

CHAPTER ONE

The Meet

Kassandra didn't smoke but she accepted the cigarette without question. She uncrossed her legs and leaned forward so the man beside her at the bar could light her up.

"Thanks." She drew the smoke in like a pro. "I needed that."

"You're welcome. This is one of the few places in town that still allows smoking. My name's Robert. Nice to meet you."

"I'm Kassandra. My friends call me Kassie." She never lied about her name. It was all part of the training. The fewer lies, the less the risk of getting caught out. She lowered the cigarette to the bar, flashing her highly polished nails. In her peripheral vision she watched him check out her legs as she crossed them again. He would be able to see the top of her suspenders. She had done that on purpose.

He wagged his finger at the bartender and pointed to her glass. "Another?"

"Sure."

"One for the lady and another for me." He spun round on his stool, facing the bar and mirroring her position. She tugged at the hem of her skirt. "This is your first time here, isn't it?"

"Yes. How can you tell?"

"You keep pulling your skirt down. Yet you dressed for the part. But I see it makes you uncomfortable. So tell me, Kassie, what brought you here?" His voice was deep and authoritative. It made her skin tingle in a most pleasant way.

She pointed to a booth just behind them both. "That's my friend, Wanda. She said I might enjoy it, meeting you all, trying new, um, things." Friend. Wanda was an asset, cultivated a few weeks back when she learned of Robert's taste for the BDSM lifestyle. She was her ticket into the *club*.

"Ah, yes. Wanda has a lot of friends. I've met quite a few of them."

He licked his lips, like a man reliving a pleasant memory. She squirmed in her seat, trying not to betray the disgust in her belly. They had told her he liked to tie women up and flog

them. As cute as he was, bending over to take a good beating was not her idea of a fabulous time. But, then again, what she liked didn't come into it. Offering herself as a submissive was the most expedient way to earn his trust. Not everything about her job was perfect.

The bartender slipped a fresh Marguerite in front of her. She picked it up and sipped it nervously. Her fear and trepidation would be working for her now, so why hide it?

"So, Wanda told me a bit about what it is you do. Can you tell me more?"

"What would you like to know?" He sipped at his drink, as if this were the most normal conversation in the world.

"Oh, I dunno."

"Well, then, answer me this, Kassie. What about it excites you?"

She felt a warmth deep in her belly. Odd. If she weren't working she would have answered *nothing*. And yet there it was—an inexplicable jolt in her loins. She took a large gulp of her drink. He nodded at the barman again and pointed to her glass. She might as well stay with the truth for as long as she could.

"Being out of control."

"You're usually in control?"

"Yes, I suppose. It's my job."

"What do you do?"

I'm a spy. "I'm a teacher. Eighth grade."

There was the slightest trace of a smile on his lips. He took another sip from his whiskey glass.

"A worthy profession. So how did this come up? You and Wanda just started gossiping over a lunch engagement? You mentioned you fancied having a man dominate you?"

"Something like that. I just split up with my boyfriend. She said I was uptight, needed loosening up, and all that." He raised his eyebrows skeptically. She must not play him for a fool. "Um, what about you? What's your story?" *Apart from being my mark?* "I mean, how did you get into it?" She deliberately faltered. "The, um, err, lifestyle?"

"I've never been into anything else," he said simply.

She finished her Marguerite and closed her thighs, tight. "What do you do otherwise? I mean, for a living?" *Beyond selling government secrets?*

"I run an IT company. We specialize in supply logistics and have clients all over the

world."

"Supply logistics?"

"Making sure companies get the right quantity of materials at the right time and such. Our people go into various companies and tailor the software to a specific client's needs."

"Sounds exciting."

"It is to me. And lucrative."

"I see." Billions, she'd heard.

He turned toward her, peering over the rim of his glass. He had oddly soft, hazel eyes. They had jumped out at her from the photographs in his brief. A pair of sad, soulful eyes that didn't quite match the firm set of his lips. His tone softened.

"What got you into teaching?"

"I loved all my teachers at school."

"You loved them?"

"Admired then. Anyway, I just couldn't imagine being anything else."

"What happened with the ex-boyfriend?"

There hadn't really been one. Not for some time at least. She rolled her eyes up to the ceiling and delved into a memory almost forgotten it was so old.

"He wasn't really serious. Not about me. Always had his eye on the door for a better offer. And then inevitably, a better offer came along."

Robert took another sweeping glance at her legs. "I find that hard to imagine."

"I know, right." She chuckled, feigning bravado. "I thought he was the one, though. It was hard."

"How many boyfriends before that?"

Cheeky fucker. None of your damned business. She blushed. "None. He was the only one."

"Was he good in bed?"

Did he really ask that? "I guess." I suppose you think you are.

He ran his forefinger around the rim of his whiskey glass, quiet for a moment. It gave her the opportunity to study him more closely. His suit was high end - Anderson & Sheppard maybe, his cuffs well tailored and crisp white. His cuff links were a little odd though, a small, complex rose, something she had never seen before. Pretty. His hands were well manicured and strong,

the kind that really worked for her, or would do if she weren't on the job. But then she remembered the kink. She couldn't get past that, no matter how attractive he appeared on the surface.

"So." She leaned back in her seat and pinched her lower lip between her thumb and forefinger. His eyes never left her mouth.

"So?"

"So what happens now?"

He laughed. "What would you like to happen?"

The million-dollar question. *Best not to be too forward.* "Oh, I dunno. I'm just nervous, I guess. I blabber a lot when I'm nervous."

She studied her closely. *Well, was he biting or not?* He kept his cards close to his chest, that was for sure.

"Relax. Nothing will happen unless you want it to. Why don't we just sit here and get to know each other a little better. Like people do."

"Okay."

He drained his glass and called for another. "For instance, do you think you have the self-discipline it takes to be a subordinate?"

"I think so. I thought it was the other person who did the disciplining."

"Ah, well, discipline and disciplining are not the same. It takes just as strong a will to subject yourself to the will of another as it does to be commanding. To surrender yourself completely—that's an art. Your master may desire something you have no liking for. Could you do it anyway? Not a lot of people can shelve their own will that way. It takes something special, and that's self-discipline. *Disciplining* only comes into play when you step out of line."

"Do you enjoy that? Disciplining I mean?"

"I enjoy everything I do. If I didn't, I wouldn't do it."

"And the girl? I mean, does it matter what she wants?"

"The right girl will want this. The wrong one won't understand. Her pleasure is derived from her total submittal."

"I see. And how will I know if it's right for me?"

He took a quick sip from his fresh whiskey, then spun her stool around so she was facing him. "Would you like to try a little experiment?"

Her heart skipped a beat. "What did you have in mind?"

"How about a straight yes or no?"

She had to say yes. Odd though. She found she wanted to. "Yes."

He pulled her stool as close to his as he could get it. "Open your legs."

Her pulse raced and her breathing grew fast and shallow. Slowly she forced her legs slightly apart.

"Wider."

Nervously she looked around the bar. Surely everyone could hear her beating heart, or at least see how her legs trembled. Yet no one appeared the slightest bit interested in what they were doing. She opened them a little wider still.

Robert leaned into her, running his beautifully manicured hand along the inside of her stocking and up towards her panties. His fingers grazed the flimsy fabric, tracing the line of her slit, first down then up. He paused at her clitoris, rubbing across the surface with the flat of his thumb. After that his hands grazed the side elastic, and she thought he might slip around it, but he held his hand suspended, caressing her with his finger but not venturing any further. She could feel her own heat; she was so fucking turned on. But then she remembered why she was there in the first place, and tried to control her emotions. It wouldn't do to get too carried away. She had a job to do, and that was all.

"Your eyes are dilating," he said. Then he pulled his hand away and nudged her Marguerite toward her. "Take a drink. You've earned it."

She did exactly as he told her. "So I passed the test?"

"One of them."

"So now what?"

"You are eager, I'll give you that." It was his turn to look around the bar. "I think your friend Wanda has left for the evening. Did you come here together?"

"Yes. But she said she might split. I'll get a cab."

"There's no need. I have a car outside. I'm still on the right side of sober, and I'd be happy to take you home. Unless, of course, you'd rather stay and meet someone else."

"No, I think I've had enough to drink."

"So may I escort you home?"

That was the plan! "I'd like that, yes."

She slid off the stool and recovered her purse from the bar. He put his hand on the small of her back and escorted her through the small crowd toward the exit.

Am I about to fuck a complete stranger? Her loyalty was to the job, sure, but she was throwing herself on the mercy of a man who got off tying up women and torturing them. She had to ingratiate herself, that was a given, but could there be some other way? *What if she was coming on too fast? Would he become suspicious?* These thoughts tormented her as they crossed the street and headed over to his black Porsche. He opened the door for her, and she slipped into the passenger seat, rewarding him with what she thought was her most seductive smile.

A moment later he slipped in beside her. "Buckle up. I drive pretty fast."

So do I. "Okay, then."

She pushed her skirt down as far as it would go and braced herself for a lively ride. And where she was ending up, well, only time would tell. She took a deep breath and, with a limp smile, held onto her seat.