

My heart started pumping hard as I spotted the back of her head. I'd pulled a ridiculous amount of strings just to get a chance to talk to her, and I knew she wouldn't even be happy to see me. Still, I didn't think for a second that it wouldn't be worth it. I hadn't felt so alive since I could remember. I also couldn't remember a time when I'd felt this level of anticipation. I couldn't think about anything but her. *What was it about her?* She was beautiful, sure, and her body was fucking hot, but it wasn't as though I hadn't had my share of that.

*Her reaction to me*, I thought. She'd said that she wasn't into the lifestyle, but I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that she was wrong about that. She might not have tried it, but I'd never seen a more perfect sub in my life.

*The chemistry...*We would be perfect together, I was certain. *That must be it.* And it was that. But still...it was more. *Her eyes*, I thought. There's

something in those eyes, something that called to me, some kindred spirit that I needed to explore.

I had no doubts that I could seduce her—her reaction was just too volatile to give me any doubts. She worried me though, and my entire body felt drawn tight with tension. She was skittish. If I didn't pursue her relentlessly, she would walk away from me and not regret it. I *hated* that. I wanted to affect more than her body, and that was the strangest thing. I'd never had that urge before, and I barely knew the woman. Still, I *felt* like I knew her. She was reserved, but I felt like I could read some things about her like a book. Like her eyes. She was young, possibly a little younger than I'd like, but those pale blue eyes of her's were ageless.

I shot a glance at Clark, who was at the door, helping to execute the slow evacuation of the club. He nodded at me, not quite hiding a tiny smirk. I wouldn't have caught it if I didn't know him so well. He thought that these were ridiculous lengths to go through for a woman. I mentally shrugged. The sad part was, I would have done more. Already, my obsession with this woman didn't seem to have a limit. I should have been more troubled by that...

I began to approach her. I had to stop, my fists clenched hard, when I saw a pilot touching her hair. I counted to ten, my vision growing cloudy with a fine red film. *Beating a man to a bloody pulp for laying a finger on her would surely scare her off...*

I saw her reaction to the man, the slight recoil, but he didn't seem to notice, leaning close to her. I had to take another long pause, repeat another long

count, before I resumed my stride towards her.

I rudely moved the pilot out of my way, shouldering in with no apology. I didn't even look at him. I didn't want to see the way he looked at her. I might lose it, then.

I was directly behind her chair as she shook her head, talking to Stephan. "Not like that," she was telling him in an infuriatingly drunken voice. "A different kind of scary. I haven't figured it out. All I know for sure is, I need to stay the hell away from Mr. Beautiful."

Perversely, her words made me hard. I was glad her chair obstructed the room's view of my growing erection.

Stephan spotted me, his eyes widening in recognition. I nodded at him. I liked him, and there was no doubt in my mind that I had to stay on his good side. That would be essential if I wanted to get close to her.

Bianca had been slouching against the bar, but with the look on Stephan's face, she straightened suddenly. "What?" she asked loudly, drunkenly. I hated how drunk she was with a singular passion. "What? Is Mr. Beautiful standing behind me or something?"

Stephan pursed his lips, and she spun to look at me. She gazed at me, looking drunk, and dazed, and too beautiful to keep my hands off of. *Fuck*. I was in trouble. I hated alcohol, and drunk women were not something that had ever tempted me, but I still wanted her as badly as ever.

"Hello, Mr. Beautiful," she said softly in that slurred

voice. The dazed look on her lovely face quickly turned to an accusing one. She spun on Stephan. "Traitor!" she slurred.

Stephan threw his hands up, giving her a completely innocent look. I'd need to watch out for that one, I thought. *He's a bit of a hustler.* "I didn't give out your number or anything. He asked if we were going out tonight. I just told him where. No harm done."

I looked down at her head, at that smooth, pale golden hair. I had to touch her. I couldn't stop myself for even another second.

I pressed my cheek to her hair, my mouth close to her ear. It was an effort not to shudder at the brief contact. "Mr. Beautiful, huh?" I whispered in her ear. She'd gone stiff. "I'm going to take that as a compliment, though I have to say, it's a new one."

"Hello, Mr. Cavendish," she said stiffly. She didn't turn.

I smiled, loving the sound of that on her lips. Too much for public, in fact. "I told you, call me James," I said quietly into her ear. "Or Mr. Beautiful, if you prefer. You can save Mr. Cavendish for when we're in private."

I felt a fine tremor move through her before she pulled away. I relished her reaction.

I straightened and grinned at Stephan, and he smiled tentatively back. "How's it going?" I asked him.

His smile widened. "Good. I've had a few more than I meant to, but I can't say I care at the moment."

I sighed, looking at Bianca. It was the first time I'd seen her hair down. I found it nearly impossible to keep from touching the soft fall of it. "You aren't the only one," I said wryly.

He grinned. "We've got a great bartender tonight. What can I say?"

We chatted companionably for a few minutes while Bianca ignored us both. He was easy to talk to. I was glad we'd have no trouble getting along, since he and Bianca seemed to be a package deal.

Bianca lurched to her feet suddenly and drunkenly.

"Whoa, careful there, Buttercup," Stephan told her.

I moved closer, wrapping my arm around her waist. "Buttercup?" I asked him, distracted for a moment from the dark mood her condition had put me in.

He gave me a sheepish look. "It's an old nickname, from when we were kids. Bee will have to tell you the story sometime."

"I look forward to it," I said. She swayed a little, and I had to grit my teeth to remain calm. "Does she drink like this often?" I asked him, my tone deliberately bland.

"All the time," she said loudly. I wanted to spank her right there.

"This is the first time she's had a drink since the month she turned twenty-one," Stephan corrected. "At least two years ago."

I felt a wave of relief at his words. This wasn't a pattern for her. Good.

I put my mouth to her ear again. "You remember what I told you about lying to me," I warned quietly.

“That’s two.”

“He’s a kinky bastard,” she said in a whisper, looking at me with very wide eyes.

I bent to make sure she was looking into my eyes and nodded. It was best that she understood that right away.

“I need to go to the bathroom,” she announced to the room.

“I’ll help you get there, Buttercup,” I told her. Strangely, I loved the ridiculous nickname.

Stephan rose as though to help. I waved him off. “I’ve got her.” I told him.

She’d left her phone on top of the bar. She didn’t notice as I grabbed it, shoving it in my pocket.

I led her through the room, taking the brunt of her weight as she stumbled along.

“Why are you here?” she asked me.

I gave her the short version. “Well, I came here because I very much want to fuck you until neither of us can walk.” It was the most polite way I could word it. “I want you so bad I can’t see straight.” It was an understatement. “But since that won’t be happening now, I’m staying to make sure you make it back to your room in one piece.”

“Why won’t that be happening now?” she asked me, sounding put-out about it.

I had to work to keep a straight face, loving what her statement told me about her willingness.

I raised a brow at her. “I won’t touch you while you’re impaired. Never. I just don’t do that.” I wanted to be very clear.

“So you give up?” she challenged.

I kissed the top of her head to hide my grin. “Far from it. I still intend to fuck you senseless. Just not tonight, Buttercup. And I’d appreciate it if you could refrain from ever getting yourself into this condition again.” I couldn’t keep the irritation out of my voice as I thought about her getting this drunk.

She stopped suddenly, turning into my arms, pressing into me. I sucked in a breath at the feel of her against me. Some graphic pictures of me buried inside of her flashed through my mind. *God, I wanted her.*

She made a point of meeting my eyes, her lush breasts plastered to my chest. If she wasn’t so drunk, I’d have given serious thought to nailing her against the nearest wall. She was just the perfect height for a good wall fuck...

“Yes?” I asked her, my tone as hard as my cock.

“My condition isn’t your business, James.”

I didn’t even entertain that idea. It was *all* my business. “I intend for it to be my business,” I said diplomatically.

“You don’t want to date me, you said,” she told me. She sounded a little wounded over it, which made me mentally flinch. I hadn’t handled that delicately enough, hadn’t explained that my need to keep my personal life very private was for her benefit. Of course, to tell her that, I would have to explain how infamous I was, which would inevitably lead to her discovery of how promiscuous I’d been. My reputation was beyond tarnished, and I knew instinctively that it wouldn’t go over well with her. She would never trust me if she had an inkling of my

past. I thought that one was better put off as long as possible. I didn't think it would take much to scare her off at this stage in the game.

I sighed, debating with myself on how to handle her. "It's true," I said. "But I want other things. I at least want the chance to talk to you about what I do want."

"So talk," she told me. I had a very brief but vivid fantasy about spanking her bare ass right there.

"We will talk. When you're sober. And when we have some actual privacy."

She wagged a finger at me, then stood on her tiptoes, speaking directly into my face. "That doesn't sound like talking," she slurred.

I flinched, hating how intoxicated she was.

It was an effort not to follow her into the restroom, her steps were so unsteady.

A cheap looking redhead passed me, giving me a lascivious once over. I ignored her, used to the type.

I made good use of the five minutes she was in there, programming my number into her phone, and then calling myself so I had her's.

I took Bianca's arm the second she staggered out of the restroom.

"Have you ever been so drunk that you can't look yourself in the eyes when you see a mirror?" she asked.

I watched her, keeping my face blank. I thought that she was *trying* to piss me off.

"Answer me, James," she said.

"No," I told her.

"Dance with me," she told me.

“No.”

“Fine. Somebody’ll dance with me. Just you watch.”

I gripped her arm when she tried to move away. “No, they won’t. If you have to dance, it’ll be by yourself tonight,” I told her, leading her by the arm back into the main room of the bar.

“Whats’appened to all the people?” she asked, looking at me.

I shrugged.

“Is it that late?” she asked, rifling through her handbag. “Where’s ma’phone?”

“You left it at the bar,” I told her.

She started to move in that direction.

I held her back, holding her phone in front of her face. “I grabbed it for you.”

She snatched it from me, giving me a glare that I found way too adorable. She glanced at it, checking the time. “S’only eight clock. Why d’y’a spouse everyone is leaving? Is something happening? Are they closing?”

I shrugged, saw that it infuriated her, then shrugged again, keeping my face carefully blank.

Her eyes narrowed on me. “You don’t have to stay here,” she told me. “I’m just fine.”

I pulled her against me, pushing her cheek into my chest. The urge to touch her was overwhelming me. I couldn’t remember a time when I’d fought so hard for control, both of my anger, and of my physical response. I buried my face in her soft hair. It felt like silk, and smelled like heaven. “You’re an infuriating woman,” I murmured. She struggled a little at that,

but I just held her tighter. “I would be happy to walk you back to your room, but I’m not leaving you here when you’re acting like this.”

“You don’t know anything about me. I may act this way all the time,” she said into my shirt.

She started nuzzling into my shirt, and I clenched my jaw hard to keep from touching her. I wouldn’t so much as kiss her when she was this plastered, and I was shocked at myself for wanting to.

She pulled back to study me, focusing on my chest. She started running her hands over my chest, kneading at my skin. I had some vivid images flash through my mind of tying her to my bed and fucking her senseless.

“Someday soon I’m going to tie you up and tease you just the way you’re teasing me right now,” I told her, my voice pitched low, “with no hope for release for at least a night.”

Her hands stilled, and she pulled back to give me wide eyes. Her expression changed in an instant into one of determination. She snapped her fingers at me. “I have a surprise for you,” she told me darkly, swiveling around to stalk towards the Karaoke stage.

The DJ sent me a questioning look as she spoke to him, and I nodded slightly, folding my arms across my chest and schooling my features into passivity.

When the first notes of S&M started to play, I just stared at her, a little shocked. *I’m in trouble with this one*, I thought. For the first time in my life, I had the thought that I was in over my head with a woman.

She started giggling and singing in her soft voice

and my brain did a little short circuiting. *Fuck. I'm in trouble.*

She was doing a distracting little wiggling dance when she stumbled, and I moved closer to catch her. I swore to myself that if she fell off the stage I was going to carry her straight out of there.

The trashy red-head approached me, getting way too close. I didn't want anything to do with this one, I thought.

She flashed a sultry smile at me. "Hi, I'm Melissa. Are you friends with Bianca?"

I nodded slightly, just wanting her to go away so I could focus on Bianca's performance. I had a feeling she wouldn't be doing this for me often, going by her usual reserve.

"I work with Bianca. She and I are real close," she said, showing a lot of teeth in a strangely feral grin that struck me as a little crazy. I ran into fortune-hunters like her all the time. *Fuck*, I thought. I didn't want to have to hang out with this one all the time. Stephan I could take.

She leaned into me, pushing her silicone breasts into my arm as she craned up to speak into my ear. "Just so you know, if you want a wild time in bed, you should always go with a redhead. Blondes are on the cold side, if you know what I mean."

I looked at her. "Are you referring to Bianca?" I asked. If she was doling out information, I wanted all I could get.

She shrugged, still standing way too close. "Maybe. I can't say for sure about her, but you can find out for yourself about me."

I gave her very solid eye contact, trying my hardest not to be openly rude to one of Bianca's friends, though she seemed like a pretty shitty friend from where I was standing. "No, thank you," I said slowly and clearly. "I prefer blondes."

The music stopped and I smiled at Bianca as she strode towards me with a purpose.

"Thank you for the surprise, Bianca," I told her, meaning it. "I won't forget that for as long as I live."

"Do you two know each other?" she asked, looking between Melissa and I suspiciously.

That baffled me. "We just met. She works with you, right?"

"So what were you talking about?" she asked.

"She said she was a good friend of yours," I said, beginning to suspect that Melissa had been lying when she'd said they were close. "I was asking her about you."

Bianca gave Melissa an inscrutable look.

Melissa did a quick one-eighty, grabbing Bianca's hand. "Come on, chicky," she said, leading Bianca back to the stage. I'd been right, I decided. *The redhead is mental.*

I folded my arms across my chest, just raising a brow as they started rapping a duet of a crude rap song. I didn't even spare Melissa a glance, just watching Bianca rapping with a silly smile on her face. *Ah, now, there it is.* I needed more of that smile. It affected me. *She* affected me.

Stephan was moving towards me, giving Bianca some intense best friend looks. I imagined they had their own language just with those looks they

shared.

He approached me, his mouth tight. He spoke quietly, his tone serious. “This isn’t her,” he told me flatly. “She’s drunk, and she never drinks. I don’t want you to get the wrong impression of her.”

I nodded, meeting his eyes. I’d known as much. The only impression I’d gotten that evening was that she was way too fucking drunk.

“I hope you aren’t thinking she’s someone that you can just play around with. She doesn’t sleep around, not ever. If you aren’t serious-“

I interrupted. This part would be easy to put to rest, if he didn’t object to me seeing her altogether. “I’m very serious, Stephan. Earnestly so. I want to take care of her. I’m *not* playing around. Not at all.”

His brow furrowed. “If you don’t treat her well, I will hurt you. I don’t care how rich you are, I will kick your ass.” He said it as though he honestly couldn’t help it.

I nodded at him to show I understood. “I want you to trust me, Stephan. As I said, I want to take care of her. I swear to you that I’ll treat her like a princess. I’m not in the habit of stalking women. This is all new to me, but I...just want to care for her.”

Stephan cleared his throat, suddenly looking down at his feet. Even in the dim bar lighting, it looked like he was blushing. “She’s a virgin,” he said quietly.

My eyes went wide and shot to Bianca on the stage. My brain did another little short circuit. I was a little shocked at myself. My first response was one of overwhelming pleasure at the revelation. *Mine*, I

thought. She was all mine. I couldn't help but relish the thought. I'd never felt so possessive of anyone or anything in my life.

"I'll see her home tonight," I told him quietly. "But I want you to know that I would never touch her in this condition. She's too drunk to make a decision like that, and I would never take advantage."

He studied me closely, then nodded.

Bianca stormed from the stage as the music ended, walking right into Stephan. She was clearly irate. It was a sight. They huddled together for a solid five minutes, obviously hashing something out. I shamelessly tried to eavesdrop on them, but I couldn't hear a thing.

Bianca pushed back from Stephan suddenly, pointing at the bar. "Go. Back. To. Your. Seat."

He went, looking dejected.

Bianca turned her wrath on me. "So, are you done yet?" she demanded. "You can see now that this is not going to happen. My V-card should be more than enough of a reason to make someone like you run screaming in the other direction."

I schooled my features into passivity. I wasn't feeling civilized. The things I wanted to do to her *weren't* civilized, and I didn't want to shock the poor girl any more than I had to.

"Come here," I ordered, watching her. *Mine.*

I gripped a hand into her hair very carefully. I pulled her head back slightly, leaning down to her. "I'm going to ruin you," I breathed into her ear. "I'll be your first, and I'll fuck you so thoroughly that I'll be your last, too. You won't want any other man

after I've gotten my hands on you. Every last inch of you."

She shuddered deliciously against me, and I had to struggle for control. *Mine.*

She pulled back a little to look at me, her brow furrowed. "So you prefer virgins?" she whispered.

My brows shot up. She had the strangest notions. "I've never been with one, so no. But I can't say I'm displeased with the notion. In fact, I love it that I'll be your first."