

Doug looked up and smiled, Clara watched his lips say "Finally," as he stood, wiping crumbs from his lap. Dominic fell in step beside his friend as she walked towards the man who had annoyed her a few days ago. Clara laid a hand on Nick's arm, "I've got this. I'll call you if I need you." She finished her walk towards Doug's table alone and then let out a snort, as he extended his hand in a handshake. She didn't reach for it. "Doug, are you trying to be a stalker?"

"No, Ms... I mean Clara. I was just here for a late dinner, just hoping I'd run into you."

"Well, that is sort of the definition of stalking, Mr. Stevens."

"Only if you have filed a prior complaint," he quipped with a disarming smirk and the photographer shook her head and rolled her eyes. "We still haven't had our talk, it's really bothering me that we got off on the wrong foot."

"Wrong foot, wrong timing, wrong assumptions."

"Yes, exactly. I'd like to explain." He tapped a folder with his fingertips and motioned her to sit.

She sat but glanced at Dominic who headed over. "You need anything Clara?"

"Yes, I do. A cup of decaf and a nice sandwich, whatever you want to make me and hopefully a nice slice of pie?"

"Sure thing Clara." He turned to Doug,

"Anything else sir? Mister...? " he questioned.

Doug handed him his business card. "There's all my info just to ease your mind, Mr. Antinelli. I'd like a piece of pie if I could."

Dominic looked at his friend. "Why not, Nicky. It's okay. No need to run this guy out a second time." She glared at Doug, "Correct?"

Doug said, "Yes. I'll behave this time." He laughed and smiled a smile that was less fake than last time. Her wariness eased but did not disappear. The conversation was mundane about weather and local crime until she finished her sandwich. She pushed the plate of chips towards Doug, he refused. "Don't eat junk food," he said firmly.

"Suit yourself," she said with a shrug and waited for her pie. "So, what's your best apology Doug, this is the last chance you get."

"Bossy, aren't you? I like that." he said.

"Doug. Last chance." She replied and slid her chair back.

"Geesh, Clara. Okay." He ran his hands down his face like he was rubbing his thoughts into place. He looked at her until she looked back right into his eyes. She caught herself studying his brown eyes as he continued to speak. He leaned forward in a whisper. "I met Mitch when he came in for a massage," he slid over his card again. "We hit it off. Soon, well, he was more than a client. I'm a Dom

and he was my Sub for a quite a while."

Clara choked on her coffee. "A what?!"

"Come now Clara," Doug sat back in his seat half amused, but didn't continue as their coconut cream pies had arrived. As soon as Dominic left, he continued. "You must know what kink play or fetish play is in your line of work." Clara leaned back and put up a hand, not quite panicking but close. "Stop right there, I do not do any of that for any amount of money. I like natural interaction between my clients."

"You've never been asked to photograph rope work?" Doug said in shock.

"I've been asked but always turn it down. If you like to photograph that kind of kink I can pass along your info the next time it comes up."

Doug didn't say anything for a minute, he heard her voice go cold by the end of her comment. "Okay Clara. Got your point," he said quietly as he set his fork down. "Was just trying to be open with you. What is your problem anyway? I can't imagine an erotic photographer being so uptight. You do fantastic work, I'm just surprised is all."

Clara tried to keep her anger down, this guy just rubbed her the wrong way, for some reason. "Well, if I don't fit the bill for whatever kink you two get into, I'm sorry." Her chair scraped the

floor as she scooted back. Doug grabbed her hand lightly.

"Please stay. I don't understand why everything I say pisses you off." Then he laughed, and Clara couldn't help it. She laughed too. "You got that right, Mr. Stevens, you ruffle my feathers, for sure."