

**Michelle  
Means**



**His Promise**

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## His Promise

Leaning against the concrete bench, he closed his eyes and relaxed. Raising his face toward the sun, he relaxed into the warm light. A few seconds later, there was a cool, breeze, and it brushed along his cheeks, but he enjoyed all of this. He was done, he thought with a smile. He was done with all of his classes, all of his final exams, at least for a few months.

It was strange just sitting there, relaxing, and understanding that he didn't have any other obligations. Sure, he would go hang out with his friends and he would eventually need to go to work on Saturday morning, but right then and there, he didn't have to think about any of those courses or professors. He had done his best, so now he just had to wait to find out what his grades might be. It was such a relief not to think about calculus, English, American history, or German.

For the last two weeks or so, he had scrambled from one project to another, one cram session to another, memorizing ideas and pounding out essays as he stayed up late to try to keep up with his workload.

Taking another slow breath, he opened his eyes and turned his head toward the fountain. He watched as those eddies of water shot up ten or twelve feet before plopping down into the round pool at the center of the quad. Just past the jets of water, however, someone drew his attention.

"Not this," he muttered when he saw her.

It was Jennifer Putnam.

They met in his calculus class, and they studied together exactly three times to prepare for one of the tests. After that, Daniel had done his best to avoid her. He couldn't articulate the reason, not precisely. Sure, he had dated around the school quite a bit. As a junior, he looked so experienced, suave, and worldly compared to the freshman guys on campus. That made it easy, especially because he was reasonably attractive. More importantly, he was confident, and he knew how to negotiate through different conversations. So many guys out there tried to view asking a girl out

as some kind of competition, like they needed to come in hard and fast. More often than not, they just scared the girls away.

Daniel, in contrast, could flirt and play and joke. He knew how to drop easy complements. Just as importantly, he could ask for favors or offer his services, all of which made the girls around him feel very comfortable.

When he first met Jennifer Putnam, he thought there might be some kind of future there. Maybe they would date. Maybe they would just fool around as friends with benefits. Perhaps they would just hook up a single time and drift apart. And yet, when they had spoken, they mostly focused on their math equations, yet there had been this prick at the back of his neck. He hadn't been able to describe it, not exactly. He couldn't articulate any particular habit or remark she had made.

Instead, there was something about her gaze.

From a distance or at a glance, Jennifer Putnam seemed fine. In fact, she was better than fine; this girl is gorgeous. With her neatly braided blonde hair, her sharp blue eyes, her small nose, full lips, and big breasts, she was hot by virtually every standard. She had a great ass, and she even knew how to dress. Most of the time, she favored snug jeans and T-shirts when it was hot or sweaters when it was cold. Even then, her sweaters seemed to cling to the contours of her body, making it harder for the guys around her to ignore her and concentrate on their studies.

So what was it then? What bothered him? Why hadn't he pursued her?

Actually, it was more than that.

After their third study session, he had started to avoid her. He had never been especially rude. He still smiled at her in the hallways or waved when he saw her, but he never pursued her. Not only that, she had suggested they meet up a couple more times, and he had always put her off by claiming that he needed to work or take care of other projects for different classes.

She seemed understanding enough, only now her blue eyes focused on him, and she strode forward.

What was her major?

As we Daniel had studied at this college, he had noticed how different disciplines attracted different kinds of people. Obviously, business majors were going to be intrigued by the questions of profit and making as much money as possible. Art majors lost themselves to questions of aesthetics, beauty, and representation. Then there were the psychology and sociology students who seemed intent on understanding the underlying principles of how people made their decisions. Economics majors and others liked to assume that the human race could be rational, that we operated within specific parameters using all of the available information, but that wasn't true for most of the other social scientists on campus.

When Jennifer looked at him, it felt like she was studying him, like she was making these various determinations. Sure, he could get the same sense from other girls from time to time, especially when it came to the way he laughed, flirted, and the jokes he told. But Jennifer Putnam was different. It seemed like she saw him more as a lab rat than anything else.

For a moment, Daniel was genuinely tempted to jump to his feet and wander off. Since he had finished with the last of his final exams, he didn't have anything to do or anywhere to be. Later that night, he had tentative plans to go drinking with some of his friends, but that wouldn't be for several hours at least.

"Daniel!" Jennifer called out. Readjusting the straps of her backpack, she brushed forward and sat down next to him on the concrete bench. "So, I was hoping you could help me out."

"What's going on?" Daniel asked, careful to keep his tone neutral.

"Well..." Jennifer pressed her lips together into this precocious pout. "I'm doing a project, and I need to test a specific set of psychological inputs."

His brows creased, "It sounds like you want to use me as a lab rat."

Rather than deny it, she wobbled her head from side to side, shrugged, and admitted, "Yeah. Pretty much. That's about it."

"I'm not taking any psychology classes," he told her. "It's not like I need extra credit. But anyway, thanks for the offer."

He was about to get up and politely excuse himself when she burst out with, "You'll get a thousand dollars for one afternoon."

"A thousand dollars?" He actually started salivating when he heard that number. As a college student earning minimum wage, that sounded like a small fortune. Suddenly, his muscles relaxed, and he sat down again. Narrowing his eyes slightly, he had to ask, "What do I have to do?"

"Basically, I'm doing a study on learning and the variables that affect memory and data retention. Look, it's nothing big or especially hard. Basically, you just have to sit back in a chair, watch a couple of videos, listen to some music, and see if it affects how you remember information."

"If it's so simple, then why would you be paying so much?"

"First, the department chair really, really likes me, so she gave me access to a special slush fund. Second, my last test subject dropped out of the study at the last moment. Look, Daniel. I'm desperate. Please? Please, would you help me?"

"Fine," he said.

"Thank you. Thank you so much! I swear, you won't regret this!"

He had that same sense of uncertain foreboding as he followed her across campus to the psychology building. It was a large, white stone edifice. The exterior looked polished, although he always found this particular building to be one of the most intimidating on campus. The white stones stretched up in stark contrast to the black, tinted windows. It always seemed to Daniel like the psychologists in this building didn't want anyone to know what they were up to.

The first floor seemed normal enough. He saw the main Psychology Department Office, and they passed a bunch of corny posters with cartoon images of different famous psychologists and psychiatrists. They headed up a pair of stairs. Then, she brought him to a doorway, and she pulled a card from her wallet. She swiped it through a reader, and the red light above the door flashed several times before turning green. Then he flinched when he heard the audible sound of a lock disengaging.

"Really?" Daniel asked. At the same time, he had to wonder if he wasn't making some stupid mistake. Did he really need to do this?

For a thousand dollars? Yes. Yes, he did.

Although the answer came quickly and easily enough, he couldn't ignore that sense of trepidation pricking at his insides.

They headed down the hall to another key card reader. She swiped it again, and another light turned green. Finally, they came into the room.

"What is this?" Daniel asked when he saw the piece of furniture in front of him. It looked a lot like a dentist's chair, only his eyes immediately darted to the white, leather straps for the feet, wrists, and forehead.

"Okay," Jennifer said as she spun around and faced him. She peered intently into his eyes, and she had her hands on her hips as she took a slow breath before explaining, "Basically, I would like you to sit down here, and then several images are going to be projected on the screen. After a little while, I'm going to ask you some questions, and we're going to work on seeing how long it takes you to learn and adequately recall a selected piece of information."

"That's it?"

"Yup," she said.

"Then why the restraints?"

"Oh, those?" Jennifer asked as if they weren't even worth mentioning. With a dismissive wave of her head, she told him, "Basically, some of the lights flash pretty quickly, so it's possible you would get disoriented and might fall out of the chair, especially if you tried to stand up too fast." She shrugged again like it didn't really matter, only to add, "Look, I know it's really intimidating, but it's not a big deal. Basically, the college says we have to use them. Obviously, they want to avoid a lawsuit."

That mostly made sense, but Daniel couldn't help it. He bit down and glanced toward the door again.

She stepped a little closer, and he glanced down at her. He was taller by several inches, broader and more powerfully built. She was definitely a cute girl, especially when she held her hands together and let the pitch of her voice rise as she pleaded with him,

"Daniel, I really, really, really need this!" She sounded so young, so helpless and innocent, just like a damsel in distress.

And Daniel had always been a chivalrous guy. That was one reason why so many girls liked him. They felt safe with him.

"Fine," he said.

"Perfect," she said, clapping her hands together. She pointed to the chair and said, "Just go ahead, sit down, and please put your wrists and ankles in the safety straps. I will make sure they are secure."

"I can do it myself," he said as he started to climb up onto the seat. It was softer and better padded than he expected.

"Sorry," she said. "Again, it's just about the college and limiting liability. As a trained researcher, I'm the only one here qualified to strap you in."

...*Strap you in*... Those words pumped through his skull, and that little tickle of bestial anxiety pulsed through his body all over again. Was he really going to let this girl strap him down?

For a thousand dollars? Yes.

After arriving at that same answer, he exhaled slowly. He relaxed, and he tried not to flinch as she went for his wrists. She strapped down his right arm first, then his left. Each time, she yanked on the white, medical restraints. The straps became very, very snug. Fortunately, they were lined with something like faux fur, so they weren't uncomfortable.

She came over to his feet, and she strapped those down as well. He started to lift his head, to look down as much as he could, but she put her hand against his forehead and shoved him against the head rest. Next, she brought a strap around his forehead. Finally, she attached one more restraint for his neck.

"Is all of this really necessary?" Daniel asked.

"Like I said before, it's just part of the policy." She shrugged like it didn't matter and he didn't need to be concerned. But now, she stepped in front of him, and she asked, "Is there any chance you're going to fall out? I think I did a good job, but I really want to know that you are nice and secure."

"No," he said. "I'm fine."

"Let's just be sure. Can you do me a favor and try to struggle?"

"Fine," he said, rolling his eyes. Instead of his misgivings about her, he concentrated on what he was going to do with that money. First, he thought about buying a round of drinks for his friends. Second, he might replace his laptop. Then again, just holding onto some cash and having a cushion would be nice, he thought.

As those ideas ran through his head, he tensed the muscles on his right arm as he tried to pull against the restraint. Next, he tried his left. He attempted to kick out with his feet, but he couldn't jerk away, no matter how hard he tried.

"Really? That's the best you can do? Come on, Daniel. You're a big, strong, athletic guy. Fight it. Show me that you can really try to get away. If you're not going to take this seriously, then you're going to risk ruining my entire research project."

Daniel sucked in a slow breath, held it for a moment, and then he made up his mind. Maybe it was the fact that she was challenging him. Perhaps it was something else. Either way, he yanked as hard as he could against those bonds.

Exhaling through his teeth, Daniel closed his eyes, focused, and then he pulled. He twisted. He threw all of his strength against his right side, then his left. He pulled and struggled, fighting hard. By now, his eyes had opened again, but he didn't see Jennifer or notice the expression on her face. He almost expected the heavy seat to wobble or shudder underneath him as he pumped all of his strength from his arms and legs into breaking free from those restraints, yet the chair had been bolted down, so he stayed firmly in place, strapped down and unable to break free.

After nearly a minute, he was panting, and he dropped his head back as much as he could. "There." He sucked in another breath, "They are. Was that good enough for you?"

"Yeah," Jennifer said as she picked up her tablet. She brushed her finger along the smooth surface and nodded to herself, "Okay, so to begin, I need to establish a brief baseline. First, how would you describe the relationship between women and men?"

His brows tightened. Really? Why was she asking something like that? Wasn't this supposed to be an examination of his ability to learn, not his political beliefs?

"Men and women should be equal, I guess?"

A smirk tugged at the corners of her lips.

"Would you care to elaborate?"

Feeling uncomfortable, especially while trapped in his restraints, Daniel glanced up this girl again. Yes, she was gorgeous by so many different standards, but there was something in the way she was looking down at him. Although he didn't say anything, he finally figured it out. Her gaze struck him as predatory, like there was something she wanted, a secret agenda, and he wasn't smart enough to figure it out.

"I guess that women and men are equally smart, equally capable, so they should have the same opportunities?" He tried to think back to some of his aggressively feminist professors and what they believed. In that moment, Daniel didn't really care one way or another. As a college student, he focused on his grades, potential internships, and what his career would look like. Large questions about the structure of society, equity, or equality didn't really factor into his personal calculations.

"Okay," she said, typing in a note. "That works well. Now, I'm going to put a set of headphones on you, and you are going to be watching a series of videos. You're going to hear several messages, and you need to learn what they mean. Do you think you can handle that?"

"Yeah?" Again, his answer sounded more like a question, mostly because he didn't actually care about this one way or the other. He was there for the money and nothing else.

Jennifer grabbed the heavy set of headphones, and she carried them back over to his seat. She stretched forward, and he couldn't help but notice her cleavage. Yes, she was gorgeous, he reflected again. She had that amazing body. But then she slid the headphones over his ears, and then she stepped back.

Her mouth moved, but he couldn't hear anything she was saying. In fact, all sound seemed to disappear from his perceptions.

It was unnerving, although he managed to keep his expression neutral.

Obviously, he couldn't hear her now that he was wearing those noise canceling headphones. Just as importantly, he couldn't read her lips, so he had no idea that she just said, "I'm looking forward to brainwashing you, Daniel." She smirked and shook her head from side to side. Yes, she was making him nervous, but she really didn't care. "Boys like you think you should be able to run around and do whatever you want. Actually, you should be owned." She nodded to herself, walked forward, and then she decided to indulge. She patted him on the head.

His brows creased, but he didn't say anything.

She stepped behind the chair, outside of his field of vision.

What was she doing? What was going to happen next?

As he waited, Daniel couldn't hear anything except for his breath and the beating of his heart. Having every other sound taken away seemed so weird.

Then she stepped in front of him again, only now she was holding onto something. It looked like some kind of metallic band with a single hinge. She was talking again, but he couldn't understand anything she said. Another bright smile stretched across her lips, and that's when she opened the circle and moved to down toward his neck.

Right away, he tried to turn to the side. Not only that, he asked her, "What is that? What are you doing?"

Her mouth moved, and she told him the truth, but he couldn't hear it.

There was no way for him to recognize the sound of, "This is a shock collar. I'm going to use it to give you the responses you need when you invariably mess up. Don't worry. It's all part of the learning process." Daniel couldn't be sure one way or the other, but she seemed to enjoy that look of confusion on his face, like she savored his uncertainty.

She pressed the electrodes against the sides of his neck. Maybe he sensed and noticed the cool touch of the metal, but he wouldn't know what it meant, not yet.

Taking up her tablet again, she glanced down at the UI and nodded to herself. She ran the tip of her tongue along the edges of her molars and considered what it was going to be like when she saw that look on his face.

She patted him on the head again, enjoyed that glowering grimace, and stepped away. Now it was time to get started.

Daniel didn't know what to expect, not really.

When the classical music started to play, that made sense to him. In the distance, it sounded like he could pick out the sounds of a trumpet or horn. A flute joined a few seconds later, followed by the sounds of a violin. Everything was quiet, so incredibly quiet, but he could pick out those notes as he strained.

Then he heard the beating of a drum. At first, he thought it was his imagination because those pulses of sound were so subtle; they were barely detectable.

And then he picked up on the sounds of words. At first, he thought it might have been his imagination. It sounded like Jennifer's voice, although he couldn't pick up on distinct words or more syllables. It was like this gentle whispering against his ear.

The lights dimmed, and that's when the projector activated. Right in front of him, he could see colors play.

All of it looked like some wild abstraction. He stared straight ahead, and he contemplated all of this. At the same time, his brows tightened again as he realized something. She had asked a couple of questions about feminism or gender or whatever, but what did she expect him to learn? If this was supposed to be an exercise in information retention, then wasn't she supposed to give him a string of numbers or letters or something and quiz him later?

Exhaling slowly and doing his best to ignore the fact that he was strapped down and helpless in this chair, Daniel watched the patterns play. At first, he told himself that he was just being a good sport. After all, Jennifer was a college student just like him, and he didn't intend to mess up her study.

He forced his muscles to relax even though there was something unnerving about the music playing at the edges of his perceptions.

Then he thought he heard something.

It could have been his imagination. But then, he'd never think something like, "Women are superior."

The words just brushed against his psyche. At first, he couldn't tell if that was something he had heard or thought.

After a moment, he closed his eyes and shook his head from side to side.

Closing his eyes had taken more effort than he expected, almost like there was something enthralling about the abstract colors and patterns playing in front of him. It reminded him of those old screensavers. A pyramid appeared, only to morph into a sphere before changing into a cube. The shapes flashed gently. They disappeared and reappeared every few seconds, all while the music continued to play.

Then it happened again. He heard something. "Women are superior."

"What was that?" Daniel asked even though he realized he wouldn't be able to hear her answer.

Only then something strange happened.

Despite his expectations, Jennifer pulled the headphones off of him, he paused the program, and she asked, "Do you feel like you're learning?"

"No," he said automatically. At the same time, Jennifer towered over him. She also seemed unnecessarily close, like she was examining him. Although he had literally signed up to be her test subject, he couldn't ignore the curiosity and ambition glinting in her eyes.

"You just asked a question. Why?"

"I, I thought I heard something," he told her.

She leaned forward, intent. Again, he didn't know if he should focus on her eyes, the predatory curve of her lips, or at the rounded curves of her breasts. On some level, he felt ridiculous for checking her out, but Daniel couldn't resist the temptation.

"What did you hear?"

"Nothing," he said a little bit too quickly.

That's when she tapped the tablet again. Daniel was hardly paying attention, mostly because he assumed she was taking extra

notes. Instead, she hit a different spot on the screen, and she activated a different part of the procedure. A jolt of electricity shot through his body. He cried out, horrified and embarrassed by how that sharp jolt of pain could just flash through his body instantly.

"What the hell was that?"

"Don't worry about it," she said. "Instead, you need to tell me what you're learning."

"You did that?" Daniel demanded. For a second, he sucked in a breath, and he wanted to tell her to let him up right away.

Obviously, he hated the notion that he would have to ask to be released, yet he remained strapped down "for his safety," which meant he had to rely on her.

"I did," she said. "But now, I expect you to answer me. Tell me the truth, Daniel. What did you learn here?"

He locked his teeth together, glared at her, and he just barely resisted the temptation to demand his freedom. Sure, he would forfeit the money, but maybe it wasn't worth it.

Actually, it was a thousand dollars. To a college student, that sounded like a small fortune. No, he told himself. He wasn't going to throw a tantrum, and he wasn't going to mess this up. He pressed his lips together, and then he glared at her. "I don't know exactly what I heard. "Women are superior? Something like that?"

"Good," she said.

She slid the headphones back into place, resumed the program, and the colors started up again.

It all happened so fast, like Daniel was having a hard time keeping up. But now, he focused on the imagery playing in front of him. Part of him wanted to turn away. Part of him wanted to ignore whatever he was supposed to be hearing. Yes, part of him actually wanted to sabotage her research.

Even now, he couldn't ignore the memory of that electric bite. On some level, he wanted to believe it had been some type of mistake, like a jolt of static electricity or something.

Then his mind started to drift. As hard as he tried to concentrate on getting upset or angry, Daniel couldn't do it. Instead, he started thinking of Jennifer again. He didn't know why. Maybe it

was because of the way she attracted him? Maybe his mind just wanted to retreat to some sort of fantasy?

Only those images rushing through his head didn't seem like something he would daydream about. Normally, he pictured the girls in his classes in their bras and panties or maybe tight little bikinis. Sometimes, he imagined wet T-shirt contests or maybe the girls in cheerleading uniforms. They could jump up and down, their breasts bouncing. Water could stream down their bodies, dampening their hair as they giggled cheerfully.

But at that moment, he wasn't thinking about anything like that. Instead, he imagined what it would be like to be down on his hands and knees, braced and positioned in front of Jennifer. It was a singularly bizarre image. It wasn't something he normally experienced. He couldn't explain it. He couldn't understand how or why his mind would take him in this direction even as the soft music continued to play and he watched as the abstract shapes moved and shifted.

Standing behind him, Jennifer monitored his progress. Just as she had said, he was a test subject, and she could only hope that he was learning properly.

A fierce grin stretched across her lips.

Down in his chair, strapped in and powerless, Daniel heard it again. "Women are superior."

He blinked his eyes. It took more effort than he expected. Turning away seemed almost impossible. Instead, his eyes were drawn back to the images projected in front of him. It reminded him of hanging out at a bar with some friends where there were a bunch of different TVs playing games or random TV shows. He and his friends were out to joke around, talk, and drink. Even so, their eyes were constantly drawn back to those screens. Focusing on one another became a lot harder as the images played, one after another, on and on through the night.

Daniel tried to clench his eyes shut, to block out the light and color, but it didn't work. At the same time, he expected those three words to be the end of it. Instead, he could hear more now. Maybe the music was getting louder, or maybe he could discern the pattern of those gentle notes.

"Women are superior. Women are superior. Women are superior." Those words repeated themselves inside of his head. Unless he concentrated, he couldn't tell whether or not those were his thoughts or something he heard. Making that distinction became harder and harder.

What was she doing to him? What were the sounds doing to him?

Daniel couldn't see her. She had stepped back beyond the edges of his peripheral vision, so he had no idea whether or not she was doing anything at all. Maybe she was just watching. For all he knew, she had left the room.

His chest tightened, and he instinctively tugged against at the restraints. In that moment, he needed to pull the headphones off. He didn't want to hear those sounds, only then he froze. While the music continued to play, there were other whispers.

"Women are superior because boys are incapable of making their own decisions. Men need to be owned. Men need to be trained."

Those words seemed to echo inside of his head, "Men need to be owned. Men need to be trained. Boys need to be owned. Boys need to be trained." There was a nearly hypnotic cadence to those words, like they pulsed through his psyche, he didn't know how to push them back.

At first, he tried to laugh, only his expression remained impassive. His body felt sluggish as the music and lights continued to play.

"Men need to be owned. Men need to be trained. Boys need to be owned. Boys need to be trained. You are a boy, Daniel."

At that moment, he managed to send a surge of strength down into his arm.

The straps held him tight. He attempted to kick out next, but it still didn't work.

Instead, he had to listen as the music continued to play, "You are a boy, and boys need to be trained. You are a boy, boys need to be owned. You want to be used. You want to be tamed. Women are superior. Women are better than you. When a woman speaks, you

must listen. When women speak, you must obey. Women are smarter than you. Women are stronger than you."

On the surface, the lights and shapes continued to play just as they had before, only now images started to materialize behind his eyes. Just like the words, he could barely discern them. He couldn't tell what was going on, he wanted to shake his head from side to side. If he could jerk his skull to one direction or the other, maybe the momentum would be enough to knock the headphones away from his ears.

And yet, Daniel couldn't summon the strength or willpower to try. He remained there, strapped down and utterly impassive as he absorbed the programming.

"Women are stronger than you, so you must do as they say. Women are smarter than you, so you must obey."

He tried to shake his head from side to side, but he couldn't do it.

Then the lights brightened, and he blinked a couple of times. She pulled away the headphones, and she looked down into his eyes. Sucking in a breath, he tried to think of what he could say. Finally, three words jumped from his mouth, "Let me go."

"Oh," she said, stretching out that syllable. "I'm sorry, that's not an option. So, tell me, what are you learning?"

He glared at her. He tugged against his right restraint, jerking his body forward. "I'm serious, Jennifer."

"Jennifer," she said as she repeated his last word. "No, I don't think you're going to be doing that anymore. We need to fix that, definitely. Right now, let's worry about your ability to learn. What are you learning?"

"I'm serious. Let me up!"

Right as he finished, she pressed her finger down against her tablet, the signal jumped, and the collar around his neck unleashed a torrent of electricity. The volts ran through his body. It was instant and eternal. For that sliver of time, he thought it would never end. Hot pain exploded along his skin, lighting up his nerves. He twitched against his bonds, but he still couldn't escape!

He dropped back down against the soft padding of his seat. His arms and legs remained stuck in the straps, and she leaned

forward again.

"What did you learn, boy?"

Boy. At single syllable echoed the words from his programming.

"What, what is this?"

She shocked him again, and he cried out. It was so easy for her. With just the press of her thumb against the screen, she could turn his existence into a blinding jolt of agony.

Panting now, he glared at her. He needed to speak, but he couldn't bring himself to utter the words. It was like she was a woman, and he didn't want to argue with her. Deep down, perhaps he needed to agree with her. Perhaps it would be better if he stayed quiet and listened and obeyed...

"What did you learn?" Jennifer asked.

"Women are superior," he said before he could stop those words. They just seemed to fall out of his mouth, like this was some sort of muscle memory.

"Excellent," she said. "Now, I think you need to stop trying to use my name. That isn't respectful enough."

"What, what are you talking about?" Daniel was actually proud of himself for getting that question out onto the air. Part of him had wanted to stop, to freeze, to drop his gaze, like he couldn't look up at her. On some level, she felt like his superior.

Jennifer lifted a finger and tapped the corner of her cheek. She tapped her finger as she pretended to concentrate. "Let's see... Let's see..." Then a slow, victorious smile stretched across her lips. "From now on, address me as Mistress."

"What?" He sounded confused. Mistress? It seemed like an old word, antiquated and useless.

"That's right," she said, educating him. "Mistress. When you use that term with me, it means you recognize that I'm in charge. Say it."

Immediately, he needed to call out something like, "No! I'm not going to call you that." His voice should have been loaded with disdain. Instead, his lips parted, and the words were right there.

She shocked him.

Using her tablet, she unleashed one quick jolt of electricity followed by another and another after that! Three blasts of pain came in quick succession. She made sure to give him a second or two to pause and collect himself before the next jolt slammed into his body. Even though the electricity shot out from those three electrodes built into the metal band around his neck, the pain seemed to come from everywhere all at once.

"Try again," she said. "Mistress!"

"Who am I?" Jennifer asked as she quizzed him.

"You, you're my Mistress! You're in charge!"

"Good. I think another dose will be good for you," she said. She picked up the headphones and slowly slid them over his ears. Some panic response flared through his body, and he shook his head from side to side. At the same time, he jerked against his restraints, fighting hard, but it wasn't enough. She already knew it would never be enough. He tried to squirm, to whimper and plead, only it didn't work.

Soon, she was laughing, but he couldn't hear those notes of her enjoyment.

The music continued to play, and this time he only had one choice. He needed to close his eyes.

Daniel locked his teeth and focused his gaze off to the far right. He concentrated on the very edge of his peripheral vision. In the next moment, he was about to bring his eyelids down. This was his only defense; he had to hide from her programming. He could already feel those ideas slipping back into his psyche.

Although he tried to tell himself how much he hated this, there was that temptation. He started thinking about what it would be like, and the voice was right there again, whispering at the edges of his reality, "Boys need to obey. Boys need to behave. Boys need to do as they are told. Boys need to obey. Boys need to surrender. Boys belong on their knees."

*No, that's not true. That's not true. I don't need to listen to this. I don't need to listen to anything she's telling me. I'm a man, and I can make my own decisions. I deserve to make my own decisions!* He tried to throw those angry thoughts back against the beautiful

onslaught, yet the program whispers continued to play against his eardrums.

Then, in less than a second of weakness, his eyes flitted back toward the wall. The colors continued to play, and now he imagined himself naked with a collar around his neck, down on his knees, gazing first at her shoes, then feeling her fingertips against the underside of his chin. She would nudge him up, and she would smile down at him.

His Mistress.

In that moment, he tried to think of her name. He struggled to discover those sounds lodged deep within his memory. It should have been easy; it should have been simple. And yet, he kept thinking of her new title. She was his Mistress.

His Mistress.

This time, he pulled against the restraints, but it felt like some vestigial motion. It was something he was supposed to do, but he realized that the tension had started to dissipate from his body. More and more, Daniel started to relax.

"Boys need to surrender. Boys need to yield. Boys belong on their knees. Boys should be slaves."

He tried to swallow, to bite down on the inside of his mouth, to concentrate on something else. He didn't care if he was wiggling his toes or flexing his biceps. Somehow, none of it worked. He remained relaxed as those words pumped through his head.

"Boys should be slaves. Boys aren't smart enough to make their own decisions. They need to be guided. They need to be molded."

That's when the chair started to move underneath him. At first, he didn't even notice. He was completely engulfed by the program his Mistress had created.

Then his eyes started to slide away from the projected imagery, and he started to exhale, thinking he would get the chance to relax again. The chair flattened completely, so now he was on his back. He found himself staring up at a blank ceiling, only another projector activated, and fresh colors and new shapes started to form right in front of him.

He had a second where he could close his eyes, only a different thought occurred to him. It was a question.

What would his Mistress want him to do?

In that moment, he turned his gaze toward the screen. Maybe there was a flash of defiance, like he wanted to tell himself that he didn't have a Mistress. He wasn't a slave, and she didn't own him. Those half-formed thoughts couldn't hold back the flood of need. He needed to watch. He needed to obey. He needed to *please* her.

For a second, Daniel struggled hard to think of some other goal orientation. What else would he care about? What else would he want? Right then and there, he couldn't think of his degree, his classes, his future career prospects...

Nothing mattered except pleasing her. If she wanted him to finish his schoolwork, then he would. At the same time, if she snapped her fingers and ordered him down onto his knees to massage her feet, he would do that instead. Worse, he would smile.

*I have to resist...*

At first, those thoughts were supposed to blaze through his mind, like he would be able to shout and snarl his defiance against the urge to obey. Instead, that simple sentence seemed to drift away, like it was just some random flotsam on the open ocean. Tiny and insignificant, that thought didn't really mean anything, not when it came to his Mistress.

She was smart and beautiful. She was stronger than he could ever be. She understood the world, and she would tell him what to do. He simply needed to follow her commands. Nothing could be more important than obeying his Mistress.

Daniel stared up. In his peripheral vision, he could see his Mistress, and now she said something. She giggled and touched a finger to her chin.

Then she held up a controller, and he tensed, bracing himself for another electrical shock.

She pulled away the headphones, images froze, and he could no longer see the colors and shapes playing above him.

"Who am I?" asked this beautiful woman. Before, he had viewed her as attractive. Even now, he could still see that predatory shine in her eyes, like she was looking down at him as her inferior.

Only then, the natural, logical follow-up thought popped into his head: of course, she would see him as her inferior. She was smarter and stronger. She understood how the world really worked. As a woman, she was superior to him.

If there was any whisper of defiance inside of his head, he couldn't hear it, not this time at least.

"You're my Mistress," he said, only to blink.

"That's right," she said. "I'm your Mistress, and you will obey me. You will surrender. And right now, I want you."

That's when she started to strip.

He turned his gaze toward the ceiling again, only to realize what she was doing. He tried to fight the temptation, yet those urges didn't last long. Instead, she shimmied out of her jeans, and he tilted his head to the side. Daniel drank in the image of this beautiful girl as she pulled down the denim, only to reveal the black panties underneath. There was something so sleek about her underwear, so gorgeous and alluring.

For a second, he tried to reach out to touch her, only to realize that doing so would be disobedient, rude, and completely unacceptable. He was her inferior.

"It's okay," she said indulgently. "You can watch, boy."

Boy. Yes, he was her boy. He belonged to her. This simple truth gripped him, and he couldn't break free from it. Trapped there on that chair, he knew he had to do whatever she said. He had to obey each and every one of her commands. It was easy. He wouldn't think for himself. He would simply do as he was told. Nothing else mattered.

He had to follow her. He had to please her.

But then she pulled on her panties, and she let them fall down the length of her smooth, toned legs. From there, she surprised him by pulling herself up onto the chair. She straddled him, and her eyes shined. Overhead, the colors and lights continued to flash, but he couldn't pull his focus away from her face as she said, "You know, some guys get squeamish when it comes to oral servitude. That won't be you, will it?"

"No, Mistress," he said, eager to agree with her.

"That's because you know you belong on your back right now, don't you? That's where I put you, I strapped you down, and I'm programming you, so you will do whatever I want. And right now, if I want you to lick my pussy, you're going to do it, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mistress," he told her automatically.

"Good boy," she said. "Suck," she commanded next as she touched to fingers to his bottom lip.

Daniel expected another flash of reluctance or hesitation. Instead, he tilted his head up, he wrapped his lips around the contours of her fingertips, and he started sucking. He licked almost eagerly, like a pet desperate to please his owner. There was something about the easy intimacy of having her give the command and expecting his instant obedience.

Of course, he gave it to her. He surrendered completely, just as she expected.

After several seconds, she pulled her glistening fingertips away from his lips, and now she started to touch herself. She slid her fingers along her crevice. Savoring this moment, his Mistress pressed down and rubbed herself.

His arms tensed as he pulled against his restraints, only now he wanted to help her.

"Lots of guys get squeamish when it comes to oral servitude," said his Mistress. "These boys think they are too good to go down on a girl. But that's not you, now is it?"

"No, Mistress," he said. At the same time, he could feel another layer of his programming. More than anything, he wanted to please her. He knew he belonged down on his knees with his head between her legs. If she wanted an orgasm or pleasure, then it was his obligation to give it to her. He would do everything in his power to please her.

"No, it's not," she said. "You're a good boy. You want to please me. Now lick," she said.

Her pussy was already damp as she slid forward and straddled his head. She leaned forward and braced her palms against the edges of the seat just beyond the curve of his head. In the next moment, she pressed her slit down against his mouth.

There was this one spark of defiance, like he thought he could hold out for just a few moments. If he refused to service her for three, four, five, or even six seconds, she would know there was something wrong. Better yet, she might realize that he wouldn't be re-sculpted as her personal plaything.

And yet, he could feel that other, newly implanted desire. He yearned for the chance to be her plaything! He wanted to lick her, to nuzzle and service her. He needed to please her and make her feel good because nothing else could be so important! Those urges shot through his body, and he didn't know how to resist them. He couldn't push them back, and now her pussy pressed down against his mouth.

Daniel surrendered.

He parted his lips and licked, gliding his tongue along her crevice. As he did so, this warm sense of satisfaction raced through his body. It pulsed all the way to his limbs, flaring to his fingertips and at the edges of his toes. He slid his tongue in deep even as he tasted her excitement. Better yet, he could hear her moaning.

Before, Daniel couldn't tell whether or not the whispered commands and instructions had been embedded or words. But now her voice hit the air with the clarity of a bell, "This is where you belong, down on your back, bound and powerless." He licked, moving his tongue steadily up and down, left and right. He traced little circles, all in the hopes of pleasuring her.

"It doesn't matter who you used to be, boy. You belong to me now. You're going to follow me around and obey every single command I give you. You will cook, clean, and worship me. You won't even look at other girls. You'll do whatever I say. You will always do whatever I say."

Daniel should have been horrified by those orders, yet they came from his Mistress. More importantly, he could feel the programming grow stronger. It wasn't just the pleasure and joy he received from servicing her. It was something else.

Again and again, sparks of defiance burned to life, only to fade away almost instantly. There was the feel of her inner thighs pressed against his cheeks, the heat of her body, and the soft tension from her skin.

"You like this," she said, giggling. "It's okay. I can see your erection, boy. Don't worry. You want to play with that. I'm going to take you because I want you to understand just how powerless you have become."

Powerless.

That word resonated through his mind. It was a thought, and idea, and it was supposed to disgust him. He was a man, and he was supposed to be able to make his own decisions. But she was a woman, so she was his....

No. No, she wasn't his superior!

Daniel found that thought, and he tried to hold onto it. He tried to grip it there in his mind, but it felt slippery, like a string of numbers he could just barely remember. Then she pressed down, and his tongue slid up higher. He licked, servicing her as fast as he could. He didn't stop, not even for a second. And yet, he managed to hold onto that one word.

No. It was so powerful, so simple and childish all at the same time. He could resist. He could hold back. He didn't need to compromise. He could just be stubborn and cling to that little rush of activity.

Only then, he heard her moan. He looked up along the length of her body. She was so close to him. This easy connection felt amazing. Even as he tried to fight, he couldn't deny how incredible this felt. Sure, he had been with other girls, but it always seemed like some kind of competition, like they were pulling against one another in some way. Maybe she would want something serious, or perhaps he might get jealous over the other guys she spent time with.

But right then and there, he knew his place. He could fall into it. He could accept his spot on his knees before this girl. She was a woman, and so she was his owner.

No?

His tongue continued to dance and dart along her pussy right until that moment when she cried out. Distantly, he recognized the sound, although it didn't really mean anything, not until she pulled away and peered down at him. Her cheeks were flushed, and there was this fierce grin on her face. At the same time, she smiled down

at him. "I'm going to claim you right now. When I ride you, I want you to know that you belong to me."

"No. No, I don't. I can't. I'm not powerless," he said.

"Oh, I see. You're going to need another dose. Don't worry. Between that and orgasm, I think you'll break. I think you'll be ready to drop down onto your knees, to promise your obedience. You ready?"

"No..." Daniel just barely managed to say.

"Too bad," she replied.

She unzipped his pants, reached in, and pulled out his cock. Sure enough, he was stiff. More importantly, her touch felt electric. It wasn't the blasts of pain from before. These were fresh impulses, overwhelming and unstoppable. The temptations gripped him, simmering just beneath the surface of his skin as she pulled herself forward, wrapped her fingers around his shaft, and lowered herself down.

She could move however she wanted while his arms and legs remained bound in place. He couldn't even lift his head more than a few fractions of an inch.

Still, he squirmed. He struggled. Daniel fought so hard as she enveloped him. She slid down, stretching the walls of her opening with the contours of his girth. Taking her time, she lowered herself down, only to pull back up, and slip down again, further this time. It felt so good. The heat and intensity of this connection locked them together as he could feel different aspects of his programming slide and click into place.

"You belong to me, boy. Remember that. You have promise, but I want to own you. I want to make it clear that you belong to me. I'm letting you talk."

"I don't know. I, no. I, I'm not going to let you do this," he stuttered out, only she grabbed control and turned on the projector again. Overhead, the lights and colors and swirling patterns of shapes played again.

Daniel couldn't turn away. He couldn't even shut his eyes, so he watched, and now she started riding him, moving her body up and down. Those delicious, undulating motions made him shiver with need. His heart beat faster, his breathing came quicker, and then he

heard her voice. This time, it wasn't some recording. It was just her, "You know where you belong. You know who you are. You know why I deserve to own you."

"You're a woman," he said without thinking. The words just tumbled from his mouth. They had been instilled in him like an instinct, a reflex. "You're smarter than me. You're stronger than me."

"Yes," she said, her tone sharpening. "That's right." The words drained from her mouth as she rode him, sliding up and down again and again. She used his cock like it was nothing but a sex toy. She owned him, and she pleased herself all while he absorbed the last of his programming. "Get ready to promise me, boy. Get ready to accept your place. You are not going to be like those other guys on this campus. You're not going to be some arrogant brat. What are you?"

"I'm your slave," he said. He tried to fight it, but he couldn't do it. The words just fell from his mouth, one after another. "I'm a slave, and I belong to you."

"You promise to obey me. You promise to worship me?"

"I promise!"

"Then come for me," she commanded. She tilted her head down, and now their eyes met. He managed to look away from the lights and color and patterns just long enough for their gazes to lock onto one another. Right then and there, he knew it. He could feel those locks engage in his mind. He made his promise, and now he would show her what he could do. He moved his hips, thrusting up into her. At the same time, he lost control.

His shaft pulsed. The excitement roared through his body, overwhelming him. He lost himself to a different kind of color, a different kind of sound. Maybe it was her laughter. Maybe it was the pounding of his heart.

Suddenly spent, he dropped back down against to the chair. She removed the restraints, and now she got dressed.

Once she was finished, she ran her fingers along her hair, stretched a little bit, and pointed the floor.

"On your knees," she commanded.

At once, he obeyed, crawling off of the chair and lowered himself down before her.

"Say it again," she instructed.

Without lifting his gaze, he said, "I promise to obey you." This time, he didn't feel that jagged resistance inside of his head. Instead, he loved this woman, and he would obey her because she owned him. Gratitude swelled in his chest because he belonged to her.

"Yes, you do," she agreed. "Now look at me."

He lifted his head and peered up at her. When he saw her smiling down at him, he knew he had found his place. More importantly, he knew he would never be able to escape.

**The End**