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## Fantasy Heights Series, Book 9

*UNEDITED Excerpt from For The Wicked*

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He waited until after midnight.

Sneaking into the hospital had become more ritual than risk. He liked the place during the wee hours. The nurses paid way more attention to checklists, break times and chitchat than security. With the right uniform and the right makeup job, he could waltz straight into Nicole's room and no one ever looked at him twice.

The nightlight over her bed told him how her day had gone. Lowest setting tonight. She must have enjoyed a relatively peaceful day. Bad days meant the light shining brightly and the television left on to dull the sounds of Ridley's eternal disturbance.

Bastards. They should never have used his castoff drugs to hobble Ridley. That act of brutality proved once and for all that Yvette's lieutenants respected nothing but their own power. He would repay their hubris with inaction. He would do nothing to stop their planned mutiny. Let the minions do all the heavy lifting, then throw them straight under the bus after Yvette.

Until then, revenge could be had by small degrees. If there were any hope to alleviate Ridley's suffering, he aimed to try. All attempts had failed so far. Maybe tonight's new cocktail would do some good.

Later, though. First he needed to treat Nicole.

At her bedside now, he watched her sleep. Watched the rapid eye movement and respiration rate. Calculated the chemical requirements of normal brain function, and reassured himself that his approach had merit. He had very nearly succeeded with this one. She was as close to perfect as he was likely to get with the kill-switch therapy.

He still couldn't figure out what went wrong during the reboot phase. She was supposed to

simply go to sleep for a week or two. Instead, she'd escaped. He would have to do it all again to see if he could repeat that result.

For now, he had to prepare Nicole. He quickly injected tonight's dose into her IV port. This was the last of the prep phase. Her next dose would reawaken his masterpiece to a brave new world.

Very gently, he placed a hand on Nicole's head. And very quietly, he spoke. "They're bringing you home tomorrow. The lunatics are at the gates, ready to storm the asylum. When it's done, you will make them pay for Derek. Avenge him with blood and fire."

\* \* \* \* \*

Amanda leaned over the workbench to watch Josh open and close drawers on a tool trolley, looking for something.

"You know, it's funny," she told him. "I thought living under the same roof meant we'd see each other once in a while."

Still searching, Josh sounded absent minded and sarcastic at once. "Last night doesn't count?"

She gave the back of his head a tolerant look. Last night most certainly did not count. She'd gotten home from the business office at ten minutes to ten. Josh had rolled in from work five minutes later. They sat down to watch the news and were out cold on the couch together twenty minutes later.

A lot of the nights she spent at Josh's place had ended that way, lately. The Accord was devouring nearly every spare moment left to him by the contracting company, where he had two foremen on vacation and an admin on maternity leave. Plus he was still edgy and prickly about the resurgence of Janos. Difficult circumstances, sure, but there was a hint of tension between them now that Amanda didn't like. "If I take the operations manager job, will it always be like this?"

He glanced at her, his features neutral.

She couldn't stand that expression anymore. He wore it every time the subject of the OM job came up. Never mind that he'd offered her the position in the first place, at some point during the three weeks that had since passed, he had turned hell-bent against influencing her decision, one way or the other.

This time, at least, he responded to questioning. "You know, when I made you that offer, I

hoped you'd take the job because you liked it, not because you felt obligated."

Good point, that. Right now, she had no choice but to take the wheel. Steph needed weeks, possibly months, of rest yet before she could return. Until then, someone had to keep the place running. The onus had fallen on Amanda, the only one around with the experience and temperament necessary to keep both costs and performers in check. But she had only agreed to assist on a temporary basis. Nothing permanent.

Josh must have found the tool he sought. He turned to the apparatus he was fixing, a simple support prop stuck in one position. He applied a wrench to each side of the offending bolt, and twisted.

With a sharp squeak, the bolt gave way and she watched in outright appreciation as the muscles in Josh's arms and back gave her a show.

"You're a good average height. Come here." He gestured for her to step forward.

When she rounded the workbench, Josh's gaze fell to the coffee-colored suede pumps she'd worn into the office to match the sleeveless jersey wrap dress. "Take those off."

Just to tease him, she asked a hopeful question. "Everything?"

The devious smile he gave her in return made her laugh and melt at the same time.

"The shoes," he said. "For now, anyway."

Of course, she thought. And the piece he was working on seemed promising. The whole thing was black, which meant it probably came from the shadowbox. Nothing elaborate. Just a base, a metal support beam, and a cross bar that looked like handlebars covered in a padded roll.

With his attention returned to the job at hand, Josh brought her hip bones up against the padded roll. Once she rested against it, he placed a hand in the small of her back and ran it upward, then pushed to make her bend forward a hair. She held onto the handles to steady herself. Because of the padded roll's position, she had to come up on her tiptoes, and she liked the position the pose left her in. She let her legs go slack and her heels point outward. If not for the dress, everything between her legs would be on display.

God, she loved Josh's contraptions. "Way too many clothes on, Mr. Taylor."

Standing behind her, he gave an appreciative whistle. With a glance almost as heated as her thoughts, she could see that Josh was thinking along similar lines. His cock strained against the front of his jeans while he gestured toward a second apparatus, one that she'd seen used many times but never gotten to play on, herself. It was little more than a padded exam table with a

more substantial stirrup system. The leg rests supported the heel and all the way up the shin. Restraints at the top and bottom would trap her knees and ankles in place. Wrist restraints were fitted at the end of the bench.

Hard to say what Josh needed to adjust on this thing, but she could hardly wait to find out. While he was busy in the tool trolley once more, she untied the wrap dress and slipped it off, casting it onto the workbench.

He turned her direction while she was taking off her panties. His brows went up but he helped do away with her bra, tossing it after the rest of her clothes. That done, patted the table for her to climb up.

Before she could lie back, Josh caught her behind the head and took her mouth to demonstrate just how scorched he could leave her. So much sensation. Normally he was much more gentle, but her striptease provocation seemed to have worked. His mouth was insistent, and she felt his urgency everywhere. It tightened her nipples into rigid, stinging hot points that nearly detonated when he raised a hand to pinch one tight.

Feeling the charged, ravenous need ignite inside her pussy, she let her own hand travel to Josh's belt. Thoughts began to form about him being the test subject, for once. With an apparatus like this one, it wasn't difficult to picture the possibilities. Much more difficult to resist the urge to take over immediately and make it all happen.

Sadly, she knew Josh too well to believe he'd indulge her wishes before the work was done, so she decided to bide her time. Pretend to be nice and passive while he gently eased her back until she lay flat on the table.

She gave a shaky sigh as he lifted her left leg and placed it onto the support. She lifted the other leg herself. Josh made her gasp by bringing his hands between her legs and taking hold, using his thumbs to part her cunt lips. His mouth, as he latched onto her clit, was just as rough as before. Insistent. Demanding, as he flattened his tongue and grinded against her clit.

Her back arched and she mewed out a sound of purely wanton delight, her plan all but forgotten now that he was sucking and rubbing her into intense arousal. She could actually feel the blood rushing to swell the flesh against him, and the bright, lavish pleasure of her body hurrying to lubricate itself, eager for penetration.

The delight turned to disappointment as Josh raised his head. Much as she'd hoped he'd forget about the job for a while, he paused to tinker with the angle and height of the leg supports,

raising them higher and sharpening the pitch into a more strained position that didn't allow her to move her legs much, if at all.

When his hands went for the left knee restraint, she remembered her plan. "No. Not me, this time. You. I want you on this table."

He frowned. "But I want—"

"No." She sat up and pressed her hands against his chest. "This time, let me play. Please?"

He continued to frown until she slipped off the table and stretched up to kiss him. He felt a might resistant while she wrestled with his belt and unzipped his fly. She made him take his shoes off. Any remaining reluctance evaporated once she began to undress him. She started with his jeans, drawing them forcefully down, rubbing his erection with her mouth through his boxers while she did so.

As soon as the jeans were cast aside, she stripped his boxers off. She gripped his swollen shaft tightly as he stepped out of them. She lost track of things for a moment while kissing the hot tip of him, then opening her mouth to suck him in.

She heard him inhale sharply. Wanting to hear more, she curled her tongue around him, sucking harder while reaching up to take his balls in one hand, skipping the gentle part, going directly to kneading him hard.

Rewarded with a breathy, surprised growl, she traded position between mouth and hands, dipping down to flick his sack with her tongue and squeezing the tip of his cock a lot harder than she normally would, and feeling a sultry pang in her pussy at the sound he made.

Feeling empowered by then, and quite forceful, she took her mouth and hands away to order him onto the table. He eyed her somewhat warily, but he did give in and obey.

"No restraints," he said.

"Yes, restraints. Argue with me, and I'll find a ball gag."

A wry smile surfaced in his eyes, but there was something else, too, that nearly did her in: pure, genuine affection that brought an answering rush of warmth. Not quite strong enough to overtake everything else he'd aroused inside her, but strong enough that if she hadn't fallen for him entirely before then, she had at least tripped over him now.

She forced him to lie back and wasted no time getting his legs onto the supports. She made sure to get his wrists trapped first, then secured his knees, and finally his ankles. Now that he was securely caught, she left him there to go on her own hunt.

His eyes tracked her every movement as she began to open cabinets. “What are you looking for?”

“Treasure chest. I want lube and a blindfold.”

“God help me,” he muttered.

She found the chest tucked alongside the workbench. A peek inside confirmed she had everything she wanted and a few other things besides. She grabbed up the lube and blindfold and carried them back to Josh, who accepted the blindfold with one long, last look of wariness.

She laughed. “Jeez. Such distrust. I just want you to relax and feel good. That’s all.”

To prove it, she began by simply running her hands, feather light, from his knees down to his inner thighs, then drawing her fingertips over to his feet, over his arches and between his toes. Given the sighs and deep exhales and the occasional squirm, she decided he was enjoying himself as much as she was.

When she retraced it all with her mouth instead, Josh’s breathing began to deepen, his cock pulsing at every pause, every increase in pressure of mouth against skin. To escalate things a bit, she let her mouth travel back toward his cock before she dipped down to press her tongue to the very base of his balls, and lick a slow, forceful line up his shaft. The act drew such a guttural, visceral reaction from Josh that she hurried to arouse him even more, grabbing up the lube and quickly slathered his balls and shaft in a thick, slippery coat.

With one hand on his balls and one on his shaft, she kneaded and pulled, squeezed and stroked. She studied his reaction, employing more caution while squeezing his tip. That would send him over the edge in a hurry. Same with pulling on his balls. She fell into a less inflammatory rhythm of long strokes up and down his shaft and lightly tracing her fingertips over his scrotum.

He squirmed now and then, but she could see the undesired type of tension receding, leaving looser shoulders and neck muscles in its wake. When his arms finally began to relax, she eased forward, lifted his shaft, and took the tip of his cock back into her mouth. She closed her lips around his glans and sheathed her teeth, biting down on the inside of her lips to apply more pressure.

When she began to bob her head, his stomach muscles tightened and he breathed out a moan of deep arousal. The sound echoed in her pussy and nipples. She liked how it felt, knowing she was turning him on, and how her body responded in kind.

Assured she could finish him in seconds if she added more ball play, she changed tactics. No need to rush anything. She had never had complete control over him before, and it would be fun to try some other things she'd never had a chance to try with him.

She lifted her head and took her hands away to refresh the lube, and this time warming it on her fingers before lowering her hand between his legs.

Josh tensed immediately, as soon as she pressed her fingers between his buttocks. He liked doing it to her. His turn, now. She wanted to do it to him, to pay back some of that intense, profoundly intimate pleasure.

“Easy,” she soothed. He didn't protest as she rubbed in experimental circles against the taut muscles of his anus. It took a while, but once she picked his shaft back up and resumed a smooth, easy stroking motion, she felt him relax. She didn't rush into penetration, continuing to rub, curling her fingertip a little to apply more pressure but never attempting to poke inside until his breathing was level once more.

Careful to maintain the stroking, she lowered her head once more to take his tip into her mouth before finally giving him the tip of her finger. Gently, but still he arched a good inch or two off the table, and inhaled deep. Very tight, and the feel of his muscles clenching around her had a powerful effect she hadn't expected. It made her feel possessive. And aggressive. Also suddenly and dangerously close to orgasm. She wanted to hurry things along, pump her hand. But this was Josh, and if she hoped to ever get him into this position again, she had better play nice. Make sure to earn his trust, the same way he'd done with her, before indulging her more aggressive urges.

Slowly, gently, with just the smallest motions she pushed into him up to her first knuckle, then drew out once more. Over and over again without pause, allowing him to grow more used to the sensation while she kissed and sucked the tip of his cock.

Before much longer her patience paid off. She felt him surge in her hand, felt his cock swell even harder, and there was a shift in his thighs and pelvis as he opened up to her. She didn't hesitate to drive her finger more deeply inside him and felt a sharp answering sting in her own body. Her mind hurried ahead to images of climbing onto the table, squatting over him, taking the tip of his cock into her ass. Facing away so she could reach down between his legs and poke inside him, all the way, forceful and fast until he came so hard he'd be spent for days.

Josh breathed out a plea. “Ah, slow. Slower, please. God, that feels good.”

She hummed an apologetic response. But he wouldn't have it all his way. Gentle though she was, she still drove her finger more deeply inside him, pressed it all the way in while she opened her mouth and lowered her head to draw the tip of his cock to the very back of her throat.

He made a different sort of plea, then. Wordless, a simple rocking motion with his pelvis. Back and forth, driving first his cock more deeply into her throat, then her finger more deeply into his ass. She didn't expect her own body's fiery response. She was so wet now that she could feel her own wetness leak out onto her thigh, cooling in the outside air, enflaming her all the more.

But she kept it cool, allowing Josh to continue pleasuring himself with the rocking motion. She had never felt him this hard before. So swollen, so hot.

Then all of a sudden she felt him go utterly taut, utterly still.

It startled her for a moment. What was wrong? What happened?

Then she nearly jumped out of her skin as a hand gently settled into the small of her back.

Ah. Josh had better hearing than she did, apparently. And she knew the intruder instantly.

Thomas.

She lifted her head, releasing Josh's cock to meet Thomas's eyes. She'd had dreams about Thomas walking in on her and Josh, and vice versa. And of course she'd known it would happen sooner or later, but not now, not like this, with Josh in restraints.

Thomas did not appear the least surprised or bothered. In fact, he didn't appear to have any reaction at all. "How's that for interesting timing?"

Josh answered him. "You'd think we'd been neglecting her or something. Help me out, here."

Thomas did not respond. He simply watched. And there it was again. She felt that tension, that certain suppressed hush rise up to overshadow them all.

Heaven help her, but she ignored it and continued to stroke Josh's cock. She didn't relieve him of the finger inside him, either. She did hesitate to speak, though. She might be interested to see what would happen with the three of them together, but that didn't mean Josh or Thomas would. Though they'd been on set together at the same time, their friendship did not extend into friends with benefits territory. Maybe that's where the tension came from.

Neither Josh nor Thomas seemed eager to green- or red-light the situation. A decidedly heavy silence extended toward highly uncomfortable before Josh finally caved in. "Please? She's

gonna make me come, and I won't be able to finish her the way she likes."

Amanda saw a flicker of relief in Thomas's eyes, quickly followed, of course, by a sort of devilish determination. "As you were," he ordered. He even raised a hand to push her head down until she'd taken Josh's cock back into her mouth. Thus she could only listen as Thomas stripped his way out of suit coat, boots, jeans, t-shirt and boxer briefs.

The anticipation sizzled through her like a flame along a wick. Half the nerves in her body had now tuned themselves into every tiny move Thomas made. As he approached her, the sweet, achy pull moved with him.

When Thomas did finally put his hands on her, he went directly to the point, cupping her mound and sliding his middle and ring finger into her pussy. "You're so wet I could drink you."

She hummed against Josh's cock and pressed back onto Thomas's hand at the same time. When Josh squirmed, she realized she'd also driven her finger into him, hard. She meant to apologize by wiggling it gently, but he gasped in response.

Now aroused past the point where she had much control, only wanting to turn up the heat on Josh even more, she withdrew her finger and added a second. Then it became much more difficult to penetrate him, even with all that lube.

She was the one to gasp next as Thomas withdrew his fingers and replaced them with a hot, hard cock. Not gentle. He drove into her from behind in two rough thrusts, deep and forceful enough to make her cry out. He kept her steady with one arm wrapped around her waist. With his other hand, he reached around to clamp his fingers onto an already aching nipple.

The effect was predictably explosive. The pang that seized up all the muscles in her pussy zapped like lightning. She cried out again, then redoubled her efforts on Josh, who had begun to struggle against the restraints.

"I want to see."

"Isn't that too bad?" Thomas countered.