

Unsub

By

Kendra Greenwood

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Chapter One

Friday

“The dead women found on Gull road out in Hampton Shores weren’t prostitutes. They were women involved in the BDSM scene.”

The big boss had spoken. And the words coming out of his mouth proved both shocking and somewhat expected. Special Agent Alyx Cameron sighed—part disgust, part lament. Working for the FBI in New York City certainly had its sick twists.

Summoned to a 9:00 a.m. meeting, the eight female agents sat in rigid silence around the conference table. Alyx spoke up, “So, what are we talking, pervs? Bondage? That sadomasochistic shit?”

“Not exactly how I’d put it, but yes,” Division Chief Robert Scarborough said. As a supervisor, he rated right up there. Yet he could be intimidating. Tall and strapping, fiery red hair; he reminded her of a Scottish warlord. “We must act quickly, or more women—innocent women—may die.”

“So, we’re going under in sex clubs?” Marta said, the stocky brunette sitting across from Alyx.

Sipping at her coffee, Alyx contemplated posing covertly as a hooker. She’d done it before and didn’t find it particularly difficult. The worst aspect? Dressing the part and then the interminable boredom while she’d waited to lure in a john, and ultimately a pimp. She thought the whole thing a waste of time, actually. If consenting adults wanted to pay for sex, let them. As long as some pimp wasn’t holding women against their will, then who cared?

“That’s the plan,” Agent Scarborough said. “Seven clubs in the metro area have been identified, as well as the one on the east end of Long Island, and we believe a group called the 6X Enterprise—advertised as three X’s above a triple X rating, kidnapped these women. The underground population calls it “SEX” for short, you know, six... ex... sex? Myself, I’d call it sick-sex.” Rob paused, wondering whether his audience understood his word play. When nobody said anything, he went on, “They sell women as sex slaves. Not your garden variety slave either.” He ran his hand over his face, stress lines creasing his brow. “Sorry, I didn’t mean that the way it sounded. What I mean is the victims are sold to seriously demented sadists. Men who don’t only get off on the sex, they get their jollies beating and mutilating these women, slaughtering them like animals.”

“Evil fucks,” Alyx murmured, glancing around the table at her fellow agents as a wave of revulsion passed among them, too. She already wanted in.

“So,” her boss continued, “we want to place decoys in all the clubs. The local authorities haven’t had any luck tracking the perps and asked for our expertise. They’ve tried to infiltrate with decoy buyers but haven’t been successful because buyers need a referral to get invited. And even if they got a referral, they’re transported in vans with anti-tracking gear and they constantly move the auction locations.

“I’m not going to blow smoke up your ass, this assignment is a bit unorthodox and purely voluntary. To be convincing, you may have to cross uncomfortable lines. We’ve fast-tracked

some training before you enter the club, which will theoretically make you an attractive target for the slavers. Our most recent intel indicates they're seeking brunettes. There's an auction in two weeks and it's being billed as 'Bitchy Brunettes'."

The glaring fluorescents overhead underscored the foul mood pervading the room. Alyx grabbed her long ponytail of chestnut-colored hair and twirled it around her finger before releasing it. Like her, every woman here was a brunette, except Jenny, who'd probably be heading to the drugstore immediately after the meeting, if she signed on.

"All right," Agent Scarborough said, "we're on a time crunch here. I'll give you until the end of the day to decide, unless anyone is already on board."

Alyx threw her hand in the air. "I'm definitely in." Geez, she looked like a first-grader volunteering to erase the blackboards for her teacher. And seriously, she'd no idea what really went on in a BDSM establishment. Would she actually be required to have intercourse with men she didn't know? It certainly wasn't uncommon, or prohibited, for undercover male agents to become intimately familiar with suspects to crack a case—even though such specifics were kept off-book. Plus, she wasn't hung up on the notion that sex must necessarily be linked with love. It could be for pleasure or playtime. Adult play-dates, possibly.

Agent Scarborough's eyebrows shot up. "I applaud your enthusiasm, Agent Cameron."

"Honestly, Sir, I cannot wait to bring down this perverse organization," it was the reason Alyx had joined the FBI Division of Covert Operations in the first place.

Then came various responses from her colleagues, "Count me in. Me too. Let's get these bastards."

"I'm pleased to see everyone's a team player." Agent Scarborough distributed a folder to each agent. "Inside, you'll find the name of your assigned club and the agent who will act as your liaison with the club owner. The members of the BDSM community are as anxious to catch these guys as we are and more than willing to help.

"There's also background info on the club and the BDSM lifestyle. We've included online references where you can learn more about protocols for submissives, which will be your role. Do your homework. Each owner has arranged for a trainer in their club to assist."

A roomful of eyes—some wide with astonishment, others unemotional, a few squinting and skeptical—perused the folders' contents.

"On the file tab, you'll find the name of your task force's lead agent. Meet with them immediately. You're expected in your assigned club sometime today. Since the auction is only two weeks from Saturday there isn't much time to get up to speed." He turned toward Alyx, "Agent Cameron, you're working with me."

Minutes later, Alyx settled in at her desk, nursing a fresh cup of coffee with her favorite hazelnut creamer. She studied the folder's sordid contents, then hit the Internet for further research. Her partner, Matt, suddenly appeared at his desk across from her. His blond hair glistened, still wet from a shower. He and his wife had just welcomed a new baby and he'd been late every day this week. His usually bright green eyes were bloodshot and he sank heavily into his chair, landing his elbows on the desk and his head in his hands. He blew out a long breath.

"Goddamn, that kid has no concept of sleep. He's killing me, Alyx. And Jillian is a friggin' crank-pot. I'm not sure I'll survive this."

She loved Matt like a brother and couldn't help but smile while he whined. This had become his new morning greeting. "Poor baby. And I mean you, not the one in the crib."

Matt looked up wearily. "I'm glad somebody has compassion for the father. Everyone is sympathetic to the mother and us dads get ignored."

Alyx smiled compassionately. “Most parents live through this. I’m sure you will too.”

“So, I strolled in past roll call. Did I miss anything important?”

“We had a meeting with Rob and actually you weren’t included. It was about those murders out in Hampton Shores.”

“Same ol’, same ol’. Some pimp knocking off ladies-of-the-night?”

“Let’s just say you can’t make this shit up.” Alyx detailed her new assignment, explaining how the girls weren’t streetwalkers. And, she thought, what if they had been? Every life had value.

Matt frowned. “I don’t like it. The Bureau is full of it, actually asking you to undertake something like this.”

“I’m not naïve. I’ll probably have to get a little dirt on me, but somebody has to help these women. You know that I find sex-trafficking to be about the most heinous crime on the planet, the vics can be as young as fourteen and fifteen. In this case, they’re over eighteen but it still makes my blood boil.”

“I get it. Just not sure you do. What if the fact you’ve been sex-starved most of the year is clouding your judgment?”

“Excuse you? It hasn’t been a year and this is *not* a joking matter.” Yet perhaps Matt had a point. Last night she’d slept in Jason’s tee shirt again, which made absolutely no sense. It’d been six months since she kicked Jason-the-Philanderer to the curb and she hadn’t missed him for a single minute. This morning, she’d spent nearly five minutes sitting on the side of the tub deciding if she should start another month of birth control. Why bother? Well, her periods were much better on the pill, a check in the plus column. Maybe this would be the month she’d meet somebody new. On the other hand, it might not be a bad idea to give her ovaries a break from hormonal assault.

In the end, she’d swallowed the little yellow pill and chased it with a swig of tepid tap water.

Matt said, “You can’t stop me from worrying about you.”

She stared at him. “Let’s just tie up the loose ends on the MacAvoy case before I have to leave.”

They worked right through lunch, the day going by in a hectic flash. When Rob appeared at her desk, Alyx checked her phone: 4:00 p.m.

“Time to go,” Rob said. “I hear traffic’s already hell.”

She bid a quick farewell to her unhappy partner, gathered her purse and followed her boss out of the building.

Climbing into Rob Scarborough’s black Escalade, she put on her aviator sunglasses and stared out the open side window. They exited the parking garage and the New York City sun hit her face. The crisp autumn air filled her head with thoughts of pumpkins and apple picking. Fall had always been her favorite season. Maybe she should bake a pie. However, she’d wind up eating the whole goddamn thing herself. Not gonna happen. When you enjoyed cooking, but lived alone, you ate everything you made for an entire month. The last time she’d made a pot of soup she’d had it every day for a week and then finally threw the rest out. She’d tried freezing stuff, but that caused another problem. The contents of her freezer could feed a high school football team for an entire week.

She inhaled deeply and let it out slowly, chewing on a fingernail. Her plans for visiting some friends in her hometown tomorrow had gotten derailed. The promise of unseasonably warm weather for the weekend had teased her with images of walking along the beach and

breathing the salty air while the ocean tickled her toes. She'd even hoped to catch a few waves. Life was good in Westhampton Beach and she missed those simple days as a teenager where her biggest worry was whether the surf was up or not. Having inherited her dad's house, she used it as a getaway whenever she could grab some time off. Sadness dampened her sublime mood. Her crazy-ass father, she still missed him.

Sweat clung to her neck, her face suddenly flushed and she leaned closer to the open window. What had she agreed to? Was she out of her ever-loving mind? She twisted her long dark hair into a tight knot and secured it with a tortoise shell clip from her purse. Sometimes the hair falling against the back of her neck gave her a serious case of claustrophobia, especially in the summer. Maybe she should cut it short, it would definitely be easier to maintain.

* * *

Daniel parked his black Mercedes in the lot next to the St. Andrew's club. He rubbed his temples and sighed. He really didn't want to be here. The strain of the last few days had taken its toll and he wanted to go home and catch up on some sleep. It'd been a year since he'd played here. Bored with the constant flux of women, he'd abandoned *the lifestyle* and figured he'd try dating the *normal* way for a change. That hadn't gone so well. He couldn't seem to drop the bossy attitude in the bedroom and most women resented his need to maintain control. Then he'd met Lacey and well, the fucking wasn't great but he considered it a tradeoff for her other qualities.

Jack, the club owner and one of his former compadres, had lured him here with the pretense of needing some big favor. He and Jack had kind of lost touch, but he remembered Jack's compulsion to play matchmaker and hoped this wasn't another lame attempt to hook him up with some woman.

Zach, the overly muscled security guard at the front door, gave him a huge man-hug as he entered. "Hey, bro, where you been hiding out?"

Nobody in Daniel's circle called him 'bro' and he balked at the unfamiliar greeting. "Zach, good to see you. How's it hanging?" *What was wrong with him? He never talked like that.*

"Good, I'm good. Jack's upstairs in his private quarters. He said to go right up."

"Thanks." Daniel resisted tacking on "buddy" at the end there.

Zach buzzed the door open and the familiar smell of leather, sweat, and sex smacked him in the face. The lingering scent of amyl nitrate perfumed the air as the use of *poppers* frequently compensated for the limited use of alcohol. Jack imposed a strict two-drink limit at the club, and that included staff. Poppers produce an instant rush with few after effects, while at the same time decreasing anxiety and easing pain. Daniel remembered them being particularly popular with the gay community.

Adjusting his eyes to the dark, chaotic atmosphere of the club, he glanced at the bar on the far wall where he knew some of his old partners-in-crime would be slugging down a drink. Although it might still be a little too early for that.

He hoped to sneak by them and, if he'd thought about it, probably should have gone around back to Jack's private entrance. No chance now.

"Holy shit. Daniel? Long time no see." Steve's booming voice penetrated the overly loud music emanating from the dance floor and there was no way Daniel could pretend he hadn't heard him. He weaved his way through the maze of leather clad Doms/Dommes and naked subs

engaged in a variety of carnal activities. Moans and screams, mingled with the sounds of slapping flesh, brought him back to a time when he thought this fun. He'd never participated in anything particularly brutal. As a healer, there were certain lines he'd never cross.

Steve leaned on the glass bar spanning the entire length of the room. Daniel reached across, shook the bartender's beefy hand and said, "Steve, good to see you. How've you been?"

"Great, great. How 'bout you? What've you been up to? Too busy saving lives to whip a few asses?"

"It's a long and boring story. But you're right, I've been busy. Too many people abusing their bodies, and I don't mean that in the way you're probably thinking." He gave Steve a wink. *Really, Daniel, a wink?* Who had possessed his body? He regrouped. "Poor diet and no exercise makes for lots of broken hearts to mend." Jesus, that didn't come out right either. He sounded pathetic.

Steve arched an eyebrow. "You sound like Mr. Only-Lonely all of a sudden. Maybe you're in need of some serious playtime."

Daniel had been desperate to make an escape when the onslaught occurred. First, Sam, then Jerry and Colin, followed by Mark and Donna, all established and well-respected Doms/Dommes, and his closest friends at the club, all wanting to visit. He refused the offer of a drink, cutting the reunion short, using the excuse that Jack expected him pronto.

Jack's submissive met him at the door to the upstairs apartment. Her sultry voice and voluptuous body welcomed him. "Hello, Sir, good to see you again."

"Lisa. How've you been? Jack taking good care of you?"

She smiled seductively. "Of course. I wouldn't still be hanging around the old coot if he wasn't."

"Good girl." She offered him a drink, but he refused, saying he had someplace else to be later. These days, he usually only drank at home and when he wasn't on-call. It wouldn't serve a cardiologist to be issued a DUI summons.

Lisa didn't follow him into the stylish living room, not to be seen or heard, like a good little submissive. Jack rose to greet him, pumping Daniel's hand in a generous handshake. A burly, redheaded man occupied half the couch across from Jack and beside him sat a petite young woman. Her inexpensive black suit appeared a bit wrinkled, but her starched, white, button-down blouse was impeccable. They both stood to make his acquaintance.

"Daniel," Jack said, "this is Special Agent Robert Scarborough. We served together in the Marines."

Agent Scarborough held out his hand to make his greeting and introduced his companion as Special Agent Alyx Cameron. Daniel took her hand in his, startled by her firm grip, and immediately pictured her holding a sleek black handgun. She seemed too delicate for an FBI agent. Although he didn't really know any FBI agents personally and his only concept of one came from the movies or TV, total Hollywood hype.

Everyone returned to his or her seat. Daniel slumped into the red wingback chair at the end of the coffee table wondering what the hell he was doing here.

"Daniel, Rob asked me for a rather unusual favor and you immediately came to mind." Daniel shifted uncomfortably in his seat trying to imagine how he could possibly be of service to the FBI. Before his mind got very far down that road, Jack continued.

"As you're an expert trainer in the lifestyle and you already have a playroom in your home, I thought you might be the perfect consultant to help him out."

Daniel bristled, sitting up straight in his seat and leaning forward, his forearms resting on

his thighs. “Jack, I’m not really comfortable discussing my involvement in the lifestyle with outsiders. You know that, and especially not in front of this young woman. Besides, you know I’ve left that life behind.”

“I know, but this is important and it concerns Agent Cameron.”

Agent Cameron’s gunmetal blue eyes locked onto his. He couldn’t read her, which annoyed him. He usually had no trouble assessing a woman’s mood and considered himself sort of a female mind reader.

“I’ll let Rob explain,” Jack said.

Agent Scarborough cleared his throat and began, “We have a line on a human-trafficking ring and we plan to put decoys in all the clubs in the area in hopes of attracting the spotter who will lead us to the base of operations. I’m not sure if you’re aware, but several bodies have been discovered in a shallow graveyard at the end of Gull Road. At first, we classified them as prostitutes but recently we discovered they were women who frequent BDSM clubs. We’re fairly certain each was kidnapped by this group and then sold at the auctions they hold every few months. Usually they target women with few personal ties. No family in the area, no boyfriend or Dom to watch over them; and in a job where it might be a few days before someone noted an extended absence.”

Daniel had read about the recent findings in his neighborhood. He still fancied himself a newspaper junkie, his favorite way of relaxing between surgeries. Embarrassed, he had to admit to himself that the fact they were reported to be prostitutes might have caused him to dismiss the crimes a little too cavalierly.

“This group of slavers,” Agent Scarborough continued, “sells women to men who are serious sadists. The women are used so brutally they often wind up dead, then they’re simply replaced with new merchandise. We believe we’ve stumbled on the graveyard they’ve been using for disposing the bodies.”

Daniel cringed inwardly at the thought of such incredible horrors. However, he still had no idea what any of this had to do with him.

“Agent Cameron has volunteered to act as a decoy here at the club,” Agent Scarborough said, “but she has no experience in the lifestyle and will need some training in order to be believable and attractive to the organization. An auction’s coming up and we’re hoping she might be able to lead us to the site if she gets picked up.”

Little Miss Special Agent? I don’t think so, thought Daniel. However, he decided to play along for the moment. “When is this auction?” he inquired.

“Two weeks from Saturday,” Agent Scarborough said with a straight face. “But, we need to get her into the club as soon as possible so there’s enough time for her to be noticed.”

Daniel bellowed a laugh. “Right. And you think your innocent little agent here will get her PhD in bondage that fast? I don’t think so. And I’m not interested.”

Agent Cameron spoke, her voice angry, “Dr. Taylor, my stature may be somewhat diminutive but I assure you I’m no lightweight in anything I do. I’m committed to saving these women from both torture, and eventual murder, at the hands of these bastards.”

Agent Scarborough said, “Dr. Taylor, I understand how you might...”

Agent Cameron poked the air with her finger. “Aren’t you in the business of saving lives, Doctor Taylor? I’m willing to do whatever it takes here and nothing you say will dissuade me. Furthermore, if you won’t help me and more women end up dead, well, that’s on you.”

He hadn’t anticipated Little Miss Special Agent getting her nose out of joint. And she certainly had spunk. He’d give her that much. Honestly, she had no clue what would be required.

Perhaps a little shock therapy was in order. “Unfortunately, Agent Cameron, I fear you have absolutely no idea what you’re asking.”

She cut him off, “I’ve done my homework, Dr. Taylor. I know what’s involved and I’m ready to jump right in.”

Yeah, I don’t think so, missy. Time for a reality check. “You do, do you? You realize I’ll have to fuck you, and not only the vanilla stuff, but all sorts of ways. How about restraints and floggings, how about hot wax and nipple clamps? I could go on and on, but what’s the point? You’re jumping into the deep end of the ocean without a life jacket.”

She stood up, her face flushed. “Continuing with your metaphor, I’m a fully certified ocean lifeguard, Dr. Taylor, and instead of jumping to trite conclusions, perhaps you should give me a try and then decide. If I don’t live up to your high standards, or should I say low, then you can criticize me to your heart’s content.” Her fists landed on her trim hips.

Annoyance fueled him and he walked over to face her. “All right, little Miss Smart Ass, let’s see you put your money where your mouth is.” He grabbed her by the arm and tugged her toward him. They faced off. “You’ll keep your mouth shut and do whatever I tell you without one second of hesitation. And you will answer me with ‘Yes, Sir.’ Is that clear?”

“Yes, Sir,” she snapped.

Her sarcastic tone pissed him off. He halfway expected her to punctuate her agreement with an impertinent salute. Reaching to the back of her head, he removed the clip, taking the tortoise shell clasp hostage and placing it in his pants pocket. Running his hands through her long dark hair, he arranged it behind her back. “Take off your jacket,” he ordered. She ripped it off, and one arm briefly got stuck in the sleeve. She tugged on it violently and heaved it forcefully onto the floor. His anger eased and he struggled not to smile. She was having a tantrum. When his eyes fell on the weapon at her waist, he froze. He had no idea if he should touch it.

Alyx unhooked the holstered weapon from her waistband and tossed it into Agent Scarborough’s lap. Quick hands caught it before it would probably have hit him in the nuts. Daniel tried to regroup.

“Shoes off,” he ordered. She kicked the right one free, then the left, and they hit the wall behind him with two loud thuds. Turning to Jack and Agent Scarborough, “Really? Look at her, there isn’t a submissive bone in her goddamned body.” They didn’t answer him. *Come on.* They had to know he was right. He fumed. Okay, he thought, let’s see how far I can go with this. “Eyes on me,” he commanded. Unbuttoning her shirt one notch, he loosened it at the neck and gazed at the hollowing of her clavicle. He put a finger in the tiny indentation, filling the gap. Their eyes locked together in a battle of wills as he slowly worked his way through the tiny pearl buttons. He left the last two closed, but opened the white fabric as wide as he could. She didn’t flinch, her eyes blue fire.

The lacy bra surprised him. He’d expected something plain and practical, perhaps a sports bra. She had magnificent full breasts and he felt himself harden. Immediately he realized he’d been the one to let his eyes drift and quickly returned them to where they belonged. Hooking his index finger through the center of her bra, he pulled her close and leaned in, grazing his lips over hers. He took a kiss from her. The sweetness of her scent filled his head and he inhaled deeply before taking another kiss. This time he put a hand behind her back, securing her against his chest, and plundered her mouth. She responded with an eagerness that threw him off kilter. He opened his eyes and gazed into those big baby blues. *Fuck.*

He circled around behind her and pressed his chest to her back. He pressed his erection

against her ass, then grabbed her long dark hair in his fist and jerked her head back, exposing her neck. Her sharp intake of breath set his pulse racing. Facing her, he kissed her again, their tongues wrapped in a lustful embrace. He ended it by biting her bottom lip before pulling away. The roughness of his kiss left her lips swollen and glistening and he struggled to control the urge to throw her over the arm of the couch and fuck her right in front of Agent Scarborough. Somehow, he didn't think Little Miss Special Agent would allow anything even close to that. Not yet.

She was nothing like the women he used to play with. And for some strange reason, he was incredibly turned on. "Feet apart," he growled. She moved them to shoulder width. "How do you answer me?" he barked.

"That wasn't a question, Sir." Her face showed no emotion he could read.

"You're a real smart ass, aren't you, Agent Cameron?"

"Yes, Sir," she answered and he knew she told the truth. He put a foot between her legs and kicked them farther apart and she landed her hands on his shoulders to steady herself. Holding her tight against his chest, with one hand against her back, he thought about working his fingers between her legs to see if she was wet, his urge to dominate and take what he wanted rearing its ugly head like a Grizzly bear reawakening after a long hibernation. Instead, he squeezed the muscular cheeks of her ass and focused on her face. Her crystalline, ice-blue eyes blazed, her cheeks slightly flushed and he thought maybe a glimpse of arousal flickered behind her angry facade. He smirked inwardly and then released her.

He still had doubts this would work, but what the hell? He could have a little fun before he flunked her out of sex school. She wasn't overly shy, he'd give her that much. He found her incredibly attractive: her body trim and well-toned from what he could tell, and those fascinating eyes. She had the most beautiful face, with full pouty lips and high cheekbones and long dark eyelashes that curled to unfathomable lengths. Her skin was flawless and slightly tanned. He guessed she liked the outdoors and wondered how she'd gotten so brown. He hadn't noticed tan lines on her body and wondered if she'd been sunbathing nude somewhere. He tried to imagine what her smile might be like and what she sounded like when she laughed. Jesus. Where was he going with this? *Get a grip, Daniel.*

Okay, back to the matter at hand. He had some vacation time he could arrange, let his partners handle his cases for a week while he put her through her paces until she finally ran from his house screaming. And, he rationalized, he'd be doing a service for his community at the same time. Perfect.

Daniel forced himself to avert his eyes from Alyx's flushed face and returned his attention to Agent Scarborough. "She's brave, I'll give her that. I'm not sure she has what it takes to be convincing as a submissive, but I guess we can give it a try."

He re-buttoned her blouse, fully expecting her to smack his hands out of the way and do it herself, but instead she remained perfectly still as he worked his way down the line of tiny buttons. He retrieved her jacket from the floor and held it out for her, as if they were on a respectable date and he was helping her with her coat. This whole thing seemed really messed up for some reason.

"My hair clip?" she said with too much attitude, extending her upturned palm.

"I'm keeping it." He flashed her a smug grin. "You can get it back tomorrow—maybe. I'll send my driver to pick you up. Be ready by 7:00 p.m. sharp. Pack a small bag with essentials, but no clothing except workout clothes. I have a gym and we'll be using it. Other than that, I'll provide whatever I want you to wear and it won't be much." He heard her sharp intake of breath.

Now he had her attention.

Alyx huffed, then retrieved her shoes from the far wall and slipped them on. Removing the wallet from his back pocket, he extended his card and waited for her to come to him. “Here’s my number, when you need to call and tell me you’ve changed your mind and you’re not coming.”

Alyx bit her bottom lip and her cheeks flushed, Daniel knew it wasn’t desire, but anger again. “Don’t worry. I’ll be ready and on time.” She jerked the business card out of his hand and shoved it into the pocket of her jacket.

“Oh, I’m not worried, Agent Cameron, but *you* should be. You have no idea what you’re in for, even with all your research.” She glared at him but kept her pretty pink lips shut.

“All right then,” Agent Scarborough said, slicing through the room’s tension. He stood and handed Alyx her service revolver. “Thank you for agreeing to help us, Dr. Taylor. I’ll tidy up some details with you tomorrow and we’ll keep in touch each day so you can apprise me of Agent Cameron’s progress.”

Jack flanked Daniel as the two agents exited. Nobody shook hands on the way out. Jack walked over to the bar and poured himself two fingers of bourbon, extending the bottle toward Daniel. “No thanks.”

“That was entertaining.”

Daniel glared at him. “You better hope you never find yourself on my table, Jack, because I might have to think twice about literally ripping out your heart. Right about now, I’d like to kill you.” Daniel shoved his hand into his pants pocket and Alyx’s hair clip poked into his knuckles. He wrapped his fingers around it and felt his erection harden.

* * *

Alyx got in and slammed the door of Rob’s black Escalade. Rob sat beside her and didn’t say anything. He turned the key in the ignition and the engine purred to life. Unexpectedly, he threw his head back against the headrest and broke into hysterical laughter. Alyx faced him and glared, but of course he couldn’t see her expression in the darkness. Rob laughed for at least an entire minute, while Alyx fumed.

“Are you quite done?” she finally said.

Rob wiped the unseen tears from his eyes and let out an audible sigh. “Shit, Alyx, I nearly split a gut in there. I thought for sure you were going to deck the guy. And under normal circumstances you should have.” Rob struggled to catch his breath.

Alyx beamed in the darkness. “What an asshole, but I did have him going there for a minute, didn’t I?” She started to laugh.

“You definitely did. When he told you to answer him, and you said he hadn’t asked you a question, I thought he was going to blow a gasket.”

“I know,” Alyx said, letting out a chuckle. “He was getting pissy.”

“Although, I’ll admit he got one thing right, you certainly are a smart ass.” Regaining his composure, Rob put the car in gear and headed down the long driveway turning left onto Old Montauk Highway. Alyx wished the trip were shorter, anxious to be home and in bed. In the height of the summer tourist season the ride back to the city could take upwards of several hours. However, the day after Labor Day, which the locals affectionately nicknamed Tumbleweed Tuesday, traffic instantly evaporated. They’d be back to the city in an hour. Of course, Rob would take advantage of the unwritten law enforcement privilege of driving well over the speed

limit. Hell, they might make it in less than an hour.

Finally in her bedroom, Alyx stripped off her clothing and threw it on the floor. Picking up Jason's tee shirt, she studied it long and hard, then walked to the kitchen and grabbed a garbage bag and heaved it inside. Back in her bedroom she donned a pair of sweatpants and a camisole, then searched her closet and every drawer in her bedroom, ridding herself of any trace of him. She bagged it all and walked it out to the incinerator door and shoved it inside. Why she'd kept any of his stuff around mystified her. They'd had a terrible break up and he'd even gotten violent at the end. Dating a cop always carried added risk, especially with a temper like Jason's. Somehow, she seemed to only remember the good times when she broke up with a guy. Delusional about her relationships with men. Nothing ever changed in that department.

Teeth brushed and faced washed, she climbed into her queen-sized bed and switched on the TV, but she was too wound up to fall asleep. What had she gotten herself into? That pompous ass would be sending someone to pick her up tomorrow night and take her to his house where he'd do terrible things to her. The thought made something in her belly clench. Well, not really her belly, farther down. She decided to consider the bright side. He could have been an ugly son-of-a-bitch, something she hadn't considered when volunteering with her unbridled enthusiasm, and before thinking the whole thing through. He was probably the best-groomed and best-dressed man she'd ever seen. That black pinstriped suit he wore had to be more than the mortgage payment on her apartment and the royal blue tie perfectly complimented his pale blue shirt. She'd always been a sucker for a guy in an expertly tailored suit. Tall, broad-shouldered, lean, his wavy brown hair framed a face that could knock your breath out at twenty feet, not to mention those smoldering dark eyes. They looked downright dangerous. And the kissing, she hadn't expected that. But her thoughts soon settled on other things—floggers, restraints, clamps, hot wax? Yikes. Well, restraints didn't bother her, she'd let a boyfriend or two tie her up before, that was fun. Clamps? Definitely not. The other stuff? *Perhaps in an alternate universe.*

Sleep continued to evade her. Even Jimmy Fallon couldn't distract her from thoughts of kinky sex and what the perverted Dr. Taylor would do to her. Frustrated, she jumped out of bed and ran to the kitchen to retrieve the folder Rob had given her. Sliding under the covers again, she switched on the bedside lamp and flipped through the background info inside. There: the required negotiation between a Dominant and a submissive. They would have to agree on what was acceptable to both of them. Well, she thought, he probably liked the most extreme *everything*. Ugh. There were definitely things she had no intention of trying. Some of them she couldn't even say out loud. How much stuff could he make her do in a week? Well, twenty-four hours in a day, times seven days, that's 168 hours. Gulp. That's a lot of sex, or whatever. But they had to sleep and he had to go to work, so that would probably cut it in half. Maybe there would be a lot of people in need of emergency heart surgery and she'd get lucky. On the other hand, she did need to learn enough to be convincing for her debut at the club next weekend. Oh, boy. Catch 22.

Whichever way this went she was fucked, literally and figuratively.