

PROLOGUE



*P*erched on her Dom's lap, Kelly Franklin grinned as he patiently tried once again to show her the best way to use chopsticks.

"No, darlin'. Hold the top stick as you would a pencil, but don't grip it. Just rest it on your middle finger. That's right. Now, place the lower one against your ring finger, like so," James Evans repeated, repositioning her grasp. "Let it lie in the dip between your thumb and index finger, but a little closer to your thumb."

"How do you know so much about using chopsticks when you come from Texas?" she asked, her mind more on the strong curve of his jaw than his instructions.

"You ain't payin' proper heed to what I'm tellin' you, Kellian Franklin. And that's gonna earn you a plug of fresh ginger up your butt in a few minutes, if you don't watch out."

Kelly's wide smile faltered for a second. That was a new threat. "Why? What does that do?"

Releasing her fingers, Jim gazed up at her with a look of amazement. "Don't tell me in all the eight years you've been in the lifestyle, no one stuck a ginger plug up that pert little back hole of yours."

"No. Why would they? I mean I've had plenty of plugs and other, less pleasant things shoved back there, but no one thought to push in groceries."

Jim chuckled and shook his head. "Well, that'll be another first for us, then, darlin'."

"Why? What'll it do?"

He chuckled her chin. "I'm not gonna say. You'll have to find out when it happens."

Drawing back a bit, she scowled at him. "I'm not going to like it, am I? Will it hurt?"

With a quick shake of his head, he gripped her waist and moved her to the couch beside him. "That'd be tellin'. Besides, every sub reacts differently."

"But you intend it as a punishment, don't you?"

He shifted his position to stare down at her. "I'm considering using it as a way to gain your attention. Since you clearly aren't interested in learning how to use chopsticks, go ahead and pick up your fork. I'd rather you ate Western style than starved."

Kelly dipped her utensil into the moo goo gai pan he'd ordered for her along with a side of chicken fried rice and held it there. Less than an hour ago, she'd feared being knifed to death by her former psycho boyfriend and Dom, and, less than thirty minutes ago, she'd been stretched across her police detective Dom's knees while he gave her a spanking for attempting to run away. Then he'd stolen her breath by proposing. It had been a crazy up-and-down night, and though she'd agreed to eat, Kelly's stomach wasn't in concert with her words. She stared at the cooling food.

"Somethin' wrong, Kelly girl?"

She quickly smiled to reassure him. "No. I mean, I'm fine."

"Uh huh. Wanna try that again?"

Grimacing at how easily he read her, she murmured, "I guess my insides still aren't settled after Mike's attack."

"Understandable. I can put our dinner in the fridge and heat it up again later, if you'd like to lie down for a bit."

"I'm not sure I could sleep. I feel tense and uneasy, not sleepy."

He took her plate and set it on the low coffee table in front of them. "Well, I might have a cure for that."

Certain he did, she gave him an impish grin. "And what might you have in mind, Sir?"

Rising, he grasped her hand and led her into her bedroom. "Why don't you fetch us some towels, sugar, while I see to the rest?"

Always eager to play, Kelly scurried to the bathroom, gathered the towels he'd requested, and scampered back with her arms outstretched.

"Good girl," he praised. Removing the fluffy terry cloth from her grasp, he placed the items on the edge of her bed and turned back to slip his fingers beneath her shorts and panties. "Now, let's dispense with these, shall we?"

Once her lower garments were on the floor, she raised her arms so he could remove her top. He liked to undress her, and she enjoyed the attention. It brought back happy memories.

"Okay, up on the bed. I want you on your knees and elbows, with your head restin' on your hands and your butt high in the air."

Though Kelly's stomach dropped to her feet, she hesitated only a second before she obeyed. However, once she got into position, her legs and arms began to tremble.

"What is it, doll?" he asked, while strong fingers gently stroked her back and bottom. "You do realize I'm not gonna hurt you the way that perv did, right?"

"Yes, Sir," she answered as her trembling increased despite knowing Jim would never purposefully cause her any injury or harm.

His hand caressed her hindquarters a little more firmly. "You even came for me when I played with you back here last night."

"I know."

"So, what's got you shiverin' like a newborn colt, now?"

"Nothing. I'm just being stupid." The smack Jim delivered had Kelly snapping her head up and giving an undignified squawk as

she turned to scowl at him. "What was that for?" she demanded in a very unsubmissive tone.

"For not bein' truthful with me. This position clearly bothers you for some reason, and I want to understand why. I expect you to answer honestly, when I ask you a question, and not give me prattle like I don't have eyes or a brain in my head." The sharper his voice grew, the more miserable Kelly felt, until her eyes burned with unshed tears.

Jim gave her bottom a couple of reassuring pats. "Sorry. Didn't mean to snap, but sometimes you frustrate me."

"I don't intend to," she answered softly.

"Yeah. I get that. But I still need you to be honest with me. So, what else did that asshole do that makes you so nervous about this pose?"

"He made me assume it when he gave me the enema. Then he plugged and restrained me so I couldn't move, keeping me vulnerable and exposed to anyone who came by."

"You have a thing about bein' put on display like that, don't you?"
Kelly nodded miserably. "Yes, Sir."

"Did he know that?"

"He knew it was a hard limit for me, but he did it anyway to punish me, probably because I hated it so much. He didn't believe subs should be allowed limits."

"Both subs and Doms have the right to set boundaries, Kelly. Doms might try to stretch their sub's threshold a bit, since it's in their job description to do so, but that doesn't mean hard limits shouldn't be respected. The more I learn about that prick, the more I wish I'd shot him where it would have done some real damage."

Though Kelly's eyes still burned, a giggle emerged at the thought of Jim shooting Mike in his privates, which made him smile back at her. "I really do like that sound, sugar. And I want you to make it often. Despite your unease, would you be willin' to try this for me?"

She nodded. She did trust Jim with all her heart. He might never

be able to wipe her memory of all the terrible things Mike had done to her, but he could replace the scarier moments with much more pleasant adventures.

"That's my girl," he praised. "Head down and raise that pert and perky bottom up high for me."

She did as he asked with only a soft groan of protest. As he always did, Jim gave her the time she needed to gather her courage by reassuring her with calming strokes and caresses. "Do you know how much I enjoy touchin' you?" he asked, his voice low and soothing.

"No."

"Well, maybe I should tell you, then. Here," he said, running his hand along the curve of her backside, "your skin is petal soft and smooth and, when freshly pink from a light spanking, it blooms like a rose." He kissed the small of her back in a way that had Kelly tingling with pleasure as she gasped in a breath. She loved his petting, and her body responded with tiny shivers of ecstasy.

"Here," he said slowly sliding his fingers down the crease in her buttocks until he reached the warm, wet center of her. "This is one of my favorite play areas where I find the slight scent of honey and jasmine mixed with a salty, earthy aroma that is all you. When I put my lips here, I feel like I've entered the Garden of Eden." The moment his actions followed his words, Kelly tensed and moaned from the exquisite sensation.

"Still," he commanded. "I want you to remain quiet and motionless while I continue my explorations. This is my pleasure journey, not yours, so you must stay open, yet silent, for me. And you do not have permission to come."

Kelly groaned deeply at that, so Jim rewarded her with a light spank. "What did I just say?" he demanded, his tone firm and Dom-like.

"Sorry, Sir," she mumbled. He gave her a harder smack, and she cried out.

Worried, she lifted her head and gazed back at him. "What did I do wrong, now?"

"I asked you a question, and, rather than answer, you apologized. An apology, though appreciated, is not what I sought. You know better."

Uncertain, Kelly drew her lower lip between her teeth then asked, "Are you angry with me?"

His expression immediately softened. "No, sugar. I'm not angry at all. I am only trying to teach you what I want and expect when I'm directing you as your Dom, but I think it may be too soon after everything that's happened. You feelin' a little rocky?"

She nodded as tears filled her eyes again. He arched an eyebrow at her.

"Yes, Sir," she replied dutifully.

"All right. Here's what we'll do. I'm gonna take the taste I want so badly, and you're gonna come for me when you're ready. No teasin', no torture. Just give in to whatever you're feelin'. Agreeable?"

She nodded again then, recalling herself, added, "Yes, Sir."

"All righty then. Back in position." The moment she obeyed, he lowered his lips and gently sucked and nibbled until she was rocking her hips back to press them more firmly against him. He took her right to the edge and gave her clit a gentle nip, which sent Kelly soaring with a cry as she came in his mouth. With Jim playing her like a finely tuned instrument, Kelly ejaculated almost as copiously as a man. Tiny pleasure-filled spasms flowed through her body while he continued coaxing orgasms out of her until her knees could no longer hold their position and she crumpled forward.

Within seconds, he had her stretched out on the sheets. After placing a few light kisses on her hair, he made sure she was warmly covered as her trembling body came down from the erotic high he'd given her.

He slipped in beside her and pulled her against his warmth until

her body and spirit calmed. "I am very pleased with you right now, darlin', so I want you to rest for a bit, hear? I need to call the station, so I'll just be in the next room. All right?"

"Hmm."

Snuggling deep under the covers, Kelly sighed with contentment as she slowly drifted off to sleep.



AWAKENED BY A LOUD BANG, little Kelly tossed back her blanket and ran barefoot into her parents' room, but her father wasn't there.

"Where's, Daddy?" she demanded, fists on her hips. Daddy always eased her nightmares and checked to be sure all the monsters were exorcised from under her bed and inside her closet before she lay down. Daddy took care of all the scary things, so Daddy was the person she sought when she'd had a bad dream, which Kelly, with the impeccable logic of a six-year-old, determined must have been what awakened her.

"Shh," her mother hissed, finger to her lips. Kelly could tell Mommy had been crying, and that bothered her, but not as much as the absence of Daddy did.

"I need you to stay in here for a while, Kelly," her mother insisted as she pushed Kelly toward their walk-in closet. "Be a quiet little mouse, and keep hidden until Mommy says it's okay to come out. It won't be long. I promise."

Kelly started to protest, but her mother was closing the door when two men dressed in black, holding what looked like toy guns in their hands, burst into the room. Able to see through the tiny crack left when the door didn't close all the way, Kelly tried to make herself small as she watched and waited for her mother's return.

"Do as we say, lady, and no one needs to get hurt. Go over there," one of the men ordered as he waved the gun from Kelly's mother to her parents' big bed. When her mother stood at the bed's side, Kelly could

see the top of her lacy nightgown and the wooden footboard, but not much else since she was crouched on the floor. She didn't recognize the man's voice, and both men wore something sheer over their heads that squished their faces into funny expressions, so she hunkered down on the carpet and clapped a hand over her mouth. She'd originally assumed her mother had wanted Kelly to play a game of hide and seek with Daddy, but, now, she thought something might be wrong. These men were strangers. And they weren't being very nice.

"Lie down, lady, and stay real quiet," the first man said before turning to his partner. "Check for the expensive stuff, while I keep our hostess entertained. This family ain't poor, so they should have something worth our trouble."

"Okay, but I get a turn, too," the other man insisted as Kelly heard him trod over to the dresser beyond her line of vision to rifle through her mother's clothes and jewelry box.

A turn at what? Kelly wondered as the first man pressed a hand over her whimpering mother's mouth then pushed her down on the bed out of Kelly's sight.

"Shh," the man crooned.

"Please—"

"I said quiet, bitch, and I meant it," he growled. "Make one more sound and I'll shoot a bullet through your lovely brain. Would hate to do that, but I will."

Though Kelly couldn't see what the man was doing, she heard her mother give a muffled grunt. Unsure what to do, Kelly curled into a smaller ball and remained as still as the mouse her Mommy told her she needed to be.



KELLY BLINKED at the strange woman in blue who extended a hand to her, but didn't move. Mommy said she had to stay where she was.

"It's all right, sweetie. You're safe. Just come with me."

"Mommy?" she asked in a tiny voice she didn't recognize as her own.

"Your mommy has been taken to the hospital." The woman crouched down so she was eye-level with Kelly. "What's your name, sweetie?"

"Kelly. Where's Daddy?"

"He's with your mommy, Kelly. You're safe with us, now, and Mrs. Simpson will be here shortly to take you to a nice place where you'll be more comfortable. In the meantime, why don't you come out of that closet and walk downstairs with me?"

"Why?"

"Well, you certainly can't be all that comfy in there, can you?"

"I'm okay. Are the men gone?"

"Did you see them?"

Kelly nodded and shut her eyes. "I think one of them hurt Mommy."

"Your mommy isn't hurting anymore, Kelly. She's with people who will take good care of her."

"Isn't she coming home?"

The woman swallowed then slowly shook her head. "No, sweetie. She won't be coming home."

Kelly felt a rising panic inside her. Something was very wrong. "What about Daddy? Is he coming home?"

The woman closed her eyes and looked away for a moment before she turned back. "No. He's going to remain with your mommy, but you don't need to worry about either one of them." The policewoman extended her hand again. "Come with me, Kelly, and we'll fix you something to eat. All right?"

Kelly shook her head. "I'm not hungry." Her eyes burned, and she rubbed at them. "I want my daddy." The woman moved closer to wrap her arms around Kelly, but she resisted. Not wanting to leave her safe haven, Kelly screamed and kicked to get loose. She

had to wait where Mommy told her to stay put. If she left, her parents wouldn't be able to find her.

The policewoman pressed Kelly's face to her shoulder as she lifted her out of the closet, but Kelly still saw how red her parent's bed was. Dark red. She hated red. It was an ugly color, and it always smelled wrong. Five or six men stood in the room, but they didn't say anything as Kelly was carried out and down the stairs. She fought to return upstairs. She'd been safe there. But the woman kept tight hold of her and took her into their dining room. She spoke to other people gathered in there, but didn't put Kelly down.

"This is Kelly Franklin. She's our only witness to what happened here yesterday, but I'm not sure how much she'll remember."