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## Chapter 1

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"YOU MISSED A SPOT," Mark pointed out as he made his way around the end of their oversized beds.

Matthew paused for a moment, for which Maddie was eternally grateful, peering carefully down at her already beleaguered backside. It gave her a chance to catch her breath through the tears he had unerringly invoked with that God-awful belt of his.

"Where?" he asked, his big hands paradoxically gentle as they skimmed lightly over her skin trying to find what Mark was talking about. He was not at all convinced that his friend and housemate was right. He always did his level best to make sure that he didn't concentrate all of the inevitable multitude of swats or stripes or strokes she'd earned in one place—unless he wanted to. And, as this wasn't a punishment for a health or safety or other such unbending rule, he would spare her that—this time.

Not that he was going to take it easy on her—ever—but he and his roommate always tried to match the degree of punishment to the degree of crime as best as they could.

She felt, rather than saw, Mark touch her bottom in the

only spot that wasn't already aflame. "Right there," he pointed out.

Having recovered sufficiently enough to find her voice, Maddie tried—unsuccessfully, of course—to turn at the waist enough to swat Mark's hand away and still manage to remain in what Matt would consider to be the correct position, while practically screeching, "Don't *help* him, for God's sake!"

Of course, she missed those big brown fingers by a mile and only received a crisp swat from his ginormous palm on the exact spot he'd been teasing Matt about for her efforts. "You know better than that, Madeleine," he scolded in that tone she absolutely hated—the one that reduced her to a recalcitrant six-year-old as soon as it met her ears.

"*And* you're out of position, young lady," Matt chided in much the same timbre. "I was going to only give you another five or so, but I think twenty's more like it now."

Maddie threw back her head and let loose with a throaty wail at that pronouncement, drumming her feet on the carpet. But she knew that, although the release made her feel somewhat better, no one was going to come to her rescue. Their nearest neighbor was more than a mile away and as her guys had said at the time they found it, that was one of the reasons they'd liked this place—no one was going to hear her scream.

She also knew better than to try to wheedle comfort from the non-participant in this particular comeuppance or any other, for that matter. If either of them decided that she needed a spanking—or hairbrushing or belting or caning or any number of other possible methods of tanning her hide—then the other would support his "brother from another mother" in that decision. They were a disgustingly united front when it came to the implementation of her discipline.

They each knew—as did Maddie, although she would be

loath to admit it, except under the most extreme duress—that neither of them would ever choose to hurt her gratuitously, but rather would only do so when she had clearly broken one of the rules they had set down for her behavior.

But they were wholly dedicated to making sure she toed the lines they had drawn for her. She knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that, if she did break a rule—and there was really no "if" about it—it was only a matter of time before she'd find herself in the position she did currently, although it and the location might vary a bit, depending on the severity of the offense and the preferences of the man who was going to deliver her comeuppance. Somehow, they always found out what she'd done, damn them. She couldn't think of a single time in the years they'd been together that she'd gotten away with anything she'd tried that she'd known full well at the time was eventually going to get her into trouble.

It always did, blast it.

And, when she'd already endured about the same number of strokes that Matt had promised he was now going to deliver on top of what she'd already had, it was almost too much to bear. But she knew she must.

The belt was Matt's favorite implement when she'd done something that he thought deserved more than his hand but less than the cane. He let its doubled over length sing through the air to smack loudly down on that cringing flesh and emblazon new swathes of cherry red across her mottled behind. He ignored her sobs and moans, expertly managing to avoid the kicking feet and landing each stroke true on the rise or underside of her bottom, as well as distributing a few well-placed strokes to the tender backs of her thighs as she howled and kicked in protest but held her place.

Mark, who had just gotten home from putting a full day in at his family's company, of which he had been the CEO since his father had died a few years ago, completely ignored

the commotion coming from behind the bedroom door that he had closed upon leaving. When he caught the wonderful garlicky, chicken scent wafting from the oven, he decided to set the table for dinner instead.

Matt stopped, finally, but only after having delivered the exact number of stripes he had promised Maddie—not one more, not one less—leaving her sobbing and groaning where he had originally positioned her over the end of the bed to put the belt back where it lived on the nail over their bed that he and Mark had installed—much to Maddie's very real dismay—the first night they had all slept in this house.

Then he reached down and pulled her up onto the pillows and into his arms, holding her as gently and lovingly as he could, letting all of those primitive, protective feelings nearly overwhelm him as he kissed her damp temple and rubbed her back, holding her so tight and close that she stirred from the strength of it.

Although she did her best to wiggle out of his arms, he couldn't quite let her, so she found she had to content herself within them. Not that that was really a bad thing. Both of her men were easy on the eyes, but then she might be just the slightest bit prejudiced.

No, she was a whole helluva lot prejudiced in their favor—about that, anyway.

Matt was the taller of the two, the quietest of the three of them, a thinker and a ponderer who could quote Plato with the best of them and drink nearly anyone—including the two of them combined—under the table while doing it. He was—as both men were—gentlemanly almost to the point of being chauvinistic, overprotective in the extreme when it came to his chosen—or biological—family. He was willing to do just about anything to help someone he cared about, whether that was through thoughtful advice or the lending of his strong back to someone who was moving, or a

swift kick in the butt—or the blistering of one particular young lady's posterior.

He knew, though, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that when he cupped Maddie's face in his hands, he held his whole world in them. Not that he was going to let that deep seated love he felt for her keep him from making sure she obeyed the limits he and Mark had set for her—and using the very same hands that held her so gently to thoroughly blister her behind.

She was nude, as he preferred when he punished her, and he found her quite distracting in this state, as always. His lips descended eagerly to claim her dark pink—already peaked—nipples, suckling hard, bringing them to even more swollen and erect points. But other charms soon called to him and he brought his lip to hers, claiming them in no uncertain terms in a long, passionate kiss that ended with him rolling the both of them—very carefully—to one side so that he could tuck her neatly beneath him. A few quick adjustments of his jeans and underwear, and he found himself nestled against her home.

He never failed to wonder—but didn't want to examine any too closely, lest it change somehow—how he could be searing her backside one moment, but in the next, even when her punishment was as bad as it had ever been, completely sure of her body's welcome. He'd searched her eyes countless times as he did again, now, for any sign of reservation or resentment about the fact that he was pressing her very sore red bottom into the bed beneath them, as well as expecting that she wouldn't protest his possession despite what he'd been doing to her seconds before. But Matt had never even the slightest, most fleeting indication of any negative feelings reflected in those black fringed, hazel orbs.

But he did see—and hear—what he nearly always did when he first entered her, and it nearly drove him over the

edge much too early every time when her eyes widened and her breath caught, as if it was always a surprise to her how her body had to accommodate him in very much the same way as she had when they had first gotten together. She was almost unbearably tight around him; he didn't know how she managed to accomplish that, but he was ever thankful.

He stopped, as he often did, with just the barest tip of himself within her, not really even a part of her yet, so that he could watch her face as he took her, see her bite her lip as he pressed forward, forcing her to accept him as she clutched spasmodically at his shoulders—her eyes never leaving his—as she whimpered just a bit, panting and trying to adjust her body beneath him so as to ease his entry. But he wouldn't allow it; big tanned hands reaching down take a hold of her hips to render them motionless, lest he lose control of himself completely as he made himself advance at an excruciatingly slow pace, wanting her to feel every millimeter of his possession.

Which she did. There wasn't any part of her that didn't feel taken by him, most especially her lady parts, which were stretched almost, but not quite, to the point of discomfort. He had rasped himself along every nerve she owned, aided by her own body's generous libations, which only served to help him achieve his goal.

When the tip of him found her natural end, he leaned down to kiss her slowly and gently, saying, "You know, I shouldn't really be doing this now, should I?"

*A rhetorical question, at a time like this?* When she was completely full of him and pinned beneath him like some conquered slave girl? Sometimes Matt thought entirely too much.

"But then, you know better than to come when you're not supposed to, don't you, Madeleine?"

Not rhetorical—not rhetorical at all. That question—and

his use of her full first name—demanded an answer. The *right* answer, as far as he and Mark were concerned, or she could very well find herself over his lap getting another layer of tremendous swats on top of what she'd already been treated to. That didn't bear thinking of.

"Yes, Sir." Her quick, dutiful answer ended in a guttural moan as he began to move deep within her, withdrawing almost completely before driving himself back into her, not giving her any chance after that long, first pause to adjust to his invasion, but merely taking her for his own pleasure and to exclusively his end.

But he knew as well as she did that she was right there with him every second of the way, even though she was being required to battle her own body's responses to the man she loved, to do the damned near impossible and tamp them down as best she could. There was absolutely nothing she could do, though, about the way he made her moan as he reached down and brought her legs up over those broad shoulders of his, maneuvering her into a much more vulnerable position and opening her up to him even further than she had been before, to say nothing of the fact that her bottom then became just that much more accessible to those roving hands. He liked to reach down all too frequently and squeeze a well warmed, throbbing bottom cheek to remind Maddie of the all too thorough chastisement she had just received.

"No, Matt, please," she whimpered—but knew it would be to no avail even as she said the words—not because he was causing her any distress, but rather because the inherent defenselessness he was requiring of her only served to ratchet her desire to epic proportions.

But she knew there would be none of the usual ecstasy to be found in his arms this time, despite how close she was and

how much further towards her own release he would drive her without thought for anything but his own needs.

"Oh, yes, babygirl," he barely ground out, snapping his hips forward and taking her to the hilt in one smooth, invasive motion and causing her to let loose with a reluctant long, low growl as he set every nerve she owned on fire. Having found that deliberately provocative rhythm, he continued to withdraw fully before plunging himself back into her until the very end, when his one last powerful thrust had him growling his completion and reaching down to clutch both full, red globes, holding her tight to him as he continued to thrust strongly for several long moments, emptying himself helplessly within her before collapsing on top of her, barely able to think or move.

At first, both he and Mark were always worried that, because of the vast differences in their sizes, they would end up crushing her to death if they really allowed themselves to relax enough to let her feel their whole weight on top of her.

But Maddie had practically insisted to them that—as long as it wasn't the two of them atop her at once—she absolutely welcomed it. In fact, she practically demanded it, as much as she could, within the constructs of the type of relationship they were in. She thoroughly enjoyed the feeling of a man's weight on her, which was why she had always had a distinct preference for the missionary position, old hat that it was. And eventually, she was able to convince them that they weren't going to kill her if they gave her their full weight, although it had taken a while, since they were both stubborn knot heads, especially when it came to protecting her.

As he covered her completely, his breath huffing in her ear, Maddie stroked his damp back lovingly, easing her legs off those impossibly wide shoulders of his, making him do just what she hadn't wanted him to.

Matt immediately reared up, hair falling into his eyes,



panting out apologetically and made as if to get off her, "Oh, hon, I'm sorry. Let me move."

"No! Stay, please? Just for a few more minutes?" she whispered, her love for him shining in her eyes.

As if he could deny her anything she asked for so sweetly, he gratefully reclaimed his former position and thoroughly enjoyed the feel of her hands and lips soothing him as he came down from the heaven he'd found within her.

They parted long moments later, reluctantly, and he patted her bottom as she wandered in the direction of a shower, then rearranged himself so he was decent. He headed out to the kitchen where the buzzer on the oven had just gone off and Mark was putting dinner on a hot mat on the big round dining room table that had already been almost completely set.

Meanwhile, Maddie turned on their huge shower in the bathroom that was just off the master bedroom—past the walk-through closet that housed all of her considerable wardrobe and acres and acres of shoes—glad, as always, that the guys had insisted on it. It was done in pink marble—which, of course, had been her contribution to that part of the construction of their house, besides insisting that there be a luxurious tub, too, that was big enough for three, of course. The walk-in shower was also more than big enough to accommodate all of them at once, with four shower heads—and all sorts of settings for tired muscles, et cetera—one on each wall, so that it was very much like standing under a waterfall. There was also a bench on one side, which the guys had used on at least one occasion to provide a bit of a steam bath for her when she'd had a particularly bad chest cold.

But this wasn't a long, luxurious shower after a hard day doing medical transcription. It was a much more mundane one. Considering their unusual living arrangements and

trying to keep the health and happiness of her men foremost in her mind—at which she didn't always succeed, but she did always try—Maddie did her best to make it a regular practice to shower after she'd made love with either one of them. She never wanted anyone to feel as if they were getting sloppy seconds, so she was always very careful about her personal hygiene, not that either of them had ever complained about such a thing to her. She just wanted to be proactive in that area.

She did, however, as usual after a spanking, only skim the soapy body sponge over her still aching behind. She had forgotten to look at herself in the mirrored wall behind the three sinks, and, for a moment, thought that Mark, who had long since been pushing the idea that they needed the shower to be mirrored, too, might not have a bad idea, but then she came to her senses. Like most women, even though she was a size ten, Maddie considered that her body was too fat here and too skinny there, and she knew she really didn't have any interest in having to be constantly confronted by the image of her own nude body while she showered, especially since she did so more frequently than anyone else in the house.

She was the lone holdout about the mirrors in the shower, and she intended to continue that resistance. But over all, she thought, as she soaped herself up for the last time, the three of them got along almost frighteningly well.

She certainly hadn't envisioned living quite like this when she was growing up, though! She'd never really expected to have one husband, much less two! Sometimes she thought she had died and gone to Heaven, but other times, she would have been hard pressed to identify it as anything other than the purest of hells—but that was always only when she was being punished. She wouldn't give either of them up for, well, for anything or anyone.

Maddie had starting out dating the two of them—along with a few other guys—at around the same time, not knowing that they were best friends. But she had kept everything entirely above-board from the start with all of them, letting everyone know that she was dating other people and that they were perfectly free to do the same.

Unlike the rest of her generation, Maddie didn't sleep around. When she said dating, she meant exactly that. *Not* sleeping together—at least not right away—but going out for dinner and a movie, or to fly a kite, or on a hike. Any man who had a problem with the fact that she wasn't going to put out on their first—or even maybe the tenth—date didn't get a second. She wasn't a virgin, but then again, she also wasn't going to be pressured into anything she didn't want, and she also always let the men she dated know right off her preferences about what was, nowadays, an unusual way to conduct relationships with the opposite sex.

But Maddie had never worried about being different and often bucked the trends in other ways, too. Sex had never become the casual thing that it seemed to be to everyone else. If she got horny, then she had hands that reached, a drawer full of vibrators and KY, and a very vivid imagination. Her sexual satisfaction did *not* depend on sleeping with *anyone*.

Matt and Mark were the two who stuck around, despite the fact that they were going to go home alone at night until she decided otherwise.

She and Mark had been on a few dates before she began to see Matt, also, and he—unlike a discouraging majority of the men she'd dated lately, but very like his best friend—was fully on board with letting her set the pace of the sexual side of their relationship, although he certainly did let her know he was very interested. He was also almost unfailingly polite

and treated her with an old-fashioned respect that Maddie hadn't experienced in a while—if ever. He stood when she entered a room, he opened doors, helped her in and out of the car—which took some getting used to. He treated her like a lady, and she decided she liked it. A lot.

He was also, however, a fellow overachiever. Mark had two undergraduate degrees and a masters and was working on a second masters, even when he was already a vice president in his family's business—a position he hadn't gotten through nepotism at all. His father would never have allowed that. When he was sixteen, he had to apply for a job in their mail room, knowing full well that his last name didn't necessarily mean he was a shoe-in.

As a matter of fact, he had to apply three times before he actually got the job, because other older, more experienced guys had also applied. Not that he hadn't already been working his butt off. His father also didn't believe in paying children to be children. From the time he was about six, he had been given chores that had become progressively more challenging as he grew. The Rutlands—despite their money—didn't have a company to come once a week and groom their extensive lawns. They had a son, and at first, they only had a gas-powered push mower with which—if he wanted any spending money beyond the basics he needed for school lunches—he had to mow the whole grand estate.

His parents had taught him—the hard way—the value of a day's work, and that just because he came from wealth didn't mean he was any better than anyone else.

Mark had thrived on every challenge his old man threw his way, from working his way up in the company from the very bottom, Harvard Business School, which he attended not because his parents donated a building—they didn't—but because his grades had earned him a full boat scholarship.

His mother's influence wasn't missing in his upbringing, either. Unlike most of his friends, his parents had always been very happily married, and despite his tough, no nonsense father, it was truly his mother who ruled the roost, and she had her two children—himself and his younger sister, Rhia—marching right out of the womb. She did her best to help Rhia become as much of a lady as she could and, Mark, as much of a gentleman as was possible. As a result, both of her children had impeccable manners, and through a combination of his mother and his father's input about the opposite sex, he became a very loving, protective—but unmistakably dominant—man.

As she stepped out of the shower, she found the subject of her musings standing right outside, holding out a big, warm, fluffy pink towel.