

Studying sucks. I've lost nearly a week in papers and work. After the conversation with Jake and the time spent with Alaric, I'm beginning to rethink this whole thing.

"Come on, Ruby, for a week you have stared at it, decide."

"If I do this, I'm essentially cutting all ties to my parents," I think. They won't forgive me.

"Right, you wouldn't be there if it wasn't for your parents. Your life would be entirely different if you had chosen for yourself." She sits in front of me.

"How bad will it be?" I laugh at her words. "I mean it, they already ignore you and see you as unworthy of their time. Why are you still doing this shit to make them happy?" She pushes all my work on the floor.

Groaning, I move, and she stops me. "This was what they wanted. This is what they expected. You spent the week doing the work while staring at that brochure. If you want to dance, dance, screw studying."

"It's not that simple."

"Explain it to me."

"I loved dancing. I did it every day after school. They had no issue with it then, as I was keeping up with schoolwork. However, when it came to deciding what to do after school, dancing wasn't an option. They don't believe you can make a career out of dancing, and it's also not the best look for a pastor's daughter."

"So you did as daddy and mummy said and took up business."

It seemed like a good thing at the time. "My time with Alaric and speaking to Jake has made me realise I've done it for years for them, and they don't appreciate it or even notice. I miss dancing."

"So dance, I'm not saying drop class, but you spend time on this list, right? Stop the pole dancing, stop the mini-missions, and spend that time dancing. Go to it." She points at the brochure.

"Tomorrow, tonight, I'm at Boudoir Bunny."

She grins and nods. "Hoping daddy will be there?"

"From what I heard, it's rare he goes. He has ones closer to him, so he only calls in for issues. I do plan to sign up, though." She stares at me.

"Like, sign up and use the place?"

"Yes! No masks tonight either." Which I'm grateful for, I would like to be able to see the person I am talking to.

"Okay, well, I'm coming. Safety in numbers. I'm not sure what I can wear, though. What are you wearing?"

"It's a cutout dress. A zip goes from the collar straight down to the end of the skirt. It's made of leather and PVC. The sleeves aren't connected but have a chain connecting them."

Her eyes widen. "Okay, get dressed, then I can see. I will go search through my stuff." I watch her walk out, getting showered and ready, I put on the dress.

Standing, I begin to do my hair and watch her walk in.

"If he's there and fails to touch you, I will be disappointed." I laugh at her words. "I mean it, just if you find someone you like, give me a heads-up; don't just disappear with him."

"I will, I swear, and I doubt I will." She nods and walks to me. I stand and watch as she straightens my hair. "I need to know where you got this, though, I want to go to the shop." She smiles, and I nod.

"I got it from Kinknook." She looks at me, confused. "It's the shops that Alaric owns. They have a better range." She laughs and nods.

"You're meant to distance yourselves. Showing up at his multiple businesses isn't doing that."

"It is, I'm going to ones local to here. He's still four hours away." I'm not going to the ones close to him.

"Okay, we're all done. Let's leave." I grab my bag and follow her out, and she drives. Nearly an hour later, we walked into the building. Ordering a drink, we sit and talk.

"Right, so the plan?" She looks at me.

"Tonight is a meet-and-greet, so we'll walk around and talk to people. You might find a friend."

She laughs. "Unlikely, I scare my friends away." She's not wrong; she does scare men away, but I'm hopeful she will find someone who doesn't run so quickly.

We walk around and talk to people, and as I thought, Bex is now alone with a guy talking and laughing. So, I stay by the bar. It's a safety thing, I feel safe here.

"Ruby, right?" I turn and smile.

"It is. Well done for remembering. You're Kian, right?" He nods and laughs.

"I am. How are you finding this place so far?" He sits and holds his drink while looking at me.

"It's amazing." I have no words to explain it.

"I'm surprised to see you here alone, without Mr Hendrix?"

Nodding, I smile. "He was helping me."

"Oh, I thought that you two were together." His head tilts.

"No. I spoke to him here and realised I knew very little about the world. He helped me understand the lifestyle more, and it was a good thing. He was right that day. I had no idea and shouldn't have committed to anything."

To be fair, I shouldn't have talked to anyone. I knew so little that even talking to someone was wrong—until I had learnt the basics, anyway.

"And now?" He smiles, waiting.

"I've done a lot of research. Not just on the lifestyle, but on this place as well."

"Well, would you like to sit and talk? Just talk, I swear." I nod and follow him to a table, my eyes constantly on Bex, she seems perfectly fine though.

"So what made you come here? The first time, that is." He smiles, and I laugh.

"A friend suggested I make a sex list, and visiting this place was on it. I wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone and experience something new. I'm guessing you come here a lot?"

He nods and smiles. "Bars and such are great, but here, the conversation is better. So even if I'm not in the mood to use a room, I come here to socialise. It's why I thought you and Mr Hendrix were...well together. He doesn't typically meet guests out here."

All I can do is nod.

"I found out about this lifestyle about eight years ago. I found this place about two years ago."

"So I'm guessing you're more dominant than submissive?" I smile at him, and he nods.

"Yes, I tried, but submitting isn't for me." He shrugs and takes a drink. "Have you figured out what you want from this?" His hand waves around.

"I'm not sure. Well, I am, but also not." He laughs and looks at me, confused. "Sorry. Short term, I want to explore this world—nothing serious, though. Long term, I want something that isn't just in the bedroom."

He nods. "You want to try this out, get used to it, but like the aspect of it being 24/7 not just behind closed doors."

"Exactly. There's a lot I like about the 24/7 dynamics; I'm just not sure I can go from nothing to that right away." Sitting we talk, Kian is eight years older than me.

He's had submissives in the past. He typically goes for serious, long relationships that last years, then one-offs. I say goodbye to him for a while. I need to get Bex and sign up.

I walk towards her, and she joins me. "So I'm signing up," I turn, shocked. "I know a lot; I used that contract, remember? Plus, these guys are actually respectful and not scared of me." I laugh and nod.

Walking to the desk, I speak to the woman and she gives me the forms. Sitting I fill them in, and talk to Bex while I do. It's almost like the contract, only far more in depth. Half an hour later, my hand hurts, but it's filled in. I hand it to the woman.

She smiles and starts entering things into the system. "Ah, Ruby, welcome." She smiles, and I nod. She said that was weird—really weird. "Sorry." She smiles slightly. "You're registered to use the services, though." I nod and walk back to Bex.

"She was weird." She laughs at my words. "I mean it. When you're done, I want to come with you and see what she says."

Her eyes roll, and she hands me the form and pen. "My hand kills; help."

Laughing I take it, and she tells me what to tick and cross, and everything else. Twenty minutes later, I handed her it back. I watched her go through the forms again. Nearly half an hour later, she is finished.

She works slowly. Standing, we walk to the desk. I watch the woman take the form.

"Welcome to the business, Bex; you can use the services now." Yeah, totally damn different, we walk away and I look aback at the woman.

"Okay, what? Explain." Bex chuckles.

"She took my forms and said, 'Ah, Ruby, welcome.' Then she said sorry and that I was registered."

"Maybe Alaric had a feeling you would join, so told her to watch out for you?"

"Maybe, who is your friend? He hasn't stopped watching you for the past half an hour, and all you were doing was ticking boxes." I smile at her.

"His name is Lucas, he's hot."

I laugh. "After an hour of talking, you have his name and

that he's hot?" She should have more than that.

"He didn't run and isn't scared of me. He's five years older than me and has a daughter." I still hearing her words. "She's young, two to be exact."

"And her mum?" I don't know why but red flags just floated in my mind.

"Don't, a woman was talking to him. He's not lying. The mum died, so no, he isn't cheating. He's nice." I nod and hug her.

"Just be safe."

"You sound like Alaric now." I laugh and nod.

"Fine, don't do anything I wouldn't do." She tilts her head.

"Right now, you seem willing to do a lot, so I will stick to what I'm happy doing." We laugh, and I let her go back to Lucas. Turning, I see Kian.

I walked over and sat with him. "You're still here?" I assumed he would be gone.

"I told you, weekends I have no commitments, I spend my time here socialising." Sitting, we talk, and I decide to take the plunge. I mean, I have nothing to lose.

We talk, and I explain what I want or what I'm willing to start with. Then, standing at another reception desk, I am handed yet more forms.



"Each time you come, you have to. Each time, you might change what you're willing to do and not." I nod at Kian; that makes sense. I go through and fill in the specifics we agreed to—nothing too big or crazy.

I watch the woman read through the files and input them into the system. "So, as you're new, you won't know. We record everything: the time you are given the keys and the time they are handed over. We record who is going into the room, their lists and limits, your mood at the time you signed the forms, and such." She smiles, and I nod.

"Okay, so since you're not using any of the large equipment, there are fewer forms. The more you use, the longer the scenes, the more forms there would be." I nod at her.

"Final two forms." She places them down. I look at them. This one asks how we know each other, how long we have known each other, and such. I glance at her. "These forms are so if people come with others, we have the history should any issues arise." I nod, and explain that this is the second time I've met Kian, and explain everything before handing it to her, and Kian does as well.

"Okay, now you just need to sign for the room." Oh wow, I laugh and nod. This is a lot. I guess, though, it's a good thing. It ensures everyone is safe.



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