

ELLORA'S CAVE TABOO



REESE GABRIEL

Submissive
with Benefits

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Submissive with Benefits

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SUBMISSIVE WITH BENEFITS

Reese Gabriel

Chapter One

Anabel had barely settled down to enjoy her bowl of clam chowder and crackers when the stranger showed up at her table, his cologne strong as a tsunami, his one-liners better suited for a singles bar than an office building cafeteria.

“Hey there, I’m Mike Martini. Like the drink,” he rattled off. “Not that a guy would want to dull his senses with alcohol around a babe like you. Mind if I sit down?”

“As a matter of fact, Mr. Martini, I—”

He didn’t bother letting her finish. “You won’t regret it,” he cut in, plopping into the seat opposite her. “No woman ever has. Just kidding,” he added with a laugh that did absolutely nothing to reassure her. “Seriously, I’d like to get to know you better. You got plans this evening?”

“As a matter of fact, she does.”

Martini frowned, his eyes traveling upward as he looked over Anabel’s shoulder.

Anabel didn’t need to look to see who was there. Relief flooded her, mixed with that pulse-racing excitement that always came in the presence of the six-foot-one-inch-tall head of building security.

“So, what about tomorrow night?” Martini asked, attempting to circumvent Royce entirely.

“She’s busy then and the night after that too,” Royce answered for her.

Anabel’s toes curled. He got so protective around her, as if she belonged to him and yet he never crossed that line between friendship and lover. If he only knew. She had secret fantasies about him, dreams of delicious ravishment and slavery at his powerful hands. Would he run for the hills? Would he stand there and laugh or would he take her in his arms and tell her that he, too, had fantasies about her?

Something deep in her gut told her Royce was no ordinary lover, not with the way he commanded his environment, demanded respect and made it clear what he wanted, accepting nothing less.

Would he be as dominant in bed, dictating how and when his woman performed? Might he even enforce his will, punishing her for disobedience? Anabel certainly had those fantasies. She had never told anyone she had dated but deep down she was so very curious.

Anabel wanted to feel the bite of steel on her wrists, the cinch of ropes on her bare flesh. She wanted to be ordered to her knees, trembling with desire in the presence of a man who would guess all her secrets and make her do and give all.

He would love and cherish and protect her. They would be equals, except in bed. Oh yes, behind closed doors, in that most intimate chamber, it would be clearly understood that she must obey, under penalty if need be.

The whip, the paddle, even the force of his stinging hand – all of those things would keep her in line. She would tell him yes, always yes, even as he pushed her to the black velvet depths of ecstasy.

There was a word for women who assumed such roles. They were submissives – consensual sex slaves.

The very thought that her fantasies of being under Royce's dominion might come true was making her lose sleep. Night after night she tossed and turned, her fevered, sweat-covered body aching, craving to be possessed, controlled and loved.

Was Royce into BDSM? She had no proof, but suspected. One thing was sure – he would be a natural. She had gone weak-kneed that day in the lobby when she had watched him single-handedly take down and handcuff a purse-snatcher.

She had actually been jealous, watching him put the handcuffs on someone else.

But she'd never find out, would she? Not with Royce stubbornly refusing to go any step beyond friendship. What was his problem? Did he expect her to make the first move?

As if.

Mike was on his feet now. "I should be going," he said.

"You think?" said Royce, giving the man a death stare.

As soon as Mike made his hasty retreat, Royce sat in his place.

"Are you going to eat that apple?" Royce asked as if nothing had happened.

Anabel gave him her own version of the death stare. She couldn't stand the way he ran hot and cold, acting like a jealous boyfriend one minute and a platonic buddy the next.

"What?" he said with that exasperating innocence of his.

"You're unbelievable, you know that?"

"If that's your way of saying 'thank you' for saving you from that loudmouthed idiot, you're welcome."

"How did you save me? Did I look like I was going to hop into bed with the man? We were just talking."

Royce took a bite of the apple, a little rivulet of juice dripping from the corner of his mouth. He caught it quickly with a dab of his tongue. She could only imagine what other uses he might have for that tongue, especially on the body of a helpless, aroused woman.

The way he looked at her sometimes, she could almost feel the heat. It wasn't as if she wanted him to take her free will away but the idea of agreeing to yield to him in the bedroom absolutely thrilled her, from the offering of her lips for a kiss all the way up to crawling across his lap for a spank—disciplinary or just because it pleased him to dominate her in such a way.

Or was "agree" the wrong word? Didn't that imply the possibility of saying no? If, right this minute, Royce told her to come to him so he could whisper in her ear the things he intended to do to her or that he planned for her to do to him, what choice would she really have?

The answer would be yes, from deep in her hot belly. Yes to the surrender of her lips. Yes to kneeling. Yes to his sexual will imposed on her.

Any other answer would be ridiculous. Mouths could lie, but not tight, firm nipples, hard as the bullets Royce had dodged as a Special Forces soldier in the war. He could check elsewhere too. A single command would cause her to open her legs, her heart beating a thousand miles an hour as he expertly moved his fingers between her aching thighs.

He would find her wet, receptive...for slavery.

"Guys never just talk, Anabel. There's always an ulterior motive. He wanted in your panties."

The intensity of his glare made her breath quicken. Royce was not a man to share. He took and kept what was his.

Surely that must include his women.

Anabel snatched the apple back. "I'll thank you to leave my underwear out of it. And for your information, I get a little tired of you thinking that the only thing men want from me is my body. It's a little insulting."

"I didn't say that's all there was to you but a man would have to be clinically dead not to take one look at you and want you for himself."

Anabel felt a hot twinge in her pussy, matched by a quickening of her pulse. Was he including himself? If so, why not stake a claim? "That's not the point, Royce. Even though we're friends, you interfere in my life too much."

"I look out for you. That dude was trouble. Trust me."

"How do you know? Did you run a background check in the two minutes he was sitting here?"

"No, but I gave it serious thought."

She rolled her eyes. "I was being sarcastic."

"Your safety is no joke."

Why? Anabel wanted to ask. What was so special about her, in his eyes?

"You're very thorough in your security work, Royce. Do you provide this service for all lunch-goers?"

"Just the ones with food I want to snatch," he quipped, taking back the apple.

And so it continues, she thought wistfully, our endless game of cat and mouse.

"Seriously, I know you mean well but I have to fight my own battles."

His eyes narrowed. "Why?"

Anabel laughed, incredulous. "You know perfectly well why."

"No I don't."

"Well, how else will I find Mr. Right if I don't learn to weed out the Mr. Wrongs?"

Royce frowned. "You're not happy with your life now?"

"I'm not unhappy but I want more. Don't you?"

"I take things one day at a time. What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing," she said. It was no use. She might as well talk to a brick wall.

Royce wasn't going to let it go. "The hell you say. Something *is* wrong. I have a polygraph machine—don't make me use it."

She forced a smile. "I'm just overworked. We've got a big ad campaign we're working on."

"You always have a big campaign coming up," he dismissed. "That doesn't explain why you are on the verge of tears."

"I am not on the verge of tears." She stood. "We'll talk another time."

"No, Anabel."

Anabel stiffened, reacting to the sheer effect of his admonition, like a tiny zap of electricity up and down her spine, pooling in her pussy and breasts. "Excuse me?"

"You aren't going anywhere until we settle what's going on with you."

She could feel her pulse pounding. Part of her wanted to run while another part wanted to throw herself at him and do something extremely inappropriate for an public cafeteria.

"What's going on is that I am sick to death of how you treat me, Royce. Do you have any idea how embarrassing that little stunt of yours with Mike was? You mortified both of us."

Royce's expression hardened. His eyes were unreadable. "I told you, I didn't like him being with you."

"Well, it's not your business." She shook out her chestnut curls. "You don't own me."

"Maybe I should," he shot back.

Anabel's mouth dropped. Now what? She ought to tell him to fuck off or better still just walk away and show him she was the better person. Unfortunately she was in too deep for clear thinking.

"You'd enjoy that, wouldn't you?" she blurted. She'd give anything to take it back but it was too late.

Seconds passed like centuries as the words hung in the air.

When Royce finally answered it was like a knife cutting hotly through her belly.

"Be careful, Anabel. A man could take that as an invitation."

Anabel almost swooned, danger mingled with irresistible desire.

"I need to go," she said, trying to keep her voice steady. "Don't you dare follow me."

She looked over her shoulder as she reached the cafeteria doors. He was still at the table, having honored her request.

But what if he hadn't? she thought, shivering in the elevator. What if he'd come after me and taken me up on my almost invitation?

The idea was unacceptable. Better to never see Royce again than risk the kind of contact they would both regret.

On the other hand, it made her so sad to think of being apart from him.

"You're killing me, Royce Devon," she muttered under her breath. "You're the man in this relationship...*friendship*. Why can't you figure things out, one way or the other?"

* * * * *

Royce cursed his insane stupidity as he watched Anabel stride angrily from the cafeteria. What the hell had possessed him to tell her he would like to own her? Especially when he knew damn well what such words would mean to a woman like her.

Anabel was sexually submissive and he'd known it from the beginning. It wasn't the kind of thing that could be put into words, just something he sensed. An instinct. Something deep inside her had reacted to something equally deep in him and he would have been blind to miss it. Maybe it was in those gorgeous green eyes of hers, that combination of timidity and defiance. Maybe it was her posture when they were introduced, that subtle arching of her back, the way she licked her lips.

She was curious, more than a little nervous and very, very hungry. Like many women of her type, she hadn't had real-world experience with BDSM. Royce would bank on that, as surely as he would on her underlying desires. Sexual domination and submission were still dreams to her, aching fantasies that plagued her nights and maybe her days too.

As he had gotten to know Anabel and seen how intelligent and sassy and strong-willed she was, he'd only become more convinced of her hidden sexual needs. Contrary to popular belief, weak and unintelligent women did not make good submissives. They were uninteresting and they had little to offer a dominant's passionate needs.

No, it was the extraordinary women, the proudest ones, who yearned for experiences out of the norm. No doubt he could show her all she wanted but it was not to be.

Letting Anabel go just now had been the toughest thing Royce Devon had ever faced. He could still see her image burned in his mind as she sat there at the lunch table. She had been shaking, trembling. Damn it, her beautiful green eyes had almost been engulfed by tears.

How much of this was his fault?

Had it all been a mistake, his attempt to walk that fine line of keeping her safe without subjecting her to the overwhelming demands of his sexual preferences? There were sharks in this world, men like Mike Martini the attorney who had been scoping out Anabel for the last few days, just waiting for an opportunity.

Thank god he had done a little intel work. The moment he had seen Mike scoping out Anabel's office yesterday he'd known the man was up to something. Sure enough, it had turned out he was a two-timer.

Had Royce stretched the boundaries of his job a bit in conducting his investigation? Probably, but this was Anabel he was talking about. She was smart and sensitive, dynamic, and sexy as hell. Guys looked to exploit women like that every day. Not on his watch though. She was his friend, worked in his building and was his responsibility.

Would he like to be more than friends, to be dating her himself? In a heartbeat, except a beginner like Anabel could never handle a guy like him. It wasn't in him to compromise his needs.

A woman had to enter into a very special relationship of trust before entering his bed. She had to accept his erotic supremacy and all the glorious kink that went with it, up to and including blindfolds, gleaming chains against soft skin and, should the mood call for it, the slice of the whip in the air, the exquisite sting of pain that was inseparable from pleasure.

Who knew how far Anabel would be able to go down that road. There was also the problem of meeting her very real emotional needs.

In his experience, BDSM did not lend itself well to long-term relationships and so he had settled on play partners, reconciling himself to bachelorhood in the process.

Sometimes it scared him though, how easy it was to imagine taking possession of Anabel, body and soul. At about five-foot-four, with her luxuriant chestnut hair, sweet button nose and full lips, she was a dream of desire. He would do anything for the chance to win her surrender, to have her offer up her supple, slender wrists for his leather cuffs. To have her raise her arms overhead, knowing she was to be bound, rendered helpless and naked for the teasing blows of his crop over her pert breasts, her flat, white belly, not to mention her twitching, rounded behind.

If only he could hear her moan and sigh, whisper and cry out, whimper and beg and plead. That would make his life complete.

The real core of BDSM was to drive a woman wild, to make her beg to be taken ruthlessly and absolutely to the ends of mutual pleasure. Orgasms, that's what it was about, and all the denial along the way that made the journey so exciting.

And what a journey it would be with her.

If only he could separate his emotions. Every time he saw her his radar went up, an uncanny desire to keep her safe, such as he had felt with no other woman in his life. But he couldn't take the risk of creating an attachment between them that went beyond friendship.

The fact was, Anabel needed a steady, long-term relationship, something that could give her children and a future. He could never have her for himself and so he needed to be okay with her moving on with her life. She deserved happiness and he would kill to get it for her. He would die for it too. Trouble was, he couldn't bear the thought of another man being with her, putting his hands on her curvaceous body.

No man would ever be able to hold her as he could, or understand her half as well. From the first time he had laid eyes on her it was as though he had seen into her soul.

Just watching her walk into a room, seeing the light dance in her eyes, brought the world to life. He needed her, he craved her, and truth be told, she was the reason he still came to work, the reason he fought against the night terrors the sudden flashes of raw memory that took him back to the war.

If only he were different. If only he knew how to go after love without the BDSM part, he would claim her for himself.

She was perfect for him in many ways. The chemistry was unmistakable. They could pal around but playing with Anabel would be like playing with fire.

Anabel was the stuff of his dreams, his nightly fantasy. He'd enjoyed her in dozens of ways, conquering her again and again in his mind. He would give his left arm to make it real, to hear her scream in orgasm, to watch her writhe, pulling against her bonds, yielding to the darkest lust, begging him, calling him Master.

Right now, just thinking of it made his cock rock hard.

That wasn't good. Not at all. A no-win scenario as his old commanding officer used to say.

The only option was to cut his losses. He had no choice but to let go, even if that meant avoiding her for the rest of his life.

* * * * *

Anabel was so over the discussion.

"I'm telling you guys for the last time," she snapped. "Royce and I are just friends."

At least we were friends, she thought glumly, until Royce upped the ante with his scorching declaration of – what exactly – lust, sheer dominant desire?

He would enjoy owning her, that's what he'd said.

There were four of them gathered in the office kitchen at present—her, Staci, the pigtailed intern, Favio, the senior graphic designer, better known as Favio-the-Fabulous and Monika, their tough-as-nails, thin-as-a-toothpick boss.

It was Monika who had corralled Anabel on her way back from lunch, demanding she share the latest installment of their favorite soap opera, the Anabel-Royce Show.

"Please, girlfriend," Favio drawled now, smearing curry mustard on his lettuce wrap. "Royce Devon is not the kind of man to have women as friends. The way he looks, he could afford to go through them like peanuts."

Anabel rankled at the idea of Royce being promiscuous. "You think he sleeps around? That's impossible. He'd tell me."

After all, they shared a lot. She knew his favorite music, his heartaches and pet peeves, even his family background and history in the war.

He had told her he hadn't been with anyone in a year and a half and she believed it, though how a man like Royce could exist without a female, she had no idea.

After all, he was as much a wolf as a man—a fearsome, hunting creature, protecting, guarding.

It made her tremble to think what it would be like to have those hungry wolf eyes on her, devouring her even as he gave his first command.

Strip, Anabel. Show me everything.

"Check out Anabel's claws," Monika quipped. "Methinks I smell the heady brew of jealousy."

"I couldn't care less what Royce does in his personal life," she said a little too quickly.

"You should get it over with and just ask him out," said Staci with typical twenty-something overconfidence.

"It's not that simple. Besides, why are you guys so threatened by a man and a woman just hanging out platonically?" Anabel accused.

"Do you think Royce could be gay?" Staci turned to Favio as if Anabel weren't even in the room.

Favio arched a brow, licking his lips dramatically. "I only wish. Tall, wall-to-wall muscle, face like a male model? Believe me, honey, I would be all over that in a heartbeat."

It was true—Royce was gorgeous by any standard. Totally hot and smart too. And damn him for the way he could carry on a conversation, really listening and validate everything Anabel was feeling. He was like the brother she'd never had.

Except she didn't want a brother right now. She wanted a lover—powerful and politically incorrect enough to treat her like a treasured sex object, a pleasure slave subject to punishment and restraint, captivated and overwhelmed, desperate, moaning and begging, shameless, brazen.

Anabel caught herself, pink cheeked, breath quickening. The last thing she needed to do was let her colleagues know about her secret fantasies.

"If you ask me," said Monika with all the confidence of a woman who was used to sharing her opinions, invited or not. "You are both too stubborn for your own good. Someone needs to bend first and I am afraid it will have to be you, Anabel, dear. Royce is much too manly to back down, you know."

Anabel cringed inwardly. Asking out a man like Royce would be hard enough for a normal vanilla girl, but what was a poor submissive to do with all her fantasies of domination and possession?

"One thing is for sure," said Fabio. "You can't let it go on like this."

"Why not? I told you we have a good friendship."

"Do you? You said yourself he doesn't respect boundaries, he gets jealous. Is he really being a good friend?"

Anabel sighed. He had a point. They were stuck in no-man's-land, this weird zone between friends and lovers. "I'll have to tell him something," she decided. "I just don't know what."

"The truth shall set you free," said Staci.

Anabel rolled her eyes.

More likely, it would all blow up in her face.

For starters, she would have to straighten out their earlier misunderstanding.

If that was the right word for it.

“Much as I’d like to stay and have my life dissected under the microscope a while longer, I have work to do,” she said, making her escape.

Her hopes of making a clean getaway were dashed as she heard the clicking of Monika’s heels in the hall, following her.

Here it comes, Anabel thought. We’re going to have one of those cathartic little talks where people bare their souls and end up feeling so much better.

Except in this case Monika was the only one who ever got to talk.

“My office, kiddo,” she said, tapping Anabel’s shoulder. “Pronto.”

Monika closed the door behind her, sealing them both inside her glass and steel sanctuary of postmodern bliss, the product of twenty years clawing and scraping in the ad business.

Monika was good at what she did and Anabel was proud to work for her. If only the woman could keep out of her employees’ private lives.

“So what’s the deal?” Monika began as she leaned against her desk, which was a marvel of gravity-defying black onyx and steel.

“There’s no deal,” said Anabel quickly. “I’m just anxious about the Kern account and—”

Monika held up her hand, a sweep of perfect French nails cutting Anabel off midstream. “Save the spin for the clients, my love, this is me you’re talking to. You think I don’t see those tears just dying to burst out? What did Royce do now? I’m not above kicking butt to find out—yours *and* his.”

Anabel sighed, feeling the tension drain away. “He didn’t do anything. It’s me.”

Monika pointed to one of the curvy chairs by the window. There were two of them facing one another. "Sit."

Anabel collapsed. Monika swooped gracefully into place opposite her like the host of some talk show. Knowing she was beaten, Anabel spilled the beans as sunlight poured in, giving harsh reality to a truth she scarcely believed herself.

"I think Royce might be into BDSM."

There, she'd said it, let the sky fall in.

Monika went quiet, way out of character.

"You're freaking me out," Anabel exclaimed. "Say something."

"Tell me more."

Anabel couldn't believe her ears—this from the biggest women's libber in the world. "What do you mean, tell you more? Aren't you going to argue and tell me I'm crazy for thinking such a thing? Or if you do believe me, why aren't you telling me to get away from the guy as fast as possible?"

"I'm not you. The real point is how does it make you feel? What if Royce is into kink? He'd be dominant, that goes without saying. So how would your safe little world be changed if you found out your lunch buddy and perpetual shadow had it in his mind to rope you like a filly and break you in?"

Anabel shivered at the thought of Royce with rope in hand, coming for her. "It wouldn't change anything."

Actually, it would change everything. Her life would spin on a dime. Everything would be up for grabs, including, quite possibly, her heart.

Monika's brow worked double time, like a frigging lie detector. "With all due respect, kiddo, I've seen the way you look at the man. I would say you're pretty smitten."

"Smitten is not submissive," Anabel said, trying to retain a modicum of dignity.

"That's true but can you honestly say you haven't fantasized?"

"About what? BDSM? A couple of times. So what?"

"I mean about Royce specifically. There's something between you two, I know there is. I would swear that you like the way he hovers over you and I can damn well promise you he gets a charge on his end."

"From being obnoxious?"

"From playing cat and mouse with a beautiful woman. Come on, Anabel, the two of you are so predictable. You do this weird dance. You make him jealous and he comes in snarling. Just go to bed with him, the kinkier the better. Will you...please?"

"You sound like Staci."

"Except I'm your boss and I'm making it an order."

Anabel snorted. "You can't order me to have sex with someone."

"It's either that or send you off for Royce rehab. Frankly, you're stressing everybody out."

"Fine, anything's better than asking him to...to make love to me." She could barely get the words out.

Monika gave a snort right back. "Who said anything about lovemaking, girlfriend? You need to march up to Royce and beg to be taken hard and savage, with all the tools of the trade."

Anabel slumped in her seat. Had she dropped into some parallel universe? "I couldn't...never, ever."

Monika turned thoughtful. She had her brow pinched the way she did in brainstorming sessions. "Probably not. We'll have to find a way to trick him into taking the bull by the horns."

"I don't want him taking any horns, Monika," she pleaded. "I don't want him taking a damn thing."

"Doesn't matter what you want. It's what you need." She snapped her fingers. "I've got it. You, my dear, need to wave the red flag in front of the bull."

"Excuse me? I thought you just said the bull had to be wrestled?"

"New metaphor," she said. "Keep up. You're going to tell Royce that you plan to explore BDSM without him. In fact you'll confess that you've been looking online for some time and you're going to meet this guy you've just met there."

"Why would I meet someone from the net? That's insane."

"Royce will say the same thing, don't you get it? In fact, I'm wagering if you push the point he'll have no choice but to offer his own services as a teacher."

"A t-teacher?"

"Don't stutter," Monika chided. "And for Hades' sake, stop acting like an idiot. I expect you to take this and run with it. You will seduce Royce by this time tomorrow or we will be having a very different sort of conversation."

"Seduce him? I thought he's supposed to dominate me?"

"You'll seduce him with the promise of tabula rasa, a blank slate. He can do as he likes with you. What's not to love? You're gorgeous and I'm sure you'll make all the right noises in bed."

Anabel buried her head in her hands. "Tell me again why I still work for you?"

"Because you know I'm always right, even if it kills you. Now get going, my little sex slave-to-be, we have work to do. You're still mine until five then you are his."

"Suppose he's not a Dominant," Anabel said, grasping at one last straw.

Monika laughed, deep and rich. "Not to worry, sweetheart, I'm sure you'll manage to convert him."

Chapter Two

The seconds ticked by as Royce waited for Anabel to speak. She had obviously come to his office for some reason but so far she was just standing there. What in blazes was she up to? Whatever it was she was here to say, it was making her nervous as hell. He could tell because she had this habit of licking her lips when she was nervous – little darts of her tongue over ruby-red lips.

He would like to be kissing those lips, capturing the lower one between his teeth, biting just hard enough to make her moan. Then he would run his hands over those luxuriant curves, letting her know she was going to be his, no ifs, ands, or buts.

Damn it, she was driving him to distraction as usual.

“Anabel, are you planning to say something or are you just going to stand there in front of my desk all night?”

She jolted, as if seeing her surroundings for the first time. She must have gotten down here on autopilot. Frankly, he was surprised to see her again so soon.

He had expected her to avoid him for the next day or two at least.

“Yes...yes, I am.” Anabel cleared her throat, so transparent, trying to sound casual. An award-winning actress she was not. “I wanted to tell you I am going to be...busy. I might, um, miss some of our lunches in the next few weeks. Maybe longer.”

“Busy? Busy with what?” This was making less sense by the minute.

“There’s something I want to experiment with.”

Royce leaned back in his chair, unleashing the usual creaking noise. Unlike the furniture up in Anabel’s office, his was no frills all the way. He liked it that way, not that the management cared either way. Their concern was the safety of the inhabitants. And in this day and age, you had to be prepared for the worst.

"Experiment? You're a little old for the science fair, aren't you?"

She rolled her eyes. "Ha-ha. Actually I want to join a study group. I-I've been thinking about it for a while."

"Funny you never mentioned it to me."

"There's plenty I don't tell you," she insisted.

"So, what kind of group is it?"

"You know...a group."

"How could I possibly know, Anabel, if you don't tell me?"

She sighed. "If you must know it's a BDSM group, short for bondage, domination and –"

"I know what BDSM is," he said, cutting her off. Royce's heart skipped a beat. Talk about a wild new development. Somebody had obviously put her up to this. The question was who and for what purpose. One of her office mates, her boss, the free-wheeling Monika Burns, most likely. The woman was a real spitfire, way too domineering for his taste. But she looked out for Anabel and that's all Royce cared about.

"Strange that you haven't mentioned anything to me before, Anabel."

Anabel's pink tongue made a quick sweep over a luscious lip. "You don't know everything about me."

Royce frowned. The idea of her having secrets bothered him. "I know enough. You don't like chick flicks, your favorite lipstick shade is passion pink, you collected seashells as a child because you liked to hear the ocean."

Anabel swallowed. "This is different. It's very personal so I never told you about it. Look, it's no big deal. I won't actually do anything, just talk to people."

"Talk to them about what? Your fantasies?"

She stiffened.

"Who says I have fantasies?"

"Why else would you be interested in a BDSM group? Unless you have the fantasies, it would be like signing up for a bowling league when you hate bowling."

"This isn't like bowling, Royce."

"No kidding. So what are you, a top or a bottom?"

"A what...or a what?"

"Do you want to dominate your partner, or would you like to be dominated?"

"Does it matter?"

He laughed. She was too precious. "Of course it does. Anabel, why don't you just tell me what this is really about? You have no intention of joining any group. For one thing, I can promise you that they don't meet over lunch Monday to Friday."

"Talking to you was a bad idea. I should go."

"Why? Do I scare you that much?" he challenged.

Anabel pursed her pretty lips. "You can't be serious. Goodnight, Royce."

The sight of her whirling about, then her taut, pert buttocks inflamed him into playful, dominant mode. "Not so fast, Anabel. I didn't dismiss you."

She whirled about, her eyes on fire. "What did you say?"

"I said I didn't dismiss you." He tried not to ruin the mood by laughing. "And I have no intention of doing so until we have talked this out."

"There isn't anything to talk about."

Royce pointed to the seat in front of his desk. "Sit."

"I'm not a child," she said testily, though she sat, all the same.

Royce would give anything to know what was going through her mind right now. He would also like to be able to gauge her arousal. She was flushed. Was she moist as well, in the secret place between her thighs? Had she been waiting for this all along, craving the moment when he would take erotic charge?

It was too late to back down now. He would have to steer the course, like paddling a canoe over Niagara Falls.

When she was settled, he cut to the chase. "I don't know how much you know about 'experimenting' with BDSM but it's not a game. It can be dangerous, Anabel, especially for a woman like you."

"What do you mean, 'a woman like me'?" There was fire in her eyes. His cock throbbed.

"Damn it, you know how desirable you are. If the wrong kind of man were to have you at his mercy..." Royce trailed off, unable to bear the thought of something happening to her.

She shook out her long, silky soft mane of hair. So many times, he had dreamed of gathering it in his fist and pulling her close. She smelled so good, like honey and spring flowers.

"Gee, Royce, no I hadn't thought of that. Good thing I have you to be my brain. How would I even know how to breathe?"

"Sarcasm won't help anything."

"How about me telling you off instead?"

"Sorry, that's a no-go also. You might try the truth though."

"What do you mean, the truth?" Her eyes were the giveaway, the sudden transformation from fearsome wildcat to timid doe caught in headlights.

Royce smiled slantedly. "Yes, the truth. Shall I have it from you or Monika?"

Anabel sighed, busted.

He held back the laughter. Honestly, she was so adorable. "Anabel, if there is something you want from me, why don't you just ask?" *And what if she does ask?* he thought with sudden dread. How in hell would he give her what she wanted without risking their friendship and maybe their hearts too?

"I don't need anything," she said stubbornly.

"I didn't ask you that. I know you're a perfectly independent woman but doesn't it get lonely...in the middle of the night?"

Damn, talk about a leading question.

He tried a different approach. "Look, Anabel, it's time to put the cards on the table. I saw how you reacted the day I used my handcuffs and I have also guessed how you ended up here. Monika figured out your secret and bullied you into coming down here to see if you could goad me into giving you a little private demonstration, right?"

"You couldn't be more wrong," she insisted.

"You're lying to me. I can read you like a book."

"I'll lie all I want."

He arched a brow. It was time to test the waters. "If you want to play the naughty girl, there are ways to deal with that."

"I'm not a girl. I am a woman. Your equal," she retorted.

"That's a given. We are talking about something more, something agreed upon by consenting partners."

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"I think you do, Anabel. You are here because you are curious, you wonder what it might be like to be my girl, not just a strong, independent woman I respect, but someone I treasure in a personal, intimate way."

"Empty words," she said, hiding her obvious interest.

"Have you ever fantasized about being spanked?" he probed.

"Absolutely not," she replied.

"Really? It does nothing, then, to imagine yourself over a man's knee, his hand on your buttocks, gently caressing through the material of your clothes and then smacking crisply? You've never thought of yourself helpless, perhaps naked even, at the mercy of a man's discipline?"

"You are a jerk, Royce."

"Why? I'm only asking questions."

"You're interrogating me and I don't like it."

“Interrogation, eh? Is that your fantasy? Being tied up, tickled and pretend-tortured with nibbles and kisses until you surrender all your secrets?”

“My fantasy is going home,” she shot back. “Alone.”

His smile gave way to a smirk. “Do you know what it means to play the brat, Anabel?”

“I’m not listening.” She covered her ears.

“Submissives do it when they want a man to take charge. They behave in unacceptable ways, courting the consequences of being so naughty. It’s all in fun, of course.”

Anabel pretended to ignore him.

“I will spank a sub for that kind of behavior. I won’t hesitate. But there are other ways to establish the power dynamic.”

“I’m not a sub,” she said, proving she’d been listening all too well.

“You can be if you want though. That’s what is so intriguing. People get to act out secret desires, express what’s not allowed in the politically correct world we live in. I’m the man here and you are the girl. I’m Master and you are —”

“Don’t say it!” she cut in. “Don’t you dare say the word.”

“You mean ‘slave’? Why not? It obviously arouses you.”

“You don’t know a fucking thing,” she said with sudden intensity. “And just for your information, our association is officially over.”

Royce felt the knife twist in his gut. As the Dominant, he was supposed to be in control, unemotional, but the thought of losing Anabel, of never seeing her or hearing her wonderful laugh was too much to bear.

He checked his watch, set to military time, matched to the atomic clock in Boulder, Colorado. Everything in the building was coordinated with excruciating precision. He might make it look casual but he had no illusions. There were terrorists out there and

skyscrapers were a target. This was war. Here, every bit as much as on the battlefields of the Middle East.

"I assume you're done with work for the day, Anabel," he said with sudden resolve. "I've got the night shift in place so I'm free too. We'll continue this discussion over dinner."

Her gaze narrowed. Confusion reigned behind dazzling green eyes. She was fighting it. Good, that was half the fun.

"Are you listening to a word I'm saying, Royce? I don't want to see you anymore."

"We'll take my car. I'll bring you back to the garage later."

Make that first thing in the morning, after they swung by her apartment so she could change after a full night's session.

"What part of no don't you get, Royce Devon?"

"It might be the 'n'," he said with a wink. "Or maybe it's the 'o'. Come on. I know a great little steakhouse."

She allowed him to take her hand. He could feel her defiance mixed with intoxicating excitement. Oh yes, she was ready to experiment, all right.

And he would show her everything.

By morning, she would understand what it meant to be truly enslaved to a man's desires. And her own too.

The question was, where would they go from there?

Pretty bad time to ask, since he was already committing them to the journey.

* * * * *

I must be crazy, Anabel thought.

How could she let herself get manipulated like that, riding in Royce's car letting him drive her to a restaurant? Was this supposed to be a date? She had certainly never said yes. Not that he had actually asked before snatching her away.

They were supposed to be going to dinner to continue their discussion, as he'd put it.

Well, it was already done as far as Anabel was concerned. If Royce wanted to talk, he could eat a steak with Monika. She was the one who'd started the whole thing.

Except Monika didn't eat red meat—fish either, for that matter—not that she wasn't above smuggling a little bit of Nova Scotia salmon onto a bagel every now and again.

"You should relax, Anabel," Royce counseled her now. "This is supposed to be fun."

Fun? What was fun about just having revealed her deepest sex fantasies to the man who was the star of them? God help her if he asked her for any details.

"So what are your hot buttons?" he wondered aloud. "We know you like handcuffs. What about blindfolds? Ever imagined being taken in total bondage, unable to see a thing, nothing to do but lie there and let your Dominant touch, pinch and tease, working you into a cold sweat, begging for a release that's totally out of your control?"

Oh fuck, was he reading her mind now?

Royce chuckled, obviously enjoying making her squirm.

"I thought you were different," she complained. "I thought you'd be a gentleman."

He made a sound deep in his throat, a kind of rugged laugh, pure male, a joke all his own. "Sweetheart, I will respect you until the end of time, but stay a gentleman? Sorry, no can do."

She drew a ragged breath as he reached across and put his hand on her thigh. She could feel the heat through the material of her skirt. "Royce, don't."

Her attempts to dislodge him were futile. He was too strong. She ought to hate that about him but she didn't.

"Say please," he rasped.

There was an edge to him. He was still her good buddy but there was another side to him now –unpredictable, untamed. It was as though she'd been palling around all this time with a lion who had been playing the part of a tomcat.

Apparently the play was over. Or had he just switched to a new game?

"I'm not interested in a romantic relationship," she informed him.

"You're interested in BDSM, I know." He withdrew his hand though she was not in the least reassured.

"I might be, yes," she said. "Just not with you."

He shook his head. "Sorry, sweetheart, doing it with anyone else isn't an option."

Her heart skipped a beat. He wasn't seriously going to exercise some kind of sexual primacy? By what authority? On account of having eaten a few hundred tuna sandwiches with her in the cafeteria?

Time to calm things down, she thought.

"Royce, I hear what you're saying and I respect your feelings of protectiveness but—"

"Ha!"

It came out as a roar, stopping her in her tracks. "What was that supposed to be?"

"That was me, reacting against the typical psychobabble crap. I'm not telling you what I feel, Anabel. I'm telling you how it is. You aren't doing BDSM with anyone else. End of story."

Anabel just looked at him, irritated, fascinated and...flattered.

Good grief, where did that emotion come from?

"Royce," she said softly. "I know you mean well and I appreciate it. You don't have to worry though, I'm a big girl. Besides, as you deftly recognized, the odds of my doing anything are pretty small."

"The odds are zero, girl, and I don't give a damn if you appreciate me. I'm putting my foot down. And may I remind you that I'm not the one who started this. You came to me."

"I made a mistake." She folded her arms. "So shoot me."

"It wasn't a mistake. You were telling me your real passions. You are submissive, Anabel. I have known that all along."

She rolled her eyes. "Don't tell me—you saw it in my eyes when you told me to pass you the salt for the first time. I don't know how I kept from fainting on the spot, you were so masterful."

His brow furrowed. Had she managed to get under his armor-plated skin for once?

"Things will happen tonight, Anabel. You won't be the same. Me either. You'll put your dreams in my hands. Everything—*everything*—in your head will belong to me."

Anabel felt the moisture between her thighs. If he were to touch her again, she did not know how she might respond, what she might do or say.

"Mumbo jumbo," she dismissed.

"It's why you don't date, isn't it, Anabel? I can't imagine the frustration of having your lover be so tentative, having him ask you over and over what he is doing wrong and all you really want is for him to stop treating you with kid gloves and let you know what you really mean to him by ravishing you. Hell, how can you tell a man even wants you if he doesn't do what's in the dark abyss of his soul? We're all beasts, we men, we Dominants most of all. We don't make love, Anabel. We take and we conquer and we like it when you show a little trepidation. Healthy, delicious and playful. Oh yes, Anabel, you'll please me tonight. I will make sure of it."

"Is that supposed to be some kind of threat?"

"It's a promise. Exactly the kind you want."

Oh god, he was touching her again, his hand back on her thigh, this time sliding up under the hem of her skirt.

"Please," she croaked, her nerve endings screaming for release. "Stop."

"Request denied."

Anabel whimpered as he began to move his fingertips lightly, almost painfully up her thigh. It was all she could do not to moan and arch her back, cry out, offer herself.

Still, she had to hold back for dignity's sake.

"Open your thighs," he ordered.

She shook her head.

He waited until a traffic light then he pulled her against him, his hand behind her neck. His kiss was hot and hard and punishing. It left her breathless and dazzled and weak.

"Open," he repeated as the light turned green and this time her knees fell apart.

"Don't. Someone might see," she said, little conviction in her voice.

"It's dark out," he dismissed. "Besides you need to trust me."

"Why should I?" Anabel sighed, falling back against the seat.

He chuckled. "As if you have a choice."

He bid her open for him wider still and she complied, allowing him to slip two fingers under the crotch of her panties.

Her breath degenerated into a whimper as he found what he was looking for, the telltale liquid signs of submission dripping from the lips of her pussy.

Royce stroked, owning her. "This is what you want and what you need."

Anabel tried not to writhe, knowing that it would be such an admission of defeat. If he would just touch her clit though, she would be right there, so quickly on the brink of the climax she needed more than anything else in the whole world.

Royce wasn't in a generous mood though. He had a point to prove. Withdrawing his hand, he declared, "It's already happened – the power has been exchanged. I'm the center of your world tonight and you're the center of mine. No more pleasure for you right now. No pain either, no matter how you might crave it."

She turned her face toward him. She wanted another kiss. If only she were strong enough to lift her arms. As it was, she could do nothing but arch her back, offering her burning nipples and swollen breasts for him to hold and squeeze.

All of her — she wanted him to have all of her.

“Royce...” It came out as a whisper, so deep and broken she feared it might ruin everything.

“Close your eyes,” he said. “I’ve decided to skip dinner.”

* * * * *

Royce had to hold Anabel’s hand in the elevator. Without his strength she would probably have keeled over. This was incredible. No woman had ever reacted to him this way, not in all the years he had been playing this game.

Or was it something other than a game?

The thought came at him from left field but he sure as hell wasn’t going to analyze it now. Not with Anabel so close and so open, needing him to shepherd her. His heart stopped for a moment as she laid her head against his upper arm.

In one fell swoop her strength and spirit were reduced to total vulnerability. Talk about a sacred responsibility. She was entrusting him with her soul. Something had happened back there in the car. It was when she had called his name. The very air had crackled with life and something had released — deep pent-up tension.

She was his.

At least for the night.

“Would you like a drink?” he asked when they were safely locked in his apartment.

Anabel hugged herself, looking suddenly frail, almost naked. “No, thanks,” she said as she examined the décor of his living room, the prints on the wall of leopards and tigers, the photos of himself on safari with friends.

Just to the left of the photos and to the right of the bar was the bookcase. Were she to look closer, she would see his rare collection of S&M classics, including an early edition of de Sade's *Justine*.

"Are you cold?" he asked.

"No, I'm fine. Your place is just as I imagined it," she told him.

He poured two glasses of wine, handing one to her, in spite of her objections. "Go on," he coaxed. "It will do you good."

Anabel obediently put the glass to her lips. Royce felt the power surge through him as he watched. It was all he could do not to take her in his arms, rip off her clothes and throw her to the floor.

But he would go at it slowly. He owed it to her and to himself.

"So you've imagined my living room," he teased. "What about my bedroom?"

She flushed, making him chuckle.

"Sit," he told her, ushering her to the black leather couch.

Anabel did so gingerly, pulling her skirt down as far as she could. *Such modesty*, he thought. Did she really think to hold anything back at this point?

Deliberately, he sat next to her, thigh to thigh. She scooted to the left.

"What's this?" she asked, picking up the paperback on the glass-top coffee table.

Royce laughed. If she was hoping for a distraction from the sex, she was about to discover that she had jumped from the frying pan into the fire.

"It's *Story of O*. Don't let the plain white cover fool you. It's one of the steamiest works in all of Western literature."

Anabel sucked on her lower lip.

"O is the heroine," he explained. "We only know her as a letter because that is how her boyfriend designates her. He's her Master, Anabel, and in the opening scene he equips her, in the back of a car, to be delivered to a place called Roissy where she is to

be trained to give pleasure to many men. She is chained and conquered and even whipped but through it all it is what she desires more than anything."

"I'm sure it's quite fascinating," she said, setting the book down. "But it would hardly work that way in real life."

Royce touched his index finger to Anabel's cheek, brushing across the hot skin. "You're right," he said throatily. "I don't share what's mine."

Anabel moaned, scandalized. "I'm not a possession. I already told you."

"You're a treasure." His hand moved to her thigh. While kissing her neck and earlobe, he whispered what she needed to do.

"No, please," she murmured, as much to her traitorous body as to him. But she obeyed.

"Good girl," he praised as she opened her legs for him—wide. "Now we can begin in earnest."

She shivered. "I shouldn't...I can't."

He touched her breasts, finding the nipples hard and prominent under her blouse. "I've dreamed of this moment, Anabel. You've no idea how much I want you."

Anabel gasped. "I don't...I don't know what to do."

"Let go. Follow."

"Oh Royce."

His lips found hers as he leaned over her. They were hot and dry and eager. His tongue found its way quickly inside, just like a small cock, clever and conquering.

Good girl.

Royce caressed her left breast through her blouse and bra. There was no hesitancy, no tentativeness in his touch. It was as if he'd done it a million times before, taken her again and again and again.

Her response was equally unambiguous as she arched her back, submitting to the gently squeezing fingers.

He pinched her nipple, making her groan. "Put your hands behind your head, Anabel."

It was an order.

She complied, sealing a further bond between them. The position rendered her deliciously exposed, breasts pushed outward, prominent. He took his time unbuttoning her blouse. Her breathing was rapid, erratic.

Gently, very slowly, he unbuttoned and pulled her blouse from the waistband of her skirt and pushed the halves back to expose her belly, smooth and round and as beautiful as he had imagined.

He bent to kiss it, her soft skin quivering under his lips.

"Oh god, Royce."

She groaned as if he had stabbed her.

In a trance, she let him take off her blouse. Her torso was bare save for the silky bra.

"Hands back behind your head," he instructed, treating himself to the sweetest view this side of heaven.

Anabel's breasts strained, begging to be touched, begging to be freed from the confining cups.

He touched her through the material, painfully, agonizingly slowly. There wasn't a thing she could do. Not a damn thing.

Leaning forward, she tried to kiss him.

"No."

Royce made her take it—the slow, lazy tracing of his fingers over the silk cups, teasing her nipples, making her writhe.

"Shall we take off the bra?"

Anabel nodded, dazed.

"Say please."

"Pl-please."

"Please take off my bra and play with my bare breasts," he coached.

Anabel repeated his words in halting gasps, sweet feminine sounds issuing from her lips.

The bra unclasped in front. Royce let the cups dangle and traced a line with his finger down her damp cleavage. "You'll learn as we go along, my sweet little captive, that you will have to ask for everything. Eventually you'll even beg, all on your own."

Anabel's breath was quick and shallow. It was obvious that she liked the game. "Do you know who wrote *Story of O*?" he asked, taking hold of her naked left nipple. "It was a noted female author. A woman of renown and strong will. She wrote it for her lover, anonymously, to turn him on. She said the story came from her earliest fantasies. Have you been to that place—the dark, wet world where pain and pleasure collide?"

Gauging her, he pressed thumb and forefinger against one nipple, rolling the hot, erect nub. "Have you, girl?"

"No."

"You lie. You've dreamed it. You've seen it in the depths of your subconscious." Royce stopped pinching and started licking—long, lazy strokes of his tongue with just the slightest sharpness and pressure.

"Royce. Royce..." she cried out. Forgetting herself, she let her arms descend and encircle his neck.

"Not very obedient, are you?"

Anabel sucked in her breath, realizing her mistake.

"Too late," he said as she tried to put her hands back behind her head.

It was time to show her what the "D" stood for in BDSM.

"Remember these?" He pulled his handcuffs from his pocket and effortlessly locked her left wrist.

Anabel looked down, mesmerized.

"Now you really are my captive."

She was breathing more quickly, shallow and uneven.

Letting her wrist dangle, he lowered his head to her breast once more, his lips and teeth and tongue taking their fill of the sweet, soft bounty that was Anabel.

"Take me," she groaned. "Oh Royce, I need you to take me."

He shook his head. "That's a long way off."

Anabel whimpered, her eyes hot and defiant with need.

Royce smiled. Here's where it would start to get interesting.

She tried to touch his crotch with her free hand. He grasped her wrist and locked it in the free cuff. Holding her hands overhead by the chain, he berated her. "Slave girls don't touch without permission. They wait until they are told what to do."

"I'm not a slave," she insisted, putting up a bit of a fight for the first time.

Royce pushed her back, gently but firmly, against the cushion. "For the purposes of here and now, missy, that's exactly what you are and we both know it. Your body has made it abundantly clear what it wants. You're just afraid to admit it."

"I don't want anything," she gasped.

Royce had little trouble maneuvering their bodies so that she was ass up over his lap. It all happened so fast that she hardly knew what hit her. "It's that brat business I was telling you about," he said, flipping up her skirt.

"Don't you dare," she cried.

Royce laid down a moderate slap on the center of her buttocks, his hand warm through the silk of her panties.

"Ouch!" she squealed. "You bastard."

"If you keep resisting, we can do this bare-assed."

Anabel groaned.

Royce smacked her again, building the heat.

What a perfect ass she had. Honestly, if he never touched another, he would die a happy man.

"So this is what it comes down to, huh?" she taunted. "The big, strong Royce Devon needs to spank a female half his size to feel like a man."

"I don't need to feel like anything. I happen to enjoy it, and lord knows, you're putting it out there for me."

"I am not!"

He spanked her again, harder. "The hell you aren't. Who's the one who came into my office acting all coquettish about BDSM today?"

"You didn't have to take me up on it. You said yourself that Monika put me up to it."

"Either way, it's water under the bridge, sweetheart. We're going all the way tonight."

Anabel squirmed. "My body is hereby off limits."

"Oh I don't think so." He pulled down her panties, much to her chagrin. "It is very much up for grabs."

"Stop it, Royce."

He caressed her now, grazing his fingertips over her pink sex lips—sweet exposed petals, lightly dripping with arousal.

"Didn't you hear me? Stop it."

Ignoring her entreaties, he slipped his fingers inside her, enjoying her hot, tight warmth. "I'm going to enjoy taking you, Anabel. I'm going to do everything I wish and you will not want to stop me."

Chapter Three

Anabel had never been so outraged in her life...or so sexually aroused. Royce Devon was actually spanking her, crashing his sexy, masterful hand down on her poor, defenseless ass cheeks again and again, resisting her every protest, doing with her exactly as he wanted, as though he and not she was the boss of her body.

And he was calmly talking about sex the whole time, as though it were a done deal between them, as though she would possibly feel like putting out after being embarrassed like this. Except it wasn't embarrassment, not in the simple sense, because Anabel was wet, and getting wetter by the second.

"These panties are a nuisance," Royce complained as he paused to tug them down even farther.

"Fucking excuse me," snapped Anabel. "For dressing in such an inconvenient way for you."

"When O becomes a trained slave at Roissy she is no longer permitted to wear underwear," he said. "Not even when she is back in the real world. No bras or panties. And when she sits, she must lift her skirt and put her bare ass on the seat."

Anabel's pussy throbbed. "Don't you get any ideas."

"She wears a ring too, to identify her, and any man who knows its meaning is entitled to use her as he wishes and she must submit."

Anabel was writhing, pushing her pelvis down on Royce's lap. "Please...just...sex...please?"

Royce chuckled. He delivered an extra stinging-hard, final swat to her bottom and ordered her to her feet.

"Strip," he said, making her stand facing him, several feet away, as he leaned back on the sofa and reached for his fly.

She watched as he worked the zipper down over the huge swell in his pants, so mesmerized that she nearly forgot what she was supposed to be doing.

A sharp order brought her back to task. "Get naked, slave girl, now."

Fingers trembling, she undid the clasp of her skirt, sliding it down over her hips. A moment later she pushed it and her soaked panties to the floor and stepped out of them. Her shoes followed. She stood barefoot on the carpet, the cool air blowing over her tight nipples. For him.

He had boxer shorts under his trousers. He opened the slit and pulled the material aside. His cock sprang free. Oh god, it was so big and thick. Mouthwatering. Anabel's knees went weak. He was a fucking god. She wanted to see the rest of him. She wanted him touching her, doing things to her.

"I want you to get on your knees, Anabel."

She sank down, almost relieved, though at the same time the tension rose—a wave of need and anticipation so great it threatened to split her wide open.

"Are you ready to taste me, girl?"

Was she ever.

"Yes," she whispered.

He beckoned her closer, letting her crawl on her knees as he stroked himself, his fingers squeezing the long, purple-red shaft, making it seem even bigger and more imposing.

She would never take all of it in her mouth. Surely he wouldn't expect her to do such a thing?

Oh damn, she would like to give it her best shot though.

Anabel licked her lips. Royce was taking off his shoes and socks, lifting his muscular buttocks to take down his pants and boxers.

She helped him pull them free. He didn't bother with the buttons of his shirt, opting instead to rip it and his T-shirt over his head.

Clearly he wanted to be as naked as her.

That was fine by Anabel.

What a chest he had, just as she had imagined, hard and muscled, toned and tanned, smooth and sexy. She wondered about the scar, just under his left nipple. It ran across his pectoral and down over his ripped abs.

She tried to kiss him.

He grabbed her by the hair. "Did I say you could do that?"

"No," she gasped.

"You're a willful thing, Anabel. You need taming."

Tremors ran through her. Her belly did a hot flip. Rebellion welled, mixed with an indescribable need for domination.

"I said you need taming." He reached down to take hold of her left nipple, his other hand still in her hair.

"Y-yes," she conceded.

"You're here to taste my cock," he reminded.

"Yes."

"Beg for it."

"Please...may I taste your cock?"

"You may kiss the tip of it, Anabel, just the tip."

Anabel whimpered. He released her but it was hardly freedom. Obeying was sheer torture as she pressed her lips to his cock head, tasting the glistening drop of pre-cum.

"Lick the underside," he instructed. "Along the vein."

Anabel fumed. Did he think she had never given a blowjob before? She might not be as experienced as some of the women he had run across but she wasn't a novice either.

"Again," he said, rejecting her first effort. "Slower."

Anabel touched her tongue to his cock a second time. His skin was salty sweet. The vein pulsed under the pressure. She wondered if he wasn't on the verge of coming.

A man like him could probably hold it back as long as he wanted.

"Better. Now along the cock head again."

Anabel bathed his shaft in glistening spittle, feeling deliciously decadent, her bottom still burning, freshly punished. She was sucking a man's cock under command and if she got it wrong, presumably, he could punish her again.

"Mmmm," said Royce, less articulate now.

She took that as a good sign, his hands resting on the sides of her head encouraging her to take him fully between her lips.

Anabel drew his cock into her mouth, sucking him in inch after inch. Swirling her tongue, she gave him pleasure as she got used to the fullness. Royce was the largest man she had ever been with and there was no way she could take all of him. He didn't seem to mind.

Nor did she. Before long he would be inside her, between her legs, filling her pussy. The thought drove her wild. It also filled her with nervous anticipation, as if she were a virgin all over again.

Using her teeth, she pulled back, teasing him, applying just the tiniest bit of pressure. This time he groaned and she knew she was getting to him, Dom or not, he was a man and that made him putty in the reasonably skilled hands of a woman—or in her mouth.

"Little vixen," said Royce, extracting himself.

Anabel whimpered, deprived of her toy.

"Come here," he said, pulling her to her feet. Royce reached around to pinch her ass. "Up you go," he said, bidding her to climb onto his lap.

He wanted her straddling him, that massive cock of his thrust deep in her sex.

She groaned as he effortlessly held her aloft, as though she were a rag doll. Inch by inch, he lowered her onto his cock, inserting his impossible thickness, filling her, claiming her. How had she lived without him, so empty in comparison? What would she do tomorrow and the next day if he left her?

Abruptly she froze.

"What's wrong?" asked Royce.

She shook her head. It scared her to think of tomorrow, to think of all the implications of a relationship.

"We'll stop if this is going too fast."

"No. Don't stop, please." She couldn't bear it if they didn't go on, not after all they had gone through to get here. The trouble was, she didn't know where to go from here.

He frowned, taking matters into his own hands. Next thing she knew, he was carrying her to the bedroom, cradled in his arms. She had never felt so secure and protected in her entire life. It was hard not to read things into it, not to imagine this was something permanent, based on a lifetime commitment.

Was this what it was supposed to feel like with your one true love, your soul mate?

He laid her on the top of the bed.

Leaning over her, his eyes were so intense she nearly cried.

"I would never hurt you, Anabel. Do you believe that?"

"Yes."

"I am going to blindfold you," he said, removing the handcuffs. "Then I'll make love to you. You won't be restrained but it won't be like anything you've ever felt before. You'll be in a very deep place of surrender. In a very real way you will become my slave."

Anabel wanted to cry. If he only knew how she had dreamed of this moment. "I'm yours, Royce," she told him.

He reached to the nightstand and retrieved a black blindfold from the drawer. It looked like an ordinary sleep mask but it was sewn quite skillfully to block any peripheral light. Lifting the strap over her head, he slipped the material over her forehead. It was made of satin, deliciously soft.

She sighed, yielding to the kiss of darkness.

"How does that feel, Anabel?"

"Strange," she whispered.

He chuckled. A moment later she felt his fingertip tracing a line across her cheek. Moaning softly, she parted her lips. Like a bird, hungry and needy, she suckled.

Abruptly he removed his hand. Anabel tensed, awaiting his next move.

She gasped as he brushed her nipples, one after the other.

"Lie still," he told her.

Anabel's heart thundered. She wanted to obey. She needed it so badly but it was so hard.

Sighs turned to moans as he massaged her full breasts, weighing each mound as if to gauge their acceptability.

A wave of insecurity passed through her. Surely he had been with prettier women, better-endowed ones, not to mention ones trained in the submissive arts.

"What are you afraid of?" Royce asked, reading her body.

She turned away, gritting her teeth.

"Anabel," he said gently, "I asked you a question." Royce turned her face toward him again, his thumb and forefinger under her chin.

"I...I want to please you."

"You do, girl, more than anything." He kissed her lips.

She arched her back, aching.

Royce took her wrists, holding them firmly in one hand. He pinned them over her head. Oh yes.

"I've never wanted any woman like I want you, Anabel, that's the truth."

All the tension drained away as he kissed her earlobes. She was limp, passive. She was...his.

"Please, Royce."

"Tell me. Tell me what you want."

"You...your cock. Please take me."

His hip pressed down against hers, the hard muscles of his chest squashing her breasts. She couldn't breathe, she couldn't think.

"You will not come until I tell you," said Royce, though he had yet to even penetrate her.

"No...Sir."

What had compelled her to call him Sir? She wasn't sure but it felt right.

Royce's response was immediate and masterful. Parting her thighs with his hand, he pushed her legs gently but firmly apart.

"Good girl," he rasped, testing her pussy with his fingertips. "You're nice and wet for me."

"Yes Sir," she whimpered. "I'm your...good slave."

"You must want your Master's cock very badly."

"Oh yes," she begged. "Please, fuck your little slave, make her come for you." Anabel tried to picture him above her, the look on his face, the way he was breathing. Was he as excited as she?

"Spread your legs, girl. Wide," he growled.

Anabel opened for him, feeling the air on her throbbing pussy lips. She was desperate for penetration.

"You are so goddamn beautiful," said Royce.

Anabel yelped in surprise as his hands grasped her ankles. He was pushing them up and farther apart. What the devil was he doing now?

"I'm going to give you pleasure," he told her. "I won't stop until you orgasm. If you hold back I will know. I will spank you if you do."

"Royce..." Her protest trailed off as she felt the initial pressure of his tongue, flicking across her sex. Good grief, he was going down on her. But she was supposed to be the slave.

He used his mouth to devastating effect, tongue pushing in and out like a tiny cock, rubbing again and again over her clit. In a matter of minutes he had her on the edge, riding the thin line of pleasure, so sharp it cut to pain.

Her pussy juices pooled. He continued working her but he didn't take her to climax. "I need to come," she groaned.

Royce slowed down, his tongue barely grazing the superheated surface of her skin. And then he went after her for real.

She screamed out as he took it from her, wrenching the ecstasy from deep in her soul. She had no choice but to surrender, writhing for him, crying out—no pride, no holding back.

Royce showed no mercy. She had only just recovered from the first set of orgasmic waves when he induced a second climax, shattering her completely.

By the time he finished with her, she couldn't move. Her body felt a million miles away, unreachable by her mind. She tried to speak, to say his name. It sounded dreamlike, a prayer of thanks. Royce had shown her heaven. Now all she wanted was sleep.

But Royce had a different idea. So did his cock.

"Get up now, my girl, on all fours."

She moaned as he turned her slightly, giving her ass a warm, delicious warning slap.

"Now, Anabel."

Anabel obeyed, secretly thrilled at his exercise of power, his willingness to impose his desire, his needs.

She rose shakily onto her knees and elbows. Royce was behind her, gripping her waist. She held her breath as she felt his swollen shaft against her thigh.

At last, he was going to fuck her.

"Oh, Royce, yes!"

She pushed out her ass for him, letting him know she was ready.

He pinched it good-naturedly. "Wench," he teased. His cock was poised, pushing at the opening to her sex. Anabel held her breath. It was time, finally.

All of him, she was going to take all of him.

"Sweet Jesus," he groaned, slipping inside her the first few inches—smooth and easy.

"Royce..." Her teeth chattered. She was hot and cold, empty and full. She was going to lose her mind.

"I dreamed of doing this slowly," he told her. "But that's not going to happen. Not the first time."

Reaching around her, he seized her breasts in his hands.

"I don't want it slow anyway. I want you to fuck me hard, like you own me, Royce."

"I do own you, Anabel. Right now I do."

He pushed hard, a deep thrust that, in a heartbeat, sank him to the hilt inside her silken pussy.

"Master," she moaned. "Oh Master."

Royce's teeth sank into her shoulder. He pulled out partway and pushed his cock in again. He squeezed her breasts. She flexed the muscles in her vaginal canal, squeezed his cock, giving him pleasure up and down the length of his throbbing shaft.

Oh yes, she wanted to be taken, used and possessed.

"Give it to me," he commanded. "Give it..."

Anabel felt the explosive charge building – his power, not hers. She could only yield herself to him for conquest.

His muscles tensed, from his thighs and stomach to his pectorals and biceps. At the same time, she could feel his cock swelling, signaling his readiness for orgasm.

"I...need...to come," she said, breathless, pleading.

"Do it," he growled. "Now."

Unleashing a roar, Royce let go, jets of his hot semen pumped deep inside her. She could feel every bit of his cock, every inch of superheated flesh.

The orgasm went on and on, his bursts matched by the overflowing surges of her own climax, pussy muscles clenching and unclenching, encouraging him to pump and thrust and release, again and again.

At last they collapsed together, Anabel on her belly, Royce on top of her, fingers interlaced with hers, knee between her thighs.

"I want to see you," she said dreamily. "Let's turn over. Please?"

Royce turned her over and pulled off the mask. She bit down on her lower lip. He was such a magnificent sight, his eyes slaked from the pleasure he had taken, his smile easy and satisfied. Was all this due to her? *Say something. Don't let the mood go all silent and awkward.*

"Are you thirsty?" he asked at last.

She nodded, though a drink was the farthest thing from her mind.

He climbed off the bed and padded to the bathroom, a study in masculine beauty – broad shoulders, corded muscles in his thighs, arms and buttocks. She wondered again about the scar.

"You should stay the night," he said, sitting beside her and handing her a glass of water. "It's getting late."

The refusal was sheer reflex, automatic for a good girl. "I can't."

He helped her sit up. "But you will."

Anabel drained the glass. She was thirstier than she thought. He took it from her and set it on the nightstand. Then he kissed her, tasting the cool moisture.

"While you are in this bed," he reminded her. "You belong to me."

With that he gently pushed her back down, removing once and for all any talk of leaving.

Chapter Four

Anabel had never wanted so badly for Monika to be out of her office. Naturally she was right there waiting for Anabel to arrive the next morning, eagle eyes fixed on the hallway.

"Anabel, where do you think you are going?"

"To my desk?" said Anabel miserably, praying it wouldn't be too obvious that she had thrown together this morning's fashion ensemble in two minutes flat, including a very lame attempt at blowing her hair dry.

"Not until I've had a good look at you."

"Count me in too," said Favio, popping his head out of the design room doorway.

"And me," said Staci, beaming, happy for a few minutes off from her usual morning detail of laying out supplies and making the coffee.

They hauled Anabel into the kitchen for inspection.

Staci had a clipboard.

"Minus one pearl earring," said Monika, beginning the inspection.

Anabel cringed. This was not going to go well.

"Lemon yellow blouse and a tartan skirt with brown boots? Ugh. Fashion 911," said Favio.

"I don't think she dried her hair either," Staci said, recording the check marks one by one.

"Grand total?" Monika demanded.

"Three strikes," said Staci.

"Houston, we have liftoff," said Monika.

"Yep, look at the eyes," Favio said. "There's no doubt about it."

He sniffled dramatically. "Our own little Anabel, all grown up and spending the night with a man. Who will keep her down on the farm after she's seen gay Paris?"

"Obviously you and Royce consummated," Monika declared as Staci handed Anabel a much-needed cup of coffee. "I assume you went the full nine yards—chains, spanking, blah, blah, blah?"

Anabel sputtered a mouthful of the warm beverage.

Surely they weren't expecting a blow-by-blow?

"BDSM? Excellent," said Favio. "I knew you were kinky under that straitlaced exterior."

Staci's eyes widened. "You're a Dominatrix, Anabel? That's cool."

"Hah," said Monika. "Our dear Anabel is a submissive through and through, aren't you, sweetheart?"

Anabel glared at her fashion-*faux pas* boots. Was it lunchtime yet?

It had been bad enough waking up in bed next to Royce, the sunlight shining on his magnificent face. She had been lying with her cheek on his chest, enjoying the most peaceful sleep of her life. Too bad things like that didn't last. She had wanted nothing more than to skulk off but he had insisted on driving her home and waiting outside while she got dressed.

They had not said a word to each other the whole way to work. How could she have been so naïve? He didn't want someone like her. He could have any woman he wanted. BDSM-experienced women.

"I'll drop you off next door and park my car," he had said. "So no one gets suspicious."

"Thank you," she had managed to reply, though there was so much else on her mind and in her heart. Mostly she had wanted to ask how they were supposed to go from friends to lovers and back to friends without so much as a single date between, much less a breakup.

Certainly it was impossible to have another night like last night. There was no context, no agreement beforehand. And if he was interested in a repeat, he surely hadn't given any hints with his businesslike attitude.

"I don't know what I am," Anabel replied. "Other than tired."

"You do look pretty whipped," said Staci.

"I'll be fine, once I get busy," said Anabel.

"You sure must have been busy last night," Favio said and chuckled. "So spill the details. Is he like the best lover ever or what? He has to be, he looks so damn hot."

"Leave her alone," chided Monika, as though she hadn't been the one to start things in the first place. "She needs her space. We'll talk to her again after her second date."

"There won't be a second date," said Anabel. "Technically, there wasn't even a first."

"Nonsense," said Monika. "You two are perfect together. Thick as thieves, easy on the eyes, not to mention how damn jealous he acts."

"You are an adorable little couple," Staci said dreamily. "I wish I had a guy who is into me that much."

Anabel heaved a sigh. "I give up. Monika, send me home, please? I can't take any more of this."

She had thought she was stronger, honestly. She had prepared a whole speech for Royce the next time they saw each other—at lunch most likely—about how they both needed to be grownups and preserve their friendship but now she was not sure what she might say or do if she got too close to those eyes of his. And that body.

Tomorrow wouldn't be much easier but at least she could face the man with dry hair and a coordinated outfit.

"It's your call," said Monika, giving in with surprising ease.

Anabel should have been suspicious. She would bet anything Monika had another trick up her perpetually sneaky sleeve but she was too distraught to figure it out.

Or maybe, deep down, she wanted to be tricked.

Who could blame her? Anabel had never felt more alive than she had last night with Royce. It was like the first time she had had sex, the way he'd made his conquest of her body – teasing, demanding and ultimately owning the very deepest of her sexual responses. She understood now that BDSM was a state of mind. It was a trust between two people that went way beyond role-play and the use of kinky tools.

She was hungry for more too – more bondage, more discipline. And more sex. The kind that came when a man and a woman had their special places – him as Master, her as slave, treasured, lusted after...possessed.

A wicked idea crossed her mind. She would go home and learn more about BDSM. The internet would have information, pictures too.

Not that she would ever put it to use. Not with Royce.

There were some places you just didn't go in life.

She had been lucky once, playing with fire. She would be a fool to try it again. Who was to say she would ever break free again? Then what? Was she supposed to be on her knees for Royce for the rest of her life, letting him control her sex life, taking whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted it?

That would sure suck.

Or would it?

* * * * *

Royce wasn't too surprised when Anabel failed to show up in the cafeteria for lunch. A quick visit to her office revealed that she had gone home for the day. Cursing himself for not getting her phone number, he headed back to the elevator.

Monika chased him down.

"I'm really not supposed to do this," she said, handing him the slip of folded paper.

Royce smiled in spite of his glum mood. He would be a rich man if he had a dollar for every time Monika began a sentence with the words “I’m really not supposed to do this”.

Examining the paper, he saw a phone number, no name.

Three guesses whose it was.

“Giving out this information is a violation of Anabel’s privacy,” Royce disapproved. “Not to mention a risk to her personal safety.”

Monika winked. “I am sure you have all sorts of wickedness in mind for her. Just try not to leave any marks when you’re done tying her up and whipping her, will you? She’s still *my* slave, nine to five.”

Royce shook his head. “If you expect me to thank you —”

“Nope, just get the hell out of here before Favio sees you. He will want you all for himself.”

Royce promptly called his number-two security guard on the radio. “I need you to hold down the fort,” he said. “You can reach me on the cell.”

“Got it, chief,” said Carl Willows, a former military police officer and black belt in karate, not to mention one hell of a backgammon player during their downtime.

Royce’s car still smelled of Anabel’s sweet scent—jasmine and spring flowers. It had been hell driving her here this morning, having her next to him, knowing he didn’t dare touch her or talk to her about last night.

His cock had been rock hard when he awoke. Fortunately she’d made a hasty exit from the bed. Could he have pushed matters? In a word, yes. The responsibility, the choice was his. In a very real sense, Anabel had been branded, trained to his touch. Her submissive body would never have the power to resist, not after he had taken her so far. One look, one word would be enough to bring her to her knees.

It wasn't ego speaking, just experience. Anabel was a natural sex slave. She awoke to domination, she found herself in thrall to male dominion. His domination. Punishment, pleasure—he could give it all to her.

Anabel.

He had wanted to call her name, bring her back to bed. Wanted it when he heard her in the shower, knowing she was naked, so very vulnerable, the soap slipping over her body, suds on her breasts, nipples tight, her pussy wet and throbbing. He had longed to go in after her, take her in his arms, show her that he would never let her go.

But Anabel needed more than hot sex. She needed stability, a future, a calm, stable man who would give her a normal life with all the trimmings. Not a dark lover who would whisper in her ear at all hours, teach her the agony and ecstasy of the whip, make her crave cold steel chains and the feel of his hand cracking on her sweet buttocks.

Jeezus, what was he going to tell her, anyway? Why was he going to her apartment in the middle of the day when she had obviously gone home to avoid him?

Maybe just goodbye? Let her off the hook easy? Assure her that he would never bother her again? She could eat lunch with anyone she wanted, no matter how sleazy that person might be.

The thought of any man trying to make time with her, impressing her with an ulterior motive of getting her into bed...hell, it was too much.

It was crazy—his jealousy.

Even without the BDSM play, the attraction had been there, the sparks, the chemistry. He knew just how to touch her, how to drive her wild. She knew how to touch him too. She was so gentle and sweet but so wild. The way she'd run her finger over his scar had almost brought tears to his eyes.

She was curious and, damn it, a part of him wanted to share everything—the stories of his pain, the war, all of it. Including the darkness afterward, the fear and the nightmares.

Masters didn't share that part of themselves though. Neither did friends.

Royce continued to weigh it all in his mind. All the way across town.

Before he knew it, he found himself in front of her apartment door, ringing the bell. He could sense her on the other side before she said a word.

"Anabel, I know you are there. You need to open up. We can't put this off."

Half of him wanted her to obey. The other half prayed she would be strong for both of them. Because now that he had sensed her presence so close, everything was up for grabs. Indeed, this door was the only thing keeping him from ravishing her the way she needed. The way he needed.

Anabel's heart slammed in her chest. How in hell did Royce know which apartment was hers? Monika had told him, she was sure of it.

Anabel had hoped Royce would leave if she didn't answer right away but he was calling to her, telling her she had to open up.

Oh no she didn't.

"Royce, please go away," she said at last, her voice coming out much shakier than she would have liked.

Naturally he didn't take no for an answer. "I'm not going away, Anabel. Let me in."

Something gave way. Her knees went a little weak. He no longer asked, he ordered her. "This is a very bad idea," she said, even as her trembling hand moved to slide the chain free. A moment later she unlocked the deadbolt and turned the knob.

Only at the very last second did she consider what she was wearing. Cutoffs and an old T-shirt, no bra.

Fuck.

Royce wore jacket and tie, as usual. Compared to him, she felt downright naked. Closing the door behind him, he gave her the once-over, from her bare feet to her disheveled hair, held back unceremoniously with a large clip.

"I look like hell," she apologized.

"No, you're gorgeous," he said with a fierceness that made her nipples tighten.

Crossing her arms over her vulnerable breasts, she said, "If you have something to say, just say it. I'm not feeling well."

Royce frowned and reached out to touch her forehead. For a moment, she couldn't breathe. How could such incidental contact have so much effect?

"You don't have a fever. I think this has to do with last night."

Anabel took a step back. Did he get ideas seeing her like this—no shoes, in ragged clothes? Was this how strong men dressed their slaves in their imaginations?

"I don't have anything to say about last night. Period."

"We had sex, Anabel. We had *Master-slave* sex," he added.

"Whatever," she said throatily, trying not to look into his eyes—so deep and fierce and intense. Or at his sexy, passionate lips. "It was a one-time thing."

"You think it can't happen again?"

"No...yes. I don't know." She took another step back. "Look, I think you should go."

"Letting you go this morning was the hardest thing I ever had to do, do you know that?"

A lump formed in her throat. Was this it, then? Was there going to be a relationship?

"Why? What was so hard, Royce?" she pressed him.

"You know what I'm talking about as well as I do."

"No I don't."

He frowned, a storm of emotions just below the surface of his handsome features.

Say it! Just tell me you have feelings, Royce. I will say it if you will.

"There is more I want to do," he said at last.

"Oh?"

"I would like to put you in bondage, show you what it's like to come under a man's total power."

Her heart slammed in her chest, desire mixed with hurt. Was that all he thought about—kinky sex? "You had your chance last night."

"What about now?"

"Not interested."

His gaze narrowed. "Are you sure about that?"

Anabel had had enough. "What is your fucking problem? Why did you really come here?"

"I was planning to square things between us."

She laughed humorlessly. "Don't worry, you accomplished that by acting like a total dick."

Royce moved in too fast. He had her by the upper arms, his grip like steel. "You think this is a game?"

"Let go," she protested.

"Not until we settle this."

"It *was* settled, until you came here."

"Look at you," he growled. "Your cheeks are flushed. Your nipples are hard. You're wet for me too, aren't you?"

"Fuck you, you arrogant bastard!"

Royce answered by upping the stakes considerably, his lips pushing hard against hers, punishing, breath-stealing. She moaned in objection but he was not going to let go—not until he had made his point, leaving her weak and panting.

"Are you satisfied?" she croaked when he had taken his fill.

"Not even close, Anabel."

Anabel swooned. "Royce...we can't..."

"Do you have scarves?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Take me to your bedroom." He had her by the hand.

"Yes," she whispered. She might as well have said "Yes Master" for all her acquiescence.

Anabel led Royce down the hall, feeling strangely shy. They had already spent a night together, he had made it clear he desired her again, so why was she so unsure?

"Wow," he exclaimed as she brought him into her inner sanctum with the powder blue wallpaper and frilly curtains.

"It's girly, I know."

"I meant the brass bed. It's perfect for bondage. You really have been thinking about this."

Anabel buried her head against his chest. "It's not like I'm a pervert. I just thought it was pretty, that's all."

He stroked her hair, making her tremble. How could a man be so strong and gentle at the same time? "You don't have to be embarrassed, just admit it. Say it, darling. Tell me what you want me to do."

The way he called her darling made her toes curl. The way she was pressed against him, half dressed, made her vulnerable and horny as hell. "I want you to...have your way."

"Uh-huh." His voice was thick and raspy. His hands were at her waistband, undoing the button on her cutoffs. She didn't dare breathe as he worked the zipper, giving himself access. "You want to be tied to that bed? You want to show me those scarves?"

"Yes." She could barely speak as he moved his fingers down and over the silk panel of her panties, feeling her wetness.

"Move against me, baby. Don't be afraid."

Anabel surrendered, showing what she needed, what she was feeling.

"Yes, that's it," he approved as she sought to press her pussy, her throbbing clitoris against his knuckles. "That's a good girl."

"Yes...Sir," said Anabel, wanting to recapture the magic of last night.

"I am going to drive you insane," Royce said. "You will beg me and you will agree to do anything."

"Anything at all..." She mouthed the scandalous, wicked words.

Royce took his hand from her crotch and grabbed her ass. He pulled her against him, letting his erection dig in deep through the material of their clothing. His face was hard as steel, unrelenting. She was frightened but it was a good, exciting fear—like the fear of a roller coaster.

"Kiss me, girl."

Anabel offered her lips, desperate to please. He kept it slow and simmering, keeping his mouth back, barely touching hers. She knew what he was capable of, knew what he could do with his tongue.

Abruptly he smacked her ass. It was a very hard blow that made her yelp.

His eyes challenged her to object.

"Royce," she sighed, melting.

"Arms up."

He took off her shirt, baring her breasts.

Instinctively, she tried to cover herself as he moved to touch her.

He formed a fist in her hair, bending her head back. "Whose breasts are these, slave?"

"Yours," she rasped, properly castigated.

Royce's eyes held no mercy as he explored with his free hand, weighing each globe, manipulating it, casually flicking her nipples, using her body with all the lustful disdain of a man who knows his partner will accept anything.

God help her, it was a turn-on.

"Will you let me please you, Royce?" It was where she wanted to go, onto her knees, kissing and sucking, placating.

"If I want your mouth, I will take it later," he said. "When you are spread-eagle."

Her knees buckled.

"Pull down your shorts and panties, Anabel."

He didn't ease up on her hair. It wasn't pain but just enough pressure to make her feel held, captured.

No mistaking that this was submission. Squirming, she worked the denim shorts and panties down over her hips. He let her step from them and then, as if to test her, he released her and took both her nipples between the fingers of each hand.

She stood perfectly still, chest thrust out as he pressed the hot nubs, rolling the flesh between thumbs and forefingers.

"It won't ever be the same when you get into this bed," he told her. "Even if you're alone, you'll remember what we are going to do. You will feel like a slave every time you crawl under your covers."

Anabel's eyes slid shut. The idea of being alone, without him, without this ever again, was too much.

Royce was through talking. Spinning her about, he slapped her ass and scooted her forward. "Scarves," he said.

Anabel went to the dresser. She kept the scarves in the bottom drawer. She had bought dozens of them on various trips and at countless department stores. She hadn't worn a tenth of them. It was another hobby, she supposed, like the lingerie she collected, never meant to be seen.

"That's enough," Royce declared as she presented a brightly colored handful, deceptively light and soft. "Put them on the bed. You too."

Her pussy tingled. He was making her an object, just like the scarves. Unsure how to place herself, she crawled onto the mattress and lay back against the pillows, one leg drawn up, one extended. She pointed her toes for erotic effect.

"Like this?" she whispered.

Royce frowned. "You think you're a free woman, keeping your legs together? Spread them, girl – wide."

Her breath caught in her throat. He was being so rude and coarse. A little unsure, she did her best to comply.

"Wider," he growled.

Anabel parted her thighs farther, giving him full access, visual and otherwise.

"You are dripping," he observed.

"Yes Sir."

He was stripping off his clothes, shedding his jacket and tie and dress shirt. When he was bare to the waist, she moaned inwardly, her eyes traveling over the hard muscles of his chest. *I'm a lucky, lucky slave*, she thought.

"Touch yourself," he ordered. "Play with your clit."

Anabel went wide-eyed. She had never done that for any man. "Please...no," she said, hesitating.

Royce took off his shoes and the rest of his clothes. His cock sprang free, rock hard, larger than life. "Are you disobeying me?"

"No...yes..."

"Turn over."

"Royce?"

"Over."

Anabel rolled onto her belly.

"Ass up," he said, making her accept a pillow wedged between her crotch and the bed.

"What are you going to do?"

"Something more serious than a spanking."

Leather trailed down her back, a faint tickling. "No, Royce!"

"You guessed that it's my belt, huh?"

"I won't let you —"

"Too late."

Anabel heard the whistling sound. She had barely braced herself when the belt cracked against her flesh, exploding hot pain across her ass.

Moaning, she tried to bury her head into a pillow.

Royce caressed her, rubbing her hot bottom and then pushing his fingers into her pussy. She couldn't help responding as the throbbing heat blended with a pleasure so sharp it nearly blew her mind.

All at once the fingers were gone.

The belt returned, bringing another slash across her helpless ass.

"Please, Royce!"

"Master," he corrected.

"Please, Master, I'll be good." The words came in hot stabs. It was so fucking scandalous, being beaten by a lover, having to beg him to stop.

"Of course you'll be good. I won't leave you a choice."

He began caressing her clitoris again, slow and steady strokes with his pinky. He nearly made her come but stopped short, cutting her off in the throes of anticipatory bliss.

This time, the belt almost felt good. Fuck, what was he doing to her senses?

"If I tell you to play with yourself, little girl, what will you do next time?"

"I will do as you say. I'll...I'll play with myself."

"Turn over."

"Fuck!" she cried out, rolling her hot ass onto the comforter. "Fuck, fuck, fuck."

Royce stood there holding his belt, looking hot as hell, face lit with bliss, eyes taking her in, drinking in the scene as if it were the best fucking day of his life.

That view of him would have made it all worthwhile, even if she hadn't felt anything herself.

"We just kicked it up a notch," he observed.

Anabel licked her lips. "Tell me what to do, Master."

"Legs wide. Make yourself come for me. Be quick about it."

"Oh yes," she cried, pressing a fingertip to her clit, the others rubbing the entrance to her pussy. She pushed them inside as though they were an extension of his cock, owning her, invading her.

Anabel's orgasm was quick and hot and dirty. She let it overtake her—delicious and shameful—as though she were in public, about to get caught. As if she were a naughty, horny girl.

"How does that make you feel?" he asked, watching her writhe, her clitoris hard and extended, her pussy expanding and squeezing as if his dick was already inside her, fucking and using her.

"Like...a...whore." she gasped.

Royce laughed. "I knew you had it in you."

She gritted her teeth, digging in her heels, lifting her pelvis off the bed. She writhed without making a sound.

"Lick your fingers clean," he said when she was done.

She looked at him, licking and suckling in slow motion for his benefit.

"Time to secure you for your own safety." He winked. "Mine too."

Anabel let him tie scarves to her wrists, one by one. He tied the long ends of the scarves to the brass rods at the head of the bed.

Her heart slammed in her chest as he did the same to her ankles.

"Much better," he observed when he had her spread-eagle and completely helpless. Anabel tested her bonds. "You better hope this holds."

"Maybe I should call for backup," he said, feigning concern. "What about your buddy Mike?"

"He's not my buddy," she pouted.

"You seemed into him the other day."

"I was trying to make you jealous, you big lug."

He arched his brow at the confession. She hadn't intended to spill the beans, heck, she had barely admitted it to herself.

"Well, you succeeded a little too well, didn't you?" he quipped.

She licked her lips. "Maybe."

"You think I haven't had this in mind since I laid eyes on you? You think it doesn't kill me to think of you running around free for the taking?"

"Hmmm," she mused. "So does that mean I am off the market?"

"We'll discuss that later." Royce climbed onto the bed and covered her with his body, his chest pressed to her breasts. Maddeningly, he held back from penetrating her, keeping his cock pressed against her inner thigh.

"Why can't we talk about it now?" she goaded him.

He arched a brow. "Do I need to take my belt to you again, little missy?"

"Maybe."

Royce bent his head and captured one of her nipples between his teeth. She moaned as he bit down, just hard enough. A moment later he gave the other nipple the same treatment.

"That was not a proper answer to my question," he informed her.

Anabel was panting. "No...Master...you don't need to whip me...again."

This time he was gentle, suckling, though that was almost worse.

“Oh, Royce...Master, take me. Oh god, I need you in me.”

He kissed her neck and then her cheek and forehead. “Patience is a virtue.”

“Not when I’m tied to my own bed, out of my mind with lust.”

“Are you really out of your mind?” He kissed her to find out.

“Yes,” she groaned, arching her neck.

“Perhaps I could show a little mercy,” he mused. “Being that I am your Master.”

“You...fucking...bastard,” she growled, showing that she still had some spirit.

Royce grinned, letting her know he liked it that way just fine.

Slowly, very slowly, he entered her, making her feel every inch, making her whimper and beg and cry for it until she really was out of her fucking mind—arching her back, twisting against the silk bonds, writhing, doing anything to get their bodies closer, making it inevitable by pushing him over the edge.

Damn it, Royce had the willpower of some kind of Tantric priest. He thrust into her forever and didn’t come until he was good and ready. Even then, as he poised above her, his cock thick and hard and full of the cum she so desperately needed, he took an extra moment to remind her who was in charge.

“I am the only man in your life,” he said. “For better or worse.”

“What about Favio?” she managed to quip.

“He’s the exception.” With that he thrust his cock deep, all the way to the hilt, filling her and completing her, urging her to climax with him. Her spasming muscles accompanied his own release as he came in burning spurts, releasing every last bit of his thick, hot essence.

And then when it was done, when she had finally settled down from flying high above the world, he started in again, his tongue dabbing at her sensitive pussy and clit, making her need it all over again. He brought her to climax twice more with his mouth and then he entered her again with his cock.

The whole time she stayed tied to the bed—utterly, deliciously at his mercy.

He will have to cut the scarves, she thought. Oh well, they had served their purpose. She had plenty more. Better still, she would buy some proper rope or chains. She was sure he had a million ideas.

She would have a few of her own.

Starting with a nice thick steak after this was over.

Maybe then he would finally tell her about that scar and a few other things about his mysterious past. They did need to start dating and getting to know each other a bit more, after all. They had done the friend thing and they were pretty good at the sex part, so that was the only thing left.

That and figuring out how to keep her nosy coworkers from asking too many questions. She had finally broken that barrier between them – from friend to submissive and a whole lot more.

About the Author

Reese Gabriel is a born romantic with a taste for the edgier side of love. Having traveled the world and sampled many of the finer things, Reese now enjoys the greater simplicities—barefoot walks by the ocean, kisses under moonlight and whispers of passion in the darkness with that one special person.

Preferring to remain behind the scenes, cherished by a precious few, Reese hopes to awaken in the lives of many the possibilities of true love through stories of far off places and enchanted lives.

For the sake of love and hope and imagination, these stories are told. May they be enjoyed as much in the reading as in the writing.

Reese welcomes comments from readers. You can find Reese's website and email address on the author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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