The Soft Place

by Brent Clark Palmer

The Chariot, Book 6; Vulpes Parvaes, Book 43

Chapter 1

Jaina Dade pushed the key into the lock of Dan’s apartment and stepped inside, the late afternoon light slanting through the floor-to-ceiling windows that looked out over the city. She dropped her softballs bag by the door with a soft thud, kicked off her cleats, and rolled her shoulders. The post-practice ache sat pleasantly in her muscles—tight calves, a pleasant burn across her thighs from the drills, the residual heat of sun and effort still clinging to her skin.

She was built compact and powerful, the kind of body that looked carved rather than grown. Five-four on a good day, every inch of her dense with the kind of muscle that came from years of explosive starts and hard slides. Her breasts sat high and full on her chest, firm enough that they barely shifted when she moved, the weight of them solid and responsive rather than soft. Her ass was a perfect heart-shaped curve, high and round, the kind that filled the seat of her practice shorts and made the fabric strain when she bent to pick up a ball. She knew the effect she had. She had known it since high school. The looks in the dugout, the way the other team’s shortstop sometimes forgot to call the play when she took her stance, the way Dan’s eyes always dropped the second she walked in the door. She didn’t mind. She liked the attention. It felt like proof that the work she put into her body showed.

Dan was already on the couch when she came in, phone in one hand, the other resting loosely on his thigh. Skinny in the way that made his boyish face look even younger, big blue eyes that always looked a little startled, a little eager. The crypto money had paid for the apartment and the view and the expensive sound system, but it hadn’t changed the way he looked at her —like he still couldn’t quite believe she came home to him every day.

“Hey,” she said, already peeling her practice shirt over her head. The sports bra followed a second later. Her breasts settled with a soft, heavy bounce that was more firmness than jiggle. “Give me two minutes.”

He didn’t answer. He just stood, walked to the bedroom, and stretched out on the bed the way he always did—on his back, head toward the foot of the mattress so she could straddle him facing the headboard and the big window. She watched him settle, watched the way his throat worked when she pushed her shorts and panties down in one motion and stepped out of them. The air-conditioning kissed the damp heat between her legs. She was already a little swollen from the ride home, from the way the seat had pressed against her after practice, from knowing exactly what was waiting.

She climbed onto the bed and swung one knee over his chest, then the other, until she was kneeling above his face. The first brush of her skin against his mouth made her breath catch. She sank down slowly, deliberately, until the soft,

slick folds of her settled fully over his lips and nose. The heat of him was immediate. She rocked once, just enough to seat herself properly, and felt his tongue slide out and press flat against her.

“There you go,” she murmured, already reaching for her phone on the nightstand. “Just like that.”

She unlocked the screen and opened her messages, settling her weight more firmly. Dan’s hands came up to rest on the outsides of her thighs, light and careful, the way they always did. He knew better than to try to guide her. She controlled the pressure, the angle, the rhythm. Right now she wanted steady and deep, the broad flat of his tongue working slow circles against her clit while she scrolled.

Her first call was to Mara.

“Hey,” she said when her teammate picked up. “Practice was brutal. Coach made us run the bases until two of the freshmen puked.”

Mara laughed on the other end. Jaina shifted her hips a fraction, grinding down just enough to feel Dan’s nose press higher. The wet sound of his mouth working between her legs filled the quiet spaces between words. She kept her voice even.

“Yeah, I’m at Dan’s. Just decompressing.” She scrolled through Instagram with her free hand, liking a few posts from the team group chat. “No, I’m not going out tonight. My legs are shot. Tomorrow’s an early class anyway.”

Dan’s tongue never stopped. He licked in long, patient strokes, then focused on the swollen peak of her clit with the tip, fluttering just enough to make her thighs tighten. She rewarded him with a little more of her weight. The pressure made him groan softly against her, the vibration traveling straight up into her core. She bit her lip and kept talking.

“Tell Coach I iced my knee already. It’s fine. Just tight.” She paused, listening to Mara complain about the new transfer who kept missing signals. While she listened she rocked in slow, shallow circles, smearing herself across Dan’s mouth. Her free hand drifted down to rest on the top of his head, fingers threading into his hair. Not pulling. Just holding him there. “Yeah. I’ll see you at the field house at nine. Bring the extra bats.”

She ended the call and immediately opened another, this one to her sister.

“Hey, you. No, I’m good. Just got home from practice.” She leaned forward a little so that more of her weight settled onto Dan’s face. The angle pressed her clit harder against his tongue. Heat bloomed low in her belly, slow and thick. “Dan’s here. He’s being useful.”

Her sister made a knowing sound on the other end. Jaina smiled and kept scrolling, half- listening, half-feeling. Dan’s hands had tightened on her thighs.

She could feel the tension in his arms, the way he was trying not to thrust up against nothing. She liked that. She liked knowing he was hard and ignored and still giving her exactly what she wanted.

“No, we’re not fighting. Everything’s fine. He’s just… occupied.” She let out a soft breath when Dan’s tongue pushed deeper, parting her. “I’ll call you tomorrow, okay? Love you.”

She hung up and dropped the phone onto the pillow beside her. For a long minute she just rode his mouth in silence, eyes half-closed, hips rolling in lazy figure-eights. The wet sounds grew louder. Her breasts rose and fell with each deeper breath. She reached down and cupped one of them, thumb brushing over the tight peak of her nipple, and felt the answering clench between her legs.

Dan made a muffled sound. She looked down at him—at the blue eyes that were open and fixed on her face, at the way his lips and chin were shiny with her. She shifted forward just enough to free his nose for a breath, then settled back down.

“Don’t stop,” she said quietly. “You’ve got another forty minutes before I let you up.”

She picked the phone up again and opened a group chat with three of the girls from the team. Her thumbs moved across the screen while her hips never stopped moving. Every so often she would grind down harder, or lift just enough to drag her slick folds across his tongue, or press her clit firmly against the flat of it and hold still until the pleasure sharpened into something that made her thighs tremble.

She texted. She laughed softly at a meme someone sent. She answered a question about the weekend tournament schedule. And the whole time Dan stayed exactly where she put him, mouth open, tongue working, breathing only when she allowed it. The hour stretched. The light outside the windows shifted from gold to softer amber. Her body grew hotter, wetter, the slow build of pleasure never quite cresting because she wouldn’t let it. Not yet. Not until she was ready.

When the phone finally chimed with a low-battery warning she set it aside and looked down at him again. His face was flushed. His lips were swollen. She rolled her hips one last time, slow and deep, and felt him shudder underneath her.

“Good,” she said, voice low and warm. “That’s good.”

She stayed there a little longer, just feeling the heat of his mouth and the steady pressure of his tongue, letting the last of the afternoon settle into her bones.

Chapter 2

Jaina's hips stuttered once, then locked. The slow build that had been coiling low in her belly for the better part of an hour finally broke. She pressed down hard, grinding the swollen peak of her clit against the flat of Dan's tongue as the first wave rolled through her. Her thighs trembled. A soft, broken sound escaped her throat. She kept her weight fully on his face while the pulses kept coming—tight, rhythmic clenches that smeared more of her slick heat across his mouth and chin. His hands stayed on her thighs, steady, letting her ride it out exactly the way she wanted.

When the last aftershock faded she stayed seated a moment longer, breathing through the lingering flutters, then lifted herself off him with deliberate care. A thin string of her wetness stretched between his lower lip and her before it broke. She swung one leg over and sat on the edge of the bed, still flushed, still open.

"Charge my phone," she said, voice low and satisfied. "It's almost dead."

Dan wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and reached for the cable on the nightstand without comment. He plugged it in, set the phone face-up on the dresser, then turned back to her. His lips were shiny. His blue eyes looked a little dazed.

"I've got news," he said.

She raised an eyebrow, still catching her breath.

"Business opportunity in the Middle East. Dubai, mostly. Some meetings in Abu Dhabi. I'll be gone about a month." He sat on the edge of the mattress beside her, skinny frame angled toward her. "You can stay here, obviously. You've got the key. Everything's paid through. If anything happens to me…" He gave a small, crooked smile. "Place is yours. Condo's clear. Account's set up. Just a joke. Mostly."

Jaina studied him for a second, then nodded. "Okay. When do you leave?"

"Flight's this afternoon."

She leaned in, kissed the corner of his mouth—still tasting herself—and stood. "Then you'd better pack."

The apartment felt different the moment she stepped through the door after practice the next day. No sound of the television. No soft click of Dan's laptop. Just the low hum of the air conditioning and the faint scent of the cleaning service that had come through that morning. His suitcase was gone. The closet on his side of the bedroom hung half-empty.

Jaina dropped her bag, peeled off her practice clothes, and walked naked into the living room. The big windows showed the late-afternoon city the same as always. She stood there for a minute, hands on her hips, then wandered into the bedroom and stretched out on the bed in the exact spot Dan used to lie. She tried the usual routine—phone in one hand, the other drifting between her legs—but the angle was wrong. Her fingers felt too small, too familiar. She rubbed slow circles over her clit the way she sometimes did when she was alone, but the pressure never quite matched the broad, patient stroke of a tongue. After ten minutes she was only more frustrated, hips shifting restlessly against the sheets.

She sat up, exhaled hard, and tried again in the shower. Hot water, one foot up on the tile ledge, two fingers sliding through her folds. It felt good for a few strokes, then stalled. She was too used to the weight, the heat, the way someone else's mouth took over completely so she could just scroll and talk and let it happen. Solo felt like work.

Back in the bedroom she towel-dried her hair and sat on the edge of the mattress, phone in hand. She scrolled through her contacts without opening any. A couple of guys from the business school she sometimes studied with. A shortstop from a rival team who had made it clear he was interested. None of them felt right. The idea of explaining the arrangement—of having to train someone new to stay still and keep his mouth open for a full hour—made her shoulders tighten.

She switched to the team group chat and scrolled the names. Most of the girls were loud, competitive, always talking over each other in the dugout. Then her thumb stopped on Terri Hyung.

Terri was a sophomore utility player, quiet, compact, Korean-American, with a neat black bob that never quite stayed tucked behind her ears and a shy smile that showed up mostly when someone else made a good play. She had the kind of soft, pretty face that looked almost delicate until she was on the field, and then the delicacy disappeared. Jaina had noticed her watching sometimes—quick glances in the locker room that lingered half a second too long on the curve of Jaina's ass or the way her sports bra sat high and firm.

Jaina opened a new message, stared at the blank screen, then hit the call button instead.

Terri picked up on the third ring. "Hey, Jaina?"

"Hey. You busy?"

"Just got out of class. What's up?"

Jaina leaned back on one hand, still naked, the air-conditioning cooling the damp skin between her thighs. "Dan left today. Business trip. He's gone a month. I

usually… decompress when I get home from practice. Like, every day. And I’m realizing I don’t really know how to do it by myself anymore.”

There was a short pause on the other end. Not shocked. Just thoughtful.

“Okay,” Terri said slowly.

“I was wondering if you wanted to come over. Hang out. Help me figure it out.” Jaina kept her voice casual, easy, the same tone she used when she asked someone to throw extra batting practice. “No pressure. Just… company. And maybe more, if it feels right.”

Another beat of silence. Then Terri’s voice, quieter but clear. “Yeah. Sure. I can come over.”

“Cool. I’ll text you the address. Whenever you’re free.”

“I’m free now,” Terri said. “Give me forty minutes.”

Jaina ended the call, set the phone down, and looked around the empty apartment. The frustration from earlier had shifted into something sharper, warmer. She stood, walked to the bathroom, and started the shower again—this time just to rinse the practice sweat off her skin and make sure she smelled clean.

Chapter 3

The doorbell rang forty-one minutes after the call. Jaina checked the peephole, then opened the door still wrapped in the thick white terrycloth robe she had pulled on after her second shower. Terri stood in the hallway in a simple black t-shirt and dark jeans, soft black bob slightly messy from the walk, a small crossbody bag over one shoulder. Her eyes flicked once over Jaina's bare legs and the deep V of the robe, then met Jaina's without flinching.

"Hey," Terri said.

"Hey. Come in."

Terri stepped inside. The door clicked shut. For a second they just looked at each other in the entryway. Then Terri reached out, took the belt of the robe in both hands, and untied it with quiet certainty. The heavy fabric fell open. She pushed it off Jaina's shoulders so it dropped to the floor in a soft heap. Jaina stood naked in the cool air-conditioned hallway, skin still faintly damp, nipples tightening under the sudden exposure.

Terri's gaze moved over her without hurry—firm high breasts, the tight plane of her stomach, the neat triangle of dark hair between her thighs—then she put both hands on Jaina's waist and walked her backward into the living room. The back of Jaina's knees hit the low armchair near the window. Terri pushed, and Jaina sat. The leather was cool against her bare ass and the backs of her thighs.

Terri dropped to her knees on the rug between Jaina's open legs. She didn't take anything off. She simply leaned in, placed her palms on the insides of Jaina's thighs, and spread them wider. Then her mouth was on her.

The first long, slow lick made Jaina's head tip back against the chair. No stubble. Nothing rough. Just soft, warm lips and a tongue that knew exactly what it was doing. Terri licked her open with patient, thorough strokes, then sealed her mouth over Jaina's clit and sucked gently, rhythmically, while her tongue worked small tight circles underneath. Jaina's hands found the arms of the chair and gripped.

It was better. Immediately, unmistakably better. Dan had always been obedient and steady. Terri was hungry. She made soft, appreciative sounds against Jaina's skin, little hums of pleasure that vibrated straight into her core. Her tongue was more agile, more precise, alternating between broad flat strokes that covered everything and focused flicks that made Jaina's hips twitch. When she pressed two fingers inside—slow, curling upward—Jaina let out a shaky breath she hadn't meant to release.

Terri paused just long enough to look up, lips already shiny.

"You taste really good," she said quietly. "I've thought about this."

Then she lowered her head again and went back to work, deeper this time, tongue pushing inside alongside her fingers, nose pressed firmly against Jaina's clit. The dual sensation made Jaina's thighs tremble. She watched the top of Terri's dark head moving between her legs, the neat bob shifting with every eager motion, and felt something coil tight and fast low in her belly.

Terri lifted her mouth again, still pumping her fingers in a steady rhythm.

"Your clit is so swollen already," she murmured. "It feels perfect on my tongue."

The words alone made Jaina clench around the fingers inside her. Terri smiled a little, then sealed her lips over the swollen peak again and sucked harder, tongue fluttering in quick, relentless patterns. Jaina's hips started to roll without her permission. She reached down and rested one hand on the back of Terri's head—not pushing, just holding—feeling the soft hair under her palm while Terri kept working her with single-minded focus.

Every time Jaina got close, Terri seemed to know. She would ease off just enough to keep her hovering, then sink back in with even more enthusiasm, making those soft wet sounds that filled the quiet apartment. Once she pulled back completely, fingers still buried deep, and said in a low, almost wondering voice, "You're dripping down my wrist." Then she licked a slow stripe from her own fingers up to Jaina's clit and sealed her mouth there again.

Jaina's orgasm hit like a wave she hadn't seen coming. It crashed through her so hard her back arched off the chair and a broken, helpless sound tore out of her throat. Her thighs clamped around Terri's head. Pulse after pulse rolled through her, longer and deeper than anything she had ever felt with Dan. Terri stayed right there through all of it, mouth gentle now, tongue soft and slow, riding the aftershocks with her until Jaina's body finally went loose and trembling in the chair.

For a long minute the only sound was Jaina's uneven breathing. Terri rested her cheek against the inside of one thigh, fingers still inside her but still now, waiting.

When Jaina's breath finally evened out, Terri looked up. Her mouth and chin were wet. Her eyes were dark and calm.

"Is there anything else you needed?"

Jaina stared down at her, still half-dazed, thighs open, the best orgasm of her life still echoing through her nerves. The question was so simple, so matter-of-fact, that for a second she couldn't find words. Then something practical and slightly stunned rose up in her.

"Do you… want to go to dinner?" she asked. "My treat."

Terri’s mouth curved into a small, genuine smile. She slowly withdrew her fingers, wiped them once on the inside of Jaina’s thigh, and sat back on her heels.

“Sure,” she said.

Chapter 4

The restaurant was quiet for a weeknight, all soft lighting and dark wood and the low murmur of other conversations. They had a corner table by the window. A plate of grilled octopus and another of seared scallops sat between them, mostly untouched now that the conversation had shifted.

At first it stayed easy. Classes. The upcoming tournament. Which of the freshmen were actually going to stick with the program and which ones were already talking about transferring. Terri laughed at a story about their shortstop's disastrous attempt at a dive catch in practice, and Jaina found herself smiling more than she expected to. It felt ordinary. Almost.

Then Terri set her chopsticks down, rested her chin lightly on one hand, and looked at Jaina across the table.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"Have you ever been with a girl before today?"

Jaina's fork paused halfway to her plate. She set it down carefully. "No. That was the first time."

Terri's expression didn't change, but something warmer moved behind her eyes. She nodded once, like she had already known.

"It shows," she said, voice low enough that it stayed between them. "Not in a bad way. Just… you were so open. Like you didn't have any idea how much better it could feel." She leaned in a fraction. "It's not just that my face is softer. No stubble, yeah. But it's more than that. I know exactly how everything feels from the inside. I know what makes a clit throb instead of just get hard. I know how to stay right on the edge of too much without ever crossing it unless you want me to. A guy can learn the motions. A girl already lives in the territory."

Jaina's pulse kicked harder under her skin. She could still feel the ghost of Terri's mouth between her legs, the precise way her tongue had worked. She swallowed and nodded once.

"Yeah," she said. "It was… different."

Terri's mouth curved. "Different good?"

"Really good."

"There's more to it than just that, though." Terri picked up her water glass, took a slow sip, then set it down. "At night, in bed, there's nothing like having a soft, hairless body pressed against yours. No rough legs. No random hard-on poking you when you're trying to sleep. Just warm skin and curves that fit. And she's

right there. Available whenever the mood hits. You don't even have to fully wake up. You just shift a little and she's already opening for you, or opening you."

Jaina's mind supplied the image before she could stop it—Terri's smaller frame tucked against her back, or the other way around, bare legs tangled, the easy slide of a hand between thighs in the dark. Heat pooled low in her belly again. She shifted in her chair.

"That does sound… nice," she admitted.

Terri's voice stayed conversational, almost casual, but her eyes never left Jaina's. "I could sleep with my head on your thigh. Just like that. All you'd have to do is turn an inch and my mouth would already be on you. You wouldn't even have to ask. I'd be right there, warm and ready, every single night. Or in the morning. Or both."

Jaina's breath had gone a little shallow. She could picture it too clearly—the weight of Terri's head on her leg, the soft black hair against her skin, the way she could just rock her hips the smallest amount and feel that clever tongue again. She nodded, slower this time.

"Yeah," she said. "I can see that."

Terri smiled, small and knowing. "Showers, too. You could just stand there and hold onto the wall. I'd lather every inch of you. Rinse you. Make sure you're completely clean and completely worked up before you ever step out. No effort on your part. Not even a little. I'd take care of all of it. Top to bottom. And if you needed to come again before class, I'd handle that too. On my knees on the tile. However you wanted it."

The image hit hard—hot water, steam, her own hands braced on the shower wall while Terri's soapy hands moved over her breasts, down her stomach, between her legs. Then the shift to kneeling, mouth open, eager. Jaina felt herself get slick under the simple black dress she had thrown on. She pressed her thighs together under the table and tried to keep her voice steady.

"You're really selling this," she said, a little breathless.

"I'm not selling," Terri answered quietly. "I'm just telling you what it could be like. Every day. Whenever you want it. No schedule. No waiting for someone to get home from a meeting. Just… available. For whatever you need."

Jaina looked at the half-finished plates, the low candle between them, the way Terri's lips still looked a little fuller than usual from earlier. The rest of the restaurant had faded. All she could think about was the empty condo, the big bed, the armchair they had already used once. She wanted Terri's mouth again. She wanted the soft weight of her in the bed. She wanted the shower and the night and the morning exactly the way Terri had described them.

She set her napkin down.

“You ready to get out of here?”

Terri’s smile deepened, quiet and sure.

“Yeah,” she said. “I’m ready.”

Chapter 5

The condo was quiet when they stepped inside. Jaina dropped her keys on the entry table. Before she could reach for the zipper of her dress, Terri's hands were already there—warm, sure, sliding the fabric down her arms and letting it pool at her feet. The bra followed, then the simple black panties. Terri folded each piece neatly and set them aside without being asked.

"Turn around," Terri said softly.

Jaina did. She heard the soft click of a bottle, then the cool glide of lotion across her shoulders. Terri's hands moved in slow, thorough circles, working the cream into her skin, down the length of her spine, over the high round curve of her ass. She paid special attention there, thumbs pressing firmly into the muscle, smoothing lotion along the undersides where the skin was most sensitive. When she reached around to coat Jaina's breasts, her palms cupped the firm weight of them, thumbs brushing the nipples until they tightened under the slick glide. Jaina's breath left her in a quiet exhale.

"You're so soft already," Terri murmured against the back of her shoulder. "I'm just making you softer."

In bed Terri was exactly what she had promised and more. Her body was smooth everywhere —no roughness, no unexpected angles—just warm, yielding skin that molded against Jaina's as if it had been made to fit. She tucked herself along Jaina's side, one thigh draped over Jaina's, cheek resting on the upper slope of Jaina's breast. The weight of her was light and constant. Every time Jaina shifted, even half-asleep, Terri was already moving with her— mouth finding a nipple, or sliding lower to press open kisses along her stomach, or settling between her thighs again with that same eager, precise tongue.

Jaina came twice more before midnight, once with Terri's fingers curled deep inside her while she sucked gently at her clit, once with nothing but the slow, relentless pressure of Terri's mouth while Jaina's hands stayed buried in the soft black hair. Between rounds Terri simply stayed close, available, her body a living blanket of warm skin and quiet breathing. Jaina had never felt anything as soft as the press of Terri's bare stomach against her hip, or the way Terri's smaller breasts flattened gently against her side when she curled in.

Morning came with the sound of the shower starting. Terri was already up. She guided Jaina under the hot spray and took over completely. Soap-slick hands moved over every inch— shoulders, breasts, the tight plane of her stomach, the full heart-shaped curve of her ass. Terri knelt on the tile and washed between Jaina's legs with the same focused care she had given the night before, fingers parting her, rinsing her, then polishing every fold with soft, thorough strokes until Jaina was trembling again and had to brace both hands against the wall.

Terri finished her with her mouth, slow and deep, while the water ran over both of them. Only when Jaina’s legs threatened to give out did Terri stand, rinse her own body quickly, and step out first to wrap a towel around Jaina’s shoulders.

She dried her. She smoothed a light lotion into her skin again. She chose clothes from the closet—simple underwear, a soft campus T-shirt, the jeans Jaina usually wore to class—and dressed her piece by piece, smoothing fabric into place, adjusting the fit at the waist and over the swell of her breasts until everything sat exactly right.

By the time Jaina stood fully dressed by the door, bag over one shoulder, she felt almost dazed with how thoroughly cared for she was. Her body hummed with leftover pleasure. Every inch of her skin felt attended to. She looked at Terri—still only in a towel, hair damp, cheeks faintly flushed—and the question rose before she could stop it.

“What can I do for you?” Jaina asked. “You’ve done everything. I feel… completely taken care of. I want to give you something back.”

Terri stepped close, rose onto her toes, and pressed a soft kiss to the corner of Jaina’s mouth.

“Invite me back after school,” she said. “I’ll give you something to do then. Something that will make us both feel good. If you want me here.”

Jaina didn’t hesitate.

“I want you here,” she said. “Come back after school. Please.”

Terri’s smile was quiet and bright.

“I’ll be here.”

Chapter 6

Terri arrived a little after four, still in the clothes she had worn to class—soft gray long-sleeve shirt, black leggings, the same neat black bob a little wind-tossed. She closed the door behind her, set her bag down, and looked at Jaina for a long moment.

“I want something from you,” she said. “And if you give it to me, I’ll give you something every night.”

Jaina’s pulse lifted. “What do you want?”

“I want to hear you say, out loud and in detail, everything that felt better about being with me than with anyone else. The texture. The enthusiasm. The softness. The way I’m available. All of it. No shortcuts. If you do that, then every night I’m here I’ll sleep with my head on your bare thigh. Exactly like I told you at dinner. All you’ll ever have to do is turn an inch and my mouth will already be right there. Warm. Ready. Whenever you want it.”

Jaina’s mouth went a little dry. She nodded once.

Terri waited, quiet and patient, arms loose at her sides.

Jaina drew a breath and began.

“Your face is softer. There’s no stubble, nothing that scrapes. Just smooth skin and warm lips. Your tongue knows exactly how much pressure to use and when to change it. You don’t just do the motions—you want to be there. I can feel how much you like it. The sounds you make. The way you stay when I start shaking instead of pulling back. Your whole body is soft. No hard edges. When you press against me it feels like you’re made to fit. And you’re just… there. You don’t have somewhere else to be or something else you’d rather be doing. You’re available. You make it feel like keeping me like this is the only thing you want.”

She stopped, cheeks warm, the words still hanging in the air between them.

Terri’s expression had gone soft and bright at the same time.

“That’s enough,” she said. “That’s everything I needed.”

That night Terri kept her word. She undressed them both, guided Jaina onto her back, and settled on her side with her cheek resting on the upper part of Jaina’s thigh, one arm draped loosely across Jaina’s hips. The weight of her head was light and constant. Her breath warmed the sensitive skin just above the place where Jaina’s legs met. Every time Jaina shifted, even half-asleep, the option was right there—one small turn of her hips and Terri’s mouth would already be open for her. Twice in the dark Jaina took it. Both times Terri answered immediately, tongue slow and thorough, as if she had been waiting for exactly that movement. Between those moments she simply stayed, soft and warm and present, the most

perfect weight Jaina had ever felt against her body.

In the quiet hours Jaina lay awake longer than she meant to, staring at the ceiling while Terri's steady breathing moved against her thigh. The realization settled over her slowly and completely: this was better than anything she had ever arranged for herself. The care, the softness, the way pleasure arrived without her having to manage it or ask twice. She felt a low, genuine ache for all the years she had spent not knowing this was possible—nights spent with someone who was merely willing instead of eager, mornings that had never begun with this kind of quiet, thorough attention. The loss of that time sat in her chest for a while, heavy and real, before it slowly transformed into something else: gratitude that she had finally asked.

Morning light was just beginning to come through the windows when Jaina spoke into the quiet.

"I wish I'd invited you into my life sooner."

Terri lifted her head, blinked sleepily, and smiled.

"You're inviting me now," she said. "That's what matters."

Before they left for campus they stayed in bed a little longer and did something slower. Terri asked Jaina to undress her, and Jaina did—peeling the soft shirt upward, easing the leggings down, taking her time with every inch of newly bare skin. Then they lay facing each other, close enough that their noses almost touched. They traded long, open-mouthed kisses that stayed unhurried, hands moving lightly over shoulders and sides and the soft curves of breasts, never pushing toward more. It was simply closeness, the quiet learning of each other's mouths and the warm press of skin against skin, until the alarm on Jaina's phone finally reminded them of the time.

While they dressed, Terri stood behind Jaina and smoothed the back of her shirt into place.

"I'm going to keep getting better at this," she said quietly. "I want to be the best lover you've ever had. Better than I already am."

Jaina turned to look at her. The words felt both unnecessary and deeply welcome.

"You already are," she answered. Then, after a small pause: "I need something to call you. 'Girlfriend' isn't enough. It doesn't cover what this is."

Terri considered her for a moment, eyes warm.

"Call me your soft place," she said. "When you need me, when you want my mouth, when you just want me against you—call me that. Your soft place."

Jaina felt the phrase settle into her chest like something that already belonged there.

“My soft place,” she repeated, testing it.

Terri’s smile was quiet and certain.

“That’s me.”

Chapter 7

Dan’s name lit up Jaina’s phone between classes. She stepped out of the hallway traffic into a quiet alcove near the stairwell and answered.

“Hey.”

“Hey.” His voice sounded farther away than usual, the connection thin. “Just checking in. How are things?”

Jaina leaned her shoulder against the cool wall. The memory of Terri’s head on her thigh that morning was still vivid—the soft weight, the easy availability, the new name still warm in her mouth.

“Things are going really well,” she said. “Better than I expected.”

There was a short pause on the line. Then Dan’s voice came back, lighter.

“Good. That’s actually perfect timing. I’m opening an office here. It’s looking long-term. I don’t want you sitting around wondering what’s going to happen with the place or money or any of it. I’m putting the condo in your name. Transfer’s already started. And I moved enough into your account that you won’t have to think about rent or bills for a few years at least. You’re set.”

Jaina stared at the scuffed floor tiles. The suspicion rose quietly and without much heat: he had found someone else over there. Someone convenient. Someone who made the decision easy. She waited for the expected sting and found only a calm, almost weightless relief.

“Okay,” she said. “Thank you.”

“You sure you’re good?”

“I’m good.”

When the call ended she stood there a moment longer, phone still in her hand. The condo was hers. The money was hers. The future that had felt temporarily borrowed now stretched open in front of her, and the only person she wanted inside it was the soft, dark-haired girl who had slept with her head on Jaina’s thigh and asked to be called her soft place. She could build a life with Terri. The thought settled into her chest with quiet certainty.

The game that afternoon was tight until the fifth inning. Jaina stepped into the box with runners on first and second, two outs, the count full. She saw the pitch early—a hanging curve that floated into her zone—and she attacked it. The contact felt clean and solid all the way up the bat into her hands. The ball climbed in a high white arc toward left-center, cleared the fence by ten feet, and disappeared into the small crowd of spectators beyond.

The dugout erupted. Terri was on her feet with the rest of the team, both hands cupped around her mouth, cheering loud enough that Jaina heard her over everyone else as she rounded first. When Jaina crossed home plate the whole bench swarmed her, but her eyes found Terri first. Terri's smile was bright and open, cheeks flushed, black hair a little messy from the wind.

They won by four.

The pizza place near campus was already loud when the team piled in. Tables had been pushed together. Platters of pizza and pitchers of soda covered every surface. Someone put music on. The usual post-win chaos filled the room—laughter, retellings of the home run, someone already planning the next practice.

Jaina claimed the chair at the end of the long table and pulled Terri into the one right beside her. She didn't keep any careful distance. Her arm stayed draped along the back of Terri's chair, fingers resting against the warm side of Terri's neck. When Terri reached for a slice, Jaina's hand settled openly on her thigh under the table and stayed there. Later, when someone across the table asked Terri a question, Jaina leaned in and pressed a slow kiss to the soft place just below Terri's ear before letting her answer.

No one looked away in discomfort. A few of the girls grinned. Their catcher raised her eyebrows in mild, amused surprise and then smiled. The first baseman simply said, "About time," and reached for another slice.

Near the end of the meal, while the conversation rolled around them, Jaina turned her head and spoke just loud enough for the nearest half of the table to hear.

"This is my better half," she said, giving Terri's thigh a gentle squeeze. "In case anyone was wondering."

Terri's cheeks went a deeper pink, but her smile was steady and quietly proud. Around them the reactions came easy and warm—small laughs, a couple of soft "aww"s, someone lifting a plastic cup in a mock toast. Their shortstop leaned across the table, grinning.

"She's good for you. You look happy."

Jaina glanced at Terri, at the soft mouth she already knew so well, at the dark eyes that had watched her hit the home run like it was the only thing that mattered.

"I am," she said.

Chapter 8

They stepped into the condo still carrying the warm leftover energy of the win and the party. Jaina closed the door and leaned back against it for a second, feeling the pleasant ache in her shoulders from the swing that had sent the ball over the fence. She knew she had done well today—on the field, in front of the team, with Terri openly claimed at her side. The knowledge sat in her body like a quiet glow.

Terri kicked off her shoes, a little looser than usual from the two beers she had nursed at the pizza place. Her cheeks were faintly flushed. She looked at Jaina with bright, playful eyes and said, almost casually,

“You’ve been a very good girl.”

The words landed with a soft jolt. Jaina felt a quick, curious flutter low in her belly. Roleplay? She wasn’t sure, but the tone invited her to step into it. She let a small smile curve her mouth.

“Have I?”

Terri stepped closer, close enough that Jaina could smell the faint trace of beer and the clean scent of her skin.

“What do good girls get?”

Jaina’s pulse picked up. She held Terri’s gaze and answered, voice low and a little daring,

“I think I don’t need these clothes on.”

Terri’s smile deepened. She reached for the hem of Jaina’s shirt and lifted it slowly, deliberately, peeling it upward and off. The sports bra followed. Then the jeans and the simple cotton underwear. In less than a minute Jaina stood naked in the entryway while Terri remained fully dressed, looking at her with open, experimental interest.

“Stay right there,” Terri said.

She walked a slow circle around Jaina, fingertips trailing lightly over the high curve of one hip, then the firm underside of a breast, then the soft skin at the small of her back. Jaina felt every point of contact like a small spark. When Terri came around to face her again she placed both hands on Jaina’s waist and guided her backward into the living room, then down onto the wide couch.

“Hands above your head,” Terri murmured. “Keep them there for me.”

Jaina lifted her arms and rested her wrists loosely against the arm of the couch. The position left her completely open—breasts lifted, thighs slightly parted, every inch of her available. Terri knelt on the cushion between her legs and simply

looked for a long moment, eyes moving over the flushed skin, the already-tight nipples, the growing slickness she could see between Jaina's thighs.

"You're already wet just from being told what to do," Terri observed softly. "That's interesting."

She leaned down and licked a slow, open-mouthed stripe across one nipple, then the other, never breaking eye contact. When Jaina's back arched, Terri made a small sound of approval.

"Good. Stay still."

What followed was the most focused attention Jaina had ever received. Terri experimented with deliberate care—testing pressure, timing, and words. She discovered that Jaina's breath hitched hardest when praise arrived at the exact moment of intense sensation. She learned that holding Jaina's wrists gently but firmly in place with one hand while she worked between her legs with the other made Jaina tremble harder than free movement ever had. She found that making Jaina wait—licking everywhere except the swollen peak of her clit, circling closer and closer without giving direct contact—pulled soft, helpless sounds from Jaina's throat that Terri clearly liked.

"You're being so patient," Terri whispered against the inside of her thigh. "Such a good girl for me. Look how wet you've gotten just from waiting."

When she finally sealed her mouth over Jaina's clit and sucked with slow, rhythmic pressure, the pleasure was so sharp and clean that Jaina's hips jerked. Terri held her down more firmly and kept going, varying the rhythm, adding two fingers that curled upward in perfect time with her tongue. Every time Jaina got close, Terri eased off just enough to keep her hovering, then returned with even more focused heat.

"Not yet," she would say quietly. "Stay right there. Let me feel how much you want it."

Jaina had never been edged so skillfully or so kindly. The denial itself became its own thick pleasure. By the time Terri finally decided to let her fall, Jaina was shaking, thighs wet, voice reduced to broken little pleas that she barely recognized as her own. The orgasm that crashed through her was deeper and longer than anything that had come before—wave after wave that left her gasping, wrists still obediently above her head, body arched and open under Terri's mouth.

Terri stayed with her through every pulse, gentling her tongue only when the last tremors faded. Then she climbed up Jaina's body, still fully dressed, and kissed her slow and deep so Jaina could taste herself.

“New favorite,” Terri whispered against her mouth. “I like discovering what makes you fall apart like that.”

Later, in bed, Terri finally undressed and settled against her. They moved together in a slower, softer rhythm—hands and mouths and the warm slide of skin—until both of them were spent and loose-limbed. Jaina felt altered in some quiet, permanent way. A new layer had opened. She had been guided somewhere she hadn’t known she could reach, and the satisfaction sat in her bones like a warm, complete ache.

They fell asleep entangled, Terri’s head once again on Jaina’s thigh, one of Jaina’s arms draped over her waist, legs loosely intertwined. The last thing Jaina registered before sleep took her was the perfect, heavy peace of being exactly where she was—claimed, known, and thoroughly, deliciously kept.

Chapter 9

Morning light filled the bathroom in soft gold. Steam still hung in the air from the shower. Terri had already finished washing her, taking the same thorough care she always did— soaping every curve, lingering between Jaina's legs until she was clean and quietly aching, then rinsing her under the warm spray. Now Jaina stood on the bath mat while Terri moved around her with a thick towel, blotting the water from her skin with slow, attentive strokes.

Terri dried her shoulders, her breasts, the tight line of her stomach, the full heart-shaped curve of her ass. She knelt to dry each leg, then gently parted Jaina's thighs and patted the sensitive skin there until it was only faintly damp. When she stood again she set the towel aside and rested both hands on Jaina's waist.

"I've been thinking," she said.

Jaina looked at her, still warm and loose from the shower. "About what?"

"About keeping you in a certain state." Terri's thumbs moved in small circles against her hip bones. "Not all the time. Just… ready. Soft. A little bit needy. So that when we're together it already feels like we've been building toward it all day."

Jaina's pulse gave a quiet kick. "What do you mean?"

Terri reached for the bottle of lotion on the counter and warmed some between her palms. She began smoothing it over Jaina's arms and shoulders as she spoke.

"Simple things. When you're home, I don't want you wearing underwear. Nothing under your clothes at all if you're here. I want to be able to reach for you and find you already bare." She moved lower, lotioning the undersides of Jaina's breasts with careful attention. "And I don't want you touching yourself when I'm not here. Not even a little. If you get wet or restless, you leave it alone. You save it."

Jaina's breath had gone a little shallow. The lotion-slick hands on her skin made the words land heavier.

"There's one more," Terri continued. She turned Jaina gently and began working lotion into the small of her back and over the curve of her ass. "During the day—at class, at practice, whenever—you text me when you notice you're wet. Just a short message. Nothing graphic if you don't want. Just so I know. And when you come home, or when I come over, I want you already in that state. Already soft for me. Already thinking about it."

She finished with Jaina's thighs, then set the lotion down and faced her again. Her expression was calm, almost thoughtful, but her eyes were dark with interest.

“None of it is meant to be hard,” she said. “It’s just structure. So you’re never starting from zero. So your body stays a little bit mine even when we’re apart. Does that sound like something you’d want?”

Jaina stood naked in the warm bathroom, skin soft and scented, the place between her legs already responding to the conversation itself. The idea settled over her with surprising ease— being kept in a low, constant state of readiness, marked by small rules that felt more like care than restriction. She pictured walking through the apartment bare under a long shirt. She pictured the quiet discipline of not touching herself. She pictured sending a simple text in the middle of the day and knowing Terri would read it.

“Yes,” she said. Her voice came out quieter than she expected. “I want that.”

Terri’s mouth curved into a small, pleased smile. She leaned in and kissed her once, soft and lingering.

“Good,” she murmured against her lips. “Then we’ll start today.”

Chapter 10

The rules settled over the day like a quiet current.

Jaina left for campus bare under her jeans and soft campus shirt, the denim a constant low awareness against her skin. Every time she shifted in a desk chair or reached for a book, she felt the absence of underwear as a deliberate choice rather than an oversight. It kept her present in her body in a way she hadn't expected—soft, slightly exposed, already half-attuned to the evening.

During her second class the low heat between her legs sharpened without warning. She crossed her thighs under the desk and felt the slickness that had gathered there. For a moment the old reflex rose—the urge to press the heel of her hand against herself in the bathroom and take the edge off—but she stopped. The rule held. Instead she unlocked her phone under the edge of the desk and typed a short message.

I'm wet.

The reply came less than a minute later.

I'll take care of that later. Leave it alone for me.

The words sent a slow pulse through her. She locked the phone and forced her attention back to the lecture, but the knowledge that Terri had read the message and claimed the responsibility sat warm and heavy in her belly for the rest of the hour.

At practice the awareness only grew. Sliding into base, the friction of her uniform pants, the heat of the afternoon—all of it kept her body quietly insistent. In the dugout between innings she sent another text.

Still wet. Worse now.

Terri's answer was almost immediate.

Good. Stay that way. I'll handle it when you're home.

Jaina slipped the phone away and stepped back onto the field with her pulse thudding in her throat. She didn't touch herself once. Not in the locker room after practice, not in the shower at the field house, not during the drive back to the condo. She simply let the need build, low and steady, the way Terri had asked.

When she walked through the door that evening she was exactly as requested—already soft, already aching, bare under her clothes. Terri was in the kitchen pouring two glasses of water. She looked up, took in the flush on Jaina's cheeks and the restless way she stood, and smiled like she already knew.

They didn’t go straight to the bedroom. Terri made them simple food. They ate on the couch while the city lights came on beyond the windows. Only after the plates were set aside did Jaina turn to her, one knee drawn up on the cushion.

“I need to tell you something,” she said.

Terri waited, calm and attentive.

“I thought the rules would feel like… restriction. Or something I had to remember to obey.” Jaina’s voice stayed quiet but steady. “But I don’t just enjoy them. I love them. Knowing I’m not supposed to touch myself. Having to tell you when I’m wet. Walking around bare under my clothes so I’m already open for you. It keeps me in this constant low state where everything feels more. I like belonging to the structure of it.”

She drew a breath.

“I don’t want us to just meet anymore. I want you to move in. Properly. Live here. So the rules aren’t something that only happen when you come over. So they’re just… how we live.”

Terri studied her for a long moment. The corner of her mouth lifted, soft and considering.

“If I move in,” she said, “there might be more rules.”

The words sent an immediate, unmistakable rush of heat through Jaina’s body. She felt herself get wetter just from the possibility.

“I can’t wait,” she answered.

Chapter 11

Terri had been living in the condo for two weeks, and the shape of Jaina's days had quietly rearranged itself around that fact.

Every afternoon she came home to the same soft reality: Terri already there, calm and ready. Sometimes Terri met her at the door. Sometimes she was on the couch with a book or finishing something in the kitchen. Either way, the moment Jaina stepped inside, the focus shifted. Terri would take her hand or her waist and guide her to the couch or the bed or the armchair by the window, and then Terri's mouth or hands would be on her while the rest of the world continued at a distance.

Jaina slipped back into an old habit without thinking about it. She would unlock her phone while Terri settled between her thighs, and she would scroll or text or call someone from the team while the slow, skilled attention continued underneath the conversation. It felt almost exactly like the old routine with Dan, except everything about it was better—no stubble, no distraction, no sense that the person between her legs was merely tolerating the position. Terri was present and thorough and quietly hungry for the task. She never rushed. She never checked the time. She simply worked on Jaina with steady focus while Jaina talked to Mara about practice schedules or answered her sister's questions about the weekend, one hand resting lightly in Terri's soft black hair.

The one-sidedness of it had become its own quiet pleasure. Terri rarely asked for anything in return during those afternoon hours. She gave. Jaina received. The imbalance felt deliberate and complete.

On a Thursday the pattern held until it didn't.

Jaina came through the door a little after four, dropped her bag, and was immediately guided to the wide armchair. Terri knelt, peeled her jeans and underwear down just far enough, and put her mouth on her with the same unhurried precision as always. Jaina thumbed her phone open and called one of the outfielders to confirm the morning lift time. She kept her voice even while Terri's tongue moved in slow, exacting circles. When the call ended she stayed on the phone a little longer, scrolling through messages, hips occasionally shifting under the steady pleasure. Terri brought her over the edge with patient skill, holding her thighs open through the last pulses, then easing back only when Jaina's body finally softened.

Jaina was still catching her breath, phone loose in one hand, when Terri stood and walked to the entryway. She returned carrying a simple woven basket and set it on the floor just inside the front door.

"New rule," she said.

Jaina looked at the basket, then at Terri.

“From now on,” Terri continued, voice calm, “when you come home, your clothes go in here. All of them. As soon as you cross the threshold. I don’t want you dressed in this apartment. I want you bare so I can reach for you whenever I feel like it—mouth, hands, however I want you in the moment. You don’t get dressed again until you leave for campus or practice. At home you stay available. That’s the baseline now.”

She stepped closer and rested her fingers lightly against the inside of Jaina’s still-sensitive thigh.

“I’ll undress you if you forget. I’ll position you when I want you. I’ll use my mouth or my fingers whenever it suits me. You don’t have to do anything except let me. The whole point is that you exist here to be tended to. To be used for pleasure when I decide. And I think you’ll love how complete that feels.”

Jaina’s heart beat once, hard. The idea landed with immediate, unmistakable heat: walking through the door and stripping as a matter of course, spending entire evenings and mornings naked under Terri’s quiet authority, never having to wonder what came next because the answer was simply that she would be taken care of and taken from whenever Terri chose. The asymmetry was absolute. She would be the one kept soft and open and ready. Terri would be the one who decided.

She looked at the basket by the door, then back at Terri’s waiting face.

“Okay,” she said. Her voice was low and certain. “Yes. I want that.”

Terri’s expression warmed with quiet satisfaction. She leaned down and kissed the corner of Jaina’s mouth.

“Good. Then it starts tomorrow the moment you walk in.”

Jaina felt the new rule settle into place inside her like something she had already been waiting for.

Chapter 12

The new rules had settled into the apartment like furniture.

Jaina came home each afternoon, stepped out of her clothes beside the basket by the door, and spent the rest of the evening bare. The air-conditioning moved over her skin. The leather of the couch stuck faintly to the backs of her thighs. She padded to the kitchen for water and felt Terri's eyes follow the sway of her hips without comment. It no longer felt like a performance. It felt like the ordinary shape of being home.

Terri tended to her in small, unhurried ways throughout the evening. While Jaina scrolled on her phone, Terri would kneel between her open knees and lick her in slow, absent-minded strokes, as if the act were simply part of sitting together. Sometimes she pulled Jaina into her lap on the couch and kept one hand cupped between her legs, fingers resting warm and still against her, not working her toward anything, just holding her. Other times she guided Jaina to stand facing the window while she sat behind her on the arm of the chair, reaching around to stroke her breasts and the soft fold of her sex while they watched the city lights come on. Jaina had grown used to the constant low hum of being available. She no longer tensed when Terri reached for her. She simply opened.

That night they were already in bed when the usual rhythm began to shift.

Jaina lay on her back, legs loosely parted, expecting the familiar good-night attention that always ended with her coming against Terri's mouth. Terri had settled between her thighs and given her several long, thorough licks—enough to make her wet and quietly restless—when she stopped and rested her cheek against the inside of Jaina's leg.

"I've been thinking about more structure," Terri said. Her voice was calm, almost conversational. "Would you enjoy that?"

The question alone sent an immediate pulse of heat between Jaina's legs. She felt herself swell under Terri's gaze.

"What kind of structure?"

Terri traced one fingertip along the slick seam of her. "I decide when you come. Not as punishment. As care. I already know how your body works. I know how long you can stay right on the edge without it turning sharp. I would keep you swollen and aching for hours sometimes, because I want you that way. When I finally let you finish, it would be because I chose the exact moment. The release would be deeper because of the wait."

Jaina's breath had gone shallow. The idea unfolded inside her with startling force—being held in that heightened state on purpose, her orgasm no longer something that arrived on a predictable schedule but something granted. She

swallowed.

“How long would you make me wait?”

“Sometimes only an extra twenty or thirty minutes. Sometimes most of an evening. On a day when I want you especially aware of me, maybe from the time you get home until late at night. I wouldn’t leave you desperate in a way that felt mean. I would keep touching you, keep you open and wet, keep the pleasure present so the ache stays sweet instead of frustrating.”

“And if it starts to feel like too much?”

Terri’s fingertip circled once, light and precise. “Then you tell me. But I don’t think it will. You’re already used to me handling your body. This is just a deeper version of the same thing. I would be as careful with your orgasms as I am with washing you in the morning and dressing you before you leave. Exact. Attentive. Good at it.”

Jaina stared at the ceiling for a moment, feeling the slow throb between her legs where Terri’s mouth had been only minutes earlier. The thought of being deliberately kept on the edge—of Terri watching her stay swollen and needy because that was how she wanted her—made her hips shift restlessly against the sheet.

“You’d still take care of me the rest of the time the same way?” she asked. “The showers. The lotion. Keeping me naked. Everything else.”

“Everything else stays,” Terri said. “This just becomes part of it. Another way I look after you.”

Jaina turned her head and met Terri’s eyes. The heat low in her belly had grown thick and insistent simply from the conversation. She could already imagine the long, deliberate evenings, the way the final orgasm would feel after being held back so carefully.

“Okay,” she said. Her voice was quiet and certain. “I want you to decide. I trust you with it.”

Terri’s expression softened with something like quiet pride. She pressed a slow kiss to the inside of Jaina’s thigh.

“Then we start tomorrow,” she murmured. “Tonight you can still come.”

She lowered her mouth again and gave Jaina the orgasm she had been expecting—thorough, unhurried, and complete—while the new rule settled over both of them like a shared secret. When it was finished, Jaina lay boneless and open in the dark, already wondering how it would feel to be denied.

Chapter 13

Jaina stepped through the door at ten minutes past four and felt the rule settle over her like warm water. She stripped beside the basket without thinking—shirt, bra, jeans, the plain cotton underwear she had worn only for campus—and dropped everything in. The air- conditioning kissed her bare skin. She was already soft between her legs from the low, constant awareness the day had carried.

Terri was waiting in the living room. She looked Jaina over once, slow and satisfied, then held out a hand.

“Come here.”

Jaina went. Terri guided her to the wide armchair, sat her down, and knelt between her open thighs as if it were the most natural place in the world to be. She did not undress. She simply leaned in and gave Jaina’s sex one long, thorough lick from the bottom of her folds to the already-swollen peak of her clit. Then another. Then a third, slower, lingering at the top until Jaina’s hips tried to lift.

Terri pulled back.

“Not yet,” she said quietly. “You’re going to stay exactly like this for a while. Open. Wet. Waiting.”

She rose, left Jaina sitting there with her thighs still parted, and went to the kitchen. Jaina listened to the ordinary sounds of water running and a glass being filled while the place between her legs throbbed in slow, heavy pulses. When Terri returned she handed Jaina the water, then settled on the couch across from her with a book.

“Stay open for me,” Terri said without looking up. “I want to see you.”

Jaina kept her knees apart. The cool air moved over her slick skin. Every minute that passed made the ache sweeter and more insistent. She tried to scroll on her phone and found she could not focus. The only thing that existed with any clarity was the swollen heat between her thighs and the knowledge that Terri was deliberately not touching it.

After twenty minutes Terri set the book aside and returned to the floor in front of her. She licked Jaina again—slow, exacting strokes that gathered every bit of wetness and spread it higher. She sealed her mouth over Jaina’s clit and sucked with perfect, rhythmic pressure until Jaina’s breath turned sharp and her hands gripped the arms of the chair. The moment Jaina’s thighs began to tremble, Terri stopped completely and rested her cheek against the inside of one leg.

“Breathe,” she murmured. “You’re doing so well. Look how wet you’ve gotten just from being kept like this.”

She used two fingers to spread Jaina open and simply looked for a long moment, studying the flushed, glistening flesh. Then she leaned in and gave the exposed clit three precise flicks with the tip of her tongue before sitting back on her heels again.

“Not yet.”

The evening became a long, deliberate lesson in denial. Terri would leave her aching and return without warning—sometimes only to stroke the insides of her thighs, sometimes to sink two fingers inside her and curl them slowly while her thumb hovered just above the place that needed pressure most. Each time Jaina climbed close, Terri eased off with calm expertise, whispering quiet observations that made the ache worse.

“Your clit is so hard right now. It’s throbbing against my tongue when I let it.”

“I can feel you clenching when I stop. You’re trying so hard to stay still for me.”

“This is what you look like when you need it. I want to keep you exactly here.”

By the time the sky outside the windows had gone fully dark, Jaina was beyond restless. Her skin felt too tight. Every brush of air across her nipples or the soaked folds of her sex made her breath catch. When Terri finally led her to the bedroom she was trembling in fine, continuous waves.

Terri laid her on her back, arranged her arms above her head, and opened her thighs wide.

“Keep them there,” she said. “I want you completely available while I decide.”

Then she settled between Jaina’s legs and began in earnest.

She licked with long, flat strokes that covered everything, then focused on the clit with tight, flickering circles that pulled soft broken sounds from Jaina’s throat. She worked two fingers inside her and found the place that made Jaina’s hips jerk, stroking it in steady rhythm while her mouth stayed sealed over the swollen peak. Every time the pleasure coiled tight enough to break, Terri simply stopped—pulled her mouth away, stilled her fingers, and waited until the crisis passed and the need settled into something even deeper.

“Please,” Jaina heard herself say. The word came out raw.

Terri kissed the inside of her thigh.

“Soon. You’re so beautiful like this. Completely mine. Completely open. I could keep you on the edge all night and you would still thank me for it, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes—”

“I know.”

She returned to her work. The world narrowed to the wet heat of Terri’s mouth, the slow thrust of her fingers, the unbearable sweetness of being held back by someone who knew exactly how much she could take. Jaina’s thoughts frayed. Time lost meaning. There was only the rising, the denial, the rising again, each peak higher and more desperate than the last.

When Terri finally decided, she gave no warning.

She sealed her mouth over Jaina’s clit and sucked with deep, rhythmic pressure while her fingers stroked firmly inside. The orgasm that tore through Jaina was so violent it bordered on terrifying. Her back arched hard off the bed. A broken, wordless sound ripped from her throat. Pulse after pulse crashed through her in long, rolling waves that would not stop. Her vision narrowed to white at the edges. For several long seconds she could not remember where she was or what her own name felt like in her mouth. There was only the devastating pleasure and the mouth that kept drawing it out of her without mercy or pause.

When the last tremor finally faded she lay wrecked and open, chest heaving, eyes unfocused. Terri climbed up her body and kissed her temple, her cheek, the corner of her mouth.

“Worth it?” Terri asked softly.

Jaina turned her head. It took effort. Her voice, when it came, was hoarse and absolute.

“You’re the best lover I’ve ever had. The best I will ever have. Nothing else comes close.”

Terri’s smile was quiet and deeply pleased. She settled against Jaina’s side, one hand resting possessively between her still-sensitive thighs, and held her while the aftershocks slowly ebbed into exhausted, perfect peace.

Jaina stepped through the door and felt the apartment take hold of her.

It always happened fastest at the threshold now. The day dropped away in pieces. The heat from practice. The noise of campus. The hard, public shape of herself. She set her bag down, turned to the basket by the door, and undressed without pause, letting each layer fall where it belonged. By the time she straightened, the cool air was moving over her bare skin and Terri was watching from the living room with that same calm, attentive expression that had begun to feel less like anticipation and more like recognition.

Not surprise.

Recognition.

As if this was simply how Jaina arrived now. Not in theory. Not as a game. As fact.

She crossed the room barefoot and stopped in front of her.

Terri did not touch her at once. She let her eyes travel slowly over Jaina's face, her shoulders, the firm line of her body, the faint flush still lingering from the walk upstairs. It was the same look she always gave her at home now—measuring nothing, asking nothing, simply taking in what was already hers to read.

Jaina reached up first.

She took Terri's face in both hands and kissed her, deep and unhurried, then pulled her into a full, hard embrace. Their bodies pressed together, one clothed, one bare, and the contrast struck her with unusual force. Terri was still arranged for the world outside. Jaina was not. Jaina had crossed the door and become immediately reachable. Immediately legible. Immediately the version of herself this place expected.

Terri's arms slid around her waist and held.

For a long moment neither of them spoke.

Then Jaina pressed her mouth to Terri's hair and said, very quietly, "Let's stop pretending this isn't permanent."

Terri's hands tightened once.

She drew back just enough to look up at her. "What do you mean?"

Jaina looked at her and realized, with a strange thrill, that Terri did not sound startled. Only still. Only attentive. As if she had been waiting for the wording, not the conclusion.

"I mean this has gone past anything I thought I was doing when I first called you," Jaina said. "Past sex. Past convenience. Past a better version of what I already had." She swallowed. "I come home and strip before I even think. I stay open for you all day whether you're in the room or not. I feel you in the structure of things now. In the rules. In the mornings. In the way I walk through this place knowing I'm going to be seen and handled and kept exactly the way you want."

Terri said nothing.

That silence made it easier, not harder.

Jaina went on.

"I used to think what I liked was being taken care of when it was convenient for me. When I wanted release. When I wanted to unwind." She shook her head faintly. "But that isn't what this is. You've changed the shape of being home for

me. You've changed what my body expects. What it answers to."

A faint warmth rose in Terri's expression then, not soft enough to interrupt the seriousness of the moment. More like satisfaction too controlled to call itself a smile.

Jaina felt her pulse beating harder.

"I don't want to be your girlfriend in the loose, ordinary sense anymore," she said. "That word is too small. I don't want this to be something we're trying because it feels good and works for now. I want the actual thing. I want permanence." Her fingers tightened slightly at the back of Terri's neck. "I want to marry you. I want you to be my wife. I want this life— these rules, this threshold, the way you look at me when I'm already open for you—to be the rest of my life."

The room went very quiet.

Outside, the city moved in distant glass reflections beyond the windows. Inside, it felt as if the whole apartment had narrowed to the space between them.

Terri lifted one hand and laid it against Jaina's cheek.

Still no surprise.

That was what Jaina felt most sharply. Not because Terri had manipulated her into the moment, exactly. But because some part of her had understood before Jaina did that this was where all of it was tending. The basket. The texting. The nudity. The patient, daily reshaping of her wants into habits and then into needs. Not a trap. Not a trick.

An arrival.

"Yes," Terri said.

The word was immediate and utterly calm.

"Yes, of course."

Jaina's breath caught.

Terri's thumb moved once along her cheekbone.

"You're the most beautiful thing that's ever happened to me," she said. "And I have known for a while now that you were going to say this eventually." Her mouth curved, not teasingly, but with a quiet certainty that sent a shiver through Jaina's bare body. "Not because I forced you there. Because you kept recognizing what you wanted and then wanting it more clearly each time."

Jaina stared at her.

Terri stepped closer, bringing their bodies into full contact again.

“You wanted softness first,” she murmured. “Then availability. Then structure. Then the relief of not having to negotiate your own body every second. Then the comfort of being kept in a state that belonged to both of us.” Her hand slid from Jaina’s cheek to the back of her neck and rested there, warm and firm. “This is just the first day you’ve said the final word out loud.”

Something in Jaina gave way at that—not in fear, but in recognition so complete it felt almost like submission to truth.

She laughed once, softly, shakily, and her eyes stung for no reason she wanted to explain.

“You make it sound like I never had a chance.”

Terri’s gaze held hers.

“You had every chance,” she said. “You used them to come closer.”

That line went through Jaina like heat.

Terri kissed her then. Slow. Deep. Unrushed. Not a kiss of surprise or celebration, but something more settling than that. A kiss that seemed to confirm an arrangement already understood.

When they parted, Jaina stayed close, forehead resting lightly against Terri’s.

“I love you,” she said.

“I know,” Terri answered.

Not smugly. Not carelessly. Just with the same calm possession she brought to everything now, as if love too had become something observable in Jaina long before she named it.

“I love you too,” Terri added. “Enough to keep you exactly this well.”

Jaina closed her eyes.

That should have sounded dangerous. Instead it felt like being seen all the way through.

She opened them again and looked toward the basket by the door, then back at Terri.

“I stripped the second I came in,” she said softly. “I didn’t even think about it.”

Terri’s hand remained at the back of her neck.

“I know.”

“I used to think that meant I was getting spoiled.”

“And now?”

Jaina exhaled.

“Now I think it means I know where I belong.”

The answer pleased Terri in a way Jaina could feel physically, though the only visible sign was a slight darkening of her gaze.

“Yes,” Terri said. “It does.”

For a moment Jaina could only stand there and absorb that.

Marriage, she realized, did not feel like adding something alien to what they were already doing. It felt like admitting the full scale of it. Making the private architecture official. Saying yes not just to Terri’s mouth, Terri’s hands, Terri’s patience, Terri’s bed—but to the order Terri had made around her. The order Jaina stepped into willingly every time she crossed the threshold and let the outside version of herself fall into the basket.

It should have frightened her a little.

Maybe it did.

But the fear was thin and bright and inseparable from relief.

Terri kissed the corner of her mouth and drew back just enough to study her face.

“You’re thinking very hard.”

“I’m thinking that I’m about to marry the woman who taught me that being wanted and being arranged are not as different as I thought.”

Terri smiled then, finally, and the smile was small and devastating.

“That’s a very pretty sentence.”

“It’s true.”

“It is.”

Jaina felt a sudden, low rush of heat move through her.

Not the wild impatience of simple desire. Something deeper. The body’s answer to being understood too well.

Terri noticed instantly, of course. She always did.

Her eyes dropped once, briefly, then returned to Jaina’s face.

“There you are,” she said quietly.

Jaina flushed.

“I didn’t mean to—”

“I know.”

Terri’s hand slid down from her neck to her waist and settled there, steadying, claiming.

“You propose to me,” she said, “you tell me you want my rules and my mornings and my way of keeping you to be the rest of your life, and your body answers before we’ve even moved.” Her voice stayed gentle. “That matters to me.”

Jaina’s breath went unsteady.

“Why?”

“Because I like knowing the truth reaches all the way down.”

The line made her knees feel less reliable.

Terri felt it and drew her a little closer.

“I’m not going to rush this,” she said. “I want you to understand what you’ve asked for.”

“I do understand.”

Terri tipped her chin up with two fingers.

“No,” she said softly. “You understand enough to want it. That’s different.”

Jaina looked at her, pulse fluttering.

Terri went on in the same even tone.

“You aren’t asking me to marry you despite the rules. You’re asking for the rules to become part of the marriage. You’re asking for permanence not just of affection, but of access. Of ritual. Of being known in this particular way.” Her fingertips moved lightly along Jaina’s jaw. “You’re asking me to keep building a life where coming home means becoming available to me without hesitation.”

Jaina swallowed.

“Yes,” she whispered.

Terri searched her face for another long moment.

Then, with unmistakable satisfaction: “Good.”

She bent and kissed her again, softer this time.

“Because that is exactly the life I want too.”

Jaina let out a shaky breath and clung to her.

The city outside had gone dimmer now, evening settling in against the glass. Inside, the light was warm, and the basket still sat by the door with Jaina’s clothes folded in a loose, careless pile that already looked like the remains of some earlier, less truthful version of herself.

Terri followed her gaze.

“Leave them there,” she said.

Jaina looked back at her. “I wasn’t going to move them.”

“I know.” Terri’s mouth brushed hers once more. “I like seeing the evidence.”

That sent another pulse through her.

Of course it did.

Terri drew her toward the couch but did not push her down, did not direct her further. Not yet. Instead she stood with her in the middle of the room, one hand on her waist, the other resting flat between her shoulder blades.

“Tell me one more thing before we do anything else.”

Jaina nodded.

“When you said you wanted me to be your wife,” Terri said, “what was the most important part?”

Jaina opened her mouth, closed it, and then answered with more honesty than she had intended.

“That I never want to come home to a version of life where you can’t reach for me.”

Terri went very still.

Then she kissed Jaina’s forehead.

“Perfect,” she murmured.

Jaina felt the word all through her.

The darkness in this, she thought dimly, was not cruelty. It was how quietly complete it felt. How little resistance was left in her when Terri named what mattered and she heard herself answer in exactly the language Terri had made room for. Not because she had been hollowed out.

Because she had been shaped.

And loved inside the shaping.

Terri held her a while longer in the middle of the room they would now, apparently, spend the rest of their lives filling with the same rituals.

When she finally spoke again, her voice was low and warm.

“My fiancée should know something.”

Jaina looked up.

“I am going to be very good at being your wife.”

Jaina laughed softly, breathlessly. “I know.”

“No,” Terri said, and now there was that deeper note again, the one that made sweetness feel edged with velvet control. “I mean I am going to get even better at this. Better at reading you. Better at keeping you where I want you. Better at making home feel so specific that you can’t imagine wanting any other version of it.”

Jaina’s whole body responded to that with a helpless kind of gratitude.

“Terri—”

Terri kissed her before she could say more.

When they parted, she rested her forehead against Jaina’s and closed her eyes briefly.

“You don’t have to be afraid of how much you like that,” she whispered. “I’m not.”

They stood there a little longer, the proposal settled, the future altered, the apartment unchanged except for the fact that both of them were finally speaking aloud what it had already become.

At last Jaina smiled, small and dazed and certain.

“My soft place.”

Terri opened her eyes.

“Yes,” she said. “And yours for good now.”

Jaina spoke, her breath uneven.

“But I want to come right now.”

Terri’s expression shifted into something darker and deeply pleased. She did not take Jaina to the bedroom. She stayed right there in the open space between the door and the living room. One arm slid around Jaina’s waist to steady her. The other hand slipped between her thighs from the front, palm turning upward so that the firm, warm center of it pressed directly against Jaina’s clit and the slick folds surrounding it. The contact was solid, unyielding—an immovable surface for Jaina to use.

“Go on,” Terri murmured. “Take what you need.”

Jaina gripped Terri’s shoulders and began to move. She rolled her hips in short, urgent bucks, grinding her swollen clit against the hard plane of Terri’s palm. The friction was immediate and perfect. Every upward push dragged her most sensitive flesh across the warm, steady pressure. Wetness coated Terri’s hand almost at once.

While Jaina worked herself against that unmoving palm, Terri's free hand rose to her chest. She caught one tight nipple between thumb and forefinger and flicked it—sharp, precise little snaps that sent bright sparks straight down to where Jaina's hips were moving. She switched to the other breast, then back again, timing the flicks to the rhythm of Jaina's bucking so that every grind against her palm was paired with a bright sting of pleasure at her nipples.

The geometry was exquisite. Jaina's naked body arched and rolled against Terri's clothed one. Her clit rubbed in tight, desperate circles and thrusts over the solid heat of Terri's palm. Her breasts moved under Terri's flicking fingers. She could feel how wet she was getting, how the slickness spread across Terri's hand with every roll of her hips. Terri watched her face the entire time, eyes dark with focused hunger, breathing harder as she felt Jaina use her.

"That's it," Terri whispered. "Use my hand. Let me feel how much you need it. You're so wet for me already—look at you."

Jaina's rhythm grew shorter, more frantic. The dual sensation—firm, constant pressure against her clit and the sharp, rhythmic flicking of her nipples—pushed her toward the edge with startling speed. She clung tighter to Terri's shoulders, forehead dropping against Terri's, and fucked herself against the offered palm with complete abandon.

The orgasm hit hard and clean. Her hips jerked in broken, involuntary bucks as the pleasure tore through her, coating Terri's hand even more thoroughly. She cried out once, the sound muffled against Terri's mouth as Terri kissed her through it, still flicking her nipples in time with the pulses, still holding her palm steady so Jaina could ride every last wave against it.

When the final tremor passed, Jaina sagged into her, breathing hard, legs unsteady. Terri's hand stayed cupped between her thighs for another moment, gentle now, simply holding the heat and wetness she had been given. Then she brought that hand up, slow and deliberate, and kissed Jaina's slickness from her own palm while Jaina watched.

Neither of them spoke for a long time. They simply stood there in the entryway, Jaina naked and trembling, Terri fully dressed and smiling against her mouth, the decision to marry already settled between them like something that had always been meant to be.