## OWNING O

## MASTERS OF THE CASTLE, BOOK SIX



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## CHAPTER 1



tanding before the mirror, Alan finished getting dressed. It wasn't often that he bothered to don his ceremonial black leathers: the pants, the boots, vest and silver-studded wrist cuffs. In fact, he couldn't remember the last time he'd put them on. It had been even longer since he'd last felt this level of giddiness. High school probably came close, but he was twelve long years beyond his graduation of that. The last of his wild and wooly college days were a good six years behind him as well. So why did he feel like a schoolboy on the verge of his first date, and with none other than the homecoming queen? He felt shaky, but his hands in the mirror were as steady as they'd always been. It was why he'd once aspired to be an architect... back before he realized that, while precision work suited him, sitting at a drafting table for hours on end bored him to tears.

He tightened his armbands, but his gaze had already drifted from his reflection to the series of photographs stuck by their edges all around the mirror's frame. Of all the people captured there, only one was represented in every picture: Octavia Sutters. Though she signed her name as Tavy on all her Castle admission papers, while she was here, she only ever went by the simple, anonymous moniker of 'O.' He knew this not because they were great friends, (although they had exchanged the occasional word or two of conversation over the years) or because he had once managed to score a highly-coveted scene with her and her Dom-of-themoment. No, he knew who she was because three weeks ago, when he'd first learned that Tavy had volunteered to be one of the thirty or so submissives invited to take part in the Castle's first slave auction, he'd broken into Master Marshall's office and looked up her records.

Getting caught might have cost him his job, but Alan hadn't been able to help himself. He'd been here three years now, not quite as long as the Castle had been open. Tavy had been one of its first guests, staying for one or two days every month, as reliable in her attendance as clockwork. And just like clockwork, she had a routine she never deviated from and a reputation that made her one of the most highly-sought after submissives among the regular guests and the in-staff Masters alike.

From the moment Tavy donned her usual costume (black corset and garters, with five-inch high fuck-me heels) and knelt to submit, she did whatever was asked of her. Rumor had it she never said no. At least, not apart from her hard limit of no conversations of a personal nature, and she never-ever-played with the same man twice. Had Alan known this the one time he'd unexpectedly been pulled into a scene with her, her current Top ordering her to her knees before him, he'd have done more than watch and savor it while she, with her hands bound high behind her back, opened the fastenings of his pants with her teeth and obediently took his cock into her mouth. She'd choked herself on his length, she took him so deep into her throat. Willingly. Enthusiastically. He still went to bed at night remembering how it had felt to have the muscles of her throat milking him as she'd swallowed, hummed, swallowed again and, in a ball-spasming series of spurts so strong it had almost dropped him to his knees, sucked down every last drop she could wring out of him.

Alan brushed his black hair back, his dark eyes moving from photo to photo. Cameras were banned from the grounds, but the Castle did employ a photographer who could be hired to provide mementos of any scene... and bribed to hand over extra copies. Most men lucky enough to play with Tavy paid to have their scenes immortalized; a story the pictures around this old mirror told in blatant carnality. Tavy hoisted in the dungeon, her body streaked with sweat and her face a mask of exquisite suffering while a Dom who wasn't Alan applied his flogger. Tavy in the stocks; one man in her mouth while another took her from behind. Tavy on a spanking bench, and a cross, and a wooden horse covered in sharp plastic studs that bit into her tender pussy and thighs. Tavy bound. Tavy with cane welts, strap marks, and hand prints. Being cut, pierced, branded. Tavy suffering, over and over again, doing whatever was asked of her because she never refused, never cried enough, and in not one of all those many pictures did she ever look as if she was enjoying what was happening to her.

And yet, every month, she always returned. The only guest in the history of the Castle who never had to apply online or call in a reservation. She simply showed up, disappearing into Master Marshall's office the moment she arrived, only to re-emerge with a room number, a Top assignment, and all the closed mannerisms of a very aloof O.

Something in her called to Alan. He couldn't put his finger on what, but he wanted her. Those pictures on his mirror were a balm upon that part of his being that needed to see her, touch her possess her—and yet, every morning when he woke up and every night when he went to sleep, they served as a painful reminder that he wasn't what she needed. He couldn't do to her half of what she endured at the hands of her assigned 'Doms'. Although more than ready, willing, and able to deliver a good old-fashioned spanking from time to time, he wasn't sadistic enough to deliver the kind of pain she took on a monthly basis. Every time he looked at the suffering represented in these photographs, all he could think was how... wrong it all was. Every detail of every scene. Every whip mark, and clamp, and forcefully maintained posture that brought out those pixelated grimaces and forever-silent cries. The only redeeming feature in any of them was Tavy herself.

Alan put down his hairbrush. He opened the top drawer of his dresser and took out a thin box: a perfect square, six inches by six inches, no less than two inches deep. He set it on top of the table, bracing his hands on either side while he took a deep breath to settle his firing nerves.

Somewhere in this Castle, the annual New Year's Eve party—an event scheduled to last from Tuesday to Friday—was already underway. In the more sedate programs, puppies and kittens were being tucked into their kennels and cages. Ponygirls were being brushed and bedded down in their stalls. People were already gathering on the back lawn to watch the fireworks scheduled for later that evening, a display so spectacularly renowned that Granger locals—temporarily forgetting the stigma attached to having an adult resort in their backyards—lined up in lawn chairs along the highway to catch tantalizing glimpses of the shimmering bursts of fire and light above the trees.

And somewhere, somewhere in the half-torturous and halfmagical depths of this old stone fortress, Tavy was climbing out of her civilian clothes and into her costume. She was putting on an auction prize number and the black velvet ribbon that signaled she was a submissive; an article he couldn't wait to take off her and replace with something more meaningful.

The Meet and Greet event had started ten minutes ago. Men were readying their wallets and picking out favorites amongst the auction participants milling among them. Tavy wouldn't be there; Alan knew that from experience. She never mingled at Castle functions, not unless she was forced. But every Dom preparing to take part in tonight's special proceedings would know she was attending. The name 'O' was on the register—lucky number seven—and that register had been posted on all three ballroom doors since

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noon. It was on the postcards that littered the dining tables, and would undoubtedly be in the pamphlets that would be handed out at the auction's start.

There would be no shortage of bidders. This was going to cost him some serious money, and Alan knew that, but backing out now was not an option. If ever he was going to skirt her hard limit of never playing with the same man twice, tonight was his chance. The only one he'd probably ever have. Tonight, he was going home with Tavy and for the next four days, she was going to be his and his alone.

He opened the box and withdrew the collar he'd had Kane make especially for the occasion—black leather and silver chains, with a pendant locket that, when opened, read simply: 'Owned'. That was what he intended to do this weekend. He was going to own her, so completely and so devastatingly that when she returned to the Castle next month, she would do so ready to discard her hard limit. For Alan, and Alan alone.

That was the dream, anyway.

He pocketed her collar. The leashes, he knew, were already piled on the table where Parker would be handling the financial aspect of tonight's transactions. Taking a deep breath, Alan strove to quiet the giddiness and regain a semblance of inner calm. He pulled himself out of the fantasy zone in which his mind kept wanting to wander—not yet, not until the auction was won and he had her kneeling at his feet—and then he left his third-floor apartment above the schoolgirl library and went down to join the other Castle guests below.

TAVY SUTTERS SAT on the foot of the bed in the room she'd been assigned. Her corset lay spread out on the comforter beside her, but she didn't look at it. The rest of her things were still in her duffel bag, sitting on the floor just inside the door. She hadn't bothered to

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unpack and probably wouldn't at all this trip. It was one of the perks of volunteering for the auction. All the submissives taking part in this week's holiday activity had received their stay for free. For once, she didn't feel like she was taking advantage of the resort by not paying for it the way everyone else did.

Not that she didn't pay in other ways. Sweat, blood and saltstinging tears were her currency, and of those her account was drained every single month. She just never paid with cash.

This time was different though. Her meals and room were free as usual, but in return for her participation in the charity event, Marshall had promised an extra perk—a second stay to be redeemed in whatever month she chose, as well as two days over the weekend once her allotted time as a 'slave' was done.

She rubbed the back of her hand, not yet sure whether or not she was going to stay for those extra days. She supposed that would depend entirely on the man who bought her, and whether the severity of his punishments were harsh enough to silence the gnawing guilt eating her up inside.

She wished she wasn't here.

Switching hands, Tavy rubbed that one now as well, pushing her thumb up and down the old carpal tunnel surgery scars. She hated everything about this place, but that didn't change anything. She couldn't leave, though she knew she was free to do so at any time. What did she have to go home to, except the awful thing that drove her to this equally awful place time and time again?

Absent-mindedly, she rubbed the other scar. Sitting and rubbing, she watched the sun mark the unyielding march of time as it crawled from the top of the window to the sill, and then vanished below the distant tree line. If she didn't start getting ready now, she was going to be late. Then and only then, could she bring herself to pick up the costume she had come to hate.

She donned her corset with all the enthusiasm of a felon climbing into her prison-issued jumpsuit. Jet black, it pushed up her breasts, cinched in her waist and had a short bib of black lace

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both in front and back that barely covered either her sex or her bottom. It fit her very well, amplifying each of her curves to their best visual advantage, and yet Tavy found nothing to admire about the way she looked.

Twisting her long brown hair up in a practical ponytail to keep it out of the way of the things she'd undoubtedly be asked to do before the night was out, she slipped her feet into high stiletto heels. This was not her usual corset. It lacked the fastenings for garters and left her long legs bare. Trying to ignore her reflection, she looked in the mirror just long enough to put her make-up on dark, smoky eye shadow, black mascara, crimson cock-sucker lipstick—before tying the velvet collar-like ribbon around her neck and pinning the auction number she'd been given to her bodice.

Ready fifteen minutes before she had to report to the ballroom where the auction was scheduled to take place, Tavy sat on the foot of her bed. She rubbed her scars while she waited. The ones on her hands first, then those on her wrists, and then her legs. In the back of her mind, she couldn't help but wonder, as she touched each one, how many more they'd have to put on her before she could stand to look at herself again.