

## Ropes and Mirrors

The day dragged forward as rain splashed against the windows. The client droned on, pulling my eyelids down with her endless questions and comments. Our project manager answered her questions while I listened and daydreamed. Outside the sky darkened.

It was 5:15 and I was ready for the day to end. A good meal and a glass of wine would be a great way to bring this week to a close but that wasn't the only hunger I was feeling. My mind wandered to activities that alerted my senses. I thought about the attractive man in the elevator this morning. We saw one another frequently, and flirted with our eyes. Every now and then too many people would cram into the elevator and we ended up in the back, our bodies pressed together. Even with my heels on, he was taller. And he smelled enticing. Maybe Dior or Gucci?

This morning I woke up at 4:30 to make it to the pool before there were too many swimmers and too many waves. It was only the serenity of my arms breaking the smooth surface that compelled me to wake up before 5. This was my Monday/Wednesday/Friday schedule. The remaining weekdays I practiced yoga at my neighborhood studio. I usually took Saturdays off and then Sundays I went out for a run.

I heard the meeting begin to wrap up and I drew my eyes away from the windows. The client was looking at me expectantly. I smiled, "I'm sorry, ask me that again. I was thinking through another part of your project." I covered up for my lack of focus.

"How soon until you think these changes can be made?" she asked.

"To the drawings? Oh, no time at all. I'll go over the plan with Mike here but it should only take us a few days. We've already poured your foundation but these changes are fairly minor in the scheme of things. It won't affect your completion date."

She seemed satisfied and gathered her handbag and tote and walked out.

I walked back to my desk and did the same. Trench coat, handbag, umbrella. I regretted wearing these particular shoes to the office. Usually I had a pair of flats with me, and even extras in my office but then I remembered I'd worn those home and I forgot them this morning. I considered throwing on my gym shoes but couldn't bring myself to do it. I liked to maintain a certain level of style when I left the office. I decided I would grab dinner at the restaurant around the corner and then take a cab back home. It was still early so I should be able to get in and out without too much hassle. From about 6 onward the downtown restaurants were busy.

I walked into the rain and pulled my hood over my head. My long hair was loose around my face and I pushed it out of the way so it wouldn't get wet. I felt the rain splash around my ankles and a cold wind blew up my skirt. Hustling to the restaurant, I pushed open the door. I was affronted by a raucous group of men. There must have been about twenty of them. The men were a variety of ages and most were attractive, though some with the distinctive paunch of men who believed work came before their health. I scanned the group and thought I recognized a few faces from the high end investment firm in my building. And then I saw him. The man from the elevator. When our eyes met, I could tell he recognized me. He tipped his glass my way and we smiled at one another. A brief thought crossed my mind that tonight could possibly be about more than just dinner.

I received a few other glances before I turned toward the bar. I'd become used to the attention I received, and even though I usually found it something of a nuisance, occasionally I liked using the attention to my advantage. If I wanted it, there was no shortage of opportunity to have sex with someone. Don't get me wrong—I was still *very* picky.

I sat down almost sideways to the bar. Sometimes I liked to keep an eye on the action. I extended one leg to the bottom rung of the stool next to me and tucked the other under my chair. My legs were well defined, they peaked out long from beneath my skirt. The bartender, whose deep, dark eyes caramel skin and broad mouth beckoned, approached me with a smile. He'd served me before.

“What can I get you?” His mouth teased with a flirtatious grin.

Given my state of mind, his gorgeous face and the turn of phrase, my mind filled with images of his skin on mine. I tried to hide my thoughts but very likely my slight smile gave me away.

I tried to keep myself together, “Hmm...how about a menu and a wine list, please?”

He smiled back at me. “Sure, no problem. My name’s Mark. I’ve waited on you before I think. If I can get you anything else in the meantime, let me know.”

There he was with another good turn of phrase. I could think of several ways he could get me something else. *Maybe I did want more than just food tonight?* Of course he was probably just being professional so I smiled and put out my hand. “I’m Patience.”

“Patience?” The corner of his mouth quirked up slightly. I leaned forward on my elbow, his smile drawing me in, and grinned. “Yes, yes, I know.” I rolled my eyes, “not a day goes by that I’m not trying to live up to it.” He chuckled and walked away to the attention of another person at the bar.

And then *he* was there. The guy from the elevator, standing next to me. “Live up to what?” he asked. Right away, I caught a breath of his cologne. Damn he smelled good. His scent drew me in closer than I’d ever been to him. I saw the shadows of his beard underlying smooth, tan skin. Deep blue eyes, set beneath dark eyebrows sparkled and a few creases radiated outward, as if he spent a lot of time playing in the sun. He had deep brown hair that lay in curls just above the collar of his jacket. He appeared to be muscular behind the trappings of a business man.

He had the look of a guy who’d probably always had charm and charisma. Like the way effortlessly he’d just interjected in the conversation between Mark and me. There was an intangible and compelling quality to the way he stood before me. He was a man comfortable in his own skin. It was hard not to feel at ease around him because he acted as though we were already familiar. But not as if we were friends, but more that we were already *friendly* with one another. It was the difference between too much comfort and just the right amount to feel comfortable. Right away I was attracted to him.

Mark spoke up from across the bar. “James Everett, this is Patience.”

“Well, does she have a last name?” James asked. He stood above me and I was glad I had on nice lingerie in case he could see down my shirt. For a split second I watched his eyes flit to my legs and then back up to my face. It felt just slightly like I was being assessed and the look on his face suggested I measured up. At least I hoped.

I looked between them, “I do, but it’s not being shared today.” And then I laughed aloud at the ridiculous flirting that was taking place.

“The Lady Patience with no last name. I’m intrigued. May I sit?” asked James.

Mark shook his head, even looked a little defeated, and walked away. I didn’t move my leg from the stool next to me. Even though I wanted more than anything to be nearer to him, I thought maybe I’d hold him off a little longer, see how he’d respond. “I’m not sure. Won’t your friends miss you?” I nodded toward the boisterous group of men on the other side of the room.

“No, they won’t. We’re just wrapping up a work dinner-slash-celebration. We just closed a nice deal, thus the celebration. But they won’t miss me.” He pressed his leg ever so slightly against my raised thigh as he said this and pursed his lips into a grin. Such a flirt. And that mouth of perfect, white teeth surrounded by lips just a shade darker than his skin. I forced myself to look away from it.

I looked down at my hands then cast a sideways look, flirting a little myself. “You smile a lot. In my experience, a man who smiles a lot wants something.” Then I shifted so my front side was more visible, trying to hide my own grin.

He smiled even bigger then and laughed out loud. “Wow, okay, then. You got me. I’d like to sit down.” His voice dropped as he said this and his hand pressed on my thigh. He wasn’t asking permission, he was telling me what to do.

I moved my leg aside to make room for him and sat up straighter. Maybe he’d bring even more flavor to the evening than I’d given credit. I liked a man who knew what he wanted.

He moved onto the chair next to me. Mark returned with the food and wine menus. “I recommend the lamb chops and the house pinot.”

I waved off the menus, deciding to take his word. “Okay, that sounds good. Is there a vegetable served with the lamb?”

“You have a choice of roasted brussels sprouts, grilled asparagus, or pureed celery root. Or a combination thereof.”

“I’ll take the sprouts and the puree. That sounds great. Thank you. Oh, and the Pinot as well.” I smiled at Mark to show my appreciation. I wouldn’t blow him off simply because he was on the other side of the bar serving me.

“So, tell me Patience,” James said. “You look familiar. We sometimes share the elevator in our building, isn’t that right? What do you do?”

“Yes, I think we have (*I certainly wasn’t going to tell him every time he was on the elevator I couldn’t help but look at him*). I’m an architect in a small design group on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor,” I said.

“Oh, nice. Did you always want to be an architect?”

“Yes, well, I guess you could say it runs in my family. My grandfather was an architect and even my great grandfather. I’ve been looking at buildings and spaces for as long as I can remember. I love that I was able to make a career out of my passion.” I looked him in the eye.

“Well then, you should see my place. I mean, if it’s your passion.”

And there it was. A piece of low hanging and very ripe flirtatious fruit that I wanted to grab and devour. He said nothing more. No excuse, no backfill. My face flushed as my desire flared. He was bold and I admired his presence. I took my time as I considered my response.

“Well perhaps, if you think it would strengthen my view of the city.”

He chuckled low and raised his eyebrows and didn’t hesitate, “HmMMM, yes, it would most definitely strengthen your view.”

I grinned and shook my head at him. I’m sure it was his intent to turn my words around.

“Now who’s smiling?” There was that beautiful mouth again, smiling at me.

“Well, yes,” I said. “I can’t really deny it at this point.”

“Why would we want you to deny anything that is obviously enjoyable?” He whispered this to me as he brushed my arm then tugged ever so gently at my elbow as if beckoning me closer. No one else would even have noticed, it was that subtle. And electrifying. I sat up a little straighter, liking the way this man used his body to compel me closer and the way he talked. He was forward in a way that instilled confidence.

Then, someone from his table came toward us and called for him.

“I’ll be right back,” he said.

“Okay, but you should know...” I paused for drama. “I never live up to my name.” He walked away but not before he looked back over his shoulder as if to make sure I was still watching him. I was.

Mark set down my wine and I took a sip. It was a nice end to the day and the week. I relaxed into my chair. Mark and I chatted for a bit about cooking until he became busy with the couple seated further down the bar. Then a few minutes later he brought my food. I could have dived into my meal I was so hungry. The lamb chops melted in my mouth.

“Looks like you’re enjoying those,” Mark seemed happy I was pleased.

“Is it that obvious?”

“They are really good. And it’s nice to see a woman enjoy her meal. You sound like you know your way around food.”

“Yes, well you can’t be from New Orleans and not appreciate food. San Francisco certainly offers her fair share, I will say. But I miss the food back home. It’s not that it’s better than here. I don’t know, maybe it’s the culture around the food that’s the missing piece. Hard to explain.”

He nodded. “I know what you mean. I’m from the low country in South Carolina. There’s definitely a culture of enjoying all things seafood and just food in general. It’s tough for people to understand when they’re from places where food isn’t celebrated to the same degree.”

We both became quiet as we contemplated our home places. Then we talked awhile longer about South Carolina. I’d visited a few times in the summers so I was familiar with the coast. Eventually, I finished my meal and paid my bill. I noticed Mark hadn’t charged me for my wine.

“You left out the wine, Mark,” I said.

“It’s on the house under ‘good conversationalist.’ Please come back and visit.” He motioned me forward with his hand. “I’d ask you out but that sort of thing doesn’t go very far with the owners.”

“Maybe we’ll see one another out sometime when we can share more. Or I’ll come back for another glass of ‘good conversationalist.’”

“That’d be great. Okay, I’d better get back to work.” He shrugged his shoulders and smirked.

I gave a short wave and one more long look before I turned and walked toward the door. I didn't look in the direction of James. After all that flirting, he hadn't returned to talk and I was both disappointed and irritated. And besides, I was ready to leave.

I walked out the door, moved under the awning, and opened my umbrella. I looked up the street for a cab. Nothing in sight. I sighed and considered walking up to the corner. I felt impatient. I hadn't lied earlier—it could definitely be difficult to live up to my name.

The door from the restaurant opened and James was there, umbrella in hand. He looked at me and I looked away.

"I'm sorry I left you sitting there for so long. I ended up in a conversation with my boss that I couldn't get out of."

I still didn't say anything. Here I was again, wanting to make him work for it again. But this time it was because I was annoyed.

Still he tried. "Where are you headed now?"

"I'm going to head home. Just waiting for a cab," I said, my gaze up the street.

"Why don't you at least let me give you a lift home? I have a car in the garage around the corner. Or we could go have a drink somewhere. It's Friday night after all," he teased. "Say yes. You know you want to."

In spite of my disappointment, he was right. I did want to. I was curious about this man who so boldly and effortlessly moved into my space in the back of a crammed elevator and then again at the barstool.

I shrugged, not quite ready to give myself away.

"Come on. Walk with me. We can't stand out here in the rain forever."

And again, he was right. I was getting cold. I turned toward him and his blue eyes glistened in the streetlights. He smiled at me; I found a small grin climb to my mouth. I wondered if he had this effect on lots of girls or just me. In this moment, I wasn't sure I cared much.

I walked toward him and we turned down the street. The rain fell around us in a heavy drizzle.

"How about we drop in this little place I've seen next to the garage and grab a drink?" he suggested.

“I’ve hardly agreed to a car ride,” I teased, bumping my shoulder into him.

“Look, you were going home before I walked outside. So the way I see it, the evening could change for the better for us both if you come with me. It’s not complicated. Just say yes.”

“Alright, alright, yes.” I laughed.

We walked a ways further and then ducked into a small bar with a red door. You would have walked by it if you didn’t know it were there.

Inside was all darkness and shadows. A long bar down one side and then small, private booths on the other. Each tall, round booth was enclosed by ceiling height velvet curtains. Just the kind of place you could lose yourself and a few hours, immersed in cocktails and conversation. My shoulders relaxed as the warmth filled me.

James walked over to one of the booths near the back. I closed my umbrella and followed him. He took my coat and hung it on the hook on the side of the booth. I slid into the booth and he closed the curtain.

“Really?!” I laughed.

“Ah, there's that laugh. It’s nice. I’m glad you’re comfortable.”

“I would never even know about this place. You said you’ve never been here before?” I asked.

“Yeah, I’ve peeked in a few times. But I just acquired a parking spot in the garage next door. I’ve been on the waitlist for about a year. So, it’s new for me too. I like it already.”

Then the curtain opened and a server stood in front of us. “Sorry, folks, you can’t close the curtain until after you’ve had five drinks,” he joked.

We both laughed.

“Well, in that case, let’s get started,” James said. “I’ll have one of your top shelf vodkas on the rocks, extra dirty with a few olives. And the lady will have...?” He looked at me.

“I’ll have an Aviation with Plymouth Gin please. Oh, and some water too, no ice.”

“You guys want anything from the kitchen?” he asked.

James answered for us, “No, thanks, we’ve both eaten.”

He nodded and walked away. We began with the basic small talk. Eventually our drinks came and our conversation never slowed. We talked and laughed and flirted and I realized I was having a great time. He was attentive, and asked thoughtful questions and even dropped a few nice compliments. I learned that he liked to travel and even though he worked long hours he made time to exercise and to be outdoors. He was one of the regular afternoon windsurfers out on San Francisco Bay. Even with my comfort in the ocean, I thought those people were brave.

It was apparent he was prosperous and I thought it was sexy that he was proud of his success. I didn’t feel he was bragging, but in explaining what he did, he alluded to the scope of the business deals he was involved in and the breadth of his experience. Since my father was in that world, I also knew he worked for one of the most reputable and competitive high-end investment banking groups in the world. People in that industry generally worked hard and put in long hours.

During a lull in our conversation he turned to me. “So look, think this idea through. We could keep on drinking and both get loaded which I’m guessing isn’t your style and anyway, I have a sort of early day tomorrow. But I like you and I like being with you and I don’t want the night to end just yet. Do you want to come to my place? I really do want you to see my apartment. I think from your perspective as an architect you’ll appreciate it and we can talk more and enjoy the view.”

I looked at him and decided then that whatever turn the evening took, I was ready for it. As I watched his mouth move I thought now about kissing his lips. I thought how they might be cold, iced with the taste of vodka. I looked at that small stretch of skin between the top of his collar and his ear. I thought about running my tongue up the space and then into his ear. I began to feel a little aroused and shifted my legs together, as if I could hide it from even myself.

I agreed and smiled slowly at him. “Okay, let’s go.”

He paid the tab and we gathered our coats and umbrellas. When we walked outside, the rain had slowed to a quiet mist. He led the way to his car in the garage.

He opened the door for me and I got in. Back home I drove a vintage Jaguar, a hand me down from my grandfather. Other than that, I wouldn’t consider

myself a car girl. But I know beauty when I'm surrounded by it-rich leather seats and trim a deep burl. I breathed in, still a new car smell. He started the engine and it growled awake. We left the parking garage and then it seemed like we began to fly between lights. I didn't say too much as the speed of the car and the drinks spilled onto one another. I opened the window and breathed. Not car sick, just a little dizzy. He began to slow down and pulled into another garage.

"Well, that wasn't long," I said gratefully.

"Yeah, I often walk or take the trolley but today I had a meeting in the east bay so I drove. Besides," he smiled "I really like to drive fast. This car is so responsive. I appreciate that quality in a world that seems determined to do the opposite of what we want. So, it's the little things that make a difference for me." He said all this with a grin the size of his face. It was so infectious, I couldn't help but smile back. I couldn't help but want to play.

"So, what else do you like to go your way?" My voice took a more seductive tone.

He stayed silent for a moment, and I looked at him beneath my lashes. He seemed to be considering the question, if the way he glanced at me before looking back to his hands on the wheel was any indication. "Well, it depends on the context but, usually, if I'm asking, it's because I like to lead. It's natural for me and I think generally people around me are at ease because I'm comfortable in this role."

I considered my feelings around him at the bar. That ease I felt being near him almost right away. The way he held himself, the way he spoke to me, everything from his direct eye contact to the way he used his body to assert himself. That feeling of comfort hadn't changed even though things were heating up between us. I was relaxed with him. I felt safe knowing he was in control. I'd call him a natural leader.

He parked the car and turned to me. "So get out of the car and come upstairs." He said this almost in a whisper, but no less a command.

We both got out of the car and I looked over the roof at him. "Yes, James, it's what we both want." I felt my nipples arise as the words left my mouth. I liked his nature, dominant but sweet. He came around the car in one motion and moved in close to my body. He put his face very close to my neck and breathed in, "I like the way you smell. Sweet. I wonder how you taste?" He leaned in

further, barely grazing my neck. His lips brushed my earlobe. I steadied myself with a hand on the car. My legs became weak as desire hit me like a warm wind. Then he took my hand and turned away from the car.

We walked into the elevator and he inserted a key card and pressed “8.” We stood next to each other, side by side, arms and tops of thighs touched together. The elevator rose slowly. The scent of him lingered on me. I wanted him to touch me again, ached for it in fact. It seemed like forever before the doors opened onto his floor.

He spoke as we walked toward his door. “I have the Northwestern facing unit. There are only four units per floor, and they each take a different corner of the building. No sunrise, but I have the most outstanding view of the Golden Gate bridge.”

He opened his door and we stepped into the foyer. “Let me take your things.” I handed him my bag and my coat. He threw his keys into a bowl on a side table. “Wait here for a moment.” He walked into one of the doorways. Looked like the kitchen.

Standing in the dim light, I found a light switch and slowly turned on the dimmer, keeping the light low. The crystal chandelier bounced light off mirrors on every wall. It reminded me of the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles. Here in the spacious foyer, all the mirrors were antiqued just a bit and the floors were wooden parquet. The whole space felt like I stepped back in time.

As I looked at my reflection, and resisted the urge to fix and fuss. I told myself to relax and be confident where you are. Soon enough he returned with two glasses of wine. He placed mine in my hand. I took the glass from him and inhaled.

“Mmmmm...nice bouquet. Cabernet?” I asked.

“Yes, I hope you like it as much as I do.”

We both sipped for a moment and then he reached out and took the glass from me placing them both on the side table.

I looked up into his eyes, in the low light of the crystal room. He walked around me and came up behind my back. I felt his hand on my waist as the other brushed my hair aside. He didn’t kiss me though. He breathed onto my neck and then higher onto my ear. My breath quickened. I felt my legs wobble, then I felt his lips on my neck. I turned my head, my mouth seeking his warmth. With

just two fingertips he turned my head away and continued to kiss and then nibble. Harder then up closer to my ear. He pulled my earlobe into his mouth and pressed down with his teeth. The pain bent my knees as a gasp escaped my lips. I moaned though too as I grasped his side and tried to pull him closer.

“Too much? I should say sorry. But I think maybe you like it,” he whispered as his other hand moved from my waist and covered my hand. It was a simple gesture and yet, so tender. I opened my fingers and he slid his into mine. He continued to nibble, though he backed away from the point of pain. He released my hand and slowly turned me around. Finally his lips covered mine. He tasted like wine and then underneath something more eloquent. Our mouths opened, tongues pressed together. My body moved in closer and I felt warmth slide between my thighs.

I reached down between his legs and stroked him, erect and tight against his pants. He grabbed my wrist and brought it behind my waist. With his other hand he grabbed the back of my neck and kissed me, pushing his tongue against mine. I closed my eyes and inhaled the rising scent of him. Slowly he released my arm and I put my hands on his waist and brought him in even closer. We kissed for what could have been hours, bodies pressed against the one another's, arms pulling us closer. Every now and then I caught glimpses of our reflection. I was aroused seeing our hands on one another. I wanted to feel his whole body. I wanted to hold his muscles beneath my hands. I reached around and grabbed his ass. He was firm and well toned. I wrapped my arms around further and bent down a little as I clutched between his legs, forced him to spread them. As I did this, his own hands were at work. I felt them unzip the back of my dress and I pulled my arms out of the sleeves as it slid to the floor. I stepped out of it and pushed it aside with my foot.

He pulled away from me. Once again he walked around me. This time he made small, appreciative noises as he enjoyed the full view. Just as I was thinking I was glad I'd put on one of my favorite bras and panties from La Perla that morning, he gestured with his hand, “That is some very beautiful lingerie. It's a shame it's going to be on the floor soon.” Then he walked around behind me again and made the “mmmmhhh mmmmm” sound one makes when enjoying a delicious meal.

I looked back over my shoulder, cut my eyes at him and smiled slowly. He took a languid step toward me, reached out, and traced a hand up my thigh. He caressed my derriere. Then he released it and placed his hand into the space between my legs. He teased me from the outside, pressing on the lips and then

the more sensitive middle. He didn't rush, every movement was slow and deliberate.

"Even through your panties I feel how wet you are. God, that's hot." He said this more to himself as he stroked me further. He slipped a finger beneath the line of my panty and found the essence of me inside. At last, a slight release from the tension that was building inside me. I wanted him with every cell in my body. At first he barely brushed the flesh with his fingertips. Slowly he applied more pressure, causing me to tremble and sigh. I wanted to pounce on him, open myself to him. I ached with desire for him wanting the orgasm right away. But another part of me enjoyed watching myself in the mirrors, being held back by his unhurried pace. I'd never had a chance to watch from every angle. It was voyeurism but with the enhanced pleasure of watching myself being savored by a handsome man. Every curve of my body reflected back to me.

His fingers slid further inside me and I wanted to give in but our reflection wasn't complete. I needed to see more of his flesh. I needed to see the way his muscles moved beneath his skin as he stroked my body. His clothes had to go and for the moment, his fingers from inside me.

I slid his jacket onto the floor and then loosened his tie. I lifted his hand to my mouth and as I unbuttoned the cuffs my mouth teased his thumb. I moved to his index finger and slid my mouth over it, lightly tracing it with my teeth. I pulled up and kept my lips firm around his finger and again, brushed with my teeth. I looked at him; I wanted him to see the desire in my eyes. I wanted him to think of my mouth on other places. His head rolled back and again his hand grabbed behind my neck. I mouth stroked every finger and placed his hand on my chest. His fingers found my breast beneath the bra and he began to tease my nipple.

I picked up his other hand and again, unfastened him from his sleeve, my tongue playing with his fingers, swallowing, suggesting. His other hand began to play harder with my nipple and the tease called forth my desire. A small moan shuddered my body. I worked toward his index finger as he traced his other hand down my body and slid his hand inside my panty. He moved his hand around my waist and pushed the edge of my panty down. Slowly he worked around the waist until my panty was below my ass. He teased with his fingertips, brushed against the softness, and slipped in my juices. My panties fell to the floor and he returned to the front. He teased his fingers down the middle of my pelvis and then slid between the outer lips.

“You’re so wet. I want to taste you.” He whispered and put his fingers to his mouth. “Sweet, just as I thought you would be.” And then he placed them between my lips. I traced my tongue around and between them. Licking and savoring the taste of me.

“I want more,” he growled in a very low voice.

He took off his shirt in a purposeful way, as if it were in the way of his mission. Finally I was able to see his firm chest and taut arms. I glanced to the mirror and wasn’t disappointed by the broad expanse of back and shoulder muscles. He went to his knees in front of me and spoke up to me. “Spread your legs so I can taste you.”

I spread my legs further open. He ran his hands up the outside of my thighs.

“You should see how hot you look,” he said.

I looked into the mirror at the woman standing in front of me. Her legs were long, spread apart wide, feet still heeled. Her bra was askew and her dark hair fell in points and arrows around her shoulders. A well-developed man kneeled before her, ready to make his offering. I moaned and knew that when his mouth landed he would find me supple and pliable. I closed my eyes and leaned my head back as I stroked his hair. I wanted his mouth to open me and his tongue to penetrate.

He placed his hands on the lips of my pussy and spread me open wider. With just the tip of his tongue he teased the edge of my clitoris and then dragged it backwards. All the soft parts vibrated as he flicked and dragged. Upward and ever inward until he was deeply embedded in the folds. I knew he would at last bring me there in the middle of the foyer. A heaviness climbed from my fingers and toes, lightening as it moved up my body, toward my center. I brought my hands up to my hair and let it cascade down as my knees began to bend. I didn’t think I could stand through an orgasm.

“No, stay there. I want to watch you from here, eat you from here,” he demanded. I whined a bit but was so turned on by the way he took charge of me that I did as he said.

He stroked and sucked all the nectar and goodness from me. My body tensed, prepared for the wall of energy that would explode me all over him, and, just like that, I came, my body shaking and shuddering. I almost screamed as the tension of standing made it so much better but almost painful. As if it couldn’t achieve full expression. He sucked harder and I looked down to see his mouth

covering my pussy. My hands fell to my breasts. I could no longer tolerate being fastened. I unhooked my bra and tossed it aside. I laid my hands on his back, gestured for him to stand up. My legs were weak, I needed to lean on him.

He stood up, lips and mouth glazed from all that was me, and placed his mouth over mine. My hands went to his face and I licked and kissed all around his mouth. I tasted me all over the fine ridges of his lips and the curves of his cheeks. And then my legs gave way a little. He caught me, steady on his feet.

“Let’s get you down. I want you to relax.” He whispered into my ear. He helped me down, throwing his jacket beneath me. As he smoothed it out beneath me, he looked me in the eyes, “Do you trust me to be good to you?”

“I don’t know, what do you mean?” I asked.

“I want to restrain you. But you have to be alright with it. I won’t do anything you don’t want and I’ll be safe and wear a condom of course.” He put a hand on one of my shoulders and the other landed on the back of my neck. With this gesture, it was there again, the feeling of comfort and safety. And not that I really needed any convincing but then he grinned, “And I think you’ll really like it.” He leaned in to kiss me, “I promise, I’ll be really, really good to you. And we’ll have a safe word if you’d like me to slow down or stop.” He pulled back from me and took my chin in his hand, “How does that sound to you?”

I nodded and took a breath in, “Yes, I feel safe with you. I trust you to take care of me and to listen if I need a break. But I don’t think I will.” Then I looked around the room, “I think our safe word should be Versailles.” I grinned.

He looked around as if seeing the foyer for the first time, “Yeah, okay, sure, that works. Leave it to an architect to use a place as a safe word.” And with that he stood up and as he walked away down the hallway I heard him laugh, “I like Patience, you’re different.”

I thought to myself, “Maybe, but really, I’m just me.”

He came back after a minute or so and set a few things behind me. I couldn’t really see and I didn’t turn around to look. I wanted to savor the anticipation. So few things surprised me. He squatted down and kissed me and handed me a bottle of water. I took it, suddenly realizing how thirsty I was. I drank nearly the whole bottle.

“Thanks, that helps.” I handed him the bottle and he finished it.

Then he leaned into me, “Good, because I think it’s time for us to have some fun. How do you feel about being blindfolded?” I saw a black silk sash about 3” in width in his hands.

I brought his hands toward my face and said, “Yes, I’m in. Let’s play.”

“Yes, let’s play.” He placed the fabric over my eyes and secured it at the back of my head. His hands never left my body as he caressed all the way down to my feet and removed my shoes. I’d almost forgotten they were still on. I touched the smooth silk of the blindfold while his hands moved to the sides of my chest and helped me to stand. I felt something drag over my shoulder, soft and yet mildly abrasive. I moved to touch it.

His body came very close to mine, and I felt his breath on my ear. “Don’t move your arms. Keep your hands down.”

I pictured myself standing before him. Completely naked, without protection, for him to see the entirety of me. I was calm, and intrigued, unsure what he would do next. I felt the rope loop again over my shoulder and then between my legs. He dragged it slowly upward so there was only slight tension between my legs. He understood how tender that skin was. I felt from the way he handled me that he wasn’t here to mistreat me, only to entice and to suggest.

Again the rope went over my shoulder and again up between my legs. I felt him loop and tie and coerce the binds. Sometimes as he tied the knot, he would tug and my body would pull in his direction. As he built the restraint, my feelings of safety and trust grew fueling my desire. With only my nose as my guide, I could smell his arousal as he looped and fastened me. I knew it to be the scent of the clear, slippery fluid that seeps out of the penis when a man is aroused. I imagined licking it, tasting him, drinking him up. As a final sensorial layer, building an image in my head when my eyes weren’t able, as he stepped even closer I felt his erection against my legs. I used used all my willpower to follow instructions, not touch him but there wasn’t a single part of me that didn’t want his body against mine, taking me, spreading me, filling me.

He brought the loop over and around my breasts and brushed them slightly with his hands. Purposeful touches or just intent in his work I wasn’t able to tell. My body jumped when his skin touched mine. Without my eyes, my skin was hyper alert as if it could have jumped off my body and wrapped itself around whatever part of him touched me. My body vibrated from my center, and I wanted nothing else than to reach up and rip off the mask and then to

lay myself on him, to give myself over to him. I felt out of my mind with wanton lust.

The rope went around my waist, was secured in the back, then back to the front. Secured again. Knot tying and tugging. He became very quiet and there was only the sound of the rope moving over itself as he brought it around and up under my breasts. Over my shoulders and then down my back. A few more knots and then he moved onto my arms. He picked up my wrists and I began to feel the rope wind around them, fastening them together but leaving my hands out of the bind so I could still use them.

He became quiet but I could sense him standing next to me, just the slight warmth of his breath on my shoulder. And then his hands were upon me as he pressed himself up behind me. He turned me around so I would face him. His hands went to my face and his lips pressed into mine. I opened my mouth as his tongue entered, colliding with mine. We kissed and our bodies melted together. He shifted and again, I felt his cock hard, between my legs. I enjoyed the tease of it and I became wet between my thighs.

I moved my mouth to his shoulder. I dragged my tongue down his chest and found his nipple. I bit down slightly and felt his body move toward mine. I slid my tongue across his chest and found the other nipple while my hands played on the opposite side. He didn't protest to either my teeth or my fingertips. I felt his body become more tense against mine. Then I moved my hand down and placed my fingertips on his balls. Gently I stroked them and brought my fingers around and underneath, pressing into the sensitive area closer to his backside. His body moved even closer to me as he moaned. I smiled, and enjoyed his arousal. I wanted to please him.

I lowered to my knees so finally I could taste him. Still blindfolded I unfastened his belt and slid his trousers over his hard cock, feeling hot skin where there should've been underwear. Without my eyes it was different to experience with only the scent and the feel of him to drive me further. I put the whole of him in my mouth moving the tip toward the back of my throat. Then I pulled back as I circled my tongue around the shaft and onto the tip. I traced my tongue around and around. He tasted good and I quickened my pace, driven by our mutual desire. He placed his hands on my head with his fingertips at the base of my neck. He didn't push my head but I sensed that he was controlling himself. "God that feels so good," he moaned. "You should see how hot this is."

I kept going, licking and kissing and then moving him all the way in, knowing that I could bring him just as we were. And then his hands were on my face,

gently moving it away from him. “I want you to stand up.” he said. As soon as I did, he turned me away from him. I felt his hands behind my head, as he gently untied the eye covering and dragged it against my breasts.

I inhaled at the art he had woven onto my body. The rope lay as if lingerie, tracing beautiful pathways between my legs, over and around my waist and breasts. I looked around the room. The low light from the crystal chandelier bounced and reflected back an image I will never forget. He placed a hand on the back of my neck as our eyes met in the mirror. Dizzied by the beauty of his work, my legs went weak for the second time this evening. I laid my body against his, inhaling his strength. He pushed back against me, holding firmly onto my neck.

As never before, wetness poured from me. It splashed my ankles announcing my desire. He slipped his hand between my legs, “Oh my God, you are so wet,” he said, both incredulous and fascinated. And then something between a moan and a groan seemed to be ripped from his very depth.

He walked around to the front of me and picked up the end of the rope. It too had been tied into a series of knots that looked almost like a braid. The fastening was centered at my navel. He tugged me gently toward him. I walked slowly, savoring the time it would take for him to lead me wherever he wanted. The foyer was a semicircle with three entryways that led to different rooms. He led me into the far opening. As I walked over the threshold I took in the city illuminated.

“You have quite a view.” I murmured.

He looked at me intently, “I bought this place after a very well-timed trade. But I think with you in it, it’s even more spectacular. Makes it all worth it.”

I smiled at him and lifted my hands to stroke my breasts.

“No, no covering. I want to see all of you.”

I willed my arms back down to my sides. My desire climbed up a notch as he watched me.

He guided me past a magnificent navy, velvet, sofa toward a chaise that was close to the windows. He walked to the other side of it and pulled the rope taut so that I had to kneel onto the chaise and position my hands on the back of the frame. He held the end of the rope between us as if he were going to toss it

toward me, suggesting a release from the binds. My heart quickened. The idea of being untethered and free made me anxious.

“No, please, don’t. I like the restraint, there’s comfort in it. I feel safe.” I ran my hands down my body, and breathed. “I find it very arousing.” Then I leaned toward him and whispered, “Please, please, don’t stop.”

He cocked his head and with just the slightest grin, he sauntered back around the chair and approached me from behind. Slowly he began to work his hands beneath the ropes that were on my back. He jerked me upward so that my knees no longer were on the seat.

His mouth landed on my shoulder and then my neck and he kissed me firmly before he landed his teeth.

“I want to watch your wetness lather my cock in your silky juices. I want to drive myself into you and fuck you till you beg for more while you cry for me to stop. But first, a little safety measure. I’m going to get a condom. You stay right here.” He walked away and I moaned at the thought of him inside me. I leaned over the seat and found my pussy wet in my fingertips. But he was back before I even had time to work myself any further.

I heard him open the condom and I moaned at the thought of him inside me.

He grasped on tighter to the rope on my back, his hands pulling beneath my shoulder blades, and pushed me with his leg onto the sofa. I knelt down again and felt him move his legs around mine. He spread the rope between my legs and rubbed me up and down with his fingers. Then he reached around and slid a finger into my mouth. I sucked and licked as I felt the tip of his cock tease open my pussy. My hips moved reflexively toward him, I could not contain my desire. He pushed in another inch and I threw my head back.

“Yes...more!” I begged him.

And then he pushed the rest of him into me. At last he was where he should be.

He nestled in, as if to savor the first moments of us together. Then he began to rock. I closed my eyes and focused on the singular movement of his cock moving back and forth inside me. Beneath his hands the ropes stimulated and teased my skin. With the handholds he controlled both our bodies. He pulled me close as he pushed in tight. Again and again, he pulled and pushed. With the leverage he was able to thrust into me very deep. I gripped harder into the

cushion below me and let the rest of my body relax as I reached higher and higher. This orgasm rose from the outer reaches of my limbs. The energy swirled and coalesced then surged upward. It flooded me and spilled over my skin bringing forth a moan and a scream. He jerked me closer as I rode the wave.

I felt him loosen the grip beneath my shoulder blades. He pulled his hands out from the rope and pushed me into the cushion. His hips pressed against my ass, while his large hands covered my back, owning the space between my skin, my heart, and my lungs. Maybe to let me gather myself, he slowed his pace. I pushed my hips upward to meet his. He laid both hands on my hips and pulled me into him. Then he reached around and began to massage between my legs. He found the sweet spot and rubbed one finger up and down.

“You keep doing that and you’ll bring me again.” I breathed.

He leaned down, pressed his weight onto me. “I want you to come again,” he demanded.

The next thing I knew, he pulled out of me and then away. I wanted to reach around and grab him back until he said, “But I want to watch it shatter over your face. Turn over.”

Fine with me.

I rolled over and saw the intensity on his face. Just the smallest beads of sweat gleamed on his forehead. His eyebrows knitted together with a look of both determination and concentration. I knew it was his turn. He slid himself into me and began to move faster. I closed my eyes and focused on the simple and exquisite movement of his cock. He grew larger as his desire grew. Again and again he hit the sweet spot inside me. My orgasm would come from a different place this time. It would be more internal, driven from the center outward.

We would come together, paced in wetness and rapid thrusts.

He quickened. I beckoned him. “Fuck me harder, James! Harder! I want you deep inside so you’ll make me come.”

“Yeah, you like it deep, don’t you?” He pushed further, thrusting so hard I saw all his muscles flex with his efforts.

I moaned, “Yes, yes, just like that!”

And then I couldn't speak, my climax a surge of warm liquid rushing through my veins. He shoved again once more, a deep moan escaped from his body as he came and then fell onto my chest. A sigh escaped his lips; his breath warmed the space between my shoulder and neck. I gently stroked his head as he twitched to quietness. Our breath slowed, our limbs melted together.

A few minutes later we unpeeled ourselves and he untied me, gentle hands and kisses tracing rope lines. He then stood up. I watched his backside as he walked back toward the foyer. It was a good view. He returned wearing a pair of sweatpants and a robe in hand. I sat up and he put it around me. "Thank you, I was getting chilly." I purred, sated and content.

We moved over to his sofa and cuddled, the city laid out before us.

I spoke first. "You know you didn't have to tie me down just to show me the view." I looked back at him and smiled. "Not that I minded."

"No, you didn't seem to mind. And I told you things go better for everyone when they let me lead." We giggled.

"No, you're right." I yawned and stretched my arms upward. "Tonight was lovely and I think the week is finally catching up to me. How do you feel about taking me home?"

He seemed a little surprised. *Was it because I'd asked to go home right away or was it because I'd asked to go home at all?* "Oh, yeah, well, no problem. You want to get going now?"

"In a little bit. Otherwise, I'm going to get really sleepy and I have a lot to do in the morning." I didn't want to leave open the possibility for the awkward conversations that sometimes followed with someone I didn't know very well. One or both people not knowing what to say or how to ask if they wanted to see one another again. He seemed like a good guy and, no question, a great lover, but I was tired. We could take this one meeting at a time and see where things led. The fact that I had already had sex with him didn't bother me. We both had our needs met. A chance encounter in the elevator might be awkward but only if we made it that way.

And then, he went quiet, his body going very still. I sighed. I assumed it was from my comment about needing to get home. No, I would remain steadfast and not assume we'd be seeing one another again. It was difficult to find something to say that was in between, "will we see each other again?" and "this was nice, have a good night". The first option always felt desperate (unless you

got lucky and *both* people basically said it at the same time) and the other option made one person seem cold or aloof.

I'll admit I didn't know how to handle this part of the post-sex interaction very well. I wasn't driven to pursue a relationship and yet, I enjoyed being with men. I liked their company and I loved sex. But I tried not to confuse lust with love. In my experience the two could go hand in hand but they often didn't. I tried to err on the side of caution and assume a sexual encounter was *never* the beginnings of love. Not to say it *couldn't* be but best to assume otherwise. I kept myself safe this way. Consequently, I most likely came off as aloof...

I got up and walked into the foyer. I found my puddle of clothing and got dressed. When I walked back into the living room he was gone. Soon enough he walked back in, this time fully clothed, shoes on and keys in hand. I smiled to myself. *Good boy*, I thought.

"Looks like you're ready." He smiled at me, but it wasn't the smile I saw earlier in the evening, his confidence seemed shaken. I walked toward him and kissed him, not because I felt guilty. I didn't. I kissed him because it felt natural. He was good to me and that in itself was endearing. I kissed him because I liked him, and also, because I didn't want to seem aloof or worse, cold.

When I pulled away from him, he said, "You don't really operate like other women." He stepped away from me and shook his head, almost in disbelief. But he was smiling, at least and his shoulders were back in a place of confidence. Maybe he was used to women falling all over themselves to get more of him. Perhaps their becoming enamored was a testament toward his leadership skills. I didn't want to wound him but I also wanted to be honest about our time together.

"No, I don't. You'll like me better this way though. And besides, it's the only way I know. I've had a really nice time."

"Yeah, so did I."

"Great, then let's leave it there. It's late, I'm tired, and we'll see each other at the office I'm sure."

By the time we got down to the car, he had rallied a bit. On the drive to my place, we chatted about cars and work and it seemed as though any awkwardness had dissipated between us. Worrying about it certainly wasn't

going to do me any good. It was good to take some time to think further about my feelings for him and as was usually the case *if* I liked him more and wanted to see him more, somehow, it worked out that we'd see each other. We'd run into one another on the elevator, in the lobby, even out at night. We'd have another conversation and it would go from there. *Or* I knew where he worked. I could always call or email him. But my instinct told me that he liked to lead and if he'd pursue me if he wanted. But my life wouldn't be hinged on if he did or didn't.

I lived in the 900 block of Ashbury Street and rented a garage apartment behind a house. He parked and walked me down the dark driveway to the doorway. We stopped at the door while I found my keys. I unlocked the door but didn't open it.

He leaned in and kissed me as if he wanted to take part of me with him for the ride home. The kind of kiss that made me want more. A lot more. We kissed there in the dark for what seemed like twenty minutes, hands finding the places where they already knew the rewards. I was becoming aroused all over again. He pushed up my dress as I unbuttoned his trousers

"Please tell me you have a condom," I said breathlessly as he kissed down my neck.

"By some stroke of genius, I did happen to put one in my pocket before we walked out the door. I really don't know what made me do that." He nibbled my breasts and fumbled in his pocket at the same time.

"Maybe because it was so good the first time your subconscious wanted more." I whispered in his ear.

He moved away from me for a second and dug into his jeans pocket and pulled out the little square package. I watched as he tore open the foil and stuffed the wrapper back in his pocket.

"Why don't you help?" I heard the hunger in his voice.

Together we put it on him then he let his hands fall away as I rolled it down the shaft. I cupped his balls with my other hand then wrapped my fingers around as much of him as I could. Complement to him, it wasn't easy.

Then, with some aggression he pushed my hands away, and as he lifted me up against the wall I opened my legs for him and he shoved his way inside. Right there on the doorstep of my apartment. His cock landed at the very base of me

and I moaned as if he hadn't just been inside me an hour or so before. I tried to keep quiet but I had a hard time controlling myself. I wanted to scream it felt so complete, so fulfilling.

"You'd better keep it down, unless you want to scare your neighbors," he whispered in my ear as he pushed his cock into me harder.

I reached around and opened the door. With my legs still wrapped around him, he walked into my apartment and closed the door behind him. With me in his arms, he went down to his knees and laid me out on my back. Then he drove his cock into my pussy as I rocked into him. He knew just where that sweet spot deep inside me was, and soon enough another orgasm rocketed through me. I let it roll over me as he grabbed onto my ass and pushed and shoved ever deeper. He came just after me, fucking me so hard I thought I might lose some skin on my back. I loved every second of it.

A minute or so later, as he lay on top me, he picked up his head and looked around, "So this is your apartment. Looks nice from the floor."

"I'd ask you to come in, oh, but you already did that. It's time for you to leave now. I do need to get to sleep." I teased.

He stood and pulled his jeans up from his ankles. "Well, that was easy. I mean, not you, finding my pants."

"Yeah, I knew what you meant! Ha!"

"Okay, well, I think we've already said our goodbyes. I'm going to head out." He put his hand down to help me stand. I leaned toward him, wrapped my arms around his waist. We hugged and then kissed. We were both smiling in the near darkness.

"Goodnight then, Patience. What is your last name? Please?"

"Alright...it's truLove. And not one word. We can discuss it another time."

Once again, he shook his head. "I don't even know how to respond. That's a great name for you. Goodnight, Patience truLove. Until we see each other again."

"Goodnight, James."