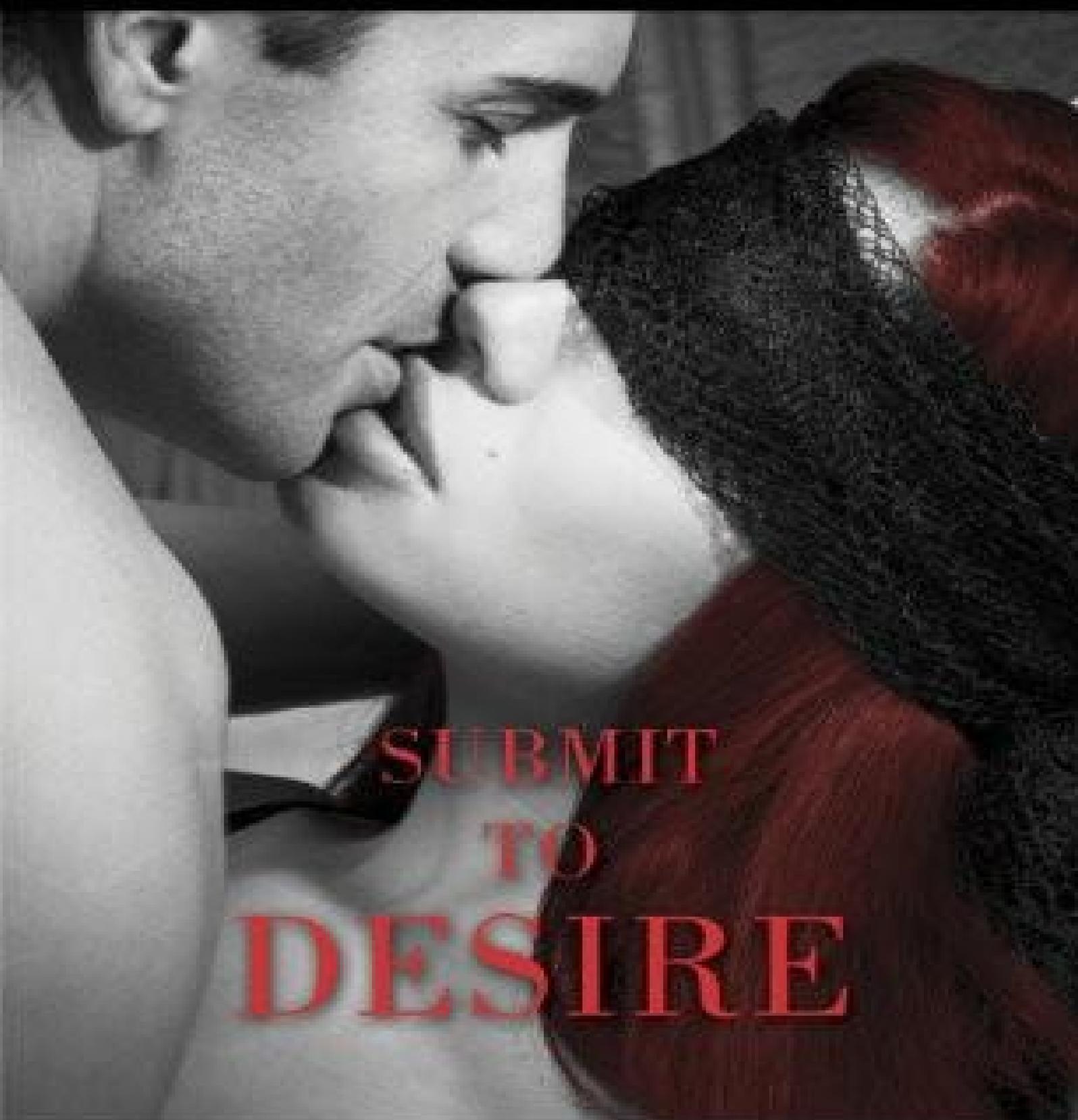


Tiffany Reisz



SUBMIT
TO
DESIRE

Spice BRIEFS

Charlotte Brand is tired of dull boyfriends and boring sex. Kingsley Edge, who owns clubs rumored to supply more than just cocktails, seems just the man to revive her: intense, sophisticated...and looking for a submissive he can train for an elite client.

Charlotte is seduced by the offer...and by Kingsley himself. Soon they are engaged in a series of lessons that test her darkest desires. But when their training is over, will Charlotte be ready to let him go?

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“Another one bites the dust,” Charlotte said, raising her glass. Two other glasses met it and the resulting clink sent Amaretto sour dripping over her fingers and onto the floor.

“Good riddance to bad boyfriends.” London downed the last of her Fuzzy Navel and sat the empty glass on the bar.

“I’ll drink to that,” Sasha said, sucking out the last drops of her Long Island Iced Tea.

Steele, the bartender, refilled her glass.

“That’s the problem.” Charlotte tucked a stray strand of red hair back into her straw cowboy hat. “Nick wasn’t a bad boyfriend. He was...nice.”

Sasha and London stared at her over the top of their drinks.

“You already dumped him, Char.” London wadded up her napkin and tossed it at Steele. “Don’t act like it’s an insult to injury.”

“You women are all the same.” Steele set three shots up in front of them. “God forbid you date a guy who’s nice to you.”

“Nick *was* nice.” Sasha picked up her shot. “And kind of hot. Nice isn’t bad. Nice is just...boring.”

“Boring,” London agreed.

Charlotte sighed and gazed down into her drink.

Nick was nice. Too nice. So nice she wanted to kill him for it sometimes. Last week had been the last straw. She’d fallen asleep during sex. Missionary position. Five minutes of foreplay. Five minutes of thrusting. Ten minutes after of “I love everything about you.” Just...like...always.

“Boring,” Charlotte echoed as she looked up and met the eyes of a man walking through the bar. The man, whoever he was, looked to be in his mid-thirties and had shoulder-length dark hair and olive skin. From what Charlotte could tell, he wore a weird suit, kind of Victorian-looking, like something off a romance novel cover. And he wasn’t walking so much as strolling, as if the crowded nightclub was a park in spring, and he was a country squire out on a pleasant Sunday ramble.

“Steele, who is that guy?” London asked.

Steele gave the three ladies a half-cocked smile.

“That is Kingsley Edge. And he is the opposite of boring. And if you three have any sense you’ll stay away from him.”

“What sense I had just took her panties off and laid down in front of him,” Sasha said with a drunken giggle.

“God, he looks like a pirate.” London ran her finger around the rim of her glass.

“I think he looks dangerous.” Sasha shot the man her best come-over-here smile.

Charlotte sighed. Sasha and London had promised her a girls’ night out to help cheer her up over yet another failed relationship. “No men” had been their promise. Only alcohol and dancing. Maybe it was time to get some real friends.

“He looks like he needs a haircut.” Charlotte downed her shot in one bitter swallow.

“Hey, do your trick, Char. That’ll get his attention,” Sasha begged.

“I don’t want to get his attention. He’s a pimp.” Charlotte had heard of Kingsley Edge. No one who haunted New York’s nightlife hadn’t. His respectable business interests included owning several of the city’s top clubs. Rumors swirled about the man, however; rumors that he made the vast majority of his money pushing flesh and not cocktails.

Steele laughed and the three friends spun back around on their bar stools.

~~“Kingsley Edge is not a pimp.” Steele poured Charlotte a fresh Amaretto sour. “Kingsley Edge is a talent scout.”~~

“Talent scout?” Charlotte’s eyes followed Kingsley Edge as he made his way through the club. Every few feet he’d pause and gaze at her through the crowd. “What sort of talent?”

“Maybe your talent.” Steele winked at her. She’d worked at this club, *Le Cirque de Nuit*, a few years ago and had picked up a trick or two.

Sasha and London looked at Charlotte with pleading eyes. Steele held out a shot glass full of liquid paraffin. Once again Charlotte decided to make getting new friends a top priority. She was almost drunk. They were definitely drunk. And they were making her perform for them. Fine—if they insisted.

Charlotte sighed and took the shot glass. Sasha handed her a lighter.

Sasha and London clapped while they hopped off their stools and stood far away. Charlotte noticed that the commotion had not just gotten the attention of most of the nightclub patrons, but had alerted Kingsley Edge as well. He stood next to a column and leaned against it with one eyebrow raised.

Charlotte inhaled deeply, swigged the liquid paraffin, pursed her lips, flicked the lighter and pushed the air out so hard her ears popped. A fireball blew out several feet in front of her and set everyone in the nightclub screaming and clapping. She kept blowing even after the fire went out, knowing she had no exhale anything left in her mouth. Hopping off her bar stool, she gave a small bow before turning back to her drink. She’d already had five tonight. One for each nice boyfriend she’d dumped in the last five years.

Two hours later she lay on the floor in the VIP section. She heard two male voices talking above her. One sounded like Steele’s. The other sounded almost melodic...deeply male and as intoxicating as all the alcohol she’d imbibed.

“It’s last call, chief. What should I do with her?”

“I’ll take care of *le petit dragon*.”

“You sure about that?”

She was close to passing out but she remembered the laugh. A warm, low laugh, she felt it more than it heard it. It rolled down her body from her neck to her ankles.

“Quite sure,” the voice said in an accent her addled mind recognized as French. “I like a woman with a little fire in her belly.”

* * *

Charlotte woke up in the fetal position. Groaning, she opened her eyes and saw a pair of knee-high leather riding boots. The boots belonged to a pair of long legs crossed at the ankles and using her back as a footstool. Looking up she saw Kingsley Edge lounging on the VIP sofa with a dainty teacup and saucer in his hands. Sipping at his tea he smiled down at her.

“I hope you don’t mind my saying this, *chérie*, but you need a new hobby.”

It took her much longer than it should have to process his words.

“Hobby?” she asked. “Who are you?”

“You know who I am. And I know who you are.” He held up her driver’s license and studied it with his dark eyes. “Charlotte Brand. Steele tells me your friends call you Char. Shameful. I’ll call you Charlie, if you don’t mind.”

“I might mind.”

“Twenty-seven years old,” he said, still staring at her license. “A good age, Charlie.”

“You’re really going to call me Charlie?”

“*Oui*. I love women with men’s names. It satisfies a certain deviant side to me.”

“Is your boot on my back part of your deviant side?” Charlotte sat up, and Kingsley lifted his feet off her back with a graceful air.

“What can I say? When I see a beautiful woman so drunk she ends up passed out on the floor, I assume she’s there because she wants to be walked all over.”

“Nice guilt trip. I heard you were a pimp. Are you a priest, too?”

“*Non*. But I have a priest on speed dial if you need one,” he said with a wicked grin on his sculpted lips. “Would you like to come home with me now, Charlie?”

“What are you going to do to me?” His face came into focus for the first time. She’d heard he was French...or half-French, something like that. He was rich and had half the judges and cops in town in his back pocket. She’d also heard he was handsome, but handsome didn’t do justice to the man in front of her.

“Breakfast and a shower are in order. Perhaps then we can discuss a certain business opportunity.”

The phrase *business opportunity* triggered a memory from last night. Steele said that Kingsley Edgerton wasn’t a pimp but a talent scout. Talent scout—she had a feeling she knew exactly what this *business opportunity* might entail.

“The shower and breakfast might work. But I can save you the trouble—*no* to any business opportunities.”

“You say that now...but wait until you try my pancakes.”

He sat his teacup and saucer down and held out his hand.

What the hell was she getting herself into?

Charlotte reached out and put her hand into his. Wrapping his fingers around hers, he pulled her toward her feet. Wobbling a little on her high heels, she put her hand on his chest to steady herself. He covered her hand with his and met her eyes.

“You’re a beautiful woman.” His dark-lashed eyes studied her face. “Even with scuff marks on your cheek.”

Charlotte blushed and rubbed her face.

“Don’t bother. We’ll wash it off at my townhouse. Shall we, Charlie?”

“Okay, so you’re going to call me Charlie. What do I call you?”

“Everyone calls me Kingsley or King. Or Monsieur. Take your pick.”

“Monsieur?”

“*Mon père était français et j’ai servi dans la légion étrangère française.*”

Charlotte blinked and tried to make out any of the words Kingsley had said. But none of them registered as anything but poetic nonsense.

“I said ‘my father was French and I served in the French Foreign Legion.’”

Charlotte stared at Kingsley. French...riding boots...the suit...and he changed her name to Charlie?

“You’re a little insane, aren’t you, Kingsley?”

“*Oui*, and you’re coming home with me.” He flashed her a wicked grin.

“Touché.”

Kingsley strode off and Charlotte followed behind him. He paused as he passed the bar and picked up her cowboy hat, which someone had left there. He tossed it back to her.

“I’m giving it to you but don’t think you’re allowed to wear it in my presence.”

“Why not?”

“Because you have the most beautiful claret-colored hair I’ve ever seen, and it’s a crime to cover it up.”

Charlotte rolled her eyes.

“It’s not real. Well, the hair’s real, but not the color. I’m a hair stylist.”

“I don’t care if it’s real. I wasn’t born bilingual but that doesn’t change the fact that it turns you out that I am. *Oui?*”

Kingsley spun on his heel to smile back at her. He raised his eyebrows and seemed to be waiting for her to answer.

“Okay, *oui*,” she admitted.

“*J’accepte*.” Kingsley threw open the doors to the club.

Charlotte shielded her face as the morning sunlight beat down on her aching eyes. Once inside the back of Kingsley’s car she noticed the lush leather interior and the old-world feel.

“Holy shit...is this a Rolls-Royce?”

Kingsley sat on the bench seat opposite her.

“She is. Not my favorite one, but she’s fine for running errands.”

“So am I an errand?” Charlie asked.

“I don’t know.” Kingsley gave her a long look that set the hairs on her arms standing up. “Are you running?”

Charlotte looked out the window and saw the city regulars on their way to work—men in power suits, women in severe dresses. And here she sat in a Rolls-Royce with one of the city’s most notorious underground figures.

“Not yet.”

Kingsley grinned.

“Good answer, Charlie. Here we are.”

The Rolls pulled in front of an elegant black-and-white bricked town house that looked at least three stories high.

Kingsley left the car first and held out his hand for her. She tried to stay steady on her feet as he pulled her out. Kingsley steered her up two flights of stairs. A stunningly beautiful young woman delivered a file folder to him with a quick curtsy.

“You can shower while I read,” Kingsley said.

“You’re really going to make me take a shower?”

“I can give you a bath if you prefer.”

“I wouldn’t prefer,” she said, not sure if she meant that.

Kingsley pushed open a set of intricately carved black double doors.

Never before had she seen a bedroom more erotic and inviting. She wished she knew more about architecture so she could properly describe it to her friends...if and when she ever made it out of here. She wanted to study the vaulted ceilings adorned with black-and-white paintings of lovers coupling in positions both pornographic and artistic. Or the hulking black marble fireplace on the lush oriental rugs that covered the black-and white-tile floor.

But in truth only the bed held her attention. A huge four-poster behemoth, it captured both her attention and her imagination. She’d never seen sheets so red, like the color of fresh blood, or pillows so thick she thought she could drown in them and die happy.

“Nice bed,” she said when Kingsley caught her staring. “It’s really...big. King-size, I guess.”

“Kingsley-sized.” He winked at her as he pointed at a door across the room. “Bathroom in there. There is a bathrobe you can use while I have your clothes sent out.”

Charlotte entered the bathroom and found it as luxurious as the bedroom. She locked the door behind her and looked in the mirror. Scuff marks had been only a slight exaggeration. A streak of black floor polish adorned her left cheek. It looked almost like a bruise. Her eyes were shaded with smudged and flaking eye makeup and her lipstick had worn halfway off from the alcohol and the paraffin. She turned on the steam shower and stepped inside. As she washed the club grime off she wondered what on earth Kingsley wanted with her before deciding she didn’t really care.

She turned off the water and wrapped herself in the plushest towel she'd ever felt in her life. Squeezing the water out of her hair she pulled on the black silk bathrobe. With nothing on but the robe she emerged into the bedroom. Kingsley reclined in a chair with his feet propped up on an ottoman. He'd discarded his suit jacket and put on a pair of wire-rimmed glasses. With a cocktail in his hand he perused the file folder in his hand.

"Hypocrite." She nodded at his cocktail and tried to ignore how desirable he looked in his embroidered vest with his crisp white shirtsleeves rolled up to reveal muscular forearms and wrists.

"Everything in moderation, *ma chérie*. Except orgasms. Have a seat."

She didn't see anywhere to sit other than the bed and not wanting to seem too eager she sat on the floor. Kingsley gave her a strange look as she waited at his feet—a look both hungry and self-congratulatory.

Kingsley pulled out a sleek black cell phone. In rapid French he poured out what sounded like instructions and hung up.

"Pancakes forthcoming. Now this is all very interesting." He flipped another page in the file. "You had a four-point-oh at NYU before you dropped out your freshman year. *Pourquoi?*"

Charlotte sat up straighter.

"That file's about me?" she demanded.

"*Oui*. While I was waiting for you emerge from your Amaretto-sour coma, I had my secretary curate your records. You are a fascinating woman, Charlie."

"And you're such an asshole. I can't believe you're digging around my past."

"I intend to fuck you blind before you leave my home, Charlie. Is penetrating your past more intimate than penetrating your body?"

Charlotte closed her mouth and sat blushing on the floor as visions of Kingsley on top of her, inside her, raced through her mind.

"I think so," she finally answered.

"So do I, actually."

"That's a pretty old-fashioned view of sex," she said. "Especially for a pimp."

"I am not a pimp. My employees do not sell sex. If I'm anything, it would be an agent. Or—"

"A talent scout," she finished. "Yeah, Steele told me. So were you scouting for talent at the club last night?"

"I was. And found a fire-breather. Not a particularly useful talent but certainly interesting. As is the—your mother, she died when you were nineteen."

Charlotte swallowed. "Car accident. That's not interesting. Just horrible."

"Horrible, *très*. But you dropped out of school to raise your younger brother—that is interesting."

"Simon and my father do not get along. He was terrified at the prospect of living with my dad. We got a sympathetic judge, thank God."

Kingsley smiled at her over the top of his glasses.

"Your father is not a good man?"

Charlotte pulled the robe tighter around her. "He's strict, conservative. I stayed out an hour after curfew when I was sixteen. I was at the movies with a girlfriend and we got ice cream after. He assumed the worst and called me a slut, a whore, everything. He and mom divorced that year finally couldn't let Simon move in with him. Especially since—"

"Your brother is gay."

"Yeah, how did you know?"

"He interned with gay rights groups while in college and law school. You dropped out of university and started working so your gay brother wouldn't have to live with your conservative father. That's rather noble of you, Charlie."

Charlotte stared at the floor.

~~“My dad would have destroyed Simon. It wasn’t noble. It was my only choice.”~~

“It wasn’t, but it’s quite telling that you think that. Let’s see,” he said and flipped a few more pages.

“You worked as a receptionist at a salon after you quit school and apprenticed there. You were a cocktail waitress at *Le Cirque de Nuit* a few nights a week as well. Must have been before I bought the club. I would have remembered a fire-breather.”

“You got much better tips if you could do a stunt. The bartender there before Steele taught me the fire-breathing thing.”

“Your brother is in law school now. Full scholarship, I see. There’s no reason you can’t go back to school.”

“I’m a little too old. Besides, I like working. I’ve been out in the real world taking care of myself and Simon since I was nineteen. Don’t think I can go back.”

Kingsley closed the file and leaned forward. He started to open his mouth but a knock on the door interrupted.

“*Entréz,*” he called out. The butler entered carrying a breakfast tray. He sat it on the floor in front of Charlotte and quickly departed.

“So now you’ve had your shower and you are currently having your breakfast. Let’s discuss the business opportunity you’ve already said no to.”

“Discuss away,” she said after her first delicious bite of pancake. “But it’s still a no.”

“Understandable.” Kingsley stood up and removed his wire-rim glasses. “I’ll talk. You eat.”

“Happily.”

Kingsley strolled leisurely about his bedroom.

“I told you I was no pimp and that’s true. There is a sexual aspect to the work my employees do, but none of them have sexual intercourse for money. At least not on my time clock. The clients we serve are an unusual lot with unusual desires. If they wanted mere sex, they could get that from their husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends. What they want from us is more complicated.”

“You’re talking about kink, right?”

Kingsley nodded. “*Oui*. Kink. Bondage, domination and sadomasochism. I said I was a talent agent. It wouldn’t be far off the mark to also call myself a matchmaker. I have clients with specific desires and I try to find a good match for those desires among my coterie. I have a client now—a wealthy businessman, not unattractive—who has found himself longing for a deeper connection than what he has experienced in his recent short-lived relationships. He prefers a beautiful woman somewhere between the age of twenty-five and thirty-five. No preference on race, height, or religion. Strong preference on intelligence—i.e. she must have it. And she must be very brave.”

At his last word he turned around and looked down at her.

“A woman who breathes fire while drunk and comes to my home while sober is about as brave as this town has to offer. Wouldn’t you agree, Charlie?”

Charlotte stared at him. She couldn’t believe what he was asking her.

“Okay...I’m not saying yes or anything. I’m only asking out of curiosity—what exactly would the whole arrangement entail?”

“This particular client enjoys S and M on occasion but is more interested in absolute sexual dominance. He is particularly aroused by fear.”

“So he’s a rapist?”

“Hardly. Dominants in the lifestyle, as we call it, find submission erotic. Overpowering a woman and taking her by force is an act of assault and violence. A dominant desires his submissive trust high enough to allow him to take her even when she is afraid. Yes, he takes but she gives as well. And your *ma chérie*, have all the makings of a world-class submissive.”

“This is bizarre.”

“Is it? Tell me, Charlie, those two blond Barbie dolls you were with last night—that was Sasha Walsh and London Faber, yes?”

“Yes. We met at the salon. I cut their hair.”

“Their parents are worth roughly the state budget of Vermont. They are vapid and dull and spoiled. They are your opposites. Why do you spend time with them?”

“Rich people are easy to hang out with. They have all the money. They make all the decisions.”

“And they left you alone passed out on the floor of my club. Anything could have happened to you—you could have been robbed, assaulted, raped...they are not your friends.”

“I know. That’s why I like hanging out with them. It’s easier that way.”

“Easier to be with people who don’t care about you?”

“Easier to be with people I don’t have to care about. I know—it’s stupid.”

“*Pas du tout*. It’s understandable. Your mother died, you raised your brother and kept him safe from your father....”

Charlotte toyed with the pancake left on her plate.

“*Oui*,” she agreed.

“At a young age you had to take on enormous responsibilities. What you must understand is that submissive women are not weak. They are often much stronger than the men who dominate them. They have to be strong and brave to submit without losing themselves. I believe you are both. And he said, squatting down in front of her, “I think there’s a part of you that would very much enjoy not being in control of everything for once.”

Charlotte looked up at him. No one that handsome should also be that insightful.

“I’ve never done kink before,” she finally said.

“I can teach you everything you need to know.”

“You would teach me?”

Kingsley tapped her under her chin and grinned at her. Something in his smile made her stomach clench. “Is that such a terrible prospect?”

Charlotte stared at him. Never before had she seen a more viscerally attractive man in her life. He seemed to read her reaction to him in her eyes.

The sane rational part of Charlotte’s brain told her to get up and get out. Unfortunately every other part of her body and mind overruled her.

“Stand up,” Kingsley ordered and Charlotte came to her feet.

He looked her up and down once before flashing her a dangerous smile. Raising his hand, he caressed her lips with the soft pad of his thumb while he reached out with his free hand and opened a drawer on the bedside table. From it he pulled a pair of handcuffs.

“Hey, no way in Hell.” Charlotte took a quick step back.

Kingsley said nothing as he slapped the cuffs onto his own left wrist.

“*S’il vous plaît*,” he said and turned around, indicating he wanted her to cuff his hands behind his back.

Charlotte took the cuffs in her hand and nervously clapped them onto Kingsley’s other wrist.

He turned around to face her.

“Do you feel safe with me now?” he asked.

Slowly she nodded. What could he really do to her with his hands cuffed, after all?

“Now,” he said, “drop the robe.”

Immediately Charlotte pulled the robe tighter around her body.

“Charlie...take off the robe. Now.”

Something in Kingsley’s voice, some hard edge of authority, spoke to something deep within her.

Slowly she untied the cord and let the robe fall to the floor. Kingsley ran his eyes up and down her body with an appraising air as she stood naked and blushing before him.

He stepped forward and she fought the urge to step back. Instead she stood her ground as he made circuit around her body.

“You have exquisite breasts,” he said. “The perfect size to fit in the palm of a large hand. I’m sure other lovers have told you that.”

One old boyfriend had said she had “great tits” but that had been the extent of it.

“Not in so many words.”

“Pity. Also, lovely full hips. Well-rounded but with definition. Oh,” he said pausing at her back. “You have a birthmark.”

Every muscle in Charlotte’s body tensed as Kingsley dropped to his knees behind her.

“Just a little one.”

“It looks like—” Kingsley’s voice dropped to a low whisper “—the Eiffel Tower.”

Charlotte laughed but the laugh turned to a gasp when Kingsley’s lips touched the birthmark that graced the back of her left hip. The heat from his mouth on her skin spread through her entire pelvic region and sunk deep into her stomach. Just as the gasp started to turn to a low moan, Kingsley stood back up again.

“Long legs but not excessively so. Not too thin. Beautiful Celtic skin. Exquisite Roman nose.”

“Roman? Is that a synonym for hooked?”

“*Oui*. You, Charlie, will do nicely.”

“Um...*merci*?” she said, remembering one other French word.

“*De rien*. Now tell me...would you care to stay with me? One month. Let me train you to be the perfect sexual submissive.”

“I have a job, you know.” She grabbed the robe and pulled it around her again.

“I’ll pay you twice what you made in your best month last year. Cash. Of course.”

“Of course.” Charlotte swallowed. Good Lord, he really meant it. This drop-dead gorgeous rich weird Frenchman wanted her to stay with him for a month. And not just stay with him, he wanted to teach her how to submit sexually to some rich client of his. Insanity. And yet, the thought of walking away from this offer... No, not the offer, from Kingsley...

She couldn’t quite bring herself to walk away from Kingsley.

“I’m not agreeing to anything,” she finally said. “I haven’t even met this guy.”

“I won’t ask you to agree to anything until you meet him. Nor will he agree to anything until he meets you. We’ll spend the next few weeks in training. When you’re ready, I’ll arrange a meeting. If you like each other and decide to give a relationship a try, he’ll pay me my rather exorbitant finder’s fee and you and he can work out whatever financial arrangement best suits you both. Knowing him, he’ll offer you a room in his rather impressive home and the freedom to come and go as you please as long as you are at his disposal three to five evenings a week. He’ll have a partner who is his sexual equal and you’ll have someone who is quite happy to make most or all of the decisions so you, for once in your life, won’t have to.”

“My feminist friends would kill me.”

“Those of us in the lifestyle are too busy having very good sex to worry about the gender war. True, most submissives are women and most dominants are men. But I have several male submissives on my payroll, and I know every dominatrix in this town. I assure you the vast majority of my clients are men who want to be dominated by women. So you needn’t worry that you’re giving up your right to vote or right to equal pay. You’re only giving up boring vanilla sex, and I promise you, you won’t miss it. Say yes, Charlie. We know you want to.”

“Okay...yes. Fine. I want to.”

“Beautiful, brave, and honest—I may have to keep you. You can stay in the room next to mine. I’ll send my secretary to see you have everything you need. In the meantime, I’m afraid I have to behave myself and get some actual work done today.”

Charlotte took a slow, deep breath.

“Okay, I’ll stay for a few days. Maybe a month. I’ve been trying to take a vacation for two years.”

Kingsley turned his head and smiled at her with a cocked eyebrow.

“*Ma chérie*...this will be no vacation.”

And then he laughed and something in that laugh caused her toes to curl and dig into the rug under her feet. The laugh rippled up her body and wrapped around her hips and dug like fingers into her stomach.

“Right...” she said, suddenly very aware of her nakedness under the bathrobe. Knowing Kingsley still had the handcuffs on his wrists came as both a relief and a disappointment. “I should go and let you get to work, I guess.”

Charlotte started for the door but stopped before she leaving.

“I should probably take those off you,” she said, remembering the handcuffs.

Gasping, Charlotte found herself with her back pressed to the door and Kingsley’s arms imprisoning her on either side. The handcuffs dangled impotently off his right wrist.

“*Pas de problème*, Charlie. Anything that needs taking off...I will do it.”

At first fear alone kept Charlotte frozen to the door. She sensed the iron strength in Kingsley’s arms, in his body, that had her trapped in place. Kingsley pushed forward until his hips pressed into her hips, his chest into breasts, and the fear turned to another feeling equally powerful but no less terrifying.

“Let me go,” she whispered.

“*Non*. Not yet.” Kingsley caressed the right side of her face with his fingertips. “You’re here to learn. This is your first lesson. The man I’ll train you for enjoys games like this...games of passion and fear. He will want you ready for him always. In the middle of the night he might wake you with his hunger. He may find you reading in the evening and without a word take your book from you and your clothes. You will try to pass him in the hallway, and he will stop you with his arms, turn you around, press you to the wall and force himself inside you. *Comprenez-vous?*”

Charlotte swallowed hard.

“So this is the lesson? Learning to keep my mouth shut while he does whatever he wants to me?”

Kingsley shook his head. He slid his hand from her face and down the front of her body. She inhaled as Kingsley cupped her left breast and gently kneaded her nipple with his thumb and forefinger.

“The lesson is that you must learn to speak when he does something you do not want him to do. Do you know what a safe word is, Charlie? We use them in my world.”

“No...” she breathed as liquid need began to gather in her hips.

“It’s a word, any word, that the two parties involved agree upon. It is the word that you must use to stop whatever is happening to you that you don’t want.”

“I can’t say no?”

“No. For this man I will train you for,” Kingsley said as he moved his hand lower over her quivering stomach, “the word *no* gasped in fear, in protest, will only stoke his passion further. It is a game, you see. The more you resist the more he will desire you. Say ‘no’ and he will carry on. Say ‘stop’ and he will not stop. Say ‘don’t’ if you wish but he will do whatever he will do. Tell me to stop. I dare you.”

Kingsley shifted his hand from her stomach to between her legs.

“Stop it,” she whispered although she didn’t mean it.

“Stop what? This?” Kingsley’s middle finger slipped inside her. Closing her eyes tight, Charlotte

thrust her hips out and into Kingsley's hand.

"Yes," she replied, panting the word. "Stop that."

"Should I stop this, too?" He pushed a second finger into her and began to move his hand, thrusting in and out of her with his fingers.

Charlotte nodded, unable to speak from the sheer pleasure of his touch.

She sensed Kingsley's mouth at her ear.

"Non," he said again. "I'm enjoying myself too much to stop. You feel exquisite inside. So warm so wet...did you know if you touch right here—" Kingsley twisted his hand and pressed the tip of his finger hard and deep into a spot one inch inside her "—I can feel your pulse?"

"Kingsley..." His name was the only word Charlotte could push past her lips. He apparently took it as an encouragement because a third finger joined the second and Charlotte had to open her legs wide to take it.

"Now pretend for a moment that you aren't actually enjoying this as much as we both know you are," Kingsley said, making lazy circles with his hand inside her. "Shocking thought, *oui*?"

"*Oui*," Charlotte agreed. She truly couldn't remember the last time she'd felt anything so erotic. The expertise of his technique, the pressure, the movements were beyond pleasurable, but far more so was the power of the man who held her pressed to the door and refused to let her go even as she said "no" and "stop" and "don't."

"Let us say you really did want me to stop, but I love that word, love your protests, far too much to heed it. And we both know when you say 'stop' you don't really mean it. Not with me. So you should have a word that truly means stop and to that alone will I listen. That is your safe word. Do you understand?"

"I think so." Charlotte grasped his left forearm and held onto him as she felt her climax building. Hung over...scared...in a stranger's house...and yet she could scarcely breathe for her desire. "So what's my safe word?"

The muscles deep inside her tightened around Kingsley's hand. She felt a rush of wetness between her thighs.

"As you are my little red-headed fire-breather, your safe word should be 'dragon.' You must say it whenever you truly wish me to stop whatever I'm doing. No other word, no amount of struggling will do it."

Charlotte's breathing turned hard and heavy as Kingsley's hand moved faster and deeper into her. His thumb massaged her clitoris. Never before had she been with a man who knew how to manipulate a woman's body so well.

With his lips Kingsley traced a path from Charlotte's ear to her shoulder. Charlotte dug her fingernails into the fabric of his jacket.

"So if you truly wish me to stop what I'm doing, Charlie, you will say...?"

"Dragon."

Kingsley pulled his hand abruptly out of her body and took a step back. Charlotte nearly collapsed from the sudden shock of his departure as her vaginal muscles fluttered in protest.

"*C'est ça*," Kingsley said. "It's like magic."

Kingsley stepped forward, took her hand and kissed the back of it.

"Get settled in," he said. "I'm off to work now. No rest for the wicked."

Kingsley pulled her away from the door, opened it and strolled into the hall whistling a song she thought might have been the French national anthem.

Charlie closed her eyes and imagined fire shooting out of her mouth and burning Kingsley to the ground. She must have actually audibly hissed because Kingsley stopped whistling long enough to call back to her.

“Patience, Charlie. We have all month.”

* * *

Charlotte spent the rest of the afternoon in the bedroom Kingsley had assigned to her, a bedroom nearly as luxurious as his own. His secretary came in and gathered information from her—emergency contacts, food preferences, even allergies.

“Allergies?” Charlotte had asked.

“Yes. Latex, for example?” Kingsley secretary answered with hardly a blink or a blush.

“Oh, God.”

An hour after returning from her apartment with a month’s worth of clothes and supplies, Charlotte tried to get some sleep but her mind wanted to wander down far too many dangerous paths. Kingsley Edge... The one and only Kingsley Edge. She finally worked up the courage to call her young brother and let him know a little of what was going on.

Simon sighed heavily, so heavily Charlotte nearly laughed aloud.

“You sure about this, Char?” Simon asked.

“I like him.”

“Do you like him because he rich and infamous or because you actually like him?”

Charlotte thought about the question, a perfectly valid one, for a few seconds before answering.

“Yes.”

After getting Simon’s blessing, or at least his promise to not call the police, Charlotte hung up and stared around the room still not quite believing she’d be spending the next month here. What would Kingsley do with her during her stay? Part of her was terrified at the prospect. Another much bigger part of her couldn’t wait to find out.

Charlotte started as an envelope slipped in under her door. She picked it up and found a handwritten invitation.

Charlie—Present yourself at my bedroom door this evening at nine o’clock. Wear your finest. We shall attend a piano recital in the Music Room. Do not be late. The consequences will be both severe and enjoyable if you are.

Charlotte corrected herself. Invitation? No, this was a summons. And although she knew she should bristle at the order to present herself on time or be punished, she almost wanted to be late simply to force Kingsley to make good on his threat.

For a solid hour, Charlotte stood before the bathroom mirror primping for the recital. She did her makeup quickly and spent the rest of the time curling her waist-length hair into thick red waves. The fanciest dress she had was a little black number. Hopefully the effect of her hair would distract Kingsley from the simplicity of the dress.

At nine on the dot, Charlotte stood outside Kingsley’s bedroom door waiting impatiently. She still barely knew the man. The more time that passed from their one long conversation this morning, the more she questioned her decision to stay with him for the month. This was crazy, right? Spending a month with a stranger? No one in her right mind would have agreed to his offer. Why was she doing this?

Kingsley opened the door.

Okay, that was why.

“Wow,” she said when all other words failed her.

He wore a black suit with silver buttons on the black-and-silver embroidered vest. His riding boots had been polished to a near-reflective shine and had she looked down she would have seen her wide-eyed face staring back at her.

“You approve?” Kingsley asked, a slight smile at the corner of his sensual lips.

Charlotte slowly nodded. “Um...yes. You look...damn.”

“And you, *ma chérie*, look enchanting.” Kingsley took her hand and kissed the back of it. “Utterly exquisite.” Raising her hand over her head, he spun her in a slow circle. “*Parfait*, Charlie.”

“*Merci*,” she said and curtsied. “The dress isn’t much. But it’s all I have that’s semiformal.”

Kingsley took her by the arm and they started down the hallway.

“It will look lovely on the floor by my bed.”

Charlotte blushed and laughed.

“Is there any particular reason why you dress like it’s the nineteenth century instead of the twenty-first?”

“There’s only one reason that matters,” he said as he escorted down to the main level of his home. “Because I can.”

Still on his arm he led her to the Music Room. Kingsley introduced her to his guests. Most of them sat on the chairs and the love seats. But although there was enough room for all, a few of the women sat on the floor at the feet of the men they’d come with. One woman, almost forty and stunningly beautiful, took an imperious seat on a chair and snapped her fingers. Her date, a young man of about thirty, sat at her feet. Charlotte looked down at Kingsley. He had a wicked gleam in his eyes and watched her. She sank to the floor and leaned back against his knee. He ran a hand possessively through her hair. Now she knew why no one asked her who she was or how she’d met Kingsley. All his guests were part of his kinky little community.

Charlotte adjusted herself and found the floor was actually quite comfortable. The carpeting was thick and lush and Kingsley’s fingers in her hair and on her neck felt extraordinary—sensual and seductive and also relaxing. She could stay here all night.

A tall blond man entered to a smattering of applause and sat at the piano. Charlotte’s eyes widened when she saw he was dressed like a priest. A beautiful young woman with black hair followed him and sat on the floor next to the piano bench. Once the applause ceased, the man began to play. Charlotte sat entranced by the breathtakingly handsome pianist and the woman who rested so contentedly at his feet.

Kingsley leaned forward and put his mouth at her ear.

“I know he’s handsome as the devil, Charlie. And you’re welcome to look all you want. But don’t touch. That,” he said, inclining his head toward the piano playing priest and the young woman, “is a love match.”

“A love match?” she asked. “One of yours?”

“Oh, no. Destiny brought those two together. I had nothing to do with it. When destiny fails, that’s when I get called.”

“You should put that on your business cards,” she joked.

Kingsley reached into his pocket and handed her a black business card embossed with silver lettering. “Kingsley Edge, CEO, Edge Enterprises. *When destiny fails...*” it read.

She covered her mouth to stop herself from laughing out loud as she looked up at Kingsley. He was smiling at her. But it wasn’t a normal smile of mirth or pleasure, but a smile that sent her body temperature shooting up a few degrees.

Charlotte turned away and tried to let the music calm her down. But it was such passionate music played so skillfully that Charlotte felt it wanted to seduce her as much as Kingsley. And both were succeeding. By the time the recital ended Charlotte was so desperate for Kingsley that she pretended to stumble when standing just so she could lean her full weight against him. He pulled her close to him, and she inhaled his scent. He smelled warm and masculine and every nerve in her body sat on edge at his nearness. When he bade his guests a swift goodbye and escorted her back upstairs, she was

nearly shaking with eagerness. They stopped at the door to her room.

“So he’s really a priest?” she asked. “The pianist?”

“I told you I had a priest on speed dial. You really should learn to trust me.”

“I’m trying. This is all new.”

Kingsley laid his hand on her neck and rested his thumb at the hollow of her throat. “I will not hurt you, Charlie. Or, at least, I won’t harm you,” he said with a roguish grin. “Do you believe that? Well, you won’t get very far until you know that at the moment you are most afraid of me, it is the most you could have the least reason to be.”

“Okay, I’ll try not be afraid.”

“You can be afraid all you want. Just don’t let your fear stop you.”

Charlotte inhaled. For whatever reason, she did trust him.

“Good girl,” he said and took her hand. He kissed it slowly and let it go. “Good night, Charlie.”

She stared at him as he strode toward his own bedroom.

Stunned that he’d left her, Charlotte entered her bedroom on feet of lead. Hurt and embarrassed she considered gathering her things and getting out of this madhouse. He’d spent all evening seducing her with every glance, every touch and every smile. And now he just sauntered off to bed, leaving her alone in her room.

She took a deep breath and remembered his words—*you really should learn to trust me*. Maybe that was a test. Maybe he was seeing if she would get pissed and try to leave.

Charlotte kicked off her shoes and enjoyed the sound of them bouncing hollowly off the wall. She gave this weird place one more day. But she couldn’t completely talk herself out of her disappointment and frustration. Kingsley knew she was more than ready and willing to go to bed with him. Maybe he got off on being a tease. Maybe when he finally did invite her to his room, she’d kiss his hand and walk off like he had.

In the bathroom she brushed her teeth and glanced at herself in the mirror. Kingsley called her beautiful but she never really thought she was. Pretty maybe, but not beautiful. But tonight with her hair flowing like red wine down her back, she knew she’d never looked better. But that hadn’t been good enough for him. Angry, she strode back into the bedroom.

Charlotte froze when she sensed something behind her. Suddenly she couldn’t move as two incredibly strong arms grabbed her and held her hard and fast in place with a hand covering her mouth. She threw all of her strength into her struggle to get loose but the harder she fought the harder he held her.

“Shh...” Kingsley’s mouth was at her ear again. “It’s only me.”

Knowing it was Kingsley didn’t do anything to calm her fears. She tried to pull away again but still he held her tight against him. She screamed against his hand. Barely a sound came out.

“Charlie, I know you’re afraid right now. You are allowed to be afraid. I want you to be afraid.” His voice was low and intimate. She pushed back against him, hoping to knock him off balance and get away. But he was too tall, too strong. She turned her head trying to scream, but his hand was a vice over her mouth. “In the lifestyle we all have a safe word. It’s the word you say when you want the game to stop. Your safe word is ‘dragon’ since you’re my little redheaded fire-breather. And the second I take my hand away you can say ‘dragon’ and I’ll let you go. Or... Or you can choose to not fear your fear. Vanilla sex is all about trust. Rape is all about fear. In that place between fear and trust is where we live. Trust me, Charlie. Don’t think that the fear means you have to stop.”

Charlotte closed her eyes. She wrenched herself to the side but still she couldn’t get free from him.

“I’m going to move my hand away from your mouth now. Say your safe word if you must. But before you do, ask yourself how you felt when I walked away from you tonight. Ask yourself how you will feel tomorrow if you walk away from me now.”

Charlotte panted against his palm. He slowly took his hand away from her mouth. She started speak and then swallowed her words.

She heard Kingsley's smug laugh at her ear. "I have good taste in women, don't I?"

Charlie opened her mouth to argue but Kingsley pushed her hard and bent her over the bed. He took her arms and yanked them behind her back and held them pinned there. With one hand he held her wrists and with the other he reached underneath her dress. He ran his hand up the back of her thigh and slid it over her hips and into her panties.

"Your clit's swollen and you're soaking wet," he said as he examined her. She clenched her jaw but was too humiliated to say anything. His fingers skimmed across the outside of her body. She flinched as he ripped her flimsy panties off her with a quick tear. Now naked underneath her dress there was nothing between him and her. Kingsley used his knees to push her legs wider apart. His hand came back to her and she groaned as he slid a single finger inside her.

"Since the moment I saw you breathing fire at my club last night," Kingsley whispered as one finger became two, and two fingers turned to three inside her, "I knew I had to have you...to feel the fire inside you."

He pulled his hand roughly out of her and she lay scared and panting against the sheets.

"Don't move," he ordered. Closing her eyes, she dug her hands into the sheets and tried to breathe through her fears.

"It's adrenaline," Kingsley said as he opened a drawer and pulled something out, something that sounded like metal. She gasped as he took her wrists again and yanked them behind her back. "What you're feeling right now—it isn't fear. You aren't afraid of me. You've simply never been this excited before."

"God, you're arrogant," Charlotte growled as Kingsley slapped cold metal handcuffs on to each of her wrists.

"I'm not arrogant. I'm French." Kingsley forced her legs apart again as Charlotte tried to relax in the handcuffs. The weighty cold metal dug into her skin. She felt helpless, and hopeless. One woman could get her out of this. All she had to do was say it and Kingsley would let her go. But she couldn't say it. Even scared and humiliated she couldn't deny that she wanted him, wanted this so much that it scared her more than the handcuffs and the man who had taken possession of her body. "Now, Charlotte, I'm going to put my cock in you in two seconds. If you have an objection to that, I would raise it right now."

Charlotte said nothing as hot tears of shame welled up in her eyes.

"I thought as much," he said and shoved inside her.

He was so big it almost hurt going in. She strained against the handcuffs and pressed her face into the bed as Kingsley thrust into her with strokes both hard and slow. Reaching around her hips he found her clitoris again. With an expert touch he teased it until Charlotte cried out. As her orgasm peaked and waned, Kingsley roughly turned her onto her back and pushed her legs open again.

Kingsley yanked her dress down and bared her breasts. His mouth dropped to her neck. He rained violent kisses across her chest and shoulders so roughly she knew she'd have bruises from his mouth tomorrow. He took both breasts in his hands and held them as he penetrated her again. She opened her legs wider and took him as deep into her as she could.

Bending over her, he met her eye-to-eye. "You tilt your hips high. You like deep penetration, don't you?" Charlotte turned her head and stared at the wall. But Kingsley grabbed her face again and forced her to look at him. "Answer me."

"Yes," she said. "I like it deep."

"Then by all means." Kingsley grabbed her knees and wrenched them up and over his shoulder. She arched back—each thrust seemed to pound at the base of her stomach.

Charlotte panted as Kingsley continued his assault on her. She hated how good it felt being taken like this, hated herself for liking the brutality so much. He manipulated her body like he owned it. He touched her like her body was an open book he'd read and memorized. Turning her head, Charlotte pressed her face to her arm. As Kingsley kneaded her clitoris between his thumb and forefinger she came so hard that tears rolled out of the corners of her eyes.

Kingsley lowered her legs off his shoulders and covered her body with his. Instinctively Charlotte wrapped her legs around his waist as he continued to move in her. He bit her neck, her collarbone, kissed the hollow of her throat all while still moving in her.

"You like this," he said.

"Yes," she whispered as she flinched at a particularly hard thrust.

"Call me 'sir' when I'm inside you, Charlie."

"Yes, sir," she breathed, wanting to both kiss him and slap him the second her hands were free.

She kept waiting for him to be done with her. But there seemed to be no end to the pleasure he inflicted on her. He pushed and pushed until Charlotte felt her inner muscles start to tighten. Raising her hips, she took him deep into her again. She closed her eyes as another orgasm ripped through her. Finally Kingsley's movements grew harsher and faster. His fingers dug into the back of her neck. He held her still, forcing her to meet his eyes. With one last brutal thrust he came with his eyes open and locked onto hers.

Still inside her he moved her legs flat on her bed. Her body continued to pulse around his length. His cock pulsed inside her. He dipped his head and for the first time since meeting, kissed her.

She opened her mouth to his and his tongue slipped inside. His kiss—gentle and subtle—was the opposite of the sex. She wanted him to stay in her mouth and her body all night. Kingsley pulled back and smiled down at her.

"Took you long enough to kiss me, sir," she said, remembering his orders, remembering he was still inside her.

"You're a fire-breather, Charlie. You can't blame me for being wary of your mouth."

She laughed a little but winced as he pulled out of her sore body. She lay on her back, letting her heart slow its frenetic beating as he disappeared into the bathroom. She wondered what she looked like. Kingsley hadn't raped her but she probably looked like someone had. Her dress was torn and stretched bunched around her stomach. She could already tell she was covered in bruises from his hands and his mouth. Even inside she felt bruised from his merciless thrusts.

Kingsley emerged and stood by the bed. He looked immaculate in his suit. He's been fully dressed when he'd taken her. Only his feet were bare and he had abandoned his jacket. He reached into his pocket and pulled out the handcuff key and released her. She rolled up and tried to straighten her dress.

"What?" she asked as Kingsley stared at her.

"You look beautiful."

"I look like a rape victim." She wiped her eyes and a smudge of eyeliner came off on her fingers.

"You look like a woman who's been ravished and thoroughly enjoyed it."

"You scared the shit out of me grabbing me like that."

Kingsley sat on the bed next to her.

"You like being scared."

Charlie didn't answer. Kingsley took her by the chin again, this time gently. He caressed her bottom lip with his thumb. "You like being scared," he repeated. "You don't have to be afraid of your fear, Charlie. You're allowed to be afraid and like it."

"Normal people aren't supposed to like this stuff. Normal people aren't supposed to enjoy being thrown down, tied up and practically raped."

“My beautiful Charlie.” Kingsley kissed her slowly. “Perhaps it’s time to admit you aren’t normal people.”

* * *

Charlotte woke early the next morning. She put on the black bathrobe and found his bedroom door ajar but no King seemed to be in residence.

After eating breakfast in his opulent kitchen, she wandered back upstairs to shower and dress. When she stepped out of the shower, she found Kingsley standing there waiting with a towel.

“You’re trying to kill me,” she said as she snatched the towel out of his hands. “Give me a little warning, please, if you’re going to shower-stalk me.”

“You must learn to keep you on your toes. Come here, Charlie. Let’s see the damage, shall we?”

Charlotte stepped out of the shower. Kingsley stood in front of her and unwrapped her towel. Even though they’d had the most intense sex of her life last night, he hadn’t actually seen her completely naked. Just standing there in front of him was embarrassing and awkward. He, of course, seemed slightly aroused and amused as always.

“How bad is it?”

“Terrible. I barely left a mark on you. We’ll have to rectify that.”

“What do you call these?”

She pointed to the bruises on her chest and shoulders.

“Just nibbles.” Kingsley bit her wet neck.

“This isn’t fair, you know.” She wrapped her arms over her bare breasts. “I haven’t gotten to see you naked yet.”

“Women tend to fall in love with me when I take my clothes off.”

“You’re a narcissist. Come on—just a peek?”

Kingsley arched an eyebrow at her. “Very well. If you insist.”

He strode from the bathroom. Grabbing her towel, Charlotte followed him into his bedroom.

She stood in the center of his room while he started to undress. Today’s look was more Edwardian than Victorian. His jacket had five buttons and she watched with eager anticipation as he brusquely undid all of them. Tossing the jacket aside, he unknotted his tie and pulled his white shirt from his trousers. She gasped when he shed the shirt and stood bare-chested in front of her.

“Oh, my God.” Charlotte covered her mouth in shock.

“You were warned.”

She reached out and tentatively touched his chest. His body was what she imagined—lean and muscled and tan. But she never imagined this.

“How?” She looked up at his eyes.

“I was in the French Foreign Legion in my early twenties. Bullet wounds.”

“You were shot?”

“Four times. Thankfully all were small-caliber and missed vital organs. Especially my favorite vital organ.”

“Thank God.” Charlotte tried to laugh but it wasn’t easy staring at the four small holes that riddled Kingsley’s stomach and chest. “Was this from a battle?”

“Two are from a skirmish. The other two are friendly fire.”

“Friendly fire?”

Kingsley grinned at her. “Not terribly friendly, really. My CO found me with his wife.”

Now Charlotte did laugh. “Then you deserved it.”

“Hardly. That poor woman was begging to be tied up and defiled. Literally—she begged me.”

“You’ve always been this bad?” she asked as she ran her hand up and down his bare chest.

“Au contraire. I’ve always been this good.”

Kingsley took her by the wrists and led her to his bed. He opened the drawer of the bedside table and pulled out a length of rope.

“Have you ever been hit by a man, Charlie?” Kingsley asked as he pulled the towel off her and threw it aside.

“No. Dad yelled but he never hit.”

“And your boyfriends? Never even spanked?”

She shook her head as her heart started racing. Was he going to actually hit her?

“Your lovers have been vanilla,” Kingsley said. “That’s a tragedy. Did you even enjoy fucking them?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “They were nice. I had orgasms. It wasn’t terrible. Just—”

“Boring? Unfulfilling? Bourgeois?”

“All of that, I guess. Simon told me I was crazy to keep dumping such great guys. He said he’d take them if I didn’t want them.”

Kingsley took Charlotte’s wrists and tied them high to the bedpost. Water from her shower ran down her back and her legs all the way to her ankles. The water droplets itched and tickled but she couldn’t reach down to wipe them off.

“You would have been crazy to stay with men who didn’t understand you. Compromise is one thing. Denying your true self is another. Now…” He stood behind her. “I’m going to do something to you that is neither boring nor bourgeois. I’m going to flog you for five minutes. And if you make it through those five minutes without saying your safe word, I’ll give you an orgasm. And then I will flog you for eight minutes. And then I will give you another orgasm. And so on and so on. I’ll add three minutes to each beating. And the game only ends when you safe out.”

“What if I don’t safe out?”

“Then we’ll be here for a very long time,” he whispered into her ear. “Because there’s nothing in the world I enjoy more than beating a beautiful woman and then bringing her to climax. Now when did I put that cat?”

“Cat? You have a cat?”

“Cat of nine tails, Charlie. Now be a good girl and just stay put while I find a few things.”

Charlotte was fairly certain Kingsley knew exactly where everything was. He just wanted to leave her tied up naked and waiting, letting the anticipation scare her. She heard what sounded like a trunk opening and then she felt him standing behind her again. Something landed on the bed. It was brown leather with a six-inch handle and nine leather thongs. It didn’t look terrifying. But it didn’t look fun either. Something else landed on the bed—a tube of lubricant. One more thud—a rather impressive looking vibrator. She blinked as Kingsley brought his hand around and waved a stopwatch in front of her face.

“Five minutes.” He set the alarm. “Ready?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You’re trying to get me to fuck you by calling me ‘sir,’ aren’t you? It will work. But not yet.”

Before she could say anything else, the flogger was off the bed and he’d landed the first blow on her back. She flinched at the sudden burning pain. It was shockingly sharp, but not unbearable. She breathed through her nose in short desperate bursts. She was determined to not to say her safe word. It wasn’t so much that she wanted the orgasm. She wanted to prove to Kingsley she wasn’t boring.

When she heard the chiming of the stopwatch alarm she sagged with relief. Kingsley pressed his bare chest into her burning back. The flogger landed on his bed again.

“Did you enjoy that, Charlie?”

“No,” she said, still panting.

“Good. I hate beating masochists. They take the fun out of it by actually enjoying the pain.”—

“I’m letting you do this to me,” she said between breaths. “I’m not a masochist?”

“Oh, no, Charlie. You’re not a masochist. You’re a slut.”

“I am not—”

He hushed her before she could finish her angry protest.

“Charlie, in this house, the word *slut* is the highest compliment I can give. It means you are a person who owns her sexuality and is unafraid to experiment and open her mind and body to new experiences. I’m a slut, too.”

“I’ve noticed.”

“Now that you’ve had your pain, I suppose you’ll be wanting your pleasure.”

Kingsley reached out for the lubricant and opened the tube. He slid his hand between her legs and applied a generous dose to her labia. She shivered from the cold and the wet, but relished the pleasure his dexterous fingers were giving her.

“I know I was a little rough on you last night. But I can be merciful.”

He took the vibrator and turned it on. He moved Charlotte’s legs apart and slid it slowly into her. She inhaled as it went deep inside her. Her body slowly stretched to take it all in.

“This is merciful?” she asked.

“It’s not as big as I am.”

He moved it in and out of her slowly as his fingers found her clitoris and teased it. The vibrator did its work quickly. She cried out as her body spasmed around it and against Kingsley’s hand. He pulled it out of her and laid it on the bed again.

“I’ll give you another one in eight minutes,” he whispered into her ear. Again he set the alarm on the stopwatch. Her body was still twitching with pleasure when the flogger struck her sore back. She concentrated on her waning pleasure and tried to ignore the growing pain.

She found that if she opened her back instead of clenching her muscles, the agony was flatter, less acute. Her head fell back. She stared up at the ceiling. After a few minutes she barely felt anything at all.

A chiming sound jarred her from her trance.

Kingsley picked up the vibrator again and pressed the tip against her clitoris. She gasped from the shock of pleasure. She’d never been with a man who understood how to manipulate a woman’s body so well. The pressure on her clitoris was perfect. His fingers inside her found all her sensitive spots. He seemed far more concerned with her orgasms than his. She couldn’t believe what she was thinking. She was tied to a bedpost for a flogging and all she could think about was how good he made her feel.

Charlotte’s orgasm spiked into her stomach and she almost wrenched her shoulder from how hard she flinched.

“If you can take eleven minutes of beating, then I’ll fuck you again,” Kingsley whispered into her ear. “How does that sound?”

“Very good.”

Kingsley slapped her hard on her right thigh.

“I mean, very good, sir.”

By now Charlotte knew how to handle this. She closed her eyes and let the pain roll over her and on her. In her mind she was somewhere else. In her mind she was untied and on her back with Kingsley on top of her and deep inside her and before she knew it, she heard the beeping of the stopwatch alarm again.

“Thank God,” she said. Another minute and she would have given in.

“You’re welcome.”

Kingsley threw the flogger on the bed. Standing behind her he ran his hands up and down the front of her body. He stopped at her breasts. He teased her nipples until they were hard and sore. He kissed her neck and shoulder.

“Tell me the truth, Charlie. Have you ever been taken here?” He ran his hand over her bottom.

“You mean anal?” she asked. “Once.”

“Did you like it?”

“Undecided.”

“That’s because you’ve never had it with me. Let’s rectify that, shall we?”

She wasn’t sure she wanted this, but she knew she didn’t want to stop him, either. Her head fluttered in fear. But she remembered Kingsley’s admonitions and didn’t let the fear stop her.

He took the lubricant again and applied it to her. She sighed at how good the cold wet liquid felt going into her. Kingsley took his time preparing her body. She tried to relax. As big as he was she would have to be very relaxed to take him inside her.

King pressed close to her. She closed her eyes when she felt him start to push into her. He grabbed her thigh and lifted it. She rested her knee on top of the bed. Slowly he entered her inch by inch. Last night he’d been shockingly brutal with her. Now he was nothing but careful. She shivered at how strangely good it felt to have him inside her this way. Kingsley moved in and out of her with gentle, careful thrusts.

With her eyes still closed she didn’t notice that Kingsley had picked up the vibrator again. But when he started to push it inside her she opened her eyes in shock.

“Breathe, Charlie. You can take both.”

He pushed the vibrator all the way into her as he continued his slow thrusts from behind.

“You’ve never been penetrated anally and vaginally at the same time before?” Kingsley asked.

“No...never.”

“My poor girl. You were practically a virgin.” She heard his smug laugh at her ear.

He continued to thrust into her. Charlotte moved her hips in rhythm with Kingsley’s. She climaxed quickly around the vibrator. The sensations were so intense they were almost painful. After her second orgasm he finally pulled the vibrator out.

Kingsley gripped her by the hips and thrust faster. She was nearly insensate from the two intense orgasms he’d given her. She simply hung from her bonds as he fucked her.

She winced as his fingers tightened their hold. He pushed hard into her and came with a ragged breath.

He pulled out slowly. A minute later he came back to the bed. Charlie saw him reach for the flogger.

“Dragon,” she said and he dropped it again.

He reached up and untied her and she collapsed back into his arms. He picked her up and laid her down. Kneeling on the floor next to the bed, he ran a hand through her still wet hair.

“Too much pain, *ma chérie*?” He didn’t seem the least upset with her that she’d stopped him.

“No.” She shook her head and smiled tiredly at him. The muscles inside her still fluttered. “Too much pleasure.”

* * *

The next few weeks at Chez Kingsley, as he called his home, passed in a haze of sex and pain and more sex. Kingsley was a near limitless font of alternative sexual knowledge and experience. He introduced her to something new every day. One day it was nipple clamps. The next day spanking. He taught her to beg for his cock. Taught her to crawl for him. One day he dressed in leather pants and

whipped her. The next day he put her in lingerie, tied her to his bed with silk scarves and violated her every orifice. Last weekend he'd even videotaped them having sex and made her watch it. Then he given her the only copy of the tape and let her decide what to do with it. Her first instinct was to destroy it.

She hadn't.

And every few days when she least suspected it, when she was certain he was out of the house or at a meeting, he would sneak up on her, grab her, throw her against the wall or push her onto the floor or the bed and ravish her brutally. No matter how many times he did it, it always terrified her. No matter how many times he did, she always loved it.

Charlotte wasn't sure what he was doing to her tonight. He'd ordered her to wait naked in his bedroom in his huge chaise longue armchair. She leaned back into the plush fabric and closed her eyes. The chair was nearly the size of a love seat. He'd taken her a few times on it already. The chair's arms were the perfect place for her legs to drape over as he thrust into her. She only had one month here with Kingsley before she met the client he'd been training her for. She didn't think she'd be able to run off with this guy no matter how rich and "not unattractive" he was. Still...she also couldn't imagine leaving this place and returning entirely to her old life. Kingsley had marked her and not just with the bruises on her body.

She did miss work, however, and would be glad to go back to it. She'd cut everyone's hair in Kingsley's household except for Kingsley himself. He told her no one but his barber in France was allowed near his hair. She called him a coward and he'd punished her in wicked ways for the insult.

"You've got a lovely smile on your lips, Charlie. I'd love to know if I put it there."

Opening her eyes, she found Kingsley standing above her.

"I was thinking about what I'd do to your hair if you let me cut it. Your hot mess is very dashing, but I could make it even better."

"You come near me with your scissors, and I'll make sure you wake up with significantly less hair in the morning."

Charlotte laughed. He'd shaved her in the bath last night. If he had no compunction about removing her most private hair, she knew he wouldn't hesitate to cut any other hair off.

"Fine. I'll leave your hair alone. But you keep telling me I have to trust you. When are you going to start trusting me a little?"

"I trust you quite a bit. Just not with my hair. But I'm glad you mention trust."

He held up a black scarf.

"Blindfold?" she guessed.

"*Très bien, ma chérie.*"

Everything Kingsley had done to her, he'd done with her eyes open. The blindfold made her nervous; she could tell from the smile on his face that he was enjoying that fact.

He tied it around her eyes and the room went completely dark.

She started when Kingsley took her ankles and pushed her legs wide open and draped them over the arms of the chair. She heard him pull the ottoman close. She knew he was sitting on it in front of her exposed body. A month ago she would have been terrified and mortified. She was still a little terrified, but Kingsley had taught her to be shameless. She was enjoying shameless. She hadn't even gone out drinking or clubbing since she met Kingsley. He was all the decadence she needed.

"Let's play a guessing game, Charlie. You guess all five right and you can do anything you want to me when the game is over."

"Anything?"

"Anything that isn't illegal. Or at least anything we won't get caught doing."

"What am I guessing?"

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