

Sign It

She was almost back to the patio, her heart pounding and her head reeling with what occurred when her cell phone rang in her back pocket. She slipped to the side hall.

"Hello?"

"Hey, it's me. Consuela."

Her editor. The best and most wonderful person on the planet next to Sloane and Halima as far as she was concerned. "Hey you. What can I do for you?"

"Did you get a signed authorization for the photo you used for your cover?"

She halted her footsteps, "um. No. I have his verbal. It's recorded."

Consuela sighed, "legal is saying it's not good enough. Especially since of the way the photo is being altered. They drafted a specic document. I'm going to email it to you, but you need to get this model's signature in order to release the book. We delayed the release ve days so you could get this change in your cover, and I admit I like it better, but we need the proper authorization."

"Why can't we use the verbal?"

"Because you and I both know it was coerced and it didn't specially outline he was going to be bare-chested, and the photo would depict him in b**m gear."

"But."

"No buts. Have it to me by the end of the day or tomorrow morning we go back to the original cover."

"Fuck." She heard clomping on the stairs and stepped under the staircase avoiding being seen by the behemoth of a man who was breathing really hard. "I really like this cover better."

"Me too. I've sent the authorization. Get it done or legal says we change back."

"Fine!" She banged her head against the wall behind her. She stepped onto the patio to see Cruz seated back at the table and his face was stoic as if nothing happened.

"Where were you?" Odin asked with a grunt.

"Taking a call from my editor. Daddy, can I use your printer in your oce? I need to print a contract out." She shot a look at Cruz who lifted an eyebrow at her.

"Sweetie, you don't need to ask. If you need to use my computer to see it better than on your phone the password –"

"No. It's ne. I can remotely link to your printer, I think." She walked back to her father's oce her feet dragging on the oor. How was she going to get the man who could be Shrek's double to sign this without reading it? She punched the air with frustration as she waited for the document to print.

She was glad it was only a one-page waiver, but it also meant he might be inclined to read it. He also could rescind his authorization, and she'd need to use the previously agreed upon cover. The other cover was good but having Cruz Hawley depicting the large male lead in the story she wrote about an alien space ocer looking for a human criminal woman was too sweet to pass up. Cruz was bulky like she'd described her male lead and while he was a red creature on the book cover wearing nothing more than a bunch of leather straps, there wouldn't be any doubt about his face being the face of her spaceman.

Her eyes caught the line of the contract talking about promotional materials and she suddenly drew a vision in her head of a life-size cutout of the edited photo of him. She wanted this so bad she could taste it. She grabbed her phone and called Sloane.

"Girl, this better be good because I'm about ready to head into my coffee date with the guy from accounting."

"I know. Here's the thing. I can't use the photo of Cruz if he doesn't sign a waiver."

"f**k. The other cover was still good."

"He said his stocks took a hit from my scene. He lost the deal too. Fifty million."

"Holy f**k. No way!" Sloane gasped. "Do you know how much money that is?"

"More than I'll ever see in my lifetime." She huffed. "I mean, he can't make me pay him back, but I really like my new cover design. Not to mention how much it'll f**k with his brain when he realizes what this book is about."

"You hate him so much."

"He has no reason to ever have f****d with me. Not a single one. His only excuse is Odin is his best friend, and he asked him to f**k with me, so he does."

"But why?"

"Because Dad can't punish Cruz. If Mom would have called your Mom on something Anderson did, then Anderson would have gotten in s**t. Odin would have gotten Dad's size ten up the ass and cut off his allowances. Cruz was untouchable. His father was never around. He was raised by nannies. He had nothing to lose and everything to gain by keeping his best friend at his beck and call. It's bullshit. I want vengeance. I want this cover. I want it bad."

"Then get it."

"Its worse." She groaned, "he's here at the house for brunch with your brother and mine. He cornered me and said his PR team is trying to play last week off as a consensual loving relationship of role play. They want me to make appearances with him for several dates," she almost choked on the word, "to reinforce the s**t I spewed about role play when I spoke to the cops."

"No!"

"Yes. It's bullshit."

"Do it. I mean, agree to do it."

"Why?"

"Tell him you'll do it if he signs the waiver for something he already promised he'd do. Then don't give him any dates or times. You're leaving Tuesday morning to Europe for a month. By the time you get back, this should all have blown over anyway, you'll have your sexy as f**k book cover with the real-life Cruz Hawley as the model," she snickered, "and the story will be out with his glorious chest on full display, and you still win. Worst case scenario, you have to go out with him a time or two when you're back but you're not coming back for a thirty-two days. It's not like he's going to nd you in France, Spain, or Italy while you're traveling under a different name. By the time you get back, all of this s**t from this week will be old news."

"True. He's not going to nd me in Europe."

"Exactly."

"Alright, I'll tell him I'll do the dates but honestly I'd rather chew glass."

"I'd rather tongue f**k your brother and he's a toad." Sloane snorted. "Speaking of tongue-f****g, my date is inside this coffee shop waiting for me. Get the contract signed. Agree to your dates. Then go home tonight, put your feet up and relax because this book is going to be incredible."

"Thanks Sloane." She ended the call and sighed. Could she really get him to sign this by agreeing to the dates? She lifted her phone and sent a text message to the number she'd called him at the other night.

My editor needs a waiver signed for your likeness on the book cover.

She watched the ellipsis in the speech bubble with disgust. She did not want to negotiate with him.

My balls need to be kissed better but I don't see you out here doing s**t for me.

She clenched her sts and hopped up and down in frustration.

Your balls will never be anywhere near my lips. One date. Entering a b**m parlor and then leaving an hour later. Your PR team can leak a photo to the press.

Four dates. One of the can be the b**m parlor but at least one in a nice restaurant where you will behave like a lady. You might want to watch some YouTube videos on etiquette since I watched you eat with your ngers like an animal not thirty minutes ago. I also want a date at a dance club where people will see you grinding on me willingly and not like I forced you to be there.

Four? You said three upstairs! Two dates. One in the parlor. One in the restaurant.

Five.

I think you missed a class in negotiation in college.

Three and you kiss my balls better.

I'd rather be sted by an ogre.

You caused the pain. You should be responsible for it.

Four dates. No balls. You sign the waiver before you leave today.

I really want to see you on your knees begging with my balls in your mouth.

I really want to see you in a ditch after being struck by a semi truck. Look at us sharing our fantasies.

Four dates. No balls. I sign. You wear the outt I pick out for you for the b**m club.

Three. No balls. I'll wear one of my outts I already own.

She was lying. She'd been in places for nothing more than research, but it wasn't her scene at all. She wouldn't own a single appropriate thing to wear to fetish club as a true patron.

Four or no deal.

She stomped her foot furiously. "Motherfucking ogre sized orcl" Taking a deep breath, she pushed her negative energy away.

Fine. Four. You sign this now though.

On my way sweetheart. Just telling the table how I'm certain you tainted my coffee with a laxative like the sneaky little b***h you are.

I hate you.

Ditto. Though I am really digging the thought of having you suck my d**k.

Not in a million years. I'm in Dad's oce.

Three minutes later she heard his heavy footsteps coming down the hall. There was no way this man ever studied martial arts because he walked like a giant lumbering through a village in a Brother's Grimm story.

"Where is it?"

"Here." She grunted angrily. "Sign it so I can scan it and send it back. Apparently legal said your verbal agreement isn't enough."

"What photo did you use?"

She pulled up the unedited one from the rugby website. "This one."

"I have no shirt on."

"It'll be edited. Won't even see nipples." She made sure she kept a straight face. There would be no n****s because the leather harness which was photoshopped onto the impressive physique included metal rings which were strategically placed in the center of his chest.

"You said it's a book about a cop and a criminal?"

"Yes. They're trying to solve the murder of the criminal's best friend who they're accused of murdering, but the cop isn't sure he can trust the words of a convicted felon. Each time they uncover a clue it points back to the criminal but it's glaringly obvious it's a setup. The cop though doesn't trust anyone. He can't decide if the criminal is making it look like a setup to f**k with him or if it's a real set up."

"Huh," he signed his name on the document and passed it back to her. He rocked on his heels, his hands jammed in his pockets as she scanned the signed paper and waited for it to load back to her phone. "People actually read these works of ction?"

"Yes."

"I'm more of a non-ction reader myself."

"I'm not surprised."

He was standing behind her as she opened the scanned document and sent it to her editor. She snapped a photo of him over her shoulder and he scowled.