



FIFTY SHADES OF WAR



BY

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**An Anti-Fanfiction Fifty Shades of Grey Piece
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Forward

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Chapter One

No Scrubs

Settling down in a wrought iron chair outside the coffee house, Alena looked up at her husband, Ares, with pleading gray eyes, "We're on vacation," she coaxed.

Standing tall above her with his brawny frame blocking out the sun, Ares let out a deep sigh as his onyx eye rolled in his head, "Fine," he capitulated, "whatever you want, my darling." A small light dawned on him as his mood lightened and he bent down near her ear, "By the way, what do you want?"

A graceful fingertip wound through his dark beard to trace along the strong jawline below, "You, of course, always you," she cooed and planted a kiss on his cheek, "but right now I'll have a large coffee with cream and sugar and a...cherry...scone. I'll have you later."

"Not too much later. I'll give you a cherry scone alright, you wait and see," Ares winked at her as he grinned with anticipation. She pursed her lips in a mock kiss before he stood up again. Turning back to the line of people waiting for a lousy cup of coffee knowing he could wave his hand in the air and there would be two steaming cups on the table before it came back to his side he grumbled, "Vacation indeed."

Covering her mouth with her hand as she snickered watching him take his place in line and towering over everyone around him, Alena couldn't hide the sparkle in her eyes. Every now and then, it gave her great pleasure to make him act like a normal human being. He'd stood there three seconds and she already feel his frustration at having to wait. Lowering her hand to reveal the wide smile lighting up her eyes and shaking her head, she raised her face to the sun letting its warm rays caress her alabaster skin.

Within a few moments, the sun disappeared and Alena opened her eyes thinking it had gone behind a cloud but there was no cloud. There was a man, young maybe in his early thirties, dressed very smartly in a gray silk suit that seemed to set off his equally gray eyes. For a mortal, he was on the tall side with a sinewy frame. His reddish hair was neatly cropped about his head and handsome face. Before she could ask whom he was or what he wanted he spoke with what she assumed he believed was authority.

"Is this seat taken?"

Already joyful at the day, the prospect of playing with the man for a few moments while Ares stood in line intrigued her but Alena didn't like the way he smelled under the slick appearance. "Yes," she said flatly, "it is."

The man didn't care, he sat down anyway, putting his leather brief case on the concrete at his feet, "I'm sure she won't mind if I sit here for a moment."

Biting down on her bottom lip to keep from telling him what she really thought, Alena sighed wistfully as her eyes grew stormy, "I'm sure *he* will." Glancing around she noted to him, "That table over there is empty."

Yes, that table was empty and he did consider sitting there but he couldn't stop staring at her enjoying the brief moment of sunlight on her face. Her skin and hair so white he thought she must be an angel the only thing missing was a pair of white wings on her slender back. "I don't want to sit over there."

"And I suppose you always get what I want," she playfully replied even though he was already boring her.

He reached across the table for the woman's hand only to find it the softest thing he had ever touched. "Has anyone ever told you that you have the most beautiful eyes?"

Running her thumb over the back of his hand lovingly, Alena leaned forward to stare him straight in his gray eyes, "Is that the best you got because if it is it really won't do." She flicked his hand off hers and sat back waiting for his reply that took a while as he sat there dumbfounded by hers. It was clear that whoever he was he truly was accustomed to getting whatever he wanted whenever he wanted it. Today was not his lucky day.

It wasn't often he came up against someone who didn't know who he was and didn't automatically fall at his feet. Always enjoying a challenge, she intrigued him further as he plotted out his next move. One hand tucked under his chin and the other on hers he offered her a sly smile, "I'm rich."

He was getting more tedious by the moment, "That's nice for you; however, I'm not for sale."

Still not deterred the stranger went on, "I can offer you a lot of excitement. Do you like to be excited? I have a plane, a yacht, a helicopter; I could take you to anywhere you want to go."

Alena was about to tell him the rude intruder that she could do those very same things for herself if she chose when she saw Ares coming back to the table. She thought she would just sit back and let Fate take its course from here. "Is that so? Well, tell me more." Alena batted her eyelashes at him stringing him along as she silently waited for his advanced to blow up in his handsome face.

Coming out of the coffee shop and greeted by the sight of the man sitting so suggestively with his wife, Ares switched both large steaming cups of coffee to one hand, licked the whipped cream from his thumb before putting Alena's cherry scone atop the cups then straightened his spine. His dark eyes narrowed on the slender man's back as he crept up behind him listening to the arrogant little brat try to sway Alena away from him with something as mundane as money. He would be furious if it wasn't so pitifully hilarious. For a one moment, Alena's laughing eyes met his serious ones to allay the jealousy still growing within him. Standing directly behind the oblivious stranger Ares cleared his throat as he planted his big mitt on the intruder's shoulder so heavily it made the man's arm fall out from under him sending his chin abruptly crashing to the wrought iron table. "I don't know what you're doing but I know you're not trying to pick up my wife, boy."

Stunned by the sudden force and turn of events, the man had only begun to pull himself together and give a self-assured reply when he saw the hand on the table holding two large cups of hot coffee easily and the other one on his shoulder. It covered the entire thing from the nape of his neck to the fairly toned bicep in his upper arm. With his teeth aching from being so abruptly gnashed together and tasting the trickle of blood running into his mouth from his cheek, the rich man with the bad attitude shuddered as he turned around in the chair to face the man behind him and took in his abs. He had to raise his eyes and then crane his neck upward to take in the whole of the man staring him down. Without doubt, he had to be seven feet tall and more than three hundred pounds of sheer muscle. The stranger's heart stopped just before his mouth could run away with him again. Instead of a smartass reply, he began mumbling his apologies, "I'm sorry, just a misunderstanding."

"Yeah, sure it is," Ares grumbled, "get out here you little toad, go!" The hand gripping the man's shoulder gave a massive shove sending him from the chair to the ground with a heavy thud.

Titters and giggles started filling the air around them. The intruder noticed people taking out their phones so they could post this to their YouTube and Facebook pages. He'd have a bit of damage control to do if this took off and went viral like so many other mundane pieces of shit did these days. Trying his best to regain his composure he stood up, brushed himself off, picked up his brief case, held it in front of his crotch and again apologized for the misunderstanding before walking away...sideways.

At first Ares thought, the man was just keeping an eye on him to see if Ares would chase after him but when he got a little further down the street and turned around to break into a sprint it was clear to see his silk slacks were newly stained. Ares laughed heartily and when Alena admonished him for making the rude man wet his pants, Ares laughed harder.

Chapter Two

Sharp Dressed Man

"Do we have to do this?" Alena sighed looking up at the all-too-modern building. "We're..."

"On vacation," Ares reminded her with a chuckle, "and when on vacation here in the Mortal World we have to do Mortal Things even if they're boring."

"Oh, fine," she agreed with a playful huff, "but what do you care about the money? I mean we don't even use it."

"I don't care about the money," he scoffed, "it's just paper, but it's good to check on it once in a while and see how it's doing."

"In case...what?" She led easily, "Olympus falls?"

"Something like that, come on, it will be fun."

"Like getting a tooth pulled," she followed him through the doors to the lobby of Grey Enterprises where Ares informed the secretary he had a two o'clock appointment with Mr. Grey. Alena watched with curiosity as Ares reached into the back pocket of his well-fitting Levi's and pulled out a leather wallet to hand over his ID. The beautiful and very young woman behind the desk buzzed the private elevator to let them go up. When the doors closed, she turned to her husband, "ID?"

"Humm...see?" He handed over the driver's license and watched her blush at the name, "That's right, just call me Ari, hummm?"

"You're a dick," she cooed and handed it back to him as she remembered their honeymoon in Boston where they'd run into Earl Holbrook her old boss and she was forced to come up a name for her new husband on the spot. "Aristotle Papathanassiou. Does that make me Mrs. Papathanassiou?"

"Of course it does," Ares flicked his wrist to produce a driver's license for her, "I didn't change your first name though."

"Not again anyway," Looking at the very authentic plastic card she laughed again then tucked it into her purse. "How kind of you."

The elevator doors opened on to a blindingly white room with touches of gray and red upon chrome. It was so sparse and overly clean that the glare hurt her eyes. There was in nothing here that was warm or inviting, it even smelled bad.

A very buxom young woman with blonde hair and purple-rimmed glasses sauntered over to them with a clipboard in her hand, "Mr. and Mrs. Papathanassiou?" Her free extended to Ares in greeting. "So nice to meet both of you, I'm Fonda."

"Fond of what?" Ares asked drawing his hand away from hers. Although it was soft and warm it had a lingering stench of jizz tinged with an underlying layer of fresh urine on it.

"A lot of things, Mr. Papathanassiou, many things," she whispered suggestively. "Please, follow me." Fonda made sure her walk had a little extra wiggle in it as she guided them toward the couch in the waiting area. "Is there anything I can get for you? Anything at all?"

With his wife on his arm and insulted by the woman's undertone, Ares dismissed her as though she were no more than a bothersome fly, "No, that will be all." Turning away from the young woman, he stood next to Alena and held her hand until she was settled upon the couch. Sitting his large body next to her, Ares put an arm around her shoulders, "Don't let her bother you."

Alena's face tilted upward to meet his gaze, "If I thought for half a second she had the merest chance with you, I'd gouge her eyes out right here," she leaned in a little closer, "yours would be soon after."

Ares nodded and cleared his throat believing that she would most certainly do her best to carry out that threat and having no doubt she'd get pretty damn far with it. "Yes, well, you know, my darling, I only have eyes for you."

"That's better," she wiggled on the couch trying to get comfortable but it seemed the furniture in here was designed more for show than for function or comfort. "I don't like this place."

That was an understatement; Ares felt her unease radiating from her, "Why?"

"It smells," she whispered in as low a voice as she could, "like...like...the back rooms of an Adult Store just after the cleaning crew has been by."

"I see, and you would know how that smells because..."

"I had a life before I became your wife, my love." Picking up the nearest magazine and leafing through it, she looked around at all of the women here. They were young and beautiful and most were scantily dressed and just standing around serving no other purpose than to look pretty. Living Art for the office. They almost reminded her of Ares' own little harem, the one he had so long ago when she first washed up upon his shore. Ares' women varied in age and size whereas these paper dolls were all between twenty-one and twenty-seven each one as interchangeable and disposable as the next. "What do you think?" She whispered to Ares from behind the magazine.

The God of War didn't need clarification of his wife's question, "Gay," he stated flatly.

"Really? I was going to say misogynistic."

Ares nodded thinking that a strong possibility, "I guess we'll find out soon enough."

They waited another ten minutes on the uncomfortable couch in the overly bright room before Fonda returned to them and said, "Mr. Grey will see you now." With that extra wiggle in her walk, her ass jutting out from beneath the too tight skirt like a ham jammed into sausage casing, she led them to the wide double wood doors and opened them with a great flourish.

Ares and Alena exchanged a silently annoyed glance before walking into the large room that was meant to be impressive and modernistic with its white walls, white floor, brightly colored artwork, and imposing bank of windows behind the minimalistic desk.

Without making eye contact the man behind the desk stood up, buttoned his jacket, strolled out from behind it with his hand extended and spoke, "Mr. Papathanassiou, so nice to meet you, I'm Christian Grey." The growl that came in response to his greeting was most unexpected. It was only at that point Christian looked up and then up some more to take in the man from the coffee shop and his angelic wife. "Oh, it's you."

"I was thinking the same thing," Ares snarled.

If the big man were anyone else Christian would just throw him out but he wasn't anyone else, Mr. Papathanassiou was the world's most well-known billionaire recluse—having inherited over 50 billion dollars from his uncle Adrian Papadopoulos just over twenty years ago-- and he was the largest investor in Grey Enterprises. The man, like his uncle before him, was a complete mystery disappearing from the face of the earth for years at a time then showing up again to change investments on a whim. When Christian heard Mr. Papathanassiou was asking for a meeting, he not only readily agreed to take it—which was something he almost never did-- but he had been up half the night hoping it all went well and blowing off some steam with Ana in their private playroom. Word on the street was Mr. Papathanassiou was at it again, he was checking on several of his investment and changing his portfolio. If he pulled out of Grey Enterprises, the company would take a massive hit from which it would not readily recover. The ripple effect could be completely disastrous. Keeping his cool and his hand out Christian finished the distance with as much grace as he could find, "About this afternoon, I want to apologize again, I was out of line."

"Off the map," Ares agreed as he clasped his hand over Mr. Grey's swallowing it from fingertip to forearm and giving a good squeeze making the man in the suit wince. "Nice pants, are they new?" One last shake and harder grip and Ares let the man go. "I'm not the one you need to apologize to," he stepped aside making Alena stand between them. "Go on."

"Mrs. Papathanassiou," Christian stumbled as he stared into her storm cloud eyes they were so like his own he was utterly captivated by them, "I meant no disrespect or harm, really I didn't, it's just that when I saw you sitting there, I just couldn't help myself."

Alena turned to look at her husband over her shoulder, "Misogynistic," she cooed, "I win."

"I owe you dinner," Ares agreed. "Shall we get this over with Mr. Grey?"

Christian didn't like the tone of the big man's deep voice; it made his heart sink as visions of his bank account emptying rapidly flew behind his eyes. "Please, make yourselves comfortable." He gestured toward the chairs before his desk.

Alena looked at the two white leather chairs in their scant chrome frames, "With your furniture, that's not really possible. It looks nice enough from a distance but when you get up close to it it's really not all it's cracked up to be." She walked past the suited man without looking back and took a seat in the chair that was exactly as she said. It looked soft but it was hard as a rock. A moment later Ares stood at her side telling Christian Grey that he would remain standing, as he didn't believe the chair would hold him.

Taking a seat behind his desk knowing he was in the uncomfortable position of playing defense, Christian held his hands apart, "Please let's forget about this afternoon and start again. It was all my fault."

"Yes, it was," Alena agreed, "you just walk up to any woman you see and impose yourself on her like that?"

Christian blushed and looked down at his desk feeling as though he'd been scolded by his mother. Swallowing hard as the rush of blood made a light bead of sweat break out on his unwrinkled brow he muttered, "This is business, let's not let our personal lives enter into it, shall we?"

"Oh," Alena chimed and glanced up at her husband still looming over the desk, "now he doesn't want it to be personal. Funny that." She couldn't get over the fact that Ares had been right when they first came in to the building; this *was* fun.

Looking down at the top of Mr. Grey's rusty head Ares mumbled, "Very amusing." Planting both hands on the desk at shoulder's width apart he barked, "Look up, boy, I think you know where this is going. I only came here to check on my investment and ask a few questions but now that I've met you, Mr. Grey, I think there are much better places for my money than Grey Enterprises."

Christian felt as though he had been fatally shot through the wallet. If Papathanassiou pulled out his original two billion dollar investment plus all of the interest and stock options, well, Grey did not even want to think about it, "You were the first major investor in this company, Mr. Papathanassiou, I'd hate to lose you."

"You'd hate to lose my money," Ares corrected, "we've never met. I invested in this venture on the advice of someone else. I owe you no loyalty."

"That's true," Christian rushed, "it is," he held up his hand in a stopping motion unable to believe the majority of his fortune was now teetering on the edge of him being unable to keep his mouth shut and hitting on the wrong woman just because he was desperately in need of a little tension relief before this very meeting. "Think of all you could lose by pulling out now, we're still on the upswing and it shows no signs of stopping. You could make another billion."

Ares' upper lip curled revealing his sharp white teeth, "I don't need another billion. In fact, I don't need the money I'm about to pull out from under you either. I'm going to do it for the sheer joy of watching you fall after being so brazen."

Grasping at any straws of hope that he could find Christian began to plead, "Please, there must be something I can do to make this up to you. It was all a terrible mistake on my part. What can I do?"

Looking back to his wife, Ares watched her raise her eyebrows and shrug her shoulders indicating she didn't care what he decided. He should just take his money and run but, then again, making people squirm like a worm on a hook was always fun to and he didn't get to do that very often anymore. His onyx eyes turned back to Mr. Grey when he spoke his voice was like the distant rumble of thunder, "I don't know. What *can* you do?"

The smallest glimmer of hope offered to him Christian grabbed at it like a drowning man in rough seas being offered the blade of sword to hold onto, "I know a wonderful restaurant here in Seattle, let me take the two of you to dinner tonight. I promise I'll be on my best behavior and you'll get to know me a little better. Maybe then you'll feel more comfortable leaving your money with me."

"Alena?"

Behind her husband, Alena stood up and then wrapped her arm around his, "I suppose it's a start." She didn't really want to spend any more time around the greasy little man but money was important in the Mortal World. If Ares pulled out his money, many of Mr. Grey's employees would lose their jobs although she doubted any of the tarts in his office would be among the newly unemployed.

Christian felt a small wave of relief wash over him as he offered a smile, "Thank you, Mrs. Papathanassiou," he held out his hand to her and Alena tentatively took it. The feel of her flesh wrapped around his, soft, delicate, and yet firm, made the monster in his slacks wiggle. When he spoke again the contriteness in his voice was gone and his voice took on a slightly sultrier tone. "You won't regret this, I promise. Ana and I will pick you up around seven? Does that sound good? Where are you staying?"

"We're at The Four Seasons, we'll be expecting your car," Alena informed him not letting the cool underlying tone of seduction in his voice bother her. Without another word, arm-in-arm, they walked out the door, behind them they heard the sound of the paperwork, phone, computer, and other items on Mr. Grey's desk hitting the gleaming white floor in his office. That didn't deter them from walking through the main office, past the little whores who were staring at them with their skilled mouths agape, and into the private elevator where Ares turned to her perplexed.

"You know, for half a second there, I could have sworn you weren't going to tell me to take the money run but to kill him."

"If he was any other man, I might have," she agreed without guilt or hesitation, "but many people depend upon him and there's little need for them to suffer just because their boss is an overbearing little prick."

"Yes, well, we'll see if you still feel the same way by the end of dinner." Ares felt certain that she would not.

Chapter Three

All of Me

For the first time since their vacation started, Alena not only allowed Ares to use his powers she demanded he do so as they exited the building. She did not want to wait for a cab. At her insistence, he whisked them back to their hotel room where she immediately began stripping the clothing from her willowy frame declaring she needed a hot bath.

Ares was never one to mind watching his lovely wife strip her clothes from her body but the urgency with which she did it bothered him. Christian Grey was a slime ball of the highest order, there could be no doubt about that or the fact that Alena knew her share of slime balls before and after she came into his life. Standing in the doorway of the bathroom filled with a layer of steam so thick it obscured his view except for the glowing candles she'd placed around the room. Casually leaning against the jamb breathing in the stirring scent of sandalwood, he offered, "Apollo would love that asshole."

"Yes he would, they make a perfect pair," Alena huffed from the bath that was still running hot water into the large Jacuzzi tub. The bath with its salts, incense, and candles were meant to calm her nerves and still her anger but it seemed to be having the opposite effect. Apollo was not the only one who would like spending time with Mr. Grey, she was equally certain Cernunnos and Jaakim would entertain his like as well. There were too many men like Mr. Grey in the world, they thought they were cute, they thought were powerful, they thought they were dominant, but they were just little boy bullies under it all out only for themselves and what they could grab even if it didn't belong to them. "If, at the end of the night, I do ask you to kill him, will you?"

An unusual request from his normally peace-loving diplomatic wife but not an unexpected one. Ares strolled into the room to kneel by the tub so he could see her better through the thick haze of steam, "I'd do anything for you, anything at all, you know that." He ran a hand over her wet head from her furrowed brow to the nape of her tense neck, "I won't think twice or feel bad about it. You, however, my beautiful wife, might have a regret or two afterward."

Alena didn't have to think about it, "Not this time. Not with him. He's no good." She held her arms out to her husband.

Waving his hand down his body, Ares' clothes disappeared until he squatted next to her naked as the day he was born, kissing her forehead he climbed into the overly large tub with her. Settling in on the other end, Alena glided through the hot water toward him to nestle her naked body against his. It cuddled in to him not just for the heat it offered or the rising passion it sparked but for the protection she always found in his arms, "Whatever you want," he assured again, "All you have to do is say the word and I'll lay the entire world at your pretty feet."

In the warmth of his embrace, laying her head on the course mat of fur on his deeply creviced chest letting the sound of his heartbeat soothe her, she moaned out a long sigh, "Do you know how much I love you?"

"I've got a pretty good idea but, if you wanted to show me, I wouldn't be adverse to it," he ran his hands through her wet silver hair and down her spine bringing her closer to him and the hardening tool between his strong legs.

"How did I get so lucky?" Alena cooed as her fingertips glided along his olive flesh taking in every bump and ripple on his thickly haired chest. "Of all the billionaire playboys in the world, I washed up on your shore."

Holding her tighter, Ares threw his dark head back and laughed until his toned flanked ached then he gazed down at her, his eyes shining with all of the passionate in his taut frame and love in his once cold heart, "It's I who got lucky, my wife." His head bent forward with his full lips parted and bestowed the kiss upon her waiting lips that he knew she waiting for with heady anticipation. Her lips answered with, not just urgency, but greed as the softly scampering fingertips on his chest turned to talons gripping his trembling flesh.

Alena needed no encouragement or instruction; she climbed on top of him with their lips still pressed together and took him inside. In the steaming water, she perched high in the saddle riding him like the spirited thoroughbred he was until she could take the swelling of his Louisville slugger sized cock sliding in and out of her as the water lapping gently around them crashed to the floor with every pump of her slender hips no longer. The world faded away as her fingers entwined in his long dark hair, pulling and grabbing it for better purchase as she rode freely with the rush of the wind in her soul and the echoing pounding his heart in her ears, she gave over to all that he was and all that he meant to her. The two of them came together in a heated rush of undying love and true passion so blistering it shamed the sun.

Lost in each other, lost in her, and the sweet caress of the water, Ares held her tight as she melted against his wet chest, "My woman, I love you more than anything in this world or any other, I do."

Listening to the slowing of his rapid heartbeat and reveling in the strength of the arms around her, she laid soft kisses upon his chest, "No more than I love you."

"But, you know, I know what you really want."

Instantly her thoughts ran wild, "Oh? Do tell."

Ares' thick arms moved around her in the water, one reaching down for her knees and the other wrapped protectively around her shoulders as he stood up in the steam to carry her from the bath to the bed while they were both soaking wet. "I think I'll just show you, it's easier that way." Holding her in one arm he threw the blankets back with the other and lightly tossed her into the thick covers. From the garment bag across the room containing his good suit, Ares called the tie to his hand and gave her a sly grin as he glanced to the headboard. "My woman?"

"Always and forever," Alena whispered as her back arched up pressing her steaming breasts to his rippled chest. Her lips to his, her hands came together at the wrists as they slid above her head and into the slipknot. She let out a heady moan when it cinched tight.

Looming over her, he traced a finger over her lips and felt his cock stir when her tongue lapped around it, "So clean, too clean," he chided, "much much too clean." Stretching out at her side with his tall solid body pressed to hers, he kissed her and breathed in the true scent of her. Under the soap, the shampoo, the scented candles and incense, the incredibly intoxicating aroma of a field of honeysuckle on a hot summer day came to him. Ares breathed in deeper to catch it, let it roll around on his tongue and drip down his throat like the sweet nectar the delicate flower had to offer. His mouth parted from hers only to clamp down on the tender spot just below her left ear. She squealed, gasped, and moaned even as she pulled at the soft restraint around her slender wrists. He suckled the sweet spot on her neck with all the urgency of a hungry infant at its mother's breast. His big hands began exploring her fragile frame, from the mound of her soft breasts, to their pink nipples hard with wanting. Down the flat of her stomach, and over the curve of her waist to the racy hump of her hip where it stopped, gave a good squeeze, his fingers sinking deep into her flesh, before they started back up again. On the second downward sweep of her alabaster body, his mouth joined his hands, kissing, licking, nibbling, and sucking every inch of her sweet skin. Yet, instead of being satisfied, he was only hungry for more.

Reaching the bare triangle between her parted legs, he stopped for one more breath so deep it filled his gigantic lungs to capacity and then he forced two more inside. Nuzzling his nose deeply between the folds he whispered, "Mine." Ares' dark eyes rolled back in his head as his tongue flicked out for its first taste of her too clean flesh wanting nothing more than to make it dirty with the hot rush of her climax washing over his beard and down his chiseled chest.

It didn't take long for him to get his wish. Her hips rose to greet his mouth and his fingers, they rocked against him pulling him deeper inside even as she strained at the tie around her wrists wanting to touch him, to sink her own fingers into his hard flesh, and grab at his long midnight locks. She climbed higher and higher but there was an obstacle in his way and Ares knew what it was; Christian Grey. The man was stirring up bad memories in her mind keeping her chained to a reality that no longer existed. Three fingers deep in her and his own cock bursting at the seams he uttered the words that always tipped things in his favor; "Give or I'll take."

That tidal wave of hot dew he'd been worked for unleashed as she began to sing out in a series of coos, sighs, groans, and finally, that low growl he loved so much. All the while her hands wrapped around their restraints using them as leverage to keep him where she wanted him.

The bed below him soaked with her climax and the woman on it breathless, Ares slithered up her panting body to perch between her waiting legs. His cock was nearly purple already as it jutted up far over his bellybutton and the ripples of his eight-pack reaching for his sternum. "My woman?"

"Yes, yours, only yours," Alena whispered biting down on her bottom lip as her hips searched out the hard part of him for which she ached. "Please?"

"Give all that I want?"

"Always."

The heat in her eyes and the need, the want of him, in her voice made the God of War give over to his own desires. He slid inside of her with one long slow thrust until he was buried to the hilt in her soft walls. Her legs clamped down over his ass as she pulled and struggled with the restraint. A few hard thrusts and he untied her so he could revel in the feel of her entire body wrapped around like a bandage easing a wound. She drew him deeper in and closer to him, her hands running free over the ripples of his back and grabbing up fistfuls of his hair, yanking, pulling, him down, so her mouth could close down around his throat as her hips rocked and begged for more.

Pinned to her, caught up in her passion and her love for him, the entire world faded away, every care, every woe, even the rain falling hard against their windows and the thunder echoing in the sky couldn't be heard by his keen ears.

There was nothing but her and this delectable moment in time.

Chapter Four

Better Man

In the master bedroom of the Penthouse in the ritzy Escala, Ana Steel-Grey was getting ready for her evening out with her husband, Christian, and his business associate. Although he had laid out her white Dolce & Gabbana dress, she thought it was a little too revealing for a first meeting with such rich and important people. As such, she made the mistake of ignoring his suggestion and slipped into form fitting but stylish backless little black dress.

"What the hell is taking so long?" Christian bellowed as he stormed into the bedroom, "We're going to be..." seeing her standing there he froze in his tracks. "Is that what I told you to wear tonight?" Without hesitation he unbuckled his belt and slipped it through the loops with one angry yank.

"I just thought this might be..."

"You don't get to think," he hissed grabbing the back of her hair and bending her over the large bed they shared. "You do what I tell you." The wide leather belt cracked over the firm mound of her young ass. "You're not qualified to think."

The hit stung, it wasn't too bad, but it was enough to wake her up and make it difficult to sit the rest of the night, "Yes, of course," she muttered biting on her bottom lip.

Christian gave her another swack on the ass, "Yes...what?"

It was humiliating but she loved him so much that she told herself putting up with his little fetishes was really nothing at all, "Yes, sir." She replied softly.

"That's better," but not good enough to satisfy the boy billionaire who gave his little submissive yet another whack with the belt before tossing her to the floor in nearly the same manner he'd been tossed earlier in the day. "Put that dress on and hurry up about it. I'll deal with your insubordination later and make sure you're properly punished for it." Walking to the door as he readjusted his belt, Christian turned around to issue one last order, "No bra, for christssake, no bra. I know the girls aren't exactly what they used to be but gravity hasn't completely taken over just yet." He slammed the door.

Dragging herself from the floor and rubbing her sore ass, she stared at the closed door with overt hatred. Once his little sex games were amusing and even quite arousing but after several years with him they were wearing her down and growing thin. She was beginning to wonder how much more she could take and just where it would all end.

Taking a seat at her vanity she stared deeply into her aging reflection as it seemed to mock her with its wise eyes echoing; I Told You So. Forcing the full weight of understanding onto her slumping shoulders it said that her life amounted to nothing more than several beautiful clichés strung together. Young naive college virgin meets boy billionaire with a dark past and comes to erroneously believe that she and only

she can see the 'good' in him below the slick exterior. Quickly she comes to believe that she's the only one who can make him a better person—a better man, a great man...the man for her. The only way she can do that is to go deep into the darkest parts of him, let him indulge them fully with her, showing him he can trust her, she won't turn him away because only then can she spread her wings and fly him up to the light where they would live happily ever after. She worked hard for it by letting him do the vilest of things to her. Then the day came when he confessed he was tired of fucking and games, and Red Rooms, he wanted to make to her and only her forever. They were blissful, or at least she was, for a while.

Life wasn't a faery tale or a book.

Everything he had ever said or done was only a rouse to get her to come even closer, to trust him, and give over the last ounce of herself she had been holding onto. True to his word, the games did stop for a very short time—he even dismantled his Red Room of Pain, throwing away all but his most favorite of toys and, when the children came along, he turned it into their playroom. That was something that never set right with her but she was happy to see it go she didn't say a word about how disgusted she felt that her sweet children were playing in a room that had once been meant for a very different kind of play.

However, a leopard cannot change its spots and Christian Grey could not change his domineering ways no matter how much love, support, and understanding she gave. Ana gave and gave until she was past the point of agony and was nearly completely numb inside and out.

With great sorrow, she thought again of the children she had given him. Their son, Teddy, the light of her life, and their daughter Phoebe, the apple of her eye. Ana adored them both, she showered with love and affection as any good mother would. Christian, with his Me First attitude, was so damn insecure about her love for their children taking away from her love from him that he started up his little games again. At first, they were rather playful and cute as they had been in the very beginning. After Phoebe came along and she had a little difficulty losing the weight, he hired a private trainer and made her work out three hours a day on nothing but protein shakes. The games were not cute, playful, or even arousing until she was her svelte self again.

Today, sitting here getting ready for dinner nearly nine years into their marriage, little Teddy and her darling Phoebe were no longer with them. The grand apartment did not echo with the laughter and running feet of children. Most of the time it was as silent as the grave in here except for whenever the mood struck him and he sat down to play his piano. Even that sounded hollow.

Life was strange and tragic and unexpected, that's what she told herself the day she buried her children both of whom had succumb to E.coli after eating tainted meat. In the back of her mind, Ana always wondered if that was really what happened to her sweet babies or if something sinister had claimed their lives.

More than anything else, she wanted—needed-- to be able to say to herself that Christian had been a good father to his children. The truth was he tolerated them more than anything. He wasn't cruel or

mean but he was curt with them. Spontaneous displays of affection didn't turn out to be his strongest suit. When they wanted hugs and kisses, he always recoiled before giving in. She would give him enough credit to be able to say that he tried but, in the end, Ana blamed herself. How could she think that a man with no understanding of himself or love therefore would be a good father?

A good husband?

After the children died, he'd played the dutiful husband for a few weeks; he lavished attention on her and held her as she wailed with the aching wounds of a heart torn asunder. After that, he just expected her to get over it and go on with her life. To smile and dress pretty, to make him laugh, to hang on his arm, to take her when and wherever the mood struck him.

Now that her youthful beauty was fading, her innocence completely shattered, and her drive, her zest was quickly waning she was beginning to realize what a mess she had made of her life. It was a well-known but unspoken fact that upon their 30th birthdays, the women in Christian's office were given fat checks and a pink slip. Ana wondered when she would be getting hers after all her own 30th birthday was just around the corner. Then she wondered if she would be happy or sad and what her own severance check would look like. What price would *he* put on their relationship and her unending silence?

No matter the consequence, Ana yearned for something more than being his little toy, his arm candy, and tension reliever. That did not make the painful truth of her being stuck with him any easier to take. Even though they didn't have a pre-nuptial agreement, she knew that if *she* tried to leave *him* that he would wipe the floor with her in divorce court with his connections and his high-powered lawyers. She'd been so thrilled when he said that he loved her and they'd get married without a pre-nup, even though he reminded their non-disclosure agreement would remain intact throughout the rest of her life, she thought for sure that all her hard work was paying off and her dreams were coming to fruition. That Happily Ever After was within her grasp.

In hindsight, she could see it was just a trick. Another little illusion, a little power play by the Master Manipulator of the Universe, to make her think he really loved her. The truth was, without a pre-nup, she had no protection and if she filed for divorce, she would be lucky if she ended up with a small stipend while he went jetting off to parts unknown with his newest flavor of the month.

With his power and persuasion he would black list her all over the world just as he had done to dozens of women before her. (And of whom she had once been so naive as to think 'he won't do that to me'). She'd never get a job as anything other than a waitress let alone pursue the journalism career she'd set out upon with such aspirations so long ago.

She thought again of her Life the Cliché and snickered a little as she shook her head wishing she had known then what she knew now. That, most of the time, the Dark Prince is actually the Prick You See but don't want to believe exists. Now that she could look back upon her history with him, she realized that her husband, Christian Grey, was no different. Underneath all of the layers and trappings, illusions, and his manipulations, he wasn't a Misunderstood Damaged Boy at all. In fact, he wasn't anything more than

a narcissistic egocentric psychopath with misogynistic tendencies in an expensive silk suit. She was his exotic pet bird, perched upon his arm when she wasn't living in her gilded, if somewhat painful, cage.

Still, her inner goddess longed to be free of the trappings of his world and his manipulations. She screamed at Ana that it wasn't too late to get out. If she wanted, if she really desired it, she would find a way to free herself from Christian Grey.

"A cheesy dime store novel has a better plot," she told her reflection. Dabbing at her watery blue eyes so as not to mess up her make-up, Ana did as Christian told her, in the end, she always did as she was told, and she slipped into the rather tasteless dress that put her breasts on display. Taking a deep breath and one last look in the mirror to be sure her appearance would meet his standards, she walked out of the bedroom to stand before him, twirl, and wait for his approval.

"Better," Christian announced, "don't defy me like that again. The last thing I need is have you making me looking bad in front of these people. Don't you know important tonight is? The future of my entire company could be resting on this shitty dinner."

Chapter Five

Sympathy for the Devil

At 7:01 the front desk called up to their room letting them know that Mr. Grey had arrived. Alena took one last look at herself in the full-length mirror of the dressing room in the fancy suite. "I should have told you to kill him," she huffed plucking at the shoulders of the long lace sleeves of her champagne colored gown. Behind her, reflected in the mirror, Ares straightened the cuffs of his sleeves but didn't say a word. "Presentable?" She asked as she turned around for him.

"Stunning as always, my darling, very classy," he complimented taking her in standing before him in the floor length dress with its over layer of lace and underskirt of silk both just two shades darker than her skin. It had a small train reminiscent of a mermaid's tail that swirled about her tiny feet and a very revealing slit up the front that ran to just above her knees. Like her, the gown was sexy and elegant. "And me? Do I pass muster?"

Rising up on her tiptoes even in the stiletto heels, she had to reach further still to straighten out the collar of his black suit jacket, "You know, I rather like seeing you in a suit and tie, it's a nice change from your usual leathers."

"Yeah? Well, in that case, I did pack my Red Sox jersey," he said slyly, "Maybe I'll put it on for you later."

Even though she was completely satisfied from their long session in the bath, Alena quivered with delight as her moist tongue ran along her upper lip, "I'd like that. Oh, come here," she motioned for him to bend forward so she could fix his tie. "You never do get this right."

"That's only because I like it better when it's around your wrists." Ares crooned but then pulled at his collar.

"Me too," Alena confessed, "now sit still." She looped the end through the knot.

"I feel like I'm being choked by a very small person with a weak grip. Why do they do these things to themselves? "

Alena snickered, "Because they're into self-torture, at least a little bit." She stepped back to look at him, "There. Perfect."

"Thank you." Ares looked her up and down before frowning and putting his index finger to his full lips, "You know I do believe there's something missing."

Alena turned back to the mirror, "What?"

Behind her Ares reached into the pocket of his black linen slacks to produce a box covered in purple velvet, "I was going to wait but, here, for you." He passed it over her shoulder and watched her in the mirror as she opened it.

Pulling open the box she stared down at a pair of teardrop shaped ruby earrings encrusted in diamonds each one larger than a quarter, "Oh! They're gorgeous!"

"Put them on for me, let's have a look," he encouraged then stood back as she slid them onto her dainty ears. "Perfect," he proclaimed, "they go very well with your necklace."

Alena's fingers went to her wedding necklace with its three tiers of diamonds and rubies and lovingly traced along the glittering stones. "I'll never forget the day you put this on me, you were so handsome standing there on the beach of our island in your white slacks and billowing shirt," she smiled as her brows raised and her gray eyes sparkled at him with adoration.

"I *was* handsome?"

She threw her silver head back and laughed, "Oh stop it, you know you're the most exquisite thing I've ever seen or will see."

"Yes, well, in that case, you know, we could just blow off this windbag. We could stay here; we could get back in that bed, bury ourselves deep under the covers and let room service bring us whatever we want. Tomorrow I'll yank the money out from under him."

That was a good idea and Alena almost went for it. "Do you think I can't handle Christian Grey?"

"I would never think or say such a thing," Ares admitted as he gazed deeply into her stormy eyes. "I know you too well."

"I want to meet his Ana."

"And then?" Ares encouraged. "I think you already see too much of yourself in a woman you've never met."

"No, I see too much of the men I've known in him. I'm looking forward to tonight."

"In that case, let's get this over with so we can get back here while the night is still young," he encouraged taking her arm and leading her out of their room for the night.

Downstairs a stretch limousine awaited them. The chauffeur opened the back door, Ares allowed Alena to climb in before him. As the door closed, they were face to face with Mr. Grey and his companion, Ana. A rather young and attractive in the girl-next-door, type of way dolled up for the night in a gown of nearly equally color to Alena's. However, Ana's plunged to her belly button revealing everything but the nipples of her firm young breasts. It was cut so short that if she shifted just the slightest bit, Ares was certain he would be looking at her crotch.

As the car pulled away from the curb, Christian introduced them, "Ana, this is Mr. and Mrs. Papathanassiou."

Ana reached out an uncertain hand to shake with Ares and then Alena who took her chilly hand in a warm embrace, "Alena, please, call me Alena," she insisted.

Mr. Grey continued before his companion could speak, "Alena and..."

"Mrs. Papathanassiou to you, Mr. Grey," Alena shot coolly as she sat back in the comfortable leather seat.

Cut off by the woman again who was again uncorrected by the imposing man at her side, Grey shifted gears, "They're big investors in Grey Enterprises," he finished cordially.

Looking at the young woman whose blue eyes tried to sparkle but still seemed sad, Alena corrected Mr. Grey, "Actually my husband, Ari, is the major investor in Grey Enterprises. As for myself, I don't care about money." Letting go of the young woman's hand, Alena felt sorry for her. Unlike the bombshell harlots back at Grey's office, this one was mousy and undoubtedly overlooked by most of the world because of it. It was already easy to see how someone like Grey hooked the girl and just as readily distasteful.

"Must be nice," Grey quipped with a sharp tongue.

"It is," Alena agreed with simplistic but authoritative grace.

"Yet you married him."

Ares leaned back on the bench seat and put his arm around Alena, "She had no idea of my worth when we married."

"That's not true," Alena contradicted, "I know exactly what you're worth to me." She nuzzled her head against his beard while staring at Mr. Grey, "More than your weight in gold and diamonds."

"That's a lot of shiny rocks," Grey chirped. In a movement that looked pained to those watching, Grey put his arm around Ana and crossed his thin legs, "Must be a hell of a pre-nup with all your money, Ari. May I call you Ari?"

"We don't have a pre-nup and yes you may."

Grey was stunned, he wouldn't even fuck a bitch if she didn't sign a non-disclosure contract first how could someone who was richer than God let his fortune ride on the whims of something so fickle as love? It was true that he married Ana without one, a fact that he chose to now proudly announce, "Us either." But it was only because he knew he had her right where he wanted her and that no matter how hard she might try she would never be free of him while he still drew breath or until he became bored and tossed her aside for something better.

Something like the woman nestled across from him leaning against the mountain of a man. Grey would love to get her into his new Red Suite of Pain and teach her some respect. Then again, that would mean revealing his secret to Ana. Christian wasn't sure he was ready for that, she certainly wasn't. Six months ago an apartment on a lower floor opened up and Christian Grey rented it under the name of the shell corporation. He had it completely redone all in red, each room with a different theme, there was the Wax Room, the Ice Room, and the Torture Chamber where he took the really bad girls he came across. Now that he was not limited to one measly room for indulging his special activities he could stretch out and really get down and dirty whenever he wanted.

What he wanted was to see the smart-mouthed woman across from him, who undoubtedly wouldn't be so disrespectful to him without that behemoth she was cuddled up to, hanging in chains, dripping in hot wax, and to hear her begging him to stop as she squirmed like a worm on a hook. But he wouldn't, not until he broke her and she called him Master.

Sitting on the bench seat in the back of the stretch limo, Christian had to readjust his position for comfort and to keep hidden the hard cock below his silk slacks.

Chapter Six

Scenes from an Italian Restaurant

The stretch limo pulled to a stop in front of The Pink Door Restaurant, an unassuming grey concrete block building with, of course, a pink front door. It didn't look like much to Alena or Ares but the place must be good as there was a long line from the door to nearly the street corner of people waiting to get in. Rather than take his place in line, Christian Grey walked straight inside the door with Ana one-step behind him and marched right up to the Maître D' station where a beautiful young woman in a golden corset greeted him with a pearly smile.

"Mr. Grey, so nice to have you with us again," she cooed, "Mrs. Grey, don't you look lovely tonight?" The hostess knew Mr. Grey and his party did not have a reservation but she led them through the restaurant to a quiet corner table by the picture windows overlooking the Elliott Bay.

Alena and Ares exchanged a brief glance each seeing their own thoughts expressed in the other's eyes. This place was right up Mr. Grey's alley, it was beautiful in its way, and obviously expensive. The throngs of people gathered sat at square tables covered in the finest pink linens where candles glowed bright, mounds of food overflowed the plates upon which they sat, and the wine was consumed like water. Most of all, above their heads (not quite above Ares' head, he had to duck) there were women doing trapeze acts over the dinner tables. On perches of thin wood board or nothing more than a wide strand of red ribbon, they twirled, summersaulted, held their firm bodies in suggestive positions in midair, to wow the crowd that clapped and oooed at their acrobatics.

Careful not to bump into any of the attractive ladies as he wound his way through the tables, Ares kept his voice low and whispered, "Do you know what this reminds me of?"

Alena was certain there was only answer to that question, "Ancient Rome?"

Patting her hand wrapped around his forearm and sucking on his bottom lip Ares' dark head nodded. There was something else to be seen here and neither of them missed it. As they walked through the crowd to their table, heads turned and took in Mr. Grey. They nodded, they smiled, some of the men held out their hands and Mr. Grey shook with them but he did not stop to speak to any of them. It was easy to see that Mr. Grey was a well respected, or at least well-know, man here. Just after Grey passed, Ana did the same, they smiled, they said hello, as she passed the men openly appraised her in her miniature white dress.

When those very same eyes turned to scan the rest of his party and in took in Ares they all swallowed hard, their eyes widened, and then cast down toward their plates. Not one of them looked him in the eye for long and they did not eyeball his wife. In fact, they did not raise their gaze to look at Alena at all until she was past them. That's when the chatter began circulating around the room. The voices were low and discreet but Ares' ears never missed anything. It seemed to him the people here had seen him on something called YouTube and something else called Facebook. They had seen him take Grey down

and put the boy billionaire in his place. They whispered about Alena, how beautiful she was and how they could see why Grey hit on her. It seemed to Ares that everyone in the room except for Ana knew what happened earlier in the day. It was only a matter of time before Ana found out but Ares knew it would not be Alena who told her. His wife had too much class as to tell a woman she did not even know about her husband's faux pas. Ana would get to see on the YouTube for herself. Ares would like to be a fly on Grey's wall when that happened.

Guided to their table, Ares took Alena's wrap from her shoulders and pulled out the chair for her. Sliding it under the firm round butt he loved to grab so much, Ares placed her wrap on the back of the chair as he waited for Ana to sit. Grey sat himself first then pushed the empty chair towards her with his foot. Ana sat, pulled the chair into place and then Ares took his seat between the two women with Grey directly across from him.

"Bring us a bottle of Barolo 2007," Grey ordered of the hostess then spoke again, "make it two." The big Greek looked like he could put away several bottles of the expensive wine, "and I think we'll start with three dozen oysters. Bring it and then give us a few minutes."

"Of course, Mr. Grey," she said politely even though she wasn't the server and didn't necessarily take orders.

Grey looked at Alena, "I hope the whimsical atmosphere of this place doesn't offend you, Mrs. Papathanassiou."

"No, the atmosphere of this place doesn't bother me at all, Mr. Grey."

"It's rather jovial, we've been to many places similar in Italy," Ares agreed, "and the food smells delicious."

"It is. I'm sure you'll enjoy the wine and the oysters."

Picking up the menu, Alena look at Grey from over the top of it, "Yes, thank you for ordering for us, how kind of you." She wasn't surprised to find he had ordered two bottles of the most expensive wine on the list along with three orders of the most expensive appetizer the Pink Door had to offer. For him money talked but for her it didn't necessarily say anything good.

Even though her mouth was covered, Grey didn't miss the chilly disapproving tone in her voice. It seemed she was just as accustomed to getting what she wanted as he was and didn't appreciate someone telling her what it was that she wanted.

Wine and oysters arrived; Grey put three on Ana's plate without a word. Then he put four on his own. Ares asked if Alena wanted any but she declined as she reached for a fresh warm bread stick. From the look in Grey's gray eyes, Ares believed the man thought his wife was being obstinate but he knew the truth was Alena hated seafood and was unwilling to suffer through the ingestion of one oyster for Mr. Grey.

While the nubile women hung and posed in the air above them, the foursome made painfully awkward small talk.

Finishing off her second glass of wine, Alena looked across the table to the younger woman who had sat there so silently as she ate her oysters and then pushed her plate away. "So, Ana, how long have the two of you been married?" She didn't miss it nor mistake it when Ana so swiftly glanced to her husband and Grey gave the slightest of nods before she replied.

Sitting up straight with her hands in her lap, Ana met Alena's stare, "Eight years, you?"

Every muscle in Alena's slender body tightened and she wanted to punch the smug man sitting next to her. Finding it too difficult to keep the anger out of her voice, she looked to her own husband with a forced grin. Ares took over without having to be filled in first, "If I get this wrong, she'll kill me," he joked and watched gratitude flash in her stormy eyes, "twenty-two years."

"That's impressive in this day and age," Grey added to the conversation wondering how they kept it together and kept it from getting boring, what they did to spice things up and make it all interesting in the bedroom. "Kids?"

Alena found her voice, "Two, Raven our son is the oldest and we have Rose our daughter, she's seventeen. You? Do you have children?"

Ana began to speak, "We..."

However, Grey cut her off, "No, no we don't."

Ana's heart sank to hear him deny what she had suffered so much to give him and held so dear. Sitting back in the chair she drank down the last of her glass and, without thinking, held it out to her husband for refilling.

Ordinarily Grey might show a bit of aversion to the thoughtless act but Alena's gray eyes were piercing straight through him. It was as if she knew everything there was to know about him and his marriage and she was not afraid to call him out on it. "Here you go, sweetheart," he filled the empty glass then tipped the bottle toward his guests. Alena held hers out and let him pour. At first he found it odd she'd take anything from him but then saw the wicked satisfaction in her eyes at having so easily, if temporarily, turned him into her bitch as he went through the civilized motion of giving her more wine. Putting the bottle back on the table resolving not to let her twist him around her little finger like that again he turned to her brawny husband, "So, Ari, your family made its money the old fashioned way they tell me."

"For a Greek," Ares nodded, "Yes, in shipping." He had told the same old cover story for three hundred years whenever it became necessary. The only thing that changed was the names he used. Twenty years ago, he was known as Adrian Papadopoulos. The recently departed. God rest his Immortal Soul. The money came down from one uncle or father to a nephew or son whose identity he assumed such as the recently born Aristotle Papathanassiou and his lovely wife Magdalena.

Grey took in the story offered to him and then asked, "How did the two of you meet?"

Ares looked at Alena with a wide winning smile, "She washed up on my shore. It was as though Poseidon himself gifted her to me." His dark eyes shifted to his host who was looking back at him with curious puzzlement.

Alena filled them in, "He makes it sound so poetic. The truth is I was on a boat and there was a storm, it capsized. All hands were lost but me. The sea was so rough and cold; I thought for sure I'd drown." She shivered at the memory but was warmed by Ares' arm around her shoulders. "I made it to the shore of a small island and turns out it was his island."

"Imagine my surprise when I found her on the beach, I rolled her over thinking she was dead but she opened her eyes and stole my heart." Ares chimed in giving her a kiss on the cheek as he reached for his wine. "Your turn," he motioned toward Grey for the man to tell his own story as he drank.

"It's not quite that dramatic, I'm afraid," Grey uttered before the telling the tale of their accidental meeting. He was grateful when the waiter came to take their order. "Ana will have the seared scallops and I'll have the slow roasted beef."

The waiter looked to Ares and waited to be acknowledged but he wasn't. Instead, Ares spoke to Alena, "What would you like, my love?"

"It all looks and smells so good, I'll have the lasagna pink door," she politely informed the young gentleman standing there so patiently and then handed him her menu. "And an insalta misticanza with olive oil and balsamic."

"The lava lake lamb porterhouse, make it pink and make it two salads alike." Ares handed over his own menu. "Bring us another bottle of that wine, if you please."

"Of course, sir," he gave a respectful nod and walked away with their dinner orders.

"So, a journalist, what a noble profession," Alena complimented the woman who was looking down at her empty plate.

Ana looked up and then over to Christian who again gave a nod but this time it was a little more forceful, "If you're not working for FOX News or the Enquirer I guess," she tittered and felt the mood lightened when Alena laughed with her. "I publish a few times a year in respectable magazines mostly some human interest stories."

Alena tipped her glass to Ana, "That's good, very good."

"And you, Mrs. Papathanassiou? What do you do?" Christian asked gazing at her from over the top of his wine glass.

Alena leaned slightly forward to give her reply, "I'm a teacher, Mr. Grey and a very good one. I've taught some very hard lessons to the unruliest of children."

Before Grey could let slip what was already in his eyes Ares added, "It's true. She does."

While Grey eased back in his chair and picked absently as his suit collecting his thoughts, Ana's eyes scanned upward for the first time to meet the dark stare of the man next to her. He was most handsome and, if truth were told, his deep resonating voice was making her a little moist as she sat here so politely. He smelled like the deep forest; rich, earthy, and clean with just the lightest undertone of fire. For years, she thought Christian was the epitome of masculinity and the male form but she was wrong. Yet, for all of his raw energy the silver-haired woman seemed to have tamed him and to have attained that which she could not with Christian. Ana wanted to know how she did it. Out of the corner of her eye, she caught Christian stop fidgeting and lowered her eyes knowing he would be angry to catch her making eye contact with Ari.

Alena did not miss it, she knew Ares caught the young woman's eye, "Very good," she mumbled into her wine glass.

More small talk was made through dinner and desert. Ana asked to see pictures of the children, Alena said she'd left her wallet back at the hotel. Ana quietly ventured a question about a cellphone and Alena couldn't help but roll her eyes thinking their cover was not totally complete. To her astonishment, Ares pulled an iPhone from his breast pocket and handed it over to Ana who looked down at images of Raven and Rose along with those of the happy couple sitting at the table with her.

"He looks so much like you," Ana marveled at the pictures of the striking olive skinned young man with long jet black hair hanging well past his shoulders. It had a wide swatch of gray running from just over his left eye all the way down his back. It set off his big gray eyes with their amber pupils. "His eyes, they..."

"He gets that from me, I'm afraid, it's a genetic condition," Alena offered sweetly. "Other than that Raven is his father's son."

"And Rose is her daddy's girl," Ares added with certainty. "We are very blessed."

"Yes, you are," Ana whispered wistfully as she handed back the phone, "Truly blessed."

With dinner over and no business having been discussed, Christian couldn't leave the fate of his company to wait until morning. "What do you say we go back to our apartment? We'll have a nightcap."

Ares expected Alena to say no and was on the verge of answering for her when Alena spoke with grace and ease, "We'd love that Mr. Grey. Thank you for the offer."

Ares wasn't sure what Alena had up her sleeve but he was nearly certain that he would not be the one teaching Christian a hard lesson tonight although he'd probably enjoy immensely every second of watching Alena tear him to shreds.

Chapter Seven

Sunny Came Home

The Apartment

With the exception of a few touches, the luxury apartment of Mr. & Mrs. Grey was exactly what Alena thought she would find when they walked in the door. It was big. It was wide. It was open. It was overly bright. It was spare decorated. The major colors were white, grey, and red with smatterings of chrome gleaming off the ultra-modern furniture. The only thing that managed to surprise her was the baby grand piano in the middle of the living room. The deep shine of the black wood stood in stark contrast to the blinding floor and white furniture.

Turning to Ana, Alena grinned sweetly, "Do you play?" She expected the young woman to cast those stunning blue eyes to her husband in silent asking of permission to answer the question posed to her. It was then that Alena got her second, but last, surprise of the night.

"No, I do." Christian Grey answered as he sauntered over to the bar with its finely cut crystal decanters shimmering under the recessed lighting and in the highly polished mirror behind them. "Drink?"

"Whisky, single malt, straight up, double shot," Alena replied as she slipped her wrap from her shoulders without looking knowing that Ares would take it from her. "Why don't you regale us, Mr. Grey?" As he took the glass with its amber content from his hand, she waved the other toward the piano. Without being asked or told, she glided over to the white sofa with its gray and red pillows to lounge upon it as though she owned the place.

And him.

Doing his best to hold back the blush flooding color into his cheeks while at the same time hold back the urge to tell the politely rude woman to go to hell. There was so much money on the line that it was almost easy to keep his tongue—and, in her gray eyes, his place--. "Ari, what'll you have?"

"I don't suppose there's any Ouzo in there?" Ares asked standing back taking in his wife setting the scene and beginning to guide the self-assured Christian Grey in the directions she wanted him to go. It was very exciting and if the night did not end up with him, Alena, and Ana in a sweaty heap then it was bound to party on well past dawn back at the Four Seasons without the little girl.

Christian thought he found a saving grace, "Actually, I do, straight from Athens, I'm sure you'll like it." He reached to mini-fridge below the decanters and crystal glasses into the freezer to pull out a frosty bottle of Tolis Nikos. He turned the bottle to the imposing man standing next to him and watched Ari's eyes widen along with the expression on his youthful but somehow wise face. Grey poured two glasses, "Gia t̄i zōí," he held his glass up a little higher.

"To life, Mr. Grey, to life, may she never deal out punches of which we are undeserving," Ares drank down the cold licorice liquor in one gulp and held the glass out for a refill. "Please, that song you were going to play for us, please." Like his wife, Ares gestured toward the baby grand.

Taking a sip off the glass of strong alcohol, Grey wandered over to the piano, took off his dinner jacket and neatly laid it over the arm of the couch. Standing at the piano, he stretched his fingers by lacing them together and pushing his arms forward as he pulled his strong shoulders back craning his neck to ease any tension in those muscles. Then he sat at the bench, put his long strong fingers to the black and white keys and began to play.

Ares stood by the bar watching Alena on the couch knowing exactly what she was thinking as Grey played a flawless rendition of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. It was perfect, technically there wasn't a single thing wrong with it other than the piano itself sounded a little flat as though it were slightly muffled. There was no passion in his playing. No ad-libbing at all, of course not, if one played off-the-cuff then one risked making a mistake or showing a card they meant to hold close to their vest. They lost control and Christian Grey was not one for losing control but being in command of it. Note for note, fingers flying over the keys, he nailed the symphony other than that he failed Alena's test miserably.

When he was done, Alena clapped for him, "Very nice, Mr. Grey," she turned to Ana and waved a hand in front of her body to fan it, "is it hot in here or is it just me?" Downing the last of the glass, she stood up, "Never mind, dear, it's probably just me, my age, you know." She tittered as she slid down the zipper of the lace covering on her dress. Opening it to the fullest showing it for the outer jacket it was, she let it fall off her alabaster shoulders until it was gathered in one hand and her slender body still before Christian Grey in nothing but the satin underskirt of her gown. "That's better." Swaying her way across the open room to the bar where Ares stood she slipped an arm around his waist as she poured another glass of single malt. "Another song, Mr. Grey? Perhaps something we can dance to, Ari and I love to dance. Do you know *Let's Get It On*? That's our song." She did a little shimmy next to her husband pushing up close against him as she rocked into his flank.

Grey's mouth began to water watching her grind on the big man, "I'm classically trained," he mumbled.

"Really? How interesting," she cooed, "Jazz then? *Need a Little Sugar in My Bowl*, do you know that one?"

When Grey took the last gulp of his Ouzo, Ares turned his head toward the bar, away from the man to whisper, "You're so bad."

Keeping her gray eyes fixed on the man at the piano, Alena reached up to grab Ares' tie and pull him down to her with a good yank, "Yes, well, I'll just have to punish you for my bad behavior later."

Ares' knees went weak and he almost fell to the floor as his strong legs bobbed out from under him. It was unlike her to be so bold anywhere but their bedroom, or the Throne Room, or the Parlor, or the island. He liked this little game she was playing and thought he'd kick it up a notch, "Yes, mistress." To his delight, Alena let out a little shudder as she gave him a sly but genuine grin.

Christian sat silently observing believing he was getting a good drunken glimpse of the inner workings of their marriage and thinking that Aristotle Papathanassiou, the richest and probably largest, man in the world was pussy whipped by the merest wisp of a wife. It made him want to teach her that harsh painful lesson all the more. The thought of her strung up in chains, her arms stretched over her silver head, and her feet spread wide held just inches off the floor ran behind his steely eyes unabated and unveiled.

"Well, why you're deciding what to play next, Mr. Grey, my dear," she turned to Ana sitting there watching the scene play out her young face white, "where's the ladies room? I need to freshen up a bit."

Ana didn't wait for Christian's silent permission, "Down the hall, around the corner, to the left."

"Thank you," she stood up on her tiptoes to kiss Ares' bearded cheek as she reached down to grab his firm ass with meaning. "I'll be back." In her own inimitable way, Alena nearly floated out of the room ostensibly to find the bathroom.

Ignoring Ana, Ares looked at Christian Grey, "She's quite something, isn't she?" He poured another glass of the expensive Ouzo but this time it was four fingers deep and rose nearly to the rim of the crystal. He took a long drink, "You have no idea how lucky I am, Christian."

"I think I'm beginning to understand," Grey replied noticing his own glass was empty. He crossed the room to the bar to stand next to his biggest investor, "But you won't let her determine your financial future, will you? Good pussy's one thing but money, tons of it, that's quite another, don't you think?"

"I don't know," Ares turned his stare to the nearly horrified young woman, "what's good pussy worth to you, Mr. Grey?"

II

Alena didn't go to the bathroom, instead she wandered the apartment until she found what she was seeking; Christian Grey's home office. If the man were hiding anything, it would be in here. It did not take her long to find it simply because the little man was so easy to read. Except to the innocent and inexperienced, men like Christian Grey were so damn predictable as to be laughable. Opening the center draw of his desk she felt below it and found a hard piece of plastic inside an envelope. Alena pulled it out to see it was a keycard for apartment 1408.

"Got'cha," she said cheerfully as she tucked it into her bra. "You little prick." Fearing only for the young woman in the living room and how her life was about to change, her illusions shattered, Alena licked her lips and sauntered back into the living room thinking of that slightly muffled and flat piano Grey played with perfect precision but without passion. She dropped the straps of her under gown from her shoulders to her forearms, let her silver hair down from its bun until it cascaded over her milky shoulders and then gave it a good tousle to appear more intoxicated than she was when she came back into the living room. Like Ares, it would take a lot more than Mortal alcohol to get her three sheets to the wind the two of them only drank it for the taste, not for the buzz. However, Grey didn't have to know that and neither did his sweet little wife.

III

Weaving an unsteady path as she slunk around the corner back into the living room, when she spoke her words were slightly slurred as she let the smoke of desire go unveiled in her stormy eyes. "Did you find that song, Mr. Grey? I'd really like to dance tonight."

Grey took two steps out from his place at the bar to be seen past the big man next to him, "No, we're here to discuss business Mrs. Papathanassiou, not for pleasure."

Alena frowned letting her bottom lip puff out and quiver, "Pity, but it's your choice."

Grey turned back to the man behind him, "Ari, why don't we step into my office?"

Ares nodded, drink in hand, he began to follow the man out of the room. As he passed Alena, she gave him a sly look as she winked at him and reached into her bodice. He stopped next to her.

"While you're in there, perhaps the two of you can discuss what's in apartment 1408?" She pulled the keycard out of her bra with as much flourish as a practiced magician. Holding it between two fingers, she turned around for Grey to see, "I found this under your desk, Mr. Grey."

Instinctively, Grey went for the bait, his hand snatched out for the keycard while the other raised up to slap her across the face. The silver haired woman took one step back and two the right, away from her husband, and out of Grey's reach. "Give it to me." He demanded through gritted teeth trying to comprehend how swiftly and gracefully she'd moved away from his attack on both fronts.

"I told you, I want to dance tonight," Alena whispered heatedly as she dangled the keycard in front of him, "don't you like to dance, Mr. Grey?"

Rage boiled within Grey's slender frame all he wanted to do was choke the smug bitch, wrestle her to the ground and then to his will. The shadow looming over him was large and when he looked up, he saw Ari's smoldering eyes staring back at him. The big wiggled a finger back and forth in the air as he clucked his lips indicated it would be a very bad idea for Christian to take one more step toward his woman. "You wouldn't be so brazen without him," Grey hissed.

"Oh, is that so? Well, then, my darling, take a load off."

Knowing Alena could take Grey down any time she wanted but preferring that she let him handle the situation from here on out, Ares played along. As he sauntered back to the couch, Alena held up the keycard and he plucked it from her fingers. Standing next to Ana who was herself beginning to rise, he held it out for her to see, "Are you moving, my dear? Out of this extravagant penthouse to a luxury apartment?"

Ana was thoroughly confused, "No," she took the plastic card being offered her, turned it over and over in her hands, and then looked up at her husband, "Christian, what is this?"

Feeling trapped by the weight of the question and the unwavering stare of the woman in front of him, he offered, "It's nothing, just a new office space. I need more room so I rented an apartment for business. I thought we'd turn this office into a writing room for you."

Alena leaned in to whisper in his ear, "Nice save."

Grey didn't just balk; he flinched and took a step back.

"Let's go see this new office, shall we?" Alena cooed and turned to Ana, "I'm sure you'd love to see what he's done with the place, wouldn't you, dear?"

"It's not finished," Grey grunted and began to sweat.

"Well, that's perfect, isn't it? You'll still be able to provide decorating tips," she looked around at her surroundings, "I see you didn't get much input here." Putting her arm through Ana's and turning the young woman toward the private elevator Alena guided her to it, "Come on, let's go see what Ari's money has bought."

"I told you, it's not finished, it's a mess, it's under construction, it's..."

Ares' nostrils flared as the stench of fear began rising off Grey's expensive suit, "Something about the office you don't want us to see? Is there where you're keeping your mistress? Very handy. Very ballsy and stupid, a man should never shit where he eats."

Ana had no idea how the night turned in this direction so suddenly, "Christian? Is there something down there?" She tapped a well-manicured nail on the hard plastic feeling a sense of panic run through her and it made her feel alive. He stood stone faced and silent. Part of her told her that she would be punished for her disobedience later. Her inner goddess started screaming that what she wanted, what she needed, was just around the corner was ugly. The inner goddess advised that it was tough to take but it led to true freedom. If she had the courage to follow her inner goddess she would never live under his thumb again. "Let's go." Ana pushed the button on the penthouse elevator.

The doors slid open, Ana, Alena and Ares climb aboard as Christian stood his place and called out, "Wait, don't."

"Oh, don't worry, Christian, you're coming with us," Ares informed him as he beckoned the man forward with one finger, "aren't you?"

Feeling as though he had no will of his own, Grey's legs hesitantly carried him to the elevator with his heart pounding in his chest and that light bead of sweat on his brow turning into a trickling brook. Standing next to his wife, he tried to take Ana's hand but she moved away from him. "Just let me say something..."

"I don't think so," Ana replied, "I think we'll let whatever's behind this door do the talking."

The elevator doors slid shut as Ares and Alena nodded to each other over the young woman's words.

Chapter Eight

Welcome to my Nightmare

The elevator doors slid open on the 14th floor. The apartments down here were not as nice or expensive as those on the upper floors and certainly nowhere near the price of the penthouse. They were expensive enough and the white corridor with its white marble floor shone top to bottom under the tasteful bronze chandeliers. Grey turned around to stop them from exiting but Ares cast him aside before he could speak shoving him into the heavy steel wall with a loud bone-racking thud. The God of War turned to Ana with a genuine smile, "Ladies first," he gestured to the door as his big hand kept Christian pinned to the wall.

"Thank you, my darling," Alena gave Ana a little push in the small of her back to get the young woman to lead the way.

With both women off the elevator, Ares held Grey in place, leaned in close and whispered directly in his ear, "Be a good boy, take your punishment like a man and *maybe* you *live*, hummm?" Wrenching Grey's arm behind his back, Ares turned him to the open doors and shoved him through like a sack of potatoes.

No longer feeling smug or brash but instead trembling where he stood, Christian met Ari's gaze, "Who are you?"

"The question is, Mr. Grey; Who are *you*? I think we're about to find out." With a thick finger, he pointed off down the corridor toward where the women were walking ahead of them. "Go on, scurry along, better catch up. Who knows what they're saying?"

Christian didn't want to follow the women but there was no way he was going to circumvent Ari and run away. The way the man was glaring at him made Christian's blood run cold telling him there truly was so much more than a few billion dollars on the line tonight. "This isn't about business, is it?"

"It's about some very nasty business, I'm afraid." Squaring his broad shoulders and stretching his neck to stand his full height Ares let out a long sigh, "Now, are you going to be a good little boy and walk down the hall or do I have kick your ass all the way to the door?"

That was it. If he started yelling that he was being attacked the lower apartment dwellers would come out and someone would call the police who would come and end this whole thing. "I've had enough of this, Ari," Christian said as sternly as he could, "I'm going to..."

"Call for help?" Ares invited. "Go ahead. Scream."

At first, Christian didn't understand but then the fact that the sound was suddenly deadened came to his straining ears. Ari was right next to him but he sounded miles away. "What is this?" Panic turned to desperation as he began to back up, away, and down the hall from where the big man was slowly striding after him knowing deep inside that he could scream until his throat was raw and no one would

hear him. Stumbling as his body turned around he called out, "Ana?" But there was no resonance. It was although the air became too heavy to carry sound waves. Down the hall, Ana was standing with the silver-haired bitch in front Apartment 1408 they were waiting patiently as he started making silent pacts with God to do anything if God would just suddenly whisk him away from this place.

God did not answer.

Not in the way Christian expected anyway.

With no other option, he finally came to a stop in front of the shiny mahogany door with the bronze numbers just over the bronze peephole. No way out, trapped like a rat in a maze, he watched helplessly as Ana slid the keycard into the lock. The light turned green, the lock opened with a chunk and she turned the bronze knob in her milky palm. "Don't..."

Too late.

With more strength than she knew she had, Ana walked straight through the open door with her hand reaching along the wall to the right for the light switch.

Red. Everything was red. Different shades from carpet to furniture to ceiling. Red with accents of gold, grey, and black. Letting out a sickening grunt, her weakening knees carried her further inside, she walked through the small white entryway that was probably like all the rest except for the sliding smoked glass privacy doors that had been installed and could be easily closed should an unexpected visitor arrive to ruin the fun.

To her amazement, she found that the shock and horror she felt bolting through her at the sight of the living room was not in response to what it represented but in knowing that this was probably the tamest of all the rooms in Christian's new Red Apartment of Pain. It was almost Victorian in its design with several red velvet chaise lounges spread out around the fireplace. They seemed innocent and comfortable until she looked closer to see the restraints hidden below the soft pillows. Several classic and very expensive oil paintings of the Greek Gods in all their naked glory adorned the walls. (Even Ares was there depicted with Aphrodite's naked body perched on his naked lap while Eros flittered around them.) There were heavy coat racks with corsets hanging from them, silk stockings, garter belts, bras, blindfolds, strands of red velvet. Golden umbrella stands with riding crops stood below. This was the room where he broke them in and first introduced them to his version of roleplaying. The women he brought here probably ate it up as much as she had in the beginning. Ana shook her head as she glared at her husband with cold blue eyes, "I gave you everything."

Christian stood silent so Alena answered for him, "I'm sure he had a wonderful time taking it from you."

"You haven't changed at all!"

Christian held his arms out to her, "I have changed, you made me a better man, I have changed," he protested.

Ana snickered and then cackled as she threw her back and laughed with thunderous force before swiping the back of her hand over her cheeks and under to nose to clear away the moisture, "Then what's all this? Why are we here?" He hadn't changed at all he had just gone underground and expanded his sessions. "What else have you got in here?" Walking away from him she wandered through the living room and then down the hall to the first room with a purple door. Opening it, she found a purple room heavy on red accents in the middle of it was a tub churning with water but it did not steam. It was so cold in here she felt certain that the constant motion of the water was the only thing keeping it from freezing solid. Chains hung in three corners of the room next to metal racks of toys ranging from thumbscrews to nipple clamps to big vice grips sat alongside dildos, vibrators, butt-plugs, cock rings, hoods, gag balls, and a wide assortment of lubrications in various flavors. They didn't surprise her; she was used to them and was certain she would find their exact like in every room, but the stainless steel stand-up doublewide freeze in the other corner chilled her to the bone. Drawn to it like a moth to a flame, Ana put her shaking hand out to touch the cold steel of the handle. Closing her eyes and saying a little prayer, she gave it yank; the door opened to reveal it was thick with ice on all sides and completely empty except for a few tufts of long hair, smears of blood, and a fingernail sunk deep in the ice. Ana's stomach churned threatening to empty her fine dinner onto the purple carpet but she held it back, held it in check, knowing there was so much more to come before the night was over. She needed to be ready to face it.

Standing in the doorway of the Ice Room all Christian could do was stare helplessly at Ana while weakly offering, "I can explain."

While Ares and Alena were very interested to hear Grey's explanation, Ana was not, she walked past him as though he wasn't even down there. Down the hall, a little more she noticed the artwork changed, it went from tasteful but risqué classic oil paintings, to framed images from the Kama Sutra and then to ancient tiles from Rome depicting some of the most heinous of sexual acts.

The next room was on the right and the door was a mustard yellow that wanted to be bright but failed. Steeling herself while behind her Christian yelled for her to wait, she opened the door to the Wax Room. The interior matched the door and again it was heavily accented with red in the form of leather restraints, masks, blindfolds, and the chains themselves were covered in a flat crimson. In here, a similar tub to the one in the Ice Room bubbled and churned but not with cold water with hot wax. There was no freezer in here but, other than his normal supply of sexual toys, there boxes of wood stick matches, candles, even a small blow torch and welder's mask. It smelled of smoke and burnt flesh.

This time as her pretty little wife walked past him, Christian remained silent and hung his head.

Standing in the hall and noticing that now that white walls began to graduate to a black as dark as the door in front of her, Ana held a hand over her heart and bit down on her bottom lip. One slow step at a time she ventured to it passing pictures so vile and torturous she couldn't stand to look directly at them. Women in chains, women being beaten, women tied up in ropes so elaborate and tight their flesh was purple, women being raped while men stand around and laugh at their pain. Swallowing hard as she reached out with a trembling hand, Ana knew what whatever was behind the black door was the true

heart of the man she'd married, once she discovered it in all of its sinister glory she could fool herself into believing he was just a misunderstood knight in shining armor. The bronze knob in her hand jiggled with the force of her quivering grip as she fought to keep her eyes from rolling back in her head and fainting dead away on the floor.

"Don't, Ana, if you ever loved me, don't open that door. Walk away."

Chapter Nine

Janie's Got a Gun

With her inner goddess urging her onward, Ana opened the door and felt her dinner come to the back of her throat again. The walls and ceiling, ranged from steel grey to pitch black but unlike the other rooms this one had a black marble floor with veins of gold running through it. There was no tub in here; instead, where it should be was a marble platform taking command of the entire room. It was seven feet long, six feet wide, and three feet deep. Directly over the middle hung a pair of iron chains and directly below an equally menacing pair of shackles bolted to the black marble. Both sets of chains had wrist cuffs so thick no one hanging there had a prayer of escape. The floor below and the wall behind had red accents as well but not in velvet or leather but dried blood.

Doing her best to keep command of her stomach, she turned around to take in the entire room. There was a blacksmith's forge on the far wall and inside its cold embers were iron rods, branding irons, and pincers of various sizes. On racks of wood so old they looked as they were straight from the Dungeon of the Marquis de Sade hung scourges and heavy leather bullwhips along with metal dildos sporting large sharp spikes.

She marveled at the iron maiden in the near corner again thinking of how old it was as it stood there thicker than a bank vault's door with its face forever gnarled in agony wants arms just waiting to hold you in painful embrace. He'd also managed to acquire a working and ancient rack it lounged in the furthest corner of the room. If that was not enough, there was a tilting board with ankle and wrist straps. Next to that sat another rack of tools including one she did not readily recognize. It was metal, in the shape of a pear, and had a turnkey at the bottom as though it opened. Ana shuddered at the thought even as she wonder with just how much force the thing blossomed once inserted into its victim.

Standing back watching the scene, Ares thought the room greatly resembled the torture chamber he once had but did not use to get his rocks off on but to extract information and, yes, some times for revenge. "It's quite the collection, Mr. Grey," he complimented as he wandered inside to inspect the items. "This must have cost you a fortune. The rack, 15th century, isn't it? Spanish, if I'm not mistaken." With gleaming eyes, he walked to the iron maiden and laid his big hand upon the cold iron, "Very impressive, made in Rome, 18th century." He swung open the heavy door letting the creaking of its ancient hinges fill the silent room as he revealed the three-foot spikes covering the interior. "I wonder how many people met their Fates in these devices, what do you think? Hundreds? Thousands? Died screaming begging for mercy inside your most cherished of possessions?" He hadn't seen one of these in a long time so he took a closer peek inside where the stench of blood and fear rose hot. Ares rubbed his fingers along one spike and came back with blood that was only barely dry. "Fairly recently too, I would think," he held up his hand so that all in the room could see the evidence on his fingertips. "But that," he hitched a thumb toward the only piece of artwork in the room to a five-foot high oil painting of a woman with brown hair. "Let me guess...mommy?"

Ana's eyes scanned to the painting but all she was the fingernail embedded in the ice flashing behind her blue eyes, Ana turned to Christian with pleading in her voice, "Tell me it's not true, tell me you haven't

killed anyone." As sick and depraved as it all was, if he looked her dead in the eye and told everything that ever happened here was consensual, there was a safe word, he obeyed, and no one got hurt she'd believe him. "Please?"

With nothing left to lose, Christian's gray eyes rolled over to his side and to the silver-haired woman standing there, "This is all your fault you little bitch! Fucking little cunt!" Before anyone could stop him, Christian grabbed Alena, twisted her arm up behind her back and yanked hard on a fistful of her silver-hair. "I'm gonna teach you a lesson you'll never forget," he hissed as he pressed his growing cock against the small of her back.

"You couldn't if you tried," she returned cold as ice just before stomping on his left foot driving the heel of her stiletto heel through it to the floor below. Bringing it back up again, she elbowed him in the sternum with her free hand then bent forward to throw him over her back and onto the floor where she stood on his throat looming over him with icy eyes. "But I'll teach you one, Mr. Grey." Easing up on his neck, she stepped back, pointed at him, and then at the chains over the marble platform. Grey disappeared from the floor only to appear hanging in his favorite set of cuffs. Rubbing her hands together to warm up she smiled at him, "Where shall we start?"

Wrestling in the chains that he already knew would never give he shouted out to his wife, "Ana! Ana, get out of here! Call the police!" She just stood there frozen like a deer in the headlights. "Do it you bitch! I command it!"

It didn't look to her as though he was commanding much of anything now. She would feel sorry for him, she'd even stand up for him, if weren't for that fingernail and the blood spatters on the walls in here. For the first time she was seeing him for the cold-blooded monster he really was and understood from her years of training at his hand that punishment must be doled out. "How many?" She hissed as she swayed up to the foot of the platform to look at him hanging there helpless. "How many? How long?"

Christian remained steadfast in his silence.

Ares laid a gentle mitt on Ana's shoulder, "Perhaps you should look under his piano, I think you'll find a rather fat stack of, what do you call them? Ah, Consent and Non-Disclosure Forms, taped there."

Ana wanted to run from the room, race up to the apartment and see if Ari was telling the truth even though she hadn't the slightest idea of how the dark handsome stranger should know such a thing.

"I think you'll many of those women who consented are now listed as Missing with the authorities," Alena added, "Won't she, Mr. Grey?"

With his entire world collapsing around him, Grey began to wail, to demand, that he be let out of the chains and that this wretched game end finishing with, "Don't you know who I am? I'll bury you, Ari!"

Ares and Alena looked at each other a quick moment then back to him, "Again, you're mistaken, Mr. Grey, it's you who doesn't know who you are or who we are." Ares answered then casually held his hand up before his face spreading his thick fingers wide allowing flames to spring up from each one to bring

light to the darkened room. "Allow me," he turned to the blacksmith's forge, let streams of fire fly from his fingers and lit the cold fire until it crackled with new life.

"Ready to begin, Mr. Grey?" Alena snapped her fingers and Grey's suit disappeared from his body leaving him exposed. His torso was peppered with old burns that appeared to be from the tip of a cigarette. "You're so pathetically typical," she sighed, "let me guess, mommy didn't love you. She never wanted you, she had many other men, maybe even an outright whore and she put all of those swinging dicks before you. Is that the crux of you little perversion, Mr. Grey? Do you have any idea who your real father is? Any idea at all?"

Ana felt that Alena's words were too harsh and even though her inner goddess railed against it, she came to his defense, "It's not his fault, he was abused."

"No, that's not his fault," Alena informed the young woman, "but how he deals with it is," she gestured around the Torture Chamber, "Do you find this acceptable therapy, Ana?"

The young woman cast her eyes to the black marble floor with its veins of gold and stains of blood, "No."

Alena turned back to the chained Mr. Grey as she ascended the platform and walked around him close enough to feel his body heat radiating from him but not close enough to touch him. "Did your mommy touch your little pee-pee, Mr. Grey? On the other hand, maybe she used you the same way other men used her, threw you down, made you her little bitch, and fucked the snot out of you. Is that what happened, Mr. Grey?"

No, it wasn't exactly what happened but it was close enough for Government Work. It was close enough for Christian not to deny it even as he fought against the restraints with his cock flapping in the breeze. "Fuck you."

"You wish," Alena giggled. "Have you told your dear Ana how you hit on me this morning when you didn't know who I was? How you wanted to buy me and a few moments of my affections, did you tell her?"

"When I get out of these chains..."

"You'll, what, Mr. Grey? Should I chose to let you out of these chains, that is, of course, what will you do, little boy?" Alena ran her index finger over his chin, down his throat, and then all the way from his neck to the coarse patch of rusty hair between his legs. Grabbing a harsh hold of his hairy balls, she continued to look in his gray eyes and talk in a sweetly condescending tone, "Do you know what I've seen, Mr. Grey? Do you have any idea of the atrocities I've witnessed?" She gave his balls a little squeeze so she could watch him wince. "Do you know what it's like to watch a group of full grown men crawl all over a seven year-old girl in a frenzy so heated it rivals Vesuvius? To hear her cry out for a mother who's being raped in front of her, stretching her hand out for her little girl, knowing there's nothing she can do to stop the men from fucking the child to death?" Alena stopped and watched the horror creep into his eyes. "Do you know what it is to have to stand by and watch as a group of children, who should be innocent, and sweet, off playing without a care in the world are gathered into the midst of rotted

refugee camp to have their arms chopped off by rusty blood soaked machetes? To listen to them beg and plead then shriek in absolute agony when the blade comes down?"

Grey wanted to argue, wanted to tell her that she couldn't compare pain that way, but the gleam in her eyes and the soft tone of her cold voice echoed throughout his body making it break out in goose bumps and telling him she spoke nothing but the bald truth of the things she had seen. He began to feel ashamed knowing the silver-haired woman wouldn't be satisfied until he was riddled with guilt but still so far away from that point there was a painful road ahead of him. "Fuck you," he spat in her face, "bitch!"

"You wish," she cooed again and called a heated branding iron to her hand. "Do you know what it is to be branded like cattle, Mr. Grey? I see your little scars from what...less than a full pack of cigarettes...not to be little you, of course," she tilted the branding iron toward the tender balls in her hand bringing it down slowly so that he didn't miss a second of the searing heat about to descend on him. Holding it over his twitching member, she looked at him again, "Do you know the strangest thing, Mr. Grey? None of those children turned into homicidal maniacs...like you. In fact, one of them, Sha'Quanda Neyrue, went on to lead her people from the refugee camp where she grew up and was terrorized on a daily basis by a gang of thugs to a prosperous community of peaceful people. Do you know how she did it?" Alena didn't wait for Grey to answer, "She didn't sit around feeling sorry for herself like you, Mr. Grey. That seven year-old girl, took all of that anger, that frustration, that agony, and turned into a determination so strong not even the toughest warlords could stand against her."

The branding iron was so close to his cock he thought it would start to burn just from the radiant heat, "I didn't rape anyone."

"No?" Alena turned to Ana, "is that true, child?"

Ana wanted to say 'no' but was unable to lie in this most pinnacle of moments, "Yes, he has, me. He's raped me, he's made me do things I never thought possible, and he's hurt me."

"Do you want him to stop?"

A sad smile broke out on Ana's aging face as she looked up at her husband stretched out in his chains and whispered, "Red. No more."

Letting the branding iron fall to the floor so close to Grey's foot, he had to recoil and bringing it back as far as the chains would let him Alena went on. "Do you know what it's like to be six years-old, watching your father be beheaded in front of you, then be dragged off kicking and screaming by psychopathic man? Then to be thrown in a cell and then, when finally compliant, released. Yet it's only to be trained for the next decade in all of the mystical magickal sexual ways of becoming that monster's wife?"

Hearing the very personal story fall from her lips, Ares' ears prick up and his eyes grew narrow waiting to see if she was too deeply invested in this game and would play it out to the conclusion that even he would cheer at this point but had no wish to see her fulfill.

Grey could almost see the images in her unblinking eyes as if they were mini-movie screens touching some transcendent inner part of his mind. "What do you want from me?"

Reaching out behind her quickly without taking her eyes from his gaze, Alena called a seven-foot bullwhip to her hand and stepped off the platform. "I want you to scream, Mr. Grey, I want you to beg me to stop but keep in mind there are no safe words here, not that you paid any attention to them anyway. Then when you're sore and bleeding, I want you to tell me the truth; how many women have you lured into your web of grandiose self-pity over the years? How many have you killed?"

"I haven't killed anyone! Everything was consensual! They were all willing and eager to please me."

Alena could certainly see how his little escapades may have begun that way, he was handsome, he had a certain naive charm that could be mistaken for sophistication, and, of course, he was so very rich. He was the perfect lure, the perfect bait dangling on a hook, for any unsuspecting fish to bite at and be taken in by. Most fish end up on the dinner plate instead of being released back into the wild. "You're a fucking liar, Mr. Grey, too wrapped up in your own bullshit to even know the truth anymore."

When Alena cracked it a second time and opened Grey's knee, Ares stepped to his wife's side, "I think what she means, Christian, is that, the truth will set you free. That there comes a time in every man's life, no matter who he is, how handsome, how rich, how charismatic or powerful, he has to face the music and himself. This is your moment, boy; I wouldn't waste it if I were you."

"How many?" Alena demanded as she flicked the whip back again.

Gathering up all his steely nerve, Christian spit at Alena, "What's it to you? Why do you care?"

That was almost as good as a confession but not quite. "To me? Not me but to her," Alena smiled as she gestured to Ana standing there captivated by the tension, "it's everything." She gave the whip in her hand a good crack letting it lick at his wounded foot and slice open his toes. Just above the gouge left by her heel.

"A man makes up for his own shortcomings, he realizes that we are all damaged and broken in our own ways, he learns to live with it, to understand he's not alone no matter how much he thinks he is. He doesn't expect some woman to come along to make it all better for him because she is not responsible for his past even though she can ignite his future. A man makes his own heart and soul ready to receive love," Alena whispered. "A boy wallows in his misfortunes, he takes pleasure in the manipulation and pain of others demanding they make up for all of the perceived wrong done to him. All the while never knowing that power lies within his own grasp, which one are you, Mr. Grey? Are you a man or little boy pretending to be so?" Alena pulled her wrist back and let it extend forward without ever moving her arm. The tip of the whip broke the sound barrier letting out its loud crack just before it sliced open a swath of flesh on Mr. Grey's six-pack abs. "Answer me, you sack of shit." She let it fly again opening a new swath just above the last.

Grey screamed from the sting of the whip feeling the shock of it run through him even as his blood began trickling down to his pubes. "I'm a man you bitch. Let me out of these chains and I'll show you."

"You're no man, Mr. Grey," Alena chuckled, "do you know why you have an office full of young buxom fillies, this adorable little wife, and a stack of bodies littered behind you?"

"Enlighten me," Grey sneered.

"It's because you can't handle a woman, a full grown woman would expose you for the little whining boy you really are. Besides that, you can't find one dumb enough to put up with your shit. So, you prey up on the young ones those with no life experience and lure them into your perverted web to use, abuse, and if they're lucky, cast away dirty. If they're unlucky, Mr. Grey, what happens to their bodies, what do you do with their empty shells once you've drained every ounce out of them?"

Grey looked at Ana with pleading eyes, "You know I love you. Tell them I love you. I'd never do anything to hurt you."

Ana just smirked and thought of her Life the Cliché. "All you've ever done is hurt me whenever you could and I let you, shame on me." Without even realizing she was doing it, Ana walked up to Alena and took the whip from her hand. "How many?" She whispered to her husband. When he didn't answer, she brought the harsh leather forward.

The lash wasn't as stinging as the ones the silver-haired woman laid on him but it was enough to get his attention yet not enough to lay his hubris to rest. "You know I love you. Let me out of these chains, Ana, I'll spend my life proving it to you."

Ana brought her index finger up to her lips and bit down upon the nail, "That's what you always say." She let the whip fly again but with more anger. It sliced open a small patch of skin on his left bicep. The sight of his blood made her feel good as it awakened a long restrained need for vengeance inside her. "Our children, Christian," Digging deep as she gripped the handle of the whip tight she looked him in the eye and found the strength to ask the question that had been weighing on her mind the last four years, "Did you kill them? Did you take them away from me just because you couldn't stand the love and attention I lavished on them? Love and attention you've never been able to show anyone but yourself."

Wounded and enraged yet trapped in the chains, Christian stared out at the threesome gathered before him looking at him as though he were some new and interesting but pinned to a piece of glass under a microscope. "No," he answered with what he hoped was resound.

"Swear it," Ana demanded and when Christian opened his mouth to do just that she added, "on your company, on all your money, and all your possessions, on my love for you, and everything you hold dear, swear you had nothing to do with the deaths of Teddy and Phoebe." The whip in her hand skittered across the black marble floor showing that her heart and soul were just itching to flog him within an inch of his life if she so much as smelled a lie coming from his lips.

"Search your heart, Ana, search your soul, you'll know, you'll see, I loved them and you."

Ana searched not her heart, not her soul, but his eyes for the truth and came up empty. In a series of uncontrollable lashes, she hit him with the whip opening his cheeks, his chest, and his thighs until his

blood ran so much it began to pool on the floor of the platform. With each lash she bellowed the unanswered question; "How many?!"

Although unsympathetic to Christian Grey's plight, but seeing the man's stubbornness and sheer belief that he could take whatever was given him, Ares thought he'd help the night along. He disappeared from the Torture Room only to reappear seconds later with a brown accordion file folder in his hand. "Here," he held it out to Ana, "Look for yourself." Grabbing the whip from her hand, he thrust the folder into it.

"How did you? Where did you? What?"

"It's not important," Ares pointed to the folder. "Go on all your answers are in there."

Grey recognized the folder instantly and was horrified by the sight on it in her delicate hand. "No! Ana! Don't! I'm ordering you, I demand it, do not open that!" Christian shouted as he dangled over the platform.

"You don't order me to do anything anymore," Ana tore it open like a starving man coming across a fresh burrito, she pulled the stack of papers from it with such force a good deal of them sailed through the air to litter the floor. Looking at the first one and seeing that its bold header read; SEXUAL CONSENT AND NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT she ripped through the pages until she got to the signature only to find it signed by Maria Gonzales, their maid. "Where is she?" Ana demanded, "You said you caught her stealing and you fired her," she shook the papers at the chained man. "Where the fuck is she?" All Ana could think of was Maria's family; she had two sons just graduating from high school, and worked 48 hours a week for the Greys to keep a roof over her boy's heads. She was an honest hard working woman and even Ana had found it hard to believe that Maria would have stolen from them but she didn't question Christian when he offered up the excuse for her sudden departure. Throwing one Agreement after the other to the cold black marble at her feet, Ana realized there had to be fifty of them here, each one dated for after their wedding day and, "No way," she growled as she mounted the platform with her blue eyes glowing fire, "the day I picked out Phoebe's casket?" She shook the agreement in his face, "The day after we buried our SON!" Ana tossed the documents into the air sending them floating around down to the room to the ground as she reached for Christian's throat and began to choke him without remorse, "You twisted fucked-up son of a bitch!" She squeezed and squeezed with all of her might until his handsome face went from crimson to blue to purple. "I hate you!"

For the last time that night Ares felt he should step in, he grabbed Ana by the shoulders, tore her away from Grey's fading jerking body and brought her off the platform. "Don't tarnish your soul that way, pretty lady," he advised before mounting the platform again, walking past Grey shooting the man a glare of derision and walking off the other side. "Here's what you seek." Running his hand along the black wall behind the platform, he stopped when he felt the plate and pushed it.

The floor below Grey's feet began to move, it slid to the left even as his bare toes danced over it hopelessly trying to grab the cold stone and keep it from revealing his darkest secret. "Stop!" He tried to demand but it only came out as a whisper. "Stop!"

But the floor didn't stop; it slid until he dangled over the hidden cache of dead women piled into the platform two deep.

Ana recoiled and threw up as the stench of decay hit her nose and the sight of the faces of the dead women frozen in horror burned into her brain. On the very top was the still fresh and badly battered body of Maria Gonzales, mother and sole supporter of two sons. Ana shrieked as she turned away from the gruesome sight.

"There is the man you married, Ana," Ares announced and was unable to stop from asking the obvious question, "Was it worth it?"

Feeling dumber than a stump but relieved and freed, Ana shook her dark head, "No." She looked up at Christian, "Why?" She gasped. "Why not me?"

The man strung up over his victims with his limp cock pointing down at them didn't answer and so Alena did as she wrapped an arm around the young woman's trembling shoulders, "Because you gave him the one thing he couldn't get on his own; legitimacy. You made him look good in his slick world. When others thought they sniffed out the psychopath in him he had you to hold up like a shield against their doubts."

Ares turned to the woman who was beginning to weep, "He used you, he played you like he does his piano, with precision and expert timing but no real passion or desire. No matter what you did, how hard you tried, or what you gave, you could not save him, Ana, because his soul is black and he did not want to be saved. He wanted to wallow in it like the pig he is. Dahmer, Gacy, Bundy, Ramirez, Berkowitz, and now Grey."

"My mother never loved me!" Grey cried, "That's not my fault! She never loved me! She made me what I am."

"Get over yourself, Mr. Grey," Ares snarled, "or at the very least stop lying to yourself, you may have begun this life an innocent boy who was abused but you chose to let it swallow you whole, to give over to it, to be a wicked man and up until a few minutes ago you reveled in that wickedness." With a grin he stroked the beard on his chin, "Not so funny now, is it?"

"You're a game to him," Alena said to Ana as gently as she could knowing how important it was for the full impact of her life to settle into Ana's mind at this very moment, "Although he treated you like a queen, you're really just a pawn to be used and moved around for nothing more than his dark delight." Seeing in Ana's eyes that she had accomplished her mission of bringing realization, Alena went on, "But it's not too late for you. You are still young. Still vibrant. You are beautiful. You are intelligent and spirited. You can make a life for yourself without him and put all of this behind you. Do you want that, my dear?"

Ana, because of her good conditioning knew she would be able to accept being made a fool of and might even be able to be forced into deluding herself away from the ugly truth of the deaths of her children. Nothing could ever take away the sight of the naked decaying bodies below him or the welling

gratefulness in her heart that she was not among them. "Yes," she said strongly, "I want to be free truly free."

Not liking the glint in her eyes, Christian hanging in his chains again began to plead, "You can have a divorce," he offered, "I'll give you half of everything."

"Sure you will," Ana returned, "and you'll stalk me, you'll hunt me down, and never give me a moment's peace just like you did in the beginning when you made me believe you couldn't live without me. But the truth was you couldn't let me live without you. You'll never let me go. Never."

Christian knew the jig was up and that no matter what he said or did it wouldn't get him his way so he let his true self show through, "You got that right, bitch, you're mine to do with as I please no let me out of these fucking chains or I'll punish you like never before." Despite his predicament, he delivered the threat perfectly with the right inflection and hint of power in his eyes but Ana stood there and laughed at him.

"I don't know which one of us is more pathetic," Ana spat as she turned around and swayed her way over to the blacksmiths' forge still blazing away. She plucked a glowing red rod from the embers, "But I know this, you'll never torture anyone again you narcissistic pig." Holding the glowing rod out in front of her like a torch, she paused only momentarily when Ari stepped in front of her to block her path.

Alena came forward to slip her arm around the big Greek's slim waist and pull him out of Ana's path. As she walked past them she swore she heard Alena whisper in his ear; "This is her cross to burn."

Striding up the platform that stopped when it was three-quarters of the way open, she made her way behind her husband who bucked and thrashed in his chains. "I should have seen you for what you are before now," she hissed in his ear before jamming the hot glowing metal rod between his firm ass cheeks and straight up the brown hole. "You're no good," she cooed sweetly as he screamed at the agony and indignity of having his colon seared shut. Leaving the rod inside him, smelling his cooking flesh, she strolled in front of him, "How's that feel?"

"Stop! Don't hurt me!" Christian sobbed listening to the sizzle of his insides and letting the scent waft to him, being disgusted as he found it to be the same exotic smell of a fine steak. The same mind-blowing, cock hardening, stench he'd smelled a hundred times before from his victims shackled right here and pleading for his mercy. "Please, let me go, I won't say anything, please, please, let me go."

Ana stood on her tiptoes to kiss him long and deep, thrusting her tongue down his throat as she pressed her still firm body against him, grinding on his bare flesh in her barely there evening gown. She reached down to grab his cock and pump it to life before pulling away to whisper, "No." Turning her back to her suffering husband, she jumped off the platform and crossed to the door. "You don't deserve to keep breathing and I was a fool to think that I could change you. Good-bye, Mr. Grey." Opening the black door, she walked through with her head held high, her soul intact, and her inner goddess cheering her on telling her to pack her things and go. This nightmare was over.

Ares looked to Alena, "What do you think?"

"I think he's all yours, my darling," she raised herself on tiptoes to kiss his whiskered cheek, "I'll take care of her. You do what you want with him."

II

The door closed again as Ares bent over to pick the whip and face the hanging man with the hot poker up his ass.

"Who are you?"

Ares nodded, waved a hand down his long strong body and the black suit disappeared only to be replaced by studded black leather from his biker boots, to his pants, to the thick vest covering his broad chest. "Please, allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste," with a flick of his wrist the whip cracked so loudly it made Grey jump in his chains. "My name is Ares."

As hard as it was to believe that Aristotle Papathanassiou was Ares God of War there really was no denying it. For one fleeting second, Grey thought he'd found a kindred soul, after all the God of War no one to be trifled with just like himself and the God of War didn't have the best mother in the world either, "You understand, I know you do, you understand why I'm this way. Why I'm so incredibly dominant."

Ares threw his head back and laughed so hard the room shook, "No, Mr. Grey, I am dominant, I am the alpha-male. You? You're just a domineering little shit who cannot tell the difference. You're no Alpha but I'll show you the meaning of Omega." Whip in one hand and the beard on his chin in the other, Ares sized up the crying man wondering how best to proceed. Having him arrested was an option; his name would plastered in headlines all over the world. The scandal would be delicious and Grey Enterprises would collapse under its weight. Ares wondered how many victims would come forward to testify against Grey at his trial. He thought the number would be considerable. The American Justice System was fickle they might let him off on some technicality or call him 'insane' and unable to stand trial. They might let him go or send him to an asylum. He could just kill the man outright and when his stench became so foul have the maintenance crew of the luxury apartment building find him rotting away here in his little playroom. But that might come back on sweet little Ana making her a suspect in Grey's demise. So, in the end, none of those sat right with Ares. "I'll tell you what, Mr. Grey; I'm going to let you out of those chains."

"Oh, thank God!" Grey praised.

"You're welcome," Ares returned with a sneer. Pointing to the cuffs on Grey's wrists and feet, they opened. The man fell to the platform butt first shoving the iron rod from his colon, ripping through his bowels, upward through his stomach until the tip pierced his left lung. Writhing in pain and already on the verge of death as the poison leaked into his frame, his limp battered body rolled into the opening to lie atop the corpses of so many women. Grey let out a girlish scream as he scrambled to get off them even as he struggled to pull the metal rod from his body. But the deep wounds on his knees and feet made it difficult and he kept falling back down. "Good night, Mr. Grey," Ares crooned waving his hand

for the last time that night and watching the top of the platform slide over him entombing him with his victims. Only his very keen ears could hear the man screaming inside the two-ton box. Grey yelled like a banshee under the heavy marble. Ares stood there and listened until the screams of rage became the lunatic cries of the madman Grey truly was and then, finally, to the pleading sobs of the little boy he used to be. Grey gasped for breath in the stench of decomposing corpses.

It took the pathetic little man about forty-five minutes to expire. When all was silent, Grey was dead, suffocated in a makeshift mausoleum of his own making, surrounded by his own hideous work, Ares thought Justice, Lawful and Poetic had been done, he took his leave of the disgusting Red Suite of Pain.

Out in the hall a familiar but unexpected guest waited for him, "What did you do?"

"Raven," Ares smiled, "how good to see you." He hitched his head toward the closed door of Apartment 1408, "Is he..."

"In Dis? Oh yeah, and he's already making a fucking stink about it. What the hell?"

Ares patted his son, the God of the Damned, on his sinewy shoulder, "He's your problem now show him no mercy for he gave none in life."

Raven had no pity for Christian Grey his dirty deeds were well-known in the Underworld there was only one question rolling around in his young powerful mind, "Why? Why did you kill him? Why not let Ana do it, it was her place."

Perhaps it was or should have been, "My soul is already tarnished, when I cease to exist in this world I will take my place next to Mr. Grey in Dis, but Ana's is clean and so is your mother's, I want them to stay that way so they can spend eternity in the Fields."

"She had the right to kill him."

"But not the stomach for it," Ares advised turning Raven away from the door and toward the empty hall.

"How long do you think it will take them to find him?"

Ares pondered the question with a smirk, "If someone keeps paying the rent on that place, who knows, it could be decades."

In the meantime, Ana would take over Grey Enterprises where undoubtedly there would be a big change in the employee/employer dynamic with dozens of pretty but stupid women collecting unemployment checks. Ana, in her husband's absence, would have it all; the company, the properties, the money, cars, planes, yachts, all of it. Ana Steel-Grey just became the richest and most eligible woman on the planet.

"Come on, Raven, there's a lovely young woman I want you to meet."

Chapter Ten

The Flame

Ares and Raven walked through the wall of the penthouse to find Ana crying in Alena's arms. Alena looked up to see the two of them and smiled with relief when she saw her son. "Is it over? Is he...?"

"Quite," Ares intoned, "he'll never bother you again, Ana, or any other woman."

With tear stained eyes Ana looked up at her company, "Then why I do feel so horrible? Why do I feel I should have saved him? Why do I miss him already?"

Alena brushed Ana's dark hair away from her shoulder, "It's only temporary, my dear, believe me after a good cry you'll feel nothing but relief. You'll feel better than you have in the last nine years, I promise."

While her ears did not want to listen to what the silver-haired woman was saying, Ana's inner goddess began to sing an aria of mournful delight. Her watery eyes turned to the handsome young man with the wide gray streak in his midnight hair and something she thought long dead began to stir. "Hello. I'm Ana."

His father was right she was lovely and cute, "Raven," he said as he held out his hand and took her trembling one in his soft firm grasp. "You'll be alright. With just a little time, you'll be fine."

"A whole new world has opened for you, Ana," Ares advised, "it's the same world upon which Christian Grey slammed the door, its waiting for you it always has been." He held his big arm out to his side and waited but a moment for Alena to come to him and nestle at his flank before closing it protectively around her. "I think we should take our leave of you now."

Raven looked at his parents and then back to Ana who was still holding his hand, "Mind if I stay awhile?"

To the delight of her inner goddess but mostly importantly to her outer one Ana found herself saying, "Not at all."

Epilogue

Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves

Two Years Later

Ares and Alena took another vacation to the Mortal World but decided to leave Seattle off their itinerary. Yet it was of no surprise when, while browsing around a bookstore, Alena came across a jewel and held it up for Ares to see the cover. The book was entitled MASTERLESS and the author was Ana Steel-Grey. He opened the cover to read the dedication: To Ari and Alena Wherever You Are. On the back cover was the picture of an older, wiser, and very happy Ana smiling with her heart for the camera.

"I think she's doing alright, don't you?"

"Better than when we found her," Ares agreed and put the book back on the shelf.

A woman walked up to them, "You should read that," she insisted, "it's a very good book, very inspiring and empowering. It's incredibly well-written, she's very talented."

"Well then," Ares plucked it back off the shelf and handed it to his wife, "perhaps we should read it."

"Maybe they'll make a movie out of it," Alena replied.

"Yes, well, let's just hope it's a good one."

"You won't be sorry," the woman told them happy to see the couple decided to give the book a shot, "its life changing."

As she walked away, Ares and Alena knew the woman not only spoke the truth but from her own experience. Perhaps they had changed more than one life the night Christian Grey died. Perhaps they set off a ripple effect that reached shores far and wide. Taking the book to the register the young woman there fawned over it, she had nothing but the highest of praise for MASTERLESS and its author telling them how Ana was the head of Grey Enterprises, which was now just as profitable as it was charitable. Ana Steel-Grey started many organizations to help under privileged women and children by providing them with food, shelter, and education along with transportation and job placement with some of the world's top companies, including Grey Enterprises. The young clerk told of how Ana started A&A Steel Publishing, which specialized in women's literature and non-fiction bringing some of the hottest, newest, most talented female writers to the world stage.

"And she did all of that in the midst of her husband's disappearance, she's quite strong don't you think?"

"Yes," Alena agreed as she handed over the twenty-dollar bill in return for Ana's book.

"Did they ever find him?" Ares inquired trying to sound casual.

"No," she told them as she handed Alena the book, "they never did."

The
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About This Story

In my very humble opinion there is nothing to like, let alone laude, about the "Fifty Shades of Grey" trilogy. My reasoning is numerous but I'm going to stick with just one of them for right now.

In any other book, 'Christian Grey' would have the serial killer. The rapist. The really bad guy that makes you cringe and close your eyes on something like *Criminal Minds* or *SVU*. No heart of gold. None. He is not a 'dominant man' in the BDSM sense he's simply a psychopathic little prick. The best ending for "Fifty Shades of Grey" and the truest ending to that first book would have been if 'Christian Grey' kept going until he killed 'Ana Steel'. Then, he'd quietly and possibly a little reverently wrap her up in a linen sheet, carry her limp body down the hall, stuff her into his helicopter, take off, dump her into the Pacific and then fly off to find his next innocent, naive, unsuspecting victim. He does it all with a sly grin proud of himself for how easily he took her in and made her his little bitch.

It is my strongest assertion that 'Christian Grey' is the man we continuously warn our daughters about all through their growing-up. The ones of whom we tell our precious girls; *You can't save him. Stay away from him.* Nowhere is this more apparent than in "Grey" the follow up to the "Fifty Shades of Grey" trilogy.

To have that type of man held up as the "damaged" romantic lead is truly sickening. Men like this, although they may not be rich or necessarily handsome, are a dime a dozen. There's nothing special about them and their poor crappy childhoods that they use to bait you into feeling sorry for them luring you closer to them. They don't do this so they can be miraculously healed by the 'love of a good woman' (one willing to debase herself to any level for him in the 'healing process') but so they can feed upon you, your kindness, your trusting nature, and your love.

Careful of the 'Christian Grey's' of the world for they will suck you in and then suck you dry....not in a good way. Be thankful this one is only a character in a book.