to see if Jeanne was trying to contact me. It was getting ridiculous how much time I was spending on sex—thinking about it, having it, planning for it, recovering from it. I barely had time to eat, let alone write a book-length monograph on an inscrutable artist.

I slogged through a few hours of writing before going out for coffee and a bite to eat. I gave way to my thoughts of Jeanne as I walked. I missed her. I wanted her every minute I thought of her. And I thought of her every minute. When I sat at the table in my favorite diner, I pulled Adele’s drawing out of my bag, trying to figure out the proper response to it, knowing the idea of leaving Jeanne was out of the question. I didn’t feel threatened by the drawing. After all, it showed me stabbing Adele, not the other way around. But clearly she was saying she hated me for betraying her, and this is where I thought she was being dramatic. Didn’t you have to have some kind of relationship with a person before you could betray her? Strangers did not have the kind of trust with each other that is broken by betrayal. I’d had coffee with Adele four or five times. Whatever she felt I’d done to her, it didn’t rise to the level of betrayal, of stabbing someone in the back. It didn’t seem Adele had a very strong hold on Jeanne, who was her patron, after all. A patron with benefits, it’s true, but not her partner, her lover, her significant other. Not as I understood those terms.



A shadow fell over the drawing and I looked up to see Pat standing by my table. Her friendly expression darkened when she saw the drawing. We looked at each other.

“Were you stopping by to say hello?” I asked.

“Yes.” She looked at the other chair and started to pull it out. “May I?”

I got a good look at her as she sat down, something I didn’t do the night she had demonstration sex with Adele. I’d been in such a daze then I could hardly focus when she walked me to the door. I saw a woman who looked even younger than the handsome butch fucking the daylight out of Adele.

“What the hell is that?” she said, pointing at the drawing.

I pushed it over to her. “I wasn’t going to show this to anyone, but since you asked...”

Pat studied it for a minute. “It’s you and Adele.”

“Yep. Adele drew it. She’s quite good, isn’t she? She left it for me at my home, shoved under the door in an envelope.”

A server came by and Pat ordered coffee. She took the drawing, folded it, and put it in her pocket.

“What are you doing?”

“This needs to be seen by people a few pay grades above us.”

“It does?” I was confused, which was beginning to feel like a normal state of mind. “Are you giving it to the police? I don’t intend to stab Adele in the back. You do know that, don’t you?”

Pat smiled. “I know. But Adele clearly feels she’s been wronged and she’s pretty upset about it. I just want to make sure you’re safe.”

I stared at Pat for a moment. “I’m getting a little sick of not understanding anything. I understand what Jeanne and I do together; I understand the scene you and Adele performed. You know what I don’t understand? The Byzantine rules you all seem to have. Submissives aren’t supposed to talk to dominants about their issues. Dominants may have Primaries. There are ‘Pay Grades’ above mine—”

“Not pay grades,” Pat interrupted. “I just meant letting the women who keep an eye on these things know about Adele’s state of mind.”

I shook my head in bewilderment. "This is what I mean. It's one mystery after another. What women? What do they keep any eye on?"

"Well, it's hard to explain..."

"Don't even try." I gathered my things to go.

"Wait." She reached over and grabbed my forearm. There was a little weight to her grip. She wasn't asking me to stay; she was telling me to.

"I'm not at liberty to explain things to you. That will come with time and at Jeanne's direction. Adele should not have told you anything about primaries, or anything else."

"You seem like a nice person, Pat. And Jeanne? I'm already a little in love with her. But I'm feeling unnerved by all this. I don't think I'm interested in learning about it."

Pat kept her hand on my arm and pulled her phone out of the back pocket of her jeans. She hit a speed dial number.

"Jeanne, it's Pat. I'm at a restaurant with Laura—ran into her here. You don't mind if I go home with her, do you?"

I was slammed with several strong and competing feelings on hearing this. First was the shock of hearing myself spoken of as if I were property to be passed among friends. Pat could have been asking to borrow Jeanne's bicycle, from the sound of it. Then I was hurt because Jeanne didn't care whether Pat had sex with me. But the feeling that rolled over the other two like a fireball was lust. I became almost instantly turned on by the idea of the boyish Pat taking me to my house and having her way with me. Perhaps rules wouldn't be a bad thing for me, for I seemed to be completely out of control.

Pat handed the phone to me. Jeanne's voice sounded velvety. "Do you want to please me?"

"Always."

"Then go do what Pat wants you to do. It will make me happy over the next hour to know you are with her. To imagine what she's doing to you."

"All right. But when will I see you again?"

There was a pause. "You'll hear from me," she said and hung up.

Pat paid my check and we took the short walk back to my place. She didn't chat and I didn't try to engage her. It seemed we had a job to do and we just needed to get to it. In my apartment she had me stand in the middle of the bedroom while she took off all my clothes. She walked around me and took a long look, stopping only to put my hands together behind my back and move my legs a little further apart than they were. She finally stopped in front of me.

"Where do you keep your stockings?"

"Stockings?"

"Pantyhose, that sort of thing."

"I don't wear pantyhose," I said.

Pat frowned.

"But I have tights! Will they work?"

"Where are they?"

I started to move toward my dresser, but Pat stopped me with a hand to my chest.

"Did I say you could move?"

I hesitated. She grabbed a nipple and twisted. I was so surprised, I shrieked.

"I asked you a question." Pat was looking a little fierce and I felt alarmed. But once again, with the fear came the excitement. She still had hold of my nipple and the feeling shot down between my legs.

"I'm sorry," I said. I cast my eyes downward, thinking that was the right thing to do.

"Look at me," Pat said, taking me by the chin. "You don't move unless I tell you to. You don't speak unless I tell you to. But if I tell you to do either, you'd better be quick. Do you understand?"

I nodded and looked at her.

"Asking you a question is telling you to speak. What is so hard about that?"

Now she had my other nipple. She twisted it like she was opening a safe.

"I understand."

"Good. Now, where are your tights?"

"Top left drawer of the dresser."

She rummaged around for a bit before returning with several pairs of tights, mostly black, but there were also the funky white ones with black skulls like polka dots all over them. Pat took me by the elbow and brought me over to my bed. Within what seemed like seconds she had me tied to the four corners of the bed frame so I was facing down, on my knees, my ass pointing toward the ceiling. My poor ass. It was still marked from my last session with Jeanne.

I heard Pat remove her belt. It was the exact sound I'd heard in my first fantasy about Jeanne.

"I'm giving you ten with my belt. I want you to call out each one."

I counted to ten, thinking at first it was not the kind of counting my mother had coached me to do. I quickly realized that thoughts of my mother were the last thing I wanted in this situation. By the third strike I was focused completely on the simplest of elements—the sound of the belt hitting my ass, the shock of pain that followed, the effort to not scream but instead to bark out a number, the concentration it took to remember what number I was on. At one point I skipped a number, so Pat added it and two more to the total.

When it was over, I heard Pat unzip her pants. I was resting my forehead on the sheets, hoping whatever Pat had in mind somehow involved my pussy. It was desperate for attention. When she moved in front of me on the bed, I knew it only involved hers. So I put my lips to her, sank my tongue into her, did my best to make her noisy. She came within a few minutes and I could tell quite clearly how much she enjoyed it. I forgot about the overwhelming desire to have my clit touched. I wanted only to give her pleasure, a way of thinking so new to me, so unanticipated when I entered this life. The desire to please, to serve, was stronger than the desire to be pleased. I wanted both, but I hadn't known beforehand I would find true pleasure in simply giving pleasure, particularly when it was ordered of me.

Pat untied me and lay beside me for a few minutes.

"I know Jeanne is into you," she said. "She's talked about you with me and some of the others. That may be a first for her."

I didn't speak, but I was thrilled.

“A dominant is allowed to have sex with any submissive who has willingly entered our society,” she said.

She put a finger across my lips when she heard me about to speak.

“Adele has broken a rule by expressing displeasure to Jeanne about your role in Jeanne’s life, and now by sending you this drawing, trying to get you to do something against Jeanne’s wishes. Jeanne will take care of the situation.”

I felt a little sorry for Adele. I assumed she would be punished or exiled in some way. Probably exiled. It’s hard to punish people who just get off on the punishment.

I raised my hand as if I were in school. Pat smiled.

“You can ask a question.”

“I don’t understand what this society is. Is there a clubhouse? A Web site?”

Pat laughed. “A clubhouse isn’t a bad idea, but we don’t have one. Just think of it as an organized society of like-minded people. I’m pretty sure you’ll become a member yourself.”

I lay there quietly. There were a thousand questions to ask, but now I didn’t feel like asking them. I was content to have things revealed to me bit by bit. It kept me off-balance, a feeling I was growing to relish. It felt exciting. Like an adventure.

Pat kissed my forehead and left, and I slept the rest of the afternoon.



Jeanne summoned me to her home the following night. I was curious to see her after my experience with Pat. I wondered if I would find Jeanne somehow different, perhaps less of a magnet for me now that I knew I could enjoy what another dominant did to me. This gave me more power, for I’d be less dependent on Jeanne to satisfy my needs. But I didn’t want more power with Jeanne. I wanted even less.

Mrs. Kirchberger answered the door and led me downstairs. I was perfectly clean, groomed, and dressed for the occasion, but

this ritual of preparing myself in her home was part of the whole gestalt. Without it, my experience felt less than—less satisfying, less spiritual.

When Mrs. K. let me into the garden apartment I wondered if Adele had to leave each time Jeanne had me over. Maybe the thing Adele was pissed about was being uprooted so often. I did feel bad about that, though I had no solution to the problem.

As I walked toward the bathroom I passed Adele's bedroom. The door was closed. This was awkward. I didn't want to see Adele, but I also didn't want her walking in on me when I was giving myself an enema. Along with counting to ten to avoid unnecessary confrontations, my mother taught me to face head-on the situations that couldn't be avoided. They usually proved to be less awful than I'd feared. I knocked on Adele's door, meaning to let her know I was there and talk to her if she insisted. There was no answer. I knocked again before opening the door and sticking my head in. The first thing I noticed in the pristine room was the missing stuffed animal on the bed. The photos on the nightstand were also gone. I stepped to the closet and found it empty. The dresser also. She was gone. She'd been exiled. I had a flash vision of a bleak Siberian camp for wayward submissives. Surely, this society wasn't as severe as that.

When I'd finished my preparations, I opened the door to the hallway to find Mrs. Kirchberger waiting. She locked the door behind me and led me upstairs. I tried to start a conversation with her, again.

"Has Adele moved out?" I was climbing the stairs behind her, her sturdy shoes making a clomping noise. She did not reply.

"Look, Mrs. K., I realize you don't like me. Maybe it has something to do with Adele. But I swear I had nothing to do with her losing her place here. You must realize I don't have any pull with Jeanne."

Mrs. K. cast a skeptical look back at me. It was far more expressive than anything I'd seen before.

"Honestly. I'll tell Jeanne right now that I mean no harm to Adele and don't want to see her lose what she has. But I don't think it will work, do you?"

She forged ahead, completely ignoring me. As she showed me into the study, she avoided my eyes. I am done with this, I thought. If she hates me, then I officially hate her. No more sucking up to Mrs. Kirchberger.

The study was empty. I curled up on the sofa and brooded about Mrs. K. and Adele. After about half an hour Jeanne swept into the room from the hallway, two DVDs in her hand.

"It's movie night, my dear." She joined me on the sofa. "In honor of our upcoming trip to Paris, we're going to see a Truffaut double header tonight." She looked mischievous.

"Trip to Paris?"

"As soon as you can break away for a few days from those undergraduates of yours, I thought we'd fly to Paris and track down some Balthus."

Given how calm and contained Jeanne normally kept herself, she looked very excited about her news. She was watching me closely, waiting for me to say something.

"Really?"

"Yes, really. Just you and me and Paris and all the art you can possibly take in. And maybe some other things as well."

"What kind of things?"

"Let's just say I have friends in Paris. And I think you'll like a little French style dominance."

I took her hand and leaned in to kiss her.

"Thank you. I feel like squealing and jumping up and down, but I'm trying to act with some dignity."

Jeanne was grinning and then suddenly was not. "Dignity is a luxury for you. I intend to strip you of it as often as possible."

Here was the lightning-fast change in tone that played with my head so deliciously.

"While I'm in the other room getting some things, I want you to get naked and stand right here," she said, pointing to the area in front of the sofa. Within a minute or two she was back, carrying enough rope to secure a small naval fleet. With stunning expertise, Jeanne wrapped the ropes around me until I was hog-tied on the floor. My arms and legs were lashed together behind my back, my

breasts were bulging out of the rope wrapped around their base, and my head was held in place by my ponytail being tied by another rope to my ankles. Jeanne moved me around so my face was pointed toward the TV and then she settled in to watch *The 400 Blows* and *Jules et Jim*. She rested her legs on my ass and I could hear her drinking something on the rocks and munching on something.

I loved every minute of the discomfort. As the hours went by and the stiffness in my joints and chaffing of the rope grew exponentially worse, I loved it more. When Jeanne moved her foot between my legs she found me wet. When she unbound me after the second movie was over, she found me wetter still. I found I could barely move, but somehow I got onto my knees, draped over the ottoman, and I came instantly when she put on her harness and fucked me. Then I came again. I listened to her breathing and could tell she was close to coming herself, but she took a long time before crying out. And still I was wet.

We lay still for a long time, Jeanne draped over me, me draped over the ottoman, and I felt an intense closeness. I couldn't be making it up. But soon she got up and told me to dress and leave her. She wouldn't look at me when she gave the order. I think she wanted me to stay.

I was at the door to the study when I thought to follow up on my thoughts from earlier in the evening.

"Jeanne, do you know why Mrs. Kirchberger hates me?"

"Hates you? She doesn't hate you."

"Oh, yes, she does. I've never been treated as rudely by anyone. She's never once said hello or even replied to anything I've said to her."

"Of course not. She's mute."

"Excuse me?"

"Mute. She can't talk. She had some rare mouth cancer when she was quite young. Most of her tongue is gone."

I stood there stock-still. It didn't seem quite right to be glad Mrs. Kirchberger didn't have a tongue, but I was very relieved it was nothing personal.



“I find it unbelievable that no one has mentioned this to me,” I said. “It doesn’t seem fair.”

Jeanne shrugged. “It doesn’t seem fair she can’t talk, but there you go. I’m not going to make it worse by making a big deal about it.”

I opened my mouth to ask more questions about Mrs. K., but Jeanne interrupted.

“You’ve had your question for the day, Laura. Now go on home. Think about Paris.”

There was no point in arguing. The car was waiting out front for me and I was glad to slip into the comfortable backseat. My body ached. It ached from being tied up for so long, and it ached because I still wanted more from Jeanne. I was insatiable. I was curious about her and the people around her, and the curiosity made me ask her questions, which I knew she didn’t like. But it would be no hardship to give up the questions. The only thing I needed from her was her complete command over me, her willingness to go the distance it took to make me feel without a will of my own. That set off in me a feeling of freedom I’d never even thought of when I read all of those books of mine. And now there was no going back. I would never turn away from it, no matter what the cost.



## CHAPTER FIVE—PARIS

As a potentially professional person in the art world, it is practically a requirement I love Paris. Or at least the idea of Paris. I'd been to the city just once before, through a college program my junior year. The trip cemented my decision to make my living in art, to study and celebrate it the rest of my life. There was hardly a better city to immerse myself in, hardly a better city for a twenty-year-old to feel bursting with life.

But during this trip at twenty-seven, I felt I actually would burst. I was eager to return to Paris, of course, but more excited still to be there with Jeanne. Was she my lover? She certainly had her way with me, tied up, strapped down, bound in countless contortions. She did with me as she pleased. Afterward, we talked about art or politics, if she felt like it, or she would just send me away when she'd had her fill. It looked from the outside like a completely one-way relationship. Yet, I'd never felt so happy and free. She was my lover, certainly. She was my captor and my liberator as well.

There were other perks with having a rich woman dominate me and my life. We flew first class Air France to Paris, rode by stretch limousine into the city, and checked into the Ritz. I wondered if Jeanne would arrange for the Louvre to be closed for a day so we wouldn't be bothered by tourists. Nothing she did surprised me because everything she did surprised me. I was officially numb to surprise.

The only cloud on my sunny existence was not knowing what I should or should not share with Jeanne, given that she made all the rules but only told me some of them. For instance, do I tell her Adele had been threatening me if I didn't stop seeing Jeanne? Jeanne had made it clear she didn't want to hear of any fighting among the women she has sex with. I thought maybe our time together in Paris would help me decide what, if anything, to say to her, without worrying whether Adele would do something crazy. It was unlikely she would be stalking me here.

At five in the afternoon on the day of our arrival, Jeanne was on the phone in our room, chattering away in French. My French was very poor, but I understood the words, "what time," and "how many," which exhausted my vocabulary, unless she were to ask "Where is the WC," which she certainly would not. When she hung up, she clapped her hands together as if she'd just closed a big deal.

"That's all set then." She looked over to where I was tied up at the foot of the bed. We'd inaugurated the bedroom upon arrival a few hours earlier, and this is where she'd put me for my nap. I was having a hard time waking up. Jeanne seemed full of energy, and I wondered again at the twenty year difference in our ages. She seemed inexhaustible, while I felt continually sleep deprived.

Over a late night dinner Jeanne shared her thoughts on what we should see the next day, including a few visits to gallery owners she knew. Then she told me about the following night's plans.

"It's no surprise to you, I'm sure, that I've become friends over the years with dominants here in Paris. Half of them are gallery owners I've met while buying and selling. The art world is full of our people, which is one of the reasons I know you'll fit right in."

I smiled wanly. Here I was, part of yet another demographic—art-loving dominants and submissives. I knew where Jeanne was headed with her talk of the Paris members of her tribe, but I wasn't sure how I felt about it. In all honesty, French people seemed off-putting enough to scare me a little. And beautiful French women who were practicing dominants? The idea of a group scene with them was alarming.

“My friend, Natalie, has a place not far from the hotel, very nice, where there are occasional gatherings of women who like to play. Luckily, we’re here for tomorrow’s soiree. I told her I was very excited to bring you along. I’m looking forward to showing you off—you and your amazing beginner’s capabilities.”

“What should I expect?” I said.

Jeanne paused for a moment and sipped her wine. “Do you really think I’m going to answer that?” She smiled and squeezed my hand. “I’ll be there with you. You’ll love it.”

The following night at eleven, after a full day of walking the city and viewing art, talking to artists and gallery owners, and a shopping spree for some new clothes for me, we arrived at her friend’s home. It was a half hour walk north from the Ritz and the Place Vendôme, on the Rue Boudreau, which Jeanne liked because it was the same as her last name. I was very quiet while we walked, mincing a bit on my new high heels.

“Is everything all right?” she said. She took my arm and placed it through hers.

“Yes.”

“That doesn’t sound very convincing.”

“Nervous, I guess.”

Jeanne stopped and turned me toward her.

“I’ve never seen you nervous about anything.”

I didn’t want to hesitate. Part of falling in love with Jeanne was discovering the pleasure I found in pleasing her. I didn’t have to second-guess her. If she asked me to do something, it was because it pleased her in some way for me to do it, and so I did.

“I want to go for you, of course,” I said. “But I’ve never been in a group situation before. And, you know, they’re French.”

“Meaning?”

“I don’t speak their language. What if I’m told to do something I don’t understand and they do something I don’t want them to do. It’s just scary to me.”

Jeanne frowned, but saw I was a little upset. Mostly, I just wanted to go to bed. The jet lag was making me wobbly. I think my bottom lip was quivering a little.

“There’s nothing to worry about; I promise you,” Jeanne said. “And just so you know, they all speak English. They just don’t always let you know that.”

It was the first time I didn’t feel like doing what Jeanne wanted me to do.

“If it’s all the same to you, then, I’ll just hang out. Not participate.”

Jeanne started walking again. “Of course. I wouldn’t want you to be uncomfortable,” she said, and I noted the ironic tone in her words.

I should have known such generosity on Jeanne’s part was a double-edged sword. All I felt at the moment was relief. I’d discovered so much about myself during the weeks I’d been seeing Jeanne. I’d found in myself a capacity and desire for submission and pain that surprised me, even though I’d fantasized about it for years. But I thought my limits might fall short of a group scene with strangers. Or maybe I was just tired.

We arrived at the building on the Rue Boudreau, an immense and imposing structure with gray stone, black wrought iron balconies, black shutters. Lights sprang from many of the windows, softening the exterior of the building, making it inviting. Jeanne rang the bell and soon we found ourselves getting off an elevator directly into an apartment. Apartment seems an inadequate word for the place. It looked like Versailles to my Midwestern eyes, huge, sparkling, ornate. It took several minutes for me to take in what I was seeing, and in that time Jeanne introduced me to Natalie, who looked remarkably like Jeanne. She kissed me on both cheeks and took me by the hand down the long gallery-like hallway. Jeanne walked behind me.

We entered a living room so enormous my jaw dropped. The price of such a home in Paris, especially this part of Paris, was incomprehensible to me. There was astounding art and artifacts everywhere. Unfortunately, my bug-eyed look made me appear more like a gawking American than ingénue, and this was exactly the moment all faces in the room were turned toward me. In the center of the room was a grouping of four large sofas, set in a square, with

women sitting on all of them, and more women standing around. Quite a few exclaimed upon seeing Jeanne and there was much chatter in French. Somewhere in there I was introduced. My name was mentioned several times, though in what context I'll never know. I always assume the worst, however. I guessed they were talking about what a moron I looked like. Even though I was wearing a chic new dress, I felt outclassed. All around me style erupted from every woman I looked at, whether it be the simple turning up of a sleeve or the way that a scarf was knotted. It was intimidating.

Jeanne had me by the hand as we joined the others, two of whom rose to make room for us on a sofa. The gathering appeared to be a regular party. As I looked around I saw there was no evidence of any of the accoutrements of bondage and discipline. There were no women collared and sitting at their mistresses' feet. Instead, I saw friendly faces, people coming up to offer me wine, to introduce themselves and ask where I'm from, all in English. I cast a suspicious look at Jeanne, who was smiling like a cat with a feather sticking out of her mouth.

After an hour or so of party talk, I felt completely at ease. I had a conversation with a woman who knew quite a bit about Balthus and offered to take me on a tour of the places he'd lived and worked in Paris. Another woman was an old friend of Jeanne's, and she told me a funny story about the first time Jeanne had driven in the city. Jeanne wasn't always as smooth and assured as she seemed.

Eventually, I noticed one woman had her eye on me, which ignited a little charge of excitement. She was standing behind the sofa opposite me, not paying attention to anyone else. She wore a black suit of gabardine, a scarf at her open collar, very European glasses on her sharply featured face. Her haircut was severely short. I felt a bit like a girl at a school dance being checked out by a boy from across the gym. I thought I wouldn't mind it at all if she asked me to dance, or whatever the much more adventurous equivalent here would be. I stared back at her, knowing I was sending her an invitation. Then I looked at Jeanne to see if she'd seen this exchange. She was talking and laughing with a young woman sitting next to her, holding her hand and fondling

the necklace she wore. Why would I worry or hope that Jeanne would feel jealousy? She was always one step ahead of me, never in a vulnerable position. Me making goo-goo eyes at someone wouldn't change that.

Soon, small groups began to leave the room and head down the long hallway. I assumed there was a designated play space at the other end of the apartment, which, from what I could tell, put it a mile or so away. I felt a complete change of heart from the reluctance I felt during our walk to the party. I was curious to see the action, curious what Jeanne would do with me in front of others, and really curious what my admirer would be like. Jeanne took me by the elbow and led me down the hall. I looked at the woman she left behind on the sofa and was glad to see her turning to someone else. Apparently, she and Jeanne had not made any plans.

Jeanne did not speak to me, and her grip on my arm was painful. We finally reached the end of the hallway and walked into a room similar in size to the living room. I thought it might have been a ballroom at some point in its history. There were Baroque murals across the entire ceiling, loaded with angels and clouds. Three enormous chandeliers hung in a line, casting only muted light on the room. The dimness was cast off in the four corners of the room by floor lamps that illuminated groupings of furniture, both domestic and bondage oriented. Women were settling into the different areas and I quickly took inventory. A simple library table was in one, straps attached to each leg. A woman was undressing another in front of it, while a third pulled a flogger and some cuffs and a collar from a nearby chest. In another corner was an ottoman, also impressively simple, and there was already a naked woman being tied to it. A third corner held a freestanding metal frame where a woman would be attached by each limb, arms overhead, legs stretched apart, her body available on both sides. A group was approaching it, one woman pulling another by a collar.

The last corner had a bed. It looked like someone was going to sleep in it that night. It was dressed with beautiful linens and colorful pillows, and there was a nightstand and reading light. This was the corner Jeanne led me to. We arrived at the same time as three



other women. Jeanne said something to one of them, apparently offering them first use of the bed, and we settled into the sofa in front of it. I looked at the women for a moment and was amazed to see how they now appeared to be either obviously dominant or submissive, whereas I'd not had a clue while we were socializing in the living room. Their clothes were the same, but there was a shift in their bearing that didn't even seem subtle to me. Two of the three women were submissive and they stood quietly while Jeanne and the dominant continued to speak in French. Then the dominant, whom Jeanne called Aimee, had one of submissives sit on the sofa with us and took the other to bed.

Over the next half hour I sank further into the furniture as the activity all around me became louder and more chaotic. In our own corner, Aimee thoroughly paddled the ass of the submissive she'd tied to the bed. Then she grabbed a harness and dildo from the toy chest, turned the woman around, and fucked her for a long time, causing the woman's very sore ass to rub against the bed clothing. Both were strangely quiet during the whole scene, until they cried out, in tandem, and laughed as they collapsed together.

I wanted in on the action. I knew better than to make the first move with Jeanne, but I hoped she could tell I was excited by all of the fidgeting I was doing. She again took my arm and we went to watch the action at the wooden frame. A woman with bright red hair was strung up tight. Someone had gagged her with a neon orange ball gag, which contrasted horribly with her hair. I watched her with envy, hoping I'd have a turn when they were done with her. There were women in a semi-circle around the frame, while the top was directly behind the bound woman, wielding a large, heavy flogger. The lashes she was laying on the submissive's back and ass were a more intense punishment than I'd yet experienced from Jeanne. The woman screamed through the gag. I looked at all of the women staring at this tableaux and saw they were transfixed, as was I. They'd seen this dozens of times, no doubt, and still it had a magic hold. It was very powerful. Jeanne seemed a little fidgety now, so I tried to get things moving.

"I'm ready for this."

She turned toward me with an eyebrow lifted.

“Just so you know,” I added.

“It’s of no concern to me whether you are ready or not.”

“Well, then,” I said. “Would it be better if I just let you know I’m ready for whatever you would like?”

“It would be better if you didn’t speak.” She turned back to the scene in front of us, and I felt my face burn a little in shame. It was a little like trying to kiss someone and having her turn away from you, only a million times worse. It started to dawn on me that Jeanne was not very happy with me. My admirer from the living room chose just this moment to approach Jeanne and ask permission to take me to the library table, which was currently unoccupied. I cast a hopeful look at Jeanne, thinking she may well want me away from her for a little while if she was irritated with me.

“Thank you for your request,” I heard Jeanne say in English, “but Laura will not be joining in the activities tonight. She’s not feeling quite up to it.”

The woman frowned as she looked at me, no doubt wondering why I had been flirting with her if I was feeling poorly. She excused herself to try her luck elsewhere. I looked back at Jeanne and saw a face carved in stone. I honestly didn’t know whether to be mad at her, nervous about her, or sorry that I’d upset her. She clearly was unhappy and I realized having an emotional reaction of any kind was something I’d not yet seen in her. I wasn’t sure what to make of it.

There was a break in the activity as the woman in the frame was released. I tried a lighthearted approach.

“It looks like the frame is free. Perhaps you’d feel better if I was in it and you had the flogger in your hand.”

No response. Mt. Rushmore. Jeanne walked away from me, straight over to the woman she’d been cooing with in the living room, and whispered something to her. The woman nodded, followed Jeanne to the frame, and then looked right at me while Jeanne stripped her and tied her to it. My face flamed. I felt everyone was staring at me, asking who the stupid twat was who’d just come to observe, who told Jeanne she wouldn’t play, who then started

flirting with someone else. I became deathly afraid that Jeanne was furious with me and would send me back to the States and out of her life.

Before she took the flogger to the woman, she warmed her up by caressing all parts of her beautiful body. She sucked on her breast, rubbed her clit, brought her close to orgasm before backing off. The crowd was reassembling to watch, and I wondered what kind of reputation Jeanne had among them. Watching her give someone else the kind of attention I had only known her to give to me was very hard. As if reading my mind, Jeanne came over to me, pulling a key card out of her pocket.

“Go back to our suite. Do not talk to anyone on your way out or on your way back to the hotel. I want you naked and kneeling by the bed when I return.”

She didn’t look me in the eye when saying this. I took the key from her.

“I’m so sorry. I don’t know what I did exactly, but I’m very sorry.” And I was. Despite the unusual dynamics in my relationship with Jeanne, I still felt we were close and very compatible. As with all first fights, I was terrified we wouldn’t survive it. I left the party and caught a cab back to the Ritz.



It was three in the morning when Jeanne returned from the party. I knew because I was kneeling next to the bed, close to the alarm clock. The carpet in the Ritz was thick and soft, so my knees were in much better shape after hours on it than they were performing the same feat on the hardwood floors back home. Still, it amazed me I did this at all—kneeling quietly for two hours with no one policing me, simply because Jeanne told me to do it. Usually, I would feel a growing excitement as the time passed, but this night had an element of penance in it. I was on my knees hoping Jeanne would not be mad at me.

As soon as she entered the bedroom I could smell sex. She reeked of it. She didn’t acknowledge me but simply walked straight

into the bathroom. Five minutes later she emerged in a fluffy white robe, her hair wet, feet bare. She sat on the bed in front of me.

"In the past," she said. "I've had companions to whom I've explained my simple requirements and who took it upon themselves to unilaterally do or not do something based on their wishes, not on mine. I immediately eliminated those women from my life."

"But—"

"Stop. Do not say another word or you will be among them. As it stands, I'm willing to overlook the fact you announced you would not be participating in this party, even though I was bringing you there for that purpose. I will also overlook the fact you made it even worse by then deciding you would participate, and even encouraging other partners."

I bit my tongue. I couldn't believe she was this upset about such a little thing. I supposed I was going to get punished now.

"I'm so sorry to not have known your will for me tonight," I said. I thought it sounded pretty good. "I know I must be punished for it."

Jeanne rolled her eyes and stood.

"Yes, you wish you'd be punished for it. But I'm not going to give you the pleasure. The punishment is for me to not lay a hand or instrument on you. To keep you isolated. And perhaps the punishment also is to make you understand what you've gotten yourself into when I brought you into my life. You seem to think there's still a smidgen of will allowed to you. That you can use your intellect to suss out what my 'will for you' is. It's all far less complicated than you want to make it. You only have to do exactly what I say. Nothing more and nothing less. If you can do that, I am here for you. If you cannot, as in tonight, I will get rid of you. It's perfectly simple."

I was still on my knees. It seemed the right place to be when being talked down to in every sense of the word. Jeanne took several sets of stockings from her drawer and bound me wrist to ankle, pushing me on my side. She tied another stocking around my mouth.

"You will stay like this tonight. Tomorrow you will be tied up and you'll stay in the room all day. I'll decide what you will be

allowed to do tomorrow night. I'll cancel the Balthus tour. Perhaps you'll spend the time contemplating what the consequences are of your willfulness."

The rest of the night seemed very long. My bindings were tight, and my joints already cramped from my hours on the floor. In the morning Jeanne got ready for the day at a leisurely pace, and then spent some time on the phone in the living room. I was still tied up by the bed, dying to go to the bathroom. She finally allowed me to do so, allowed me to shower and get something to eat, and then waited for me by the bedroom window, stockings in hand. There was a built in bench in the bay window. Jeanne had me kneel over it, my arms stretched toward the windows in front of me, my wrists tied to the window hardware. My left ankle was tightly secured to a chair nearby, my right leg left free. Within another minute I felt a strap go around my waist and through my crotch. Jeanne put a huge butt plug in me and secured it with the harness so I couldn't push it out. It was going to be a long day.

When she left, I counted my blessings. At least I could move one leg around, which made a big difference. And I didn't mind not tromping around the city again today. I might even be able to sleep. What I hadn't anticipated was the visitor to the room at two in the afternoon. A hotel maid came in to clean the room. She untied me and allowed me to use the toilet before tying me back up. She ran her hands along my body, tweaking my nipples. She moved the butt plug around side to side. Then she left. I had no idea if she was a Ritz employee or a friend of Jeanne's in costume, but I understood the importance of the message Jeanne was sending me. It's her, not me. It's others, not me. While we're together, there is no me.

I was sleeping soundly when Jeanne returned and I didn't hear her enter. She knelt behind me and draped herself over me, her arms on top of my arms, stretched out in front of us. I started awake to see her face next to mine. I felt her hips move against my ass, rubbing me side to side, pushing against me into the bench.

"Did you miss me?" she asked.

I thought it pretty clear she missed me, but I was through trying to be clever or coy.

“Desperately,” I said.

“Did you have a visitor today?”

My face heated as I remembered the humiliation of being untied and then tied again by the tiny French maid, a woman I could easily have overpowered or run from. But I hadn’t. I’d done exactly what she’d asked me to do, as if it were Jeanne herself asking me to do it.

“Yes.” I looked into Jeanne’s eyes. She looked very happy, and so my worry lessened. “I was so afraid you wouldn’t come back to me tonight.”

She looked confused. “Not come back? I thought of you all day.” She laughed as she leaned forward to untie my arms. “I thought of how hot this was making you—the waiting, the maid. I had cocktails with a friend and thought I’d combust.”

She untied my leg and then sat on the window seat as I sat up and stretched. She started to take her pants off.

“I can’t do anything else until I’ve come.” She slid her things off and cupped me by the back of the head. “Give me your mouth.”

She pulled my head down to her sex, spreading her legs wide. She was very wet. I used the tip of my tongue to spread some of her moisture around, but that wasn’t what she wanted. She put both hands behind my head and pulled me right into her, my tongue rigid and working itself against her clit. She started chanting, “yes, yes, yes, yes,” and I knew she wouldn’t last long. I could feel her limbs tightening, quivering, and then she came in the most explosive way. I was shattered—exhausted, achy, uncomfortably in need of both water and a toilet—but I lay my cheek on her thigh and felt perfectly contented. Jeanne stroked my hair and my face, her breath slowing.

“God, I needed that,” she said. I was happy to hear her say anything at all. I still stung from the silence and anger of the night before.

“You’re not mad at me anymore?”

“No. I’m not even sure I was mad. Scared, maybe. I worried you wouldn’t be able to be how I need you to be in order for this to work for us.”

I stopped breathing as my brain tried to process what she said. It was a whole lot of confession for her.

“I want to be that person. I think it’s how I need to be. But I’m new to all this. I make mistakes.”

We were quiet for a little bit and she continued to stroke my hair.

“What do you say to going out for an unbelievable French meal and then coming back here?”

Was she asking? No wonder I’m confused all the time.

“I’d say let’s go. I’m starving.”

We went out for one of those dinners in Paris that people talk about *ad nauseam* once they return. It was delicious, but we made short work of it, anxious to get back to the hotel. We took a hot, sudsy bath together and then settled into the bed.

“Lay across my lap,” Jeanne said. She looked somehow regal propped up against the headboard in the middle of the bed, her hair floating onto the snow-white pillows, her face relaxed but her eyes bright. I was naked after the bath, my skin already pink from the steamy hot water. It was about to get pinker still. I lay across, resting my head in my crossed arms, my ass centered on her naked lap. I held my breath, waiting for the first blow. When it came I was again shocked by how much it hurt. I was aroused, as I had been all through dinner, but not yet in the haze of hormones that, in me at least, deadened the sharpness of pain and made it a more directly erotic experience. As the blows began to rain down on me sharply, loudly, I whimpered, not from discomfort but from the vulnerability, the need for her to continue and the rawness of having her see me like this.

She paused just long enough for me to hear her command.

“Touch yourself. Put your fingers there and make yourself come.”

She waited while I shifted enough to put my fingers to my clit and begin to rub.

“Good. Don’t stop until I tell you to.”

I rubbed. She spanked. The countervailing forces were creating a nuclear reaction in me. I was about to detonate.

“I’m coming!”

“Don’t stop,” she said, now moving her hand between my legs and entering me. I exploded.

“Don’t stop.” And she went deep and then came back out and then teased the spot inside that drives me wild, then went deep again, all the while with my own hand pumping away. I wanted more. I usually need to rest between orgasms, but I wanted more and she gave it to me until I came again.

She pushed me just far enough off her lap that she could get at herself. My eyes were bleary and I felt drugged, but I was able to see her pussy rise up to meet her hand and her fingers slip around her clit. She stared at it with her mouth open, looking as hazy as I felt, and within a minute she cried out, her hand falling away and flopping bonelessly to the side. I think if we’d had the energy we would have started laughing or crying, and I’m not sure which.

The next day we flew home to the States.



## CHAPTER SIX—WELCOME HOME

**I**t was late in the evening when the driver left me off at my apartment building and went on to deliver Jeanne home. I was exhausted from the trip, but Jeanne had been on the phone the entire way in from the airport, making arrangements for a video conference at midnight. Her energy alarmed me, and I vowed to start exercising or taking amphetamines or something to keep pace with her.

I felt a looseness in the lock on my apartment door and my heart sped up as the door swung open. Lights were blazing, though I'd turned every one of them off before leaving town. The living room was trashed from end to end. I stood in the middle of the room in a state of shock, my mind a complete blank other than to be thankful Martha was staying at the cat sitter's while I was gone. If I'd had any other thought at all it was to wonder whether I could wait until morning to clean up the mess. I was so damn tired.

What didn't occur to me was someone could still be there or they meant me harm, or even that they'd probably stolen from me. I was just annoyed by the inconvenience. But the closer I looked the more I could see that as far as these things go, it wasn't a terrible trashing of the place. Whoever had done it had flung everything to the floor that could be flung. Few of the items were broken. Nothing had been piled together and pissed upon. The upholstery hadn't been slashed apart. It didn't even look like anything was stolen. My laptop was on the floor by the desk and perhaps a little worse for wear, but no one had taken it.

My bedroom is where I found my anger. I had a wooden chest where I kept my nearly complete and possibly world-class collection of lesbian BDSM fiction. Some of the books were very old and intimate companions of mine. There were volumes in my collection I'd found in the back shelves of countless used bookstores. Others I'd won in competitive online auctions, and still others were rare enough to have required professional book dealers to find. Now they were all toppled onto the bed, many of their covers ripped off and the pile covered in blue paint. Paint that had come from a cupboard in my kitchen, extra from when I'd redone the bathroom. My interest in my collection had plummeted since meeting Jeanne, but still it felt heartbreaking to see it destroyed.

It struck me as one of those surreal moments when you can't quite believe something's happened, despite what's right in front of you. I had the same feeling the first time Jeanne tied me up. I couldn't move, but I almost couldn't believe it either. Soon a tear came as the truth sank in and I felt about the death of my collection the way one would the death of an old friend—one you perhaps didn't connect with as much any longer but would always have a deep fondness for. It was gone. And I couldn't believe it.

I knew it was Adele who had invaded my home. She was already mad as hell that I was seeing Jeanne. Maybe hearing I was in Paris with her put her over the edge. But who would have told her?

I put the cushions back on the sofa and slept there, unwilling to change the bedsheets in the middle of the night. I was starting to feel furious, but mostly about the damage. My Marimeko bedspread was a vintage one from the '60s, in perfect shape, but now covered in paint. And my book collection was an incalculable loss. Did Adele think she was going to make me quit seeing Jeanne because of this? All it did was make me swear to punch her in the nose next time I saw her.



I heard my phone ringing as I climbed the stairs from my sixth trip to the building Dumpster. The sodden books weighed a ton

and kept breaking through my cheap plastic garbage bags. I was miserable. I let the call go into voice mail knowing it was Jeanne. My social world had grown very small since I started to see her. I didn't get many calls these days.

The message said: "I didn't get much sleep last night, but still want to see you this evening. Be here at seven for pizza and a movie—you bring the movie. And, Laura, you don't have to stop down at the garden apartment any longer. You know what you're doing. I trust you to come prepared."

I groaned. Coming prepared was thinly veiled code for arriving prepared to have every passage, every nook and cranny in my body probed, penetrated, and paddled. Clean, shiny, and smooth was how I thought of the condition I needed to be in, imagining myself going through a sort of automatic car wash for submissives. I'd be attached by the collar to an overhead conveyor, standing in a little car on a track, and machines would swing into place and lights come on for each of the stations along the way. Soap, scrub, rinse. Douche. Enema. Soap, scrub, rinse. Fan dry. Lotion. I would now have to recreate the elements of this in my miniscule bathroom. But worse was the idea of picking out a movie at the video store. Hollywood action films and comedies didn't seem quite right for a woman who happily watched four hours of New Wave French Cinema while using me as a footstool. I pushed the thought aside and went back to putting my apartment in order. I would do what she asked because something within me automatically bent to her will. I did what she asked not to avoid punishment, but because punishment was my reward for doing so.

At seven o'clock I arrived with five DVDs and my overnight bag. Two Jane Austens, two American independents, and *Das Boot*, because it seemed like a safe bet. I brought the bag because I never knew if I'd be spending the night or not. One of the last times I was here I didn't have a change of clothes, and Jeanne was very amused watching me leave the house in the morning holding together the shirt she'd torn from me the night before.

Mrs. Kirchberger answered the door and reached for my bag. I held on and she gave it another tug toward her. I didn't want her to

carry it because I was uncomfortable with the idea of servants doing things for me. But it was hard to argue with Mrs. Kirchberger. Ever since Jeanne told me Mrs. K. didn't have a tongue, it took away my resistance to her. She yanked my bag from me and turned to lead me upstairs, and I swore I saw a tiny smile on her lips.

Jeanne was in her study, feet up on the coffee table and watching CNN, the remote in her hand. She wore gym shorts and a T-shirt, and I almost didn't recognize her. She muted the TV and got up to greet me with a kiss. Mrs. K. stood by, my bag still in her hand.

"Mrs. K., will you drop the bag in my bedroom and then order the pizza?"

I watched her leave and turned back to Jeanne, who still had me in her arms. "How does she order pizza? Or do you have a complete downstairs staff I've never seen?"

"No, Mrs. K. is all alone. I sometimes think I should have someone else here to keep her company, but that's thinking of her rather like a cat. She'll tell me if she's unhappy. She's very straightforward."

I imagined that was true. It seemed unlikely you'd be anything but when your modes of communication with your boss were scribbled notes and nods of the head.

"She has one of the TTY machines downstairs to make phone calls, and she's online all the time."

The secret life of Mrs. Kirchberger. It seemed there were layers to uncover in the people who lived here, even in the house itself. The dominatrix in her shorts and T-shirt, the house with its secret passageways, the silent housekeeper with the huge social network. Things were not as they seemed, including the world of domination and submission. At least this slice of it. What I had read about or fantasized about was a world of 24/7 compliance with the demanding will of a dominant. I hadn't taken into consideration that twenty-four hours was a long time for anyone to be in strict domination mode. Even someone as energetic as Jeanne might need to put down the whip and pick up the remote control from time to time. She might want to use the flat of her hand to caress a cheek rather than administer a spanking. I'd seen glimpses of this part of Jeanne

before, but somehow the gym shorts brought her down to earth in a way nothing else had done before. She looked like a woman to me. Simply that. And all of that. I wondered if I was falling in love with more than Jeanne the dominant.

My movies passed muster and we spent a pleasant evening watching *Das Boot* (I knew it). The footstool was used as a footstool.

"I'm glad you planned to spend the night," Jeanne said when she clicked off the movie. "I'm exhausted, though. I don't think we'll do anything adventurous tonight."

"Is that how you think of what we do together?"

"Each and every time. Don't you?"

"Yes, absolutely. But I'm new. I didn't know if it became more of a rote thing with time."

Jeanne rearranged herself so her legs were across my lap. I began to massage her feet and I thought I heard her purring.

"If anything in my life begins to feel rote, I hope I still have it in me to change—either the thing or myself. Having sex with a woman who places her ultimate trust in me has never felt rote. It's always an adventure." She paused. "And with you it's been something else. It's felt different."

She looked right at me. I had a hard time holding her gaze.

"Different good or different bad?" I asked, kind of like a five-year-old.

"Different good." She sat up. "Come on. Let's go to bed."

We went upstairs to the third floor. Jeanne had a massive master suite up there, and I knew there were a couple other bedrooms as well. Anything could be in those, I thought. Another play room filled with equipment. A guest room, I supposed.

"Where does Mrs. Kirchberger sleep?"

"She has the whole attic. I put a bedroom and kitchen and bath up there. It's kind of perfect for her."

I wondered if Adele had slept up here in the master suite and whether sex with her felt "different good" to Jeanne. I didn't want to ruin Jeanne's mellow mood by bringing up Adele, whether to ask Jeanne exactly why she'd had Adele move out of the garden

apartment or to tell her I thought Adele had broken into my place while we were in Paris. Maybe I'd bring it up later.

We showered and crawled into bed naked. Jeanne pulled out a catalog for an upcoming New York auction she was attending and we went through it together until we both felt drowsy. When we turned out our lights and then turned to each other, Jeanne pulled me close and tucked her arm under me, her chin on the top of my head. It was very nice and cuddly, but I hoped this was just temporary.

It was.

When I woke in the morning it was to find Jeanne cuffing my hands together in front. She didn't say a word and put her finger to my lips to command my silence. Then she raised my legs up and over my head and cuffed my ankles to the posts at the head of the bed. I was thankful for my yoga classes, for I was bent nearly double. I was also exposed in the most vulnerable way. I raised my head and looked between my legs to see Jeanne climbing back on the bed, on her knees, wearing a harness and rubbing lube on a dildo. She began to push her way into me—no foreplay, no words to try to incite me, just her body pushing into me and her hungry eyes staring down at me. I gasped at the entry. I was already wet, having an instant reaction to every move Jeanne made on me. She pushed in further. I gasped again. She went all the way in and stayed there. Her eyes were not only hungry, but they had a brightness, as if she were taking what she wanted and was delighted at what she got. She rubbed herself against the base of the dildo, the motion causing the base on the other side to rub my clit as well. She pulled back and did the same. Then again, and again. The thrusting then became less, the rubbing more, she held her mouth in a tight line and her legs trembled as she started to come. She tried to maintain eye contact with me, but as her orgasm swept through her, her head jerked away and she cried out. She collapsed on me, her weight heavy on my spread legs. I hadn't come, surprisingly, but didn't care. I was thrilled with the wake-up call and to be back in service.

At breakfast Jeanne said she'd be out of town for a few days but would contact me at some point about where we'd next meet. She excused herself while I was still eating and left, kissing

me on the cheek on her way out of the dining room. I saw Mrs. Kirchberger shaking her head as she left the room with some empty plates. Was she clucking her tongue, so to speak? What did she mean? Was Jeanne on her way to see someone else? The flash of jealousy terrified me. Remember Adele, I thought. You don't want to be like her.



The next call from Jeanne didn't arrive for a full week. I was starting to get concerned she was having second thoughts about me. In the most hopeful scenario making the rounds in my head, Jeanne was freaking out at how much in love with me she was and decided to cool things down for a while, unsure whether she was ready for a serious relationship. Maybe she was nervous I was someone who might become her Primary. I wasn't sure yet what a Primary was, but I knew I wanted to be Jeanne's Primary. The name alone told me it was the number one spot, and that sounded pretty good to me. This best-case scenario concluded with Jeanne realizing she'd be mad to let me go, moving me immediately into her home, and proposing to me. I didn't know whether a dominant proposed in the traditional sense of the word. I couldn't picture Jeanne going down on one knee. It would be more likely I would be on my knees when she announced I was to become her Primary. The details didn't worry me.

The other scenario racing around like a pinball in my brain was the one I was convinced was the real deal. Jeanne had come to the conclusion I didn't have the right stuff, that I might be okay for playing around with, but I'm not relationship material. Therefore, calls from her would be far less frequent and our time together far less intimate. This was a bit like closing the barn door after the horse has escaped. I couldn't stuff my feelings for her back into their initial form, that of a novice simply grateful for any attention from a dominant. I had feelings for her that went way beyond gratitude. If she were dumping me, my heart would be broken. I knew this, even though my heart had never been broken before.

As it turned out, the situation was exactly as Jeanne had said. She was out of town on business for four days and busy with other things back at home. Apparently, she was not the type who called just to chat, which if I thought it through made sense. She was my dominant, not my gal pal. She didn't want to know if I bought the shoes I'd seen in the store the day before. She didn't care to hear how my day had gone. And it didn't even occur to her to let me know what she was up to. She didn't call just to "check in."

What she did say when she called was she was having some people over on Friday whom she'd like me to meet and to be at her place at seven.

"And don't be concerned," she said. "They're not French."

"Ha ha," I said, glad to hear her teasing me. "I'll be there with bells on."

"No, don't wear bells."

"I was kidding."

She was silent for a moment. "On second thought, wear bells. On your ankle."

She hung up.

There had been no message from Adele, no follow-up of any kind to the trashing of my apartment. The silence made me think it may not have been her after all, and I'd put it out of my mind by the time the party at Jeanne's arrived.

I greeted Mrs. Kirchberger at the door as if she were a long-lost friend and I got the same response as I always got, which was none at all. She took my coat, for the air was cold now. It was Halloween, and I could see tiny costumed children being herded by their parents up and down the street. I wonder what their reaction was when Mrs. Kirchberger answered the door. Maybe the little ones screamed.

"Trick or treat," I said to her. She stared back and took my coat, looking down at my feet when she heard the tinkle of the tiny bells at my ankle. A trip to the fabric store and an evening with needle and thread had produced something I hoped would be acceptable—an ankle wrap with bells dangling from it. The sound made me feel like a cat. I hadn't bothered with a costume myself, thinking I wouldn't be wearing clothes for long anyway.



Once in the study upstairs I saw I wasn't the first to arrive. Jeanne was in her usual place on the sofa, nearest the fireplace, and with her were four other women. The dominants stood as I walked in the room and the submissives stayed seated, turning their faces toward me. Jeanne kissed me as she always did, on the cheek, and introduced me.

There was Pat, who smiled warmly and leaned over to also kiss my cheek. I felt a kinship with her, though we barely knew each other. The other dom was a woman named Kevin. It was her given name, she quickly offered, lest I think what, I don't know. Kevin was shorter than me and much more mannish than Pat or Jeanne. She wore a white shirt and skinny black tie and low-slung blue jeans. Her hair was buzz cut, and she had the broad physique of a wrestler, just starting to grow soft. She was older and had a very confident bearing, but in a different way than Pat's relaxed demeanor. Kevin had a slightly dangerous feel about her.

On the sofa were Denise and Heather, and there was no question they were femmes. I considered myself femme-ish, but they were the real thing—expert makeup, high heels, perfect accessories, complicated dresses. They both had long brown hair. At first, I had a hard time telling them apart, but Denise was a little younger, perhaps my age, and smiled easily. Heather was in her thirties and just barely acknowledged our introduction.

We sat, with Jeanne patting the seat next to her and Heather shifting over to sit on a chair, with Kevin perched on its arm. Jeanne poured me a glass of wine.

"Laura, I wanted you to meet my friends, not only because they are dear to me and an important part of my life, but also because we all belong to a society we'd be very interested in you joining."

"We spoke a bit about it with you before," Pat said, "but I'm sure it seems very mysterious."

"Very much so," I said. "The only thing I know is there is some sort of organization, and part of the structure includes making a submissive a primary to a dominant. Everything else is a complete mystery to me."

Kevin, Heather, and Denise stared at me as if I'd just fallen into the room through the ceiling.

“What?” I asked.

“How did you hear about primaries?” Heather said.

I shrugged. “Adele told me about it.”

They stared harder, but mingled it with looks at each other. Heather seemed particularly taken aback.

“It’s not something that’s supposed to be shared with anyone until such time as a person is taken into the Society,” Jeanne said. “None of the details of our structure are. But it’s done. Let’s move on. What we do as a group is nothing more than operate as a support to one another, to function as arbitrator when there are disputes among members, to coordinate our quarterly functions, and administer certain rules that have proven to make operating in our world less confusing and more fulfilling for everyone—dominant and submissive alike. Because you are someone with whom I want to spend more time, it is time now for you to be introduced to the Society and become a member.”

This was not posed as a question or an invitation. It was an announcement of their intention. So far, as had been the case with nearly everything else, Jeanne’s desire comported with my own. Except for that damn night in Paris.

“How does that happen, if you don’t mind my asking?” I looked demurely at Jeanne and she smiled.

“You can’t hear the history or too much of the detail of the organization until you become a member, so we don’t have much to tell you tonight. However, the upcoming quarterly get-together is scheduled for next weekend at my country place. I’d like for you to go with me and to submit to the initiation at that time.”

This seemed a little clichéd, if you were to base such things on how much there is similar to it in the BDSM literature. In my lost and lamented collection of books there were several stories partially set in someone’s country place, and the country place always had an elaborate dungeon. Of course, I reminded myself, those were the books I couldn’t stop reading, so it’s not like cliché is necessarily bad. In this case it might be very, very good.

“This initiation doesn’t include any form of sacrifice, does it?”

That got a laugh out of everyone.

“No, we aren’t an offshoot of the Freemasons,” Pat said. “The only thing that will be sacrificed during your initiation is a little bit of your dignity.”

I saw a note of pleasure in Heather’s expression when Pat said this, as if she was going to particularly enjoy watching whatever humiliation was in store for me. Presumably, Heather had to go through something similar, but as so often happens when someone becomes ensconced in an organization, there is scorn for the newcomer, as if they were somehow inferior for not knowing all the rules, for not yet being a part of the group. At least I hoped it was as banal as that. I had a sinking feeling there was something personal in Heather’s less than enthusiastic reception of me.

Jeanne put her arm around me and gave me a squeeze. “Let’s leave off that conversation and concentrate on this evening. Who’s ready for dinner?”

Mrs. K. served a scrumptious feast of roast leg of lamb, twice-baked potatoes with fancy designs on the slightly browned top, fresh asparagus with a sauce I couldn’t even describe, and a fresh fruit tart I hoped to God she picked up at a bakery and didn’t make herself. The woman was a workhorse. During coffee back in the study I was interested to see Heather sit on Kevin’s lap, Denise snuggle up under Pat’s arm, and Jeanne take my hand. It was like any lesbian party, where long-term couples reach for each other as they relax with other long-term couples. Very safe, very established. And yet this similarity was a veneer, one that would crack the second a submissive tried to assert her will about anything. One that would positively shatter as soon as we walked into Jeanne’s play room and the doms started stringing us up in any way they saw fit. I wasn’t going to test Jeanne’s patience by suggesting we go in there right away, though I already could feel my excitement. I would wait for her, and I knew Heather and Denise would act with the same restraint. The doms were well aware of our eagerness, and even if they were dying to get us in there, it was more important to them to keep us waiting and guessing what they would do. I had been around just long enough to figure that out. I had a love/hate relationship with it—loving the dependence on their decision-

making, but hating the patience it called for. I'd never had much in the way of patience.

Luckily, their collective will must have been to get right to it this evening. Jeanne put down her coffee cup and rose.

"Shall we?" she asked, and all of us sprang up and followed her to the secret door, waiting while she entered her code under the desk and held the book shelf panel that swung open. We walked in, followed by Jeanne, who locked the door behind us, a sound that still gave me a chill.

Denise and Heather had clearly been in the room before, probably many times before. They stopped in the middle of the room, standing quietly while the doms poured drinks and took off their jackets. I joined Denise and Heather, holding my hands behind me, feeling like an army private in line before the commanding officers. We were about to be sent into action. I stole a glance at Jeanne, who was settling into her seat, and was surprised to see her wink at me. It was a strangely intimate message, as if she were saying, "We're about to put on a show, but don't forget it's really about you and me." But maybe she was just winking to say, "You are about to get fucked within an inch of your life, darling. Have fun!" I didn't yet feel fluent in dominant-speak.

Pat stepped forward and led Denise and I over to a wall where chains and cuffs were attached to eye-bolts. She cuffed us to the wall and put gags in our mouths. Denise was a little taller than me and I envied her height. I was unable to rest my feet full on the floor. Denise glanced at me with a look of sympathy, but her eyes were also glittery. I could see she got off on this as much as I did. Even saying I envied her height wasn't exactly true. Each bit of discomfort I felt seemed only to increase my feeling of arousal.

Heather was left in the middle of the room, standing very erect and looking straight ahead. Pat returned to her seat next to Jeanne while Kevin rose and walked slowly to the armoire that held the equipment. When she returned she was carrying a large amount of rope. She tied an incredibly complex series of knots around Heather's body, pushing her to the ground during the process so her body could be contorted in very specific ways, none of which

looked in the least bit comfortable. I knew that these rope skills were something that some doms worked very hard to master, not only as a way to distress their submissives but also to show off to other doms.

At one point Heather looked over at Denise and me and gave us the haughtiest look one could give under the circumstances. I noticed she did so when Kevin was busy tying knots behind her back and Jeanne and Pat were talking and laughing about something. It wouldn't do Heather any good to look proud. I'm sure Kevin wouldn't like it. Or maybe I was basing that on the books I'd read, where the submissives were forced into a constant state of humility.

Whatever the dominants might think of Heather's haughty look, I know what I thought of it. It said she had something personal against me. I wondered if the other submissives were going to be like Heather and Adele—bitchy, territorial, maybe a little crazy. It made my heart sink, not only because I'd have to be around them, but because I didn't want to be associated with that kind of personality. I'd hoped to be done with social drama in high school. And I didn't want to think badly of the women I'd soon be spending more time with. Denise seemed nice, at least.

Jeanne and Pat fell silent as Kevin finished her work. Heather was left on her stomach, essentially looking like a rocker bar. Her head was held up by a rope tied to her ponytail, secured at a central knotted area in the middle of her back. Her legs were pointed toward her head, rope securing them between ankle and the center knot. Her breasts were bound at the base and bulging beneath her. Kevin walked over to the coffee table and picked up a remote, which lowered the chain from the ceiling. When it was all the way to the floor, Kevin attached it to the center knot and then slowly started to raise the chain back up. I heard it creak a little, but no one looked concerned it would break and Heather fall to floor. All three dominants stared intently at the figure as it rose to Kevin's shoulder height. The strain could be easily seen on Heather's face, and I didn't doubt the force of her weight against the suspension was incredibly hard on the body. She didn't look so proud now—more like she was simply gritting her teeth and trying to get through it.

Kevin walked slowly around her, tapping lightly with a crop on her ass, her breasts, her feet. Each tap brought out a cry from Heather. I could see sweat starting to break out on her forehead. She kept this up for five to ten minutes. It was hard for me to judge the passage of time. It must have seemed like an eternity to Heather. Kevin glanced over at Jeanne, who gave a slight nod of her head, and Kevin lowered Heather to the floor and removed the rope. I think I was breaking out in a sweat by this point. The rope markings on Heather were vivid and red and they didn't look like they'd just fade away in a few hours. They would be bruises. I understood the things submissives are sometimes asked to do are extremely hard and also call for extreme trust. There had been no genital contact between Heather and Kevin, yet everyone in the room was aroused by what they saw. Kevin put a collar on Heather and then pulled her up by it, leading her over to the wall where she was chained up next to Denise and me. Heather wasn't looking at anyone. She seemed to be in a zone of some sort, and I hoped it was a good one and she was as aroused by all of this as were those watching. I had to admit I was impressed with her skill, because there had to be some involved in successfully hanging like that, even for ten minutes.

While Kevin was putting her equipment away, Pat was pulling a pommel horse to center stage. It was about waist high and a foot wide, leather clad on sturdy metal legs. She then made her own trip to the armoire while Kevin got a drink and joined Jeanne. I saw Jeanne pat her on her knee, as if to congratulate her on a job well done. Pat dumped some items on the floor and then came over to get Denise. I felt a little heart stab, not out of a sense of being rejected by Pat, but more at being last to be asked. Again with the high school stuff.

Pat put a collar and cuffs on Denise and then pushed her over the pommel horse. Her body was bent in two, her ass in the air, and her head hanging upside down. Pat fastened her cuffs to the legs of the horse, tightly, so Denise could not move at all. She picked up a bamboo cane and walked in a circle around Denise. I heard Denise make a noise through her gag when Pat walked past her head and she saw the cane. It confirmed what I'd read, that the cane was the

least liked of all the implements used on submissives. It stung the most, and it could do a lot of damage with very little effort on the part of the dominant. It was often misused as a result. I would trust Pat. I'm not sure I'd want to be caned by Kevin, though. She seemed skilled, but I didn't like her. Therefore, I didn't trust her.

My thoughts, which had a tendency to quickly complicate the very simple, were brought quickly around by the sound of Denise crying out. It looked like Pat was barely tapping her on the ass and I wondered if Denise was being overly dramatic. Certainly, it couldn't hurt that much. Pat was moving from ass to thighs and then down to her feet, which got a particularly loud cry, a scream really, though all of it muffled by the gag. This went on for quite a long time and Denise's ass and thighs grew cherry red. There were horizontal lines across both. Denise was no longer making any noise other than a little whimpering. Pat reached down and removed the gag and then strapped on a dildo. She took Denise by the hair at the back of her head and raised up her head.

"Suck it," she said. She looked very fierce. She was rubbing the dildo up and down as if it were really her own cock and she was getting it ready. I believed it was her own cock. Denise opened her mouth and did the best she could from her awkward pose, trying to swallow the cock and push it against Pat's clit. Pat stood in front of her, staring down at the mouth working on her, holding Denise by the back of the head and pushing further into her throat. Pat's thighs were trembling from the strain and the excitement, and all at once she pulled out, leaving Denise gasping for breath. Pat kept hold of her head with one hand while she took off her harness, and then she thrust her pussy at Denise. Again, Denise took her into her mouth, using her tongue instead of the back of her throat to excite her. I could see Pat rubbing, holding Denise rigid between her legs, rubbing and rubbing until I thought her legs would go out from underneath her. She came, quietly, but her body language was clear. She let Denise's head drop and pulled up her pants.

I looked over at Jeanne and Kevin. Jeanne looked perfectly composed but certainly interested, while Kevin seemed a little overheated. Her hand was snaking into her trousers. Without

looking at her, Jeanne reached over and pulled Kevin's hand out of her pants.

Pat got Denise off the pommel horse and chained back on the wall next to me. She looked flushed but happy. She hadn't come, I don't think. Was she truly happy without having an orgasm? I hoped I'd be able to talk to Denise about this question of coming or not coming. I believe in submitting, but I believe in orgasms also. I didn't want to give up one to get the other.

After Pat put away her equipment she poured another drink for Jeanne, Kevin, and herself. Nothing was offered to the submissives. Jeanne rose and walked slowly and gracefully to the armoire and came back with her own accoutrements. She kicked the ottoman over from where Kevin had been propping her feet on it, and then she walked toward the wall. I had a bad moment where I thought she might pick one of the other women instead of me. But she didn't. She took me off the wall, without looking at me and without speaking to me. She attached a collar to me and then clicked on a leash.

"Get on your knees," she said. "And I expect you to keep up with me."

I dropped to all fours and looked up at her just as she set off at a brisk pace toward the back of the room. It was a bit like the Westminster Dog Show, though I stumbled a bit, making her yank on the leash and wrenching me forward by the collar. I quickly got my limbs working and scrambled to stay at her side as we went around the room. It was a large space and the floor a polished hardwood. I felt like I was bringing a hammer down on my knees with each step. It was painful, and it was also the most humiliating thing I'd done for Jeanne. I felt everyone's eyes on me. The effort was making me breathe hard, and I was drooling through my gag. At one point I balked, needing to catch my breath, and Jeanne stepped behind me and kicked me in the ass with her boot. Hard. For the first time since I'd been with her, the actions we were taking were not what I thought would be arousing to me. I never fantasized about wanting to be dragged along like a dog and kicked, but I had constantly fantasized about being spanked and whipped. And yet, as I found myself falling into some kind of rhythm beside her, I



also felt my arousal. It was strong. It was fed by seeing Jeanne's leg striding beside me, leading me by tugs on the leash. When we finally stopped, in front of the sofa where Pat and Kevin sat, I was ready to be taken in any way imaginable. Doggy style seemed appropriate.

I was encouraged when Jeanne pulled me over to the ottoman and draped me over it.

"Grip the legs of the ottoman and don't move. Keep your legs exactly where they are. If you move, bad things will happen."

Jeanne picked up a flogger, not unlike the one I'd admired in Paris. She dangled the strands over my body, brushed them up and down my back and ass, and did it a little more as I cooed appreciatively. But then came the thwack of the whip as it met my flesh and I howled through my gag. This was much heavier and more intense than anything she'd used on me before.

"You said you were ready for this when we were in Paris," Jeanne said. "So I'm going to take you at your word."

She hit me five times with it. Five horrible times. But each time I felt the pain in a different way, a progressively intoxicating way, as I saw myself go further under and Jeanne grow ever larger above me. By the end of the fifth blow I was panting, but it may have been as much from excitement as from the pain. I hadn't moved at all while she was flogging me. I hadn't moved once to avoid the blows, even though I was unrestrained. I could feel the shape of the strands where they left their impressions on my back. I relished the idea of them being there for days.

I was still in a haze when Jeanne returned me to the wall. It didn't look like I was to be granted an orgasm either tonight. I also realized Jeanne had not come (I don't think) and it seemed unlikely she'd let that remain the case. This worried me, for good reason. Jeanne now returned to her comrades and sat in a wide chair, signaling Pat to bring Heather to her. Pat took Heather down from the wall, took off her gag, and gave her some water. Then Jeanne pointed to the floor at her feet and ordered her to service her. I could hardly bear to watch.

Heather looked like she knew what she was doing, which was no surprise. I concentrated on watching Jeanne's face. She didn't

look at me once. Instead, she stared at Heather's tongue on her. Her eyes started to become hooded and her hands gripped the arms of the chair. It seemed it was just a minute or two before she came, her hips rising, her hands now pulling Heather's mouth tighter against her. Then she collapsed back against the chair and signaled Heather to go away. Pat walked her back to the wall, and I tried not to look when Heather walked by me, the shine from Jeanne's juices still gleaming on her skin.

## CHAPTER SEVEN—THE COUNTRY HOUSE

The following Friday morning, I was on the train to a town two hours north of the city, a region dotted with hobby farms and expansive retreats for the city's well-to-do. These properties encircled a quintessential small town with cute Main Street shops and overly sophisticated restaurants, the menus and prices of which would be of no interest to the year-round residents of the area. I'd been up here once before on a weekend trip with some fellow students, crammed into a lake cabin and too poor to eat at any restaurant. As the train pulled into the newly refurbished station and I saw Jeanne standing next to a Range Rover waiting for me, I knew I was in for a totally different experience this time around.

She took my bag when we reached each other, giving me a one-armed hug and a kiss. She seemed genuinely glad to see me. I'm not sure why this continued to surprise me, but it did. As I stepped up into the big car she pinched my ass and laughed before closing the door for me. Playful. It was also taking me a while to realize what a playful person Jeanne was, even beyond the sex play. She was not above a tickle fight, and one night we sent the feathers flying during a pillow fight. I felt guilty later that Mrs. Kirchberger probably had to clean it up.

"I'm so excited you're here," she said. "I was starting to go stir-crazy by myself."

"I thought the place was going to be full of people this weekend."

"It will be. But they're just now trickling in. Most will be here by mid-afternoon."

"When is the initiation?" I said.

Jeanne looked at me and smiled. "Nervous?"

"Of course. For all I know I'll be pierced a la *Story of O*, or branded, or something else along those lines. I'm going into this blind."

I could see Jeanne thinking about this. She took my hand.

"And you would go through something like that for me?"

I hesitated just a quick moment and returned her gaze. "I would. I would trust you to know when the right time would be."

"You're brave. I can see that in you. And you trust me, which means more to me than you probably know. But this isn't the time for anything like that."

I was relieved, and I also was even more trusting of Jeanne. I didn't want to be jolted out of that place of trust by fear she'd do something that was too much for me. Would she one day order my labia pierced or a red hot brand applied to my flank? Possibly. But it would be when we were both ready for it.

"The initiation is scheduled for Saturday night. After the dinner you will leave with the other submissives while we vote on your admittance to the Society. The vote needs to be unanimously in favor, which I'm sure it will be. Then we proceed to the initiation and the party afterward."

Jeanne drove as I looked out the window, at peace with the moment and able to not worry about what the weekend would bring. The countryside looked fairly bleak in the early November gray, but it was beautiful as well. Austere and graceful. The fields were on either side of us, both harvested and fallow, and I thought of their abundance and of how marvelous it would be to have such a simple and important reason for existence—to provide food. In between the working farms were the larger, elaborate properties used as second homes. Other second homes were located on the many lakes in the region. After a fifteen minute drive, Jeanne pulled

into a narrow gravel road that ran through thick woods, emerging after half a mile onto an enormous property on one of those lakes. The house was an excellent imitation of an English manor home and it sat on the rear of the property, surrounded by acres of lawn and garden.

The property was on a bluff above the lake, and as soon as I walked through the front door into the house I saw the floor to ceiling windows that looked over the water. This one room appeared to be the central meeting area. It had a lot of furniture in it, all of it comfortable. Several women were sprawled around on sofas and chairs, and I could tell right away they were dominants. I didn't think the submissives would sprawl. Jeanne introduced me briefly and then made our excuses to the others. She wanted to take me for a walk on the property.

"I'll save our tour through the inside for tomorrow," Jeanne said. "I want to show you the art, of course, which will take a little time. I'm looking forward to you seeing it."

We walked out the back of the house. Twenty feet away were wooden stairs leading down to the lake, a vertical drop so steep it would be impossible for anyone in poor health to come back up once they'd gone down. The lake itself looked gorgeous—quiet and a steely blue. Jeanne led me away from the stairs and to the north lawn. There was a walkway that led some hundred feet or so away from the house, and along it were several outbuildings. Jeanne paused in front of the first.

"The first building here is a writing studio. It can also be an art studio. It can also be your studio if you want to do some concentrated work up here. Maybe on your holidays from school, when you want to get a lot done on the dissertation."

"Really?" I was flabbergasted. I was starting to feel like a girlfriend. A girlfriend of a rich woman. We peeked into the studio and what I saw was an adorable cottage quite a bit bigger than my present apartment.

"I'd love that."

Jeanne looked pleased. We went along the path and came to a tool shed and then a guest cottage, approximately twice as large

as the studio, and finally a barn/workshop/auxiliary garage. There were no horses or livestock of any kind in the barn. Just jet skis and scooters and bikes and sporting equipment. As we were approaching the building I wondered if it were another play space—huge and elaborate. But it was a bit far away from the house. Getting to it wasn't the problem, but I imagined staggering out of it all the way back would be.

On the other side of the house there was an enormous patio and an outdoor pool, and beyond that a tennis court. I felt like I was at a Four Seasons Resort. Jeanne talked about the work she'd done on the place, what it looked like when she bought it. All of the boring things people tell you when they are in love with their properties. It made me happy she was in love with hers.

We went down the steep stairs to see the beach. At the base of the stairs was a long dock out onto the water, with a boathouse at the end of it. It was surprisingly warm inside. Jeanne turned on an overhead light and I saw a large Chris-Craft cruiser clad in gleaming wood.

"It's too cold to take her out today, but let's sit in the boat for a while. I find it relaxing."

Jeanne stepped down into the boat and turned to help me in. I loved how she automatically did the most thoughtful of things, just as she automatically felt an ownership over my body. She would offer me her arm one moment and give me the flat of her hand on my ass the next. It was hard to believe I found this soothing.

There was a bench seat in the back of the boat and we sat side by side, gently rocking as the lake moved beneath us.

"Can you tell me anything more about this society?" I asked. "Is it like *Story of O*? It seems the elements are there—the country house, the dominants who are in charge, the submissives who come to be initiated."

"I hate to think of this as being so derivative."

"We're not talking about art, after all. Maybe there just aren't very many ways to have such a group. And anyway, *Story of O* was popular for a reason."

Jeanne grinned. "Kind of like the Bible?"

“Yes, the Bible of Dominance and Submission. So what’s the genesis of your group?”

“I am, I guess. I found as I became acquainted with more and more women who were interested in living this kind of life, it was feeling unwieldy. I didn’t feel all of the submissives were safe, or all of the dominants well trained. Essentially, I wanted a way to vet the people I play with, and it turned out there were many others who had the same concerns.”

I felt as if I’d found a home after looking for one my entire life. It was a feeling of tremendous relief. I teared up.

Jeanne looked startled. “Is that upsetting to you?”

“No, it’s like magic to me.”

Jeanne put her arm around me and held me close. “I gathered a few together and put the pieces in place for the organization.”

“How many are there?”

“World-wide there are probably two hundred or more. In this part of the country there are around fifty, and probably a third will be here this weekend. It’s a fluid number because there are people who are members but who are now old enough they don’t attend every function. People who were quite a bit older than me when we started. And then there are younger members of all ages, women who have been admitted over the last year and are still undergoing training.”

I sat quietly for a bit, taking it all in. I didn’t want to know all of the details up front. I knew Jeanne would let me know what I needed to know.

“I want to say something, but I’m not sure how good I am at saying this sort of thing,” Jeanne said.

“You’re good at everything.”

“You shouldn’t overestimate me.”

“What do you want to tell me?” I couldn’t imagine what it was.

“One of the reasons we’ve formed this society is because we all intend to have sex with multiple partners. It’s what we do.”

“I know that.”

“That’s not going to change, no matter what form our relationship takes.”

I felt stung. "I know that too. I would never imply otherwise."

"Not all women are like you. And that's what I want to say to you. Something about you has affected me in a way none of my other lovers ever has."

My eyes got wide. Jeanne laughed. "I'm not sure whether I should take your expression as happiness or alarm."

"Surprise, I think. Then happiness."

"There will be a few group activities this weekend and you'll see me with other women. I want you to know part of me will be thinking of you while I'm with them."

"What will you be thinking when you see me with other women?"

Jeanne paused and looked down at her hands. "I'm not sure I'm prepared to see you with other women."

We both were quiet with our thoughts about that. Jeanne probably couldn't believe she'd said it.

"But I'll keep an open mind," she said, looking back at me. "Would you stay with me in my rooms this weekend? Most of the submissives stay in the west wing of the house unless invited to one of the doms' bedrooms. I'd just as soon invite you now."

"I'd love to," I said.

Jeanne leaned over and kissed me. It seems odd to say she'd never really kissed me before. Not this kind of slow, passionate, masterful kiss. If I had been standing I would have swooned. If this were the first thing Jeanne had done with me it would not seem nearly as intimate as it now did. The kiss lengthened, our breathing deepened, and soon she was pushing me down and her hands started to roam over me. She fondled my breasts as if she'd never touched them before. She kissed the length of my neck as if in worship, adoring every inch of me. Then she knelt beside me and helped me take my clothes off, kissing each area of my body as it was revealed. I didn't feel the cool air. My skin was hot to the touch. As she slid my panties off I could feel my wetness, and Jeanne wasted no time in feeling it also. She moved between my legs and put her mouth on me, teasing me with slow laps of her tongue. The tenderness was as powerful as her absolute dominance over me always was, but so interconnected.



The one wouldn't have its power without the presence of the other. I moved my hips to meet her tongue, to force myself harder on her and she didn't correct me, didn't order me into stillness. She met my urgency with her own and I felt myself starting to come.

"Can I come now?" I was panting.

"Yes. Come to me," she said putting two fingers into me. "Come now."

The boathouse was an acoustic nightmare, and the sound of my cries must have scared the fish below us. In the aftermath, I had my arm draped across my eyes as I tried to swim back up to real time and space. I felt Jeanne move so her face was resting on my belly.

"Wow," I said, vocabulary eluding me for the moment.

Jeanne was quiet.

"Are you there?" I raised my head and looked down at her, and she lifted her head to look back at me.

"I'm here, though I'm sure that didn't seem like me."

"It did."

"Really? Because it's been a long time since I made love to a woman that way."

"You seemed to remember how just fine."

She sat upright and straightened her clothing. "Well, don't get your hopes up. I don't think I've changed."

"I hope not. I loved that, but it wouldn't be you if it's all we did."

Another long pause. She gazed straight ahead, toward the lake, though the door to the boat house was down and there was nothing to look at.

"Why do you think that happened?" she asked.

For the first time I was seeing Jeanne as a bit confused, less in charge than was normally the case. It didn't fit with what attracted me to her as a dominant, but it made her all the more human to me as a woman. The question I struggled with was whether I wanted to encourage her vulnerability or discourage it. Did I want to know her, or did I want to just play with her?

"Why would it be strange for you to have a desire to be tender?" I asked.

"I don't think of myself as tender."

"You're complex. That's partly why I love you."

The words hung in the air. I hadn't yet told her I loved her and I could see it startled her. She helped me on with my clothes and we left for the main house, where I followed her to the west wing of the property. I was trying to hold my tongue.

"I'll see you this evening when we gather for cocktails," Jeanne said. "Your bag is already in my room, but you will find you have everything you need for this evening in the west wing. I believe Denise is here. She'll help you get acquainted with everyone."

Before she could leave I took her arm. "You're not upset with me, are you? For saying I love you? I don't expect anything from you."

"I know you don't."

"It would be impossible for me not to love you."

"Well, I'm not mad. I just have some things to think about."

"Will we be able to talk when I see you tonight? I don't know what the protocol is."

"We won't be talking like this until we're alone again. They'll explain it to you in here." She opened a door to a hallway and ushered me in. I stood in a breezeway leading into another section of the house. It was very quiet. At the end of it was another closed door and Veronica answered it when I knocked. I had not seen her since the evening she'd done the makeover on me.

"I heard you would be here!" she said, giving me a quick hug. "Jeanne asked me to keep a special eye on you."

"Is that a good thing?"

Veronica laughed. "A very good thing. Clearly, you've got her full attention."

We were standing in a living room, its windows also looking out toward the lake. There was no one else about. Veronica led me across the room and into a small kitchen, where she handed me a bottle of water. We sat at a table.

"There's only a few of the girls here, and they're all taking naps. More will be arriving soon. We'll go into the spa around six and start getting ready."

“Why did you say that, about me having Jeanne’s full attention? What was that based on?”

Veronica looked curiously at me. “Just what I said. Jeanne called me especially about you. And I know that Adele was asked to leave Jeanne’s house, which has to mean something.”

“I took it to mean something too, but I don’t know what. Jeanne won’t talk about Adele.”

Veronica laughed. “Typical. The doms like to think all the subs are fighting over them, but they don’t want to become involved in any of the details.”

There had been no sign of Adele since she trashed my apartment, and I was not nearly as concerned about her as I had been. It was hard for me to keep her in mind when there was room for little but Jeanne and the new life she was introducing me to.

“Jeanne wasn’t happy that Adele tried to warn me off.”

Veronica drank from her water. “I’m sure if Adele was exhibiting any signs of jealousy Jeanne would shut her down very quickly. That doesn’t fly around here. It doesn’t pay to be possessive of a dom, especially Jeanne. She’s the one who wrote the rules.”

Denise came into the kitchen and gave me a big hug. I hardly knew her, but watching each other at the mercy of a dominant as we had at Jeanne’s was a bonding experience. I felt happy to be with two friendly and somewhat familiar faces. I felt I’d found a home and that was almost as exciting as finding Jeanne. Denise offered to take me on a tour and we headed up to the bedroom level of the wing. Here I could see another long hallway filled with shut doorways.

“These are all bedrooms,” Denise said, “where most of the girls stay over the weekend. Here’s mine.” We went into a small but very nice room with tall ceilings, big windows, and a comfortable bed and easy chair. There looked to be six or seven bedrooms on this floor, with another floor above us. “Sometimes I stay with Pat, but she wanted to be on her own this weekend.”

“I like Pat. She’s very down-to-earth.”

“Yeah. I adore her. But I adore a lot of the doms. That’s partly what makes this so much fun.”

"Is Heather here this weekend?" I asked.

"Oh, yeah. She wouldn't miss it. She and Kevin get in soon, I think."

"Are you and Heather good friends?" I wanted to know if I could speak freely with Denise. "I get the feeling she doesn't like me."

Denise scrunched up her face. She had freckles, even in November, and she was very innocent looking, unless you'd seen her slung over a pommel horse, as I had.

"I think it's very hard to be friends with Heather. I'd say I get along with her as well as anyone does, which isn't saying much."

"Why is she like that, do you think?"

"You mean other than she's just unlikeable?" Denise laughed. "Some people just are."

"What about Adele?"

"I don't know Adele well. She's just been eighty-sixed from the Society. She and Heather were best friends, so I guess they at least liked each other."

"Wait. I'm lost here." I sat on the easy chair and motioned Denise to sit on her bed. "I do know Adele, because she's the one who introduced me to Jeanne. She and I were in the same art class. But Adele was unhappy when I started seeing Jeanne."

"Yep, and I think that's Heather's influence. Everyone here knows a submissive must keep any signs of jealousy strictly in check. It's in the oath we swear. I think Heather put it in Adele's mind she could hang on to Jeanne and perhaps profit more from their relationship if she made it a little more exclusive. Heather has complete control over Kevin, so you can imagine what kind of advice she was giving Adele. But Adele was a fool if she thought she could make any demands on Jeanne. They were doomed to failure."

I thought about this for a moment. "You know how I mentioned Adele told me about primaries and what they were in the Society?"

Denise laughed. "Yeah, definitely a no-no. I know Jeanne was angry about that."

"She also told me she hoped to be Jeanne's primary one day. I'm sure that's why she was so upset when Jeanne and I started

to spend time together. I don't know about the rules of primary relationships, but my guess is the doms would continue to have multiple sex partners but spend social time only with her Primary. Is that right?"

"Essentially. Again, Adele's plan was doomed to failure. If there's anyone less likely to have a Primary than Jeanne, I don't know who it would be. We were all shocked when she agreed to have Adele stay in her basement apartment. I hope you aren't getting your hopes up about Jeanne."

"No, of course not. I'm just trying to get through the day without falling flat on my face."

"Don't worry about a thing. We'll keep an eye out for you. Has anyone told you what these parties are like?"

"Not a word. So far, I've learned everything right before it happens."

"Well, it's not complicated. Cocktails, dinner, sex in the dungeon."

I'm sure my eyes lit up. "There's a dungeon?"

"Oh, yes. Huge, fully equipped, plenty of room for everyone."

"Okay. I know how to do cocktails and dinner. And I'm dying to see the dungeon."

"Just remember when we see the doms you must be in full submissive mode from the start. This isn't a cocktail party where we giggle and flirt with them. They may grab you and have you over a knee. They may pull your tits out of your robe and hang ornaments on them. You don't say a word and you don't resist. Can you do that?"

"Yes."

As in love with Jeanne as I thought I might be, it was this kind of experience that had inflamed me in the books I read in my pre-Jeanne life. I felt ready. I couldn't wait to do it.

Denise patted me on the knee and stood. "And your initiation tomorrow is nothing to worry about. If you already like what we do, you'll love it. I can't tell you about it, but it will only make you glad to be part of the Society."

"What's the name of the Society, anyway?"

“I don’t think it has one. We just call it the Society. On paper, it’s capitalized, so I guess that’s its name.”

What kind of organization with oaths and initiations and voting doesn’t have a name? Maybe one that doesn’t want to call attention to itself. Or maybe Jeanne just couldn’t think of one.

Denise and I went into the back of the west wing, behind the kitchen, and found six or seven women already gathered in the spa there. Denise introduced me and everyone was very cheerful and friendly, except for Heather, who was not hiding her dislike of me. While all the other women gave me a hug, Heather did not. While all the others asked after me, Heather walked away. It was painfully obvious, but I decided to not react and concentrate on the positive reception I was getting. I was led through several pre-evening rituals: a group steam bath and shower, and then, with everyone robed, a gathering at makeup tables to start putting on faces. Veronica oversaw all and helped me with my makeup from beginning to end. The women chattered and gossiped, and it could have been a group of women gathered anywhere—washing clothes on the banks of a river or having lunch at the country club. Or preparing to turn ourselves over to the mercy of a randy group of female dominants.

In the wardrobe room we replaced our bathrobes with long, flowing silk robes, each tied with a matching silk belt and open above and below it. I was given a light blue robe, the same color given to one other woman, Nan. I was told that she too was here for the first time. The other women wore robes in many colors, making for a subtle rainbow flowing into the main gathering room as we made our entrance. The dominants looked up, but none came forward to greet us. They continued their conversations, made their drinks. I stood next to Denise and scanned the room. The doms were dressed without uniformity as we were, but they were dressed up in their own ways. Pat had a tie on and black trousers instead of her usual black jeans. Kevin had a suit on, emphasizing her stout, fireplug appearance. Jeanne looked like the androgynous beauty she was. She wore a tunic over very skinny black pants, with elegant flat heeled shoes, a scarf wound around her neck, large watch at her wrist, and gold hoop earrings.

The doms began to approach the submissives, sometimes in pairs, and I could hear them laugh together as they began to handle them. The submissives kept their eyes cast to the floor. I saw Mrs. Kirchberger surveying the room before retreating to the kitchen.

Jeanne appeared next to us, seemingly out of nowhere. She glanced at Denise and said, "Leave us." The tone of her voice left it clear the dominant Jeanne was back. I didn't say anything as Denise quickly left and I kept my eyes cast downward. I could see Jeanne was holding a collar and leather leash in hand.

"Hold your hair up," she said, and I quickly gathered my hair and held it out of the way as she attached the collar and snapped on the leash. I fell to my knees when she pointed to the floor.

For the next half hour I scrambled behind Jeanne as she moved through the large room, pausing at each group to tell the dominants who I was. These were not introductions as much as a display of goods. A dominant might reach over and grab me by the chin, turning my face back and forth, raising or opening my robe to examine my body in an almost clinical way. I was half expecting them to open my mouth and check my teeth. When we got to Kevin's group, which included Heather sitting on the floor by her side, a dominant named Murphy asked Jeanne if she could take me by the collar for a moment. Jeanne nodded and handed the leash to Murphy, who yanked on it to get me to stand up. Murphy was tall and thin and had hair that fell into her face. I couldn't tell what she looked like. Like most of the doms in the room, she appeared to be in her late thirties, early forties. She quickly tied my hands behind me with the leash and then reached into the robe to take my breasts out, one by one. She grabbed me by each nipple, first one and then the other, and twisted, lifting my face to stare into my eyes, almost daring me to cry out. I didn't. Kevin was standing next to Murphy, watching intently. I did not want to give her the satisfaction of seeing me uncomfortable.

"I'd like to see how quickly I can make her scream once we get downstairs," Murphy said to Jeanne. "With your permission, of course."

"Of course," Jeanne said.

When dinner was announced we moved into the formal dining room and everyone took seats in no particular order, or so I thought. My leash was back in Jeanne's hand, so I went where I was led. She pushed me to the ground next to her seat at the head of the table, which seriously hampered my ability to observe. But I did see Pat sit next to Denise and Kevin and Murphy sit with Heather.

Jeanne fed me bits throughout the meal and occasionally stroked my head. Being treated like a dog was making the whole occasion a lot easier to navigate and comprehend, because I didn't have to navigate or comprehend a thing. I just did as I was told. I could feel it sliding me into a mental state of subservience that somehow translated for me into physical arousal.

As dinner wound down, Jeanne stood and addressed the group.

"Before we move downstairs, I want to officially welcome two newcomers with us this weekend. Laura, would you stand up? And Nan?"

Nan and I stood. We were at opposite ends of the long table and I could see heads swiveling between us, getting a good look. Pat winked at me. Denise gave me a thumbs up.

"This weekend is the last official Society gathering this year, and we will be voting tomorrow night on whether to admit Laura and Nan as members. We look forward to an exciting initiation ceremony following the vote. As always during our weekends, we will have some training and some workshops during the afternoon on Saturday, and Sunday afternoon will be the executive committee meeting. I hope you'll all enjoy yourself. If there's anything you require, you need only ask me or Mrs. Kirchberger."

Mrs. K. was standing in the dining room, just by the open door to the kitchen. I was relieved to see there were quite a few others in the kitchen to help her, but she was clearly running the show. It was remarkable what she could get done without a tongue. I began speculating on Mrs. K.'s sex life, whether she even had a sex life, first of all, and secondly, if she was a lesbian, how she dealt with being tongueless. Of course, if she were a dominant, which I would have bet everything she was, she'd never have to worry about her tongue not being there to perform those important acts of reciprocity.



Going down on submissives was not something dominants often did, I suppose because it seemed to them to make them appear less dominant. I was still getting over the surprise of Jeanne doing me in the boat that afternoon.

Soon, the women were walking toward the wide staircase near the entryway to head down to the dungeon. Jeanne held me back until everyone was gone. I was back sitting at the foot of her chair.

“Do you have any questions?” she asked.

“I have a million questions. How many can I ask?”

“One.”

I thought for a moment, but there was only one pressing question.

“Do I have to do whatever a dominant says, even if I don’t like her?”

“Yes. Most especially then.”

I resigned myself to some unpleasantness with Kevin. I had no doubt she would put me through something that pleased her a lot and me not at all. And if Heather forbade Kevin from approaching me, I thought Kevin would send in Murphy as her proxy. As these thoughts danced around in my head, Jeanne sat quietly.

“Is there someone in particular you don’t like?” she asked after a bit.

“It’s Kevin. I’m a little afraid of her.”

“Why?”

If I bring up Heather, I bring up Adele.

“I don’t think Kevin likes me, and since she’s the one holding the whip, so to speak, it makes me nervous.”

Jeanne sighed. “It seems we had a similar conversation in Paris, only there you thought you would be in danger simply because the dominants were French.”

“No, I—”

“Quiet.” Jeanne took hold of my collar and turned my face to look up at me. “Are you saying you don’t want to participate this evening?”

“No, not at all. This is completely different.”

“It sounds like you are declining to do as I wish, once again, out of an unfounded fear, maybe a ruse for you to get your own way. It’s clear you have no interest in being submissive to me. This is not a gray area, Laura. You aren’t submissive sometimes and not others—not at your own discretion, anyway.”

I could see Jeanne’s frown, etched deeply in her forehead and around the corners of her mouth. I felt nearly panicked.

“I want to go down there with you. I’ll do everything you want me to do.”

“I don’t believe you.” Jeanne was now unbuckling the collar. “You can go back to the west wing and stay there until I arrange for you to be sent home.” She stood and walked away from the table. My neck felt naked and vulnerable.

“Jeanne, please. Wait.” I scrambled to my feet and ran to her. “There’s something about this situation you don’t know. It’s not like Paris at all.”

She stopped. “You’ve kept something from me, in other words?”

“Technically, no. You said once you didn’t want to know anything about submissives squabbling over you, though the definition of squabbling is a little fuzzy.”

“Just tell me what you’re talking about.”

I took her arm and dragged her back to the dining table. I sat in a chair next to her.

“The reason I’m fearful of Kevin is because of her relationship with Heather, and I’m afraid of Heather because of her friendship with Adele.”

“Adele?”

“You told me we weren’t to talk about Adele, so I didn’t tell you when she threatened me on campus one day, or when she sent me a threatening drawing.”

“I saw the drawing. Pat brought it to me.”

“Just prior to that she saw me on campus and told me to stay away from you. When we arrived home from Paris I found my apartment trashed and my collection of lesbian BDSM completely ruined. There was paint thrown over it. I’m sure it was Adele.”

Jeanne looked stunned, but she didn't say anything. She got up and walked back to the window, staring out at the black lake and sky.

"I probably wouldn't have told you anything," I said, "but since I first met Heather, it's obvious she hates me and I've learned she and Adele are best friends. I'm sure Adele has poisoned Heather and Kevin against me. That's why I didn't want to submit to Kevin."

She turned to look at me. She looked stricken.

"I have failed you," she said. "I should have followed up after Pat gave me that stupid drawing of you stabbing Adele in the back, but I thought it was just a childish act on Adele's part. I'd grown a little tired of Adele, frankly, and used the drawing as the pretext for sending her away."

"Was she a member of the Society?"

"Yes, but I exiled her after the drawing incident."

"You can do that?"

Jeanne looked at me as if I were questioning her abilities. "Of course. If someone breaks the rules, their sponsor can unilaterally revoke their membership."

Jeanne took my hands into hers. "I never imagined Adele would actually be dangerous, but I think we have to take her seriously if she, in fact, did trash your apartment. I'll keep you safe, I promise."

"Is that your job, to keep me safe?"

"If you have put your trust in me, as you have so many times now, you need to trust I will protect you. I am so sorry I've not done that."

She was so sincere I felt like crying. I loved being a damsel in distress, as silly as it seemed. I hoped Snidely Whiplash would burst through the door so they could fight over me.

"I feel completely safe with you. I trust you, and I don't expect you to know things you can't know. But what do you think about Kevin and Heather?"

"I don't know. I think we should go down and keep an eye on them. Are you ready?"

We went downstairs arm in arm.

This was the first dungeon I'd seen in person. My Internet searches had been extensive, so I'd seen the variety within the fairly narrow scope of possibilities. Short of recreating a medieval version with dripping walls and stained flooring, a dungeon was just a basement version of Jeanne's fully equipped playroom on the second floor of her house. As we reached the bottom of the stairs a short hallway brought us into a large room already teeming with activity. It was twice the size of the room in the city house with twice the equipment. A sling was only one of the many things hanging from the ceiling—slings, swings, chains, ropes, pulleys. On the walls were fixtures where submissives could be chained up in countless configurations. Benches, crosses, frames, and horses were placed in different areas of the room, and a good number of them were occupied. Jeanne held me close by the collar as we took a seat on a sofa near the bar area of the room. Unbelievably, Mrs. Kirchberger was tending bar. Did this woman never get a moment off? I vowed to bring this up with Jeanne when next I was allowed to ask a question. Mrs. K. poured us some wine.

Straight in front of us was Denise strapped to a bench about to be spanked with a wooden paddle by one of the older doms in the group, a gray-haired, stunningly beautiful woman. She had several paddles to choose from arrayed on Denise's back. When she saw us sit, she brandished one of the paddles.

"What do you think, Jeanne? The traditional wooden?" She picked up another. "Or the leather studded one?"

Denise did not crane her neck around to see what was being discussed, but kept her eyes to the floor. I found that impressive.

"I think you know which one you want to use," Jeanne said.

The woman grinned. "You're right." She tossed the wooden paddle aside and stepped behind Denise. She spent a few minutes rubbing Denise's ass, moving down and up her thighs, reaching under and feeling her sex. Denise expelled a breath and Terry dried her wet finger on Denise's flank. Then she stepped back and brought the paddle down, the slap loud in the already noisy room. There seemed to be a slight hesitation, almost like the delay in a sonic boom, and then Denise cried out as the sting of the blow caught up to her. From

then on I would be hard-pressed to match her cries to Terry's blows. They both came rapidly and were soon all mixed up together. Welts in the form of dots and lines appeared all over Denise's ass, and soon Terry stopped to give her a break. She soothed her ass cheeks with her hand, checked on the state of Denise's excitement (she was dripping), and started up again. I was mesmerized.

Jeanne suddenly took my collar and pulled me down to my knees, between her legs. I was surprised to see her yank her pants off and pull my head to her, surprised she wanted relief so early in the evening. My experience with her so far, with a few notable exceptions, was she built up excitement for quite a long while before allowing herself an orgasm. I dove eagerly in, for going down on Jeanne was my greatest pleasure, my strongest connection to her. I could feel every need of hers in the tip of my tongue. It was as simple as feeling the most powerful person in your life become the most vulnerable.

I took my time and tried to give her the most pleasure I could, but soon she wouldn't wait. I was drenched by her wetness and her thighs were trembling. She gripped my head to her as she moved to meet my tongue, to simply use my tongue, and when she came she sounded like she was swallowing a scream. She held my head against her thigh as we caught our breath. I felt as if we were alone in the room, but when I opened my eyes I saw Heather about fifteen feet away from me. She was on her hands and knees being fucked by one of the doms, and she was staring straight at me. If you just looked at her face you wouldn't know she was being vigorously rogered by a very muscular looking dominant. Her face was set in an expression I can only describe as hate. It was unsettling. I looked up at Jeanne to call her attention to it, but Heather was in full submissive mode a moment later, her eyes facing the floor.

I was moving back onto the sofa when Kevin came up to us. I glanced back at Heather and she saw Kevin approach me. She was still getting it from behind and not free to meddle.

"Jeanne," Kevin said.

"Kevin."

"I'd like some time with your lady."

I felt a little sick. I saw a cane hanging from Kevin's belt, and Kevin had the singular ability to make the things that excite me seem frightening. I moved a little closer to Jeanne.

"I'm sorry, Kevin. I've promised Laura to Pat next. We're just waiting for her to finish up."

All of us looked across the room where Pat had a woman stretched out against the wall, chained at the ankles and wrists. She was putting clamps on her nipples and had a pile of equipment at her feet. It looked like she was just getting started. Kevin turned back to Jeanne.

"I'd say there's plenty of time. I'll be quick."

I tried to hide the shudder down my spine.

"I'm sorry. There's really not. I'd like to keep company with Laura until Pat is ready for her. But thank you for asking for her. I appreciate your interest."

Kevin stared at her for a bit before turning and walking away. Jeanne held a neutral look on her face, as if she and Kevin had just set a date for tennis. She pushed me down to the floor again so I'd be kneeling at her feet. I glanced over at Heather on my way down and saw her looking over to Kevin, slightly exasperated. Now my guess was she'd instructed Kevin to give me the tanning of my life, and once again Kevin had failed her. I almost felt sorry for Kevin.

Jeanne managed our movements over the rest of the evening so it seemed she was generously sharing me, but I was never far from her side. We had a three-way with the other new girl, which was delicious. When Pat was finally free, Jeanne handed me over to her and watched as Pat put me in the sling and gave me a long, slow fucking. Pat had smoldering eyes and a very earnest approach. If Jeanne didn't have such a powerful effect on me I could become very attached to Pat. And I sensed the feeling was mutual.

When Jeanne saw Kevin was occupied with someone else and wouldn't try to interrupt, she gave Murphy her chance to make me scream. She accomplished this quite handily by caning me fore and aft while I hung straight up and down from a hook in the ceiling. Even though Murphy seemed to be a friend of Kevin's, I was able to disassociate them while I hung there, finding myself slipping into

a feeling of acceptance and excitement, the one following the other, over and over as the cane made thin stripes on my skin. I was trying to be quiet, but it's impossible with the cane. I don't think it can be done. And I don't think it should be. As I cried out I felt yet another level of freedom and thought I must be a beautiful sight. I understood the riveted looks on the faces around me, especially Jeanne's. I wondered at the change that had overtaken me in such a short time, the journey from shame over who I am to whatever this feeling was—pride, freedom, love.

When Murphy took me down and handed me back, Jeanne excused us for the evening and we went up to her suite on the top floor of the house. We sat by a fire in the sitting room that was cheerfully ablaze when we entered, courtesy of Mrs. Kirchberger, no doubt.

"Thank you for staying close," I said. I was sitting next to her on the sofa, leaning against her. "I know there were other things you might have been doing if you weren't watching over me."

Jeanne had her arm around me, but she was staring into the fire.

"I don't care about that."

She did care about something. The furrow on her brow was deep, a tip off to me she was unhappy. She moved over to the fire and started poking at it.

"There's something going on in the group, and I wouldn't have even noticed it had you not told me about Kevin and Heather."

"And Adele."

"Especially Adele. But Adele was asked to leave the group. She should not be a consideration at all regarding what goes on here during a society meeting. That she exercises some influence on present members concerns me."

I sat quietly and watched Jeanne mull things over. I'd hardly presume to understand how things normally worked among this group of people. I did know, though, there is inevitable conflict within any group.

"I'm not naïve," Jeanne said. "I know not all of the doms are crazy about my leadership. But I hadn't sensed any organized dissention before this."

“I don’t think Kevin and Heather rises to the level of dissension, does it?”

“It’s more than just Kevin among the doms. I could see the various conversations taking place tonight. Doms putting their heads together and nodding in agreement, as if the time had come to storm the Bastille.”

I didn’t dare respond. I figured she was just thinking out loud.

“Do I sound paranoid?” She returned to my side. “I’ve always been the head of this organization. It’s never occurred to me I wouldn’t be.”

“Try not to worry about it tonight. Why don’t we just go to sleep and let the thoughts and feelings settle a bit? You’ll feel better.”

I was running my fingers through her hair in a feeble attempt to soothe her. She turned her eyes upon me and I could see the fire in them. In a flash she flipped me over so I was facedown, on my knees. My robe was an easy thing to get rid of. She spread my legs as far apart as she could and pushed my face down into a pillow, holding it there.

“I’ll feel better when I decide to feel better. Do you understand that?”

I tried to nod, but she had a firm hold on my head. With her other hand she began slapping my ass, which was plenty sore from the caning I’d gotten not an hour earlier.

“I don’t need a sub to tell me about my ‘feelings.’”

Slap.

“Or to help me assess the politics in my organization.”

Slap.

“Or to make me feel guilty.”

Slap.

Her hand found my pussy, feeling inside for moisture and finding plenty of it there. She got her fingers slicked up and then started to work two of them into my ass. Despite all of her efforts over the previous weeks to stretch my opening through long hours of dildo wearing, the feeling was still uncomfortable. Uncomfortable and profoundly exciting. She fucked me for a long time, and not particularly gently.



“You won’t forget who’s in charge, will you?”

“No.”

“Or who you will be pledged to obey, absolutely?”

“I will not forget, even for a moment.”

We rocked together for what seemed an eternity, until finally she pulled out and flipped me over again, onto my back, and straddled my face, pushing her wet pussy onto my tongue, riding me to a quick and furious orgasm.

I lay under her, exhausted and a bit cautious. Jeanne got off me and walked toward the bedroom.

“I’m going to sleep,” she said. “You can join me if you want to.”

I did, but nothing more was said between us. I slept like a stone.



## CHAPTER EIGHT—THE VOTE

Jeanne was gone from her rooms when I woke up the following morning. My body was sore from the caning, the spanking, the ass fucking, the various contortions it had been tied into. I slipped on a T-shirt and went into the sitting room. There was a thermos of coffee and a plate of rolls on the coffee table. As I picked up the thermos I saw a note from Jeanne.

*Off to take care of business today, may not see you before the evening's events. Stay close to the house. Call Pat with any questions/concerns.*

I had no idea what she meant by business, but I was fine with the idea of spending the day in her comfortable rooms, soaking in a tub, napping, and maybe, just for the novelty of it, doing some work on my dissertation. I was growing seriously behind schedule. When I grew restless mid-afternoon, I went down to the beach, thinking a brisk walk would feel good. But it was cold and windy and spitting rain. I came right back up and pulled the covers over my head.

At four, I went to the west wing for the pre-evening rituals with my fellow subs, only to find the spa empty except for Veronica and Nan, the other initiate. They were drinking tea in the kitchen area.

"Where is everyone?" I asked.

"It's just the two of you here with me," Veronica said. "The other women will get ready in their rooms. Tonight's all about the women being initiated. The doms won't be touching anyone else until after the ceremony."

Nan and I exchanged looks. I could tell she was tired from last night too. I suppose that's why it was called an initiation. It was some kind of test of endurance.

There was nothing different about our preparations from the night before, and soon we were made up, robed, clean as a whistle and sitting around waiting for our escorts. The doms that sponsor us were to pick us up at six and escort us in for the cocktail hour. Jeanne was prompt and I took her arm as we walked the long hallway from the west wing.

"Did you have a busy day?" I asked.

"I would call it productive. But we have other things to talk about right now. Tonight, you will be given an oath to swear to, and I want to explain it to you so you have time to think about it."

"But not too much time."

Jeanne looked at me.

"I mean, I'm going to be taking an oath in an hour or so and you're telling me what I'll be swearing to now. That's not much time."

"Do you have some doubts on the matter?"

"No. I'm just observing. Never mind." This wasn't how I meant to start out our evening. I got into trouble every time I was on my way into a group setting with Jeanne.

"The oath states you will honor the confidentiality of the Society's membership, you will never speak of its procedures and practices to anyone not a member of the Society, you will treat all members with respect and courtesy, and in the case of your interaction with dominants, you will obey them when you are asked to do something. By swearing the oath, you are granting your consent and placing your trust in the dominants of this Society. To your sponsoring dominant you will swear absolute loyalty and obedience. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Is any of that problematic?"

"No, not at all."

We were at the door to the main gathering room and it looked like most everyone had arrived. Heads turned our way, and the

feeling wasn't completely one of welcome. Denise and Pat and many others I'd started to feel a friendship with acted genuinely glad to see me arrive with Jeanne. But there were others, Kevin and Heather first among them, who seemed to release a toxin in the air when we walked in the room. It wasn't the best atmosphere for a newcomer on her initiation night, but I didn't dare bring up my caution with Jeanne. Before we started to mingle with others, Jeanne leaned in and spoke softly in my ear.

"I'll be watching after you tonight. Don't worry about anything. But try to endure what you can. The initiation is meant to be intense. You might mistake it with something else, some ill intent from a member. It won't be. Initiation can feel like punishment. But then, you have an extraordinary liking for punishment. It probably won't make you think twice."

If this was meant to be comforting, Jeanne had fallen short. But I had to trust her. I'd trusted her so far.

As we waded into the room I saw the other submissives were wearing dresses and heels, and that Nan and I were the only ones in robes. And it wasn't just the doms who were reaching in our robes to take a breast or butt cheek in hand. The submissives seemed to get a real kick out of it, and it had the disarming effect of making me feel more like an object than when the doms helped themselves. I was hoping to make the emotional slip into my sub space, the state of mind where feeling humble would be a step up. Where the ego is completely dissolved and the only feeling left is sensation. Where I found the deepest relaxation possible, the deepest peace. But that journey seemed to be longer than usual.

At the dinner table there was a lot of talk about the delicious meal, but for Nan and me it was an hour of crawling around at the end of a short leash held by a submissive. Occasionally, a dom would ask us to stop and then I would be fed a tidbit from a plate, sometimes having to take the food off the plate with my mouth. I didn't take much notice of how it tasted. Other times, I would be stopped and a dom would check out the state of my pussy, which was wet despite my nervousness. I think even the other submissives were impressed.

As dinner came to a close, I found myself kneeling next to Jeanne's chair at the head of the table. She rose to speak.

"If everyone's ready, we will excuse the submissives and begin our vote on the membership for Laura and Nan. You've all gotten a chance to get to know them over the weekend, so you know how privileged we are they've agreed to apply for membership. They will be, in my opinion, wonderful additions to our organization. Ladies, if you'll take yourselves back to the west wing, we'll send someone in to get you when the voting is completed."

The submissives moved as one out of the dining room and back to our headquarters in the west wing. As we sat in the living room waiting, the women teased Nan and I about what we had in store for us that night.

"Don't plan on walking much tomorrow," one said.

"No, walking and sitting are going to be a little difficult," said another.

"If I'm not walking and I'm not sitting, what am I supposed to be doing with myself?" Nan asked.

"Kneeling?" Denise said, and everyone roared. It was kind of funny, but not that funny. Still, I appreciated it was good-natured. I could feel Heather's stare on me, and I started to wonder what her problem was. Was she so devoted to Adele as a friend she was willing to focus her venom on me this whole weekend? There had to be more to it than that. I walked across the room and sat next to her. She looked surprised.

"What can I do to make things a little easier between us?" I said. I took a conflict resolution class as an undergraduate, but this opening line was about all I remembered from it.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she said. She was staring at her hands.

"Really? Ever since you first saw me you've been shooting daggers at me. I guess because you're friends with Adele and she's been asked to leave the Society by Jeanne, who is the one bringing me in. I get that."

"You don't get shit." She was looking right at me.

"Am I wrong? Is there some other reason you've been so nasty?"

“Nasty is as nasty does. Bitch.”

I felt for a second as if I’d been transported to the *Jerry Springer Show* and was about to be thrown down by my baby daddy’s girlfriend. I didn’t understand Heather, and I was starting to get pissed off.

“Okay. I’m going to walk away before we start rolling around on the floor scratching each other’s eyes out. I sure don’t get what I’ve done to you, but you’re going to have to get over it. I’m going to be around.”

As I turned to leave I heard her say, “No you’re not.”

“What?”

Heather had a smug smile on her face as she sat in her chair and picked up a glass of wine. I was about to question her when Veronica came into the room.

“Listen up,” she said, as everyone turned their attention to her. “The voting is complete and they are waiting for us downstairs. Nan, will you come forward?”

Nan looked a little confused, but went to stand in front of Veronica while the rest of the women started to line up behind her.

“Wait a minute,” I said, walking up to stand next to Nan. “Don’t forget me.”

Veronica looked stricken. “I’m not forgetting you, Laura. But you have to stay here. You’ve been blackballed.”

The others gasped. My jaw dropped open, but nothing came out of my mouth. All I could think about was Jeanne and what this meant to her. I bolted toward the door.

“Wait!” Veronica cried. “You can’t go out there.”

I was already out the door, running down the long hallway toward the main house to find Jeanne. I saw Pat enter the hallway. She grabbed me as I tried to race by her. My robe was open in front, the tie having come loose during my sprint. Pat took me by the elbow and into a nearby room. I could hear the submissives starting to move down the hallway on their way to the basement dungeon.

“What the hell is going on?” I asked. I was gripping Pat’s arm.

“Jesus, I don’t know. Revolution, I guess. The vote came in unanimously for Nan, and blackballed for you. Jeanne asked for

an open vote and it turned out there were five voting against you. It wasn't just Kevin."

"Oh, god. That's really not a vote against me, is it?"

"No. Definitely not. They were voting against Jeanne and she knew it."

"Where is she? I have to go to her."

Pat tied my robe and adjusted it at my shoulders. "I don't know. She ran out of the room after the vote. I was just going out to look for her."

"I'm going too. Let's split up. I'll go to the boat house; you go toward the barn."

Pat handed me a flashlight and we went out a side door, away from where the others could see us. I didn't know if all the other doms were downstairs, or whether some of them were out there looking for Jeanne also. I wished I had something more than slippers, a robe, and a flashlight. Maybe a pitchfork. Isn't that what they carry during revolutions?

My search didn't take long. As soon as I entered the boat house, even before I turned the flashlight on her, I could feel Jeanne's presence. She was sitting behind the steering wheel, her hand resting on top of it as if she were lazily guiding the boat through open water.

"That didn't take long," she said.

"You don't sound surprised to see me."

"I'm not. Mrs. Kirchberger is on the roof and she texted me you were approaching." She pointed at her phone sitting on her lap.

"Mrs. Kirchberger is on the roof?"

"I can't ever seem to shake her. I've just grown to live with it."

I stared at her. Jeanne's life was bizarre. It was fully dawning on me how different everything was in her world. It was also dawning on me how lonely she was.

"She has your back, that's for certain," I said. I climbed into the boat and sat next to her. "What will she do if someone unfriendly approaches?"

"Depends. If they look threatening, I imagine she'll pick them off with her rifle."

"Now you're pulling my leg."



“Am I? We’ll see.”

We sat quietly for a bit.

“Are you mad about me not making it into the membership?”

Jeanne looked at me in dismay. “I’m not mad at you, for heaven’s sake. No one would ever imagine you would be blackballed. This doesn’t have anything to do with you.” She took her jacket off and gave it to me. I was freezing in my silk robe.

“It’s hard not to take it personally. I understand it was more than one vote against me.”

“That’s why I know it’s not just someone’s jealousy or quirk. There’s no reason multiple people would be against your membership. This has to do with me.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s what I spent the day trying to find out, with only a bit of success. It looks like there’s a group who think the Society should be run along democratic principles, its rules should be formulated by committee, and on and on like that.”

I was quiet again. It was hard to argue with what the dissenters were asking. Most organizations in this country would follow that model.

“What do you think?” I asked.

Jeanne had the good sense to smile. “It never even entered my mind. To tell you the truth, I started this group and just made things up along the way. It all seemed to work fine—until it didn’t. Maybe I’m not a democratic sort.”

“Still, they could have talked to you about it before blackballing me. What are we going to do now?”

Jeanne pulled me on to her lap. “I think you and I will just sneak up to our rooms and have our own fun. I’ll figure out what to say to everyone during the meeting tomorrow.”

She nuzzled me for a bit before we climbed out of the boat. As we walked up to the house I looked back and saw a figure in black climbing down the ladder from the boat house roof. It looked like Mrs. K. actually did have a rifle in her hands. I bet she could field-strip a six-point buck and have the steaks on the grill that night. And it struck me like a bolt that the other thing Mrs. K. couldn’t do

without a tongue was taste food, a horror I hadn't even considered before. She was largely incomprehensible to me.

I also couldn't help but marvel at how well Jeanne seemed to be taking this rebuff by her fellow doms. I knew she was used to having her own way.

"Are you upset?" I asked.

Jeanne took my hand when we reached the top of the stairs and walked across the lawn toward the brightly lit house. "Strangely, I'm not. I don't get it, really. I've given this organization everything—my time, my money, my best thinking, my property. And when the vote was returned it felt like I'd been kicked in the teeth. But then I thought about how a lot of things have happened lately that seemed to be telling me I might not be as in charge of things as I thought."

"Like what?"

"Like this little *coup d'état*. Like losing a couple of bids on paintings I've planned a long time to buy and was sure I would get for exactly what I wanted to pay for them."

She stopped walking and turned toward me.

"But the thing that has rattled my cage more than anything else is you."

I bit my tongue. There were so many ways I could fuck things up. I kept quiet.

"You're the first true submissive I've ever fallen in love with."

I gasped a little, but still didn't speak.

"And the more I fall in love, the more I find your submission the most thrilling I've experienced in my life, and your participation in my life the most fulfilling. I call all the shots, but somehow I am aware it's because you allow me to, and the shots I call seem to all have your wishes taken into consideration. It's all very different."

"And that's unsettling to you?" I asked.

"Deeply."

"We can be discombobulated together. I'm discovering a new me since I started spending time with you and it's exhausting. I know I'm in love with you, a whole new and different sort of love."

She got a scared look in her eye again, so foreign in Jeanne. She started walking again.

“Are you going to freak out every time I tell you how I feel about you?” I asked. “You can tell me not to do it.”

“No. That’s not it. Just don’t expect me to get all lovey-dovey.”

“I won’t.”

She stopped again. “Let’s go home. Tonight. Mrs. K. can stay and see the rest of the group doesn’t trash the house or anything. Pat will be here. I think I just want to be with you. For right now, anyway.”

We walked into the house and slipped up the stairs. We couldn’t hear what was going on downstairs in the dungeon, but my mind’s eye had a good look. I hoped it wouldn’t be too long before Jeanne mended fences with the Society and we were welcomed back in. Somehow, I knew it wouldn’t be. But for right now, just the two of us together was more than enough.

## **About the Author**

Lesley Gowan has published several novels and many stories under a different name and in a different genre. This is her first book length work of erotica. She can be contacted at [lesleygowan@gmail.com](mailto:lesleygowan@gmail.com).

## **Books Available from Bold Strokes Books**

**Dying to Live** by Kim Baldwin & Xenia Alexiou. British socialite Zoe Anderson-Howe's pampered life is abruptly shattered when she's taken hostage by FARC guerrillas while on a business trip to Bogota and Elite Operative Fletch must rescue her to complete her own harrowing mission. (978-1-60282-200-9)

**Indigo Moon** by Gill McKnight. Werewolves Hope Glassy and Godfrey Meyers are on a mercy mission to save their friend Isabelle after she is attacked by a rogue werewolf, but does Isabelle want to be saved from the sexy wolf who claimed her as a mate? (978-1-60282-201-6)

**Parties in Congress** by Colette Moody. Bijal Rao, Indian-American moderate Independent, gets the break of her career when she's hired to work on the congressional campaign of Janet Denton—until she meets the remarkably attractive and charismatic opponent, Colleen O'Bannon. (978-1-60282-202-3)

**Black Fire: Gay African-American Erotica** edited by Shane Allison. Best-selling African-American gay erotic authors create the stories of sex and desire modern readers crave. (978-1-60282-206-1)

**Breaker's Passion** by Julie Cannon. Leaving a trail of broken hearts scattered across the Hawaiian Islands, surf instructor Colby Taylor is running full speed away from her selfish actions years earlier until she collides with Elizabeth Collins, a stuffy, judgmental college professor who changes everything. (978-1-60282-196-5)

**Justifiable Risk** by V.K. Powell. Work is the only thing that interests homicide detective Greer Ellis until internationally renowned

journalist Eva Saldana comes to town looking for answers in her brother's death—then attraction threatens to override duty. (978-1-60282-197-2)

**Nothing But the Truth** by Carsen Taite. Sparks fly when two top-notch attorneys battle each other in the high-risk arena of the courtroom, but when a strange turn of events turns one of them from advocate to witness, prosecutor Ryan Foster and defense attorney Brett Logan join forces in their search for the truth. (978-1-60282-198-9)

**Maye's Request** by Clifford Henderson. When Brianna Bell promises her ailing mother she'll heal the rift between her "other two" parents, she discovers how little she knows about those closest to her and the impact family has on the fabric of our lives. (978-1-60282-199-6)

**Chasing Love** by Ronica Black. Adrian Edwards is looking for love—at girl bars, shady chat rooms, and women's sporting events—but love remains elusive until she looks closer to home. (978-1-60282-192-7)

**Rum Spring** by Yolanda Wallace. Rebecca Lapp is a devout follower of her Amish faith and a firm believer in the Ordnung, the set of rules that govern her life in the tiny Pennsylvania town she calls home. When she falls in love with a young "English" woman, however, the rules go out the window. (978-1-60282-193-4)

**Indelible** by Jove Belle. A single mother committed to shielding her son from the parade of transient relationships she endured as a child tries to resist the allure of a tattoo artist who already has a sometimes girlfriend. (978-1-60282-194-1)

**The Straight Shooter** by Paul Faraday. With the help of his good pals Beso Tangelo and Jorge Ramirez, Nate Dainty tackles the Case of the Missing Porn Star, none other than his latest heartthrob—Myles Long! (978-1-60282-195-8)

**Head Trip** by D.L. Line. Shelby Hutchinson, a young computer professional, can't wait to take a virtual trip. She soon learns that chasing spies through Cold War Europe might be a great adventure, but nothing is ever as easy as it seems—especially love. (978-1-60282-187-3)

**Desire by Starlight** by Radclyffe. The only thing that might possibly save romance author Jenna Hardy from dying of boredom during a summer of forced R&R is a dalliance with Gardner Davis, the local vet—even if Gard is as unimpressed with Jenna's charms as she appears to be with Jenna's fame. (978-1-60282-188-0)

**River Walker** by Cate Culpepper. Grady Wrenn, a cultural anthropologist, and Elena Montalvo, a spiritual healer, must find a way to end the River Walker's murderous vendetta—and overcome a maze of cultural barriers to find each other. (978-1-60282-189-7)

**Blood Sacraments**, edited by Todd Gregory. In these tales of the gay vampire, some of today's top erotic writers explore the duality of blood lust coupled with passion and sensuality. (978-1-60282-190-3)

**Mesmerized** by David-Matthew Barnes. Through her close friendship with Brodie and Lance, Serena Albright learns about the many forms of love and finds comfort for the grief and guilt she feels over the brutal death of her older brother, the victim of a hate crime. (978-1-60282-191-0)

**Whatever Gods May Be** by Sophia Kell Hagin. Army sniper Jamie Gwynnmorgan expects to fight hard for her country and her future. What she never expects is to find love. (978-1-60282-183-5)

**nevermore** by Nell Stark and Trinity Tam. In this sequel to *everafter*, Vampire Valentine Darrow and Were Alexa Newland confront a mysterious disease that ravages the shifter population of New York City. (978-1-60282-184-2)

**Playing the Player** by Lea Santos. Grace Obregon is beautiful, vulnerable, and exactly the kind of woman Madeira Pacias usually avoids, but when Madeira rescues Grace from a traffic accident, escape is impossible. (978-1-60282-185-9)

**Midnight Whispers: The Blake Danzig Chronicles** by Curtis Christopher Comer. Paranormal investigator Blake Danzig, star of the syndicated show *Haunted California* and owner of Danzig Paranormal Investigations, has been able to see and talk to the dead since he was a small boy, but when he gets too close to a psychotic spirit, all hell breaks loose. (978-1-60282-186-6)

**The Long Way Home** by Rachel Spangler. They say you can't go home again, but Raine St. James doesn't know why anyone would want to. When she is forced to accept a job in the town she's been publicly bashing for the last decade, she has to face down old hurts and the woman she left behind. (978-1-60282-178-1)

**Water Mark** by J.M. Redmann. PI Micky Knight's professional and personal lives are torn asunder by Katrina and its aftermath. She needs to solve a murder and recapture the woman she lost—while struggling to simply survive in a world gone mad. (978-1-60282-179-8)

**Picture Imperfect** by Lea Santos. Young love doesn't always stand the test of time, but Deanne is determined to get her marriage to childhood sweetheart Paloma back on the road to happily ever after, by way of Memory Lane—and Lover's Lane. (978-1-60282-180-4)

**The Perfect Family** by Kathryn Shay. A mother and her gay son stand hand in hand as the storms of change engulf their perfect family and the life they knew. (978-1-60282-181-1)



**Raven Mask** by Winter Pennington. Preternatural Private Investigator (and closeted werewolf) Kassandra Lyall needs to solve a murder and protect her Vampire lover Lenorre, Countess Vampire of Oklahoma—all while fending off the advances of the local werewolf alpha female. (978-1-60282-182-8)

**The Devil be Damned** by Ali Vali. The fourth book in the best-selling Cain Casey Devil series. (978-1-60282-159-0)

<http://www.boldstrokesbooks.com>

# *Bold Strokes*

B O O K S

victory  
EDITIONS



*Drama*



*Mystery*



*Sci-fi*



*e-Books*



*Erotica*



*Young  
Adult*



*Romance*



# WEBSTORE

PRINT AND EBOOKS