

## Roots of Control

### Chapter 1

"Older is better," Richard said, his voice carrying further than he seemed to realise. "If you have to choose between a teen girl and a milf, always go for the milf. You won't regret it!"

Across the hall, a few girls glanced our way, scowled.

It was rich of my best friend to talk about the virtues of older women, seeing as he was as much of a virgin as I was. He didn't know shit about what he was talking about, yet acted like he knew everything there was to know. Get him in a room with a hot milf and he'd freeze up, no doubt about it.

"Uh-huh," I shrugged. "So what're you doing after school?"

A pretty obvious attempt to change the conversation, I know. But what else could I do? Rich might not care that he was drawing the ire of a group of girls, but I sure as shit did.

"Like your Mom," Rich continued, oblivious. "Now *that's* a real woman. All curves and-"

"Dude!" Anger and warning entered my voice. "Stop. Don't talk about my mother like that."

My friend grinned, shrugged. "I'm just sayin'..."

"Don't."

After that, we were silent for a long while. Not exactly the most fun lunch-break ever. I was thinking about apologising, telling him I was sorry for snapping. Richard was odd - I'd known that since we were children. It was like he didn't have a filter, would say and do whatever he was thinking in that moment. It wasn't his fault that he could be a bit of an asshole every now and then.

"Hey," I began. "I'm-"

"Nothing," Rich said quickly.

"What?"

"After school," he rolled his eyes. "Nothing. I'm not doing anything."

Maths. The most boring class ever. And totally unnecessary. Just like everyone else in the room, I had a phone - and thus a calculator - with me at all times. Why did I need to learn about all this pointless shit?

The only saving grace for Maths was the unprecedented number of hotties in the class.

The teacher, Miss Thorn, was the hottest teacher in the school. No doubt about it. Where all the others were old women and men, wrinkled and bland and uninteresting, Miss Thorn was young and full of life, attractive beyond reason. Long red hair, bright blue eyes, full lips, an hourglass figure. She always wore button-up shirts, and always left the top few buttons undone to show off her ample cleavage.

Then there was the school's idol - Hannah - the most beautiful girl you can imagine. Flowing blonde hair, icy blue eyes, an angular face that belonged on magazine covers. She never smiled, never scowled. Every time I'd ever looked at her, she had that same distant look - that unobtainable beauty. She was the type of girl you just knew was going to be famous one day - as an actress or a model or a wealthy man's trophy wife. Far and away out of my league, for sure. But it didn't hurt to look.

And there, sitting at the front of the class, the only person paying attention to what Miss Thorn was saying, was Alexia.

If Miss Thorn was sexy and Hannah was beautiful, then Alexia had to be the *prettiest* girl in school. Not blatantly sexy, nor otherworldly beautiful, but cute and kind and attractive in her own special way. Her hair wasn't perfect - it was a fuzzy, bushy brown mess. Her eyes were brown too - not some impossible, unseen shade of green or blue or

any other colour. Just simple brown. And they looked adorably cute all the same. Wide and intelligent and caring. And her smile! Whenever I saw it, my heart ached and butterflies fluttered in my chest. *That's* how amazingly beautiful her smile was.

And, of the three, Alexia was the most unobtainable. Not only was she in a long-term relationship with the 'love of her life', but that 'love' was another girl.

Just thinking about it felt like a punch to the gut.

Thankfully, I didn't have to think about my horrible luck with women for long.

"Does anyone have any questions?" Miss Thorn asked the class.

A single hand rose into the air.

I could see the smothered groan on Miss Thorn's face, could tell how much she didn't want to give him a chance to speak. But it was her job, and no other hands went up. She sighed.

"Yes, Richard?"

"Do you have a boyfriend, Miss?" My idiot of a friend asked.

Once class was over, the school day ended. I watched as Hannah left the classroom, gliding gracefully out the door. Her skirt billowed as she went, toned thighs flashing into sight for a brief instant.

"Careful," a familiar voice said behind me. Richard's hand slapped my back. "Keep staring like that 'n' perky tits will notice you're lookin' at her."

I turned, stared at Richard's stupid smirk.

"So," he continued. "Where to today?"

Together, me and Richard stumbled through the overgrowth. Weeds and square stone slabs and knee-high grass surrounded us on all sides. And bugs. Lots and lots of tiny insects flying around the run-down graveyard.

In front of us, the remnants of an old stone church loomed. Mostly rubble now, after so many years of disuse.

"Place is fucking creepy," Richard shuddered beside me. "Why am I here again?"

"Because you've got nothing better to do," I reminded him.

Once upon a time, this church had been important. The number of graves surrounding it proved that. Why, then, had it been abandoned and left to crumble?

It was on the outskirts of town, removed from everything else going on, but not so far away that people would just up and abandon the place for no reason. Maybe a new church had been built in a more convenient location? Or maybe whoever owned this church had run out of money and couldn't maintain it?

For as long as I'd been alive, the Church of Two had been nothing more than a mouldy old building ready to collapse.

I walked forwards, towards the high archway into the crumbling building. Behind me, Richard hesitated before following. For once, he was silent - not making some stupid remark about women or sex.

The church's roof had half-rotted away, letting in plenty of light. The wooden flooring had also rotted away, revealing cracked concrete and a sea of weeds underneath. Beer bottles and syringes littered the floor, empty snack-food wrappers and cigarette butts.

No people though, thankfully.

Being careful where I stepped, I walked through the Church of Two, staring at the walls and floor and ceiling.

Everything was falling apart. The place was a shithole.

"It stinks in here," Rich said. He spat on the floor. "Let's get out of here. Don't even know why you wanted to come here in the first place. There's nothing here."

I rolled my eyes. Some things, Richard would never understand.

Being here, seeing this huge building slowly decaying, dying, was amazing. In a few

years, it might not be here any more. It might give way and collapse in on itself overnight. There was beauty in that, a reminder that time was precious or something. It was hard to put my finger on what I liked about the Church of Two exactly. There was just something about it that spoke to me.

A low rumble, the sound of stone cracking, was the only warning I got.

In front of me, one of the church walls began to crumble. It happened in slow motion, the wall falling to the ground, slamming into the floor, disappearing in a shower of dust and rot.

Instinctively, I shielded my eyes.

Somewhere behind me, Richard swore.

The dust hit me in a wave, a foul-smelling gust of debris. It flew into my mouth, up my nose, down the collar of my school shirt and into my ears.

I hunched over, coughing and choking.

"The fuck," I heard Rich saying, "is *that*?"

It took me a moment to regain composure enough to look up, see what Richard was looking at.

My eyes widened.

A glowing statue of a woman stood where the wall had been a moment before, no more than a foot tall. It shone white, ripples of blue and red and green and purple flowing across its metallic surface.

"What *is* that?" Rich said again, voice filled with awe and uncertainty.

Carefully, cautiously, I took a step towards the statue.

Orange and teal and pink flowed across the figure's surface, cyan and magenta and yellow.

Richard came up behind me, nudged me forward.

The statue was unlike anything I'd ever seen before. The glow seemed to be coming from somewhere inside it, though where exactly and, more importantly, how, I had no idea. The metal wasn't anything I'd ever seen before. Not steel or copper or silver. Not any natural metal that I'd ever heard about.

And the statue's shape - womanly and detailed, enough that I could make out the individual strands of its long hair, could see the tiny crinkles around the corner of its eyes and the faint smile lines around its mouth.

Most interesting of all was the feeling I got from it. Like it was watching me.

"Crazy," Rich whispered over my shoulder.

I took another step forward, and another. When I was close enough, I reached a hand out, touched the metal surface. The moment my skin made contact, everything went white.

A woman's voice spoke to me, whispered the statue's secrets into my mind.

"Dude," Richard spoke behind me - though it sounded like he was a million miles away. "You okay? Harry?"

The voice went silent, the statue glowing a dazzling white.

I stumbled backwards, eyes huge.

"What just happened?" Rich asked, shifting nervously.

I turned to him, grinned.

"Wait," Rich interrupted, sounding sceptical, "so you can 'control' anyone you want, just like that?"

"Any *two* people," I answered, raised both hands.

"And they have to do *anything* you say?"

"Yup."

"Sounds like a load of bullshit to me," Richard confessed. His eyes drifted again to the foot-tall, glowing metal statue. A shadow of doubt entered his expression, a glint of

hope twinkling in his eyes.

"All you have to do is touch the Goddess - the statue - and you'll get the blessing too. And then all you have to do is press the palm of your hand to someone's forehead and they'll be yours. One person for each of your hands."

Richard stood there silent for a long moment, thinking hard.

Then he walked forward, reached out to touch the statue of the Goddess. As his fingers wrapped around the metallic surface, Richard's body went rigid. He stood there, motionless, for a long moment, the Goddess silently sharing her secrets to him.

When he stumbled backwards, eyes wide, I knew it'd worked.

Somehow, when the Goddess had spoken to me, I'd known every word of what she said was true. That not a word of it was wrong or false. She wouldn't lie - couldn't lie. It's impossible to describe. A sensation somewhere between instinct and gut feeling.

The Goddess spoke truth and her power was real.

When I pressed the palm of my hand to someone's forehead, they would become my puppet. One puppet for my left hand, one for my right hand.

Total control, in the palm of my hands. Literally.

I shook my head, felt uncertain for the first time since touching the statue.

The power was real. No doubt about that. It was as real as I was. That wasn't what was causing my uncertainty.

Was it right to control someone else against their will?

The answer was a resounding 'no' from my brain.

Was it okay to rob someone of their free will, make them a slave a permanent slave to my every whim and desire?

No, my mind answered again.

Images of girls and women flashed through my mind. Miss Thorn and Hannah and Alexia at the forefront, followed by others girls at school, women I'd seen around town - a shopkeeper and the woman who was always walking her dog by my house in the morning and Richard's sexy next-door neighbour.

I could have any of them. Make them do whatever I wanted.

Richard let out a loud, maniacal laugh. He spun around on his feet, a huge, insane smile on his face.

"We need to test this out," he told me. "We need to make sure it works. We *have* to."

"Are you sure about this?" I asked, glancing at Rich.

We were entering the street that he lived on, a small suburban alcove near the town centre.

"Yes," he answered, sounding firm, confident. "I'm not gonna waste one of my hands on you, and you're sure as shit not gonna be controlling me. So we have to test it out on someone else."

"But why her? Why not try it on..."

No names came to mind. Who could we possibly test this power on who would be totally okay with being controlled?

"Have you *seen* her? She's a solid nine out of ten, easily. Only woman I know who's hotter is your-"

"Don't," I warned.

Rich laughed, a boyish, joyous grin on his face.

He hadn't stopped smiling since touching the Goddess.

When we reached his neighbour's home, he turned, walked up to the door and knocked it. I glanced about, made sure no-one was around to see what happened next.

The door opened, revealing Richard's neighbour.

Nine out of ten was too low for the woman stood before us right now. Mrs Callas was naturally tanned, her family originating from somewhere around the Mediterranean,

and sexy beyond description. Dark, piercing eyes stared at us, a cordial smile tugging at her luscious lips. She was thin, athletic. Wearing a thin white t-shirt and denim shorts. Her t-shirt was strained by a pair of voluptuous breasts, her black bra visible under the stretched white fabric of the t-shirt.

"Hello Richard," she said, the hint of a European accent in her voice.

"Hi Mrs Callas," Richard smiled. Then his eyes widened, the smile disappearing. "Don't move," he told the woman. "There's a bug..." He reached out, planted his hand firmly on her forehead. "There, I got it."

The woman's eyes were wide, confused.

"Invite us in," Rich commanded her.

Mrs Callas blinked. "Come in," she said, gesturing inside her house. Her eyes widened further, surprised at what she herself had just said.

"Yes," Richard smiled smugly. "I think I will."

"What have you done to me?!" The woman demanded, eyes narrowed.

"Taken ownership of you, slave," Richard shrugged. "Don't shout or scream, or make any kind of fuss about it. And never tell anyone what I've done or do to you. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Mrs Callas answered instantly. She pursed her lips, glared at Richard, then turned her eyes on me.

The loathing, the disgust in those eyes was too much. I looked down, refused to meet her glare.

"When was the last time you had sex?" Richard asked.

The glee and excitement in his voice made me uncomfortable. He had always been a bit of a dick, but in a harmless, fun kind of way. He'd never been malicious, much less enjoyed being so.

"Two weeks ago," Mrs Callas answered, face turning red.

"Ever cheated on your husband?"

"No."

Richard laughed. "You will today," he told the woman.

She didn't say anything, just sat there glaring. She couldn't refuse or disobey Richard any more than she could defy the laws of gravity. From today onwards, for the rest of her life, Richard's words would be greater than any law to Mrs Callas, they'd be her one and only reality.

"Suck my cock," Rich ordered. "Give it your all and don't stop until I tell you to."

Mrs Callas stood, eyes widening in horror. She walked over to where Richard sat - right next to me - dropped down to her knees and began pulling his trousers down.

I sat there awkwardly, looking away.

Sloppy, sloshing sounds filled my ears, consumed my every thought no matter how much I tried to ignore it. Muffled gags and tiny chokes, my friend's soft grunts.

"You're really good at this," Richard said. "You must really love sucking my cock, don't you?"

Mrs Callas choked loudly.

"No," she managed to say, the word barely distinguishable from her gagging - her voice muffled and distorted by the cock and saliva filling her mouth.

"You will," Rich promised. "When I'm done with you, you're gonna love everything. Me most of all."

I stared down at my hands, eyes wide. Walking home, alone, I finally had the chance to think. To really take in what had happened, to fully comprehend the power I now possessed.

Anyone in the world - as long as I could touch their forehead - could belong to me. A

slave in the most total, literal sense.

My maths teacher, my crush, the school's idol. I could choose any one of them. Any two. And they'd be powerless to resist me. Unable to stop me.

My mind reeled, thoughts swirling around in my head, a mess of ideas and images and emotions.

What should I do?

Who should I choose?

Should I even use this power at all?

Richard had. And, right now, he was having sex with one of the most beautiful women around. Had total control over her.

Did I want that?

As I stared down at my hands, I couldn't help but imagine a faint glow emanating from both palms. A blessing from the Goddess.

What even was that thing? The statue, was it really a Goddess or was it something else? So many questions, and I couldn't answer any of them. Couldn't even concentrate on a single question for long enough to think of an answer.

"This power," I spoke aloud, forcing my mind to focus on this one question alone. "Should I use it?"

Silence followed my words.

Quietly, in barely more than a whisper, I asked my hands another, darker question.

"Who should I use it on?"