

~QUEERING~CONSENT~

A TIGHT SQUEEZE

SMUTTY TRANS AND QUEER STORIES

LAURA Q

~QUEERING~ ~CONSENT~

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Smutty Trans and Queer Stories

laura q



Microcosm Publishing
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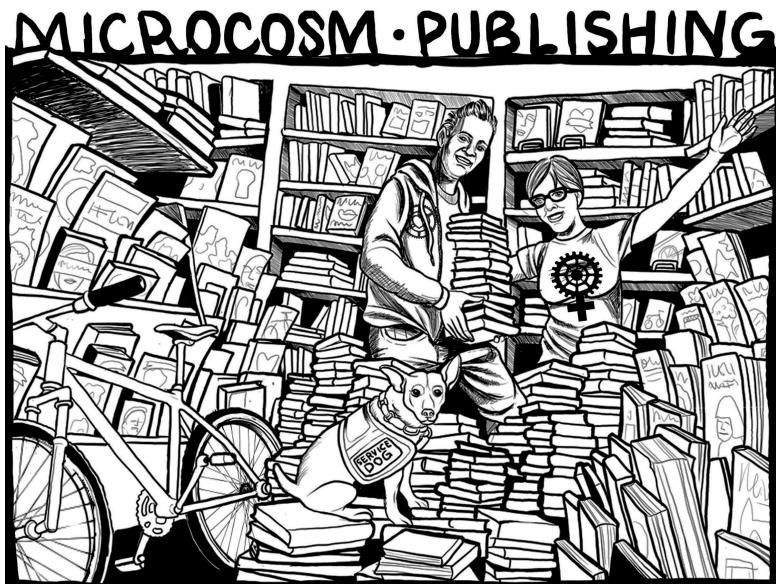
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CONTENTS

Introduction • 5

Kindling • 7

Reconfigurations • 15

First Contact • 27

1-800-BUILD-A-BOI • 45

lockpick girls • 58

Denial • 81

...Patience • 86

Meat on Bone • 93

(g)loved • 103

After Hours • 108

Over. • 115

A Good Date • 119

Acknowledgments • 127

About the Author • 127

Introduction

“I’m writing to conjure a world that I wish existed, a world where trans women can love and fuck without being bogged down by shame and (internal and external) transphobia.”

—Hazel-Jane Plante¹

Much as I adore sharing intimacy with other trans folks, it’s no coincidence that this collection is bookended by pieces about self-love and exploration. These stories came together in the aftermath of a shitty breakup that taught me the heart-wrenching lesson that t4t relationships aren’t immune to dynamics of abuse, control, and coercion. Feeling disillusioned and disappointed, while also deep in the hormonal throes of puberty 2.0, I retreated from sexual connection with my body just as the COVID-19 pandemic began. I used the months of staggeringly long, enforced isolation that descended on Toronto to work through my hurt and to focus on my needs. By writing erotica that centered transfeminine characters and the ways they lived, loved, and fucked on their own terms, I found a way to process and document the ways I was (re)learning how my body and brain worked on my new hormonal operating system. I rediscovered the joys of t4t desire through intimacy with myself.

Once I had cultivated a solid base of self-love, care, and respect for my own boundaries, I felt safe and ready to connect with people again. I found spaces where I could share my writing with other queers (thanks Glad Day!) and met new trans lovers who allowed me to put into practice much of what I’d learned while I’d been hidden away and dissolving into goo in the chrysalis of my transition. The love, intimacy,

1 “t4t triptych: the concept, the erotic, and the technique” in *TSQ*Now, The t4t Issue*

and incredibly hot sex I shared with these marvelous humans inspired much of what you'll read herein.

In writing these stories, I wanted to honor what transfem desire and eroticism looks and feels like; to share—and share in—the beauty, softness, and delicacy of those experiences. t4t is a radical proposition. It is an invitation to inhabit something real that respects all the beauty, pain, and pleasure that comes with the complexity of loving and fucking as a trans person.

No matter how fantastical the framing, these stories are grounded in the realities of loving and fucking as a transfem human. I hope you enjoy reading them. I hope you find them hot. Most of all, I hope you see yourself and your desires reflected within them.

I also want to acknowledge that some of the things that I write about in these stories—fantastical or not—might not be to everyone's tastes and could trigger unpleasant thoughts or memories if folks read about them without warning. To that end, I've put together a short content warning guide:

- Impact play in *Meat on Bone* and *1-800*; characters in *1-800* engage in consensual non-consent play.
- Passing mention of previous trans/queerphobic experiences in *First Contact* and *Reconfiguring*.
- Characters go to bars, drink alcohol, and/or do drugs recreationally in *1-800*, *Reconfiguring*, *Over.*, and *A Good Date*.
- *Kindling* centers around fire play, and contains brief discussions of advanced mathematics and quantum mechanics.

Kindling

Spontaneous human combustion turned Amy on in the same kind of way that math did: she didn't understand why either one excited her, but they both held the same near-magically unearthly appeal. The idea that they could be enacted in any kind of practical, real-life way was almost entirely unimaginable to her. Regardless, pretty much the only way she could get off these days was to lose herself in thoughts of one or the other.

Math was always where it started, though. She would tease and toy with herself through her thin underwear with the fingers of her right hand as she held a pen in her left, the gel tip (no other kind would do) gliding smoothly across the paper as meaning and depth appeared from the ether with each stroke of the nib on the page before her, like conjuring magick from a spellbook. Her excitement would build as the solution began to clarify in her mind and her hand would start to struggle to keep pace with her thoughts. Lines and numbers and symbols and proofs fell together perfectly in her imagination as she worked frantically to scribble them down before they disappeared. Both hands moved in frenetic motions, her clit swelling and pulsing under the ministrations of one as the perfect penmanship of the other dissolved line by line until her symbols became hastily scrawled, ink-smudged blemishes the closer she got to the inevitable Q.E.D.: those rare, shining moments showcasing the inescapable beauty of logic that made her breath catch in her throat. Just getting there wasn't enough, though. She could knock out a proof of Euler's theorem blindfolded and it wouldn't even warrant a twitch downstairs. Amy needed to learn, to feel the spark of discovery set her alight.

On weekend mornings she'd skip brunch invites to go cruise estate sales and thrift stores looking for algebra textbooks written in the 50s, three-ring binders full of course notes from University calculus courses or—her favorite—advanced texts from niche fields in physics: slim

paperbacks packed densely on every page, no space wasted on hand-holding introductions or illustrations. A dog-eared copy of *Modern Cosmology* was her prized possession, but she wasn't picky as long as she didn't need to integrate anything: it was messy and always broke her flow, the last thing she needed when she was slick and wet, desperately closing in on a hard-won orgasm.

Math may have been where it started—her textbooks had been her go-to jerk-off material since she started her transition—but recently she couldn't come until she started thinking of her fingers taking flame: the thought of scribbling a formula down in her chicken-scratch handwriting so fast that her pen's movement on the page would set the very tip of her finger alight. The idea had come to her one afternoon as she slogged through the long grass of a decomposition of fluid energy momentum tensors in a chapter on Einstein-Boltzmann equations. She didn't know what any of it actually meant in terms of real-world effects, not really, but she could follow the movements of the variables through the complex machinations and transformations that her derivations traced, and math was all that mattered to be able to do that. After painstakingly trudging through the proof, each step taking her an age as she was forced to flick back and forth through the pages to double-check the fundamental properties and particular quirks of each variable, she had her lightbulb moment. The answer—still three lines away—came to her full-formed and clear as day. Ink flowed freely as she rushed to get the last few lines of the proof down, her breathing quick and shallow, the head of her clit throbbing in her spit-lubed fingertips as everything fell together, each symbol of the solution slotting in place perfectly. She triumphantly sliced her pen across the page to underscore her conclusion like she was striking a—

Her orgasm exploded within her, unfurling and engulfing her entirely, exactly as a freshly-struck flame envelops and consumes the phosphor head of a match, a climax that blazed so brightly its memory had been permanently screen-burned in Amy's consciousness from

that moment onward. Now, she'd imagined herself igniting so often she didn't even think she'd be surprised when it happened.

If *it* happened. Amy occasionally had to remind herself it wasn't inevitable.

When she would first think of catching fire she would feel it as a visceral drop, low in her groin; the same sensation she would feel when she still used to ride rollercoasters. (She idly wondered how that sensation would manifest now, in her post-orchi body, given where she felt it most corporeally as a kid.) From there, she would think of the shimmering wave of heat that would surround her finger, the fire almost-but-not-quite touching her, the way a flame seems to dance a quarter inch from the surface of a lit match even as the wood within blackens and shrivels. But her finger wouldn't blacken or shrivel. She'd lift her hand up, turn it over, watch it with curiosity as she tried her hardest to see the fire she so desperately lusted for inch down over her flesh until it engulfed her whole finger. She'd imagine the flame jumping across, taking her next finger then the next until her whole hand was aglow. Sitting in her chair, right hand crassly stuffed into her panties, eyes half-closed, she'd hold her left as close as she could bear to her desk lamp, willing herself to be fooled by the glow of the light breaking through between her fingers and the heat of the bare incandescent bulb against her skin. That had worked for her a couple of times but, as with everything, the novelty wore off after a while and she needed more.

Recently, Amy had discovered she could recreate a reasonable simulacrum of the sensation she craved most if she submerged herself in a bath, counterintuitive as it had initially seemed to her. Three nights running she'd sat on the rim of the tub as she filled it with scaldingly hot water, carefully edging to a foundational quantum field theory text, repeatedly getting herself precariously close before backing off. If she took a deep breath and shut her eyes tightly before she plunged under the surface she could buy herself a solid three minutes where she could almost—*almost*—feel the tongues of flame licking at her skin, the hairs

on her arms singeing away under their caress. With the heavy, oppressive weight of the bathwater all around her she could oh-so-very-nearly believe that its slow, syrupy rippling movements were the fluid motions of flames lapping at her, that she was holding her breath not because she was underwater but because she was combusting, burning so hot that superheated air would sear the inside of her throat if she tried to inhale it. Breathless: more than anything, that's how she wanted to be made to feel. Holding her breath underwater, completely cocooned in the heat's all-encompassing embrace, she felt it, if only momentarily.

But it wasn't enough. Running through solutions to math problems she already knew while she jerked off simply wasn't enough stimulation and, try as she might, she just couldn't ignore her knees jutting up above the waterline, the cool air breaking her immersion in the fantasy. Three nights running Amy had submerged herself with high hopes, a fevered imagination, and barely any distance to an impending orgasm; three nights running she'd broken the surface feeling little more than disappointed, sitting bolt upright to gasp for air with her hand still wrapped around her needy, unsatisfied clit. She needed more. She didn't know what, not yet, but she knew she needed... *something*.

She found her *something* on her bike ride home from getting groceries a few days after the last bath experiment. She'd taken a meandering route back through her neighborhood, rolling slowly as she cruised for discarded treasures left out on the side of the road with the garbage, when her interest was piqued by a yard sale outside a house on an unfamiliar street. The first folding table was worth little more than a passing glance: all knick-knacks, floral plates, sherry glasses, and vaguely creepy crystal animals. Instead, as always, she was drawn to the books: her attention locked on the densely-packed boxloads of them that filled the second table. There, nearly indistinguishable from the dozens of other leather-bound library volumes it was packed in the bankers box alongside, she found it. As casually as she could, Amy picked out the weighty folio, sandwiching it between two other books grabbed at random and tucking the lot under her arm. She spent a minute more

pretending to consider a couple of others in the box before she haggled the pile down from four bucks a pop to ten for the lot. Truth be told, Amy would have emptied her meager bank account of every penny it held if she'd needed to so she could get her hands on what she now had tucked in her backpack. Her ride home was the longest seven minutes of her life, the weight of the book pressing on her back reminding her of its presence every second of the way.

Back at her apartment she sent a couple of texts as she put groceries away, clearing her calendar of plans for the weekend, then retired to her bedroom and pulled the books from her bag. The two dummy purchases gave her a moment of uneasy pause as she noticed their titles for the first time—*The Unabridged History of The War of Heaven: Vol. DCCLIV* and *Biography of the Very Reverend Bartleby J. Collings: 1792-1848; 1852-1872*—but the draw of her real find was too much to resist. She set the decoys aside, laid her newfound treasure upon her desk and reverentially traced her fingers over the gold-embossed letters on the cover: *Elements of Thaumaturgical Thermophysiology: Extradimensional Mathematical Analyses and the Preliminaries of Autopyrokinetics*. Just reading the title sparked a growing warmth in her groin from the promise contained within. Carefully, she cracked the weighty tome open and began to read. She didn't try to understand any of it, not at first. Instead she gave herself permission to simply let the arcane language covering the leaves of vellum wash over her, affecting her as it might without trying to draw meaning nor force it into coherent shapes, let alone familiar ones. An hour slipped by as she paged through chapter after chapter, recognizing common symbols here and there, occasionally noting the familiar shapes of fluid motion or classical thermodynamics hidden in the twisted, otherwise nonsensical mathematical constructions that wound their way through the heart of the book. Each turn of the page filled her bedroom with the musty, organic smell of old book while every word she read stoked the coals of understanding that had started burning in earnest at the base of her spine.

As soon as she reached the end she flipped back to the first chapter, grabbed a pad of notepaper and began the heady task of forging a path through the complex, occasionally contradictory, directions and explanations laid out within. The afternoon disappeared in a haze as she filled page after page with notes and equations until a veritable ream of looseleaf lay on the floor beside her desk. She kept her hand off her clit as she worked; riding the eddies and whorls of the math she was following proved more than enough to keep her turned on and tightly focused. The last thing she wanted was to push too hard trying to force something, to come too soon and douse the slow-built erotic heat swelling inside her. When the daylight faded she lit candles and dotted them along the shelf over her workspace, her desk lamp somehow not feeling like appropriate illumination for the work she was doing.

After hours of toiling devoutly at the altar of math, Amy had attained a state of hyper awareness of every inch of her body: from the path of the single bead of sweat rolling down her spine to the low, rumbling reminder in her belly that she hadn't eaten since before her grocery run, to the gentle warmth of friction on the outer edge of her hand as it scuffed and grazed against the page. More than anything else, though, she could feel energy flowing everywhere through her, in slow and subtle and previously unplaceable ways. The more she read, the more she worked through the enigmatic equations that seemed impossible until they suddenly fell together through the intervention of clever mathematical tricks or lucky quirks of science, the more she realized she was cultivating something, corralling the normally directionless swirls of her thoughts, feelings, and instincts into fuelling an indefatigable fire deep within her. There was no need to push herself to the edge and hope for a spark, nor to try to fool herself through fakery: the flame she wanted so badly was coming to her, building in her, as her knowledge and understanding grew. She just needed to give it fertile ground to root in before it could flower.

As the evening waxed into the night proper, Amy shed layers periodically until, come midnight, she sat crossed-legged in her

computer chair wearing nothing but her underwear. After hours of resistance, she'd finally succumbed to temptation and had her free hand resting on the bulge her tender, swollen clit made in them. She dared not work herself through the fabric nor slip her fingers inside, but feeling her body's own warmth radiated back on itself—the heat of her sex on her hand, the heat of her hand on her sex—served only to focus her mind more clearly on locating and tending to the burning locus of energy simmering inside of her. The math pouring from her pen was free-form now, the book no longer serving as a guide to follow but a resource to reference and even then she hadn't needed it for a while. She'd stopped doubting herself hours ago, trusting that the energies she had been tending to, stoking and basking in would be reflected in the calculations that flowed effortlessly from her hand.

Amy wasn't sure how long her eyes had been closed when the acrid stink of burning rubber crept into her nostrils and startled her back to the present moment. The page that lay before her was filled with densely-packed, occasionally overlapping, screeds of calculations in her hand that she vaguely remembered thinking through but had no recollection of actually writing out. More pressingly, though, her underwear appeared to be on fire. Bewildered and alarmed, she jumped back from her desk, sending her chair spinning across the room to bump to a stop against her bed. The singed fabric she'd been wearing fell loosely to the floor as soon as she stood, the waistband blackened and burned through where her hand had been resting. Hesitantly, Amy turned her gaze from the still-smoldering remains of her second-favorite pair of boyshorts to look at her right hand. The low blue flame that had already engulfed her to the wrist was now creeping further up her forearm, climbing an inch or two every few seconds. The sensation was everything she'd hoped and nothing she'd expected: her hand felt icy-cool, even as the heat radiating from it left the air above it hazy, while flexing her fingers—intact and uncharred—proved the fire wasn't eating her alive to fuel itself. A tingling in her left hand drew her attention over just in time for her to see a tiny flame ignite from the tip of her middle

finger. She watched, awestruck, as the freshly-sprouted flame swayed and flickered, wicking across to her ring finger next before spreading to envelop the rest. By the time she looked back to her right side the flame had worked its way up past her elbow, the cat tattooed on her forearm seeming to dance under the invisible heat shimmer surrounding her.

As the initial surprise of her long-awaited combustion abated, Amy returned her focus to the glowing ball of energy she'd been nurturing in the depths of her body. In her mind's eye she could see it ablaze in all its white-hot glory, every scrap of erotic heat she'd built and cultivated through the day fuelling its breathtakingly bright burn. She traced its movement, following the flow up from the base of her spine to its still-expanding reach out through her whole body. The promise of every orgasm she'd ever chased and lost was being compounded, multiplied, and returned to her, an ever-cresting wave that she *knew*—deep in her bones—wasn't going to consume her, but would instead lift and carry her onward and upwards. Where to, she didn't yet know, but she felt no fear in embracing the sweet relief of calmly giving in to her own immolation.

Amy gasped as she felt the air being drawn up and out of her lungs; the hungry flames had reached her chest and were rapidly spreading across her torso, greedily sucking up all the available oxygen in her room. She closed her eyes again and, with the last breath she had left in her, sighed contentedly:

“So this is what it feels like.”

Reconfigurations

Most people assume Toe Tag picked up their name because of that time they died. But the truth is that no one even called them that until a few months later, around the time when we all started to hear them tell the story at parties for the fifth or sixth time. It got to the point where it became a running gag among the rest of us: you'd go to grab some beers from the cooler on the porch and there they'd be—neon green mohawk standing up 8" from their scalp, face full of piercings, tattoos covering almost every inch of their skin—telling anyone who'd listen, "I was gone for, like, 90 seconds in the back of that ambulance," in that distinctively nasal Quebecois accent of theirs. Again. The story that wouldn't die. And that's how it stuck.

They're a good kid, though. As soon as I'd met them I saw shades of my pre-transition self in their reckless, impulsive bullshit and quickly agreed with some of the other elder queers that we should probably keep an eye on them. From pulling them out of a crowd crush at an over-capacity shitty punk show to teaching them how to blow smoke rings and acting as trip-sitter for their first acid experience, I played my part in stopping them getting into (too much) trouble and making sure they learned a thing or two along the way. While I'd occasionally roll my eyes at their need to be the center of attention in every social situation, I could never deny their inherent magnetism nor question the fierce loyalty they held to the people they cared for, counting myself lucky to be part of that tight-knit group.

Even though we'd been running in the same circles for a couple of years, we hadn't really had much in terms of meaningful, in-depth conversation with each other before the party they threw in the spring to celebrate getting their first apartment. After everyone else rolled out around 11 to head to a basement show nearby I stayed behind to help

them tidy up, having begged off the show since I had to work early the next morning. Despite my best intentions to get a decent sleep, I ended up staying up past 2 after being drawn in by a new, more mature side of Toe Tag I hadn't seen before. Without an audience to entertain they had a much more thoughtful, nuanced outlook on things. Long after the last of the empties had been bagged up, we were still holding forth on gender politics, meditating on what "staying true" to our broke-ass punk roots could look like in the city today, and discussing how weird it was to watch all our friends falling into the same rough pattern of hitting their thirties, finding a stable and steady job in a salon/butcher/gallery/restaurant/tattoo studio, then getting their own place. Turns out that being able to afford a real bed and a bathroom that wasn't shared with a rotating cast of a half-dozen roommates holds more appeal than many of us realized. When I got my own place two years ago, everyone made a big deal of the fact I was "settling down," having found myself an apartment, a boyfriend and a cat in short order (the boyfriend lasted three months; Piddles and I are still going strong), but by the time Toe Tag signed their lease it felt like everyone was just checking another one off the list and starting the guessing game of who'd be next.

That housewarming party was the last time I saw anyone for months, as folks scattered across the country to their varied and sundry summer gigs, leaving me the only one to stay in the city. I appreciated the time to myself, though, and was enjoying a lazy, late summer solo picnic in Bickford Park when an excited puppy came bounding over to sniff at me.

"Hey bud!"

I scratched its fuzzy head and let it lick at my hands, while I looked around for its owner.

"Benji!"

I clocked Toe Tag's voice immediately, but I barely recognized the person I saw when I turned toward them: gone were the giant mohawk

spikes and might-as-well-be-Sharpie black-on-black-on-black panda eye makeup I knew, instead they were sporting a gorgeous bouquet of huge, tumbling faded lime green curls atop a slick undercut fade, complemented by a flawless soft and hazy poison-green-on-black makeup look, to say nothing of the immediately noticeable additions to their chest that were visible under their flowing slip dress.

"I see you've met my little troublemaker," they scooped Benji up and planted a kiss on top of his head, "He didn't bother you, no?"

"I, uh, yeah, no, umm . . ." I fumbled with my words, too stunned by the radical shift in their aesthetic to pull together a coherent sentence, "No, he's good, no worries."

They beamed at me and let Benji hop down to start sniffing around at my snacks.

"I didn't think you were back in the city yet, weren't you out in . . .?" I trailed off, trying to keep track of who worked what gig over the summer and where was always a challenge.

"B.C., yeah. But tree-planting season wraps up in, like, mid-July so I've been back for a couple of weeks, mostly just house-training this little butt."

"How was it? Did you wanna . . .?" I gestured to the blanket beside me and scooted over a little to make some room for them.

"Oh thanks, yeah."

They sat down and caught me up on how the summer had been treating them, while I brought them up to speed with my latest batch of dating-while-trans horror stories—the only interesting thing I had to share since I last saw them in the spring.

"How'd your orchi go, by the way?" they asked as we packed up in the late evening, the hours since we'd run into each other having passed in a blur, much like our late night at their housewarming. While glimmers of their mile-a-minute motormouth energy had still

shone through, I'd been pleasantly surprised by the slowed-down, contemplative attitude I'd seen from them through our hangout.

"Oh, uh, good, thanks," I replied, slightly surprised by the question. I must have mentioned I was going in for it at their housewarming but had apparently completely forgotten doing so, "usual hospital shit, though: got deadnamed a bunch, no one knew what pronouns to use, they had to tape my nipples down because I couldn't get the barbells out."

I shrugged; it was no big deal. I mean, it certainly wasn't ideal by any stretch, but the experience was no worse than anything the ragtag band of genderfucking punks we ran with had dealt with before. They nodded along as I shouldered my bag and we started for where I'd locked up my bike, Benji excitedly trotting along behind us.

"Yeah, I feel you: same shit, different doc."

"Uhh . . . kinda? The surgeon was actually pretty chill: no stupid questions, didn't give me any hassle. He's a total sweetheart."

They nodded thoughtfully for a moment.

"Could you send me his info? I've been, uh, considering it for myself recently."

"Sure, I'll text you his details. And feel free to hit me up if you've got any questions about the paperwork or whatever. It's frustrating but other than actually getting the referral sorted it's not too bad, ju--"

"Can I see sometime?"

The question came blurring out unceremoniously, throwing me off guard to the point where it took me a second before I even realized what they were asking.

"Umm, sure, I guess. It was pretty gnarly, though," I fumbled, as I started digging my phone out of my bag. I knew a couple of other girls who were considering going in for the same op and one of them had asked me to give her a no-holds-barred look at the grisly reality of the

healing process, so I'd dutifully obliged by taking a series of incredibly unsexy photos every day for two weeks after the surgery. It certainly wasn't something I'd wanted to see in the lead up to my own trip to the operating room, but to each their own, I suppose.

"Uhh. I, um . . ." they stuttered and stammered as we stood by my bike, cheeks clearly beaming red even in the low light of the setting sun. I wasn't used to seeing this brash and bold human acting flustered; it was a cute look on them. "More like, y'know, in-person. Like a proper look at how it's healed and how it's all working for you."

"Oh jeez . . ." I said, as I slipped my phone back in my bag, flattered but not quite sure what to make of the request. I hadn't had much luck on the dating front this year so, even though I was more than comfortable flying solo again, I still hadn't shared my reconfigured bits with anyone since the op.

"I mean, that kinda still feels really intimate, y'know?"

They bit one of their lip studs and chewed on it for a second, a timid smile just barely turning the corner of their mouth. I was surprised to feel my knees weaken a little at the sight; turns out they had some real charm when they toned things down a little.

"Well . . . would you wanna get intimate with me sometime?"

I felt myself blush at the suggestion. Six months prior I'd have just politely declined without a second thought, but in that moment I hesitated: the calm, thoughtful, entirely self-sufficient human I'd just spent most of the day with was a far cry from the impetuous kid I used to have to look out for. After a summer of lousy dates, the idea of finding intimacy with someone I was already comfortable with seemed pretty tempting.

"Just to be clear," their words spilled out rapidly, my momentary pause clearly making them nervous, "I'm asking you on a date . . . if you're interested?"

“Yeah,” I said, feeling a grin spread across my cheeks; their earnestness was pretty endearing, “I think that’d be nice.”

We made plans to see each other somewhere more private the following Tuesday evening while I unlocked my bike and pulled on my helmet. The sight of their contented smile as I rode off left me with a flutter in my belly and the first tingly feeling in my pants in a good while.

When Tuesday evening rolled around, I filled a bowl extra full for Mr. Piddlepants the Housecat—to give him his full and formal title—then hopped on my bike and headed over their way, grabbing a couple of tall cans and a bunch of flowers at a store en route. After a light dinner, a couple of drinks and some tentative, exploratory flirting in their backyard, we headed inside again; I offered to handle dishes while they arranged the flowers in a giant mason jar they were using as a makeshift vase.

“So, I didn’t want to bring this up by text,” I started, steeling myself for the impending awkwardness I knew I was about to bring upon myself, “but I’ve got an embarrassing confession I wanna get out of the way before we take things any further.”

“Shoot,” they replied, as they set the finished bouquet down on their kitchen windowsill, “what’s up?”

“I’ve known you for, what? Like, four or five years now?”

I pulled the plug from the sink and nodded my thanks as they passed me a towel.

“Yeah, around that, I guess. Why?”

“So, I never really got properly introduced to you way back. Y’know, before everyone started calling you . . .”

I trailed off as I started drying my hands off. It’s not like they didn’t know that they were Toe Tag to all our friends but, knowing where our evening was likely to head, it felt silly and juvenile to call this gorgeous

genderqueer babe by a crass, vaguely mocking nickname that had been bestowed upon them after what was probably one of the shittiest moments of their life.

“And, um,” I swallowed and met their eye, “I don’t think I’ve ever known another name to call you by.”

I offered a sheepish smile to accompany my bashful admission. They chuckled a little as they met me with a kind, soft smile of their own and leant back against their kitchen table. The sight of the midriff they exposed in the process made my insides melt a little.

“Well, lucky for you I, uh . . . I’m actually not using the name you would have known me by any more anyhow,” they started chewing on their lip stud again and glanced down toward their feet for a second before they continued, “I haven’t told anyone else yet—I figured I’d have a few more weeks to feel it out for myself first—but I’m going by Emily now.”

I smiled back at them shyly, feeling more than a little relieved that they’d taken it well and honored they’d chosen to share their new name with me.

“Well . . . Emily,” my delivery was thoughtful and deliberate; their name was delicious as it rolled over my tongue, “I’ve been wondering if you’d like to take a bath with me tonight?”

After a few days of consideration, taking a bath together had emerged as one of the most comfortable, relaxed and low-key ways I could think of to introduce them to my body—and me to theirs, if they were amenable—and Emily’s new place had one of the nicest tubs I’d ever seen. One of the big talking points at their housewarming had been the ridiculous size of their new bathroom: the full-size clawfoot tub and gigantic rainfall showerhead had impressed the shit out of the crowd of disheveled punks in attendance. Just another sign we were all getting older, I guess.

Emily's face lit up at the suggestion, their cheeks pinkening just a touch.

"That sounds wonderful, yeah."

We undressed together in their bathroom as the tub filled, exchanging shy and curious glances at each other as layers were peeled away. I'd seen most of my friends in various states of undress countless times—shirts were shed at shows, people skinny-dipped in the lake during beach trips, and walking in on folks sharing private moments was a decently common part of the house party experience—but this felt different. I was mentally mapping their body in ways I'd never considered before, imagining the friction of their skin sliding against my own, the heat of their core radiating against my roaming fingers, the taste of their sweat on my tongue. After I slipped my socks off and kicked them aside I lifted my dress up and over my head then glanced back over at Emily to see them wearing nothing but a pair of tight-fitting boxers.

"Shall we?" I asked as I thumbed at my underwear and tried not to stare too hard at the way they were filling theirs out.

We slid our respective pairs down more or less simultaneously and spent a solid few seconds after with roving eyes taking in the sight of each other's fully nude forms for the first time. It took all I had in the moment to gesture toward the bath rather than to reach out to touch them, but we found our way there, Emily stepping in first before I settled in to sit facing them. I had a million things running through my head, all of them jostling against each other, but Emily silenced every stray thought with a simple question:

"Can I kiss you?"

"Please."

I leant forward to meet their full and supple lips, the sensation of them against my own felt utterly intoxicating. They were eager and demanding, pressing themselves into me, their tongue darting forward

to flick and tease at my own while I struggled to remember to breathe. Carefully, tentatively, I reached forward to touch their skin, finding their ribs and letting my fingertips roam from there. Brushing the backs of my knuckles against the underside of the soft swell of one their newly-grown breasts made them gasp, breaking our kiss for the first time.

“So . . . enjoying estrogen, then?”

They laughed and grinned widely.

“Yeah, it’s been a good few months,” they lifted their chest a little and looked down at the pert little buds of the darkened nipples that sat atop their small mounds, “they may not be much but they’re mine!”

I leant forward and placed a glancing whisper of a kiss just above one nipple, even that light touch making them groan and gasp again.

“I like ‘em.”

They reached over and took one of my nipples in their fingers, eliciting a purr of delight as they began rolling it lightly against their thumb. I leant in and kissed them again, caressing their cheek as they pinched and pulled at my nipple, the switchboard of pleasure synapses in my brain lighting up in response to their deft fingerwork. I began to lose myself in our kiss, pressing myself into them hungrily. When they finally released their hold on my nipple I let loose a groan of delicious frustration into their mouth, then gasped as they trailed their fingertips down my midline, their gentle touch sending shivers up my spine.

“Can you show me . . . ?” they started, glancing down below the surface. I shimmied forward a little, splaying my knees as widely as the ample tub would allow, then held my hand out to take theirs, plunging both under the waterline once they obliged.

“How about I give you the full post-orchi tour?” I asked, drawing their hand between my legs.

While they kept their smile, I could see a new intensity of focus come across their face as I directed their touch to the spots I was still learning myself.

"Here," I sighed, as their fingertips first touched me, "just above my ass, push into me there and see how much give there is."

They curled two fingers up and deep into me, my head lolling down at the dizzying wave that washed over me from the sensation.

"Here," I gently nudged their touch a little higher, to the thick, sturdy muscle running between my thighs, "*firm* pressure."

They pressed against me, then glanced back up to check in. I shook my head lightly.

"Like you mean it."

They shot me a *you asked for it* . . . look and tried again, really driving their fingers against the root of me.

"Ahh fuck, yes, like that. Unff."

I tried not to buck against them too much, there still being a lot I wanted to run them through yet, but resisting leaning into their touch was a hell of a struggle.

"K, you can feel the aftermath of the surgery here," I reluctantly drew away then guided their hand a little higher, to where the emptiness left behind by the removal of my orchids became clearer, "see how you can just follow the strip of muscle all the way up?"

Emily nodded a moment later, their gaze intently focussed on the path their fingers were tracing up between my legs up through the loose skin that had, until recently, held my girls all the way to the base of my shaft. Taking a light hold of the thin wing of rumped skin that hung loose in the warmth of the bath water, they explored the creases and folds of my newly hollowed-out pouch with a soft touch, likely feeling the same feelings of wonder and discovery as I did when I first started to get a feel for my new junk in the weeks post-op.

“And here,” I directed their fingers with my own again, placing them just off to one side of the root, by the entrance to one of my muffs, “you should be able to feel one of my openings.”

They stroked through the relaxed skin, delicately and carefully feeling for the crevice in the sensitive tissue that lay below.

“There . . .” I breathed, struggling to keep my composure. Emily pressed the very tip of one finger against me, just barely starting to push into me, but paused and withdrew their touch entirely, leaving me feeling achinglly deprived . . . until they stood and offered me their hand.

“You wanna relocate somewhere a lil roomier?”

Toweled off, the bath drained, I lay on my back in their bed with my legs splayed once more. Emily lay on their front a little lower down the bed. Having found a comfortable spot to position themselves between my thighs, they placed their hand in mine again and let me direct them back to the crease of my inner thigh. They rested their hand there lightly and watched me intently, my right hand mostly covering my junk as my first two fingers searched out and located the under-skin opening on my left side again. They didn’t need verbal direction, they simply placed their right hand on top of mine so their fore and middle fingers lay directly on my hand’s counterparts. I pushed in, taking a slow, deep breath as my fingertips disappeared into one of my body’s hidden canals, barely below the surface but feeling somehow deeper than I could ever fathom. We made intense, unbroken eye contact as I drew my fingers back up and out to let theirs take over. As I lifted my hand away entirely they pressed in, penetrating me—slowly, deliberately, carefully—until a catch in my breath told them I’d reached my limit, for now. They drew back slightly and pushed forward again, curling their fingers down and in toward my center line, cupping the outside of their palm against me to press against one of the many spots I haven’t yet found the right words to name but that desperately need to be known through touch.

I could barely breathe, let alone speak, so I let Emily take her direction from my frenzied nods and stuttered gasps. Once their fingers found a slow and steady rhythm in my muff they started grinding two knuckles from their left hand a few inches lower. There's a time and a place for featherlight touch, but the muscle-heavy strip between my legs is not one of those. They knew it and leant the weight of their body into their arm to provide the intense pressure I needed: their fingers pressing into me, fucking me hard and filling me deep, was everything I wanted, everything I needed, everything I could have asked them for.

All good things must come to an end, though, and the incredible, overwhelming sensations Emily had drawn out of me were no exception.

"Okay, fuck . . ." I only barely managed to get the words out, "I'm done, I'm done . . ."

"You okay?" they asked as they carefully withdrew their fingers from me, a hint of panic in their voice.

"I'm so good!" I threw my arms wide and pulled them down on top of me, "I'm just overstimulated in the best fucking way possible."

As we lay in a tangle of sweaty limbs and tangled hair afterwards—a breather to let me catch myself before I returned the favor and smothered Emily with my affections—I trailed my touch down the faded remnants of their barely-there treasure trail and through their well-tended fuzz to tease the edge of their sac.

"So what d'you think?" I questioned, flitting a glance down in case my touch didn't make it clear what I'd meant, "Still considering it?"

"Fucking definitely!" they replied excitedly, their breathing still heavy from their exertions, "That was hot as fuck! I can't wait until I can get in there on myself."

I propped myself up on my elbow, a sly smirk on my face.

"Oh, believe me, love: you can get in there now . . . want me to show you?"

First Contact

I wasn't even trying to be the first trans astronaut, it just kinda . . . happened. I mean, yes, I have the admittedly daunting qualifications needed to fill my role on this ship, but the spot wasn't meant for me. The crew for this mission had been picked from hundreds of thousands of hopeful applicants; months of try-outs and tests were used to select for the right balance of skills, specializations and flight experience, steadily whittling down the field until the final sixty-five candidates were selected. That team had been training for the mission together for a month already when one of them was killed in a freak accident: a hit-&-run by a drunk driver while he was walking his dog on the last home-visit weekend away from the training facility. Their back-up only lasted a week in the confinement training, designed to prepare the crew for missions lasting years, possibly decades, with only each other for company, before she bailed. She just couldn't take the isolation.

Somehow, in the internal panic at NASA, my name was passed on to the right person and I got an unexpected—to say the least—phone call with a desperate plea. Three days later my cat was with my sister, I'd quit my part-time job and handed my keys back to my landlord. I was leaving the planet for the first, and almost certainly last, time on a next-generation spaceship with a roadmap pointing out beyond the edge of our little solar system.

I didn't think I was still in the military's good graces, not after I published my book ("Air Force Ex Changes Sex, Writes Book BLASTING Military Policies!" was one of the more colorful headlines), but apparently someone I'd collaborated with years ago on a next-gen hyperjet propulsion system project still remembered me and thought highly enough of my work to put my name forward. I spent two full days in Pasadena doing round after round of interviews and physical testing, all while desperately trying to remember physics I'd last used

well over a decade ago so I could just about hold my own in discussions of the interstellar engine design that was being used on the ship I'd be leaving on. Thankfully, most of their interest was in my post-Air Force linguistics work, especially what I'd written about in my book on non-violent communication that had caused the minor furor a few years ago: the specialist they lost was on the crew primarily as an engine tech, but they were relying on his linguistics background in the event that the ship encountered intelligent life after it passed out of the solar system.

And so that's how I wound up being the first human—trans or not—to communicate with an extraterrestrial being. Like I said: I didn't plan any of this, I was just lucky enough to be brought along for the ride. I figured that, at best, I'd wind up playing school teacher to the first wave of offworld children that would be born from the frozen embryos stored in the ship's midsection whenever we reached our destination, wherever that wound up being. But even that seemed like it would be better than dying alone somewhere in the midwest after an uneventful next few decades. Instead, I was woken from cryosleep almost three months before my first mandated wake cycle and dragged—almost literally—down the hallways of the ship to the medical bay. Still fighting the foggiest in my brain, I caught snippets from the two incredibly excited crewmembers who'd brought me here: a crash, something about gas ratios and life support systems, a rescue pod, and there was an *It* they kept referring to. I had no idea what was happening nor why I was there until the medical bay doors slid open and I saw *It* for myself. There, lying on a pair of gurneys with a thin clear plastic tent jury-rigged around it, was something decidedly non-human. It was almost entirely a uniform shade of dull slate gray and measured in at maybe ten feet long, with a long trail of dozens of wispy-thin tendrils making up well over three-quarters of that. Where the messy tangle of micro-tentacles pulled together, they cohered into a smooth featureless dome with a faint ring of five darker spots recessed into one side. Certainly not orifices, but maybe eye spots?

The shock of the sight jolted me properly awake: this surely couldn't be real. I tuned back in to what was being said to me, the overlapping jumble of information being thrown out by the two exuberant crewmembers starting to make some sense now.

"... signal they picked up turned out to be an escape pod of some kind—"

"The main ship wreckage hasn't been found yet, but—"

"Naar and Chen took one of the scout ships out and found the specimen unconscious inside. We're pretty certain it's alive beca—"

"It's breathing! Well, kinda. And it moves and twitches, too. But here's the really wild thing: it's not carbon-based. This is an entirely new type of life! We—"

"We've got the tent filled with a gas mix as close to the sample we got from the tank in the rescue pod, there's some oxygen but it looks like—"

"It breathes argon! Well . . . maybe not breathes, we're not sure. But the gas has a much higher ratio of it than Earth air, but there's still a nitrogen buffer, oxygen is there in trace amounts and . . ."

The makeshift door to the tent zipped open and the captain of the ship stepped out, a short, stocky, perpetually-scowling man named Naar. I'd met him a couple of times during my orientation and on-boarding and while we hadn't exactly hit it off, I felt like we had at least a grudging respect for each other. Leaving the other two to get lost in speculation about the molecular make-up of "the specimen," Naar pulled me aside and slipped off his oxygen mask.

"I need you here 24/7 until it wakes up. It's likely to be intelligent, given the craft we found it in, so I need you to communicate with it, if you can. If there's any trouble, Ellis and Ward will handle it. They're being woken next and will sleep in shifts with you. The ship is going to hold here while we recover the pod it was in and send word to Houston to ask what they want us to do from here. We can't send a signal for

at least a few weeks because of our position, and we can't change that while we're working on recovering the craft. Get ready to hunker down."

Then he was gone, off to some more important task. Ellis and Ward were the military grunts; I didn't like that he felt the need to have both of them here "just in case" but I also knew there was no way I could argue it. I headed for my locker and pulled out some clothes, blankets, and a tablet then stopped by the galley to get an armload of snackable room-temperature foods. I wanted to be here as much as possible; the last thing I needed was to come back to Ward or Ellis pointing a gun at the poor thing because it came to while I was out getting lunch.

It took a full two days before there was movement from the table: one of the tendrils hanging off the side started moving more deliberately than the occasional unconscious twitches I'd seen over the past forty-eight hours. I gave Ellis a "two minutes" hand signal then moved into the tent, grabbing a portable oxygen tank and hooking the tubing under my nose on my way. I heard him cock his gun before I even closed the door flap behind me. The creature moved slowly but deliberately; if it was scared or panicked it certainly didn't show in its movements. After cautiously extending, flexing, and curling a couple of its long, thin tendrils, it trained what I'd guessed were its eye spots on me. It started up from where it lay, moving to the closest thing to a sitting position that it could, a mass of its tendrils spilling down toward the cold, polished floor from the edge of the gurney. Half a dozen tendrils then raised up and moved rapidly in front of it in a series of very deliberate motions that were very clearly directed at me. The motions stopped as quickly and precisely as they'd started, after which the creature dropped its tendrils and waited. I slowly brought a hand to my chest then spoke my name, enunciating it loudly and clearly.

"Emma."

The previously featureless blank slate of its face—if it could be said to have one—lit up at this, with various sections rapidly swelling and depressing in concert in response. It raised its tendrils again and they began another frenetic dance that I couldn't follow in the least. I had no idea what this alien being was trying to say, but it was definitely attempting to communicate with me. This was unbelievable.

Our first major breakthrough came three weeks later, after spending almost all day, every day slowly working out a shared communication strategy. My daily practice to that point had involved me speaking, then watching for the corresponding tendril motion that was mirrored back to me; we'd started with fragments of sound and had slowly worked up to combining those into individual words and the basic syntax of spoken English. That morning I was met with an immediate excited waving of tendrils, the same sequence being repeated slowly over and over: two tendrils crossed in an X, three held up in slanted lines, then two pointed directly at me. I scribbled them down in my notebook and checked back to my earlier notes to translate.

"EM. MA."

An extraterrestrial being had just spoken my name. Holy shit.

I nodded enthusiastically and touched my hand to my chest, as I had when we'd first met. There was a pause, then the sequence of movement changed: three wavy lines, four standing straight up beside each other, then two pointed back at itself.

"OH. REY."

I spoke the sounds back slowly, enunciating the two syllables clearly.

"Orey."

Orey shivered with happiness in response, then framed another set of tendril movement.

"SH. EE."

This time Orey's tendrils pointed at me, then back at herself. I felt a wave of relief wash over me: the first few weeks of referring to her as a genderless *It* had dredged up unpleasant memories of how I'd been treated in some quarters during the early days of my transition. I had a name and pronouns for her. We were making progress.

With the building blocks of a shared communication in place, conversation started to emerge over the weeks that followed. Though Orey made no communicative sounds of her own, she seemed to be able to hear across the full range of human vocal frequencies. Even if she didn't understand all of my short, to-the-point sentences, she was able to pick out some key words and concepts from them to gain at least the general idea of what I was trying to get across to her. It was slow and laborious work at the best of times, but it was happening. It wasn't like we didn't have time; Orey's escape pod was too large to be housed in any of our ship's docks, so it was being towed behind our ship at a crawl to ensure it wasn't damaged further as we crept out from Jupiter's shadow back into communication range.

As weeks stretched into months, I learned more about her tendril-waving communication. She "framed" her sentence with two tendrils, bent as if at the elbows, in a box around two to four others that she "spoke" with in precise movements, with the tilt of the "frame" providing the stresses, emphases, and emotions that the words she signed lacked on their own. And boy, was there emotion. The forty-odd basic units of speech that made up her words had been simple enough to figure out, but the range and depth of feeling she could express with her framing filled pages upon pages of my notebook. There were still a lot of subtle differences between them all that I was missing, but I was starting to be able to tell when she was excited, reserved, frustrated, or curious just from her framing. Mostly she was curious.

"WHAT EMOTION YOU FEEL. QUESTION. TENTATIVE."

"TELL STORY ABOUT TIME BEFORE SHIP. QUESTION. EXCITED."

“WHERE SHIP DESTINATION. QUESTION. CURIOUS.”

“WHY YOU TRAVEL. QUESTION CURIOUS.”

“MISSED YOU IN ABSENCE. FEEL FONDNESS.”

I had a list of questions about her ship, her culture and technology that I'd been tasked with, but they mostly just sat unanswered in my notebook. Orey didn't care about the technology we used or sharing details of how her craft operated; she wanted to hear stories about my life, about what I thought of all the different people on the ship with us, about what a world with billions of humans on it was like. She wanted to know so much about people and was starting to get frustrated at being trapped in the small tent she'd been living in for months. She desperately wanted to meet the rest of the crew, to talk to them about their lives and hear about their feelings.

It took weeks of badgering Naar and Stein—the ship's chief medical officer, woken shortly after I was—but they finally allowed me to convert one of the quarantine rooms in the medical bay into living quarters for Orey. With the bay primarily built to serve as a medical base for the full population of the ship at its final destination, most of the space was fairly useless until we got wherever we were going: we didn't need hundreds of square feet and a dozen separate quarantine rooms at a moment's notice when only a skeleton crew were in their awake phase at any given time. Whether she was considered a refugee, an emissary or a visiting dignitary, she was due at least some privacy and space to move more than a few feet under a plastic tarp. I pushed the two of them heavily on these points, finally getting them to relent when I offered to use my downtime to help Engineering plumb the room with Orey's argon gas mixture, a task I wasn't super qualified for, but was more than happy to take on in order to get her out of the cramped space she was stuck in.

I didn't tell Orey until the plumbing had been completed, but she was delighted by the news when I finally, clumsily got it across to her. Her entire body seemed to shimmer and waver slightly in her

excitement as she explored her new quarters. Part of the compromise I made with Naar and Stein was that the viewing port in both doors to the room be kept open at all times so Ellis or Ward could continue to “keep an eye on her,” but she at least now had some semi-private space and a little more room to move herself around in. Orey heaped her thanks upon me, the same now-familiar tendril motions repeating over and over as the framing all but screamed happiness and gratitude.

She touched me for the first time then, as I got ready to leave her in her new quarters for the night. I’d touched her tendrils once before, a few days after she’d woken up: I’d signaled interest in them and their motions, so she’d extended one to me and allowed me to feel the firm, cold, and rough texture. It felt almost like flexible concrete, but her movements with them were deft and precise. This time she reached one out to me, signaling, “TOUCH. PERMISSION. QUESTION.” with a reserved, polite framing. I nodded my assent and she let the tip gently drape over my left arm just above my wrist. If it hadn’t felt so good, the surprise of the sensation would have caused me to jump away: far from the cool coarseness I’d experienced before it almost felt like her tendril was melting around me, into me. My body warmed from a coldness I didn’t know I’d allowed myself to settle into. I felt less hardened and bitter than I had in years. I had no idea how much time passed before she lifted her tendril away, gave me the nod/curtsey that I’d learned was her way of politely ending an interaction, and moved over toward her bed, still vibrating with glee. I left in a daze, my mood buoyed by the tingly warmth still radiating through me as I drifted aimlessly down the hallway to return to my own quarters.

I lay awake in my bunk for hours after that, unable to get the lingering after-effects of the sensation out of my mind. I was exhausted, but my brain wouldn’t stop spinning: I kept thinking of the feeling of Orey’s tendril on my wrist, and how much it reminded me of those blissful post-sex afterglow moments, when all feels right in the world and nothing matters but your sweetheart’s arms around you. My mind filled with fuzzy memories of old lovers and those brief,

fleeting moments of bliss that I still treasured. I thought back to the night when I watched the sun set from the top of the local make-out hill with my high school girlfriend, the two of us giddy and flushed, huddled under a tree with nothing but my jacket covering us. Then, as fond recollections of the first man who didn't treat me as disposable began to swell, I started rocking myself against my pillow. Thoughts of falling asleep with my head on his furry chest and waking up to his soft kisses and golden smile roused my clit, clearing the path for hot and filthy memories to start replacing the sweet and tender ones as my brain shifted up a gear to keep up with my body. I shed my sweaty shirt and straddled the pillow properly, rocking and grinding my clit into it through my underwear as I rummaged back through the highlight reel of my lifetime of sexual exploits: the night I skinny-dipped in Hawai'i and wound up taking two sailors home; the time my girlfriend and I didn't leave her bedroom for three days after she borrowed her friend's video camera one summer long weekend; the ecstatic desperation of being plugged, gagged, and edged for hours by a loving mistress. When my thoughts flitted back to Orey's touch on my arm the feeling rapidly spread through my whole body, unexpectedly tipping me over the edge and into my first orgasm in a very long time. Squeezing the pillow tightly between my legs, I rode out the seemingly never-ending waves of pleasure that overcame me before I collapsed back into my bunk, my breathing heavy and ragged. When I finally leveled out again, I peeled off my sticky underwear and dropped them beside my pillow on the floor before I rolled over and passed out almost instantly.

I awoke a little groggy from my unexpectedly late night, but the bubbly good cheer I'd enjoyed on my way to bed remained, giving me a spring in my step as I headed down the hallway, ready for another busy day with Orey. My good mood came to an abrupt halt when I reached the medical bay. From outside the door I heard angry shouts, the sounds of glass breaking, then something metallic clanging and spilling its contents on the floor. I rushed in to find Ward struggling to hold Orey

down on an examination table, her constricted tendrils still flailing, pushing, grabbing, and whipping at him while Stein loomed over her, syringe in hand.

“What the *fuck* is going on?!”

The question was redundant, but my volume and tone were enough for Stein to turn toward me and take a step back. I shot daggers at Ward as he continued to struggle with Orey and hissed through clenched teeth.

“*Let. Her. Go.*”

Ward kept his hold until he got the nod from Stein, at which point he reluctantly released Orey from his bear-hug and shoved her back over toward her room. She immediately darted through the door into her quarters, the one refuge she thought she had. I pivoted, releasing my barely-contained rage on Stein.

“Really? You couldn’t have waited until I was here to explain what you were trying to do to her? She can’t breathe out here! Can you imagine what she must think of us now?!”

He stumbled over his response, seemingly only just becoming aware of how poorly this reflected on him.

“We—we needed more samples, the scrapings we took initially need to be, uh, need to be compared to new ones and I need to take some blood from it for—”

I flew off the handle at that, my indignation at his lack of respect for Orey tapping into the deep veins of anger, hurt, and self-loathing buried within me.

“*She* has a goddamn name and *she* should be treated like the intelligent being that *she* is. Tell me what you need and why, then come back in a couple of hours and I’ll see if she consents to giving you anything. *Fuck!*”

I stood shaking and outraged as I watched the two skulk off out through the sliding doors. As soon as the main bay door shut behind them I began pacing around the room, working off my agitation and trying to clear my head. When my hands finally stopped shaking I pulled up a stool outside the airlock door to Orey's room. I sat up straight and tried to project my voice as clearly as I could; the inner window was closed and I was unsure how two-way communication would work if she refused to come out.

"Orey. I am sorry. I did not know. Remorse."

Silence.

"Can we talk? Question."

More silence. I waited her out for a bit then stood up and moved the stool away. I decided then and there to shift my belongings from my quarters to set myself up in the quarantine room next to her: I couldn't trust leaving her alone and unprotected any more. Before I was able to put my plan in motion I heard a hiss from behind me. Orey was tentatively pushing her room's inner door open with a tendril. When she saw I was alone she signaled for me to enter and moved back inside, closing the inner door but opening the window. I grabbed my oxygen tank and started the time-consuming process of entering her room through the double-door airlock chamber. Once I was inside and had both doors safely shut behind me I positioned my arms as best I could to approximate her signaling for regret/apology and spoke again.

"I am very sorry. I did not know the men would come. Remorse."

She raised her speech tendrils in response, her quavering framing conveying her understandable terror and trepidation.

"NOT YOU. BAD MEN. BIG FEAR."

"The men are not bad. The men are stupid. The men are . . . clumsy."

It was a complicated concept to put across, but she seemed to grasp it: we'd talked clumsiness enough already. I didn't want to tell her, "The men will come back." I was going to have to, but not yet. Instead, I sat down on the chair beside her bed and we settled into something resembling our usual conversation, Orey slowly unfurling from her panicked demeanor as we talked.

Later, in the evening, I spent an hour or so in Orey's room supervising and translating—as best I could—while she voluntarily gave Stein some more skin scrapings. My attempts at asking her permission for a blood sample went less smoothly: she didn't seem to distinguish between her skin and what was beneath it. Eventually, Stein demonstrated by drawing a small vial of blood from my arm—much to Orey's fascination. After another roundabout conversation with her, I relayed the message to Stein that whatever samples he'd got from her skin were the same as he'd get if he stuck a needle anywhere inside her; the idea of specialized cells was entirely alien to her. Stein was obviously eager to do more invasive testing after I told him that, but it only took a well-placed icy glare for him to know that wasn't in the cards. I sent him off with a promise to spend a few hours facilitating a conversation on our species' respective biological compositions between them another day, then checked back in with Orey before I headed to collect all my things for my move. She seemed delighted to have me staying so close to her, and excitedly requested that I come back and see her again after I'd collected my belongings.

Once I'd mostly set up my new quarters I paid Orey a visit to check in with her before I slept. It was late, but she was even more eager to see me than usual, and began to sign to me almost as soon as I got through the inner door. I couldn't keep up with her excited chatter—her tendrils moving so quickly they just became a blur—so I had to ask her to slow down. She paused for a moment to calm herself, then started again, signing slowly and clearly to me:

“YOU RESPECT ME. YOU ASK BEFORE TOUCH. YOU CONSIDER EMOTIONS. ALWAYS. WE SHARE MUCH TIME. WE SHARE AFFECTION. I WANT TO SHARE POSITIVE EMOTION. I WANT TO SHARE TOUCH. PERMISSION. QUESTION.”

Her wording was almost identical to when she'd touched my arm before—the memory briefly making my heart flutter and my clit twitch—but the framing of “TOUCH” was much stronger from the reserved, polite stress she'd given it last time. I hesitated for a moment, unsure how to answer a question I didn't quite understand, before it dawned on me what Orey's exaggerated framing meant and exactly what the “TOUCH” she was asking to share with me would be. Feeling flustered and totally unprepared, I quickly excused myself, trying my hardest to ignore Orey's crestfallen look as I hustled past her and out the airlock. I wished I'd set up a little further from her quarters as I burrowed myself down into my blanket, my brain spinning with questions of ethics, duty, desire, and safety.

What if I'd misunderstood and caused her horrible offense by assuming her intentions? What if I knew exactly what she meant and just blew my chance to take her up on the offer? What if she hurt me, or—worse—if I hurt her? What if someone found out, or walked in on us? What if she changed her mind when she saw what was beneath my clothes? *What if, what if, what if . . . ?* filled my head until I couldn't take it any longer and had to get up to walk laps of the ship's corridors around the medical bay. What she was asking made me as excited as it did nervous, but despite every argument I made in my mind about why I shouldn't, I couldn't deny that it was what I wanted. I'd spent almost every waking hour with her for months without tiring of her company for a moment: our conversations were fascinating, fun, surprising, enlightening, and—most of all—they were something I thoroughly enjoyed and treasured. I looked forward to every new day because I knew I was going to spend it with her. If she wanted to “SHARE TOUCH” with me then I wanted to experience that with her.

My decision was made. Standing outside the doors to the medical bay, I readied myself with one last deep breath, then touched the button to slide the doors open.

Breathing tubes in place, I was about to knock on the outer airlock door to Orey's room when I realized how human a social convention that was. I decided just to raise my voice and speak to her through the door as I'd done before.

"Orey. I would like to talk with you. Can I enter? Permission. Question."

The wait was agonizing, but she eventually moved herself so she was visible through the inner door's window and cautiously waved me in. I worked my way through the process of entering, sliding the outer and inner windows shut as soon as each door closed behind me. I couldn't lock the room from the inside, but the hassle of entering through the twin-door airlock system would at least alert us and buy us a couple of seconds if someone decided to come snooping. Orey stood on the curled tips of her tendrils by her bed, looking curious and cautious—at least, as best as I could tell. I took a second to collect my thoughts. I'd run through what I wanted to say a hundred times in my laps around the bay but standing in front of her left my mouth dry and my knees weak. Attempting my best apologetic/reserved framing with my arms I put my response to her:

"Orey. I am sorry I left. I was surprised by your question. I . . . I want to share touch. With you. Would you still like to share touch with me? Question."

I saw the ripple of excitement pass through her before I'd even finished speaking, and felt a rare grin break across my own face as I watched her reaction.

"YES. SHARE TOUCH. I FEEL EXCITEMENT."

The smile remained plastered on my face as I stepped forward and took her offered tendril in my hand. Immediately I felt the same flushed

feeling and inner glowing sensation I had when she'd touched my arm before. Without the surprise, I was able to appreciate exactly how it felt as it radiated through me in slow, pulsing waves of warmth, like the giddy headrush of standing up after downing your first drink on an empty stomach. Looking down at my hand, I could see that the feeling I had of her melting around and into me wasn't just a phantom sensation: her tendril had lost its rigid and coarse firmness and was now semi-translucent with an oily, bubble-like sheen to it, flowing around my skin like a thick gel, testing and probing at my soft flesh with gentle squeezes that I could feel but see no mechanism for. Not that I really cared, the sensation was so mind-blowing that I struggled to pay attention to anything else.

She offered a second tendril, and I gladly took that in my other hand, stepping closer to her again as she enveloped me up to the wrist, the rest of her body beginning to shimmer and waver. Another tendril joined the first on my right arm, melting around me just above the wrist and probing at the sleeve of my shirt, making me highly aware of my clothing. I gently pulled one hand back from Orey. She quickly released me entirely and glided back a few inches in a smooth rolling motion, gesturing apologetically for hurting me, her body firm and gray once more. I shook my head and smiled broadly at her: two of the non-verbal signals that she'd begun to pick up on.

"You did not hurt me. You make me feel good. I like sharing touch. I need to . . ."

I faltered at the word "undress." Clothes weren't something we'd really discussed before. Instead I simply unhooked my oxygen line, grabbed my shirt at the waistband, and pulled it up over my head, following it quickly with the sports bra I had underneath. Orey seemed to understand what I was doing and relaxed, her outline softening to its blurred, glistening haze once more. I sat on the edge of the bed, slipped the tank's nose strap back on and kicked my boots off, slid down my pants, then caught myself hesitating when I got to my underwear.

This was a moment that had been so fraught for me so many times before—occasionally for good reason—but looking over at the ecstatic being gazing back at me with pure adoration, I knew I had nothing to worry about. I slipped them down and stood again, facing Orey in my nakedness for the first time. I could see her processing the visual changes that my nudity presented after weeks of only seeing me dressed in my crew uniform, and I gave her a moment to take it in. She began to reach a tendril toward me again then hesitated and pulled it back, replacing it with her communicating ones.

“I DO NOT WANT TO HURT YOU. SHARE POSITIVE EMOTION ONLY. PLEASE DIRECT.”

“Your touch has only been good. Please, share touch with me again.”

I offered her a hand and she melted, flowed over and encompassed me with her goopy, quasi-liquid form. I lost count of how many tendrils were touching me as the building sensation-upon-sensation quickly overwhelmed me. After she'd wrapped both my arms to my shoulders, I pulled us over to the bed and lay back. She climbed up after me and straddled my stomach, the mess of her tendrils spilling across my midriff beginning to come alive to embrace and encompass me. I felt a couple snaking down my stomach toward my clit and involuntarily stiffened up. Without missing a beat Orey gently shifted their course and began to coil them around my upper thighs; my sighs and groans and micromotions directing her better than I could have with words. I curled and flexed my fingers inside the sheer bubble of tendrils they were enveloped in, delighting in the push-and-pull of the interaction with her softer form. She was still soundless, but I could read the ways she tensed back against me: sometimes inviting, sometimes gently redirecting, sometimes pleasantly surprised at my motion. I rolled my hips up and against her, most of me now engulfed within her semi-solid expanse; almost all her tendrils had lost their discreteness, becoming more of a swelling, shifting, flowing mass that my torso, arms, and

thighs were being swallowed up within. Every motion I made was met by her soft, slick, warm resistance, and I hoped the interplay of our motions felt as good for her as it did for me.

“I want you inside me.”

The words surprised me even as they left my mouth, but I didn't regret them. The tendrils wrapped around my thighs stiffened a little as Orey asserted herself, pulling and spreading my legs until I could feel her start to push and probe at me between them. She pressed hard on my perineum as she flowed over me and began to tease my hole with the slick tip of a single, discrete tendril. My breaths shortened and quickened; my fingers curled tight, squeezing her from within.

“Please?”

I was almost begging: her teasing was driving me wild. Then I felt her tendril tip take on more definition, hardening as it pressed against me with deliberate intent. I whimpered at the gentle pressure, then almost screamed as she pushed into me. Her tendril swelled and pulsed once it was inside me, filling me more thoroughly than I'd ever felt before. She found a rhythm inside me, pulsing the thickness and firmness of her tendril to work me up more and more. I was sweating, thrashing, gripping, and moaning, desperately trying to pull her even closer into me and push myself back against her. My orgasm hit me so hard that I blacked out briefly: I honestly just don't think my brain could handle everything that was being thrown at it in that moment. I came to again not long after, feeling Orey slipping out of me and gently, carefully detangling herself from the 80% of my body she was melted around and pressed into.

“That was . . . incredible. Thank you so much.”

She nuzzled into me, her tendrils still soft and squishy but slowly taking on individual definition again, and signed her own satisfaction and pleasure with a couple of the firmer ones. I stroked at some of her

hardening tendrils as I relaxed into her dozen-limbed embrace, feeling nothing but pure bliss at having a loving partner hold me again.

I was drifting in and out of sleep when my communicator pinged from somewhere in the mess of my clothes on the floor. I moved carefully, trying not to disturb Orey, as I reached down and slipped the device off from where it was clipped to the waistband of my pants. It was a message from Steele: Houston had received the ship's signal, further orders were expected to follow in the next six to eight hours. My heart sank as I read it. One of two things was about to happen: either Orey would leave for Earth on a scout ship (with or without me, I had no idea) or—if we were lucky—I'd be tasked with getting some directions from her and the mission would reroute to head for wherever she called home. I had to tell her, to warn her that no matter what these new orders were, everything was about to change. But she was asleep, I was tired and emotional, and it wouldn't change anything for me to wait until the morning to break the news. For now, I simply laid with her tendrils wrapped around me, enjoying the sweet afterglow I hadn't realized I missed so much until I met her.

1-800-BUILD-A-BOI

“**I**-800-BUILD-A-BOI, this is the dispatcher speaking. What kind of boi do you want to rock your world tonight?”

I'm met by dead silence from the other end of the line, so I start a slow mental count to ten before I hang up.

One . . . Two . . . Three . . .

Timewasters are fairly common, but I get enough business from nervous “long time admirer, first time caller” clients that I always leave a generous window for an anxiety-ridden queer to find their voice and speak up.

Four . . . Five . . . Six . . . Seven . . .

It's pushing 10:30pm and if I don't have a date sorted by then I'm going to clock off, light the joint I've been eyeing all evening, and take a well-deserved quiet night off alone on my balcony.

Eight . . . Nine . . . Ten.

I tap the phone screen to end the call and glance across to the wall clock over my bed: 10:23pm. Close enough that I'm tempted to just turn my work phone off a little early, spark up, and enjoy a relaxing evening to myse—

My phone cries out with a loud, shrill chirrup, notifying me of an incoming call from an unknown number. With my thumb already hovering over the power button, I briefly consider giving into the temptation of just letting it ring out and calling it a night, but my job is way too fun to miss out on whatever adventures this call might hold. I take a breath to get my head right then click to answer.

“1-800-B—”

I don't even manage to get my intro line out before I'm met by the familiar, high-pitched, mile-a-minute chatter of an occasional,

though reliable, date. Ah, Mhairi—one of my favorite clients. A wicked grin creeps across my face and I have to shift in my chair a little to accommodate the reaction my junk has to the flood of sordid, debaucherous memories that simply hearing her voice has sparked. All thoughts of clocking off early are quickly abandoned; there's no way I'm passing up the opportunity to fuck her again.

When Mhairi finally runs out of steam after her initial verbal barrage we start figuring out the details of our plans for the night. She's in town for business and wants to see me for a few hours of stress relief before an early flight in the morning; all fairly standard and par for the course, given our history.

Just before I hang up, I ask her what kind of night she's got in mind. My smile blossoms into a full-blown grin at her two-word request, the first seeds of an idea starting to take root in the filthiest parts of my brain. I promise to see her soon then end our call and slide open my closet door. As the sole employee of my Build-A-Boi service, I'm called on to fit a lot of different niches: with the right wardrobe elements and mindset I'm just as comfortable playing stern toppy futch dom in a sharp Oxford button-up and pinstripe pants as I am being a tender and squishy softboi cuddle-provider with scuffed Etnies and a Thrasher tee over my bound chest. All part of the joys of being a gender-flexible tomboy-leaning trans girl, I suppose.

It doesn't take much effort to pull together an outfit suitable for the night's plans: a smart, low-key dapper dyke look that showcases my broad, full chest. Sharp, but not flashy; punky, but not without class. I waver on adding a bowtie for a while before finally plumping for it. Worst case, I can always slip it off and pocket it if it proves to be a bit much. I know Mhairi and what she likes, so I don't need to worry about a binder nor spending any time at my vanity doing makeup for our evening together. Instead, I need to think about the important decision: what dick to pack. Even though it's on display on my bedroom wall and I get to see it every day, I'm still routinely proud of myself when I step

back to admire the curated collection I've built. From petite packers to perversely-proportioned cryptid creature cocks, I have a few dozen options showcased on the wall-mounted boards on either side of my vanity, all carefully arranged by size and purpose. Above the mirror hang a half dozen different harnesses with which to make use of them: chest, hip, hand, rubber, and leather, oh my!

Mhairi has—to put it mildly—some very particular tastes. She's a self-proclaimed Boss Bitch; a high-powered high-femme aging gracefully into her mid-50s, her coiffe of perpetually well-styled hair both vibrantly red and still 100% natural (take it from someone who knows that the carpet absolutely matches the drapes), sporting a tongue as sharp as her monochrome, professional-goth sense of style: every bit my teenage crush on Shirley Manson all grown-up. She's the top dog in some niche field of the corporate business world that I have no interest in asking about and she's shown no interest in sharing details of, which suits us both just fine. Criss-crossing the continent between JFK, DFW, YYZ and LAX a couple of times a week leaves her too busy to waste time on the bullshit of the traditional dating scene in any one city, so she simply doesn't bother; she knows what she wants, how to find the right people to do it for her and—most importantly—how to ask for it.

We first met around two years ago, back when I was still starting out, after word snaked through the grapevine that she was having trouble finding anyone in the city that could meet her expectations for a fun night out. Never one to back down from a challenge, I passed my number along and heard from her the next time she stopped off in town. She took a shine to me right off the bat, after my reaction to a brusque, expectation-laden demand she casually shot at me over our getting-to-know-you dinner. Without batting an eyelid, I let her know she could go fuck herself and stood up, fully prepared to walk out on her mid-meal. It was immediately clear that it had been a very long time since anyone had refused to bow to her high status and sizable bank balance, but refusing to play her game earned me her respect, only somewhat grudgingly.

Twenty minutes after I'd told her where to go on our first date, I had her designer Little Black Dress shredded around her ankles and her face pressed up against the plate glass window of her 56th floor hotel penthouse suite while I held her tightly by a fistful of hair and fucked her ass selfishly and mercilessly. During our get-together over New Year's I had the perverse pleasure of spitting champagne into her mouth from a bottle that cost more than my month's rent as I pushed, cajoled, and bullied her into taking every inch of a thickly-knotted XL-size silicone "werewolf" cock she'd been craving ever since I'd first sent her a photo of my dick wall. We didn't even make it up to her room on our last outing together before things kicked off. I dragged her to the bathroom of the Michelin starred restaurant we were at to fuck her face between courses, returning to our table just in time for her to order dessert from a nonplussed waiter who desperately tried to avoid staring at the ruby red lipstick she had smeared from ear to ear or the dark streaks of mascara-tears that had run down to the corners of her mouth. All of which to say: she might have some classy, expensive tastes, but she also has a burning desire to be dragged down from where she sits up-on-high and thoroughly degraded by a kid who looks more like a bike courier than her arm-candy.

With a knowing smirk to myself I grab a harness and my dick of choice, tossing them in my go-bag along with a couple of other toys—just in case. One quick outfit change later and I'm on my bike, making the the fifteen minute ride to the hotel lobby bar where she'll be waiting, her sole request for the evening ringing in my head as I cycle over:

"Surprise me."

I do so love the look I get at the door to a fancy bar or restaurant when a gatekeeper sees a scruffy-looking genderweird tomboy girl(?) and decides on the spot that I shouldn't be there. Even when I'm as nicely scrubbed up as I can be, it's patently clear I don't have the funds to wine and dine in the kinds of establishments that I meet Mhairi at.

And so I politely stand by the door, patiently waiting for her to come and fetch me. The second the magic words tumble from Mhairi's mouth—"She's with me"—everything changes on a dime. Suddenly it's, "Certainly, Ms. Grey," as a literal velvet rope is lifted from in front of me, "Will you lovely ladies be dining with us this evening?" as we're whisked through the dining room, "Can I take your, um . . . coat?" as I slip my hoodie off at the private, members-only bar in the back.

Tonight's no different: I get into the hotel no problem, but have to wait by the door to the restaurant ("Just off to the side there, please . . . miss") and text Mhairi to come and collect me. She makes a big show of greeting me in front of the waiter—kissing both my cheeks and gushing over how good I look—before she loops her arm through mine and leads the way back into the restaurant. At this point it all still looks like *The Mhairi Show*: she's the center of attention, the known face among the staff, the one in charge. I play it up, looking a little sheepish, gawping a touch and all-around playing the part of the awestruck poor queer kid being dazzled by all the ritzy trappings of a top tier eatery. In truth, the underlying dynamic is already starting to play out. Mhairi doesn't yet know if we'll be dining in the restaurant, drinking at the bar, or simply making a showy loop of the premises before heading straight for the elevator where I'll start stripping her down before we even reach her floor—that's certainly happened before. As much as it looks like she's taken my arm and is leading me, I'm already directing and dictating every step we take.

I decide on the bar, at the least to start with, and gently steer us that way. Before Mhairi can sit down on the stool next to mine I lean in close and whisper in her ear. She smiles back at me, then—before she heads off to do what I've commanded—reaches into her clutch to retrieve her AmEx Black. The weighty metallic clink of her card on the genuine marble of the counter wipes the questioning look from the barman's face and he swiftly lays two napkins and the drinks menu down before me. I can't help but stare as Mhairi struts down the hallway toward the bathroom, her towering heels making her ass sway side-to-side at the top of her long, shapely legs.

While Mhairi is busy getting herself wet on my instruction I take my time deciding on drinks, flirting with the confused bartender a little in the process (I can tell that James—a very lovely boy—doesn't quite know what to make of me), then order us a pair of fancy shooters. With James working on our drinks and Mhairi in the bathroom I have a bit of time to myself to finalize the details of my plan for the evening in my head and do a little rearrangement to facilitate things. After a quick glance around to make sure I won't scandalize anyone, I slip my dick of choice out of my go-bag and tuck it in an inside pocket of my coat. Once James has our drinks prepared and set before me I shoot Mhairi a text, telling her to come back and hand me her panties. I revel in their sticky dampness in my hand when she returns, flush in the face, and discreetly presses them into my waiting grasp. I let her squirm for a moment as I watch her mentally calculate how to take her seat at the bar with no underwear and a dress that sits mere inches from her now-bare cunt.

"Drink up," I finally tell her, a visible wave of relief washing over her at my resolving of her predicament, "we're heading out."

We down the shooters, Mhairi signs to settle the tab, and I take her hand. As we pass the front desk I get Mhairi to drop my bag with the concierge, asking for it to be sent up to her room. When she turns back around she has a knowing sparkle of mischief in her eye, and I smile coyly in return; it's cute when she thinks she knows what I've got planned for her. Before we step out of the hotel Mhairi offers to order us a ride on her phone but I decline, telling her it won't take long to get to where I'm taking her. Four blocks in she tries to flag down a passing cab but I wave it on and keep her walking, enjoying watching her slow and stumble in her red-soled car-to-bar heels, struggling to keep up with my relentlessly brisk pace as I lead her further and further from the city's financial core that I'm all-but-certain she's never seen the outside of. A block later she finally gives up, pausing for a moment to lean on a lamppost as she peels her shoes off, leaving her to walk the last

stretch of our journey in stockings feet, her four-figure heels dangling from her finger.

When we finally reach our destination I know she has no idea where we are: the streets are grimier, the neon lights more garish, and the patrons spilling from the nearby watering-holes significantly more disheveled and rough around the edges than anyone she interacts with in her day-to-day. I lead her in through the door of my local queer bar, my usual weekend haunt when I'm not working, and exchange brief upward nods of acknowledgement with a couple of friends, occasional lovers and former coworkers from some of the many and varied precarious jobs I've held. I worm my way through the crowd to get to the bar and catch Coco's eye as xe finishes up filling a pitcher of lite beer for some out-of-place gay tech bros. With them dealt with, Coco makes a beeline for me and leans over the bar, air-kisses both my cheeks and starts mixing me up a rum & coke, before xe looks expectantly to my date. Mhairi hums and haws before yelling over the pounding music to request a neat vodka from their top shelf; a label I know wouldn't even cut it as a rail brand in the bar of her hotel. Sometimes I feel bad about making Mhairi uncomfortable, until I remember that's exactly what she's looking for when she calls me: she wants to be pushed, to be "forced," to be made to take what she never thought she could.

"If she can handle my whole fist in her cunt," I think as she awkwardly slips her Louboutins back over the shredded soles of her stockings, "she can handle a night of subpar liquor brands."

With our drinks set in front of us Mhairi tries to pay for them with her AmEx. Coco shoots me a deadpan look that says "Seriously?" then makes quite the show of sliding the card back across the countertop to Mhairi with a shake of xir head. With visible annoyance, Mhairi then attempts to use her phone's eWallet. I try not to snicker as Coco informs her that, "No, honey, we don't take that future shit here either." Now getting flustered, Mhairi roots through her purse until she retrieves a crisp American hundred dollar bill. Coco rolls xir eyes as xe takes it

and starts to make change. Mhairi straightens up, standing a half-inch taller, and opens her mouth, a stony look on her face that I know from experience means that she's about to get snappy. I gently nudge her calf with the toe of my well-shined boot to get her attention. She turns to me, nostrils flared with the charge of righteous indignation, and I shut her down with a sharp look. Mhairi is used to utter deference from service staff at elite fine-dining establishments that cater to high-flying travelers with healthy expense accounts; she can count on them looking the other way when her toes creep up my leg under the table because they know they're getting a 20% tip on a six course meal that's accompanied by a bottle of wine twice my age. I lean in so Mhairi can hear me over the pulsing bass of early 00s RnB.

"It's not just me; no one gives a shit who you are here, love."

She bristles again, but only briefly. My intervention seems to have done the trick, though, as she takes a deep breath, lets it out slowly and genuinely thanks Coco when her change is placed before her. Then she turns, takes my arm and lets me lead her to the dancefloor, leaving the full amount on the bartop as a tip.

As we settle into the groove of the music, surrounded by sweaty queers on all sides, I pull Mhairi in close to me for the first time in the night, letting her feel the telltale outline of the strapping of my harness beneath my pants. Her eyes light up with mischief and she immediately tries to drag me toward the bathroom, but I force her to wait through another couple of songs as I deliberately nurse my drink, delighting in watching her fade as her bratty energy reserves slowly deplete. It's only when the room fills with a whoop of excitement at the announcement of the upcoming drag show that I take a firm grip of her by the back of the neck and head against the movement of the crowd toward the back of the bar; she perks up immediately at the move, but I leave her crestfallen when I order her to wait outside while I step into one of the single stall washrooms alone. I take my time in the small, cramped, graffiti-covered room; partly for the enjoyment of making her wait,

partly to time things right for my plan, and partly (okay, mostly) because of the sheer awkward necessity that my wardrobe choices for the night enforce. I manage to get back out—albeit walking a little inelegantly—just in time to see Reggie Bea, the rainbow queen, strut out onto the tiny stage in the corner of the dancefloor. The whole bar cheers in unison at her sequins-and-LED-strip-lighting-in-every-color ensemble, hoots and hollers erupting from every corner of the room. With everyone distracted, I take Mhairi by the hand and lean my weight into the crash-bar that reads “Fire Door: Alarm Will Sound.” I’ve made out with enough people in the alley behind the bar to know the warning is bunk, so I push the door open and shove Mhairi out in front of me.

In the thin, graveled pathway behind the bar a light drizzle has started and Mhairi briefly attempts to protest before I take a firm fistful of her hair with one hand and drag her—stumbling and cursing—over to an out-of-sight spot tucked behind the bar’s dumpster. When she opens her mouth again I slap her face with my free hand, hard, then force her down to her knees with a sharp yank of the grip I have of her hair. As she lowers she tucks her hands behind her back, awaiting my permission to use them. I can finally see her starting to switch into the compliant, servile mode that I know she craves from our nights together. Still holding her hair tightly with one hand, I use the other to loosen my belt and release the strap I’ve just slipped into my harness in the bathroom, letting it flop out between my untucked shirt and unzipped fly. Mhairi looks up at me, a momentary look of disappointment obvious on her face at the sight of a smooth silicone dick of fairly regular size; nowhere near the length or girth of some of the cryptid cocks I’ve “forced” her to take before.

“Get to it,” I growl down at her, careful to suppress the smile threatening to curl the corner of my lip and give the game away; she still thinks she knows where this is going.

On her knees, Mairi leans forward to take my strap-on in her mouth. I waste no time starting the process of face-fucking her, the

full length of my silicone appendage quickly filling her mouth and the upper part of her throat. As Mhairi graces me with the wet, guttural gagging noises of a deep throat-fuck I begin feel my arousal shifting into a higher gear. Part of my awkward movement on our way out the back door of the bar was due to the fact that I haven't tucked underneath my harness and have a building erection that's being constricted, almost painfully, by its strapping. However, from the sloppy soundtrack I'm being treated to—to say nothing of the tears I can see already welling in the corners of her eyes—I'm pretty sure Mhairi is too distracted to have noticed as much yet.

I debate on how much longer to drag the big reveal of my surprise out, but I don't want Mhairi to be too deep in subspace for the impact to be completely lost on her. I pull her away from me by the fistful of hair I have a hold of, and look down to admire my handiwork so far: her stockings are torn through and bloody at her knees where they've been grazed from the rough gravel on the ground while her face of light makeup is smeared, a look that only enhances the obvious hunger painted on her face. Her tongue is hanging out her mouth and she keeps leaning forward, struggling against my grasp, still trying to lick the tip of the silicone dick that I'm deliberately keeping *just* far enough away from her to keep her consistently denied. As she strains and struggles against the fingers I have tightly wound in her hair, I use my free hand to slip my flesh-&-blood erection out the side of the harness, breathing a sigh of relief as my dick is freed from its pressing constraints. Mhairi stops struggling and looks up at me, wide-eyed and quite literally awe-struck.

"Suck my dicks," I spit the words down at her with a snarl and release my hold on her hair to let her approach them as she sees fit. Her confusion and the sudden element of choice presented to her leaves her momentarily stunned before the deeply, hungrily horny part of her takes over and she dives back in. With practiced skill, Mhairi takes my biodick deep in a single, gulping bop of her head, my silicone second rubbing up against her cheek as she does so. Moments later she lifts

her head and switches her focus, her choking, gagging gurgles ever-so subtly different in timbre than when she had my strapless in her mouth. When she lifts away once more she tries, unsuccessfully, to wrangle the heads of both into her mouth, but each time she attempts it one slips free.

“Your hands,” I bark, a little surprised at how ragged my breathing sounds already, “use your hands.”

Mhairi immediately wraps her right hand around both my shafts, her fingers barely reaching to close a ring around them, pressing my dicks together firmly so she can take the two in her mouth side-by-side. As she coughs at the combined thickness assaulting the back of her throat, I mentally pat myself on the back for my choice of appendage: the silicone I picked is similar enough in size to my own that her mouth isn't so full of bonus dick that she can't fit my OG one in beside it. Evidently unable to swallow both together, Mahiri shifts her tactics and takes a dick in each hand: her left slides up and down the full length of the silicone while she works the base of my biodick with her right, her lips and tongue performing miracles on my head that have me leaning back against the brick wall of the bar, struggling to stay on my feet. My knees wobble and quiver under me as she switches again, taking the silicone deep in her mouth while she uses the thick, ropy strings of deepthroat saliva she's built up on my biodick as lube to jerk me off, and I feel the telltale swell of an orgasm beginning to build in the depths of my groin. Mhairi seems to sense it too and redoubles her efforts to take both my dicks as far as she can in her mouth, her ability to breathe be damned. She coughs and sputters more than once but doesn't quit, leaning back in time and again, albeit a little more slowly with each attempt, to fill her mouth with a double helping of stiff girldick. Between the incredible combination of sensations and the wildly hot sight of her working my twin shafts so skillfully, Mhairi has me close: she's certainly earned herself the privilege of my cum. I reluctantly pull back and wait for her to look up at me, her face blank and expectant.

“Fuck . . .” I breathe, barely able to keep a top-py edge in my voice, “You want it?”

The question takes a full three seconds to register in Mhairi’s addled brain; when it does, she grins slowly and nods her assent.

“Good girl,” I coo, stroking her cheek lightly, “now: take it.”

I lean back against the wall and let her work her magic: the soundtrack of slurps and gurgles and barely-held-back wretches spilling from Mhairi’s overstuffed mouth only serves to stoke my steadily building climax. I grip her by the hair once more as it crests, pushing both my dicks as deep into her as I can. The shuddering pulses of my ejaculation wrack through me as I cry out silently, my mouth agape. Spent, I loosen my grip. Without my fingers in her hair holding her in place she simply falls back, landing on her ass in the wet gravel. As she gasps in heaving gulps of air, her splayed legs give me a perfect view of her sopping-wet cunt and the shiny cum-stain she’s built up on the inside of her ruined designer dress.

After catching my breath and, as best I can, tucking myself back away in my pants, I help Mhairi back to her feet. Her stockings are totally ruined, her hair a mess, and her dress sticky, rumpled and torn, but she smiles at me with the guileless, unselfconscious grin of a bottom who’s more than met every expectation thrown at her. I pick up her purse and help steady her as she takes short, wobbly steps past the dumpster over to the fire door back into the bar. Coco catches me sneaking back in and locks me with her second “Seriously?” look of the night. I give her a sorry-not-sorry shrug as I help Mhairi onto a barstool and pour her a glass of water, then pull out my phone to order us a cab.

Back at the hotel, I ride the elevator with my glassy-eyed, cum-drunk princess, my hoodie loosely draped around her shoulders, and make sure she gets back to her room alright. She blearily invites me in, still half-way gone in subspace, but I politely decline: she looks about ready to pass out and I’d rather not deal with the 5am wakeup she’ll need to make her flight. I kiss her goodnight and promise to check in

with her in the morning then head back downstairs. Out front, I glance at my bike briefly before deciding to just leave it locked up, then start the walk home in the light drizzle of the wee hours. I'll just swing by and collect it tomorrow; I figure Mhairi will probably have dropped my hoodie and go-bag with the front desk staff by then anyhow.

As I reach into my pocket to pull out the joint I rolled earlier, I find the lacy black scrap of fabric that passes for Mhairi's panties and chuckle to myself. They'll make quite the souvenir.

lockpick girls

Lee shuddered briefly as she stretched her arms wide then rubbed the sleepy crust from the corner of her eyes. She sat up from the edge of her bed and stepped over to the bay window that overlooked the pockmarked remains of what was left of Queen Street, rolling her shoulders to shake off the lingering stiffness that had settled in her bones. She'd awoken early enough that the rising sun was still barely cresting through the fragmented downtown skyline, its bright rays lighting up the skeletal remnants of so many would-be condos that stretched as far as she could see in either direction. It was six years since Toronto's housing market had first reported the "surprise dip in monthly sales figures" that had been the first domino to fall in a sequence that had precipitated the city's total collapse. After a couple of months the dip had stretched for long enough to be described as an "unexpected and worrying quarterly slump." The slump didn't end as one tough year bled into the next, then the next, until one day everything just . . . stopped. Without any new blood moving into the downtown core, building developers wound up quitting on projects, going bankrupt or simply packing up shop and disappearing overnight, finally forsaking the city like the politicians and cops did not long after.

As complicated as her feelings were about the collapse of an economic system she'd barely even been a part of—let alone the disproportionate impact it had had on her and the city she'd once loved so much—Lee had to admit there was a strange beauty to be found in the sight of the forgotten, half-finished shells of the once-luxury condos that filled the view from her window. The towering buildings that stretched thirty-, fifty-, eighty-storied upwards, filling almost every available patch of land within a dozen blocks of the lakeshore, now lay as a patchwork of varying degrees of completion, decay, and collapse.

Lee had woken up early today for a reason, though. She'd been tracking lunar cycles for months, waiting for the azimuth of the sunrise to be at just the right angle, and today was finally the day. Years before, back when the eastern seaboard was still a thing, she'd read about Manhattanhenge and the magic of watching the sun rise and set along the city's east-west thoroughfares. The density of buildings in Toronto's core and the lack of a perfect grid of downtown streets meant there was no exactly equivalent effect, but after a few years in the city Lee had learned that on the right morning, caught close enough to dawn, the barely-risen sun shone straight through the windowless top twenty or so floors of a building down on Front Street before it hit the mirrored glass exteriors of a half dozen others. With each one sitting at an odd angle to the rest, the internal reflections between them all sent the bright morning light scattering out like the rays from a spinning disco ball for a few precious moments. This dazzlingly brilliant, twice-a-year morning spectacle was one of the only good things left about the decrepit bachelor apartment Lee had called home for a half-dozen years. That, and Ichiban Sushi downstairs. It was abandoned now, and she had never been a fan of seafood in the first place, but if it wasn't for the killer dynamite rolls that Mr. Sugimasa used to make, Lee wouldn't currently be admiring the serene face of her sleeping girlfriend as she lay tangled up in the sheets of her bed.

It was almost two years before that Lee had headed downstairs one frigid January afternoon to ask Mr. S—her landlord and occasional boss as well as the restaurant's owner—to look at her leaky kitchen faucet; she slept lightly and the dripping was keeping her awake at night. Mr. S had a soft spot for her, letting her stay in the apartment over the restaurant rent-free in exchange for a couple of shifts a month and “keeping an eye on the place, just until the city bounces back.” It was hardly The Ritz, but living directly above a street-level storefront was better than squatting in a condo; she didn't envy folks who had to make

the daily hike up dozens of flights of stairs every day to reach one of the few units that hadn't been trashed, stripped, or overrun by wildlife.

Still shivering a little from the cold morning air, Lee had just stepped through the door to the restaurant when she was arrested by the sight of a tall, blue-haired, visibly trans butch in a ratty denim vest bartering a box of waterproof matches and a baggie of safety pins for her lunch and a to-go bag of leftovers. Caught in the sights of the woman's crooked, charming smile and utterly transfixed by her punky *fuck you, I'm trans, so what?* aesthetic, Lee froze in the doorway to the restaurant. Still struggling to process the sight before her, Lee watched with a slack jaw as this vision of trans beauty finalized the exchange, thanked Mr. S for the excellent dynamite rolls then turned toward her and asked, casually, like it was no big deal:

"So . . . you wanna invite me upstairs, then?"

Forty-five seconds later Lee was shoved up against her bathroom door with the hot stranger's knee pressed up between her legs. Under three minutes after that, with less than a dozen words uttered between them, Lee was crying out to the gods—any of them, all of them, none of them—as her nipple was twisted in a painfully tight grip. Her heavy tits were flushed and extra sensitive in the wake of the spike of estrogen that was flooding her system after she'd injected her weekly dose that morning, making the torment even more delightfully painful. Just as Lee reached her limit on nipple torture, the curly-haired babe released her hold and met her with a long, tender kiss that only added to the surge of endorphins flooding her brain as sensation returned to her tender, swollen breast.

"You want my mouth on you?" came the breathy ask, when she finally broke for a gulp of air. Lee nodded furiously in response, her floppy shoulder-length blonde hair spilling across her pillow as she gasped, unable to make words. Her new friend grinned up at her, then lowered her head between Lee's legs to go to task. Despite the sudden start to things, she didn't rush: she started patiently working at Lee's

softest, most sensitive tissue with delicate pecks, agonizingly slow drags of her tongue and the gentlest of lovebites as she moved her way upwards and inwards from Lee's mid-thigh. Lee began to shudder and squirm as a probing tongue reached the edge of her underwear, her breathing coming in sudden gulps and stuttered exhales.

"Oh gods, oh gods, oh gods . . ." Lee murmured, her brow furrowed and dotted with sweat as she struggled to stay coherent enough to remain verbal. She glanced down and was met by piercing cool-gray eyes and the sight of a thumb tucked under the waistband of her striped boyshorts.

"Can I . . . ?"

Lee bit her knuckle and nodded in response as she hiked her butt up to help this woman she hadn't even known ten minutes ago slip her underwear down and off, then watched a look of genuine, awestruck marvel wash across her face as Lee's girldick was slowly exposed by the lowered fabric. For a moment, Lee felt like she might need to pinch herself to confirm this was real and actually happening: she hadn't felt this revered and appreciated in . . . well, maybe ever. Once Lee's underwear had been pulled off fully and tossed aside, the two resumed their passionate, hungry kiss. Lee hummed with overflowing excitement as her lover's fingertips danced down her collarbone, traced over the peachy treasure-trail fuzz of her ample belly and crested her hip.

"Ohhhh . . ." Lee broke their kiss with a loud moan as short nails were dragged lightly through her coarse, wiry pubic curls before two warm fingers gently encircled her half-hard shaft. She could feel the heat of her blood redirecting its coursing flow through her veins, leaving her fingertips and toes cold as her girldick swelled and stiffened under the taller woman's delicate touch. The butch dreamboat repositioned herself so she could seat herself fully between Lee's thick, heavily-tattooed thighs, then paused to tuck a loose strand of hair behind her ear, catching Lee's eye again in the process. As soon as their gazes met,

she wrapped her whole hand around Lee's twitching erection and slowly slid her grip down its length and back up again before she let her fingertips settle around Lee's head, thumb rubbing back and forth across her frenulum. Lee's eyes rolled back in her head and a low, rolling growl emanated from deep in her throat in response.

"Ready?" came the purred question from between Lee's legs, accompanying an uneven smile that curled the woman's lips up just a touch more on one side than the other. Lee took a deep breath to ready herself as best she could before she gave the go-ahead nod. With Lee's okay in place, her lover grinned again and bent back over to begin twirling her tongue in slow circles around Lee's already achingly-sensitive head, making Lee grip tight fistfuls of her cheap bed sheets and unleash sounds she didn't even know she had in her.

It didn't take long from there.

"FUCK!" Lee cried out, her body spasming and convulsing as the first wave of her orgasm crashed over her, shortly followed by the second, then the third. Her lover just sat back and let her ride it out, watching with a contented, if a little smug, half-smile on her long, slim face as the ripples gradually lessened in intensity and Lee slowly returned to reality.

"Fuck . . ." Lee repeated, softer this time. She just couldn't keep the stupid-happy smile off her cheeks as she looked over to the rugged, swaggering babe who had just fucked her senseless.

"So, uh, I'm Michelle, by the way," she said with a smirk, by way of introduction.

For the few seconds that the early morning light show blazed in its full glory, Lee sat on the floor in front of her window, drinking in the view and committing every moment of it to memory. Moments later, the sun had climbed high enough that the effect ended and Lee reluctantly stood up to return to the grind of her daily life. She spent the rest of

her morning quietly packing up the last few essential items still dotted around her apartment, moving quietly as Michelle continued to slumber in her bed. Michelle had been out late making one final trade deep in the east end and had got back sometime after Lee had turned in for the night. Getting to the east end had never been an easy ride, but it had only become harder since the Bloor viaduct had collapsed and the rising water levels had meant the lake had begun creeping inland anywhere from a few feet to a full city block each year. The loss of the lakeshore path had forced a reroute up through the pothole-heavy city streets miles further north, extending what used to be a fairly simple afternoon trip into a day-long endeavor. The trade must have gone well, though, because a package wrapped in crumpled brown parcel paper now sat on Lee's kitchen counter: a bundle of last-minute perishables to keep them sustained during their trip. Fresh food had been increasingly hard to find since The Great Blight had struck, wiping out what little green space remained in the City Within a Park that hadn't already been turned into yet another master-planned, multi-use development. But the struggle had become even greater after the power in the city finally tapered out in the Spring. With all of that considered, Lee was pleasantly surprised at the amount of stuff Michelle had managed to score: they wouldn't feast, but they'd certainly be comfortable on their journey and it wasn't like they would need any of the old luxuries they'd traded away anymore anyway.

The apartment was only just beginning to brighten properly when Lee finished tightening up the straps on her rucksack, almost everything she owned now packed within it. She stepped over to the bed and slipped under the covers as carefully as she could before gently wrapping her arms around Michelle from behind. She didn't want to wake her quite yet; she knew neither one of them would be getting another chance at a good sleep for a few weeks at least. This was the last time they'd ever share this bed, so she wanted to give Michelle every minute she could spare.

They'd been dating for months before Michelle finally stayed over for the first time, though Lee had fallen asleep on her or in her arms on countless occasions before then. Lee would be woken in the middle of the night by the familiar clump and creak of Michelle's well-worn, third-hand combat boots descending her staircase, her front door being carefully clicked shut or, once, Michelle cursing out a mangy raccoon on the street that had just pissed on her bike. Lee would lie awake for hours after Michelle left, wrapped up in her duvet if she could still feel Michelle's warmth in it, basking in the low-level ache she invariably felt between her legs after a good fuck, trying her hardest not to fall asleep so she wouldn't need to wake up alone in the morning.

They'd had their first, and biggest, fight over the fact that Michelle never stayed the night. Lee didn't know what Michelle did with her days; every time she tried to ask about it Michelle brushed her off, giving vague half-answers at best. She'd hinted at being a bike courier—or rather, she hadn't actively discouraged Lee from operating under that assumption—but Lee knew that couldn't be all of it: the giant carry-all bag she had with her all times, the fact that she'd "have to go work" with almost no notice after a glance at her messages, the way she'd never make plans to see Lee beyond a promise to "try to come by sometime next week, okay?" Michelle had tried to slip out at 11pm on Lee's birthday to work a job that simply couldn't wait and that had been the final straw. Lee had blown up at her. Michelle hadn't said much initially, just letting Lee vent her anger until she calmed down somewhat, but her coolly level "I still need to go to work" hadn't been what Lee had been hoping to hear in response to her plea to stay. She'd told Michelle to get the fuck out and Michelle had dutifully obliged, slamming the front door behind her on the way out, causing Lee to promptly burst into tears.

It was a full ten days later, as she was putting dishes away after a late dinner, when Lee next heard from Michelle. More specifically, that was when she heard the top step of her staircase creak followed by Michelle muttering one of her ever-colorful compound curses under her breath.

Lee set down the plate she was holding and walked out to see Michelle hastily turning her back to shield something from her view.

"How did you even get in . . . ?" Lee asked incredulously, dish rag still in-hand.

"Shh! Close your eyes and sit down on the bed," Michelle demanded, "I've got something for you."

Lee briefly considered starting the *oh, you shouldn't have* game but decided against it just as quickly and simply sat on her bed with her eyes closed as instructed. Who was she to tell Michelle how to apologize or show her affection? She heard the familiar soft thud of Michelle's boots padding through to the main room, the thwump of her backpack being dropped on the floor, more footsteps, then the clunk of something weighty being set on her nightstand. The aging, squeaky mattress beneath her shifted and groaned a little under the weight of another body as Michelle settled down next to her and placed her hand gently on Lee's lower back.

"You can look now."

Lee opened her eyes, ready to crack wise or give Michelle shit for the way she'd left things after her last visit, but she was immediately stunned into silence by the sight of a single bright yellow lily growing in a large terracotta pot. She blinked hard, twice, then reached out and gingerly took one of the delicate petals between her thumb and forefinger.

"This . . . this isn't synth," Lee was genuinely incredulous, "this is a real flower. Where the fuck do you even find fresh flowers?!"

"A girl like me learns a thing or two in her travels," Michelle replied with one of her oft-repeated lines, attempting to play it cool, though the brightness in her voice betrayed her obvious delight at Lee's reaction to the gift.

Any other day Lee would have called Michelle out on her bullshit, deflected non-answer, but in that moment she simply couldn't tear

herself away from the lily: she toyed with the delicate give and spring of the barely-blooming petals, rubbed the firm, waxy solidity of the green leaves between her fingers, and brushed her fingertip across a fuzzy, pollen-heavy stamen ever so lightly. She stared at the orange-stained pad of her pointer finger after this last touch, the reality of it finally hitting her properly. There were synth plants dotted around her apartment: tropical flowers and cacti all as perfect as the day she got them, never needing water nor light. Until then she'd thought they were great, low-effort decorations, but in that moment, with a real, dirt-grown plant before her for the first time in years, she could so clearly see them for all they were: cheap imitations.

"Oh, but it won't last . . ." Lee lamented, as she reached out to stroke one of the delicate petals again, unable to resist how feather-light they felt as they grazed her fingertips.

"Nothing good sticks around forever, darlin'," Michelle leant in and placed a kiss on Lee's cheek, "you've gotta learn to enjoy the best things in life while they last. Take care of this through the summer then I'll show you how to trim it down in the fall and I guarantee you it'll bloom again next year, don't worry."

Lee wiped a tear out the corner of her eye then turned to Michelle to thank her properly.

"I'm sorry," Michelle started, as Lee leant in for a proper kiss, "I was out of line. I know I need to—"

Lee lightly placed a fingertip on Michelle's lips, cutting her off mid-sentence. The past few minutes had set off a swirl of emotions within her that would require proper processing later on, but Michelle having extended the twin olive branches of a proper apology and a display of genuine emotional vulnerability had earned her a place in Lee's good graces. That she'd already been planning to enjoy a gratuitously self-indulgent jerk-off immediately after finishing drying her dishes probably worked in Michelle's favor as well.

“You need to shut the fuck up and kiss me already is what you need to do. In case you’d forgotten, I’m still owed birthday sex.”

Lee dragged Michelle down onto the bed and into a lengthy kiss, each woman’s hands starting to roam over the other, stroking and caressing as the heat and tension between them built. When Michelle broke to unbutton her flannel shirt Lee rolled over and reached for the drawer in her nightstand, returning with a wicked smirk as she held a drawstring bag tight to her chest.

“So, uh . . . whatcha got there, babe?” Michelle asked as she dropped her freshly peeled off white tank onto the floor, her cocked eyebrow revealing her piqued curiosity at this unexpected development.

“I like to treat myself to one extravagant expense for my birthday every year,” Lee began to explain, as she reached into the bag to retrieve a mid-sized silicone dildo with a thick head, mild curve, and a marbled white and aquamarine finish. She set the toy aside and reached into the bag again, lifting out the tangled assemblage of shiny black leather straps and dull brass rings, buckles and rivets that made up her new harness. It had been quite the indulgence: leather hadn’t been an easy find in the city for a very long time. Even the bio-printed knock-off that made up her new purchase—constructed from reclaimed and recycled mixed organics in a makeshift workshop run by anarcho-punks in the Don Valley—had taken a lot of work, the right connections and an eye-wateringly large chunk of her credits to source. She was pretty sure the dildo had just been stolen from a mail raid on one of the gated bubble “communities” that had popped up all over the rural Ontario landscape in the past decade, their tech-money fuelled population growth directly correlating to the city’s spiraling decline, but for what she paid she was willing to forgo too many questions about its origin.

“You down?”

“Oh, fuck yeah!” Michelle exclaimed, biting her lip as she glanced between Lee’s excited expression, her new dick and the harness hanging from her finger. Any lingering awkwardness from their fight was set

aside as the two quickly stripped down; Michelle lay back on the bed to admire Lee as she stepped into the harness, got her strap-on sitting comfortably and rolled a condom down over its length.

“Does it look okay?” Lee asked, as she adjusted the D-ring over her right hip.

Michelle groaned and nodded, deep and slow, in response.

“Unfff . . . fuck yeah, babygirl, you look *gorgeous*.”

Lee blushed a little and looked away shyly for a moment, before turning back to Michelle with a glint in her eye and only one thing on her mind. She cocked her chin, channeling her inner confidence, and commanded:

“Roll over.”

Michelle didn’t need telling twice, quickly flipping onto her front and hiking her ass in the air invitingly. Lee paused for just a moment, committing the view to her memory indelibly, before diving in and running her flattened tongue from the root of Michelle’s clit all the way up the smooth expanse between her legs to her eager rosebud. She listened intently to the sounds that spilled from Michelle as she took a second, slower, pass across the same route: noting where her lover’s gurgling moans swelled and crescendoed, and where they subsided and fell away into hungry gasps for *more*. She couldn’t play Michelle like a fiddle the way Michelle could play her, not yet, but she was an attentive listener and an enthusiastic learner: she was committed to figuring out how to make this girl drool. Giving extra time and care to the spots that had made Michelle writhe under her on her previous passes, Lee played with her pacing on her third trip over. Adding the firm pressure of the pad of her thumb to the mix really got Michelle raring, drawing muffled curses and pleas from where her face was planted in a pillow. It wasn’t until Michelle’s hips started bucking that Lee allowed herself to turn her attentions exclusively to Michelle’s needy hole. Pressing and

pushing and licking and curling and lapping and teasing and easing her way in, Lee tonguefucked Michelle until her wiry frame shook under her.

Once Lee was certain that Michelle was sufficiently worked up and warmed up, she reluctantly lifted her mouth away and leant forward, the fronts of her thighs kissing the backs of Michelle's, her silicone appendage sliding up the length of Michelle's crack, to place her lips right on Michelle's ear.

"Do you want me inside you?"

Lee knew the answer already. Everything from Michelle's frustrated moans at the break in play to the way her hips were still relentlessly, hungrily, insistently rocking told her as much, but there was a sweetness in hearing Michelle actually say the magic word.

"Jesus fuck, YES, now, *please*, fuck. Fuck me, yes, yes, pleasepleaseplease, *fuck*."

Close enough.

Lee straightened back up and grabbed her bottle of lube from her bedside, squeezing a generous glob onto the first two fingers of her right hand. After briefly scooting away from the chill of Lee's slick, goopy fingers, Michelle quickly reversed course and arched her back, welcoming Lee's tender, probing touch. Taking her time, Lee teased at Michelle's hole: circling the ultra-sensitive skin surrounding her opening, gently pressing the pads of her fingertips against her, marveling at how easily Michelle gave and gaped at the lightest pressure. Michelle shuddered again when the slippery, bulbous head of Lee's lubed-up bonus dick pushed against her.

"Ready?" Lee breathed.

Michelle groaned into the pillow once more, then lolled her head to one side for long enough to gasp out a clear "Yes!" once it was clear that an unintelligible vocalization wouldn't suffice. As soon as she had the go-ahead, Lee took hold of Michelle's hips with both hands and

slowly rolled her own forward. Michelle gasped, cursed, squealed, and growled in short order as Lee pushed deeper and deeper into her, leaving Lee feeling drunk on power at the reaction she could command with such a simple motion. Carefully, with control, she eased most of the way back out of Michelle then plunged her full length back in in one smooth, driving motion. From there, the two quickly found a rhythm that worked for both of them: the rock in Michelle's hips providing a comfortably complementary counter-motion to Lee's thrusts. The air filled with the salty tang of hot sweat and the steady slap of skin-on-skin as their bodies pushed and pulsed against each other. Each time she bottomed out inside Michelle, Lee's girldick twitched under the driving pad of the harness, the thin strip of leather all that sat between it and Michelle's taut, toned ass. The friction of the soft underside of the hide against the estrogen-thinned skin of her junk proved more than enough stimulation for her to thoroughly enjoy fucking Michelle as more than simply a visual treat; she could sense a familiar, low-level tension swelling at the base of her soft girldick, the pressure within her building each time she pressed up against Michelle. Lee couldn't remember the last time she'd come while inside someone and didn't waste the time nor the energy in the moment on plumbing her memories for the answer: she had a dedicated, single-minded focus driving her as she quickened her pace, reaching one hand forward to grip Michelle by the shoulder, giving her a better hold for the deep, lunging thrusts that were inching her ever nearer to the edge. Michelle cried out in ecstasy, her words tumbling and crashing into each other in a rambling, babbling stream-of-consciousness:

“—ckinggodsdamnfillemwithyourfuckingsweetdickfuckfuckfuck-FUCKMENowfugggggyesYESahhgoodgodsfuckingdamnfuckmehard-eryousweetfuckingba—”

Lee barely even noticed: she was close and her mind was locked on one thing and one thing only.

“Fuck. I’m. Gonna . . .” Lee managed to gasp each word out individually between shallow, panting breaths, before the end of her sentence was lost to a low, gurgling growl.

Jutting her pelvis forward, Lee pulled Michelle back against her by the hip and shoulder as tightly as she could while her orgasm battered and buffeted her, making her shudder and jitter and loose an involuntary bark of laughter as the electric sensation of her climax coursed up and down her spine. The strain in the backs of her thighs, her locked-up knees and a chorus of overworked muscles from her neck down to her calves all started to make their displeasure known as the orgasmic high started to recede and Lee began to fully inhabit her body again. She slipped herself out and collapsed next to where Michelle lay on the bed, twitching happily and gulping down lungfuls of air, grinning from ear to ear.

As Lee peeled the unbuckled harness off, sinewy strands of cum stretched up to the underside of the leather from dabs of thin, clear liquid pooled on her skin.

“Good gods . . .” Lee breathed, as she took in the sight of the ropy strings of viscid fluid she’d leaked, “I haven’t produced anything in . . . fuck, years, maybe?”

“Well, happy birthday to you, I guess?” Michelle chuckled and leant over to kiss Lee on the cheek before crumpling back onto the sweat-soaked comforter as Lee finished disentangling herself from the straps of the harness.

The sun had set before Lee broke the comfortable, cosy post-fuck silence that had fallen over them, her head resting on Michelle’s chest as she curled against her. The reprieve from facing her feelings that her earlier magnanimity had bought was wearing off and the prickle of some important, unanswered questions were starting to gnaw at her. Yeah, Michelle cared about her and she was a great lay . . . but was that really enough?

“How did you get in earlier?”

Lee knew Michelle’s mannerisms well enough that she could hear the coy grin on her face as she began her response:

“A girl like me—”

“*Don’t.*” Lee cut her off abruptly, a sharp edge in her voice that softened into a pleading tone as she continued, “Just . . . just don’t. Please. I can’t stay with you if you’re gonna keep secrets from me. I can’t live not knowing anything about you, where you are, what you’re doing, if or when I’ll see you next . . .”

Michelle leant away and for a brief, heartbreaking moment Lee thought she was making to climb out of bed and leave, but she rolled back over a second later holding the black skinny jeans she sported almost every day, the knees patched and re-patched where they’d torn through from wear. From a back pocket Michelle retrieved a small wrap of rubber inner tubing closed with a string tie. She unwound the cord and let the wrap fall open in her hand to reveal a dozen thin rods and L-shaped twists of scratched-up silver metal tucked into a neat roll-up toolkit.

“Lockpicks?” Lee asked, though it wasn’t really a question.

Michelle nodded as she pulled an evidently well-used rake pick out and spun it delicately between her fingers.

“Why do you even have those on you?” Lee continued, “Do you use them for your job?”

She felt Michelle’s muscles tighten up at the mention of work and tensed herself, ready to react if she was fed another side-stepped answer. Instead, Michelle relaxed, released a deep breath, and squeezed her around the shoulder.

“It’s . . . some of part of one of my jobs, yeah.”

There was another pause before she spoke again.

“So . . . even if it’s got a fancy digital touchpad thingy, every lock is mechanical at its core: from the doors of condo penthouses to the U-locks on bikes left in the basement parking below a building. Once you’ve taken the cover off so you can access the mechanism itself you only need a couple of minutes with these to get past pretty much any lock out there. You wouldn’t believe the things folks left behind during the exodus, thinking they’d come back once they were settled in a bubble: leather shoes, carbon-steel knives, vintage wines . . . Hell, even copper wiring stripped from the walls can fetch you a decent amount of credits if you know the right people.”

“What are you saving for?” Lee asked. She knew what kind of return a pair of genuine leather shoes could bring in; scoring even one item like those in a unit would set her up for a month of basic living expenses. But Michelle’s daily life outside of work revolved around trading knick-knacks for meals and repairing her own clothes; with the long hours she worked and the fact Lee couldn’t remember the last time she’d taken even a single day off she knew there had to be a larger play underway.

Michelle slipped the pick back in the wrap then set the bundle on the bedside table beside the pot housing the lily. She pulled Lee in close then began opening up, answering all the questions Lee had been avoiding asking her for months. She explained the risks and benefits she weighed up when deciding to tackle a building alone versus throwing her lot in with one of the many feudal gangs that now claimed various patches of turf throughout the city as their own; the cut they invariably demanded for their permission and protection was hefty but it beat being caught raiding one of “their” buildings without their say-so. She talked about her dream of squirreling away enough from these raids and trades to be able to afford the passage across the border on a train, away from the wildly varying weather that the seasons of southern Ontario brought and far enough inland that constant moves to higher ground wouldn’t be needed in the face of rising sea levels. The sole CN line that still operated—in the loosest possible sense—reached all

the way across to Omaha, where Michelle planned to barter her way onto a boxcar to take her further west. She'd been corresponding with the members of an all-trans farming commune outside of Denver for years and had a standing invite to buy the rights to a plot of land there whenever she could afford the journey. With the trip as her goal, she'd diligently tucked away every credit she could for years, periodically trading her accumulated savings for a single gold coin whenever she could afford one at the ever-fluctuating exchange rate.

In return, Lee shared some of what she'd been too shy and reticent to tell Michelle yet: how, ever since she'd moved to the city, she'd been saving with a single-minded focus to buy one of the official Aesthetic Adjustment™ nanosynth systems to help her along with her transition. While there were mind-bendingly expensive elite versions that could rewrite your DNA to essentially rebuild you from the ground up, Lee's sights were set on one of more reasonably priced mid-range models that could perform the types of bodily alterations that used to be the sole domain of surgeons. The idea of having a swarm of nanobots running around in her bloodstream squicked her out more than a little, but the results were undeniably impressive. By eating away at bone on a cellular level then redistributing it incrementally over a period of months, they could slowly push her cheekbones up, bump her height down by an inch or two, narrow her shoulders and widen her hips. She knew a couple of girls like her who'd shelled out way less than her savings goal for knock-off synth on the city's thriving post-central governance black market, but their mixed reviews kept her wary about paying anything less than the exorbitant official market rate, so she'd kept her nose to the grindstone, saving and waiting.

Lee told Michelle how she felt paralyzed and stuck in limbo. How much it had hurt to watch the city that she had once loved so much, that had welcomed her with open arms when she was cast out from so many other places in her life, as it crumbled and collapsed around her. How, after everything she'd lived through, she was kinda surprised she was still alive as it was, so planning ahead felt foreign. The nanosynth

had become her singular goal, the one thing that gave her *something* to look forward to, though it seemed frivolous and silly as she tried to explain it to Michelle in the moment. Michelle reassured that it wasn't silly at all, but gently hinted that it might be an idea to follow her lead on the gold.

As the night wore on they spoke fondly of their favorite remaining restaurants in the city, and the places and foods they missed most from the Before Times. They compared weird, niche skills they'd each picked up as more and more of the businesses and city services they'd previously taken for granted were cut, pared back, or shut down entirely: blade sharpening, fermentation, bike repair, water collection and purification. They reminisced about the parks and trails and birds and plants they missed most, and their treasured memories of the last times they saw each of them. They talked and talked through the night, oblivious to the time.

Lee was as surprised as Michelle when her bedroom suddenly lit up in a blinding flash of light. Michelle sat up stiffly, eyes wide and nostrils flared as her fight-or-flight mode immediately activated, until Lee tenderly placed a hand on her arm and calmed her, explaining the retroreflecting effect that the shiny condo glass had on the dawn light. Still sleepless and nude from the night before, the two got out of bed to stand wrapped in the blanket in front of Lee's window, watching the dazzling points of light scatter and dance across the cityscape before them.

Michelle started staying over after that. One night a week gradually became two, which quickly thereafter became every other night until, by the time the city's electricity supply finally dropped out, Michelle had all but moved in what little she owned. They'd started working together after that night too, as Lee's bit-part jobs dried up and the opportunities that working condos as a team presented to them became too lucrative to pass up: one of them would act as a lookout, serve as a distraction, or provide intimidation as each situation called for, while the other slipped

into a unit and stripped it of anything they could use, salvage or trade. They'd reconvene, do a quick appraisal of their finds, then move onto the next unit, the next floor, the next building to do it all again.

They never discussed it explicitly, but once the power died both of them knew they wouldn't—couldn't—spend another winter in the city. Their approach to work changed after that, as they began actively seeking supplies for their journey south. Things that would previously have been a high-value score, worthy of taking a celebratory half-day off after finding—an original Sonic Youth album on cassette tape, a down-filled parka, or an intact glass bong—started to be passed over in favor of sturdy boots, hard-working clothing, and books on soil management.

One otherwise unremarkable night, when they were both dog-tired and cranky from hours of hauling ass up and down steep staircases with fully-laden backpacks, Lee had looked across the table at Michelle over their late, cold dinner and just *knew*, deep in her bones, that this girl loved every inch of who she was in that moment. She realized that “home” no longer meant a shitty bachelor apartment in the empty husk of a decaying city; instead, the word had become synonymous with “being with Michelle.” In an instant, the exorbitant cost of the nanosynth she'd wanted so badly for so long seemed like a silly waste of her savings, a goal set by a previous version of herself that she'd kept striving toward unquestioningly, even as Michelle had wormed her way into her life and slowly shifted everything that was important to her. Who was she even planning to change herself for any more? She'd rarely been more grateful for heeding Michelle's advice than she was then, knowing the hard-earned gold coins she'd traded her accumulated savings for would help get them both across the border and set up their new life together.

Michelle stirred as the dawn light finally started to fill the apartment proper. She arched her back and pressed her ass back into Lee's big-

spoon cuddles; in response, Lee kissed her cheek and spoke softly, her plump lips right by Michelle's ear.

"Out late?"

"Yeah," Michelle replied sleepily, "I ran into some trouble on my way home. Nothing major, but I wound up having to take fucking Lawrence to get back."

"Ain't it always the way. Fuckin' NoBlo."

Michelle chortled; it was an old joke they shared, rooted in their respective memories of the city from way back and the snobbery they each held about neighborhoods north of the demarcating line of "coolness" that Bloor cut through the center of the city. Lee kissed Michelle again, on the cap of her shoulder, and asked:

"It's early yet, the sun's still coming up; did you want me to let you sleep a bit longer?"

Michelle rolled onto her back then took a deep breath as she considered it, before shaking her head lazily.

"Nah, I'm awake now," she tilted her head away to yawn, loud and long, then turned back to face Lee, "did you catch your light show?"

Lee smiled sadly, the bittersweet memory of that fleeting moment already tugging at her heartstrings, and nodded. They'd originally been planning to leave a week before but, knowing it was coming soon, Lee had asked that they stay the extra few days so she could catch the sight one last time.

"If you wanna get up now I could start coffee while you shower?" Lee offered, trying to stay chipper, "I've saved enough of my stash for two small cups this morning. It's not great, but it's the last real coffee you'll have a chance at for . . . well, for a while, at least."

Lee watched Michelle bite her lip, looking almost bashful.

"Actually . . ." Michelle started.

A grin began to break on Lee's face; she knew Michelle's expressions all too well by now and could already tell exactly what was coming next.

"Could you do that thing I like?" Michelle asked, "Pretty please?"

Lee was already pulling her hair back and rolling one of her precious few hair ties off her wrist before Michelle had even finished her question, offering silent thanks for having found a six-pack that still had stretch left in them during one of their last raids together. Michelle pulled the sheets from the bed, leaving her lanky body exposed. Even after months of being treated to it on a daily basis, the sight of Michelle's naked form still stopped Lee in her tracks. She paused, sucking air in through her teeth audibly, as she admired her girlfriend's tall, angular body, her olive skin peppered with DIY stick & pokes and a smattering of dark scars earned over a decade of bike crashes, won't-back-down fights, and countless other (mis)adventures, each jagged line an entire story in its own right.

For all the bluster and commotion that came from her during the majority of their sex, Michelle was surprisingly quiescent when it came to what worked to actually get her off. Lee tucked her feet up underneath her, curling up beside Michelle as she settled into the meticulous, systematic process she'd slowly learned over dozens of repetitions. It was a delicate operation requiring finesse, hard-earned knowhow and, most of all, patience. Thankfully, Lee most definitely had all three, and with the train they planned to hop not due to roll through for hours yet, she had all the time she needed to dedicate to doing the job justice.

She found *The Spot* in Michelle's pelvic floor with two fingers and began to work the muscle rhythmically and methodically, ramping up the pressure ever so gradually until Michelle's limp clit showed the first signs of progress. Its occasional twitches and jerks under Lee's ministrations of her girlfriend's prostate told her that she could add another layer of sensation. On cue, Lee bent down to wrap her lips around one of Michelle's nipples, giving it the gentlest of suction as she

started providing the darting, teasing flicks of her tongue that would eventually usher in the next subtle sign that things were progressing as hoped: Michelle releasing the barest whimper of a moan.

The light of the rising sun slowly crept up and crawled across Lee's apartment walls while her own erection swelled and receded like the tide, her single-minded focus to the task at hand (and in her mouth) keeping her delightfully engaged in stoking her lover's slow-building pleasure. While, from the outside, it may have looked like very little was happening, Lee could sense every little shift in Michelle's breath and muscle tension, each one offering her the hint she needed to adjust her motions in response to maintain the slow progress toward Michelle's oft-elusive orgasm. Even with all she knew of how to read Michelle, Lee rarely knew exactly how close she was to getting Michelle there until . . .

A brief shudder and a hushed, stuttered exhale signaled Michelle's muted climax, followed shortly thereafter by a series of convulsions that shook her body through. Lee relaxed the pressure between Michelle's legs, leaving her hand resting there gently as she released Michelle's nipple and met her lips for a tender kiss. The two lay tangled in a sweaty embrace until the relentless onward march of time and their looming appointment with a train forced Lee to reluctantly tear herself away. While Michelle wiped herself down in a jury-rigged "shower" of reclaimed water poured from a repurposed watering can strung over Lee's bathtub, Lee set her ancient French press over their camping stove and lit the flame: one last luxury before the weeks of rough-sleeping travel that lay ahead of them. As the liquid heated, she spilled the bag of their pooled gold pieces onto the table, setting eight aside to wrap in a strip wrap of wax paper: their fare for the train and the upfront half of their border-crossing fee. She split the remainder of the tooth-marked coins into two piles, half for each of them to tuck away in their socks, bras, and hidden pockets in their coat linings. Before stashing her share Lee pulled out a larger bundle of wax paper from her inside coat pocket and unfurled it. The lily bulb was still there, still unchanged from her

triple-check a few hours before. She wrapped it back up and tucked it away in the pocket closest to her heart: it was too important to leave in her bag.

It was hard to tell time definitively any more, but she'd learned to approximate by the sun's position in the sky and the lengths and directions of the shadows that various condo buildings cast across the city streets. Standing by her window, Lee looked down at dark patches on the sidewalk and made a best estimate of "around noon." The train was rolling through on the Bloor line just after 2pm, which gave them some time yet to double check their bags before they biked up to the hop-aboard rendezvous point.

As Lee stood in the window she heard the bathroom door swing open and the sounds of Michelle's wet footsteps approaching from behind. She didn't turn around, instead letting herself be wrapped up in Michelle's strong, loving arms as she looked out at the sun that had finally cleared the top of the tallest condos and now shone down on the city entire from up on high. They'd need to move soon: to tend to the coffee, to finish packing, to go over their plans A, B, and C one last time, to check their bikes over . . . but not yet. For now, Lee was tightly held in the arms of the girl she loved, ready to set off on an adventure to find and build their new life together.

She was going to miss the view, though.

Denial

“*H*ave you decided yet?”

I’m lazily dragging my fingernails through the thick brush of her pubic hair as she lies naked beside me, occasionally straying an inch or two lower to brush the pads of my fingertips against the soft peach fuzz of her inner thighs.

“Mmm . . . almost, I think,” she replies, her words heavy with sleep.

She hasn’t come for over a month now, but the countdown is underway and I want to make sure she gets exactly what she wants when I finally give her permission to orgasm again.

“That doesn’t sound terribly certain. We could always push things back a week or so if you need more time to think . . .” I trail off and lift my fingers free entirely, grinning to myself as she squirms and shakes her head decisively.

“I’ve got an idea! It’s just the details . . .”

I return my fingertips to her needy skin and wander a little lower, eliciting a purr of satisfaction before I draw away again, forever leaving her wanting more. I’ve been getting good at that these days. We lie for a while, my fingers running back and forth over her belly, before a memory pops into my mind, bringing a smile to my face.

“Remember when I asked if you thought you’d make it?”

It was six weeks ago now, but I remember it as clearly as if it had happened yesterday: I’d just got her off for the third time in a row and she was curled up in my arms in a daze when I told her how long she was going to need to wait for her next release. She’d paused for a moment as she took it in then let out a long, slow, sobering breath before nodding her assent.

"I honestly didn't think I would."

"I got you close a bunch of times."

"I got me close a bunch of times!"

We dissolve into laughter and I pull her close, kissing her forehead.

"I don't think I've ever come harder than when you were riding me that time," I whisper in her ear, relishing the way she vibrates with happiness at my words, "hearing you struggle through that for me was so fucking hot, my love."

It's the truth: the past few weeks had contained some of the hottest sex we'd ever had, but this particular session had taken the cake. She'd been eager and hungry and desperate—still early on in her denial period—and I'd worked her up to the edge a couple of times before I decided I wanted to finish myself off, and fucking her neo-cunt seemed the most fun way to do that. Just slipping herself down onto me seemed to take her to the brink again, but she still braved teasing at her already overworked clit as I settled into a rhythm. She quickly regretted it, lifting her hands clean away once I took a grip of her by the ass and hip and began driving myself up into her. Her desperate gasps and whines followed shortly, as the effort of staving off the orgasm she so desperately wanted became a Herculean task. She eventually resorted to chanting, "I won't come, I won't come . . ." over and over as a mantra while I held her exactly where I wanted her and fucked her exactly how I wanted to. My orgasm was fucking mind-blowing: my eyes snapped open as it hit me, permanently searing every single tiny detail of the image of her atop me into my brain. I can still clearly picture the gasping O of her mouth, the beaded rivulets of sweat running down her budded breasts to drip from her puffy nipples, the tilt of her hips under the direction of my hands . . .

She told me after that the sight of me cresting almost took her over the edge as well.

But she stayed a good girl. For me.

She rolls over now, curling herself up against me while I reminisce aloud, murmuring contentedly as I allow her to enjoy the dip of my fingers a little deeper inside her. I can see she's starting to settle into a blissful subby space and I'm more than happy to help her get comfortable there so she can really zone out and enjoy it.

"You're so much fun to overload, kitten. Remember the zipper?"

She coos at me, past verbal now and entirely engrossed in humping my hand.

"We counted those clothespins going on together: one by one by one by one. Thirty-eight of them. Every single one of them pinching you nice and tight, all over your chest, all down your sides . . . and *all* along that stretch of your inner thigh. I thought you were done after I placed the first one there, but you took all ten—what a good, good girl you are for me."

She growls a little at the compliment and starts grinding herself into me a little harder: there's nothing like glowing praise to keep an obedient sub content.

"Then I tugged on the string connecting them all, pulling at my pretty little kitten's tender, sensitive, pinched skin. Oh, love, I fucking adore making you wait and whine and whimper and beg for me. Then . . ."

I trail off, ruffling her messy bed-head hair before suddenly gripping a handful of it, drawing a sharp inhale and a brief stutter in her humping rhythm.

"Whoosh! Off they came. Thirty-one pins snapping off in a rattling chain. And I got to watch that wave of pain and relief wash over you . . . before the sting of the ones I left on you finally filtered through. Do you remember what you called me when you realized they were still there?"

The question is entirely rhetorical: I know she's in no fit state to answer it. I still have her held by the hair while she desperately bucks

and writhes against me, working herself up more and more even though she knows this can only be an exercise in futility.

“You called me ‘a fucking sadist.’ And you learned an important lesson in name-calling that day, didn’t you, kitten?”

She whines and nods as best she can with my grip on her hair while I nuzzle myself up against her, mouth right against her ear, my voice a low, hoarse whisper.

“Actions have consequences.”

Releasing my hold, I start tracing my fingertips lightly across her broad, sweaty chest, relishing the slow pulse of her labored breathing and the pounding rhythm of her heartbeat beneath them.

“Oh, how you tried to take it back. To un-say it. To make it all better.”

I slide my hand higher, gently caressing her neck and keeping my mouth a fraction of an inch from her ear.

“But I had to teach you a lesson. Good girls don’t need to be gagged . . .”

I push two fingers into her mouth. She immediately draws them in, sucking greedily and moaning her delight at being filled from both ends—a particular favorite of hers.

“ . . . and left wanting.”

There’s a moment of stunned silence when I slip my fingers from her mouth and cunt simultaneously, before her sweet symphony of desperately needy pleas begins:

“Ohfuck, pleasepleaseplease, I’ll be a good girl I promise, I promise, I swear I’ll be good for you, oh please, please, I won’t say any—”

The first two fingers of my left hand—shiny with the viscous wetness from between her legs—plunge between her lips and shut her up again.

“Oh, I know you’re going to be good for me, kitten. Now . . .”

I pull them most of the way out of her mouth, keeping her attention by dipping back in and out, just barely passing her lips each time. She’s putty in my hands at this point: all worked up, mind filled with filthy thoughts, and all inhibitions long ago left behind. The perfect time to get a little information on what my lovely kitten wants.

“ . . . about those details.”

...Patience

*I*n my defense, I'd waited long enough already. Five hundred and seventy eight days since they wrote me the only interesting response to the personal ad I'd posted, looking for an online pen pal to exchange long-form emails with while remaining otherwise anonymous to each other. Their one-up suggestion of a longhand, pen-on-paper correspondence had stood head-and-shoulders above all the forgettable, low-effort "hmu if you wanna sext" messages I'd been sent by thirsty lewd-hunters who'd missed the point entirely.

Five hundred and seventy two days since I'd mailed them the first missive of our correspondence, written furtively and painfully slowly by hand at my work desk over my lunch breaks, detailing all the filthy places my mind had wandered after repeatedly re-reading the rough outline of their desires that they had sketched out in our preparatory messages.

Five hundred and fifty six days since I returned from work to find their first reply in my mailbox and immediately devoured it twice over in the comforts of my bedroom. The frantic speed-skim of my first read-though—with eyes wide and mind spinning—allowed me to luxuriate in my second pass, drinking in every detail their poetic purple prose hinted at, coyly brushed up against, and explicitly, salaciously spelled out. Already knowing the length and shape their dispatch took allowed me to work myself to a perfectly-paced climax on my re-read, my fingers slick in the wet heat between my legs as I drank in every sordid detail they had gifted me with through their exquisitely-crafted wordplay.

Four hundred and twenty three days since I'd been given the only hint of a look at them I'd ever had: a charcoal self-portrait of them lounging sidelong in a chair, face turned just far enough away to no

longer be considered a view “in profile.” From the day it had arrived I’d had it pinned to the corkboard by my front door, making their gorgeous enby form one of the last things I saw on my way out the door into the coldness of the world and the first thing welcoming me back into my cozy, queer refuge from the rest of reality.

Three hundred and nine days since the idea of them coming to visit was first cautiously, hesitantly floated, both of us more than aware of the potential for disappointment that a real-life meeting could bring to an arrangement that had unexpectedly blossomed from a fun and hot correspondence into a genuine and deep *Relationship* in its own right.

Two hundred and eighteen days since we broke one of our initial rules and spoke on the phone for the first time, four hours melting away in a heartbeat as we had an actual, real-time discussion about what it would take to make a cross-border trip happen. From the moment I first heard the delightfully gravelly grit of their tentative “Hello?”, the rich tone and dark timbre of their voice had echoed in my mind every minute of every day since.

Fifty four days since they booked their flight, making a long bandied-about, fantastical idea into a practical, planned-for reality with the click of a mouse. Through a combination of loyalty points I’d been collecting for years without knowing what to cash them in for and a credit they had from being bumped off a flight last summer their ticket wound up costing next to nothing, something we both took as a sign that the universe was conspiring to make it as smooth and frictionless a process as possible. Because of course we were meant to get together.

One hundred and thirty three minutes since their plane took off from an airport a mere four hundred odd miles away, the flight tracker on my phone studiously updating their progress across the green then blue then green of the map, the detail of the terrain improving with each refresh as their distance from me reduced steadily.

Twenty seven minutes since I got to the nearly-empty Arrivals gate, where I stood waiting for one of the airport’s last inbound flights

before the overnight curfew to disembark, still incredulous that our much-vaunted meeting had somehow moved from “long-awaited” to “imminent.”

The description of their outfit they’d provided by text a few hours earlier proved entirely unnecessary: the second the sliding doors opened to let passengers out of the secure baggage claim area I had eyes for no one and nothing else. Sure, they stood a head taller than most and their dark, olive-green hair made them the most visually arresting person among a crowd of mostly young families and business travelers, but the instantaneous recognition I felt instead came from the way they held themselves, how they moved, the sharp cut of their jawline and the confident swagger in their hips. I could tell they experienced the same giddy feelings of identification in me from the moment our eyes locked on each other’s goofy grins, both of us entirely unable to remain cool, calm, and collected in the face of the eight full days together that stretched out before us.

As they walked toward me, their pace picking up just enough to be noticeable, I took in their dimensions: sizing them up, building a mental image of the shape and size of their limbs beneath their loose-fitting clothing, doing the mental math to figure how our bodies were going to line up against each other and move together, horizontally and vertically and everything in between in endlessly mutating combinations. No matter how I worked the numbers, one thing was abundantly clear: there was no way I was going to be able to wait any longer—through the forty minute bus ride, half an hour jaunt on the subway and ten minutes by foot back to my apartment that still lay ahead of us—to be able to get them alone.

Like I said, I’d waited long enough already.

Resisting the urge to pull them into a kiss immediately strained my willpower to the limit, but I knew if I’d relented that the floodgates would have opened and we would have caused a scene in the Arrivals area. Instead, I took their hand and shot them a look that I hoped

conveyed every ounce of the urgency I was feeling. Wordlessly, I started us hustling against the sparse flow of travelers, weaving our way around reunification hugs and luggage carts in the direction of the giant yellow *Departures* sign. The only person we passed in the vast, empty expanse of the usually bustling Departures hall was busy wiping down the counter of a tacky theme bar and paid us no heed as I made a beeline for one of the two multi-purpose gender neutral/accessible/family bathrooms, the light-up sign by the door proudly proclaiming that the spacious single-stall facility had been cleaned a mere fourteen minutes prior. I hit the wall-mounted button to lock the door behind us as they slid their case off to the side to come to rest by the fold-out baby changing table; we were finally alone and the gravity of that knowledge was almost overwhelming.

Turning to face me, they read my mind and hopped up onto the counter the sink was recessed into. Of all the things we'd fantasized about as we talked each other off on the phone over the past few months—me in the bath, them tucked away behind their bedroom door, voice hushed and low to avoid their roommates overhearing—they knew exactly what I craved most from finally having them in front of me. I pulled my sweater up and over my head, throwing it down on the cool tile floor to give myself something soft to kneel on as they accidentally set off the motion-activated soap dispenser in the process of working their skirt up around their waist. I'd have giggled at the incongruous silliness of the mechanical whirr and squirt of foaming soap if the sight of their visibly damp underwear dangling from one of their shoes hadn't stolen my breath.

Time stopped as their legs parted and it felt right to the point of being divinely prophetic that I was on my knees when I got my first glimpse of their sex, glistening and puffy, nestled in the soft, downy copper curls betwixt their thighs. I glanced up to meet their eyes, my insides melting at the sight of their bitten lip and furrowed brow, simultaneously expectant and apprehensive. The slightest hint of a nod was all the okay I needed to release my held breath, exhaling a tension I

hadn't realized I'd been carrying for months, and lean forward to finally greet them with the kiss I'd been eagerly, hungrily saving. The tang of their juices on my tongue was electric, setting off a cascade of rapidly-firing synapses across my brain as I lapped them up and drank them down. With my first exploratory motions I ran my flattened tongue up the full length and breadth of them, using a soft, slow drag to map the topography of their anatomy so I could revisit each crevice, ridge, and swelling with the probing, pointed tip on my return trip. With my second pass I began building a profile of their wants and needs, taking my cues from their coos of encouragement, stuttered breaths of exhortation, and surging crescendos of commendation. Armed with this rough blueprint I'd just drawn together, along with the knowledge I'd gleaned from tens of thousands of words of insight already shared through their letters, I took a deep, grounding breath and dove back in.

Their lips spread and curled around me as I ran my tongue up the length of their divine parting, my mouth filling with the thick, heady liquid that was all-but-flowing from them. With a gulp I swallowed down a mouthful of their sticky nectar and eased my way upward, making my first tentative approach on their clit: a cautious, slowly circling motion that I cut short when their short nails dug deep into my shoulders, demanding less teasing and more stimulation. When my lips finally wrapped around their needy head a trembling convulsion rippled through them, before the gentlest of suction made them buck and double-over with a sharp, audible inhalation. From there I read their needs through touch: the tensing and quivering of the insides of their wide-spread thighs against the palms of my hands instructing me on when to press on, when to ease off, when to not stop no matter what. Once I found my rhythm their breath settled into a comfortable, heavy pant above me, while I gulped down gasps of air as and when I could bear to pull myself away for long enough to take them in.

Adding two fingers to the fray, their folds rippled around my touch as I slipped inside of them, their entrance gaping to welcome me in. My first press into them elicited a raspy, glottal groan from the depths of

their throat. The sound repeated with every bob of my head downward, the motion matched each time by the curl of my fingers against the furrowed wrinkles of their front wall. Moan after moan dripped from their lips, a mumbling protolanguage of pleasure spilling out of them in meaningless vocalizations and groaned orphaned syllables. Enraptured by the sounds of their delight, I briefly lost myself: lapping hungrily at them, speeding up the pace of my insistent, inquisitive explorations and pressing my face into them harder, as if I could somehow push myself even closer to them than I already was. They tangled their fingers in my hair and pulled me back, breaking my spiraling reverie and returning me to reality with the silent request to slow down and listen to the direction their body was giving me. Duly reminded, I wrapped my lips around them once more. Drawing them up and into my mouth with more suction than I had before, I met their exposed clit with a swirling, rotating flick of my tongue; the move drew a loud, yelping groan from them and they instinctively tilted their pelvis down and forward against me in response. My head, still cradled in their hand, barely moved as they started rocking their hips toward me over and over, fucking my mouth at a pace that I matched with my fingers. Their legs began to quiver as I sucked on them, flitted my tongue against them and slid my curling digits effortlessly into and out of their hot, slick opening, their tempo stuttering and faltering as their breaths became louder and more ragged.

With a sudden jolt their shuddering legs closed tightly around my head, knocking my hand away and muffling the urgently building moans that were resounding off the walls of the small, tiled room. Even with their thighs clamped tight against me the long, keening wail they released when they reached their peak cut through enough to leave my ears ringing. The unexpectedly shrill sound continued to build in volume and urgency in response to the flitting ministrations of my tongue-tip until it suddenly cut out entirely as their body was wracked by a wave of convulsions that I took as my cue to ease up.

I got to my feet shakily, needing the support of the counter they were sat on to help me up, my chest still heaving with heavy, labored breaths. Similarly winded and still entirely unable to speak, they simply beckoned me toward them with the curl of a finger; I dutifully obliged, sharing the taste of them as I finally kissed their other set of lips for the first time.

“Hi,” they murmured, when we finally pulled apart, a tenuous string of their own wetness stretched between their lips as they smiled at me breathlessly.

“Hi,” I replied, squeezing their hand in mine, my cheeks aching from the grin stretched across my cum-smeared face, “it’s so good to see you.”

I’d waited long enough.

Meat on Bone

“**W**hat do you want, babe?”

It’s Friday night and I’m pinned between my wife’s thighs in the middle of our bed while she ties back her long, loose black curls above me.

Raquel can tell something’s up: any other week, this is the point in the night where I’d start leaning into my mouthy, bratty tendencies, trying to goad her into a reaction. She’d pretend to expect obedience from me then act surprised at my insubordination. Invariably it’d escalate, she’d slap me around a little and pull me over her knee to “teach me a lesson” before putting me to work between her legs. I spend seventy-odd hours a week at my job being the final word on decisions big and small, so it’s a nice change of pace to have someone else take charge for a while.

This week, though? This week was a doozy. I’ve been run ragged chasing a never-ending series of deadlines that have had me working late every evening but one, when I spent an emotional final night together with a dear friend before she moved across the country. Even now, having finally left the office at 9pm to spend what was left of the night with my love, I’m struggling to focus on her. The background processes in my brain are churning away relentlessly, planning the wording for my responses to a couple of important emails I got this afternoon, making a mental note to check whether I’ll have enough time to call my doctor’s office between those two meetings on Tuesday, mentally rehearsing my speech for the Q2 launch event. . .

I’ve been drinking herbal tea with breakfast, practicing finding moments of stillness throughout my day, and doing twenty minutes of yoga before my ride into work every morning, but there’s only so much that kind of self-soothing can do. Faced with this degree of work-creep, a routine pressure-release spanking just isn’t going to cut it: I need to call forth something I’ve only ever seen in Raquel a handful of times before.

“Remember our honeymoon, the night we wound up at the leather bar?”

Raquel’s face lights up with glee. Of course she remembers that night, but why I’m choosing to bring it up now has her curiosity piqued. She raises her eyebrows questioningly, inviting me to continue.

“You scored us an invite to a play party where you beat the shit out of that girl from . . . Luxembourg?”

“Ah, Marine from Belgium . . .”

Raquel trails off, grinning to herself, briefly lost in a reverie at the memory.

“Yeah, I remember. Why?”

It was one of those incredible scenes that you couldn’t help but be drawn in by. Sitting off to the side, captivated from the get-go, I’d watched with pride as everyone else in the dungeon gradually realized they were in the presence of something special and turned to reverently bear witness. My heart had swelled as my new bride took a bright, shining spark of a young woman and, with every pair of eyes in the room focussed on the two of them, thoroughly broke her. Using nothing more than her calloused, hard-working hands, some well-chosen words and the very pair of wrist restraints hanging on the wall beside us, Raquel had ruthlessly and meticulously dismantled the poor Belgian girl. Over the course of maybe twenty minutes, I watched Raquel pulverize, defile, and debase Marine until she was left lying prone on the floor, a mere empty shell of the woman she’d been earlier that night.

Raquel is a wonderful service top, don’t get me wrong, and I know she loves all the ways we fuck. But most of the service she’s drafted into these days is fairly milquetoast: I totally understand why doling out the odd perfunctory spanking doesn’t exactly get her engine roaring. I’ve seen the capital-T Top that lurks within Raquel’s darkest depths. Summoning her is like conjuring under a blood moon: the opportunities

to channel that kind of magick may be few and far-between, but when the stars align to allow you to unleash it? It's a force like nothing you've ever seen. I'll never forget the cool, animalistic look that I caught a flash of in Raquel's eyes that night: the inky darkness of her pupils, already swollen by the dim light of the dungeon, seemed to engulf her mahogany irises completely. As she circled Marine, those black eyes briefly scanned past me and in them I saw the determined, singular focus of a persistence predator stalking her prey. That was the first time Raquel allowed me to see that part of her and the memory still sends a shiver up my spine. In the years since, I've seen that look in her eyes a handful of times again, but only ever from the periphery of her scenes. I've never properly and fully submitted myself to her. Not like that. Not after seeing the broken husks of women that crawled away, stupefied, from their encounters with her. I've never been able to imagine that level of loss of control before.

"I want that Raquel."

Silence swells in the wake of my words as the gravity of the request settles in for both of us.

"You sure?"

"Yes."

"Give me your hands."

I raise them up and let her guide them to the headboard. Taking the hint, I wrap my fingers tightly around two of the thin metal bars.

"Don't let go."

She slaps my chest before I have the chance to respond. My body bucks impulsively under the blow but I barely move: she's sitting astride my hips, her bodyweight pinning me to the bed, while my hands might as well be welded in place after her command. I've got nowhere to go.

"One to ten."

It doesn't sound like it, but it's a question: she's testing my limits, gauging just how hard of an impact I can take.

"Four."

"Four?"

She cocks an eyebrow skeptically. I nod and repeat myself calmly:

"Four."

She tilts her head to the side as if to say "okay, if you say so . . ." then raises her hand up and slaps my left tit. Hard. I suck in a sharp breath through gritted teeth then let it out in a slow, steady stream while she shakes her hand off. If the fresh heat in my chest is anything to go by, her palm must really sting after that one.

"Seven."

The word is barely out of my mouth when her hand comes slicing down to connect with the inside of my right breast. I let out a yelp as tears sting at the corners of my eyes.

"N-nine."

The corner of her lips curl ever so slightly and the sight instills more fear in me than any deranged, maniacal grin ever could. I feel a chill settle in my core as I become suddenly, horrifyingly aware of exactly what I've invited upon myself: now that Raquel has my pain tolerance calibrated she can start really enjoying herself and I have no idea what she's going to do from here. With my exposed chest already burning from her warm-up strikes, I close my eyes tightly and brace myself for whatever she decides to throw at me next. The whip-crack of an open-handed slap cuts through the still air of our bedroom and there's a brief moment where I'm startled by the unexpected sound before I feel the pain begin to blossom in my right cheek. My eyes snap open in surprise just as Raquel takes hold of my chin with a cool, firm grip and turns my head toward her.

"Look at me."

Her voice is icy and sharp, totally devoid of any of her usual playfulness. I feel a hot, angry flare of emotion in my belly at Raquel's demand that it takes me a second to recognize as misplaced frustration; the emotional specters of my job haunting me in my bedroom. I may be here in body, but my thoughts are still being stretched and pulled in a hundred different directions. Raquel won't accept that, though. I know from experience that she expects nothing less than the full and complete attention of her sub and that she'll do whatever it takes to ensure she has it. So I do as I'm told and meet her gaze. My capitulation must be apparent on my face as, satisfied, Raquel lets go. Staring dead at me, she grips my left nipple and coolly torques her wrist through a quarter-turn. My head jerks upward and an agonized bleat escapes me, but I keep my eyes locked on hers. Still holding my twisted nipple in her vice-like grip, she uses her free hand to slap my tit in a rapid one-two-three. With the skin of my breast already pulled taut there's nowhere for it to stretch when it's hit, making the blows sting even more than they normally would, to say nothing of the extra pull it adds to my already pained nipple.

"Fuck!"

I cry out, twisting ineffectually beneath her. Unperturbed, she releases her hold and immediately lets loose a flurry of slaps with both hands, tattooing a pulsating rhythm across the inside and outside of my tits and the expanse of skin between them.

one-two-THREE-one-two-THREE

smack-smack-SMACK-smack-smack-SMACK

I throw my head back in anguished ecstasy, lifting myself to invite the first two hits as they pepper my chest only to be beaten back down by the third. Over and over she repeats the pattern, over and over I stretch up to welcome the blows. The constant, steady pattern demands my immediate attention and forces me to live in the present moment: all I can think about is Raquel's hands, the burning skin of my chest and the quietly building swell of endorphins in my brain.

When she finally breaks, I'm half-delirious and panting heavily. Before I can regain my composure, though, she subjects my right nipple to the same torture that my left only barely survived: she twists it further than I thought possible to bear, pulls away from my body then swats at the tightly-drawn skin of my breast with another trio of biting slaps, each harder than the last. The way my tit tugs against the layers of sinewy tissue surrounding it when she lands a blow makes me startlingly aware of how much my body is simply a collection of meat on bone; meat that's being lovingly tenderized by her hands. I whimper and shut my eyes tightly after she releases her hold following the third hit, preparing myself for another violent squall to pour down on me like the first.

"Look at me."

She speaks the words softly but firmly, knowing she can expect my compliance this time. I tentatively flutter my eyes open to the sight of her cool, impassive face staring down at me. The instant I meet her gaze, I freeze: I might as well have just locked eyes with a shark. As I stare into the infinite depths of those twin dark pools, every instinct in my body screams at me to be afraid. To leave. To run. I've felt securely pinned beneath Raquel many times—in all honesty, it's one of my favorite places to be—but this is the first time I've ever felt *trapped*. As the realization hits, a wave of panic washes over me. I shiver involuntarily and almost give in to the urge to glance for the door, but stop myself before I'm stupid enough to break eye contact with her. I don't want to think about what that would bring down upon me.

Raquel simply waits and patiently watches all of this play out on my face. In less charged moments, she's forever placing her broad, warm hands on my chubby cheeks and telling me that she loves how expressive my face is, that she can always tell how I'm doing more by how I look than what I say. So for her to have been the cause of—and the only witness to—the kaleidoscopic whirlwind of emotions that just flashed across my face must have been quite the treat for her. The

barest flicker of a smile briefly lifts one side of her mouth in satisfaction before she lets loose a singularly devastating open-palmed slap, landing full-force just below my collarbone. The blow knocks the wind from me with an audible “oof” and I stay winded as she leaves her hand on me and leans forward onto it. It’s not until this very moment that I truly understand the “cage” part of “ribcage.” The pressure of her full bodyweight on me, her torso tilted to angle as much of it as possible onto my chest, forces my ribs down to squeeze all the air from my constricted lungs, robbing me of my breath. I try to gasp, but can’t. I try to move, to cry out, to find an ounce of empathy or mercy in Raquel’s eyes but I know there’s no use. The panic within me begins rising again and I’m seriously considering releasing my hold on the bars of the headboard when she suddenly lifts off me and follows up her initial strike with a matching one on the other side of my sternum. In the wake of the blow I have no air left in me to release and can only wheeze out a strained squawk from the back of my throat.

My chest feels like it’s on fire, inside and out: I can barely suck down enough air with each labored inhale I take, while the raised, angry web of handprints criss-crossing my chest is stretched painfully with every expansion of my ribcage. There’s a visceral primacy to the urgent, life-or-death *need* for oxygen that the burning ache in my lungs signals, the kind of demand that my body rarely gets to make of me. It’s a bone-deep reminder that makes me palpably aware, much as I try to ignore it and pretend otherwise, that I am my body as much as my brain. In the span of a few minutes on a Friday night, Raquel has managed to do what months of meditation and attempts at self-care couldn’t: she’s dragged me down out of the ivory tower of conscious, rational thought and into the messy, confusing, emotional reality that my body is a physical object with needs.

As my breathing finally levels out, the ache in my chest remains but my focus gradually expands to take in the outside world again. Raquel is sitting up tall above me, casually sipping water from the glass she keeps on her night stand.

“You look thirsty.”

She leans her head back to take a pointedly long, slow drink, her cheeks puffing out like a chipmunk as she fills her mouth with liquid. Tilting forward, she lets a steady stream pour from her mouth to splash into mine. I sputter a little as I drink it down, but manage to swallow every drop of the mouthful she’s shared with me. She places the glass back on her bedside table theatrically then turns back to me with just a hint of smugness on her face. It’s the break in her terrifyingly blank expression that generally only comes when she’s done with someone, a relaxation into softness as she undoes a set of restraints, pulls someone to their feet and welcomes them back to reality. The glass set aside, she bends forward so the soft squish of her breasts smothers mine, her cool skin wicking away some of the searing hot pain from the surface of my own. With her face hovering fractions of an inch above mine, she smiles and asks sweetly:

“Had enough?”

“Punch me.”

The words come out in a hoarse croak just barely above a whisper, and I briefly consider taking them back after seeing the glimmer in Raquel’s eyes upon hearing them. But only briefly. Raquel sits back up and cracks her knuckles in preparation; the sight sends a shiver of worry rippling down my spine.

“Are you sure?”

There’s no sadistic malice in her voice: it’s a genuine question, not a challenge. With our eyes locked, I take a couple of deep, slow breaths to center myself then nod assuredly.

“Punch me.”

She sends her left fist down onto me. No fucking around, no warm-up, just a straight-shot directly to my chest. Her right follows a second later, landing just a few inches away. Her thudding blows reverberate through my bones, traveling up my spine to vibrate in the echo chamber

of my skull; the jarring, unpredictable impacts of her punches rattling and disorienting me in ways that the wide, rhythmic slaps of her palm just couldn't manage. As she hammers me down with a series of stiff shots—two lefts, a right, a left in quick succession—I sink further into both the mattress and the depths of my own consciousness.

Time melts away and the pain in my chest transforms into something akin to pleasure but closer to the simple contentment of having a long-ignored need finally met. Like waking up late on the Saturday morning, comfortable in the knowledge that it's a long weekend and my calendar is clear, I slowly come to the realization that not only has Raquel has stopped hitting me but I'm sobbing, heavily, and messily. Tears of joyous release and relief pour down my cheeks as my pummeled chest heaves with deep, wracking sobs. Like a computer coming back online after a hard reboot, the signals from my body start trickling into my brain piecemeal: the pain in my lower back I've been ignoring for weeks, the perpetual carpal-tunnel tightness in my forearms, the strain in my eyes from using glasses with a years-old prescription. Feeling these signals come to me like this, my whole viewpoint shifts: these aches and pains I feel aren't failures, they're emotions I buried, meals I skipped, needs I ignored. Every one is a plea from my body to listen to it that I turned away from in order to "power through." As my body's systems slowly finish coming back online, I thank it for each concern it's brought to my attention and vow to listen to each and every one individually to give them the care they require—from setting some boundaries at work to taking a swim in the ocean. With the promise of a care plan in place, my body allows me to relax and bask in the afterglow of the violent gift that Raquel bestowed upon me.

"You okay?"

Once more, Raquel's words snap me back to reality. She rests her red and angry excoriated knuckles on my pecs gingerly and awaits my response. I take one last heaving, shuddering breath in then release it slowly, with control. I nod calmly. I'm done. With deliberate gentleness,

she carefully uncurls my fingers, one by one, from the bars of the headboard that I'm still gripping as if my life depended on it. As I lower my shaky arms, she climbs off me, lies down beside me and pulls me in to rest my head on her chest. She'll get up and make me tea soon—hot, milky, and extra sweet—but for now, she just wraps her arms around me and lets me nuzzle into her. With my brain turned to mush, I'm completely incapable of expressing the depths of the gratitude I feel towards her for the overwhelming sense of peaceful serenity that has descended over me. And so, until I'm able, two muffled words, murmured into her soft chest, will have to suffice:

“Thank you.”

“**F**riends, lovers, metamours: welcome. I know it’s a tight squeeze in here, but bear with me—you’ll all get a chance to move a little more freely soon enough.”

There are some chuckles and a bit of a creak from the floorboards as someone shifts their weight. I was blindfolded long before the first guest rang the doorbell, so I can’t tell how many people Vik has crammed in our cozy little bedroom, but their collective body heat has already made the air warm and sticky. The industrial-strength vibrator strapped to my leg probably doesn’t help how hot I feel either: I’ve been struggling to endure its “Low” setting for twenty minutes, to give my best guess.

“You all know Allie.”

Someone—I can only assume it’s Vik—ruffles my hair as they say this, and I feel my cheeks redden. I’m naked and bound, on display to a small crowd in my bedroom, and it’s having my hair tousled that makes me blush. Go figure.

“Allie here told me something interesting a while ago: they told me that they like the sensation of gloved hands on them. That the latex adds a distance and an anonymity to the sensations of being pinched . . .”

Vik’s lubed-up, latex-clad fingers sharply twist my nipple, and I squeal a cry around the ball gag filling my mouth.

“Manhandled . . .”

I collapse onto my front, ass up in the air, as they shove me over from behind.

“. . . and fucked.”

They slip a finger into my ass as they slowly, deliberately draw out each word.

“And we’ve had a lot of fun with those sensations the past little while.”

Vik curls their finger to hit just the right spot and I whimper into the mattress a little, as best I can around my mouthful of silicone. They slip their finger back out of me, their demonstration complete, and carefully lift me by the shoulders to help me to sit up again. As I settle back down on my knees I’m made even more aware of the deep, rumbling vibrations permeating my entire body, the memory of my brief respite already fading.

“If you’ve been lucky enough to have spent any, uh, ‘quality time’ with Allie, something you’ll know about them is that they quite like the experience of sensory overload. Some of you . . .”

There’s a moment of pointed silence, eliciting another handful of giggles, including one I’m so close to recognizing but just can’t quite place.

“. . . some of you will know just how much they like a mouth on each nipple and a quartet of roaming hands pawing at their delightful body. Sadly, sometimes even four hands aren’t quite enough to suitably satiate this filthy little pup of mine. They want *more*. They want to feel *completely* overwhelmed. And so, I’ve invited all of you here to help me give them a night to remember. I know a couple of you quite well already . . .”

More giggles. I’m right on the cusp of putting a face to the distinctive laugh I know so well, but I’m too distracted by the throbbing, humming motor between my legs to be able to think coherently for long enough. As best I can with my arms bound behind my back, I shift my weight from knee to knee to try to relieve the punishing intensity of the vibrations, even momentarily, but the head of the wand is pressed hard against my junk no matter how I move.

“ . . . while I’m only meeting others here for the first time. All of you know and love this precious, whimpering, slavering sweetheart of mine, and I know that every single one of you is oh-so-terribly excited to assist me in this endeavor.”

There’s a palpable tension in the room now, a growing impatience I can almost taste in the air. Part of me is tightly attuned to it, praying that Vik will just start things already, that they’ll free me from the constant, torturous thrumming machine I’m sitting on and throw me to the assembled pack to be devoured. The rest of me wishes they’d keep talking forever, drawing out the build-up and anticipation, leaving me perpetually on display as a drooling, dripping pornographic *objet d’art* for the audience assembled in my own bedroom.

“You’ve all read my email with Allie’s limits and boundaries for this, but as a last-minute reminder. One: Hands only, please, and keep them gloved. Two: Allie will squeeze the squeaker in their right hand twice if they need a break. They’ll squeeze it three times if they need to stop entirely. Three: If anyone . . .”

I tune out as it suddenly hits me: this is real. This is actually going to happen, and very soon. The fantasy has been rattling around my head for months as I’ve toyed with it, fleshed it out, and built on it with Vik—among others—while we fucked and dirty-talked, but now it’s *here* and it’s *happening*. My breathing starts to quicken, but before the looming panic can settle in I feel the familiar warmth of Vik’s ungloved hand rest on my shoulder in a gentle, reassuring grip and I relax: they’ve got me.

“There are a couple of boxes of gloves by the door. If you haven’t already, please grab yourselves a couple of pairs in whatever size you need. The wand should have Allie nicely worked up by now and you’ve all seen how much they’ve been drooling but even still, please don’t skimp on lube: there’s a pump bottle on each nightstand. Now, please, take a moment to get yourselves ready while I prepare our main course for consumption.”

The tape on my legs is cut free and I feel the weight of the wand fall away. I'm left a quivering mess in its wake. Vik's voice fills my ear as they untangle me from the vibrator's snaking cord, the familiar low, comforting susurrations of their words only calming me further:

"Are you ready for this?"

I nod without hesitation.

"Okay. I've got you, love."

They take a firm hold of me by the scruff of my neck, right under the buckle for the gag I can still feel long strands of saliva dripping from, before they stand again. Even blindfolded, I can tell that our assembled audience has closed in around me: their radiant body heat has me covered in sticky trails of sweat. The collective energy in the room has climbed to a fever pitch, but all I'm really aware of is Vik's grip.

"Everyone good to go?"

The buckle is loosed and the gag pulled free; I manage a single gasping intake of breath before my mouth is filled again by probing fingers and the unmistakable taste and texture of latex. A swarm of hands—all of them warm and smooth and anonymous and interchangeable—descend and smother every square inch of my skin.

Well . . . maybe not quite so anonymous and interchangeable: a sharp slap to my inner thigh stings so much and covers such a wide area that it can only be the work of Rachi's hand; I didn't even realize ze was back in the country. While I can't tell whose fingers are in my mouth—nor keep track of quite how many there are—Jordan's slender, probing digits in my ass are unmistakable, particularly when they're accompanied by a couple of Vik's. I'm finally able to place Callie as the mystery giggler when the warm, rich tones of their T-fried voice growl in my ear to tell me I'm doing *such* a good job.

It doesn't take long before the overwhelm sets in: sensations blur together, my body loosens and relaxes, and my constantly-whirring brain finally gives out, falling blissfully silent. I stop being able to

identify anyone, or even really keep track of who's doing what to me, as the crowd of my lovers, friends, partners, and crushes grab at me, glide their gloved fingers over my sweat-slicked skin, push me around, and fuck and fill my holes.

And I swear I've never felt more loved.

After Hours

I still can't believe I convinced Dee to do it with me. Every single fucking time we come to one of these stores I spend half the trip pointing out the mocked-up rooms I most want to fuck in and thinking out loud on which secluded spots would be best to hide in to wait out the hours until the place closes so we can start claiming it as our own. I honestly don't even know what I said that finally swayed her, but given that I just woke up in a closet wrapped in her arms I must've finally talked her into it. After a tentative peek out the door confirms the lights are dimmed and the store is empty I ease myself up to my feet, stretching my stiff limbs before stepping out into the mid-range bedroom showcasing the KVITSJUN bedframe with the underbed storage boxes.

"I fucking love this place!" I yell out, throwing my arms out in excitement and spinning in place under the low light of the LLÄMPELIN chandelier hanging above me, "Every inch is haunted by the specter of cis-het domesticity: we can play out every tacky shitty relationship cliché we want in every imaginable arrangement of reasonably-priced, assemble-it-yourself furniture!"

"Calm your tits, Liv, it's just a furniture store," Dee mumbles through a half-stifled yawn as she follows me out. She glances up at the chandelier above me and smirks, "I do have to admit that this would look good in our bedroom, though."

I pull her into a tight embrace under the twinkling lights and press our lips together in a firm kiss.

"This could be our bedroom tonight, if you wanted. I would *love* it if you would rail me under this."

Dee grins back at me before taking a moment to look around at the contents of the three-walled bedroom of our dreams. She puts on an exaggerated frown and shakes her head firmly “no.”

“Nah, it’s a bit . . . sterile. Wanna go find something better?”

I nod in agreement and make for the meandering path that snakes through the showroom. Dee starts to follow then winces and gasps.

“Ah, fuck . . . I’ve got a cramp,” she hisses through clenched teeth. She leans back against the foot of the bed and starts massaging the back of her calf, “I’m gonna take a sec to stretch it out. You wanna go ahead and I’ll catch you up?”

I leave her to work the knot out her muscle and start the hunt for another spot ripe with potential, scoping a few options before plumping for the deluxe living room featuring the KÖUCJA sofa and the LAKJIBO armchairs: a solid family room for a hard-working man-of-the-house to relax in after a rough day at . . . I dunno, the mechanic’s or whatever? Dee walks in to find me with my hand down my skirt watching late-night cable on the cardboard flatscreen TV, my feet propped up on a glass and chrome GLÄSTOPP coffee table.

“Porn? Really? I tell you to go sleep on the couch and this is what you do?” she crosses her arms and I dutifully withdraw my hand from my underwear, putting on my best hangdog expression.

“I’m sorry, honey, I just missed you so much,” I’m laying it on thick, really aiming to hit that deadbeat husband vibe, pushing her to see which of us will crack first, “I hate it when we fight . . . let’s go back to bed and make love. I’ll cook breakfast in the morning for our beautiful children, Bobbi-Jo and Zayden-with-a-J, then get them on the school bus so you can sleep in. Promise.”

Dee sets her face in a hardened scowl. She’s good at this. I chance my luck:

“I’ll settle for a handjob?”

A smile creeps in at the corner of her lip as she can't help but giggle.

"K, fine, you got me," she concedes, giving me an affectionate punch in the arm for good measure as she settles down on the couch next to me, "what d'you think of the room? Wanna make ou—"

She freezes and whips her head around to look over the back of the sofa. I follow the line of her gaze but don't see anything.

"Did you hear . . . scratching?" Dee asks as she turns back, her brow furrowed with concern.

I shake my head then sit in silence with her for a few seconds longer.

"I mean, a store this size has gotta have at least a few mice running around it, right?" I venture.

"Yeah . . ." Dee sounds only somewhat convinced, "probably."

"You wanna move somewhere else?" I offer, squeezing her hand to give a bit of reassurance.

"Yeah, let's do that," Dee says, seeming a bit more chipper, "gimme five to set up in the kitchen?"

I stick my hand back in my underwear and channel surf on the cardboard tube for a while but quickly get bored: there's never anything good on this late at night. After giving her a bit of lead time, I find Dee in the modern, compact condo kitchen slicing plastic fruit with a KÜTTINEM chef's knife.

"Good morning, sweetheart," her voice lilts up as I walk in, hitting a register I've never heard her use before, "I'm making your favorite!"

She greets me with a winning cheery-housewife smile and a quick kiss then hops up on the LIGOUMB counter in the Walnut finish, shoving the WÖÖD bamboo cutting board out the way. She props her leg up, letting her dress fall away, and pulls her underwear to the side with a finger.

"Breakfast is served."

I can't keep a straight face and break into giggles almost immediately, but this isn't an offer I'm going to pass up, so I settle into an ENKEDLATEN stool and dive in: kissing her inner thigh over and over as I wind my way in toward the crease of her leg. I let my tongue linger there, teasing at tender skin through her short, wiry fuzz, the gentle but insistent pressure of the tip of my tongue starting to draw deeper and deeper groans from her, her vocalizations echoing back to me off the collection of AROÅSTEN pans hanging on the wall behind me. For once, we're somewhere that Dee doesn't need to keep it down lest we get thrown out, so I intend to take full advantage. I've teased her enough—the growing pool of her cum that's dripped on the faux-Walnut finish of the counter stands as testament to that—so I press further in, drawing a guttural growl from her as my tongue first grazes her clit. Dee's fingers are wrapped deeply in my hair, pressing my face into her—*hard*—when she suddenly yanks my head away.

"Did you hear that?" she hisses, still maintaining a death-grip on my hair.

"Oww!" I whine. She shushes me, but releases her hold.

Dee looks genuinely worried, but I didn't hear anything and still don't. I stretch my neck out a little from the strain, making a show of it in the hopes that she'll offer to make it up to me: I'm holding out for some shower sex. We wait a minute longer, but the only sound is our labored breathing.

"Dude, I think you might just be being paranoid," I tell her with a shrug, "wanna go check out the bathrooms?"

Dee smirks down at me, "No, I want you to finish the job you started."

I start to lean back in, eager to get back to work, but before my mouth reaches her skin Dee screams.

I jerk my head around to see what spooked her and scream.

The seven foot tall, purple-skinned, leather vest-wearing demon with cloven hooves and eighteen inch curved black horns spiraling out her forehead screams.

Dee and I scatter to the floor, cowering together with our backs against the stainless steel French doors of the STÄTUSSIMBOLL fridge. After all the yelling dies down the demon leans her head back into the mocked-up kitchen cautiously, the tiny room filling with the oppressively heavy stench of sulfur as she does.

“I’m so sorry to, uhh, interrupt, but I’m looking for . . .” she glances down at a clipboard she has delicately held in her long, curved talons, “Olivia and Deanne, recently deceased?”

“So . . . let me just check I’ve got this right: we died on impact in a car crash on the 401 on our way home from here and now we’re haunting the store because it was the last ‘residence’ we were in?” Dee asks, recapping everything that Stella—the tall demon lady who’s been assigned as our afterlife orientation coach, apparently—just filled us in on.

Stella nods and offers a sympathetic smile. She’s clearly done this before.

“It’s quite an adjustment, I understand,” her voice is measured and soothing, despite its gravelly depth and the occasional sparks that fly from her mouth full of razor-sharp fangs, “but most folks settle into the swing of things within a few weeks. Like I said, I’ll leave you both copies of the *Handbook* before I go, but given that you’ve both seen Beetlejuice, it sounds like you’ve got a pretty good handle on things already.”

Dee leans back in her FJOTTENSBOK swivel chair at the ÖFISJOBB conference table we’d relocated to following the incident in the kitchen.

“Who’d’ve thunk Tim fuckin’ Burton would have given us the most accurate guide to the afterlife?” Dee wonders aloud. I don’t know

how to answer; I'm still reeling from that revelation more than the fact we're dead.

"It surprises a lot of people," Stella nods her agreement, "but every once in a while a piece of mortal media pretty much nails the gist of the netherworld: adults can't see you, kids might catch a glimpse, you can't leave the premises, so on and so forth. Details are all spelled out in the *Handbook* but in all honesty, I think you two will be fine: you have each other for, uh, company."

She adjusts her glasses, pretending her voice didn't just hitch a little, and quickly busies herself digging out two large books from her briefcase. The pigmentation of her skin makes it hard to tell, but I'm pretty sure she's blushing. I raise a questioning eyebrow at Dee while Stella's distracted and get a "worth a shot" shrug in response.

"So I think we've discussed everything we need to in order to wrap up your orientation. Do either of you have any questions before I go?" Stella asks, setting two copies of *The Handbook for the Recently Deceased* on the table between us, her composure and level tone restored.

"Can you give me just one moment to confer with my associate?" I ask.

Stella nods and turns away while Dee and I huddle together.

"K, this hot demon butch is *so* your type," Dee is terrible at keeping her voice low but Stella politely pretends not to notice.

"And you're *such* a greedy slut," I whisper back, "I could use a hand."

"Shall we?"

I nod decisively. We turn back toward Stella and both lean in toward her, winning smiles in place.

"We have a proposition for you . . ." Dee starts.

We've clearly done this before.

Dee and I pull out all the stops to welcome Stella as the first visitor to our new home. I get my steamy bathroom fantasy fulfilled right off the bat, as Stella and I pin Dee between us under the hot stream of the YÅXVO shower head: four hands pawing at her, pinching and pulling at her nipples, teasing her clit, filling her mouth and stuffing her cunt, leaving all of us dripping—in various ways—after. We render a king-sized IOBSUUT mattress totally unusable after Stella's horns rip dead through it when she throws her head back as she comes, my face buried between her legs while Dee fingerfucks me from behind and snarls filthy encouragement in my ear. Destructive as they may be, Stella's horns prove a delightful handle to grip as she and Dee double-team giving me head, her forked tongue providing an eerily cold and deftly agile counterpoint to the familiar warmth of Dee's mouth enveloping me; both of them dig their nails deep into my back, thighs and chest, leaving scratches and bruises that I'll cherish for days to come.

As the dawn creeps up on us I lie watching Stella and Dee moan into and around each other in a sidelong 69. Even as burnt out, dazed, and overwhelmed as I am I'm still unable to keep my fingers from my own clit as my girlfriend and our new demon lover devour each other. Stella will need to leave soon—some netherworld rules around the day breaking—but she's assured us she'll be back when she can. Until then, Dee and I have countless other rooms to claim as our own as we settle into our new home.

I don't think being dead will be that bad after all.

“So, this is it, huh?”

She stands half-naked in the door of the bathroom, towel wrapped around her waist, her near-empty shower beer loosely held by her side. In my current state I can summon only a weak smile in response.

I shuffle over and pat a spot on the bare mattress next to me. She downs the dregs of her bottle, sets the empty atop a box, and sits down beside me. From the middle of the floor of our giant, empty apartment we look around at the walls once vibrant with art, the two distinct stacks of cardboard boxes filled with things that used to be “ours,” and the disassembled skeletons of furniture we’d spent the last four years fucking all over.

She takes my hand in hers and I turn toward her, wanting to say . . . something. But the words dry up in my mouth and all I can do is stare down at the floor. There’s nothing left to say, not now. We talked and talked and talked, but we still wound up here.

“We tried,” I manage.

I squeeze her hand and sniff back tears.

“I know,” she replies, emotion straining her voice.

For the first time in a long time we make deliberate, prolonged eye contact. With the barest hint of a smile turning the corner of her lips, she brushes some loose hair back behind my ear and I melt, the way I always do. The wrench in my heart that follows it is as unexpected as it is agonizing: the sudden, visceral knowledge that *that was the last time she’ll do that*. I fall on her shoulder, sobbing, and she scoops me in her arms.

“I know, I know,” she pours comfort on me, stroking my back and kissing my forehead.

She's trying to soothe me, but I can feel her own tears raining down already. She heaves in a shuddering, ragged breath above me and I sit up, wiping my eyes with the sleeve of my sweatshirt before I open my arms for her turn to collapse into me. On the eve of the end of our love we break down in each other's embrace.

She comes up from crying into my shirt seeking my lips, her face still wet with trails of tears. I kiss her back, softly. We've always played rough: rolling around with limbs flailing, knocking over any glasses of wine, cheap bedside lamps, or stacks of books unfortunate enough to be in the way of the tornado we create. This feels different, though. We're moving slowly, deliberately. She loosens the towel to let it fall away and I lean over to place a kiss on her thigh, beginning a trail of hundreds I lay across her belly, cresting her hipbone before climbing the ladder of her ribs toward the swell of her breasts, finally curving up her neck and jawline until I meet her lips once more. With a practiced motion, she pulls my sweatshirt and undershirt off in one shot, tracing her fingertips across my collarbone after tossing them aside. Our eyes meet as she takes a grip of my shoulder, the way she does when I'm railing her against a wall, but with a featherlight touch that won't leave the kinds of marks she usually does.

"Please?" she asks.

I nod and reach for my travel bag of toiletries, one of the few things not packed up in a box at this point, digging past my face wash and toothbrush to unearth the lube and a condom that I tear open and set aside. I stand and unceremoniously drop my pants and underwear. It feels odd and somehow improper to be aroused, given the circumstances, but I push the thought aside as I lie back down with her. She meets me with a warm, lubed-up hand, her soft fingers wrapping around my half-hard clit and working me the way only she knows how until I'm gasping for air through moans. She takes her hand away, leaving me to twitch needily in the air for a moment as she shifts herself. I roll onto my back expectantly and briefly lose myself in the sight of her nude

form, marveling at her body the same way I did the first time she ever undressed in front of me.

“You okay?” I ask, as she lowers herself down to sit astride me.

She nods without looking at me as she rolls the condom down then glances at me as she finishes lining us up, hand wrapped around me once more. I nod and she lowers herself, easing the first little bit of me into her. She gasps when I first slip in, then again as I push the rest of the way. Once I’m inside her, I want so badly to make this last forever, to draw this out as a beautiful, prolonged episode, fit to stand as a testament to the love we shared in this relationship. But my aching body and pounding head leave me painfully aware that I spent the entire day moving heavy shit around, that the truck arrives in under 10 hours, and that I desperately need to rest before then. There’s no time to waste on ceremony here. I start bucking my hips, gradually ramping the speed up and up until I find a pace that has her panting and struggling to hold herself up, one hand gripping at the bare mattress as her other disappears in a furious blur between her legs. I let my thighs fall further apart, reveling in the way her ass cheeks slap against them with each thrust.

“I . . . oh, ohh . . .”

I know her orgasms, I can see them coming a mile off. I’ve used that knowledge to tease her countless times, to take her to the brink then ease up just enough to leave her floating in that *almost* space for minutes on end before I finally let her crest the edge and into a crashing, cathartic mess. Or to get her *so fucking close*. then to deny her—over and over—until she’s soaking wet and full of frustration, begging for me to just please give her the release I have dangling before her.

This one I just want to share with her. I slow my breathing, letting my impending climax advance in time with hers.

“Oh, fuck! FUCKFUCKFU—”

She buries her face in the mattress, head right beside mine, smothering the rest of her scream. I arch upwards, grunting as her contractions provide the last little push I needed to reach my own climax. We cry out together, our sweaty bodies gliding against each other as we ride out the final quivers and twitches. She slides off me shortly after, both of us sighing as our aching bodies uncoil from each other. We lie, side-by-side on our backs, holding hands and staring up at the ceiling fan that never worked while we catch our breaths.

We need to get up from this mattress, to towel the sweat and cum from our bodies. We need to put the lube back and toss the condom in the trash. We need to turn off the light, to charge our phones, to brush our teeth . . . The demanding realities of the rest of our lives loom over us, yet we stubbornly, fervently ignore them. Neither of us wants to move, to unwind our fingers from each other for the last time; a silent acknowledgement that the moment—and the very idea of “us”—is done.

We both knew that this would be the last time; bittersweet doesn't begin to describe it.

A Good Date

Charlotte sighed as she kicked off her kitten heels by the door of her apartment. The date that had once seemed so promising had gone poorly, and she was back home significantly earlier than she'd planned or hoped she would be. She'd matched with the girl on an app a few weeks ago and they'd hit it off immediately, their flirting quickly getting hot and heavy over text. It didn't take long after that for them to make plans to get together for a drink at a place not far from Charlotte's apartment: she didn't want the trip back to hers to take too long if she decided it was worth her while to invite her date home after. After sitting at the bar alone for twenty minutes, Charlotte figured she'd been stood up and was just about to leave when her date breezed in without offering anything by way of explanation or apology. It didn't get much better from there. She wasted another twenty-five minutes trying—and mostly failing—to engage her date in conversation before she realized she was playing second-fiddle to a cell phone and politely extricated herself. She knew she could do better.

It had been a solid few months since Charlotte had last got laid, but she wasn't desperate: she knew she was thoroughly worth the effort of romancing properly. Scoring a second date was rarely ever a problem for her, so she figured she was good and entertaining company to have around—she'd made her last date laugh so hard at one of her off-the-cuff quips that they'd snorted their drink out their nose, which meant her friends probably weren't lying when they said she was bitingly funny—and she'd heard enough positive reviews by this point to be confident in her abilities in the bedroom. In return, she expected her dates to show her some chivalry, to court her, and to invest at least a little time and energy in their efforts to woo and titillate her.

In short: she deserved a good date, so she was gonna give herself one.

After pouring a generous couple of fingers of whisky—the nice one that she kept tucked away at the back of the shelf for special occasions—Charlotte headed for her living room. She stopped in the doorway and leant against the frame, closing her eyes as she took her first sip to better savor the slow-building smokey bouquet that lingered on her tongue long after the immediate burn of the alcohol had faded. With her eyes closed, Charlotte thought back to the familiar feelings of excited confusion that arose whenever she entered someone’s home for the first time, that uneasy nervousness of not knowing which door will lead to the bathroom and which to the kitchen. With that pleasantly unsettled sensation forefront in her mind, Charlotte fluttered her eyelashes open and took in the room before her with fresh eyes. When she stepped into the newly unfamiliar space, it wasn’t the living room-cum-home-office that she knew, a room that she had six years of accumulated memories built up in, that she’d tidied up and deliberately arranged before she left for the evening. No: a cute girl had invited her back here, had placed a healthy getting-to-know-you drink in her hand and was about to kick off the next step of the ever-enjoyable dance of flirtation that came after bringing a date home.

Drifting around the room, Charlotte took in the space the same way she would if she’d been left alone by a date who’d just stepped out to freshen up or to feed their cat or whatever excuse they needed to make to justify taking a moment to calm and compose themselves. There was a bunch of geek stuff decorating the place, of course, but she had enough capital-G Geek friends to know that she was comfortably on the right side of having *Too Much* nerdy shit on prominent display. The figurines and collectables were nicely balanced out by the basket full of cross-stitch supplies tucked under her coffee table, the stack of queer biographies, comics, and political calls-to-action lying atop it, and the carefully chosen stack of vinyl records that she’d left “casually” lying out by her stereo—all serving as hints that she was a well-rounded human who had other hobbies and interests than her video games.

Okay, so maybe the curated selection of vinyl is a bit much. She made a mental note to dial it back a touch next time.

Who was she kidding, though? When she invited a girl back home the living room was less of a destination and more of a brief stop-over point. With a smirk to herself, Charlotte took another sip of the heady amber liquid in her hand and moved from her date-ready living room to her equally well-prepared bedroom. The glow of the half-dozen strings of fairy lights draped from her ceiling lit the room in a warm, golden haze that complemented the deep purple of her sheets. Her bed sat as the focal point of the room, neatly made with the pillows fluffed, while an ornately-carved, dark-stained wooden box sat on her nightstand, exactly the right size to house her preferred brand of latex-free condoms. She'd be flattered if someone took her home and had prepared this much for her arrival.

As she stepped into her bedroom and set her glass down on her dresser she caught sight of herself in the full-length mirror in the corner. At six feet and change she didn't have the easiest time finding clothes that fit her well and also looked elegant, but she'd spent the last few years building herself a small, carefully-curated wardrobe filled with killer pieces that flattered her. For tonight, she'd chosen a slinky ankle-length dress in blood red with a swirling floral design in black sequins across the midriff, topped off with a crocheted black shawl draped around her shoulders that her long, bleached blonde hair spilled down over. Barring a couple of recent smudges to her deep red lipstick from her whisky tumbler, the makeup she'd spent a solid half-hour getting ready after her shower earlier in the evening was still immaculate. It was a hell of a look and had attracted her all kinds of attention at the bar—some more tempting than others—while she waited for her date to show.

Trying her best to turn off her self-judgment—to not even recognize herself—Charlotte drank in the sight of the well-dressed, perfectly made-up Tall Girl in the mirror, giving her the same uncritical,

breathless admiration as she would any new lover who'd just invited her into their bedroom.

"You look . . . stunning."

She was talking to her reflection, watching herself lean back to rest against the foot of the bed as she worked her tights down and off.

"I want you."

This is so stupid, she thought, as she watched her reflection straighten up and reach back to find the zipper pull.

"Allow me . . ."

This feels ridiculous, she rolled her eyes at herself as the zipper slid down easily with a satisfying metallic purr and she began to slip her arms out of her dress, revealing the first glimpse of the lacy black lingerie she had on underneath; she'd gone all-out, breaking out the fancy stuff for the first time in months.

"I can't believe you're actually in my bedroom."

This is . . . actually kinda hot?

Charlotte unclasped her bra and let it fall away to land on the floor by the dress that was now pooled around her ankles. Standing topless, she looked herself over in the reflecting glass: from her well-defined calves, her gaze roved up and over the sight of her thick thighs to the slight bulge in the frilly black bikini-cut panties that matched her discarded bra. Continuing her journey upwards, she followed the sharp dive of her hip bone into the cinch of her waist before climbing the ladder of her ribs to meet the gentle swell of her modest chest and on to her slender neck. As harsh as she could occasionally be on herself, she had to admit she was quite the sight to behold.

When she met her gaze in the reflection, she shot her best *fuck me* eyes then hooked her thumbs into her underwear to slide them down and off. The self-critical part of her brain had loud, insistent opinions on her naked body; it desperately wanted her to turn her attention to any

one of the hundred “imperfections” she would ordinarily beat herself up over. But Charlotte wasn’t looking at her reflection: instead, the mirror was showing her an incredible full-body view of the gorgeous girl who’d invited her home for the night and she could find nothing to fault in the sight of her.

After seeing her reflection’s girldick twitch, it took a full second for Charlotte to register the pleasant surprise that she was actually turned on by the sight of herself. That proved the motivation she needed to finally pull herself away from her spot in front of the mirror and drape herself on her bed. She knew a couple of girls like her who simply didn’t engage with their junk: their sights were firmly set on surgery and they dealt with what they currently had as little as possible until then. Charlotte was glad that she didn’t hate her junk, but her relationship with it was strained, at best. Masturbation had always been a goal-oriented exercise for her, especially so since her transition. Single-minded determination had become the name of the game. She couldn’t get distracted by stray thoughts or she’d lose her tenuous grip on the thread of her arousal and everything else would unravel from there. No, she had her process down. She would muster an intensely singular focus, wrap her hand around herself in *just* the right way, and use the exact combination of pressure, speed, and lubrication necessary to propel her to a perfunctory orgasm in the most efficient manner possible. Even then, it wasn’t always guaranteed that she’d get there.

Tonight, though, orgasm wasn’t her goal, not necessarily. Sure, it’d be nice, but she rarely ever got off the first time she was with a new lover; she was always too tied up with learning her date’s body and teaching them how to touch hers to be terribly concerned about if she came or not. So why was she sweating if she would tonight? She placed her hands upon herself, doing her best to approximate the cautious, exploratory touch of a new lover. Her fingertips slid up her arms then glided down her ribs, roamed freely over her belly and her inner thighs, and grazed her smooth cheek as lightly as a feather-tip. Giving herself permission to react to the sensations, Charlotte arched

her back up, stretched her neck long, and shivered excitedly in response to the gentle, curious touches of her attentive and caring lover. As she traced the curves and swells of her form, the self-doubting tension she held within her gradually began to seep away and she started to relax into the sensations she was drawing out of herself. She relished in the softness of her body, from the squishy give of her pudgy thighs to the silky smooth skin of her flaccid girldick.

Without explicitly acknowledging it was what she was doing, Charlotte began the process of relearning her body in earnest. She paid attention to her reactions and fine-tuned the ways she touched herself to match the new ways she was responding, listening to what each part she touched wanted from her and respecting what she was told in response, rather than trying to railroad her body into “working” like it used to. Under the heel of her hand, her limp girldick found delight in a firm, persistent pressure that simply wouldn’t have worked for her when she was erect. When it did, inevitably, begin to lengthen and thicken under the stimulation she was giving herself, she approached her building erection with the same newfound sense of wonderment. Using a tender, thoughtful touch, rather than the iron grip she’d been used to since her early teenage years, she ran her fingers lightly over some of the most sensitive tissue on her body, noticing just how much thinner and more delicate the skin felt after the feminizing effects of years of estrogen. She draped her hand lightly over her half-hard shaft and—for the first time—began to truly stroke herself.

Embracing the spirit of open-minded exploration, Charlotte closed her eyes and listened as closely and nonjudgmentally as she could to what her body was telling her. The buzzing warmth that flooded her girldick under the brush of her palm spread through her entire pubic area once she stopped focusing on keeping it contained and controlled. Her core muscles tensed and relaxed as she lifted her pelvis rhythmically and hungrily in response to the slightest graze of her forearm past her hip bone, helping her saliva-slicked fingertips settle into a comfortable, slow-paced motion as they slipped over her swollen, sensitive head.

Sparks of excitement fizzed through her nerves as she cupped one of her small breasts in her free hand, her chest flushed and her nipples standing to attention as the growing heat in her groin spread out further and climbed higher. When she opened her eyes again to chance a glance downward—certain that she must be rock-solid given how incredible her girldick felt under the short, sharp, staccato motions of her sleek, slippery fingers—she was astounded to see that she was barely hard at all. Her head was a deep, dark pink and she could swear she was right on the cusp of an orgasm that she just couldn't . . . quite . . . reach . . .

Reluctantly, she tore her hand away from her girldick—feeling it pulse and ache in time with the continued slow rock of her hips—and rummaged through the top drawer of her nightstand, returning with a small bullet vibe that she'd picked up years before. When she'd first tried it out, a year or so into her transition, she'd found the vibrations it provided to be pleasant, if a little weak; certainly nowhere near powerful enough to drag an orgasm from her. And so it had been tossed back in the drawer not long after and left to languish. Now, though? Charlotte yelped and flailed as soon as she touched it to herself, nearly lobbing the vibe across the room with her spasmodic reaction, the first of the three speed settings feeling unbearably intense on her tender, hyper-sensitized head. After taking a moment to catch her breath and calm down again, she cautiously experimented with the vibrations once more: she rolled the small cylinder of hard plastic from side to side along her shaft, pressed it up hard into her taint, and used the webbing between her thumb and forefinger to diffuse the vibrations once she'd worked up the courage to try touching it to her frenulum again. With the barrier in place, she gasped at the way the muffled vibrations worked their way into and through her flesh, the weak rumblings somehow penetrating her to the core. She squirmed in delight under the vibe's tinny buzzing, barely believing this was the same device she'd cast aside years before for not being intense enough.

Eventually, all the stimulation caught up to her and Charlotte realized she'd reached a point of diminishing returns: as incredible as she

felt, her girdick was overworked, oversensitive, and overwhelmed. She wasn't certain that she was *Done*, but she certainly needed a breather. After clicking off the vibe, Charlotte let herself relax and lay prone as she tried to parse the strange combination of feelings bubbling and swirling within her. Her body ached for the release of an orgasm almost as much as it cried out for a break from stimulation of any kind, she was mentally exhausted but blissfully content at her reconnection with her body, and she felt buoyed by the most satisfied sense of frustration she'd ever known.

"I don't think I'm gonna come."

She rolled her head to the side, meeting her own gaze in the mirror once more as she spoke, her self-conscious smile and rosy cheeks reflected back at her on her looking-glass lover's face.

"Oh, but I've only just begun to get a feel for you, *ma chéri*. We have all night ahead of us yet . . ."

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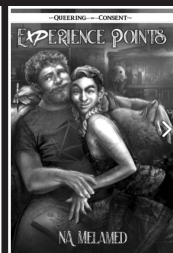
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About the Author

laura q (she/they) is a queer, transfeminine pervert with a vivid imagination and an insatiable appetite for debauchery. Her work explores the nebulae of trans identity, desire, and erotic experience by centering the magic of queer trans4trans connections. They contributed to the Lambda Literary Award-nominated collection Smut Peddlers: Glad Day 50, appeared as a featured author at Toronto's Naked Heart festival, and have had their work published in a number of limited print-run zines. You can't find her on social media.

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