

## An Invitation: Alayna's Training by Jennifer Cole



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*Logan is a Dominant without a submissive, Alayna, a submissive without a Dominant. After six months of watching one another, opportunity knocks: but first they have to find their way through Alayna's Training.*

A business card left behind by a regular in her restaurant intrigues Alayna Valerian. While visiting the Web site scrawled on the back, she finds herself submerged into the fetish world of BDSM. She learns the man who has been eating in her café for six months--and sets her libido on fire--is a Dominant, as well as co-owner of an establishment that teaches the art of mastery and submission. As her research deepens, she recognizes her submissive nature and decides the ruggedly, distinguished Logan Abram is the Dominant to show her the pleasures to be attained at the hands of the right man.

Logan Abram is a Dominant without a submissive. Five years ago, he walked away from the lifestyle to deal with a tragedy he had yet to come to terms with. Long-denied Dominant needs surge to the surface, demanding to claim the curvaceous co-owner of the eatery he frequents. Alayna Valerian's natural submissiveness calls to his Dom on a primal level. All of his control is threatened when Alayna arrives on his doorstep seeking to explore her submissiveness.

*Publisher's Note:* This book contains explicit sexual content, graphic language, and situations that some readers may find objectionable: BDSM theme and content.

### *Excerpt*

Despite the mouthwatering aromas that scented the air from the kitchen the moment Logan Abram walked through the door of his favorite eatery, it was the fragrance of vanilla and lilac that assailed his senses. He inhaled, drawing in his fill, and his brain began to conjure up all sorts of erotic visions. He scanned the cafe, seeking the woman who possessed the intoxicating perfume: Alayna Valerian, business manager and part of the two-sister team that owned Valerian's Root.

His searching gaze took in the four booths that lined each outside wall of the eatery and scanned behind the short bar where the cash register was located. A couple of older gentlemen

sat at the bar, drinking coffee and reading the newspaper. Half of the eight square tables that made up the center of the room were occupied with regular customers; the dull tones of their conversations blended into the background.

His eyes finally settled on Alayna Valerian, the older sister and object of his search. She was filling coffee cups and conversing with a couple seated at one of the center tables. A warm smile lit up her face. Her full lips were kissable, and he had little doubt she'd taste like heaven. The smattering of faint freckles dusting the bridge of her pert nose was sexy as hell.

She was feminine in all the right places. His gaze ventured lower. Her large breasts would fill his palms if he cupped them in his hands, spilling teasingly around his fingers. Her narrow waist gave way to a generous flair of womanly hips that he had more than once envisioned gripping tightly to hold her steady as he eased into her from behind. Her shoulder-length curls hung like a bolt of fine silk, making his fingertips tingle with need to stroke through the strands.

In his mind's eye, images of her bound naked to his bed, helpless--yet eager and willing--sent his pulse racing with lascivious excitement. A tingle of need began at the base of his spine at the thought of her crying out his name while he brought her to climax over and over.

But regardless of his attraction, looking was all he would ever allow himself when it came to Alayna Valerian.

As if sensing his presence--or at least that was Logan's fantasy--the object of his attention lifted her head and glanced his way. The turquoise of her eyes reminded him of the Caribbean Sea. She held his gaze a handful of seconds before lowering her eyes.

Logan shifted his stance, attempting to bring relief to the sudden discomfort behind the zipper of his jeans. He cursed the lack of restraint he had developed in her presence. The woman needed to be taught a lesson for testing him like she did. There had been a time long ago when he'd been the master and had complete control of his inner dominant. But Alayna challenged that control without even trying.

Across his lap with her buttocks exposed, she would lay to accept her punishment. He would be anything but gentle as he meted it out. The sharp crack of his fingers connecting with the pale globes of her behind would make her jump, not the sting of the well-placed swat itself; she would find pleasure in his correction.

Pride would fill his chest as her melodic voice, so full of trust and laced with need, asked for a second and then a third. Once her ass bore the imprint of his hand, he would restrain her in a standing metal stock and hobbler and use his favorite black leather Gorean flogger to strike her sensitive red backside and thighs until tears of pleasure streamed down her cheeks.

He could tell just by looking at her that submission was part of her makeup; it was in her blood. She would submit with grace and class--a worthy submissive to an equally deserving master.

But he was not that man. The privilege of dominating Alayna would never--could never--be his. He had sworn off the dominant lifestyle a few years ago after the death of his sub, Tasha. Over their three-year relationship, Tasha had demanded things of an increasingly rougher nature.

Near the end, she'd asked for things that Logan refused to carry out. As a Dom, he would do just about anything to push his sub's limits, but he drew the line at activities that could lead to the end of someone's life. One night they'd had a vicious argument regarding his refusal, and she'd issued an ultimatum.

A week later, he had ended their relationship.

Two weeks after that, she was dead.

Logan had vowed to never bring another woman into the scene. And he wouldn't. And most definitely not Alayna.

But he had thought that his many years of training as a dominant would at least give him the ability to maintain control of his own body when around her.

Alongside his best friend, Dane Reese, Logan crossed the floor to their usual table and sat down. It was near one o'clock in the afternoon, and though the lunch rush seemed to be over, the restaurant hummed with activity. Most of the occupants appeared to have already finished their lunches and were simply lingering to enjoy the laid-back ambiance of the cafe. The hardwood floor beneath Logan's feet always shone, making him wonder if they polished it as part of the daily cleaning routine. Family pictures of the Valerians, as well as pictures of numerous patrons, adorned whitewashed walls. Logan found the absence of gimmicky restaurant clutter pleasing. The Valerian sisters seemed to indulge in simple pleasures. Regardless of the fact that a five-star chef managed the kitchen, Valerian's Root served excellent meals at reasonable prices, without frivolity. The cuisine spoke for itself. And the sisters treated their patrons as family. If only they served dinner as well as breakfast and lunch, Logan would have no need to eat anywhere else.

A waitress emerged from the kitchen, carrying a plate in each hand. The other full-time waitress must have been assisting in the kitchen, he assumed.

Though conscious of everything going on around him while he and Dane patronized the tiny cafe, Logan's attentions remained focused on the curvaceous co-owner with the honey brown locks and infectious laugh. Out of the corner of his eye, he watched her interact with an elderly couple seated a few tables away. The soft air of her voice drifted to his ears and added to the growing ache between his legs.

Since the moment he'd laid eyes on her six months earlier, he'd pictured Alayna Valerian on her knees before him more than once, leather restraints binding her dainty hands behind her back. In his fists he'd grasp the silky coils of her hair while she pleased his cock with her mouth.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen."

Her voice interrupted his carnal daydream. A slight breathless lilt in her voice made him envision her panting for air as he pushed her body to sexual heights she'd never before experienced.

After restraining her to his bed, spread for his enjoyment, he would tease her relentlessly with

his mouth. Against the swollen nubbin between her folds he would lick and suckle as she writhed under his blissful torment. He would force her to the edge without giving her enough to tumble over and plunge into completion. On that fine line she would teeter, struggling with the need to come, to snatch the relief just out of her reach, and--more importantly--struggling with her desire to please him.

"Will you be ordering the usual, or may I tempt either of you into trying something different today?"

Logan glanced up and met her gaze. The green in her eyes sparkled, while the blue teased. "I'll have my usual," he replied.

"Very well, sir." A warm smile accompanied her nod. She held his gaze a moment or two before lowering her eyes. Crimson tinted her cheeks, making Logan's dick throb.

"And for you?" she asked, turning her head toward Dane, who was seated across the table.

A lopsided grin curled one side of his friend's mouth. "I'm feeling rather adventurous today," Dane replied in a coquet tone Logan didn't care for.

Logan raised an eyebrow in question. Or perhaps in warning. He left it up to Dane to decide which. His friend's blatant flirting got under Logan's skin. While Logan had made it clear to Dane that he had no intention of acting on his attraction toward Alayna, Dane knew how Logan felt about her.

"Bring me the chef's special," Dane added.

"Ariel is in one of her...experimenting moods today." Alayna's chuckle moved through Logan like a wildfire ravaging a forest. "Would you care to know what the special is before deciding?"

Dane shook his head and stared squarely at her. She appeared to hold her breath a moment as she waited for him to continue. "I trust your judgment." He winked.

Logan stifled the possessive growl building in his gut.

"Very well, gentlemen," she said, her voice wavering just a tad. As she walked away from the table, Logan enjoyed watching the gentle sway of her hips.

The opportunity to question his friend on his open flirtation with Alayna passed before Logan could seize it. Dane immediately jumped into the business portion of their luncheon.

"I'm meeting with the Becker firm at two thirty," Dane said. "Have you finished looking over the legalities?"

"Yes," Logan answered. "I e-mailed Jordan the new clauses for inclusion. He's prepared the contract and amended forms. The file is ready for you at the office."

"Good."

Dane's gaze wandered around the cafe as they spoke. Logan suspected he was searching for Alayna's younger sister, the other co-owner of the shop. The first time she'd strolled from the back of the restaurant in her white chef's jacket and vibrantly colored, spiked hair, a look of interest had crossed Dane's face. Logan had never asked him about it outright. He didn't want Dane interfering in his personal affairs; therefore Logan returned the unspoken courtesy.

Though he knew he would never possess Alayna for his own, he found he couldn't help himself when it came to her. He knew he shouldn't "case" her like he would another potential sub, but he wanted to know everything about her. He'd kept tabs on her activities outside the cafe for months. When he wasn't able, he'd recruited his assistant, Jordan Bishop, who was employed with A&R Consulting--a firm Logan co-owned with Dane, his best friend and business partner in several endeavors.

Alayna led a quiet life. She and her sister lived together in a modest home several blocks from the cafe. This he knew because more times than he could recall he'd followed Alayna home after she'd closed up the shop for the day. There had also been many an evening he'd camped out in his car on her street, watching the house for callers. Her world seemed to revolve around her sister, their restaurant, and a handful of close friends. She and her younger sister had taken over the restaurant following the deaths of their parents in a car crash ten years earlier. It saddened Logan that the tragedy had robbed the two women of their parents' love and guidance at such a young age. The two sisters seemed very close; he imagined they were the focus of each other's worlds.

A friend of his at the university upstate informed him Alayna had a bachelor's and master's in business, with her minor in restaurant management. She was smart as a whip, and though she would excel in another career more suited to her education, he suspected she remained at the helm of the cafe for the love of her customers. It was clear in her eyes when she interacted with them. She cherished the people around her, and they her.

"So what are your plans for the remainder of the day?" Dane asked.

To save himself the lecture he knew was on the tip of his friend's tongue, Logan refrained from responding with, I'll start with jumping in a cold shower when I get home in an attempt to alleviate the fucking hard-on I'm sporting, brought on by being in Alayna's presence. And when that doesn't work, I'll jerk myself off before taking the remainder of my frustrations out on the heavy bag in the basement.

Instead he replied, "After I pick up the new proposals Jordan received at the office over the past couple of days, I'll be heading back to the mansion to work. Do you want me to do anything in my travels?"

Dane shook his head. "Not for me."

His tone and the underlying connotation in his words--that Logan himself should "do something" about his obsession--was clear. But no matter how intense his need for Alayna grew, Logan refused to give in to it.

After he and Dane conversed for a few minutes more, the fragrance of lilac strengthened, announcing Alayna's approach. Logan didn't need to follow her with his eyes to know her whereabouts around the cafe. He sensed her every move. At least that was what he liked to tell himself. He judged her proximity by the strength of the scent of her subtle perfume.

In her hands she held a serving tray with two chilled glasses of iced tea, napkins, and utensils. All of a sudden, she blew out a huff of air in surprise. The tray went one way, and Alayna went the other. Across the table, Dane jumped to his feet with his hands outstretched. Reaching for the tray, he caught it as it slipped free from Alayna's grasp.

At the sound of her startled gasp, Logan leapt up, sending his chair flying backward. Without thought, he automatically reached for Alayna. One of his hands gripped her upper arm. His other arm wrapped around her waist, and he pulled her luscious curves against the length of his body before she toppled to the floor. He knew he imagined it, but for a fraction of a second Alayna seemed to relax against him.

Beneath Logan's fingers, Alayna's skin was as soft as he'd imagined. Fire roared through his body from the point of contact where his flesh touched hers. She felt too damn good cradled against his aroused frame.

"Oh Alayna darling, I'm so sorry." The elderly woman who'd been sitting a couple of tables away apologized in a wavering voice.

Heat radiated off Alayna's body, seeping through the material covering Logan's skin and singeing him. Selfishly, Logan continued to hold Alayna as she righted herself. Only when she took a step forward and away from him did he reluctantly release his hold on her.

"You don't own me an apology, Mrs. Douglas. Are you all right?" Her voice was heavy with concern as she reached for the woman.

"I'm having some trouble getting used to maneuvering this walker," she said. "I tripped and bumped into you."

With her hands holding the other woman's upper arms, Alayna's gaze dropped, and she began searching the floor for an object in the way. Beside her, Logan looked down too, as did Dane after he set the tray on the table. The hardwood floor was clear of any obstacle.

"No, no, I tripped over my own two feet and lost control of this silly thing," the woman said, tapping one of the handgrips of the walker.

"Well your lunch is on the house, Mrs. Douglas," Alayna said, continuing to search the floor. She cast a glance between Logan and Dane. "And yours as well," she added.

"Nonsense," said the elderly man with the woman. He bent down to retrieve the woman's purse, which had fallen to the floor in the commotion. Logan stopped him and reached for the bag. "Thank you, son," the man said and took the handbag from Logan's outstretched hand. "Now here," he continued, reaching around his wife to stuff a handful of crumpled bills into one of the pouches of Alayna's apron. "No argument."

"All right, fine, Mr. Douglas. No argument. Let me walk you to your car."

"We're parked right out front today, dear," the woman said.

As fast as the incident occurred, it passed. Logan watched Alayna escort the elderly couple toward the exit. He drew a shaky breath and tore his gaze away from her. The urge to follow her, to take her in his arms again, was strong. He called on all the strength he possessed to fight it.

Now that he'd held her against him, he could feel the boundaries he'd carefully erected over the years begin to crack. He envisioned her bound to a chair, open to his attentions. Between her legs he'd work a slender silver vibe through her wetness, teasing, demanding, testing. The scent of her arousal would feed his desire. Her hoarse mewls and groans of growing need would spur him on to take her further. But before his lustful thoughts could consume him, Logan pushed them from his mind. He'd almost lost the internal battle.

The vow he'd made years ago when he walked away from the D/s lifestyle and everything he found so fulfilling back then would be adhered to by any means.

Logan would never touch her again.

He couldn't. The cost was too high.

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