



# Risky Bet

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**Category:** Romance, Billionaire Romance

**Description:** Professional poker player Rylee Colton just accepted a half a million dollars to teach a billionaire how to play poker while she's in Vegas for a tournament. It seemed like easy money. Turns out he wants a lot more than poker lessons. He wants her submission for the next four weeks and damn if she doesn't want to give it to him. When her poker tournament is unexpectedly canceled, Memphis ups the ante. Play him in a round of poker. If she wins, he'll pay her the entire two million that was at stake in the poker tournament. If she loses, she gives him her unhindered submission for the next month and after that she'll still get the two million for her time. It's a win-win in Rylee's book. But he's hiding something from her and it could ruin everything. Turns out this might be a risky bet after all.

Risky Bet was originally published as part of a multi-author series under the title Betting on the Billionaire in Lockdown. Risky bet contains new, never before published content.

**Total Pages (Source):** 41

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Popcorn bounced out of Rylee's hands and scattered at her feet as the plane lurched along the runway.

"Fuck," she muttered as she gave a sheepish smile of apology to her seatmate before bending to pick up the mess.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Las Vegas. The temperature outside is currently one hundred and thirteen degrees. Please remain seated until the captain has turned off the seatbelt signs."

Shoving the now useless bag of popcorn into her purse, she laid her head against the seat and did her best to breathe deeply. She hated flying, but it thrilled her to be back in Vegas. The poker tournament later in the week would help her family out of a jam if she did well.

And she would do well.

The fact that a group of rich hotshots had hired her to spend two days teaching them how to play Texas Hold'Em was proof that she knew what she was doing at the table.

When her phone was out of airplane mode, it flashed a text message.

Call when you've landed.

After pressing the call button at the bottom of the screen, she lifted the phone to her ear and waited for someone to answer.

“Rylee, did you get in OK?”

“Mr. Novak?”

He chuckled. “That’s me. You sound surprised.”

“I just. I thought. I was expecting an assistant to answer. Didn’t know this was your direct line.”

“Memphis Foster is an important client and a good friend. I’m handling his stay in Vegas personally, and please, call me Hunter.”

“You got it, Hunter. Anyway, to answer your question, I’m still on the plane.”

The faint ding of the seatbelt sign being turned off sounded and everyone around her stood. She rolled her eyes. Why couldn’t people be patient? There was no point in everyone standing to get their bags from the overhead at the same damn time.

“Great, Rylee. Thanks for doing this. A driver is waiting for you and will bring you straight here.”

She ended the call and closed her eyes.

“You gonna get up?” the man sitting next to the window asked.

She cocked her head and stared at him. “And go where?”

He huffed and turned his attention to the window again.

Eventually, she was able to haul her bag out of the overhead bin and roll it down the aisle.

She was traveling light, so there was no need to stop at baggage claim. Instead, she went straight to the exit where a driver was supposed to be waiting.

“Miss Colton?”

A man stepped into her path as she stepped out into the Vegas heat and she jumped, having been lost in her thoughts.

“Jesus, fuck. Who are you?”

The man’s expression stayed stern.

“If you’ll follow me, Miss Colton, the car is just this way.”

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“My driver, I take it?”

He nodded.

“Well, try not scaring the crap out of me next time. I have a poker game to play and I can’t afford the anxiety.”

He cracked a small smile. “So noted, Miss Colton. If you’ll follow me, please?”

Before she realized what he was doing, he lifted her suitcase out of her hand and headed for the exit that led to the parking garage. There, he led her to a sleek black SUV and put her bag in the back.

“Mind if I ride up front?” she asked when he opened the back door.

He looked uncomfortable but gave a shrug and moved to open the front instead. She beat him to it, and he scowled.

“Sorry. I just hate people trying to make me feel fancier than I am. I don’t mind opening my own doors. Barely broke a sweat.”

The stiff driver shut her door and rounded the front of the car to slide into the driver’s seat. He cast her one more disapproving glance before he started the car, but she chose to ignore him by putting in her headphones. She pressed play on her soothing playlist and closed her eyes again.

The drive to the strip took about twenty minutes and they were soon parking in one of

Hunter Novak's exclusive resort parking garages. This was a place she could never afford unless she won a few big pots at the poker table. Even then, she probably wouldn't blow her money on it. One of Hunter's infamous kink parties on the other hand? She would drop money on that in a heartbeat—if she had it to drop. She'd been able to afford one ticket in her life, and it was her goal to attend them regularly.

She hopped out when the car was parked and rounded the car to get her bag.

The nameless driver beat her to it though, and she was almost sure he smirked as he walked toward the entrance with her bag in hand.

With a shake of her head, she followed him inside. Hunter was waiting for her in the lobby. They'd said hello once at one of his famous parties, but she hadn't been expecting a personal greeting. She really didn't expect him to remember her at all to be honest.

"Rylee," Hunter said with a smile. "Welcome to the Pink Sapphire. We're happy you could make it. Lunch is just about to be served upstairs and the players will want to meet you."

She flashed him a lopsided grin. "Tell Jeeves here I want my bag back."

Hunter narrowed his eyes at her. "Jeeves?"

"The butler?" She shook her head. "Never mind."

"I'll place it in your room, Miss Colton," the driver said.

Hunter's hand landed at the small of her back and together, they walked down the corridor to a bank of elevators. Rylee noticed how the staff scurried a little faster or stood a little straighter as Hunter passed.

“Some of them are itching to learn but don’t let their egos get to you. They’ll try to convince you you’re wrong.”

Rylee shrugged. “They win a tournament they can tell me I’m wrong. Doesn’t mean I am, but if they can’t win, I don’t have to listen to them.”

He laughed. “I think you’ll do just fine.”

They rode to the top of the building where Hunter said Memphis had rented the entire floor for the next week to celebrate his friend and business partner’s upcoming wedding.

“I don’t know why Memphis thinks he needs lessons,” Hunter said as they stepped into the opulent foyer of the twenty-first floor.

“Maybe it’s just a gift he’s buying his friends. He paid enough.”

Hunter strode to a door midway down the hall and pulled a small envelope out of his pocket. “This is your room.”

“Wait, I’m staying up here with the hot shots?”

“Why would I put you anywhere else?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. I just figured you’d have me sleeping with the help or something.”

“I have no idea what that means. Get freshened up, I’ll let Memphis and the others know you’re here.”

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She tapped the card against the scanner and watched as the light turned green. When she stepped in, her bag was sitting near the dresser.

“What the fuck?”

Hunter caught the door before it closed. “What was that?”

“How did Jeeves get here with my bag before we did?”

He chuckled. “First, his name is Ron. Second, it’s a trick of the trade. Service elevator is faster than the guest elevators. Don’t tell anyone.”

He backed out of the room again and the door shut with a soft click.

With a slow grin, she looked around the spacious room before taking a running start toward the bed. When she jumped, she landed in the middle of the mattress with a giggle.

Rylee rolled off the bed again and ran her fingers through her shoulder length hair, thinking again that it was time for a haircut.

She decided not to change since she’d made it through her entire trip without spilling anything on herself—a small miracle considering the popcorn incident.

With her key card tucked in the back pocket of her jeans, she grabbed her sunglasses and hat and opened her door. It wasn’t until she stepped into the hallway that she realized she had no idea where she was going.

“You must be Rylee Colton,” a voice said from her left.

She turned slowly as the deep velvet voice sent a shiver down her spine.

“Memphis Foster. Glad you got here. I wasn’t aware of how beautiful you are. I’ll have to thank Hunter for that added bonus.”

She swallowed the lump in her throat as he extended his hand.

He wore a dark green button-up shirt that was clearly expensive. It hugged his torso and shoulders, and the top two buttons were undone, revealing a smooth tanned chest. His strawberry-blond hair was a bit unruly, as if he’d been running his hands through it a lot today. But his thick beard was pristine and well groomed, and she wanted to run her hands through it. The intense eyes that pierced into her made her lick her lips. Images of those eyes staring back at her as he fucked her flashed through her mind.

Jesus Rylee get a grip. It had clearly been too long since she’d been laid.

“I’m not sure how you’re supposed to teach my friends poker if you’re mute, Miss Colton.”

A giggle escaped her. “Sorry. You just startled me. It’s nice to meet you, Mr. Foster.”

He narrowed his eyes. “Memphis. Unless you prefer Sir.”

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Memphis watched as the girl’s cheeks turned red. Did she understand what he meant by asking if she preferred Sir? Would she show up at Hunter’s party tonight? He

wasn't expecting to be struck by her beauty the way he was. When Hunter told him who he'd hired for his best friend's bachelor weekend, he'd gone looking for footage of her tournaments online. There wasn't much because she didn't play in a lot of televised competitions, but in what he had seen, she'd been bundled in hoodies and sunglasses. That style wasn't just a stereotype. Lots of poker players actually found the shrouding garb effective in hiding their tells and involuntary responses to their hands. At least that's what he'd been told.

"I'm going to be blunt," he said, as he stared down at her. "You're gorgeous and I might have a hard time not staring at you, so I don't know how much I'm going to learn this week."

Memphis had never played professionally, but he'd entered a few high roller Vegas tournaments just for the hell of it. The lessons were for his friends.

Rylee smirked. "I appreciate the honesty. Maybe the cap and glasses will help you not stare."

"Or you can come to bed with me and I can get you out of my system and focus."

Her mouth dropped open, and he slipped his hand around her elbow and began moving toward his penthouse.

As he led Rylee down the hall, he felt his phone buzz and was certain it was his attorney without looking at the screen. He just hoped it wasn't more unpleasant news.

He pressed ignore, intent on delivering the sexy poker player to his friends so they could get the lessons started, but the lawyer just called right back.

"Give me five fucking minutes," he snapped into the phone before ending the call and shoving it into his pocket.

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Beside him, Rylee stiffened at his harsh tone.

“My apologies, Rylee, just some work stuff. I’ll excuse myself once I’ve introduced you to the fellas.”

When he opened the door to his penthouse, the sounds of laughter drifted from the living room. This week was supposed to be fun for Memphis too, but an FBI raid had fucked that up.

“Evan, Bryce, Andrew, Brandon, get your asses in here and meet Rylee,” he shouted as he shut the door.

The group of well-dressed men ambled into the foyer and took turns shaking hands and introducing themselves to Rylee.

She looked them all in the eye and offered firm handshakes.

“Is the table ready?” she asked.

Memphis nodded. “Hotel staff set it up this morning. Just hit pound-six on the phone if they didn’t follow your instructions. Excuse me, I need to return a phone call.”

He stepped into his bedroom and shut the door.

“What’s going on, Jeremy?” he asked when his lawyer answered.

“The prosecutor has convinced a judge that you’re a flight risk because of the flight

you booked to Canada. He wants to revoke your bail.”

“I wasn’t even on that god damn flight. I sent my jet to pick up some friends.”

“I understand that. It doesn’t change things. But there is a solution. It means going back to Arizona, though.”

He dragged a hand through his hair. “What do you mean?”

“House arrest until the trial.”

“Jesus Christ. I have business in Vegas and I’m not missing Andrew’s wedding.”

“If that’s what you want, you better buy a house there, because that’s the only way I keep you out of jail.”

“House arrest means an ankle monitor. How the fuck do I explain that?”

“You could volunteer to be chipped.”

“All for a crime I didn’t even commit? How is that OK?”

The lawyer sighed. “I’m just offering ideas here, Memphis. I realize you’re innocent, but we have a long way to go to get you out of this mess. If you don’t prefer to spend the next six weeks in a cell, and you don’t want to wear an ankle monitor, you volunteer for the chip and make a big donation to the Nevada State Police Commission.”

“Fuck. OK. Make it happen. I’m going to talk to Hunter about a house.”

He shoved the phone in his pocket and stalked out of his room.

“I’ll be back later,” he snapped when his friends called out for him to join the game.

He rode the elevator down several floors and stepped off. Hunter’s office was nestled at the back of a ballroom that was only rented out for the most exclusive parties and events.

“He in there?” he asked the receptionist sitting outside Hunter’s door. Nadine, Hunter’s assistant, must have stepped out for lunch.

She nodded as she stared at him and he strode past her desk. It wasn’t until he was opening the door that she jumped into action.

“Do you have an appointment?” she stammered as she leapt from her chair.

“It’s fine, Lucy,” Hunter called.

“The villa for tonight. Who owns it?”

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“Technically, I do. It’s complicated. Why?”

“I want to buy it. Temporarily.”

“So, you want to rent it.”

“It needs to look like I bought it.”

Hunter leaned back. “I have questions.”

“It’s better if you don’t ask. I just need to buy it three weeks ago.”

“FBI gonna raid me next?”

Memphis gave a terse shake of his head. “Guarantee they won’t. Come on. Do this for me.”

“Only because I know you’re innocent. Give me a few hours. Do I need to cancel the party?”

He shook his head. “Nope. I need to own the place and be able to stay there for the next four to six weeks or more. Oh, and Andrew might have to move his wedding there.”

Hunter lifted an eyebrow. “House arrest?”

“Jesus fucking Christ. Did someone already leak it to the press?”

Hunter laughed and shook his head. “Lucky guess. I saw an article that said the prosecutor wanted to revoke bail. Get out of here. I’ll make it work and we’ll get you moved. Should I send Rylee home?”

“I thought I would see if she wanted to come to the party as my guest.”

“You met her four hours ago, Memphis. How do you know how she’ll react?”

Memphis shrugged. “Let’s say I have a gut feeling.”

Hunter rolled his eyes. “Have any of your gut feelings about women ever actually panned out?”

“Call me as soon as we can move to the house,” Memphis said, ignoring Hunter’s jab.

Turning on his heel, he made his way back to the elevator, eager to spend more time with the cute poker player in his penthouse.

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Rylee couldn’t stop replaying Memphis’ invitation to take her to bed as she studied the poker table that had been set up in the penthouse living room.

Was he serious? He didn’t seem like the type of man to joke around. And he didn’t seem like the type of man who heard the word no very often. Despite his frankness, she wasn’t offended by his invitation. Rylee was intrigued by it and by him. It was going to be hard to get her mind off him when she finished her job here.

The subject of her thoughts stalked in still looking pissed off.

“Where is everyone?” he asked with a scowl.

Rylee gave a shrug. “I think there was talk of a run through a pool party while they waited for you.”

He rounded the table and gripped her arm, taking her by surprise.

“Excuse me,” she protested as he steered her toward the bedroom.

Inside, he shut the door and backed her against it.

“I want you,” he murmured.

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“You don’t even know me.” Her heart slammed into her chest as she inhaled his masculine scent.

“That could be exactly why I want you so bad.”

“I think I should be offended,” she said with a swallow.

“Probably,” he admitted. “But I have a proposition for you.”

“This oughta be good.” Her heart rate slowed as she forced herself to take a deep breath.

“There’s a party tonight at a villa. Come with me. If I haven’t convinced you to go to bed with me by the end of the night, I’ll double your compensation for the poker lessons.”

“And what do you get if I give in and sleep with you?”

“Other than the privilege of fucking you? What more do I need?”

She shrugged. “I’m always game for a bet. I’ll take it. What kind of party is it? Wait...” she paused. “Is this one of Hunter’s parties?”

He gave a slow nod. “You’ve heard of them?”

“Heard of them? I spent my first big win on a ticket to one.”

His lips curled up into a seductive grin. “I might have a chance at winning this bet after all.”

So much for calming her heart rate. The speed of her pulse made it feel like her heart was trying to run away from her.

“You haven’t even asked if I’m a top or a bottom,” she said in a trembling voice.

He chuckled. “I’m fairly sure about the answer to that one. Your blush in the hallway gave you away, and I’m sure my suspicions would be confirmed if I slipped my hands into your hair and pulled.”

Her traitorous cheeks turned warm with embarrassment as he trailed a finger down one.

“That’s delightful,” he murmured. “You do know you’re going to lose, don’t you, Ace?”

“I can’t predict the future, and neither can you unless you plan on cheating. There’s no way to tell if I’m going to lose,” she said, ducking under his arm to step further into his room and put some space between them.

“Don’t lie. It’s not becoming.”

“I make a living by lying. We should really get back out there before the others come back.”

He opened the door. “Party is at nine, and I’m moving to the villa for the rest of my stay. Your accommodations will be moved there as well. Don’t worry, I won’t move you into my room even if I do get you into my bed.”

“You’re very presumptuous, Mr. Foster. I’m happy with my accommodations here.”

“I’m afraid I have to insist. And yes, I’m aware you have a tournament this week. I’ll move you back to the strip in time for that. But as long as I’m paying for your instruction, you’re staying with me.”

She rolled her eyes. They were paying her enough she wasn’t really going to argue, but she didn’t like the way he presumed she was just going to fall into line with his demands.

“Fine.”

“Fine,” he echoed with a smug expression on his face.

So smug, in fact, that she decided then and there that she wouldn’t sleep with him. No matter what.

They stepped back into the living room as the front door to the penthouse opened and his friends ambled in carrying drinks and laughing about something that happened at the pool.

“We ready to get started?” Rylee asked as she walked to the large poker table and sat in the dealer’s seat.

“Hell yeah,” one man said, raising his glass to her.

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Rylee shuffled a deck of cards while she waited for them to get settled.

For the next twenty minutes, she went through the basics of a round of Texas Hold'Em. It was a fairly simple game at its core, but there was a lot of strategy one had to memorize to be an effective player. Her goal this week was to teach these men some of that strategy, but they also needed to have fun learning or they would get bored and head back to the pool. As she walked them through a full round of betting, she suspected Memphis wasn't a newbie to the game, but he'd never competed on any circuit she'd been on.

Memphis seemed to pay more attention to her than his cards. Every time she paused to walk them through a piece of strategy, his attention was on her and he asked questions that required drawn out answers and follow-up questions. But based on the way he was playing, Rylee was convinced he didn't need to ask the questions at all.

She found herself reaching for her water bottle often as they went through the deck. He unnerved her, but she couldn't tear her eyes away from him either.

As the fifth hand was wrapping up, Memphis got a phone call and excused himself. Rylee watched as he walked away. He seemed stiff, much the way he'd seemed when he got the phone call earlier.

"Poor guy can't even relax for my bachelor weekend," Andrew said.

"We all know the mess he's in is bullshit though," Evan said as he studied the community cards.

“I do feel bad for bringing Miller in and starting this mess,” Andrew said.

“I thought Miller came to us,” Evan said as he fiddled with his chips.

Andrew shifted in his seat. “It’s complicated. Like you said, a mess. Just do me a favor and don’t bring it up to Kimberly. I haven’t told her what’s going on and I don’t want her dragged into all of this.”

“What mess?” Rylee asked while she laid out the last card and watched Andrew’s expression go sour. He needed to work on his poker face.

“Seriously?” he asked, tossing his cards on the table. “You must have recognized Memphis Foster.”

She shrugged as she waited for the others to make their moves. “Unless he’s from Avondale or plays on the professional poker circuit, there’s no reason for me to know who he is.”

Evan shrugged. “Avondale is basically Phoenix, and that’s where he usually lives, but I thought the entire world knew who Memphis was.”

“Thankfully, you’re wrong,” Memphis said as he returned from his phone call. “And I’ll thank you to let Miss Colton get to know me on her own, gentlemen,” he said, tossing a wink at Rylee. “That was Hunter on the phone. We’re moving locations. We get early access to the party tonight.”

Andrew laughed. “And that’s where I’m out. I’ll be in the casino practicing my new skills.”

“Prude,” one man said with a snicker.

“Not a prude, just someone who isn’t a pervert and also I’m getting married in a week,” Andrew shot back.

Rylee smirked. She considered herself neither a prude nor a pervert, but she was definitely kinky and would enjoy Hunter’s party tonight even if it meant going as Memphis Foster’s guest. There was no way she could afford the ticket on her own right now.

“Speaking of your wedding,” Memphis said, clearing his throat. “How would Kimberly react to the idea of changing the location of the ceremony?”

Andrew raised an eyebrow. “Seriously? I’m assuming there’s a reason.”

Memphis nodded. “Let’s talk tomorrow.”

Andrew agreed and promised to call him in the morning.

“Ride with me,” Memphis said as the others stood to leave. “We can stop for an outfit on the way.”

“You assume I didn’t bring one.”

“Did you?”

“No, but I don’t care for the assumption. You’re bad about assuming things, and you know what they say about that.”

Memphis just stared at her. “I don’t understand the irritation. It wasn’t an unfounded assumption. You came with a carry-on suitcase only, you have a poker tournament in three days, and you didn’t have a ticket to the party. Why would you have an outfit with you?”

She blew out a breath. OK, he wasn't wrong.

It still irked her though.

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“What makes you think I only had a carry-on?”

Memphis lifted one corner of his mouth into the semblance of a smile. “I was in the hall when the driver dropped the bag in your room.”

She wanted to punch him or growl in frustration. Instead, she crossed her arms and said, “Fine, but you’re buying.”

“I wouldn’t dream of anything less,” he said with a smirk.

On the way, her e-mail and text message alerts sounded in quick succession.

“Fuck,” she blurted as she read her screen.

“What’s wrong?” he asked as he drove away from the strip.

“My tournament just got canceled. Something about a malfunctioning sprinkler system,” she said as she scanned the email.

His hand rested on her knee and she stiffened. “Anything I can do?” he asked in a soft voice.

She relaxed and looked his direction. “I’m not sure what there is to do. It was a committee decision. I doubt they could move it this close to the day of. It takes a lot to put on an official sanctioned tournament. They’re refunding our buy-ins and they’ll reschedule in a few weeks.

He nodded. “OK. Our bet still on?”

She grinned and shook her head. “I don’t see why not. Though it seems like you have the upper hand now.”

He quirked an eyebrow up at her as he changed lanes. “How’s that?”

“I don’t have to focus on being tournament ready now. I’ll let my guard down.”

He hummed and patted her knee again. “You were always going to lose, so don’t feel too bad.”

Rylee folded her arms against her chest and gave him a scowl.

Cocky bastard.

They pulled into the valet parking lane of a resort that had some of the most high-end shops on the strip. Rylee could never see herself spending money there even if she won millions at the poker table.

“I would have been fine with something from the mall,” she said a few minutes later when they were walking down a long corridor filled with expensive stores.

“Malls are terrible. I’m barely OK with this place. If we had time, I would hire a personal shopper to bring us some things.”

“Us?” she questioned as they stopped in front of a store.

He didn’t say anything, just steered her through the door by the elbow.

“You can’t seriously think you’re coming in with me,” she said as they crossed the

threshold.

“Ace, if I’m buying, I’m definitely coming in with you.”

She pulled her arm away from his touch and made a beeline for an expensive looking dress. As she browsed, Memphis stepped away and whispered to an employee. A few seconds later, he stepped to her side and pulled her away from the dress she’d been looking at. It wasn’t her style. In fact, it was something she expected one might wear to a funeral or church. Definitely not a kink party. Which is exactly why she’d headed straight for it.

“That won’t do. Come on, Melanie is going to help us with what we’re looking for.”

“And how do you know what I’m looking for?” she asked as a thin woman in a black skirt and silk blouse met them near the register.

“Miss Colton, I’m told you’re looking for a new outfit for a... special event.”

Had that bastard told her what they were shopping for? She was definitely never sleeping with him now.

She cleared her throat. “Yes, please. I’d like to really knock his socks off if you know what I mean.” Maybe she had no plans of sleeping with him, but she could damn sure spend his money and be a tease as payback for all his cocky behavior.

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Memphis watched Rylee move about the party in what was now technically his villa. Hunter's team was still running the show, though, and he wouldn't have the run of the place until tomorrow.

A teal blue corset and black miniskirt that had set him back nearly four grand had replaced her jeans and t-shirt, and she pranced about in five-inch heels like it was something she did every day. A far cry from her sneakers and her hair stuffed into a ball cap.

"You can't take your eyes off her."

Memphis turned to grin at Hunter Novak. "It's true. I'm plotting how to lure her into my bed."

"You sound like a creeper right now. Don't make me kick you out of your own house."

Memphis chuckled. Parties like these lived and died by how well they enforced consent practices, and Hunter was a stickler for making sure everyone followed the rules. Creepers, as he put it, were not welcome.

"Speaking of Rylee, I have a bone to pick with you. You knew damn good and well she would say yes if I asked her to come with me tonight. Why did you act like she

wasn't one of us?"

His friend shrugged. "It's not my place to out someone. You know that. Not to mention, I don't know her that well. She's been to one party, and that was a few years ago. What do you think of your new place?" he asked, changing the subject.

Memphis looked around. Starting Monday, he would officially be on house arrest until the trial was over. It started in four weeks and was expected to last anywhere from five days to two weeks. He didn't relish the idea of being alone for the next month or longer. Sure, he could bring in a friend or demand that his assistant fly to Vegas to work from his house, but that wasn't enough.

His eyes shifted to Rylee, who was laughing with a group of people. He wanted her.

"I think it will do nicely," he muttered as he watched her. Among the group of people she was talking to, were two Doms he knew would try to talk her into playing with them. He ordered a scotch from the nearby bar and strode with purpose toward the group.

"You look serious, Foster. We're at a party," one of the Doms said as he approached.

Memphis ignored him and focused on Rylee. "I wondered if we could talk," he said low in her ear.

She shuddered as if his hot breath on her soft skin affected her. But she smiled and gave him a subtle nod. He took her by the elbow and steered her to the corner of the spacious room. It was the social area. Where he really wanted to take her was upstairs to one of the playrooms or maybe a private bedroom.

"A million," he said, staring down at her.

“For what? To sleep with you?”

He nodded, not ready to broach the subject of a month-long stay at his place. They could work up to that. “To give me a chance. A night of fun between two consenting adults who are drawn to each other.”

“Why me?”

He shook his head. “I can’t explain it. I’m drawn to you and I have to have you.”

She looked around. “There are at least a dozen women here who would jump at what you’re offering.”

“I’m only offering it to you, Rylee. Believe me, I don’t make a habit of offering women money to have sex with me.”

She hummed and glanced toward the stairs. “What’s your poison?” she asked.

He had a feeling she wasn’t asking about his drink.

“You first,” he said, lifting his glass to his lips.

“I have a lot of... curiosities. A few I’ve tried, a few I’ve just fantasized about.”

“Tell me one you’ve fantasized about.”

Her blush traveled from her cheeks to her neck and across her chest above the line of her corset.

“Tell me, Rylee. You know you want to.”

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“I like impact play.”

“But that’s not what you’re fantasizing about.”

She slowly shook her head. “Total surrender,” she murmured after a moment of heated silence passed between them.

“You mean TPE?”

“Total surrender, total power exchange.” She shrugged. “Whatever you want to call it. But yeah, that’s a big one. It’s scary though.”

“Fear can be fun to play with, Ace,” he murmured. “I can give you a taste if you just give in.”

She swallowed. “Why do you think I play high stakes poker?”

He gave a low chuckle. “Now that actually make sense. What does total surrender look like to you?”

Around them, conversation buzzed as people drank and socialized. Upstairs, he could hear the faint sounds of pleasure drifting from the various play areas.

“I’m not sure. Maybe that’s why I’ve never tried.”

He trailed a finger down her cheek. “Solid answer. What are the things you won’t do for the man who gets your surrender?”

She raised an eyebrow. “Is it really total surrender if there are things I won’t do?”

He let a hand settle on her waist. “Absolutely. Surrender means trusting that you won’t have your limits violated while giving in to whatever else I want.”

She sucked in a breath when he pulled her closer to him.

“The only thing I can think of right now is that I won’t walk away from my career. And I’m not going to like ask for permission to use the bathroom or be told how to dress or anything like that.”

“Only a bastard would ask you to give up your career. As for bathroom privileges, I’m not into micromanaging you. Your clothes, though. We would have to negotiate on that one. If you were mine, you would be naked as much as humanly possible.”

She blushed, and he brought a hand to rest beneath her chin.

“So, if you were my sub, and I brought three friends home and told you they could fuck you however they wanted, that would be OK?”

She bit her lip as she stared up at him. “Hypothetically, yes.”

He pressed his cheek to hers so he could speak right in her ear. “I rarely share my prized possessions, Rylee. If you surrender to me, it’s only to me.”

She swallowed.

“Pardon me,” she said, stepping out of his one-armed embrace. “I, um. I need to go check my phone.”

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Rylee leaned against the bathroom wall, trying to catch her breath. Memphis Foster was smothering.

After their little chat in the corner, he'd let her leave with her lame phone excuse. But she still felt his presence. His breath on her ear, the way his finger trailed down her cheek.

Sucking in a final deep breath, she pushed off the wall and stepped back into the party room. She had to avoid Memphis, or she was going to lose the bet. Though he was offering a million just for her to spend a night with him—no bet needed.

When she left the bathroom, she stopped by the cellphone room and checked her phone for any updates on why the tournament had been canceled. The cellphone room was a special place where guests put their phones in lockers that had been brought in just for the party. There was an attendant who watched over the lockers, so everyone knew their devices were safe. It was a security measure to prevent people from taking pictures and posting them online.

Guests were free to check messages at any time, but the phones couldn't be taken outside of the designated cellphone area.

There were no updates except for a few social media posts and one text from a friend asking why it had been canceled. Tucking the phone back into the locker, she made her way back to the party.

"Rylee, what's wrong? You look distracted," Hunter Novak said when she nearly ran into him.

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“Sorry, Hunter. They canceled my tournament earlier today and I can’t get any information about why.”

He frowned. “That was over at Caesar’s, right? I’ll make some calls,” he said when she nodded.

“Thanks,” she muttered. “I’m gonna go find a drink.”

“Hey, Rylee,” Hunter said, stopping her in her tracks. “Be careful with Memphis. He’s a wonderful friend, but he’s got a lot on his plate right now and I’m not convinced he’s thinking straight.”

She gave a terse nod. “Thanks for the heads up.”

Turning, she went for the bar, hoping a drink would take the edge off.

After downing two fingers of expensive whiskey—the only kind offered at this party—she made her way upstairs to the play areas.

Memphis was leaned against the banister, looking down into the social area when she reached the top.

“You look stressed,” he said. “You drank that whiskey like you’re trying to forget something.”

“Just upset about the tournament.”

“My offer still stands. No bets, just a million dollars for a night with you.”

She leaned back and eyed him. “Hunter told me you weren’t thinking straight. I don’t know how seriously I should take you.”

He scowled. “Hunter should mind his own business.”

“Lucky for you I don’t always listen to the warnings people give me and I have a counteroffer.”

He folded his arms, and she swallowed as she watched his shirt pull tight across his muscular shoulders.

“I’m listening.”

“A game of heads up, no limit Hold’Em. Ten grand buy-in. You and me. You win and you have my submission for twenty-four hours and I get what you were going to pay me to begin with for the poker lessons. I win and you give me triple that and I go home tomorrow.”

His wheels seemed to turn as he contemplated her offer.

“What’s on your schedule for the next month?” he asked, uncrossing his arms, and shoving a hand in his pocket.

She shook her head. “No major plans. I have no more tournaments for another three months.”

He nodded and turned to lean on the railing again.

“I have a counter to your counter. Same game, but the stakes are higher. You win and

I hand you two million. I win and you give me complete surrender for the next four weeks. At the end of the four weeks, you'll still get your two-mil."

Her mouth dropped open as she calculated whether her family could get by without her for four weeks. "Are you serious? There's no way I don't leave with two million?"

He gave a shake of his head. "What do you say?"

She blew out a breath. "It seems like odds I can't pass up."

"I need a yes, Rylee. I may want your unquestioning submission, but I also want your consent."

"Yes. But I want a licensed tournament official watching the match. You're not going to cheat your way to a win."

"That's the second time you've made a crack about me cheating. I should be offended."

She shrugged. "Probably," she said, tossing his response from earlier back at him.

"You'll find that I don't cheat my way to anything. But you have no way of knowing that, so I'll agree. But Hunter or one of his staff gets to find the official."

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She rubbed her hands together as the excitement of a looming game bubbled in her gut. Poker gave her a thrill that little else could.

“When do we do this?”

He grinned. “My inclination is to say right now. But you’re bound to be tipsy after the way you tossed back that whiskey and I want it to be fair, so we’ll set it up for in the morning. The guys will just have to do without a poker lesson.”

“Um...” She looked down at her hands, trying not to twist her fingers together.

“What?” he asked.

For the first time, she heard that dominant bite to his tone, and she jerked her head to meet his gaze. “I don’t know how to ask this. It just feels weird to have to potentially do things with you for the next month when we haven’t even... done anything yet.”

“Are you trying to back out, or are you asking me to fuck you?”

“You’re very blunt. I was just thinking a kiss or a scene in one of the play areas or something in between.”

He chuckled. “I like the sound of that very much, Rylee. You sure you’re sober enough to consent?”

She nodded. “I am, I promise.”

“Good girl. Come with me,” he said as he extended his hand to her.

She took it and relished the warmth that slithered through her as his hand clasped hers.

He pulled her into a nearby room and led her to a corner. It was a large room and two couples were playing at stations that had been set up. Memphis was leading her to a third station—a wooden x shaped device known as a St. Andrew’s cross.

“Kneel there,” he commanded. “Actually, wait one minute,” he said gripping her elbow to stop her from sinking down.

He backed her against the cross and cradled her head in both his hands. “You mentioned a kiss,” he breathed when his mouth was mere centimeters from hers.

Her eyes drifted closed as their lips connected. The kiss was gentle at first, but when she wrapped her arms around his neck, he deepened it and stole her breath.

“Much better,” he said as he pulled away. “Now you can kneel. I’ll be right back.”

“Where are you going?” she said, feeling a bit of panic.

“Just to get my toy bag, Ace. Stay here.”

What had she just gotten herself into? She contemplated her predicament as she settled onto her knees and waited for him to return.

He came back a few minutes later with a black duffel bag.

“Limits?” he asked as he set the bag on a nearby table.

“Um. No blood. Nothing gross. You can’t pee on me or anything like that.”

He chuckled. “None of that appeals to me. You’re safe. What’s your pain threshold?”

“I’m not a masochist, but I enjoy dancing on the line between pleasure and pain.”

He nodded as he circled her.

Without warning, he reached down and fisted his hand into her hair and gave a sharp tug. “Up,” he commanded.

She scrambled to stand with his hand still pulling at her hair. She winced as he tightened his grip and crushed his mouth to hers.

“Take your panties off,” he commanded.

She slid her hand under her skirt and obeyed. He backed her to the cross again and lifted an arm to attach her wrist to the wooden frame. Soon she was attached at the ankles and wrists and he was pulling her skirt up around her waist.

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“Let’s see how you feel about this,” he murmured as he reached into his bag and pulled out a crop.

“You’re not really about to hit me down there with that, are you?”

He quirked an eyebrow up. “You might want to practice calling me Sir. You know... just in case you lose the game.”

She scowled. “That’s not an answer to my question, Sir.”

He grinned. “Are you telling me you don’t want me to spank your pussy, Rylee? Have we found another limit?”

She swallowed. “Just not too hard, please.”

He held the crop at his side and pressed himself against her. “Don’t worry, Ace. I would never do damage to what will undoubtedly become one of my favorite parts of you.” His free hand slipped between their bodies and cupped her between her legs.

She gasped as he let one finger run between her lips. “So wet for me. How long have your panties been wet?” he asked.

She whimpered as he continued to caress her.

When she didn’t answer, he pulled his hand away and stepped back far enough so he could rest the crop against her pussy.

“Answer my question or you get a swat to your cunt.”

She swallowed and whispered, “Pretty much since I met you, Sir.”

He grinned and gently fluttered the leather tip of the crop against her folds. It grazed her clit, and she gasped.

“Good girl. Now, I do want to smack you, but I promise it won’t be too hard.”

She nodded. “OK.”

“Try again or it will be hard,” he said harshly as he tapped against her pussy with the crop.

“Yes, Sir,” she murmured.

“Better.”

He pulled his hand back and brought it up again. The crop landed with a stinging smack. It sounded harder than it was.

“See, that wasn’t too bad was it?”

She shook her head as the leather fluttered against her clit.

“And if I do it a few more times, it will make this sensation even better,” he said as the crop flitted faster across her skin.

She wasn’t sure how it could get much better, but she’d done enough exploring in kink to know he was probably right.

The crop landed harder between her legs again and she let out a small yelp, but the stinging sensation soon morphed into pleasure as he let it flutter against her clit again.

He repeated the pattern several times and each time, the fluttering of the crop brought her closer and closer to the edge. Soon she was writhing against the wooden cross and moaning as she neared the peak of pleasure.

“Come for me, Rylee,” he said as he flicked her clit rapidly.

She let out a strangled moan as the orgasm built. With one more flick of the crop, she fell over the edge. She heard the crop clatter to the ground and two fingers plunged deep inside her. His thumb pressed against her clit and rubbed small circles.

“Again, Ace. I want to feel you come on my hand,” he murmured in her ear.

She shuddered as bliss took her over the edge again. She wasn’t even aware that he’d unhooked her arms until she involuntarily wrapped them around his neck to steady herself.

“Now that was hot,” he murmured when she had calmed.

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“What about you?” she asked tentatively. “We could find a private room.”

He shook his head and trailed a finger down her cheek. “No. I think I’ve decided I’m not going to fuck you until I’ve won and you’re mine.”

She stuck her lip out in a pout.

“What’s wrong with that?” he asked, his brows furrowed together.

“Nothing. I mean not really, I guess. It’s just sad that you’ll never get to fuck me. Because there is no way you’re winning tomorrow.”

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The next morning, Rylee woke to the sound of a quiet knock on her door.

Rolling out of the comfortable bed, she padded barefoot to the door and pulled it open.

“Good morning, Ace,” Memphis said, holding a cup of coffee. “I wasn’t sure how you liked your caffeine, but there’s cream and sugar on the counter in the kitchen.”

She took the cup and inhaled the rich aroma before taking a sip. Black coffee suited her fine in the mornings.

“Thank you,” she murmured. “What time is it?”

He glanced at his smart watch. “It’s a little after seven. Staff will be here at eighty-three to set up our game.”

She groaned as she took another soothing drink of the coffee. “Is there a gym in this place? I usually run before a game.”

He grinned. “There is. I just finished my morning run.”

She gave a curt nod and shut the door in his face.

Draining the coffee, she rummaged through her suitcase for her jogging shorts and a tank top.

After setting the empty mug on her nightstand, she laced on her running shoes and made her way downstairs.

Memphis was sitting at the table working on a laptop. She didn’t miss the fact that his gaze lingered on her legs before meeting her eyes. “Gym is in the pool house out back,” he said as he nodded his head toward the large sliding glass door in the main living area.

She was amazed by how quickly cleaning staff had cleared all evidence of the BDSM party that had occurred last night.

In the small gym, she hopped on the treadmill and set it for a mild incline. She didn’t play music the way most people did. Instead, she ran through game strategy and gave herself a mental pep talk. It was her routine before any big game.

Although she’d gotten a taste of Memphis Foster and wanted more, there was no way

in hell she was throwing this game. Winning was important, even if it had no effect on her tournament rankings. There was a rush that came with winning a high stakes game, and she was chasing that feeling today. After she won, she could still sleep with him if she really wanted to. Though she wouldn't give in right away. Had to make him work for it. She shook her head and increased the speed on the machine. She had to get sex with Memphis out of her head or she was going to lose.

Her feet pounded the treadmill belt as various game scenarios flashed in her mind. By the time she'd reached four miles, she was convinced there was no way Memphis would win this game. She'd even managed to drown out Hunter's words about Memphis not needing the poker lessons.

Back in the main house, Memphis hollered that breakfast was being brought in as she trudged up the stairs. In her room, she showered and changed into her favorite jeans and a faded t-shirt from her college days.

When her hair was dry and she felt ready to face her opponent, she made her way down to the kitchen. Breakfast was a spread that rivaled most Vegas buffets. But Memphis just shrugged it off as no big deal when she said as much while he filled his plate.

"I wasn't sure what you would want to eat, so I asked the caterer to bring his full breakfast menu."

She examined the spread and filled her plate with fruit, some scrambled eggs, and a small piece of ham.

As they were eating, there was a knock at the door and Memphis strode to the entry to answer it.

Hunter Novak strolled in, followed by two movers carrying a heavy box that Rylee

recognized to be a poker table in pieces. Behind the movers came two women in slacks and black button ups. They would be the tournament officials. Had he hired a dealer too?

“Morning, you two. There was no way I was missing this game, so I cleared my schedule and brought a couple of my casino staff with me,” Hunter said as he leaned across the bar and snagged a piece of bacon off a tray.

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Rylee just rolled her eyes and finished the last of her fruit as she watched the movers unbox the table and set it up.

“You know we could have played at the dining room table, right?”

Memphis shrugged. “I wanted to give you as many advantages as possible. Playing on the type of table you’re used to should help your mindset.”

Andrew, Evan, Bryce, and Brandon came downstairs as the table was being finished. When had Andrew arrived? She assumed the other three had spent the night because they were at the party last night, but she didn’t recall Andrew arriving. Not that she was paying attention.

“This really doesn’t seem fair,” she said as she watched the dealer stack chips.

Memphis quirked an eyebrow up. “How do you figure?”

“You have a cheer leading squad. I have nobody,” she said as she motioned to the five men leaned against various counters around the kitchen and dining area.

“I’m on your side,” Hunter said with a wink.

Memphis just laughed.

“The table is ready, Mr. Foster, Miss Colton,” the dealer said.

A few minutes later, they sat at the table across from each other with the dealer in the

middle. The tournament official read through the rules and both of them agreed.

Rylee threw away the first three hands after the flop was revealed, but after that it seemed like the cards were working in her favor.

Six hands later that changed. She got cocky and bet big on a hand she thought was a sure thing. Turned out it wasn't, and she lost the hand.

"Seriously?" she asked as she stared at her dismally small stack. "That hand was statistically in my favor. Like ninety-two percent in my favor."

"Ninety-three actually," Memphis said as he studied his own stack.

She sighed. This was not going well.

The dealer slid the cards for their next hand to them, and she lifted them at the corner. Eight of clubs and a six of hearts. Not the greatest starting hand but she could work with it. She studied Memphis for signs that he was happy with his hand. He gave nothing away. They both checked for the pre-flop round of betting, and she inhaled and held her breath as the dealer laid out the flop. Eight of spades, Jack of clubs, eight of hearts. Trip eights. She couldn't have hoped for anything more, other than maybe a straight.

"I'll check," she said, hoping he didn't fold before at least one bet was made.

He didn't disappoint and bet the round minimum. She wasn't sure what that said about his hand. He'd been incredibly good at not revealing anything. It was an admirable skill.

Feeling confident, she raised the bet by double.

Memphis hummed and stacked and re-stacked chips as he mulled over his options. The game had been relatively free of sarcasm or attempts to distract the other with insults, so she refrained from taunting him. It seemed like they had established an unspoken rule not to play that way.

After several minutes of silence, he called and tossed chips into the middle of the table.

The dealer laid down the turn card, a five of spades. It did nothing to improve her hand, but she needed to keep him thinking she had something, so she tossed a bet in.

“Call,” Memphis said, with no hesitation. He was bluffing and had nothing, or he had a mediocre hand that had a lot of potential depending on the river. She hated not knowing his tells.

The dealer turned over the river card, a two of diamonds.

Could she force him to fold? She lifted the corner of her cards again to look at her hand. Leaning back, she watched Memphis carefully. His stack of chips was bigger than hers at this point, so there was no way to take him out on this hand, but she could put a dent in it if she went all in and won.

On the other hand, if he had better cards than she did, that would be all she wrote, and the game would be over. Was it worth the risk? That was the ultimate question for every poker hand.

Triple eights with crap cards on the turn and the river meant the only way he won was with a crazy lucky straight or a full house. She calculated the math in her head. It was a big risk.

“All in,” she said, hoping it was the right choice.

Memphis raised an eyebrow.

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“Call,” he said.

When the dealer took his chips and nodded, Memphis laid his cards face up on the table.

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Rylee stared at the cards laying on the table. Memphis had revealed a Jack of hearts and an eight of diamonds. The bastard had a full house. She flipped up her own cards and tried not to feel angry.

Had she really just lost to an amateur?

It seemed that way.

She cleared her throat. “So that just happened. Any chance of a rematch?” she asked, looking down at the red felt of the table.

Around her, the men murmured quietly. At least they had the decency not to whoop and holler at her loss.

Memphis chuckled. “Nope. Not gonna happen. I’ll accept you backing out of our bet, though.”

She lifted her gaze to meet his and furrowed her brow. “You know I won’t do that.”

He gave a one-shouldered shrug. “Just putting it out there that I’m not a bastard who’s going to keep you here against your will.”

She shook her head. “No. I honor my bets. I’m just not used to losing so badly.”

Memphis chuckled. “You didn’t lose that bad, Ace. I just got really lucky on the flop.”

Hunter was leaned against the kitchen counter, watching. “Do I need to stay, or can I get back to work?”

Memphis turned and glared at him. “You really didn’t have to be here to begin with.”

Hunter just laughed. “Of course I did. Rylee, let me know if you need a ride out of here.”

She just stared at him as he turned and walked out. A few minutes later, the movers returned and began breaking down the table. Andrew and the rest of the peanut gallery scattered while the crew worked, and they were soon loading the table back onto a truck.

“What now?” she asked when they were alone.

Memphis closed the short distance between them and bruised her lips with a harsh kiss. “Now, you go upstairs to your room and wait for me.”

She stared at him for a moment, but he smacked her ass and narrowed his eyes. “Go.”

She jogged up the stairs and into her room where she sat on the edge of her bed. How the fuck had she let him get under her skin like that? Going all in had been an idiotic move. Analyzing her gameplay, she realized she deserved to lose, but that didn’t

make it sting any less. Even the knowledge that she would leave here in a month with two million in her bank account didn't soothe the sting of such a brutal loss at the table. And in front of so many of his friends, too. Maybe it was a good thing she didn't have an audience of her own. It had been an embarrassing loss.

Twenty minutes later, her door opened, and Memphis leaned against her door frame.

"I'm sorry if that loss was hard for you."

"Any loss is hard, but that one was especially brutal," she admitted. "I don't know what happened."

He gave a shrug. "You can't control the cards. It was a good game. You sure you want to stay?"

She nodded. "I'm sure. I just need to call my family and let them know I'm staying in Vegas for a few weeks."

"I'll give you some space then. I have some business to take care of and there will be some people here later tonight to help me get settled here. I'll need you to stay up here while they work, but we'll talk soon."

"What about the guys?" she asked.

"I'm setting them up with a different poker instructor and I've moved them back to the strip. It's just us, Ace."

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She swallowed as he turned and walked out. She'd been expecting him to order her to strip or something. Now she was going to be on pins and needles until they talked.

After a few minutes of sitting in silence, she stood and retrieved her phone from the desk. Time to call her mother. Not something she relished. She loved her mother, but they didn't agree on everything, and Kathleen Colton didn't care for Rylee's career choice. There was no way she was telling her she was staying in Vegas for a month because she lost a damn bet.

The call went to voicemail, so Rylee took a deep breath and said, "Hey Mom, it's Rylee. I'm going to stay in Vegas for the next few weeks. My tournament got canceled so I'm... I'm just going to stay here and play in the casinos until it gets rescheduled. Call me when you get this. Or don't. That's really all I had to tell you."

She ended the call and scrolled to a different number.

"It's about time you call me back."

Rylee smirked at Carla's harsh greeting. "Nice to talk to you too."

"So, is it a boy or your mother?"

Rylee wrinkled her brow. "Huh?"

"Why are you calling me? Is it a boy or your mother? Those seem to be the only two reasons you call me anymore."

Rylee laughed at her ex-roommate's claim. But she probably wasn't wrong.

"Sorry. So sorry. I suck. I guess it's a boy. Though my mom has really gotten herself into a mess too, but we can talk about that later."

"Oh goody. I love when you talk to me about your love life. It's been a desert for you lately."

"Hey, watch it. I haven't done that bad."

Carla snorted.

"Do you want me to tell you about this or not?"

Carla laughed. "Sorry. I'm all ears."

"I got invited to another one of Hunter Novak's parties."

The squeal Carla let out had Rylee pulling the phone away from her ear.

"Did you meet a Dom?"

"Something like that. We played a game of poker with a month of my... well... a month of me as the wager. And I fucking lost."

Carla whistled. "He must really do it for you if you lost a poker game."

They talked for a few more minutes before Carla said her boss was calling.

"I gotta run, but maybe I'll come to Vegas next weekend or something."

Rylee grinned. “I would like that.”

“Bye, girl. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do and if you do, don’t name it after me.”

Rylee laughed at her friend’s ridiculous saying and ended the call. As she was plugging the phone in, a knock at the door startled her.

“Rylee, can you come to my office please,” Memphis said as he opened the door.

She gave a nervous nod, her heart racing at the sight of him. He opened the door wider for her to step past him and into the hall where he settled his hand on the small of her back and led her to another door. Inside, he went behind his desk and Rylee had to silently tell her body to calm the fuck down. He looked every bit the poised and powerful CEO behind that desk. He’d changed into a three-piece suit after their game, and he wore it well. Jesus.

“Rylee?” Memphis said.

“Shit. Sorry. What did you say?”

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He hummed. “I see your first lesson will need to be in paying attention when I speak to you.”

“Sorry. I’m listening. I promise.”

He narrowed his gaze and leaned back in his chair before speaking again. “I was saying, I’ve got a bit of paperwork I need you to sign. An NDA, that sort of thing. And I’ll need some basic bank information so I can transfer your money when the time comes. It’s just better to have it all now. It can take time to move that kind of money.”

Rylee nodded and sat down in front of the folder he’d slid to her.

“What’s the NDA about?” she asked as she skimmed the first few pages of the paperwork.

“Our lifestyle is still not socially acceptable. And if it got out that we are engaging in BDSM because we bet on it in high stakes poker? That would look even worse. I would appreciate it being kept quiet. This binds both of us to secrecy.”

Rylee squirmed. “I... I might have called my best friend. I didn’t tell her your name, or anything just gave her the broad details. She’s in the lifestyle too.”

Memphis didn’t seem upset much to her relief. “That’s fine, Ace. I would appreciate getting her to sign an NDA too, but that’s not required.”

Rylee nodded. “She’s thinking of visiting Vegas next weekend. I can ask her then.”

Memphis nodded. “OK. We can—” The phone vibrating against the desk cut him off and he picked it up. “Excuse me.”

He pressed the phone to his ear. “Jeremy. Do you have it?”

He waited a moment, then put his hand over the phone. “Thanks, Rylee. You can go now. I’ll be done with work in just a little while.”

Rylee stood and gave him a little wave. Unsure of what else to do with her day, she went back to her room to take a nap and maybe call her mom again.

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Memphis climbed the stairs, intent on taking Rylee to bed after a long day. His house arrest started tomorrow. So far, he’d managed to keep that little part of this from Rylee, but he wasn’t sure how long that would last. He’d spent the day getting his affairs in order so he could work from home and arranging a wedding ceremony on the property next week.

He paused outside Rylee’s door when he heard her voice raised.

“Mom. I can’t help that my tournament got rescheduled. I’m staying here until it’s over. That’s the most financially responsible thing I can do. If I’m here, I can play in smaller tournaments and keep my game sharp. Maybe I’ll earn enough to get you out of your mess before the tournament.”

He frowned. Was her family in some kind of financial trouble?

She sighed. “I know the mess you’re in isn’t entirely your fault, but we’re not having this argument again. I’m staying and that’s final. I’ll call you when I can.”

He pushed the door open, and she jumped, whirling to face him.

“Hang up the phone,” he said, knowing that’s what she was doing, anyway.

She sucked in a breath but dropped the phone on the bed.

“Do you need money?” he asked as he crossed the room and put his hands on her hips.

She shook her head. “I’m fine. Don’t worry about it.”

He wrinkled his forehead. “I’m not satisfied with that answer, but I’ll let it go for now. But only because I’m ready to bury my cock in you and talk about the rules.”

“Rules?”

He nodded. “Did you think we were going to do this without some kind of rules negotiation?”

She gave him a sheepish look. “I honestly wasn’t sure what to expect.”

He pulled her closer until his hand rested on the small of her back and she was pressed against him. “Right now, you can expect me to fuck you until we’re both exhausted, and then we’ll have dinner and negotiate.”

She swallowed but nodded.

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“Strip, Ace,” he said as he stepped away from her. “I’ll sit on the bed and watch.”

She grinned and backed away from him while he settled onto the plush mattress.

He hummed as she dragged her shirt up and over her head. It swished to the floor as she reached for the button on her jeans.

He stopped her. “Bra first. I have a thing for topless women in jeans,” he admitted.

She lifted one eyebrow and gave a shrug but brought her hands to the clasp on her bra and slid the straps down her shoulders. Her nipples puckered as the pink lacy bra plopped to the floor.

“Gorgeous,” he murmured as he crooked a finger at her. “Come here.”

She walked to him in her bare feet and jeans, stopping directly in front of him. He lifted his hands to the button at her waist and worked it loose.

“For the next four weeks,” he began as he tugged the pants past her hips. “You don’t wear anything unless I tell you to get dressed.”

She frowned as he worked her jeans down her legs.

“Step out,” he encouraged as his hands fluttered back up her thighs to the waistband of her panties.

“If you’re uncomfortable being naked all the time, I’ll provide you with a robe to

wear, but it comes off when I walk into a room that you're in."

She nodded. "That's acceptable."

His hand drifted from her waist to the curve of her ass where he cupped and squeezed.

"The correct response is, 'Yes, Sir'." He landed a sharp smack as he spoke, causing her to yelp.

"Yes, Sir," she said as she reached back to rub her stinging cheek. He gripped her wrist and placed it back at her side.

"I spank you because I want it to sting, Ace. If I want you to rub, I'll tell you."

She nodded and his fingers returned to the waist of her panties. He peeled them down her thighs and watched as they pooled at her ankles. She stepped out without his instruction and he nodded his approval.

"Much better," he murmured. "Now let's go to bed. I want to explore my new acquisition."

He guided her onto the bed before he kicked off his socks and shoes and stood to unbutton his shirt. She lay naked, watching him as he shed his slacks and boxers. He'd dug a condom out of his pants pocket and laid it on the bed next to her.

Rylee sat up and crawled to the edge of the bed where she reached for his cock. He caught her wrist and shook his head.

"I said I was going to explore you. Not the other way around."

She stuck her bottom lip out in a pout, but she laid down again. He crawled onto the bed next to her and let his hand drift from her hip up to the underside of her breast.

“Your skin is like silk,” he murmured as he cupped her in his palm and let his thumb graze a nipple.

Her response was a shuddering deep breath as she jerked against his prodding thumb. He leaned over her and sucked her other nipple into his mouth.

She gasped and let out a low moan.

His fingers danced down her abdomen and came to rest above her pubic bone before he moved his hand to hover between her thighs. He felt her tense as his fingers fluttered millimeters from her sensitive skin.

“Relax,” he breathed when he pulled away from her nipple.

When he saw her shoulders sink deeper into the mattress, he pressed his palm to her bare pussy. She was dewy with arousal and his finger slid easily through her folds and up to her clit.

Her thighs spread wider, as if inviting him in, and he would happily oblige.

He grabbed the condom and rolled it on before kneeling between her thighs.

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With one fluid motion, he thrust himself into her and settled before burying his face in the crook of her neck to inhale her scent.

“God, I’ve wanted you for too long,” he murmured as he pulled out and pushed into her again.

The pleased sounds coming from her throat fueled him on and he pressed into the bed on his forearms for leverage and began to move rhythmically in and out of her.

“You feel so good,” she said on a whimper as he increased the force he used to slam into her. Pulling one hand between them, he circled her clit and rubbed in gentle circles until he knew by her reaction that he was in the right spot.

“Let’s come together, Ace,” he murmured into her ear.

A final thrust and he went rigid as the orgasm shot through him. It seemed to flow into her and soon they were both free falling in a rush of heady bliss.

When they came down from their pleasure high, they both had a hard time catching their breath.

“God damn,” Rylee muttered a few minutes later. “You might not have had to bet me two million if I’d known you could fuck like that.”

Memphis laughed, and it shook the bed. “At least I know the next four weeks won’t be dull.”

???

Rylee made her way downstairs a half hour later in a short silk robe that had magically appeared on her bed when she got out of the shower.

Memphis was leaned against the island counter in the kitchen in a pair of black lounge pants and a dark purple t-shirt.

“Hi.” She felt her face grow hot under his intense gaze as he watched her walk into the room.

“Hi,” he said, his eyes never leaving her. “Any preferences for dinner?”

She shook her head. “I’m not a picky eater.”

“Lose the robe,” he said as he pulled out his phone and lifted it to his ear.

“Go get us dinner from Mizumi’s. A California roll, a spicy tuna roll, the sashimi plate, crispy Brussels sprouts, and the Hawaiian snapper and Wagyu short rib. Enough for two, please.”

It didn’t appear he waited for a response before he ended the call and put the phone on the counter. She let the robe fall down her shoulders, catching it in her hands. She draped it over the back of a barstool and stood awkwardly.

“It will probably be an hour before it gets here,” he said apologetically. “We’ll share a bottle of wine and talk while we wait.”

He leaned down and opened a small wine fridge below the kitchen island. Five

minutes later, he led them into the massive living room. It looked so different than it had last night at Hunter's party. The number of staff it must have taken to turn it around so quickly was mind-boggling.

He handed her a glass of chilled white wine and nodded to the floor in front of the couch. "You can sit on the floor there, Ace."

She rolled her eyes at his stereotyped nickname but did as he said, lowering herself to the floor and folding her legs behind her.

He settled on the couch and sipped his wine.

"How did you become a poker player?" he asked.

She shrugged and took a drink. "My dad liked to play. Weekend trips to Vegas were pretty normal for him, but he only played in casinos. Never joined the tournament world. He taught me when I was about nine. Turned out I was surprisingly good at understanding advanced strategy, so when I turned twenty-one, he talked me into playing in a tournament. I won ten grand. It was a pretty intoxicating feeling, and I knew that's what I wanted to do. I started studying all the greats, and I used that ten grand to enter bigger tournaments. Eventually I got noticed and invited to play in an invitational tournament and the rest is history."

He nodded. "I've always liked the game. My friends and I would play at Yale, but I was already headed for the family business, so there was no way I could ever pursue a professional career."

She narrowed her eyes. "So, Hunter was right, you didn't really need lessons."

He chuckled. "Nope. Those were for my friend and business partner, Andrew."

She nodded.

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“You don’t feel duped or anything do you?”

She shook her head. “I had a feeling you knew how to play fairly well, or you wouldn’t have made me the bet that you did.”

He gave her a sheepish grin. “It wasn’t a sure thing that I could beat you, just so you know.”

“Poker is never a sure thing. I knew the risks. But really, for me there were no risks other than to my ego.”

“You talk about your dad in the past tense is he out of the picture?”

Rylee grimaced. “He’s in prison for fraud among other things. It’s complicated. My mom doesn’t speak to him, but I visit when I can.”

Memphis nodded, and Rylee knew he wasn’t sure what to say.

“It’s fine. I know it’s weird,” she said with a tense smile.

“So, let’s talk ground rules,” he said abruptly changing the subject.

“Probably something we should have talked about before we started making bets. But OK.”

He scowled at her. “Don’t be a smart ass or we’ll start this negotiation off with a punishment. We’re doing something unconventional here, and we’re both learning as

we go.”

She nodded and sighed. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

“Ground rules,” he said again as he leaned over and put his glass on the side table. “We talked a little about your hard limits, but what about soft limits?”

“This nudity thing is definitely on the list,” she muttered. “It’s off-putting.”

He reached down and tweaked a nipple. “That’s kind of the point, Ace.”

She just frowned despite the jolt of desire his touch sent straight to her clit.

“Any other soft limits?”

“This part is hard for me,” she said with a shrug. “I’m not new to the lifestyle, but I’m also not super involved. I’ve been to a handful of parties and I get kinky with the sex partners who let me, but it’s nothing too complicated.”

“So, you might say you’re learning as you go?” he asked with a wink.

She blushed and dropped her head. “Yeah. I guess so. What about you? What are your limits?”

He lifted an eyebrow. “What a delightful question. I don’t think I’ve ever had a sub ask me for mine before. There aren’t many. I don’t share my subs. Blatant lies are a deal breaker, and I think the rest of our limits align. I’m not a sadist. I don’t want to see you suffer. I do like to cause a bit of pain with the end result being pleasure, and I do enjoy challenging my subs. And I don’t have an issue punishing subs who disobey.”

“What kind of challenges?”

He grinned. “I guess you’ll have to just wait and see.”

“What do dominance and kink do for you?” she asked as she drank more of the wine. It seemed to make her bold.

“Aside from really great sex? That’s really the key thing. Finding unique ways to exert power for the purposes of intense pleasure for both of us. The trust involved automatically means our connection is going to be stronger, and the sex is going to be hotter.”

“I guess I can see that. So why have rules and punishments at all? Why not just fuck my brains out multiple times a day?”

He grinned. “The trust, Ace. We both hold so much power when we play these games, and that power is definitely a turn on.”

The conversation lulled, and they drank their wine in silence.

“How long have you lived in Vegas?” she asked, unable to bear the quiet any longer.

“Technically, about forty-eight hours.” Her eyebrows knitted together at his response and he chuckled.

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“I’m usually based out of Phoenix, but some business has me in the state of Nevada for at least the next month.”

“My family lives in Avondale,” she said.

His eyes widened a bit at that. “So, you’re saying you’ve been in my backyard this whole time?”

She shrugged. “I went to school in California and I’ve been living there the last few years, so not exactly.”

The doorbell rang, and she scrambled to her feet, intent on getting her robe. His hand connected with her ass sharply. “I didn’t tell you to get up. I’ll get the door. You stay here and wait for me.”

She dropped back to her knees. The area they were in wasn’t directly visible from the front door, so she was safe from prying eyes. When he returned a moment later, he was carrying her robe.

“Come on. We’ll eat in the kitchen,” he said, tossing her the thin silk garment.

“Thanks,” she murmured as she stood and slipped it on.

She was still tying the belt when they entered the kitchen. Two people were pulling food out of bags and placing it on the table.

“Sit,” he commanded, pulling out a chair.

When the staff finished setting out the food, he pulled out his wallet and tipped them. “Give the chef my regards,” he said as they left.

When they were alone, he pulled something out of his pocket. “We’re going to indulge in something I enjoy,” he said as he stepped behind her.

The room went dark, and for a brief minute she panicked, but his voice soothed her.

“If you’ve never ate a meal in the dark, this is going to be a delightful experience for you.”

She inhaled deeply and waited for whatever was about to happen.

“Do you recall everything I ordered?” he asked. The sound of wood scraping against the floor seemed deafening in her darkened world. She felt him close to her as he settled into the chair he’d just moved.

“I think so, Sir,” she breathed.

“Hmmm. The blindfold certainly brings out your inner submissive. Perhaps I’ll use it more often.”

It wasn’t a thought she relished, she enjoyed being able to see him, but she had to admit she was very turned on.

“I’m going to feed you a little of everything and you’ll guess what you’re eating. For every item you get right, you earn a reward after dinner. Get something wrong and that’s a point for the punishment column.”

It sounded like a fun game to her.

“Open up,” he coaxed. Something cold touched her lips, and she parted them.

The texture was a dead giveaway. She recognized the rice and avocado of the sushi. The crab was some of the best she’d tasted, despite it being such a small bite.

“California roll?” she asked when she’d swallowed.

“Very good,” he praised. There was a pause, followed by the sound of Memphis chewing.

Cool glass pressed against her lips and she opened them. Water slowly filled her mouth, and she drank.

Her breathing felt ragged as another mysterious food item touched her lips. It was raw fish of some kind, but she couldn’t place what.

“Something from the sashimi platter?” she questioned.

He chuckled. “But what do you think it is?”

She opened her mouth for another bite. “Tuna?” she questioned.

“Very good, Ace.”

Some kind of cooked meat followed another drink of water, but she didn’t recognize it.

“And you were doing so well. It’s the Hawaiian snapper.”

“It’s delicious,” she said between bites.

By the time he’d fed her some of everything, she’d earned three rewards and three punishments, but he wouldn’t tell her what he had planned. Instead, he took her blindfold off and kissed her neck before setting an empty plate in front of her so she could dig in and get more of her favorites.

They talked about poker, Vegas, and ways they’d discovered their respective kinks while they ate.

“What’s keeping you in Vegas?” she asked.

“I would rather not discuss business with you.”

“Sorry,” she muttered. She didn’t like the idea of just being a good time to him, but she had to remember that’s exactly what she was, and she was doing this to better her family’s life. Not that she thought they deserved it. But they were family, and she wouldn’t abandon them in their time of need.

“Hey, I wasn’t trying to upset you, Ace. I just talk business all day long and there’s

no need for me to bore you with my work. Not when there are more exciting things to get up to.”

She shook her head. “It’s fine. I just internalize things I shouldn’t. What’s for dessert?” she asked with a grin.

He chuckled. “I’m sure I can come up with something. Finished?” he asked as he stood to carry his empty plate to the sink.

“Yes, Sir,” she murmured, hoping he would take her back to bed.

Instead of bed, he led her upstairs to another of the many rooms. It was still set up with bondage furniture and other toys.

“When the cleaning staff was tearing the party equipment down, I had them set this room up for us.”

She frowned. “You were that sure you were going to win against me, huh?”

“Hopeful, Ace. I was that hopeful.”

He winked and tugged at the belt of her robe.

“You have choices.”

“I’m all ears,” she said with a grin.

“Punishment first, reward first, or do you want to combine the two?”

She shrugged. “I’m not sure. Can I know what they are yet? It might affect my decision?”

He looked toward the ceiling. “Hmmm. That seems like it would tip my hand, Ace. That’s hardly fair.”

“But I don’t even have a hand in this metaphor.”

He laughed. “Fair enough. The rewards will obviously include orgasms. The punishments will be a bit more creative, but I don’t think you’ll hate them. We’ll call them funishments.”

She giggled. “I like that word. I guess we can combine the two.”

He stepped so he was behind her. His hands rested on her silk covered shoulders and slid the material down her arms until she was naked again.

“Go stand in front of the cross with your back to it.” He pressed a kiss to her shoulder.

When she was in place, he strapped her to the cross, much like he’d done the previous evening. Had that really been just last night? It felt like forever ago.

“Three rewards mean three orgasms. Since we’re combining the rewards and punishments, three punishments mean three things that might make it harder for you to reach those orgasms.”

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She frowned. "I thought you said I wouldn't hate my punishments."

He tapped a finger to her nose. "Hush or I'll gag you."

He crossed the room and opened a small cabinet door. A digital panel was there and after pressing a few buttons, the lights dimmed, and soft music was piped in through speakers in the ceiling.

He moved to a chest of drawers in the corner and opened it up. With his back to her, he seemed to be contemplating what to torture her with.

He shoved several small items into his pocket and turned around. "Let's begin, shall we?"

When he stood in front of her, he lifted a hand and let one thumb graze her nipple.

"Such a pretty girl," he murmured as he reached into his pocket.

Nipple clamps on a chain dangled from his fingers. "Punishment number one," he said with a wink. He held one nipple between his finger and thumb and pinched until she winced. He opened the clamp on one end of the chain and placed it around her nipple.

She cried out as he let it close. Then the bastard tightened it until she was seeing stars. Fuck, that hurt. He repeated the process with the second clamp, and she had to squeeze back tears.

“Reward one,” he murmured as she writhed against the smooth varnished wood of the cross. His hand came to rest between her thighs, and he slid a finger inside her slick pussy. The pain in her nipples was still at the forefront of her mind though, and she wasn’t sure how she would reach orgasm. When he slid a second finger in and began to gently stroke her inside, the pain dulled. Then he touched her clit with his thumb, and she knew she would be on the brink of pleasure soon.

“Come for me, Ace,” he said as he brushed her clit with his thumb with more pressure this time. It took a few minutes, but soon the pain in her nipples was just a dull warm sensation and an orgasm rolled through her.

“Fuck,” she cried as he pulled his hand away.

He pulled something from his pocket and soon the music changed to a stock exchange report. The item in his hand was a remote that controlled the system, and he used it to turn the volume up to an obnoxious level. “Punishment two,” he said with a grin. “Let’s see if you can come while that’s playing.”

He reached up and released her hands. “And you get to make yourself come for reward number two. Get busy,” he ordered as he leaned against a spanking bench that sat opposite the cross.

She narrowed her eyes at him. “This is ridiculous.”

He just shrugged. “I can take one of your rewards away if you want to move on.”

She sighed. “What’s the point of this little exercise?”

He leaned forward and tugged on her nipple chain sending electricity through her nipples. “The point is that I want to watch you come, and as my sub you should be able to make that happen no matter what’s going on around you, so get those fingers

busy and come.”

She closed her eyes and let a hand drift between her legs. “I’m sorry,” she muttered. “I wasn’t trying to argue with you.”

“It’s OK, Ace. Just be a good girl and come for me.”

After several minutes of massaging her clit, it just didn’t seem like an orgasm was going to happen as the news anchor droned on about stocks and other drivel she cared nothing about.

“I’m gonna need some help,” she whimpered, hating the idea of failing.

He smiled. “All you had to do was ask, Ace.” He stepped closer to her, pressing his body against hers. “Keep playing with that gorgeous cunt,” he murmured as he leaned down and peppered her neck with kisses.

With his body against hers and his mouth on her skin, she was able to drown out the annoying sounds coming from the speaker system, and she was soon trembling as wave after wave of ecstasy rolled through her. As she came down from the last wave, she noticed he’d switched the audio back to the soothing music.

He pulled another chain from his pocket. A small tweezer style clamp dangled from the end of it.

He attached the free end to the center of the chain between her nipples. The tweezer went exactly where she feared it would. Thankfully, it wasn’t terribly tight as he settled it around her engorged clit. However, the chain was short which meant in order for the third clamp to reach her clit, it had to pull tightly on the clamps attached to her nipples.

“FUCK,” she cried as lightning bolts went through her nipples again.

“Nipples or clit?” he asked as he ran a hand soothingly down her arm as if he weren’t the one causing her pain.

“Nipples, Jesus fuck.”

“Maybe this will make it better,” he murmured. A low hum sounded in her ears and soon a vibrating sensation landed on her clit. The tweezer clamp exposed her clit in a way she wasn’t prepared for, and she soon forgot about the pain in her nipples as she squirmed away from the intense sensation.

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“No, no, naughty girl. You don’t try to get away from the things I give you. Now you have to give me an extra orgasm,” he said as he flipped the vibrator up to high.

The orgasm hit her like a tidal wave, and she screamed as the pleasure rolled through her. She begged him to take the vibrator away, but he ignored her pleas.

“You owe me one more,” he said as he leaned in close and sank his teeth into her neck. The fourth orgasm seemed to shatter her as it blasted through her system. She felt moisture on her cheeks and realized they were tears.

Her body seemed to convulse for several minutes after he pulled the vibrator away and it clattered to the floor.

The pain as he removed her nipple clamps barely registered. His movements were quick and efficient as he freed her from the restraints and lifted her into his arms. He carried her down the hall to his room and sat her on the bed where he laid with her, his hand running up and down her back as she came down from her high.

When she was coherent, he stood and stripped his own clothes off before rolling on a condom. Soon she was in the throes of a final orgasm as he fucked her hard and fast. When they finished and cleaned up, it didn’t take long for her to fall asleep with her back to his bare chest.

“Mr. Foster, from now until your trial, you are hereby ordered to stay on this property. Our sensors will detect whether you are obeying these orders. If they are not adhered to, you will be remanded to the county jail. Do you have any questions?”

Memphis forced himself not to scowl too harshly at the officer who was explaining the details of his house arrest.

“I think it’s all pretty clear. Thank you, Officer. And I’ll be permitted to attend weekly meetings at my attorney’s office and any court dates added to the schedule, correct?”

The officer nodded. “Correct. It’s our understanding that you have a female companion living here as well. Her movements will not be monitored in any way, but I would advise you not to use her to bring contraband into the home. While you are on house arrest, all drugs and alcohol are forbidden. Because pretrial house arrest is not as stringent, we will not be continuously monitoring for those substances, but your assigned officer could show up at any moment and drug test you or ask you to breathe into a Breathalyzer. Again, any infractions will land you in jail until your trial.”

He only half listened as the officer explained the ins and outs of house arrest and how his case was special because of his willingness to have a chip implanted. In some ways that was working in his favor because it was allowing the department to test whether such a device was workable for other criminals sentenced to house arrest.

On the other hand, organizations like the ACLU might have a field day if they got wind of how he was being monitored. People were weird about chips.

He’d slipped out of bed early this morning to go for a long run through the neighborhood. His last for a few weeks at least. He just hoped this house arrest didn’t end with him in prison for twenty years. Which is exactly what would happen if he

didn't figure out who screwed him over.

The officer finished his spiel and demonstrated the tracking system. He also left a large stack of documents for him to read about house arrest and the fees he would be assessed for the city of Las Vegas to monitor him.

He flipped through the stack and carried it upstairs to the room he'd designated as his office. There had been much haranguing on his attorney's part that allowed him to be able to continue working since it was essentially his business practices that were on trial. But after Jeremy's impassioned plea peppered with numerous reminders that innocent until proven guilty was still a thing in this country, the judge had finally given in to the requests they were making. Bail should have never been revoked in the first place.

When the officer was gone, he paced his office and wondered just how much he should tell Rylee. According to his attorney, she should have known everything from the beginning, but it hadn't been a simple thing to work into conversation. Not when every interaction they'd had so far had been extremely sexual.

The sound of movement down the hall caught his attention, and he knew she was awake and would be looking for him soon. He was glad she'd slept through the morning activity, but he had told her people would be around to set up a new security system just in case she woke up and wandered what was happening. Why was he trying so hard to keep his predicament from her?

He dragged a hand through his hair and sent a text to his attorney to meet him back at the house in an hour. Jeremy had been there at the beginning when they'd set up the sensors and implanted the small chip but had left for another appointment before the officers left.

Rolling up his sleeves, he made his way to the bedroom he'd slept with Rylee in.

She was pulling on her robe when he pushed the door open. There was lust in her eyes when she turned and let it fall to the floor again.

“Mmm. Good girl. I would love to play, but I have work meetings all morning. I just wanted to come say good morning before I got started.”

She seemed disappointed but made no move to put her robe back on. He closed the distance between them. His mouth closed over hers and he let his hand fist into her already disheveled hair.

“Good morning, Ace. There should be pretty much anything you want in the kitchen for breakfast.”

“Thank you,” she murmured as her fingers danced on her swollen lips. “What should I do after breakfast?” she asked.

He smiled. “I’m sure you can find ways to entertain yourself in this house. You have free rein. Just stay out of my office if I’m in a meeting.”

She nodded. “OK.”

He frowned and shook his head. “Turn around and bend over the desk.”

Her mouth dropped open, but she obeyed.

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Her ass was a pale, empty canvas and he couldn't wait to paint it red. That would have to come another time, though. For now, he placated himself with three harsh swats to each cheek before thrusting two fingers in her already soaked pussy.

"How do you address me, sub?" he asked as he pumped in and out of her.

She moaned and didn't respond, so he landed six more swats and plunged into her again.

"Answer me, sub, or I'll get my hairbrush and give you a real spanking."

"Sir, I call you Sir," she whimpered as he continued finger fucking her.

"Better," he said, pulling his fingers free. With his left hand, he took her by the elbow and helped her raise up. When she faced him, he shoved the two digits he'd fingered her with into her mouth.

"Clean my fingers, sub," he said. She obediently sucked all of her juices from his hand. He pulled free of her mouth and pressed a kiss to her lips again.

"I'll be keeping track of how many times you forget to call me Sir today. We'll talk about what happens when it's time for bed."

She nodded, followed by a whispered, "Yes, Sir," when he narrowed his eyes and scowled.

When his attorney arrived an hour later with a stack of boxes, he knew it was going to

be an interminable day. Hopefully, Rylee would be OK without him and wouldn't start to regret her decision to stay with him for the next month.

Her body was a welcome distraction from his plight, but he had no desire to bore her. That gave him an idea. Since he'd already worked her up with a mild spanking and some fingering, he would keep her on the edge for the rest of the day.

He picked up his phone while his attorney wheeled in more boxes.

Whatever you're doing, stop and rub your clit for the next 5 minutes. No orgasm though. Just play with yourself.

He helped Jeremy open boxes while he waited for a response. It came just a minute later.

Yes, Sir.

"How close are your accountants to finishing your internal audit?" the attorney asked as he unpacked boxes on the coffee table in his office.

Memphis scowled and put the phone away. "They're supposed to have a report to me by end of business today. I've also asked an independent forensic accountant to go over everything, but they just got started so it could be a week or more before we hear anything from them. I paid a lot to get bumped to the top of their list."

"OK, that's good. You make a decision on looking into your executive board's financials?"

Memphis leaned on his desk and watched his attorney work. "I really don't want to, but if we're not getting anywhere with the company records, I guess we have to. You really think someone on my own board is screwing me?"

Jeremy shrugged. “It seems like the only reasonable explanation to me. If it’s not one of them, it has to be you. And you’re adamant you had nothing to do with it.”

Memphis smacked his palm into the desk, causing Jeremy to jump. “I didn’t, and I’m tired of you making snide remarks about my insistence that I am not guilty.”

Jeremy raised his hands in the air. “Whoa, Memphis. I’m not implying anything. I’m just giving it to you the way a jury is going to hear it. No matter what we present, that’s what the jury will see. It’s one of them or it’s you. Our job is to provide them with someone else to blame, and since you won’t let me go after the people who had their money lost, I have to look to your board. That’s the only option we have for your defense at this point.”

Memphis sighed. “I’m sorry, you’re right. Yes. Let’s start digging. Andrew and Evan are on the approved visitor list to come and visit with me so if we can get them out of the way first that would be great.”

Jeremy nodded. “It will all be done quietly. Now, we need to start digging through all of this. Some of it is stuff the prosecution sent us. Some of it is business records I requested. I’ve got three paralegals going through another stack as big as this. The amount of information the prosecution sent over tells me they have a weak case and are trying to bury us in decoys so we can’t find the meat of what they plan to present.”

Memphis folded his arms as Jeremy opened a box and lifted it onto his desk.

“Pay a dozen paralegals to work around the clock if you have to. You know I’m good for it.”

Jeremy nodded. “Start working.”

Memphis scowled, but that's what he got for insisting that he be deeply involved in his own defense. He got to spend the day pouring over company e-mails looking for a rat.

An hour after the first text he sent Rylee, he sent her another.

Finger-fuck your cunt and send me a picture of your fingers. If I can't tell you followed my instructions just by looking at your fingers, I'm going to punish you later.

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His cock was rock hard as he typed out the dirty text, and the picture of slender fingers coated in pussy juices he got two minutes later made it even harder. It made focusing on the task at hand nearly impossible, but he was determined to keep his new sub horny and on edge all day just to keep things interesting for her while he worked.

When lunch rolled around, he kicked his attorney out and went in search of Rylee.

She was hunched over her laptop and from the looks of it, she was studying spreadsheets.

He stayed back and sent her another text.

Time for another masturbation break. Two minutes on your clit. Tell me how wet you are when you're done.

He watched with amusement as a blush crept up the back of her neck. But she scooted forward in the kitchen chair and spread her thighs to stroke her pussy. It took all his willpower not to go to her and bend her over the table. When she pulled her fingers away, he stepped farther into the room and said, "That wasn't two minutes, but I'll let it slide. How wet are you?"

She jumped at his voice and set the phone down. "Soaked, Sir."

"Good. Just how I want you."

He crossed the room to the table as her gaze went back to the laptop screen.

“Everything OK?” he asked, placing a hand on her shoulder from behind and jerked his chin the spreadsheets.

She nodded. “Yeah. Just some financial stuff for my family.”

He pulled out a pen and mini notebook he’d stashed in his pocket earlier and made a tally mark. She didn’t even notice. He smirked and stuck the items back in his shirt pocket.

“How are your skills in the kitchen?” he asked as he fisted his hand into her hair.

Her hands fell from the keys of her laptop to the belt on her robe, and she slipped it off as he tugged.

“Not great, Sir. But I do have a fucked-up fantasy about the kitchen.”

He raised an eyebrow and bent to kiss her. “Care to share?”

She blushed, but he held her head steady so she couldn’t look away.

“Tell me, Ace.”

She chewed at her bottom lip. “I’m in the kitchen cooking and my Dom drags me off to use me. When he’s done with me, dinner is ruined, so he punishes me for burning our meal.”

He gave a low whistle. “That’s an intense fantasy. I like it.”

She shrugged. “I would probably ruin dinner even without being dragged off and fucked, but that way just seems much more fun.”

“Oh, I agree. Maybe we’ll play with that fantasy sometime. For now, let’s make some sandwiches and talk.”

“More talking?”

He grinned. “Yep. I intend to know you well by the time this month is up, Rylee. Now into the kitchen with you.”

He gave her ass a playful smack and added another tally mark to his notebook when she didn’t respond the way he wanted her to.

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Rylee watched as Memphis pulled food out of the fridge and pantry. Bread, meats, cheeses, veggies, and condiments all made their way to the counter. She opened cupboards until she found plates and knives.

Together, they made a quick lunch and moved to the table where she put her robe back on and sat close to him.

“How’s work?” she asked around a mouthful of sandwich.

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He closed his eyes and toyed with a chip on his plate. “Stressful. I’m experiencing some internal turmoil over a costly mistake that was made, and I’m still trying to clean up the aftermath.”

She didn’t know what any of that meant, but it sounded painful.

“What about you. You’ve been stressed since you got to Vegas and twice now, I’ve heard you mention your family’s finances. Do you need your money early? I can make it happen.”

She shook her head, then paused. “I want to say yes, but I’m also feeling petty. Some of my family’s issues are due to their own mistakes and stupidity. My mom has never been great at managing money, and she’s always being scammed. It’s at least the third time she’s had to be bailed out.”

Memphis frowned. “How did she get scammed this time?”

She took another bite of her sandwich. “Can we please not talk about it?”

“Fine.” He twisted the cap off a bottle of water and raised it to his lips. She watched as he drained half of it before returning to his food.

“What do you want to talk about?” he asked.

She shrugged. “Sorry I’m boring. I just don’t want to burden you with my family drama.”

“It’s OK, Ace. I need to get back into my office for a few hours, anyway. Meet me in the playroom at seven.”

He stood and carried his empty plate to the sink and walked upstairs without another word. She kept her phone close in case he decided to send her anymore dirty texts.

Twice through the day, he found her on a break and kissed her. Once, he spent a few minutes with his fingers between her legs, driving her to the brink of an orgasm then stopping. Each time he turned to leave, he reminded her to meet him upstairs at seven.

While she was in the middle of a game of online poker, her phone buzzed with another text ordering her to masturbate. This time he wanted her to use a vibrator from the playroom and go for ten minutes. There was still no orgasming allowed though. Her entire body was buzzing by the time she finished her task.

This time, she’d taken a ten second video clip and sent it to him. She’d taken nudes and sent them to lovers before, but video was something even more intense. It was difficult not to come with the camera pointed at her soaked pussy.

At seven, she made her way to the playroom and found it empty. Down the hall, she heard voices and stood near the door to listen.

“I just want you to get me out of this mess, Jeremy. I’m not going to prison for something I didn’t do.”

Rylee sucked in a breath. Prison? Why would he go to prison? She didn’t have too much time to think about it though because Jeremy—whoever that was—made his way downstairs and she soon heard Memphis coming her way.

When he stepped into the room, she’d moved to the center. Her gaze met his as she

slid the silk robe off her shoulders.

“Good girl,” he murmured. “At least you remember some rules. Let’s talk about the one you keep forgetting.”

She frowned. What was that supposed to mean?

He pulled a mini notebook from his shirt-pocket and handed it to her. She opened it and saw six tally marks.

“What does this mean?” she asked.

I told you I would keep track of every time you forgot how to address me, Ace. Now we’re going to address each infraction.

She swallowed. “Six times? Really, Sir? I’m sorry.”

He crossed the short distance between them and laid a hand against her cheek. “I’m glad you’re apologetic, but you’re still getting punished.”

His hand trailed from her cheek between her breasts and down her abdomen until it came to rest between her thighs.

“At least you’re still wet for me like a good little sub. Go lie on the massage table on your stomach please.”

“Yes, Sir,” she murmured, unwilling to risk him adding another tally mark to her count.

When she was in place, he stood next to her and caressed her back.

“Your delightfully soaked cunt tells me you probably want an orgasm pretty bad, but you’re going to have to get through twelve minutes of punishment first. Ready to hear how it’s going to work?”

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She nodded. “Yes, Sir,” she murmured as she stared at the ground through the hole in the face rest she laid on.

He laid his hand on her ass and gave a gentle squeeze. “Have I mentioned how much I like your ass?” he asked.

“I don’t believe you have, Sir.”

He chuckled. “Here’s how this works. Before you get to orgasm, you have to endure six minutes of spanking and six minutes of a vibrator directly on your clit. If you come before we’re done, we start all over. Now, because I’m not a complete bastard, we’ll be alternating a minute of spanking and a minute with the vibrator until we get to the end. Your first three minutes of spanking will be with my hand, and for the last three, you’ll be introduced to my hairbrush.”

“What happens if I know I can’t hold an orgasm back?”

“Good question. Again, not a complete bastard, so if you know you’re not going to be able to hold out, you can ask me to stop the vibrator and I’ll spend the rest of that minute turning your ass red.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Good.”

Music filled the room and his hand made gentle circles on her ass for a few seconds. She heard a beep followed by a sharp sting to her ass as he began the first minute of

her spanking. It wasn't overly hard, thank goodness, but sixty seconds turned out to be forever. When the timer beeped, he reset it and wordlessly pressed a vibrator between her thighs. It was a large wand style toy with a bulbous head. In seconds she was writhing against the device, chasing an orgasm. It wasn't until she was on the edge that she remembered she wasn't supposed to come.

Ten more minutes of this torture to go.

"Why are you being punished?" he asked as the timer beeped, and he pulled the toy away.

"Because I didn't address you properly, Sir," she whispered. She'd always hated being forced to confess her crimes before a punishment. Even now, when she was turned on as hell, she didn't like it.

"Very good. On to round two."

The second round of spanking hurt worse. He was definitely spanking her harder this time.

The sound of his hand smashing into her ass seemed to drown out the soft music that was playing. His spanking was fast and furious with no break between swats. She gripped the sides of the table, knowing if she moved, he might threaten to start the timer over on this round. Not something she could risk.

When the minute was over, the vibrator instantly pressed directly onto her clit again. Within twenty seconds she was on the brink. She did her best to think of things that weren't sexy and barely made it through the minute without an orgasm.

"Last spanking with my hand, Ace. After this you get the hairbrush."

“Yes, Sir. Let’s just get this over with,” she whimpered as she clenched her butt, knowing he was going to be lighting it on fire again momentarily.

Soon she was crying out, begging him to stop, but he continued her paddling until the timer beeped.

Once again, her clit was assaulted with high intensity vibrations and she begged him to stop.

“You sure you want me to stop? You’re only twenty seconds in, which means another forty seconds of spanking with my hand.”

She knew the orgasm would crash through her if he didn’t take the toy away soon.

“Please stop, Sir. I’m going to come.”

The sensation stopped and was immediately replaced with his hand peppering her backside. All thoughts of orgasm left her as her ass burned.

When the timer beeped, he gave her a few seconds to catch her breath.

“You’re doing well, Ace. Halfway there.”

She moaned when she felt the hairbrush touch her hot ass.

When the timer beeped again, it cracked against her burning skin. He went a little slower with the brush, but she still endured a good fifty swats with the wicked implement. Her arousal had definitely cooled some, and it wasn’t as much of a struggle to hold her orgasm back as her clit was lambasted with the vibrator.

When the sixty seconds were over, she begged him not to spank her anymore.

“Are you safe wording, Rylee?”

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This was it, her chance to end this scene. But she knew if she ended it now, they would be done playing for the night and she likely wouldn't get an orgasm. She'd wanted an orgasm all damn day.

"No, Sir," she said with a trembling voice.

"Then you need to ask me to finish your punishment, so I know I have your consent, lover."

Lover?She decided not to question the new nickname. It was better than Ace.

"Please finish my punishment, Sir," she whispered.

The brush landed on her ass again, and she could tell he was holding back. That didn't mean it didn't hurt though. Her poor ass was going to be sore for the rest of the night. When the minute timer sounded, he turned the vibrator on high and pushed it against her clit. She let out a garbled moan as he worked it against her sensitive nub.

When she was considering pleading with him to stop, the timer dinged, and she knew it was time for her last round with the hairbrush. She was almost done.

"I'm afraid this last set is going to be the worst, lover. But you're doing very well. I'm proud of you," he praised as the brush rested on one throbbing butt cheek.

The timer beeped to start the minute, and he picked the brush up, crashing it into her ass. She nearly screamed at the force of it but bit it back. For sixty seconds he paddled her ass hard and fast, and she writhed to escape the punishing blows. But he

had excellent aim and never missed her squirming backside.

When the timer beeped, he dropped the brush on the floor and leaned over to speak in her ear.

"The vibrator is about to start. You can't come until you hear the timer go off. After that, there's one more aspect to your punishment."

She flinched, wondering what it could be.

"The vibrator doesn't stop until you've given me six orgasms. After that, I'll take you to my bedroom and fuck you until you scream."

She shuddered as his words sent a chill up her spine and his hot breath against her overly sensitive skin aroused her further.

The vibrator pressed against her swollen pussy and buzzed. It was on low for the first half or so of the minute, but then he cranked it too high. She chewed the inside of her cheek, hoping the pain would hold the impending orgasm back.

When the timer sounded, she relaxed her jaw.

"Come," he commanded.

The orgasm rushed through her and she cried out, clamping her legs around the vibrator.

"Turn onto your back and hang your legs off the table. No closing your legs. You owe me five more, sub."

She scrambled to do as he'd ordered. When her legs were spread wide and hung off

the table, the vibrator returned to its spot accompanied by two fingers from his free hand. He pumped in and out of her as he milked orgasm after orgasm from her. She cried and pleaded for it to stop, throwing in a dozen or more Sirs as she convulsed on the table.

When he stopped, the surface she lay on was drenched with her arousal and her pussy throbbed. He scooped her up mumbling something about cleaning up later and carried her to his bedroom where he dumped her on the bed and ordered her up on all fours so he could fuck her from behind.

Her pussy felt tight and swollen around his cock when he entered her. He pounded her cunt hard and fast, his hands fisting into her hair for leverage.

She didn't think it was possible, but the friction of his movements sent her over the edge one last time just as he lost it.

When he let go of her hair, she collapsed on the bed, breathing hard.

"Holy hell, I'm going to be sore tomorrow," she murmured as he fell onto the mattress beside her.

"Good. I like sore subs. They seem to have an easier time remembering their role."

She giggled. "Yes, Sir. I definitely won't forget this anytime soon."

He patted her still sore ass and rolled off the bed to clean up.

It was just barely eight-thirty by the time they were both showered and in bed. He worked on his laptop and she read a book until they were both yawning and fell asleep. As she was drifting off, she remembered she forgot to ask him about going to prison.



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Three days later, Jeremy and a team of paralegals video conferenced with Memphis to discuss what they had found overnight. His attorney had taken him seriously and put paralegals to work around the clock.

“You should have a talk with Andrew.”

“Why? What did you find?”

The email client on his laptop dinged, and he clicked over to it.

“We found this thread of emails between him and someone from Miller Holdings.”

He stared at the cryptic messages.

“How do you know they’re going to someone from Miller?”

“It took us awhile to figure that out, but in one of the emails, the sender forgot to mask their email domain and it definitely came from them.”

“He’s my best friend and oldest partner, and you think he’s screwing me over?”

“I don’t know what to think, but it definitely warrants a conversation. So far, this is the only evidence of communication we can find aside from your initial approach when you were considering a contract.”

He thought back to how mad his friend had been when he severed negotiations. Memphis had known from the second meeting that the company was up to something fishy, and he wanted nothing to do with it. Then somehow, a contract had been signed on his behalf without his knowledge, and it was looking more and more like someone on his board was working against him.

Now, because the contract was signed in his company's name, he was the one facing jail time for the laws that were broken. The CEO of Miller Holdings was also facing fraud charges.

"I'll talk to him when he comes over this afternoon."

"Where are we on making restitution to the families that were hurt and severing all ties with Miller?"

"A lot of things are hard right now because they froze some of your business assets. The contracts are null and void, based on your statement that your signature was forged, but until we can prove that it's not going to help your defense.

"As for making restitution, it implies that you're guilty and I would rather wait until we have someone else to point fingers at. You're welcome to take the blame and make payments once someone else is facing jail time, but until then, you need to keep your mouth shut and not approach any of these families."

He knew his attorney was right, but that didn't mean he liked it. It was important to put this behind him, clean house on his board, and get the company back on the right track before this escalated to major international news levels.

"God damn it," he shouted into the room for no reason. "I just want this situation fixed, Jeremy."

His lawyer, ever the patient one in the room, gave him a sympathetic look through the screen. “I’ve told you a thousand times, Memphis, this isn’t a situation we can just fix. We have to let this play out.”

“I should get off here I’m not accomplishing anything like this. Send me everything you have on Andrew. I need to get some other work done. While you’re at it, get me a list of the families who were hurt in this scheme. I promise not to do anything right now. I just want their names.”

Jeremy scowled. “I’m your lawyer, not your secretary. You have other employees to handle those kinds of things for you.”

“And right now, I don’t know who to trust.”

“Fine. I’ll do it. But you’re getting billed my weekend rate for this shit.”

“You don’t have a weekend rate.”

“I’m instituting one just for you.”

Memphis flipped the camera off and ended the call.

Instead of working like he needed to, he went in search of Rylee and dragged her naked into the swimming pool in a vain attempt to put his troubles out of his mind.

Her slick pussy felt like silk beneath the water as he dragged his fingers through her folds. He planted her on the top step of the pool entrance and spread her thighs wide. “Lay back against the edge and lift your hips. I want your cunt in my mouth,” he growled. She was quick to obey, and he lapped at her pussy, driving her mad with his tongue. She yelped as his mouth closed around her clit and sucked hard.

“Agh, Memphis, that hurts,” she cried out.

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He knew he was being too rough with her, so he backed off a bit and returned to gentler licks and nibbles. “Come for me, lover,” he coaxed as he devoured her. She tensed against his face and beard, and he knew she was close.

He made it his mission to pull the orgasm out of her and a few minutes later she shuddered beneath him and called out his name as her fingers tangled in his hair.

He sat on the step next to her and hauled her into his lap. “Ride me,” he ordered.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned in for a kiss before she sank onto his cock and let her head fall back. “Fuck,” she hissed as she eased off him and back down. After several long slow movements, he gripped her hair and twisted so she was looking at him.

“I said ride me, sub. Like you mean it. I want you sore when we’re done.”

“Yes, Sir,” she whimpered as he tightened his grip on her wet hair.

And then she obeyed him, riding him frantically, so they were fucking fast and hard. He gripped her hips as she bounced up and down sloshing water all around them. He wasn’t going to last too much longer if she kept this pace up.

He leaned down and dragged his beard across one pointy nipple as she rode. The sensation had her faltering, so he repeated it on the other. She cried out and whimpered as he tortured the sensitive nubs with his scratchy facial hair.

“You like how that feels?” he asked as she continued riding him.

“Yes, Sir. It hurts and feels good all at the same time.”

After spending a few more seconds on her nipples, he pulled away and admired how red they looked from the attention he’d given them.

“So pretty,” he murmured. Then he pinched one harshly until she squealed. The sound was enough to send him to the brink, and he slowed her down, not wanting to end this just yet.

She sucked in heaving deep breaths as she continued to move up and down his cock.

“You ready to come with me?” he asked a few minutes later.

She nodded and pressed a finger to her clit.

“Ride me.”

She rode him with the urgency that told him she craved the orgasm he was promising but she was also chasing the orgasm he would have. Forcing his hips upward, he sent them both over the edge and they clung to each other as the orgasms coursed through them.

When their breathing returned to normal, Memphis could feel the real world trying to creep back in.

“What’s wrong?” she asked as she sat almost floating in his lap at the shallow end of the pool. Her palm came to rest on his cheek.

“Just a lot of stress with work. Some major problems right now, but I’ll sort it out.”

She laid her head on his shoulder for a few minutes but sat up abruptly.

“I just remembered something I wanted to ask you about. When I went to meet you in the playroom last night, I heard you telling someone named Jeremy you didn’t want to go to prison. Why would you go to prison? What’s going on, Memphis?”

Memphis felt his stomach drop. He was not ready to talk to her about this yet.

“Eavesdropping is rude. Do it again and I’ll spank you,” he said harshly. Climbing out of the pool, he grabbed a towel and wrapped it around his waist, stalking back into the house.

He knew he needed to tell her what was really going on, but he couldn’t bring himself to do it. So instead, he’d been an asshole.

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Rylee sat in the pool trying not to seethe at the way Memphis had abruptly left. Why wouldn’t he answer her questions?

She got out of the pool and quickly wrapped herself in a towel. Upstairs, she showered and put her robe on and settled at her laptop.

She typed Memphis Foster into the search engine and hit enter. Thousands of results popped up, but recent news articles caught her eye. Words like fraud, arrest, and trial jumped out at her.

What the fuck was going on? She grabbed her tablet and pulled up the same articles before stalking down the hall to find him.

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Unfortunately, someone was in his office and she wasn't quite brave enough to bust in wearing just a robe. So, she went back to seething and reading.

A knot formed in her stomach as she realized just what Memphis was on trial for.

She called her mom.

"What was the name of the company that took your money?" she asked when the older woman answered.

"Miller Holdings. Why do you ask?"

"Fuck," she bit out.

"Language, Rylee. Just because you gamble in sin city doesn't mean you have to curse like the devil."

Her mother had always taken issue with her swearing, and she had issues with her gambling as well.

"Oh hush, Mom. It's just a word. I need to go. Thanks for the information."

"Wait. Why did you want to know?"

"I can't get into it now, Mom. But I might be home sooner than a month."

"Oh, that's wonderful news," her mother exclaimed.

“Hang up the phone, Rylee.” Memphis’ voice was dark.

“Gotta go, Mom. I’ll call you later.” She ended the call and slowly turned.

“Tell me why you’re on trial.” She held her breath and waited for him to answer.

“It’s complicated and I’m still trying to sort out all the pieces. Is your mother Kathleen Marie Colton?”

Rylee nodded.

“Fuck.”

“I think I better leave.”

“Wait. Please.” His voice was pleading.

She was already searching the room for her suitcase, though.

“Rylee, stop. You don’t understand. I need you here. I told them you’re my live-in companion. If they show up and you’ve moved out that could be bad for me. I’ll likely go to jail until the trial. And now that it looks like it involves your family, if they wanted to, they could add bribery and witness tampering to my charges.”

She stared at him.

“Are you fucking kidding me? Why would they put you in jail?”

“Lying to my house arrest officer?”

“House arrest? Is that what the new security system was all about? You’re under

house arrest? Jesus. Why would they add bribery or witness tampering?"

He dragged a hand through his hair. "This is going to make you hate me, but when I had you sign paperwork and made a copy of your ID, it wasn't just an NDA or to transfer money to you. I did that too, but it also went on some documents that say you're part owner of the villa and we live together. If it looks like I moved you in, and bought you a house, it's going to look like I'm bribing you not to testify against me in a trial. But I swear, I had no idea who you were when Hunter hired you."

"God fucking damn it. How am I supposed to trust anything you say now?"

"You don't. And I respect that, but I'm begging you to stay and hear everything I have to say. You don't have to listen to me tonight, and you don't have to honor our deal, but you do need to stay here for your own sake and mine."

"I'm not doing anything for your sake. If I have to stay here, please leave my room and give me my God damn clothes back. I don't want to talk to you right now."

“I understand.”

He backed out of the room and closed the door. A few minutes later, there was a knock. When she opened it, her suitcase was waiting for her with all of her clothes. She sat on the bed the rest of the night and read about the legal battle Memphis Foster was engaged in.

It occurred to her to wonder if she'd been brought here to somehow gain information about her family to help his trial.

On a whim, she dialed Hunter's cell number. It was the first time she'd ever used it, other than to confirm that she'd landed in Vegas.

“Rylee? Is everything OK?”

She broke down and told him everything. When she was done, she asked, “Whose idea was it to hire me?”

Hunter whistled. “That was quite a story. I can put your mind at ease on one front though. I suggested hiring you and Memphis had no idea who you were. Had I realized your family was wrapped up in the scam he's on trial for, I never would have made the suggestion though.”

Well, that was something anyway.

“Do you think he's guilty? He made it sound like he'd been set up.”

“That’s what he told me too. I have no reason not to believe him. I’ve done business with Memphis for a long time, and he’s always been a fair player in the market. That said, on paper, the deal that got signed sounded very lucrative and money can make people do stupid shit. I can’t tell you what to do because you have every right to be pissed at him right now, but my advice would be to hear him out and do your own research.”

“Thanks, Hunter. Do you think he got my tournament canceled? I never have heard what happened.”

“He didn’t but I can see why you would wonder. I checked it out. It was a legit problem with the sprinkler system, and it’s going to take them a few weeks to be ready to play again. They can’t just move it to a new place because Caesar’s is the one sponsoring the tournament. Are you allowed to leave the property?”

“I’m not sure. He said something about signing my name to some documents that made me half owner of this house and that we were live-in partners. I don’t really understand it all. But I don’t think I have to stay here twenty-four seven.”

“Well, find out. If you can leave, come play in the high-rollers room tomorrow on my dime.”

She laughed. “I like the sound of that, but that’s unnecessary. I will come see you if I can leave though. Thanks for talking to me, Hunter. I know you’re busy.”

“You’re welcome, Miss Rylee. I wish I had better advice for you. I’ll just say I think he’s a good man who got caught in an unfortunate set of circumstances. Then he had to go and start thinking with his dick where you were concerned and that just made things worse.”

Rylee hung up feeling sad. Memphis Foster might have been thinking with his dick,

but somehow her heart had gotten involved.

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Memphis cranked the speed up on the treadmill and pushed himself as he played the last several days over in his mind. He wasn't prepared for everything to blow up in his face so quickly. How the hell was he supposed to fix this?

His connection with Rylee was one of the most intense he'd had with a woman, and he wasn't ready to lose that.

He heard the door to the gym open, but he kept running.

Rylee stepped onto the treadmill next to him and turned it on. She started at a brisk walk and slowly increased to match his intense pace.

He'd been at it for a half hour already, but he wasn't going to quit until she did.

An hour later, they were both panting and drenched in sweat and not for the reasons he'd hoped.

She leaned on the bars of the treadmill as it came to a halt and wiped at her brow with a towel.

"Can we talk?" she asked between gulping breaths.

He gave a solemn nod and stepped off the machine.

"Where?" he asked.

“Shower first. Then the dining room table.”

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He wagged his eyebrows. “Shower sounds great.”

She glared in his direction. “Look, your hot sweaty ass is already turning me on. Stop with the jokes. I’m not ready to forgive you yet.”

He held up a hand in surrender. “I apologize. I’ll meet you in the dining room in an hour. Order dinner. You pick.”

Before he could turn to walk out, she took him by surprise by grabbing his hand and pulling him to her. He went to her willingly.

She stood on her tiptoes and wrapped her arms around his neck. Her lips met his in a crushing kiss. He slid a hand into her hair and fought the urge to take control of the kiss. What he didn’t do was hold back on returning her attention. He devoured her mouth as much as she would let him.

When she pulled away, her gaze was stony.

“What was that for?” he asked, genuinely curious.

“I wanted one last kiss in case I don’t like what I hear at the table.”

Without another word, she turned and walked out. He stared after her and prayed he could convince her to kiss him again. Hell, he wanted her to spend the rest of her life kissing him.

When she disappeared from view, he grabbed a bottle of water from the small fridge

in the gym and walked inside. He walked slowly to give her time to get upstairs before he made his way to his own shower to rinse off and change clothes.

An hour later, he came downstairs when he heard a commotion at the front door. A pizza delivery driver stood dumbfounded as two officers pushed their way past him and Rylee into the house.

“Rylee take the pizza into the kitchen. I’ll pay the driver,” he said, taking charge of the situation. “It’s just a random search which they’re allowed to do.”

She nodded and took the pizza boxes from the driver.

The officers waited for him to pay the driver and send him on his way before one pulled out a Breathalyzer. “Blow into this please, Mr. Foster.”

He rolled his eyes but blew.

“Very good, sir. We’re searching the property for contraband. Is there anything we should know?”

He shook his head. “I was just about to have dinner with my partner.”

They nodded and made a show of looking around. But the villa was massive, and he knew they wouldn’t search the entire thing.

When they were gone, he stood with his head pressed against the front door. He wasn’t sure how the hell he was going to explain all of this to Rylee, but he knew if he wanted to keep her here, he had to figure it out.

In the dining room, Rylee sat at the table with her head resting on the pizza boxes.

“I’m sorry about that,” he murmured.

“Did they go through my things?” she asked.

He shook his head. “I don’t think they opened that door. They’re more interested in me.”

“But they could have, right? That’s what the paperwork I signed would have said?”

He gave a hesitant nod.

“Can you see how fucked up this is?”

Another nod.

“Are you going to say anything?”

He pulled out the dining room chair at the head of the table closest to where she sat and motioned for her to slide the pizza his way.

He opened the box and pulled out a slice of supreme.

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“Excellent choice,” he murmured as he bit into it.

“If you’re not going to talk to me, I’m leaving, and you can rot in jail for all I care.”

He narrowed his eyes at her. “I’m going to talk. I just need a minute to gather my thoughts, please.”

She snagged her own slice of pizza and ate while she waited.

“Another company wanting to join forces on a community outreach project that could make a lot of money approached me about property investment and neighborhood improvement here and in Phoenix. The deal seemed off to me, but I’m a believer in letting my board vet things. I have them for a reason. Ultimately, most of us decided it was a terrible idea, and we severed the negotiation process with the company. There were a handful of board members who wanted to hear more, but they ultimately fell in line. At least that’s what I thought.”

He stood and walked to the fridge where he pulled out a bottled juice.

“Want one?” he asked from behind the fridge door.

She shook her head. “I’ll have a beer though.”

He grimaced. He would kill for a beer right now, but it wasn’t worth going to jail over and they’d already proven they would check.

“A few months ago, news broke about what the company was doing and the way it

screwed a lot of people over. They were getting small time investors to invest in a variety of neighborhood improvement projects as if they already had permits and permission. They were also keeping an inaccurate count of their debt and income, so on paper it looked like everyone involved was going to make money. Then one of the most expensive deals they were peddling completely fell through and all their debt came due. It basically screwed all the small-time investors like your mom out of their money.

“The state attorneys in Arizona and in Nevada started an investigation and promised to bring charges. I was supportive of this and even offered to give the investigators my records of our attempted negotiation with the company. Then contracts emerged that showed my company was covering a portion of their debt at around twenty-five percent. I did not approve these contracts, but my name was on them. They filed charges against me in Nevada. The state of Arizona has opted not to charge me at this time, but they still might.”

She blew out a breath. “This is a lot to take in, Memphis. I don’t even understand it all. Are you saying someone set you up?”

“Someone or perhaps multiple people on my board and within my company went behind my back and signed the deal because they thought it would bring in a lot of revenue and the possibility of expansion into a new field.”

“Who did it?”

He shook his head. “We’ve been pouring through documents for weeks trying to figure that out. Only today we came up with some things that might point us in the right direction.”

“What were those things?” she asked.

He shook his head. "I'm not willing to answer that."

"Then I'm not staying. You answer all my questions, or I'm gone."

He sighed. "It was an e-mail thread between Andrew and someone from the other company. I can show you if you're interested."

"And when did you figure out that my mom was one of the people who got screwed over?"

"Just today. I swear."

She nodded, seemingly satisfied with that.

"I want to believe you. But I need to know that you understand just how fucked up some of your actions were."

He reached for her hand, but she pulled away. "I swear, Rylee. I get it. This whole situation is fucked up and Hunter was probably right. I'm not thinking straight."

"Is it going to be a problem for your defense if I'm here?"

He dragged a hand through his hair. "My attorney might say yes, but I don't care. I want to make restitution to the families who were hurt."

She toyed with the beer he'd handed her.

"But if your story is true, it wasn't your fault."

"It is, though. If I'd had a more watchful eye on the people around me, that contract wouldn't have been signed without my knowledge."

“I did some research into you. Your company is massive. I’m not saying you’re without fault, but it seems like it would be impossible for you to have your eye on everything at all times.”

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He nodded. “You’re right. But I clearly need to do a better job. I’m working on investigating every member of my board and every staff member that had access to my signature stamp. I’m learning that entirely too many people had access to it and that’s definitely going away.”

She blew some stray hairs out of her face. “I need to just be on my own and think for a while. I’m going to my room. I would appreciate a heads up if you think they’re going to come search my room.”

He watched her stand and take one of the pizza boxes with her.

“Rylee, I’m really sorry.”

She bent and kissed his cheek. “I believe you. I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

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Back in her room, Rylee sat on the bed with her beer and a box of pizza and tried to process how she felt. On the one hand, she felt used and tricked. On the other, he was genuinely contrite and clearly going through a lot. Not to mention, their chemistry had been off the charts and there was no sign that he knew who she was when they first met. Her mind drifted to their first kiss, their first scene and their first time to make love.

She’d taken a lot of risks and bet big on Memphis Foster, and if she weren’t careful,

she would lose everything.

How was she going to figure out the right thing to do?

Her phone rang.

“Mom, I told you I would talk to you in the morning.”

“I know, but I needed you to hear this. Everett Miller called me tonight.”

“Who?”

“Everett Miller. He’s the CEO of Miller Holdings.”

Her eyes went wide.

“When did he call?”

“A couple hours ago. He wanted to let me know the company was returning my initial investment with an additional fifteen percent. We’re going to be fine, honey. You can come home if you want.”

If Memphis had a hand in this, it would have been between their blow up this morning and their meeting in the gym.

“That’s fantastic, Mom. Now hire a damn financial adviser and listen to them.”

“Rylee, please. You know how I feel about that language.”

“I’m serious, Mom. You’ve almost lost everything too many times. The things you do with your money are way riskier than anything I do at the poker table.”

Her mother was likely rolling her eyes, but she didn't care. The woman needed to learn.

When she ended the call with her mom, she scrolled to the entry for Memphis and clicked the message icon.

Thank you. I don't know what you did or said to Everett Miller but thank you.

He didn't respond at first and she thought maybe she'd been wrong about him being involved, but as she was changing into pajamas, her phone dinged.

You're welcome. I'm sorry. I miss you.

As she was thinking of going to sleep, her phone lit up with a phone call. It was Carla. Fuck, she'd forgotten her friend mentioned wanting to visit Vegas. Reluctantly, she hit accept on the screen.

"I have the next three days off. I'll be in Vegas at three tomorrow afternoon."

"Do you just not believe in saying hello?"

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“It’s implied. Now I obviously can’t stay at the villa with you and interrupt your sexy fun times, but I do expect to have dinner with you and your hottie at some point during my visit and you have to help me play blackjack one night too.”

Rylee chuckled. “Just tell me which casino and I’ll be there. As for dinner, things are complicated and I can’t talk about everything just yet, but I’ll see what I can do.”

Carla growled. “Did you chase him away? You have to stop chasing men away.”

Normally that would piss Rylee off, but she knew her friend spoke from a place of love.

“Actually, he hasn’t gone anywhere. It just really is complicated, and I might have signed an NDA and you might need to sign one too before I can talk to you.”

Carla was quiet for a minute but said, “OK. Well, I’m going to book something at the Bellagio.”

“Don’t do that. Book at the Pink Sapphire. I’ll make Memphis pay for it.” She winced. It probably wasn’t the best idea to say his name.

“Memphis? I like that name. It suits you.”

Rylee smiled. “Maybe. But things are a mess right now, and I have no idea if it’s going to work. Just get here and we’ll talk, OK?”

Carla didn’t sound happy, but she said goodnight and Rylee set the phone on her

nightstand.

As she drifted to sleep, it was to thoughts of Memphis, and she knew he would haunt her dreams tonight and every night if they didn't figure out how to fix this.

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Memphis woke to banging on his door. What the hell? It seemed unlikely the police would return for another search less than twelve hours later.

He jerked open the door without putting on clothes.

A very dressed Rylee greeted him. Her fist froze in midair as she stared at his morning wood.

"Um. Hi. Sorry. I didn't think you would still be asleep."

He folded his arms and waited for her to speak.

"I remembered something about my first day in Vegas. Can you please put some clothes on?"

He cracked a smile and dragged a hand through his hair.

Turning, he ambled to the dresser, making sure she caught a glimpse of his muscular backside. He was proud of his ass. It occurred to him that he didn't show it off nearly enough.

He tugged on a pair of lounge pants and a black t-shirt and motioned her inside.

"What did you remember?" he asked.

“Andrew said something while you were away from the table when I commented on your surly mood. It didn’t strike me as odd until you told me last night that he might be involved in your current predicament. Did he bring Miller Holdings to the negotiating table?”

Memphis shook his head and sat on the edge of his bed. “No. To my knowledge, they approached us out of the blue, which is part of why I was so skeptical.”

Rylee nodded. “OK. So, when we were playing, and you stepped away for a phone call, he commented on your mood and that he was sad you couldn’t even enjoy his bachelor weekend. Then Evan said we all knew the mess you were in was bullshit. After that, Andrew said he felt bad for bringing Miller in and starting this mess, and when Evan said he thought Miller came to you, Andrew got pretty shifty and seemed uncomfortable. Even told Evan not to mention it to Kimberly.”

“God Damn it.” Memphis stood and paced in front of his bed while Rylee leaned against his door and watched him.

“I really appreciate your help with my family,” she murmured after a few minutes of silence.

“I appreciate you hearing me out last night. I know this is hard on you, Rylee, but I’m grateful you’re here. I’m grateful Hunter hired you and I got to meet you. I’m just sorry it’s under such awkward circumstances and that I’ve fucked this up so badly.”

He wanted her to come to him, touch him, kiss him again, but he knew it would take some time to earn back her trust.

“So, is that helpful?” she asked, sidestepping his confession of his feelings.

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“It is, lover,” he whispered then cleared his throat. “It’s extremely helpful. I know I’m looking in the right direction now. Smug of him to take the blame in front of you. I guess he had no idea who you were either, though.”

“He was here yesterday, wasn’t he? Did you know then that he might be involved?”

Memphis nodded. “I did. My attorney advised me not to confront him just yet. I’ll meet with Jeremy this morning and then with Andrew again this afternoon, and at that point I will confront him. Hopefully, the State Attorney can be convinced to drop the charges against me and transfer them to him instead.”

“If I can help let me know.”

“So, you’re not leaving?”

She shook her head. “I don’t know where we stand sexually, but I’m willing to stay if it keeps you out of jail. I just need you to understand how fucked up it is that you tell me blatant lies are a deal breaker for you and then you pull a stunt like this. I’m conflicted.”

He wanted to pull her into his arms, but he resisted. “I get it. I swear. And I’ll spend as much time as you need making this up to you.”

“You can start by paying for a suite at the Pink Sapphire for my friend Carla. She gets in at three. And Hunter wants me to come sit in on a high roller tournament on his dime later today or maybe tomorrow. Is that something I could do or will that cause you problems?”

He hated the idea of her leaving. It felt like if she did, she might not return. But he couldn't keep her here against her will. Rylee wasn't the one on house arrest.

"I'm sure we can work it out. They warned me not to use you to bring in contraband, but you should be free to go to the strip. I'll call about the suite now. Did she already make a reservation?"

Rylee nodded. "I think so. She just told me she was coming last night. If I have her sign an NDA, can I talk to her? She's my best friend."

Memphis waved his hand. "Yes, please. No NDA needed. I trust you."

She quirked an eyebrow up and gave him an awkward shrug. "OK. Well... I'm going back to bed."

When Rylee was gone, he jumped into action on his phone. It was time to get this damn chip out of his skin and get on with his life.

He just hoped that life could include a certain professional poker player.

"I need you here ten minutes ago, Jeremy," he barked when his attorney complained about the early hour.

Eventually, he got his message through and his attorney said he would be there within the hour.

After that, he called Andrew and asked him to come over for a lunch meeting.

As he was talking to Hunter about a suite for Carla, Rylee poked her head into his office and said she was heading to the strip to have breakfast with Hunter before she started playing poker.

“Don’t spend all his money,” he teased, hoping to get a smile out of her.

It worked, and she gave him a little wave. “I hope you get everything worked out today.”

“I’m pretty sure I will, thanks to you. And Carla has a suite for the next three nights it’s all covered.”

When she was gone, he squared his shoulders and got to work building a case against his former best friend so he could confront him in a few hours.

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Rylee sat to the left of the dealer button and contemplated her next move. She was up twenty-five grand and had the potential to triple that with this hand. Spending Hunter’s money had proved to be more fun than she thought it would be. Carla wasn’t due in town for another three hours, and Rylee planned to play until then.

The rest of the players stared at her or their cards and waited for her decision.

Finally, she called the bet and waited for the dealer to turn up the river.

It was a gamble, but it paid off. She tossed her pair of queens on the table to reveal a three of a kind. She won the pot. The men around the table grumbled, and she knew they were tiring of her cramping their style.

She was about to ante up for the next round when her name sounded over the speaker system asking her to come to guest services.

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She frowned and nodded for the dealer to color up her chips.

Shoving the stack of chips into her pocket, she stood and left the high-roller poker room and looked for the guest services counter.

“Mr. Novak asked you to check the news, Miss Colton.”

She frowned but pulled out her phone. There were half a dozen missed calls and even more texts.

She quickly navigated to the news app.

Andrew Jenkins Arrested on felony fraud charges. Memphis Foster will go free. She stared at the headline.

She scrolled through the urgent texts from Memphis, asking her to call him.

Pressing the green button, she called him back.

There was no answer, so she called Hunter.

“I take it you finally got the message?” he asked.

“I did, but now he’s not answering his phone.”

“Hang tight. He’ll call you back. His company is about to be turned on its ear, so he’s got a lot of cleanup to do. You can go back to playing poker or I can set you up in a

room if you want to get away from everything for a while.”

“Thanks. I might take you up on that if I don’t hear from him soon. For now, I’m just going to wander around.”

“OK. Keep an eye on your phone.”

As she shoved her phone in her pocket and turned to find a slot machine to play—her father would be appalled—a familiar figure stepped onto the casino floor.

His eyes were frantic as he scanned the crowd, but she couldn’t move to go to him.

When he spotted her, he broke into a jog and pulled her into his arms.

“It’s over, lover,” he whispered.

She enjoyed the feel of his arms around her for a moment before she stepped back.

“I’m happy for you, Memphis. What happened?”

“After I confronted him with the evidence we had, I got him to confess. His personal assistant also played a large role and is facing criminal charges. Kimberly called off the wedding. The company as a whole has agreed to paying a hefty fine in addition to assisting in the restitution owed the families who were hurt, and we’ve agreed to oversight from a business watchdog organization for the next three years, but I’m not going to prison.”

The relief in his voice made her want to hug him again, but she needed to know where they stood.

He stared at her for a while before he finally said, “Rylee, I’m so sorry for all the pain

I've caused you. Forgive me, please?"

"I can forgive you. But I'm not sure where that leaves us," she murmured.

He stepped closer to her. "It's your call, Ace. You gonna fold or raise the bet and take a risk?"

She couldn't help but grin. "There you go with the really terrible poker metaphors again."

He let out a laugh.

After another moment of silence passed between them, he picked up her hand.

"You're killing me, lover."

"Am I your lover?"

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He nodded. “My lover, my sub, my wife, if you’ll have me someday.”

“You sure you don’t want to see the rest of my hand first? It might not be worth the risk.”

He pulled her, so she was flush against his chest.

“I wouldn’t bet on that, Ace.”

She stared up at him and knew she was a goner.

“OK. I’m all in.”

He lowered his mouth to hers and kissed her fiercely.

“I love you. You’re the best bet I’ve ever made.”

He scooped her up, causing her to squeal. “Where are you taking me?” she asked as he strode through the casino.

“Home. We still have three weeks of solitude and I plan to make the most of every day.”

“But you’re not on house arrest any more. Surely you have to go back to work.”

They crossed through the entry doors and into the stifling Vegas heat.

“The beauty of being the boss, Ace. I’m officially on vacation and so are you.”

A car was waiting for them and he helped her into the backseat.

“I love you too,” she murmured as he wrapped an arm around her and told the driver to take them home. “Do you actually own the house?”

He nodded and grinned. “So do you. I wasn’t lying about that. I’m so sorry for the ways I misled you.”

She unbuckled and straddled him, holding his face in her hands. “I accept your apology. We’re going to pretend you’re still on house arrest and you can spend the next three weeks making it up to me.”

His hum rumbled in his chest and sent a shiver through her as she leaned down to kiss him.

“I hope you don’t think I’m going to switch roles with you, Ace. I’m still in charge.”

She grinned as his hand snaked into her hair and pulled. “I wouldn’t have it any other way, Sir,” she said with a whimper as his grip tightened.

Rylee leaned in and kissed him, sliding her fingers into his perfect hair. As she let herself get lost in his taste, her phone buzzed, and she gasped.

“Shit. I forgot about Carla,” she said pulling away from him to check her messages. But the message wasn’t from Carla. It was an unknown number.

You’re ruining everything and I’m not going to let you get away with it. Be on the next flight out of Vegas or you’ll regret it.

Her hands shook as she showed Memphis the phone. He didn’t curse, he didn’t even

blink. But his gaze grew steely as he lifted the device from her fingers and tucked it in his pocket. “Don’t worry, lover. I’ll keep you safe.”

Rylee had no doubt he would, and despite still feeling shaky from the threatening message, she had a feeling Memphis would stop at nothing to find out who sent it and make them regret ever picking up their phone to send it.

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