



THE ASSIGNMENT



"I don't understand why you're doing this, Sam," said Brittany. "You don't get college credit. It doesn't help you get a job when you graduate. I just don't get it."

I sighed, leaning forward as I clasped my hands together. My beautiful girlfriend didn't understand because she couldn't fathom doing something just because it was a dream. Ever since I could understand the difference between good guys and bad guys, I had wanted to follow in my father's footsteps to become a cop. And the internship was currently the closest I could come, given my age.

"I'm doing it because I want to, Brittany," I said. "It's not about college credit or getting a job. It's about serving the community."

That was only partially true. While it wouldn't officially help me get a job – that process was pretty well-regulated by standardized testing – but once I became a police officer, the familiarity might help me advance. And I wanted to be a detective, just like my dad.

"It's a waste of time," she argued. "You'd be better off just taking an extra class or two this semester. Graduate early."

"I don't care about that," I said. "I care about the internship."

In truth, I was only going to college because I didn't know what else to do. If I kept my nose to the grindstone, I could graduate before I turned twenty-one and was old enough to go through the police's application process. Logically, I knew it made sense because it would help my chances of becoming a detective sooner rather than later. But that didn't mean I relished the idea of going to college.

"Look, Brittany – I'm doing it, okay?" he said. "I don't expect you to get it. But I hope you can support me."

She sighed, rolling her eyes. "Of course I support you," she said. "I love you."



Lieutenant Greg Sanders was everything I wanted to be. He had the kind of rugged good looks I could only dream about. He was well-respected. Powerful. And he was a great cop. In short, he was the man who'd replaced my father as my idol. I practically worshipped the man.

"You settling in, kid?" he asked, adjusting his no-nonsense black tie.

I nodded, wondering what the hell I was supposed to do with my hands. I couldn't shove them in my pockets – that was a no-no in the law enforcement community. Nor did I have a gun belt to hook my thumbs under. So, I just put them behind my back as I answered, "Yes, sir. Everything's great."

"Good," he said. "Your dad would be proud of you. You know that, don't you?"

I nodded. "I hope so," I said.

"He would be," Sanders stated. To him, it was a fact, not an opinion. And to be fair, he would know best. He had spent the better part of a decade as my father's partner. The two of them were practically legends on the force. "I wish he was here to see it."

I didn't respond, mostly because I never knew how to answer that sort of statement. My father had been dead for almost four years – killed in the line of duty – and I'd heard similar sentiments on more occasions than I could rightly count. But that didn't mean I knew what to say. Often, I just remained silent.

"But like I said," the lieutenant continued. "He would be proud that you're carrying on the Everett legacy. He always wanted you to be a cop."

"I'm not one yet," I said. "I've still got three years before I can even go through the process."

He nodded. "It might come sooner than you think," he stated. "I can't say anything about it just yet, but I think there's something you can help us out with. I'll tell you more in a month or two. For now, though, just keep your head down and keep doing what you're doing, okay?"

"Yes, sir," I said, feeling my heart race at the prospect of doing more than simply filing papers or filling out reports.



"It's like she doesn't want to change," Brittany said, leaning against the counter. She wore a simple pair of pink shorts and one of my old football jerseys, but as far as I was concerned, she'd never looked more beautiful, messy, blonde hair and all. "What? Why are you looking at me like that?"

I smiled. "Like what?" I asked.

"You have this big, dopey smile on your face," she said. "What's going on?"

I shrugged, plastering my eyes to the tile floor. It really was hideous, but it was our first apartment. It wasn't supposed to be a palace. "Nothing," I said. "I'm listening. You're mad because your mom doesn't want to use that new accounting software you bought."

"I'm mad because she shoots down every single idea I have," Brittany said. "It's not about the software. I couldn't care less about the stupid software. I just want her to listen to me sometimes. Or just once."

"You could always go to work at another salon," I suggested.

"Yeah – because that would go over so well," Brittany said. "If I was cutting hair somewhere else? Mom would quit speaking to me altogether. They'd probably disinvite me from family functions."

"Come on – you know they wouldn't," I said. "They might be mad, but they wouldn't take it out on you."

She shook her head. "I don't know," Brittany stated. "I think you underestimate the vindictiveness of the Dodge clan."

"You make it sound like your family is a group of bank robbers from the old west," I said, laughing.

"Shut up," she responded, smiling in spite of herself. "I'm trying to be serious."

"I know," I said. "Just tell her how you feel. That's the only advice I can give you. Maybe it works, and maybe it doesn't, but it's all you can do right now."

She sighed. "You're probably right," she said. "Of course you are. Always level-headed Sam."



"Lookin' good, Sam," said Paula, one of the dispatchers. At some point in her life, Paula had no doubt been pretty cute. But increasing weight and age had robbed her of that. Still, she was a nice woman who'd taken to treating me like a long-lost nephew. "New suit?"

I blushed. I'd never been one to draw attention to myself, and in fact, I felt incredibly uncomfortable with compliments – even innocent ones like Paula's.

But I had a meeting with Lieutenant Sanders, and I wanted, more than anything, probably, to impress the man. So, I'd worn one of my father's old suits. It was a little too big for me. And the tie was definitely not exactly "in style", according to Brittany. But it was appropriate for what I was sure would be a big day.

"Just something I had lying around," I said, adjusting the jacket. "Think it's too much?"

"I think it's great," she said, shifting her bulk in what suddenly seemed like a spindly office chair. "What's the occasion?"

I told her that I was meeting with the lieutenant, adding, "The suit used to be my dad's. I just thought that since it fit and all, I should...I mean...it's not that different from what I usually wear."

It was true. Normally, I wore slacks, a button-down shirt, and a tie. Functionally, the suit only added a jacket. But the effect was that I looked far fancier, and I felt like I was trying too hard to look like a grown-up. Either way, I'd made my decision, and there was nothing else for it but to trudge ahead.

"I think it's great," Paula said. "And I think your dad would be proud."

I almost sighed. Ever since I'd started working as an intern, I'd been forced to endure a hundred strangers telling me what my father would think of this action or that situation. It was exhausting, and I wished it would all just stop.

They meant well, but that didn't make it any less awkward for me.

After finishing the conversation with a hasty goodbye, I pushed past the woman's desk and into the bullpen. I got a few more good-natured comments on my suit, but I made it through relatively unscathed. I took a deep breath before knocking on Lieutenant Sanders' door.



"Glad you could come in," Sanders said, sitting behind his imposing desk. It was constructed of some dark wood – probably cherry or something. I don't know. I'm not a wood expert. But I did know that it looked expensive, especially compared to the other cops' desks I'd seen. Those were all dull, gray metal with laminated tops. He gestured to a chair. "Have a seat."

Sanders' office was equally out of place, given its setting. In fact, it looked more like something from a swanky lawyer's office than anything else. It certainly didn't look like it belonged in a police precinct. But who was I to judge? Maybe all lieutenants' offices were like that.

"What can I do for you, sir?" I asked, taking the offered seat, a nervous tumble in my stomach.

"That's the question, isn't it?" he said, leaning back in his leather desk chair. He steepled his hands in front of his chest. "You want to be a detective someday, don't you? Just like your dad, right?"

I nodded. "More than anything," I answered.

"Good," he said. "Good answer, kid. Here's the thing. I need your help with an investigation."

"M-me?" I asked. "I'm not even...I'm not even a cop."

"Precisely," he said, suddenly leaning forward. "That's exactly why you're perfect for this job. But I can't make you do it, okay? Undercover work isn't for everyone. It requires the sort of sacrifice most people aren't willing to accept."

"I'll do it," I said without hesitation. "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do it."

He smiled. "I appreciate the enthusiasm," he said, his grin a little unsettling. "But you need to know the scope of the requirements before you make a decision. This isn't a run-of-the-mill operation. There will be physical requirements. Emotional sacrifice."

"I understand," I said. "And I want you to know that I'm your man."

"That's the thing, kid – we don't want you to be a man," he said. "We want something else entirely."



"Dude," said Travis, my longtime best friend. We'd met in elementary school, and we'd been inseparable ever since. "Are you even listening to me?"

"What? I mean, yeah," I said, my thoughts elsewhere. "Sure. You were talking about your journalism class."

"What's going on with you?" he asked. "You've been distracted all day."

"Nothing," I lied. In fact, I was preoccupied, and not just a little. My every thought was centered the job Sanders had offered me. I wasn't sure if I even believed it was anything more than a prank; it didn't seem real. He wanted me to pose as a "sissy" – his word, not mine – and go to work for a local gang leader whose tastes ran that way. The idea was that he wouldn't look twice at someone like that – especially if said "sissy" wasn't even of an age to be a cop. Like me.

"Whatever," he said. "Don't tell me what's going on. I'm just your best friend, right?"

"Just tell me what you were going to tell me," I said. "I'm all ears."

"I was trying to tell you that I think I've found my calling," he said. "I think I want to be a reporter. Or a writer. I don't know. Just something like that."

"No offense, man, but isn't that sort of a dying industry?" I asked. "When's the last time anybody picked up a newspaper?"

"You don't have to work for a newspaper to be a journalist," he said. "I can work for a website. Or run a blog. Or...you know...I could be on T.V. or something. I don't know. I haven't thought it all through yet. But I know this is what I want to do. It feels important, you know?"

"I guess," I said. "But if you ask me, you should stick to engineering. If you don't, your parents are going to freak out."

"I don't care what they want," he said, a tiny tremble in his voice. I knew that was a lie. If nothing else, Travis cared very much what his parents thought of him. In fact, it was the driving force behind his whole life. He'd never had so much as a "B" because he was terrified of what his parents would say. If he was willing to risk their wrath, that meant he was serious about his newfound passion. And as far as I was concerned, that was a good thing.

"Good," I said. "That's great. I hope it works out. I really, really do."

“Come on,” Brittany said, perching on all fours. “I’m so horny!”

I gripped my cock, pumping my hand up and down, but the thing wouldn’t respond. “I...um...just a second,” I said, trying to stall. “I’ll be ready in a second.”

“What’s wrong?” Brittany asked, looking back.

“Nothing,” I lied. “I’m just...nothing. Just give me a second. Jesus.”

I could see her practically quivering with anticipation, which didn’t help my performance issues. I knew the culprit – I was still distracted by the decision I was going to have to make. On the one hand, I wanted so badly to help. I wanted to go undercover. And I wanted to bust criminals. It was my dream. But on the other, I had no interest in prancing around like a faggot. Or a girl. Whatever he meant by the word “sissy”. I didn’t ask because whatever it was, I knew I wouldn’t like it.

After trying unsuccessfully to get hard for what felt like an eternity, I finally gave up. “I’m just not in the mood,” I said. “I’m tired. And I...I don’t...I’m just not in the mood for this.”

I half expected Brittany to make fun of me. It would have been warranted. What kind of man couldn’t even get it up for a girl like Brittany? But she didn’t. She just said, “Yeah. Me neither. You were probably picking up on that. Let’s just cuddle, okay? Maybe watch a movie.”

I nodded, eager to put the memory of my inability to perform behind me. “Right,” I said. “That’s...um...right. Yeah. I mean, sure. Let’s just watch a movie or something.”

I got into bed and after getting under the comforter, I clicked the television on. However, I couldn’t concentrate on anything but my upcoming decision.





"I don't know what to do," I admitted to the lieutenant. It hurt – almost physical – to admit to him that I hadn't decided what to do. I wanted to tell him to kick rocks, to just drop it. I didn't want to do it. But I couldn't. As much as I wanted to, I just couldn't refuse. But I couldn't accept the assignment, either. "I wish I did. But I don't even know why you think I can pull this off."

"Two years ago," he said. "You appeared on a Youtube video with your girlfriend, didn't you?"

My heart jumped into my throat. "That was just a joke," I said. "She was trying to...she was just...she was trying to prove that she could make anyone look pretty. She's a makeup artist and a hairdresser, and –"

He held up his hands. "I know," he said. "I'm not accusing you of anything, kid. I'm just trying to help you understand why I'm choosing you. I saw that video. I saw how you looked. And believe me, you can pull this off."

"B-but I'm not gay," I said. "I'm not...you know...I'm not what you want me to be."

"I know," he said, gripping my shoulder. "I know you, kid. I know you're as much a man as anybody else. But I also know that you won't stand by and let these people do the things they're going to do. They've killed people, Sam. Good people. People like your dad."

"W-what?" I asked.

He looked away. "Look – I know I'm not supposed to tell you any of this," he said. "Not before you sign on. But this gang, they were responsible for your father's death. One of them might have even pulled the trigger. And I've been after them ever since."

"Y-you're sure it was them?" I asked, my decision solidifying.

"I am," he said. "I just don't have the proof yet."

"Then I'm in," I said. "I'll do whatever it takes."



"We could get a quickie," Brittany said, uncrossing her legs. "You could meet me in the bathroom, and —"

"Are you seriously not wearing any panties?" I asked, my eyes glued to her bare pussy. No one else was in the room, but I was still paranoid that someone would see. "Cover up!"

She rolled her eyes, adjusting the hem of her dress before crossing her legs. "It's not a big deal," she said. "I'm pretty sure everybody here has seen a vagina before."

I adjusted my tie. "I swear to God," I breathed. "Please don't embarrass me here."

We were attending the precinct Christmas party, and I was terrified that my girlfriend was going to somehow humiliate me. I loved her. I really did. But she'd always been a bit of an exhibitionist. Most of the time, I liked that about her. She'd pushed me into some uncomfortable, but ultimately pleasing, activities. However, being surrounded by over a hundred cops and their spouses was neither the time nor the place for such things.

"You are so uptight," she said. "But fine. I'll be a good girl."

I still hadn't told her about the assignment. It wasn't that I didn't want to. Rather, I wasn't allowed to. Nobody could know the details because Sanders was convinced there were moles in the precinct. If anyone else knew what I really was, I'd be doomed. According to the lieutenant, they'd already tried on multiple occasions to infiltrate the gang, and each time, they'd been unsuccessful. However, he was confident that the combination of complete secrecy and the new strategy would solve the problems. I could only hope he was right.

"Just act normal," I said. "I'm going to be working with these people the rest of my life, and I want to make a good impression."

"Normal," she said, the word rolling off her tongue, coated in disdain. "So boring. But whatever, baby. I'll be a perfect, normal girl when we get in there. But when we get home, I expect you to pay me back. All night long."

I grinned. "Yes, ma'am," I said, extending my hand. She grabbed it, and I dragged her to her feet. She took my arm, and I said, "Let's go hang out with a bunch of drunk cops."



“No,” I said, shoving my hands in my jacket pockets. “You don’t understand.”

“I really don’t,” said my girlfriend. I’d just told her the plan, and while I wasn’t sure how she would react, outright anger wasn’t what I’d expected. But that’s exactly what I got. “You’re not a cop. That should be the first argument against doing something like this. You haven’t been trained. You’re not even a good liar. But you’re going to – what? You’re just going to walk in there, and pretend to be...whatever it is they want you to be?”

“I know it sounds stupid when you put it like that,” I said. “But –”

“It sounds stupid because it is stupid,” Brittany said. “And your boss is an asshole for even asking you to do it. He’s going to get you killed.”

“I’ll be fine,” I said. “All they’ll know is that I’m a stupid kid who got fired from his internship at the police precinct.”

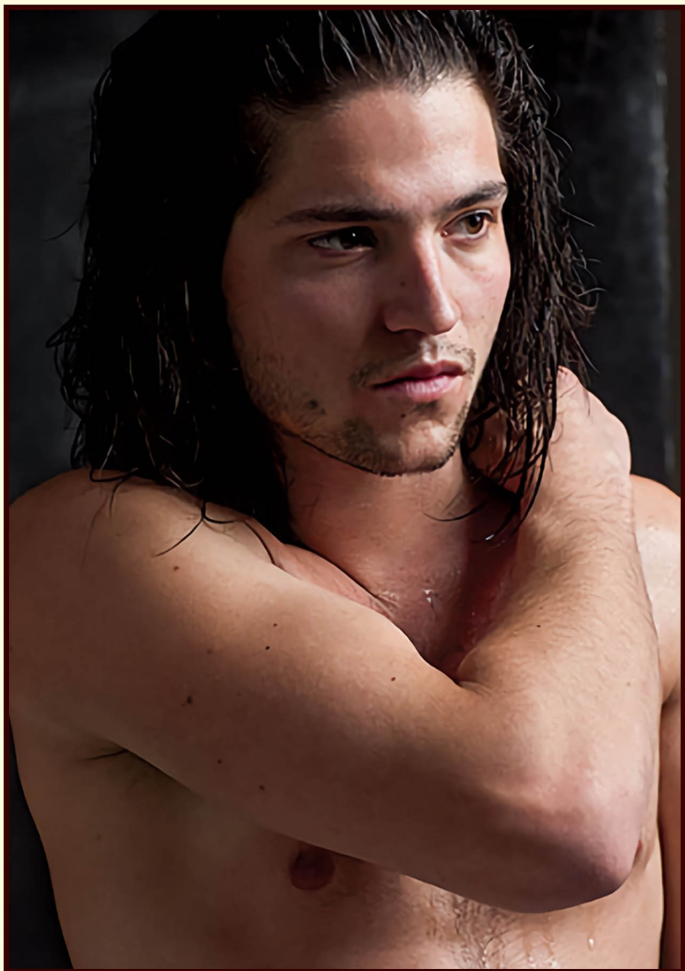
“You said they have people in the police, right?” she asked. “Won’t that kind of screw up that whole plan? They’ll know.”

“Not if I really get fired,” I said. “Sanders has worked it all out. There’ll be a big thing. I’ll get fired. And then I go through this makeover program. When I get out, I go to that club, and I get a job. I work my way up until they trust me. And when I find some actionable intelligence, I tell Sanders, and he busts them. It’s not as crazy as you think. That’s how undercover works.”

“For trained cops,” she said. “Which you’re not.”

“I’m doing it, Brittany,” I said. “These people killed my dad. And I’m going to make sure they pay for it. I’m not asking for your permission. Or your approval. I’m just telling you what’s going to happen because I don’t want you to think I’ve gone off the deep end or something. I’m not even supposed to be telling you all this. Sanders said not to tell anybody. But I trust you.”

“You trust me? Is that supposed to make me feel better?” she asked. “I expect you to trust me. But fine. I get why you’re doing this. I wish you weren’t, but you obviously don’t care what I think. So, go. Do what you’ve got to do.”



I felt weird. I was bloated. Cramping. My skin felt like it was on fire. And I felt like the least little issue would set me to crying. Or laughing. My emotions were all over the place. And what's worse, I knew the culprit – Sanders had given me some "medicine" to help get me into character. I knew they were hormones, though he hadn't specified their nature. It didn't matter, though. I had made my bed.

Now, I had to sleep in it.

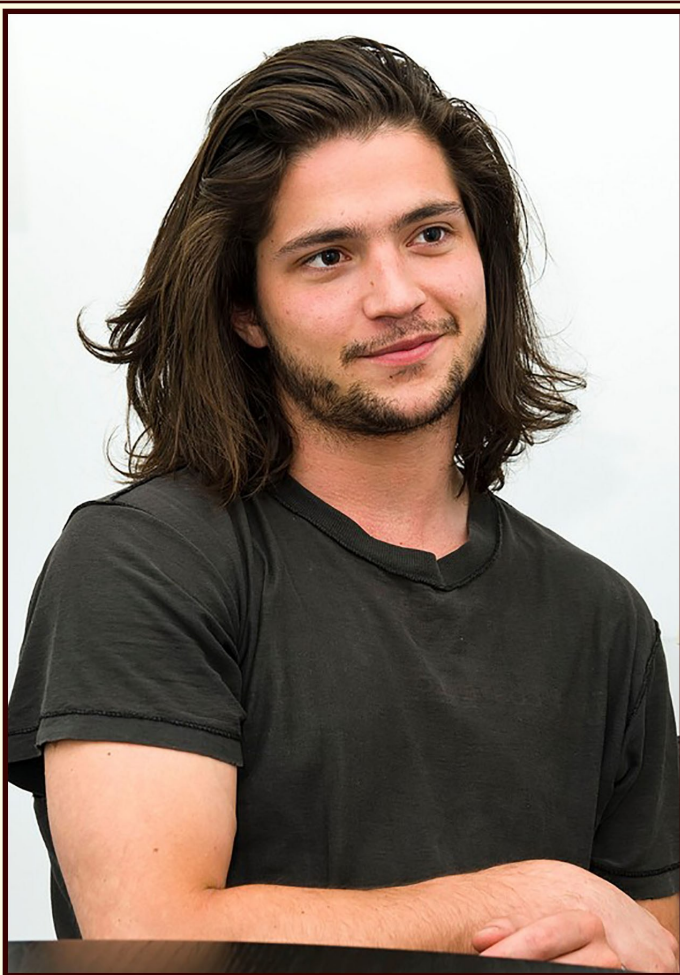
I'd been fired from my internship the day before. Officially, the reasons were that I simply didn't fit in. However, the rumors – started by Sanders – were a lot more interesting. Some said I'd been caught blowing one of the male detainees. Another said I'd shown up to work high. Still another said that I'd been arrested for prostitution. But regardless of which rumor was to be believed, I knew my reputation, such as it was, had taken quite a hit. Idly, I wondered if any of the other cops would ever look at me the same.

I knew the answer, of course. No. They definitely would not. But my reasons for agreeing to the plan hadn't changed. I wanted to avenge my father, and there was no other way. Next to that, my reputation didn't matter. I could always work somewhere else when it was all over. I could leave it behind. But I'd never be able to live with myself if I didn't at least try to bring the people responsible for my father's death to justice.

As my body chemistry tried to adjust to a more feminine state, and I dealt with the consequences, that reality kept going through my head. I was committed. And nothing could change that.

However, I couldn't deny that the whole thing scared me. Sanders had assured me that whatever changes the "medicine" wrought was reversible. Whatever changed could be changed back, he'd said.

And I believed him. Still, the way I felt, combined with what I suspected about the nature of my assignment was enough to frighten me.



"You're going to have to get rid of that scruff," said Phillipa, the woman tasked with coaching me into becoming a "sissy". She was a cold looking woman with raven hair pulled back in a ponytail. I couldn't rightly guess her age. "In fact, I would recommend electrolysis on your face, if not all over your body."

"I'm not removing my facial hair permanently," I said. "This is a temporary assignment."

"If they find out about you," said Sanders, leaning against a wall. "If there's a single crack in your disguise, they'll kill you. You know that, right?"

"I know," I said. "But I can shave. I can use this cream my girlfriend has. It gets rid of hair for, like, a month."

Phillipa nodded. "That would be acceptable," she said. "But there are some other adjustments you're going to have to make. The biggest are going to be your demeanor. You need to live and breathe sissy. That means you need to watch women and exaggerate what we do."

"I heard you the first thousand times," I said, consciously trying to raise my voice's register. "I'm trying."

"Try harder," Phillipa said. "When is the surgery scheduled?"

"Surgery?" I asked. "What surgery? Nobody said anything about surgery."

"Your facial feminization surgery," Sanders answered. "We need to make sure you look the part, kid. But like with everything else, we can put it back when this is all over. You have my word."

I sighed. "Whatever," I said. "I trust you."

"I know, kid," he said, gripping my shoulder in a fatherly fashion. "I know."



"I don't know about all this," I said. "I'm just...I just don't know, Lieutenant."

"Call me Greg," the man said. "And I understand your issues. Believe me, I do. I've been undercover before, too."

"But did you...you know...it's not just about going undercover," I said. "I'm just...I mean, everybody's going to think I'm gay. Or something like that. I just don't know how to deal with that."

"Being gay isn't a bad thing," Sanders said. "I'm gay. Nobody thinks less of me for it."

"W-what?" I said before catching myself. I'd never known that about Sanders. "I mean, I don't think there's anything wrong with it. I'm fine with it. I just...it's just not me."

It was a lie, of course. The idea that everyone I knew would see me as some sort of sissy made me physically nauseous. I was a man. Not a girl. Or an effeminate sissy.

"Like I said, we all do things when we're undercover that we're not proud of," he said. "Me? I beat a man half to death. He insulted me in some bar, and it was either that or lose face. I couldn't afford to lose face, so I put the guy in the hospital. He was drinking out of a straw for six months."

"This is different," I said.

"Not really," Sanders said. "It's the same thing if you think about it. You think people didn't look at me differently after that? Some of the other cops still talk about it. About me getting unhinged like that. But I did what I had to do to maintain my cover. And so will you."

"I...I guess," I said, still unconvinced but not seeing any way out.

"If I'm honest, though, I actually enjoyed it," he admitted. "Not Sanders the cop. Not me. But the guy I was pretending to be. That's the nature of undercover work. Once you get into it, it's easy to lose yourself. I had a buddy turn completely native. He killed a guy. Switched sides. He's in prison now."

"That'll never happen to me," I said. "I'm not...what...I'm not what you want me to pretend to be. And I'll never be that."

"Yeah," he said. "I know. But you will do it. And you'll figure out how to square it with yourself because there's a lot at stake here. You know that, right?"

"I do," I said. "I won't let you down, Lieutenant...I mean...Greg. I'll do the job."



“What’s wrong?” I asked. I looked toward the other room, where the rest of her family was. We’d just had an admittedly nice Sunday dinner. “Is it something your mom did?”

“Mom’s fine,” Brittany said, sipping a cup of coffee. “Better than fine, actually. We’re getting along better than ever. She’s even starting to take my advice at work, if you can believe it.”

“Then what is it?” I asked.

“You,” she said.

“Me?” I asked. “What did I do?”

“You’ve slipped a couple of times,” Brittany explained. “I know you have to do this. But your mannerisms, the tone of your voice, they’ve skewed way into the feminine more than a couple of times. I caught my dad looking at you like you were going a little crazy.”

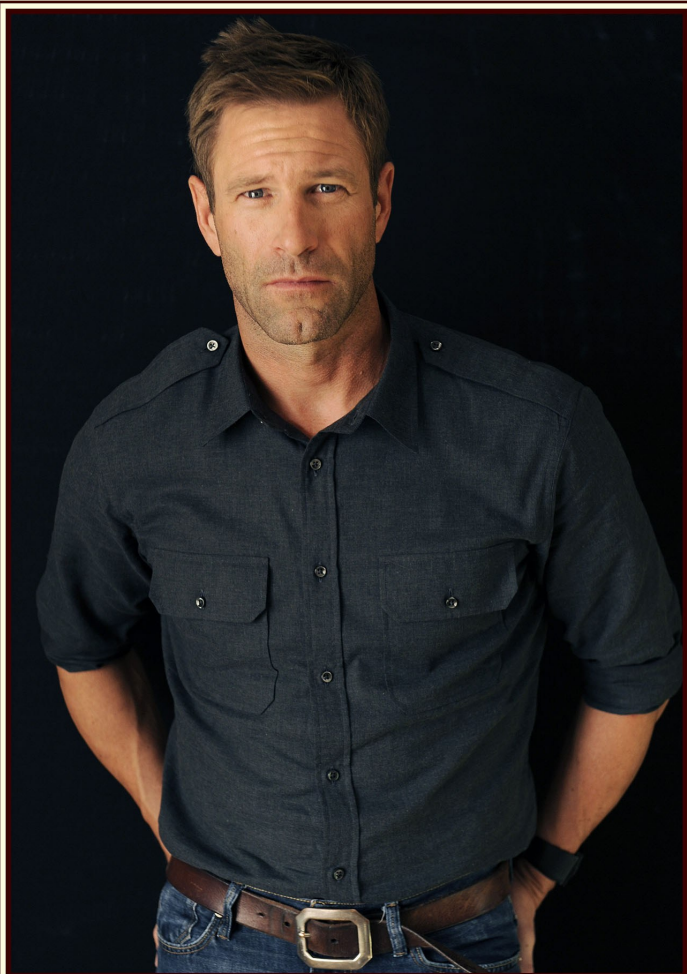
“S-shit,” I said. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to —”

“Just keep it together a little longer,” Brittany said. “You know how they are. It’s going to be bad enough when they find out about this whole thing.

Dad will probably try to witness to you. Give you the whole fire-and-brimstone speech, you know? I know it’s coming. It won’t be long before we can’t hide what’s happening. But I’m not ready for it, okay? So please, just try to keep together when you’re around my parents.”

I hated disappointing her. And I hated that she didn’t support my decision to go undercover. But it was what it was, and I couldn’t change any of it. What was worse was that I understood her point of view because it wasn’t all that different from mine. I didn’t want to do it. The difference was that I knew I didn’t have a choice — not really.

“I’ll do my best,” I said, consciously trying to speak in my normal register. I’d spent so much time practicing otherwise that it was easy to let it slip out. “I promise.”



“What am I supposed to tell people?” I asked, looking up at Lieutenant Sanders. He was dressed casually in a pair of blue jeans and a button-down shirt, but he still carried himself like the cop he was. I could only hope that, one day, I could embody that profession in the same way.

“What people?” he asked. “Your girlfriend? She already knows. I told you not to tell her, but you disobeyed that order, didn’t you?”

“I had to tell her something,” I said. “She deserved to know the truth.”

He nodded. “I can understand that,” he said. “But you don’t have any family. No real friends. You’re a loner, kid. That’s one of the reasons this works.”

“I have friends,” I said. He raised his eyebrow. “Okay, one friend. But am I supposed to tell him that I’m...you know...”

“A sissy,” he said. “You need to get used to saying it. Your character, the one you’ll be playing for quite some time, is proud of what he is.”

“Fine,” I said. “But that’s just it. Travis knows I’m not that. We’ve known each other since —”

“Tell him you’re confused,” Sanders suggested. “Tell him you’ve been dealing with gender issues for most of your life. He’ll believe it.”

I wasn’t so sure. In fact, I was a little offended that Sanders seemed to think the story so believable. I’d never so much as considered crossdressing before, and I resented the implication that it was a plausible explanation. And I knew exactly how silly that was, given that I’d already started working on becoming exactly the sort of person I was hellbent on denying I was.

“You’ll be fine, kid,” he said. “You were born for this kind of thing. You were born to be a good cop.”

I smiled in spite of myself. “Thanks,” I said.



"I don't know, okay?" I said. "I'm just along for the ride. I have no idea when they're doing this surgery. Or what the recovery time is. I don't know anything other than that it's going to happen soon."

"You didn't ask?" Brittany asked.

"No," I answered. "I didn't ask because I knew what he'd say. I'll know when I need to know. It's been the same with everything. Besides, there hasn't been enough time passed since I got fired. I need some distance. They need to think I hit rock bottom."

"You know I support you, right?" she asked. I nodded, telling her that I did. "But this is getting out of control. You're losing weight. I've seen it. And I've also noticed the swelling. And the...you know...down there."

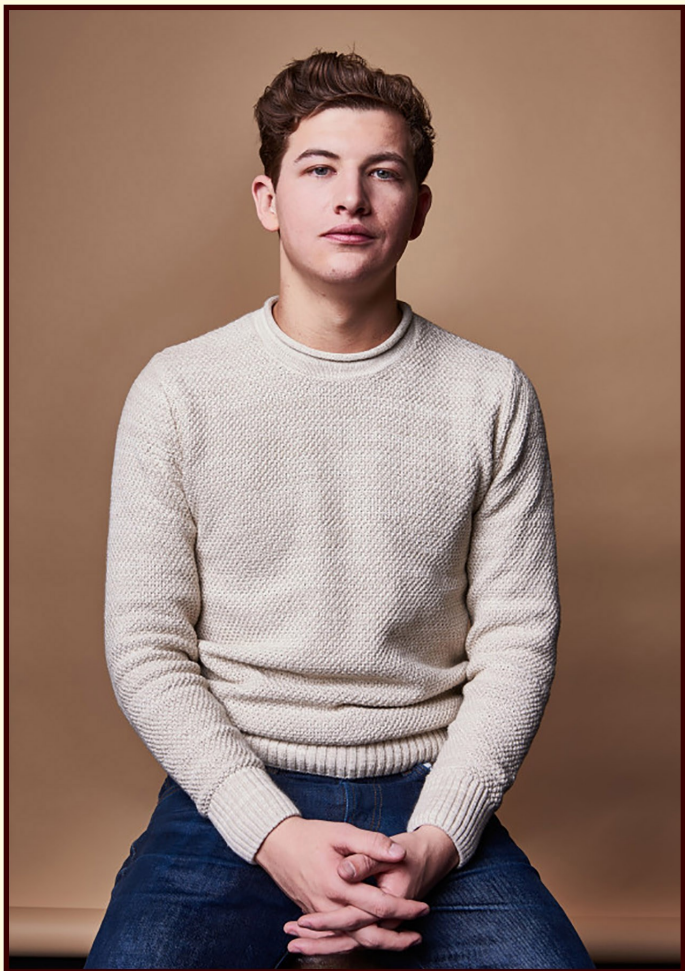
I looked away, hugging myself. I knew what she was talking about, though I didn't want to admit it. Since I'd started taking the hormones, I'd lost a good deal of my muscle mass – especially in my arms and shoulders. But that wasn't the worst of it. The worst was that my penis had shrunk considerably. I looked positively prepubescent down there.

"It's fine, Brittany," I said. "It's all reversible. When I quit taking those meds, everything will go back to normal."

"Are you sure about that?" she asked. "Because I've been reading, and –"

"I'm sure, okay?" I said, not even realizing I'd lapsed into what I'd started referring to as my girl-voice. "Just let me be. This is all part of the plan."

However, as confident as I sounded, I couldn't shake the feeling that I was getting in way over my head.



“I don’t understand,” said Travis.

“Join the club,” I said. “That’s kind of my point.”

I’d just told him about my “gender confusion”, reciting a series of lines I’d rehearsed a thousand times in front of the mirror. I was confident that it sounded convincing enough on the surface. However, Travis knew me better than anyone else in the world. We had known each other since grade school. We’d played sports together. We’d chased girls together. And we had spent countless hours in each other’s company. If there was anyone who wouldn’t believe my story, it was him.

He shook his head. “I should have known,” he said. “I should have paid more attention to the signs.”

“W-what?” I asked.

“The signs,” Travis said. “I saw them. I knew you weren’t happy. I didn’t know why, but I knew there was something wrong. I guess I should have seen that you were overcompensating all this time.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, unable to simply take his acceptance of my story as a win.

“You were always trying too hard,” he said. “To be manly, I mean. And when I saw that video of you getting made up by Brittany, I should have noticed how happy you seemed. I’m sorry. I should’ve been a better friend than that. I should have been paying attention.”

I honestly had no idea what to say. Rationally, I knew that my friend was simply seeing things through a different lens, now. He was trying to make sense of it all, and in doing so, had attached my professed gender confusion to events from my past. I should have simply nodded, saying that he was right. It would have supported my story. But I couldn’t. I could only stare at him, open-mouthed and confused.



"I want to tell him the truth about all this," I said.

"You can't," was Sanders' response. "You can't jeopardize this assignment. I looked the other way when you told your girlfriend. That was a mistake I won't make again."

I sighed. "I know," I said, pushing my hair back from my face. I was used to having longer hair than most guys, but before, I'd kept it under control. However, ever since I'd gotten the new assignment, I had been letting it grow. And it was starting to get on my nerves.

"Are you ready for the next step?" Sanders asked.

"Almost," I said. "I'm getting better. Miss Phillipa says I'm almost there."

"Almost," Sanders echoed, looking distracted. "Three weeks."

"Three weeks?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "That's when you'll take the final step. You won't be unrecognizable. We're not doing that much work. But you'll definitely look more feminine – especially when you're wearing makeup."

I nodded. I knew it was coming. But that didn't mean I was eager to go under the knife. "How invasive is the surgery?" I asked.

"Minimally," he said. "New techniques and all that. Lasers and stem cells. I don't really understand it, to be honest. But the result is that you'll be fine after a day or two."

"A day or two," I muttered. "And then I'll be in it, huh?"

"Then the real work begins," he answered. "I hope you're ready, kid."



“What the fuck are these?” demanded Brittany, holding up a pair of skimpy panties I’d forgotten to put away. “Are you seriously thinking about wearing these?”

“I...um...I did wear them,” I said. “All day. Or at least while I was out.”

“That couldn’t have been comfortable,” she said. “Where do you even...you know...where does your junk go?”

I shrugged. “I don’t know,” I said. The reality was that my “junk” had shrunk to the point that it barely made a bulge in the panties. Part of it was simple atrophy associated with the hormones, but most of it was the fact that my testicles seemed to have taken up permanent residence in my abdomen. The result was that my once-normal package had become decidedly less-than average.

Brittany sat on the edge of the bed and rubbed her temples. “This is really happening, isn’t it?” she asked. “I mean, you’re really going to do this.”

I nodded. “I don’t have a choice,” I said.

“You do, though!” she said, turning to me suddenly. Tears had started flowing down her cheeks. “You don’t have to do this. You’re not qualified. You’re not obligated. You’re not even a cop.”

“You know why I’m doing this, Brittany,” I said. “You know they killed my dad. I’m the only person who can do what they need done. I can’t just not do it. I can’t. Not if it means they get away with all of it.”

She wiped the tears from her eyes, smearing her makeup. “I know,” she said. “I do. I get why you’re doing it. And I can’t really argue with your reasons. But it’s just...I mean...everything’s going to change, isn’t it? Even if you go back to being the normal you when it’s all done, everything’s going to be different.”

“No,” I said. “It’s not. I’ll still be the same person I always was.”



“Yes,” I said, gesturing dramatically. “I’m nervous, okay? Is that what you want to hear?”

Phillipa looked me up and down. “You should be,” she said. “You’re not even close to ready. But I suppose the look will help allay suspicions.”

I was on the verge of taking the final step, and I was deathly afraid of what was coming. I didn’t want to look in the mirror and see someone else looking back at me. Nor did I want to assume the full-time identity I’d been practicing for months. I didn’t want people to look at me like a freak. Or a girl. Or anything other than as a man. But I was committed. I couldn’t turn back, even if all really wanted to do was get up and run as fast and as far as I possibly could.

“You could at least try to be reassuring,” I said, careful to use my proper voice. It had started coming easier and easier over the previous few weeks, and soon, I knew it would feel more like the default than the voice I’d been born with.

“That’s not my job,” she said. “My job was to prepare you. And I have – at least as well as you will allow. The rest will be up to you.”

“I know,” I said. “I still don’t know if I can do it.”

“You can,” she said. “Because you must. Once you start, you can’t stop. You can’t let up. You can’t take off your mask. I’ve coached dozens of undercover police officers, and I’ve seen a few fail. You don’t want that.”

I didn’t need her warning to know that failure would result in my death. Our target was serious. Arms. Drugs. Human trafficking. They had their hands in everything. They wouldn’t hesitate to execute someone like me if they suspected deception. I knew that.

“I won’t fail,” I said, as much for my own benefit as it was for hers. “I can’t.”



“You’re doing what?” he asked.

“Getting surgery,” I said. “Just a little adjustment, you know. Nothing big.”

“Surgery? Like, d-down...you know...there?” was his next question.

It actually took me a moment to understand his meaning. But when I did, my mouth dropped open in surprise. “What?” I said dumbly. “No. No. God, no. I’m not...you know...I’m not getting THAT surgery. I don’t think I’d ever...you know...do that.”

He let out a deep breath, visibly relaxing. He caught himself, saying, “I’m not judging. It’s just...you know...that’s a big step and all. If you want to do it, that’s fine. Of course it’s fine. You don’t need my permission or anything. I just don’t want you to jump into anything.”

“I’m not,” I said. “I’m just getting a couple of nips and tucks. I...um...I want to be prettier.”

The words felt strange in my mouth, and they sounded even stranger in my ears. Saying that I wanted to be pretty made me feel more girlish than anything I’d done so far. And that was strange, because at the time, I was wearing a pair of thong panties under my jeans.

He smiled. “I’m sure you’ll look great,” he said. “Do you need a ride to the hospital or something?”

I shook my head. “Brittany is taking me,” I said. “She’s been really supportive, you know?”

“She loves you,” he said. “And so do I, buddy. I’m here for you.”

“Thanks,” I said.

"I'll be right with you," said the stylist, a young woman with dark, red hair. She wore a simple, black blouse and matching slacks. The woman in her chair had blonde hair and looked far too happy to be in the salon.

"You should have just let me do it," Brittany said. "I don't know these people."

"This is where they told me to go," I said, sitting in the waiting area. "They're supposed to be full-service, whatever that means."

"It means that they do hair removal, too," she explained. "Waxing. Electrolysis. That sort of thing."

"Oh," I said, absently stroking the stubble on my face. It had thinned considerably over the past few weeks, and I'd shaved that morning, but my facial hair had always been stubbornly thick.

"Yeah – you'd better say goodbye to that facial hair," she said. "Unless I miss my guess, you won't be growing anything on that jaw for a long, long time."

"Are you talking about permanent hair removal?" I asked. "Because I told them I didn't –"

"Nothing's really 'permanent'," she said. "It'll all grow back eventually. But if you're getting electrolysis, it'll be gone for a couple of years at least. Maybe longer. I doubt they'll do it to your legs and underarms, but that little bit you have on your chest and back is definitely going to be gone. Or at least it would be if I was in charge of all this."

"R-right," I said, suddenly more nervous about my salon visit. I'd come in, thinking I was just getting my hair done, but in the space of a few comments, Brittany had put the lie to that expectation. "I think I might be sick."





"How's your skin?" asked Brittany, approaching me from behind. I wore only a simple towel around my waste. "Still sore?"

"The cream helped," I said. After getting my hair done, the salon technician had gone to work with a series of lasers and creams, ridding me of every stitch of body hair below my eyebrows, which she'd tweezed as well, arching them in an absolutely feminine shape. The overall effect was that I hardly even recognized my own face.

"You're lucky," she said, sitting next to me.

"I don't feel lucky," I answered, still reeling from what seemed like an assault on my very identity. I'd never felt less manly than I did in that moment.

"You are," she insisted. "Because if you'd gone to a normal electrologist, your whole body would be beat red right now. And you'd be in incredible pain. That's why they normally do it a little bit at a time. I'm not sure what new techniques they're using, but it's way past what I knew was possible."

"That's comforting," I said sarcastically.

"You did choose this, you know," she said. "If you're having second thoughts, you should —"

"I'm fine," I said, looking straight ahead. "I'm still doing it. Nothing's changed."

"Except you," Brittany pointed out.

"Except me," I agreed in a scant whisper.

"Nobody will think less of you if you back out," Brittany said. "But once you go through with the surgery..."

"I told you I'm fine," I said. "I'm not stopping. I made my decision, and I'm sticking to it. So, please, just quit talking about it, okay? It's hard enough to do this without you constantly asking if I want to stop. I do, but I can't. I just can't."

She sighed. "Fine," my girlfriend said. "Fine. No more negativity. I'm done with that. Full support from now on."



“Damn,” said Brittany. “I mean...seriously?”

I knew what she meant because, after I’d removed the bandages, I’d spent almost an hour staring at my own reflection in disbelief. I was in there, somewhere. There was enough familiarity that I could recognize different pieces of my face. But it was wrong. Off. Distorted. Nothing looked the way it should. Even those features that had remained unchanged – my mouth, my eyes, my nose – were rendered barely recognizable by their surroundings.

In short, I looked like a girl. Not a feminine boy. A girl.

“Yeah,” I said, pushing a lock of my dyed hair out of my face. “I thought the same thing.”

“I didn’t think it was possible,” she said.

“It was,” I insisted. “Do you know what’s weird, though? It doesn’t even hurt. They rearranged my freaking face, and it never really hurt. What kind of science fiction bullshit is that?”

“They really didn’t change that much,” she said, stepping close. Her fingers brushed my hairless cheek. “You’re just softer now.”

“I guess,” I said. I’d never had the most rugged of faces, but what they’d done had robbed me of what little masculinity my visage had possessed.

“It feels real now,” she said. “I mean, it was real before. I knew it was real. I’ve seen the way you’ve been changing, you know? But now? God, I know you’re a boy. I do. And even I’m having a hard time believing you are what you are.”

I nodded, wondering what, exactly, that was.



“Your hair needs a touchup,” said Brittany, watching me step out of the shower. For some reason, I felt incredibly self-conscious around her. Part of it was that my slim, hairless body only accentuated my less-than-manly genitals. Another part was that the swelling in my chest had increased. I wouldn’t call them breasts – not yet – but they were close.

But the worst of it was the way she looked at me. She loved me. I knew she did. But she didn’t feel attracted to me. Not anymore. And I couldn’t really blame her. With my widening hips, rounded ass, and puffy chest, I looked like a girl. And whatever else she was, Brittany wasn’t a lesbian.

We both knew that, though neither of us wanted to address it.

I fingered my hair. “It’s just wet,” I said. “It’s a lot lighter when it dries.”

“I know,” she answered. “I am a hair stylist, you know. I’m just saying that whatever dye they put in there is acting weird. I don’t know what it is, but it’s strange. Some days, it’s light. Others it’s darker. And sometimes, it even looks red.”

I shrugged, keeping my back to her. I didn’t want her to see my chest. Or my shrunken penis. I didn’t want to see the look on her face when she did. “It’s fine,” I said. “The stylist said there would be some fluctuation until it took full effect. But it’s semi-permanent, so I won’t have to keep getting it dyed.”

“How does that even work, though?” she asked. “I mean, hair grows. The roots, at least, should go back to black.”

Again, I shrugged. “I have no idea,” I said. “But whatever they put in my hair burned my scalp. Maybe it changed something about how it grows. I don’t know.”

Brittany sighed, sitting on the closed toilet. “I wish they were more open about what’s going on with you,” she said. “It all seems so...I don’t know...it seems like they’re hiding something.”

“Why would they hide anything?” I asked. “The doctor, the stylists – none of them know what’s happening with me. They just know what I none of done. There’s no conspiracy. It’s just not really relevant that I know how any of it works – just that it does.”



"It's weird," said Brittany. "Seeing you like that, you know? With the towel like that, I mean."

"This is how Miss Phillipa said I should wear it," I answered, paraphrasing her actual instruction, which was to "wear it like a girl". With my budding breasts, I couldn't very well walk around with the thing around my waist, in any case.

"I know," Brittany stated. "I get it. But that doesn't make it any less weird."

"No argument here," I agreed. Deciding to change the subject to something a little less awkward, I asked, "Am I getting better at the makeup thing?"

"It looks good," she said absently. After a moment, she sighed, saying, "Look. I know this is hard for you. It's hard for me too. But we need to talk about what's going on between me and you, okay?"

"What do you mean?" I asked. "There's nothing going on."

"That's my point," Brittany said. "You haven't touched me in almost two months. And I get it. I do. You're embarrassed. I've seen how much you've shrunk. And I get that you probably can't really get hard anymore. That's what the hormones do. I know it isn't your fault. That's what makes this so hard."

"A-are you breaking up with me?" I asked.

"What? No," she answered. "I mean, sort of. I don't know. Maybe we should just take a break or something. Just until you get back to being you. I mean, that's part of your cover, right? You're not even supposed to like girls. We could be roommates or something. That's what you could tell people."

"I'm not worried about what we tell people," I said. "I care about being with you."

"And I don't think we can do that anymore," she said. "Not in any way that counts, at least. You're going to be living a whole different life, Sam. Who knows what you're going to have to do? I just don't want to get in the way of that."

I looked away. I didn't know how to respond because I knew she was right. Our relationship couldn't continue like it used to be. I was too different, and the gulf between who I was and who I was going to become was only going to grow wider. I knew we couldn't be together. Not really. But that didn't mean it didn't hurt.

"I...I understand," I said. "I wish it was different, but I get it."



"I don't know," said Travis. "Do you want an honest answer? Or do you want me to be nice?"

"Honest," I said, leaning on my elbow. "Always honest."

He took a deep breath. "Okay," he said. "I'm freaking out a little bit, okay? That's what I think. I mean, I knew you were having issues. And I knew you were going into surgery. But this? I didn't expect you to look like this."

"Do I look bad?" I asked.

"No!" he said. "No. That's the point. You don't look bad. You look amazing. I mean, if I didn't know better, I would never have believed you were a boy. Or that you used to be. I don't know how to talk about it without offending you."

"I don't care about any of that," I lied. I very much cared about whether or not someone thought of me as male. But I knew it didn't matter. Until my assignment was over, nobody would see a man when they looked at me. And I had to get used to that.

"Yeah," Travis said, trying his best to look at anything but me.
"What does Brittany think?"

"That's complicated," I admitted. "She doesn't get it, honestly. Or maybe she does. Either way, we're kind of on a break now. I don't know what that even means, but we're not really together."

"Do you still, you know, like her?" he asked. "I don't mean to pry, but what's your deal now? I mean, do you still like girls?"

"Yes," I said. "I still like girls. That hasn't changed."

"Oh," he said. "Good. Good. At least you're sure about that."



“Is that a tattoo?” asked Brittany.

I smiled. “I got it a couple of days ago,” I said. “Apparently the guy in charge of everything – his name is Winston – likes his...um...girls with a little ink. Sanders thought it was a good idea to get something done before I made first contact. But I got to pick out the design myself.”

“New bikini, too?” she asked.

“I’ve got to go to the tanning bed to get some tanlines,” I said. “You know, so it looks like this isn’t new for me.”

“Right,” she said. “Of course.”

“Don’t be like that,” I said. “You knew this was going to ramp up. Nothing’s changed.”

“Except that your hips are wider than mine, now,” she said. “You’re prettier, too. But that’s fine. Whatever. It is what it is.”

My smile faded. Was she jealous? Or was she still frustrated by my lack of manhood? I couldn’t tell. But one thing I did know was that she’d been distant ever since she’d asked for space in our relationship. I didn’t blame her. Not really. But it still hurt.

“I can’t help that,” I said. “We’ve been over this, Brittany. I’m not –”

“I know,” she said. “God, I know, okay? I’m just struggling with it a little. I just need to stop thinking of you as my boyfriend, and start looking at you as my friend. Like a cousin. Or a sister, maybe. I don’t know. Just someone who’s off-limits. Maybe we can just pretend that Sam is on a trip or something. Maybe if you had a different name.”

“Like what?” I asked.

“What about your middle name?” she asked. “What about Ashley? What if I called you that?”

“I...um...I’ll have to run it by Sanders,” I said. I had always hated my middle name – precisely because it was feminine, but I couldn’t deny that it fit. “But I guess. I mean, I don’t see why it wouldn’t work.”

“Good,” she said. “I think that would help. Maybe. I hope. I don’t know. But it’s all I’ve got right now.”



"Why are you all dressed up?" I asked.

"Oh," she said. "I'm going out. One of the other girls from the salon wanted to go dancing, and...well...I thought I would be fun. You're welcome to come along."

I shrugged. "Maybe," I said, more out of misplaced obligation than anything else. But that was me thinking like I was still her boyfriend, even though she'd made it abundantly clear that I no longer qualified for that title. In fact, ever since she'd started calling me "Ashley", she'd made an effort to treat me like she would any of her girlfriends. "I don't know, though."

"But if you go, you have to understand that I'm going to dance with men," she said. "That's part of why I'm going."

"W-what?" I asked.

"Listen – I don't really know how to say this," she said. "But I'm going to try to get laid tonight. I know you're going to look at this as some kind of betrayal. I get that. And I wish I didn't have to do this, but I think it's the best way for us to move past what we were. If I date other guys, if I sleep with other men, you'll stop thinking of me as yours."

"I...I don't think of you like that," I insisted.

"You do," she said. "I'm not mad at you for it. I actually like that when we were together. But we're not anymore. The sooner we both move on from it, the sooner we can stop walking on eggshells around each other."

I looked away, angry. I knew I had no right, but that didn't help matters. "I don't know what you want me to say," I said. "Do you want my approval? My permission? I don't know what you want from me."

"Nothing," she said. "I'm just telling you what's happening. What you think about it is irrelevant."

"Then have fun," I said, turning away, pouting. "I hope you get what you're looking for."

“Did you have a good night?” I asked, looking up as Brittany came into the room. She’d hadn’t come home at all, and I knew the implications of her absence.

“Do you really want to do this, Ashley?” she asked. “I told you what I was going to do.”

“I want to know if you had a good time,” I said, rolling onto my stomach. I’d decided to start sleeping naked, and I hadn’t bothered to get dressed. “It’s an innocent question, right? That’s what girlfriends talk about, isn’t it? I’ve seen ‘Sex and the city’. I know what girls talk about.”

“First of all, no,” she said. “Real life isn’t like that stupid T.V. show. And second, you really don’t want to know the details of what I did. You’re just being a bitch right now.”

“No – I want to know,” I insisted. “I want all the gory details. Was he hot? Did he have a big dick? He was a black guy, wasn’t he? I bet he was.”

“Jesus Christ!” she said. “You really are a glutton for punishment, aren’t you? Why are you doing this to yourself?”

I didn’t know. It might have been morbid curiosity. Or anger. Frustration. Or maybe I just wanted to feel sorry for myself. In any case, I said, “Just tell me his name. Tell me your new boyfriend’s name.”

She sighed, rolling her eyes. “Fine,” she said. “You want to know his name? Glenn. His name was fucking Glenn. And just so you know, he wasn’t black. He was a white guy. Kind of normal, if I’m being honest. And he’s not my boyfriend. He was a one-night-stand. I’ll never see him again.”

I turned away. “Glad you got what you wanted out of it,” I said. “I’m sure you’re super satisfied now.”

I wasn’t looking at her, but I didn’t need to see her to know that she was wrestling with herself, trying to figure out how to respond. In the end, she just let out a deep breath and walked away, leaving me to stew in my own self-pity.





"I think you're ready," said Sanders, leaning against the wall. He looked a little worse for wear – like he'd been putting in a lot of late nights or something – but he seemed confident.

"What does that mean?" I asked. "Ready for another step? Or am I ready to start the assignment?"

"Ready to start," he said. "You look exactly like the sort of boy – or girl, I don't know how his mind works – he'll like."

"So – where do I go?" I asked. "What do I do?"

"There's a club," he said. "Downtown. Across the tracks. It's called No. 5 Orange. You can't miss the building. It's huge, and it's orange. That's where you're going."

"To get a job?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "At first, you're going to be waiting tables. Maybe you'll catch the boss man's eye. I don't know. All the waitresses there are like you."

"And if I don't catch his eye?" I asked. However, my mind rested squarely on what would happen if I did.

"You will," he said. "But in the unlikely event that you don't, we'll have to come up with a contingency. But we shouldn't get ahead of ourselves. You have to get the job, first. I've got a guy who'll set up the interview. They don't trust him, but he knows talent. And that's you, now. I'll text you when to be there."

"O-okay," I said. "W-what should I wear?"

"Something slutty," he said. "A club dress or something. I don't. Use your best judgement."



"I need your help," I told Brittany.

"With what?" she asked, barely looking at me. Ever since her dalliance, she'd all but ignored me. And I hadn't been much better. There was a distance between us that I just didn't know how to bridge.

"I'm going for my first interview tomorrow," I said. "Everything hinges on this. And I have no idea what to do. I don't know what to wear."

"And you want me to help you get ready?" she asked. "Why not Phillipa? Or Sanders? Or that stylist you went to?"

"I don't trust them like I trust you," I said. "And I have to get this right, Brittany. I can't afford to fail."

She let out a sigh. "I can't do this," she said. "I can't just turn it off and on. You don't speak to me for almost a week, and now you want me to pretend everything's okay? It's not. I don't know how to fix this. I don't even know what this is anymore. But I can't keep bouncing back and forth between hate and love. I'm not built that way."

"I know," I said. "I don't want that. And I shouldn't have tried to make you feel guilty about doing what you... what y-you did. I don't have the right, and I'm sorry."

I don't know if I meant it or not. Part of me did, I'm sure. That was the rational part of my mind, the part that knew good and well that whatever relationship we'd shared had been scattered to the wind. I wasn't what she needed me to be. And I wouldn't be for a long while. But sometimes, we don't see things rationally. Sometimes, our emotions get the better of us.

"Okay," she said. "I'll help. But we've got to leave the old us behind. For good. No more me and you, you know? From now on, you're just my friend. That's it. Nothing romantic. If you can accept that, I'll help. If not, I... I think we need to figure out how to --"

I forced a smile. "That's fine," I said, knowing that I needed her help. "I can do that. I'm okay with that."



“Do you really want to do this?” asked Winston Adams. To say he was imposing would be an understatement. He looked like an NFL linebacker, and he moved like he knew how to handle himself. Even his gravelly baritone was intimidating. “You know what kind of place this is, don’t you?”

I looked around the man’s office, and I was almost blinded by its stark, white walls. A simple desk stood in the corner. There was nothing ostentatious about the room. The rest of the club, which I’d seen on my way in, couldn’t have been more different. Neon lights, garish colors, and empty, raised stages told me exactly what sort of place No. 5 Orange was. I could easily imagine that, during operating hours, it was quite the spectacle.

“I do,” I said, nodding. “I just need a job. A-and...well...they said you hire....um...girls like me.”

“Like you,” he said, standing. “Maybe. Stand up.”

I did. Almost immediately, his rough, calloused hand slipped under the hem of my skintight dress. Before I knew what was happening, his fingers had found my manhood. I didn’t dare move as he squeezed my dick between his thumb and forefinger, giving it a short stroke. Then, just as quickly, he withdrew.

“I had to make sure,” he said. “My customers have certain expectations. They like cute, white sissies. They like girls, too. But that’s not why they come here.”

“I...I think I understand,” I muttered.

“You’re hired,” he said. “Start on Monday. We should have you up to speed by next weekend.”

“I...just like that? I’ve got a job?” I asked.

“Just like that,” he said. “Welcome aboard.”



“So,” said Brittany. “What happens next?”

“I...um...I honestly don’t know,” I said. “I guess I just do the job. Keep my ears open. Make sure they like me. Other than that, I’m kind of lost. Sanders never really told me what else I should be doing.”

“Does this strike you as weird?” she asked.

I shook my head. “The whole thing? Or just the fact that I look like this now?” I asked. “Because yes. It’s weird.”

“No – that’s not what I’m talking about,” she said. “I’m talking about the assignment itself. No support. No briefing. They’re just throwing you to the wolves. It doesn’t make any sense.”

“I said the same thing,” I admitted. “But Sanders explained it to me. These guys, they can smell a cop a mile away. Everyone they’ve sent in has been found out in, like, a few days.”

“And you’re going to be different?” she asked.

I nodded. “Yeah,” I said. “First of all, this is crazy. Me going through all this, I mean. Nobody would expect it. And I’m not a cop, so I don’t act like one. I don’t walk like one or talk like one. As far as they can tell, I’m exactly what I’m pretending to be.”

“I hope you find what you’re looking for,” she said. “I really do.”

“I will,” I said.



"I'm not ready for this," I said. "I wish I was. But I'm not."

"You're going to be fine," Brittany said. "Even if you screw up, you've got an excuse. As far as anyone there knows, you're still learning to be a girl, right? They'll expect mistakes. Just own them as best you can."

I shook my head. She was right. I knew that, but it didn't make the feeling in the pit of my stomach go away. It went far beyond mere nervousness. No – it was way more than that. I felt like my insides were twisted into a knot, and it got tighter and tighter with each passing second. I was still four days away from my big debut, and I felt like there was no way I'd ever make it back into that club.

"I think I'm just beginning to grasp the fact that I'm only one step away from being a stripper," I said. "I never thought my life would come to that. I mean, having men drool all over me? Grabbing me? Wanting to do other stuff? It's gross."

"I think it's kind of sexy," Brittany said.

"What?" I asked. "How is that sexy?"

"Just the idea of it," she explained. "It's empowering."

"You say that like you know from experience," I said.

She shrugged. "Maybe I do," she said. "Sort of. I guess. I never told you, but when I went down to Panama City with my sister's friends? You know, our senior year? Well, there was this wet tee-shirt contest. I was a little drunk, and all of them were doing it. So, I did it too. And God, it was...I mean, I wish I could describe it. But all those eyes on me? All those guys wanting me? It was amazing."

I wanted to chastise her for keeping secrets from me, but I caught myself. I wasn't her boyfriend. Not anymore. And I needed to stop trying to act like I was. "Maybe you're right," I said. "For you, at least. But me? I don't like men. You know I don't. And I can't imagine enjoying them ogling me."

Again, she shrugged. "You never know," she said.



“That’s what they’re going to have you wear?” asked Brittany.

I nodded. “Yeah,” I said, looking down at the outfit I was supposed to wear for my big debut. It was a day away, but my nerves were already shot. I’d half expected that trying on my uniform would settle my nerves. I was wrong. It was extremely revealing, and I was more than a little self-conscious about going out in public half-dressed. “All the other...um...servers wear the same thing.”

I could see the judgement on her face. She didn’t approve. And if I was honest, I didn’t blame her. The outfit – if it even qualified as such – barely covered anything. I’d never worn something so promiscuous in all my life. I was not looking forward to wearing it in a room full of horny men.

“The choker is a nice touch,” Brittany said, stepping close. She reached out to finger the pink lettering. “Bitch. I’m a little surprised it didn’t say ‘Sissy’, to be honest.”

I blushed. “They have particular tastes,” I said.

“I see that,” was her response. “I’ve heard about guys like them. It’s a power thing. You’re their bitch, right?”

“I...um...I don’t know,” I said. “About the power thing, I mean. I guess that’s it. It makes sense.”

“None of this makes sense, sweetie,” she said. “Not really. But I’ve already told you how crazy I think this whole plan is, so I’m not going to do it again. All I’ll say is that I want you to be careful, okay? There are some dangerous men there. Men who don’t care about consent.”

“You don’t know that,” I said. “It’s just a club.”

“Don’t be naïve,” Brittany said. “When you go in tomorrow, just stay in character. You’re a sissy, right? Sissies like the attention of alpha males. And so, while you’re there, you do too.”

“I know how to do my job,” I insisted. “I’ll be fine.”

“I hope so,” was her only response.



“Can you please stop staring at it?” I asked. “It’s just a piece of plastic.”

“Right,” said Brittany. “Why are you wearing it again?”

“Because it’s part of my uniform,” I said. “It keeps my...um...thing...from, well...from, you know...”

“Getting too limp?” she asked.

I shrugged. “They want it to be obvious that I have something down there,” I explained. “According to Mr. Adams, it’s part of the draw. He says that once I’m a dancer, I won’t have to wear it anymore.”

What I left unsaid was that it simply wouldn’t be necessary because I would be naked, more often than not. Brittany didn’t need to know that.

“And that’s the goal, huh?” she asked. “To be a stripper?”

“My goal is to do whatever they tell me to do,” I answered. “I’m supposed to gain their trust. I’m supposed to be what they want me to be. And that means I’m supposed to want to progress in the club.”

“And you think you’re ready for that?” was her next question.

I shrugged. “I don’t know,” I said. “Maybe. Maybe not yet. But I’ll get there. Sanders said that the longer you’re undercover, the easier things get.”

“Yeah,” she said. “I guess. I just hope it doesn’t get too easy for you.”

I slipped my shorts down my legs, revealing my lacy panties. I could practically feel Brittany's judgmental eyes following my every move. I did my best to ignore them. I had to get ready for my first day of work, and I didn't need her negativity.

"You're going to be okay," she said.

"What?" I asked, surprised that she wasn't complaining or that she hadn't berated me. I grabbed my jeans from the bed, slipping them on.

"I think you're going to be okay," she repeated. "Look at you. You're moving right. You're talking right. And you definitely look the part. Those men are going to eat you up."

I didn't know what to say because I'd spent the past few weeks trying desperately not to think about the idea of men lusting after me. Having that reality framed as a positive thing made me feel conflicted.

After a couple of awkward moments, I said, "Thanks. I guess."

"I know you're nervous about all this," she said as I put on a tee-shirt. "I get it. I'd be nervous too. But the one thing you need to remember is that no matter what they do or who seems to be running things, you're the one in charge."

"That doesn't sound right," I stated.

"Think about it, though," Brittany said. "You have what they want. I know you don't want to admit that, but to them, you're a sexy piece of ass. Every single man in that building is going to want to fuck you. But they can't – not if you don't let them. Sure, they'll probably talk a big game. And a few might even grab you. But at the end of the day, they can't get you if you don't let them. That's your power."

"I guess," I said, grabbing my bag. In it was the revealing outfit I was so dreading having to wear. I'd change at the club.

"Yeah. You're right. I'm in control, right? That's all I need to remember."



I stood across the street from the garish, orange building. A quick glance at my phone told me that I was almost an hour early, and soon, dusk would begin to fall. And once night came, my first shift would begin. And I was absolutely terrified.

But I was also determined. I stood there for a couple of minutes, my fright doing battle with my determination, and eventually, my resolve won out. I was committed. I had been transformed, and my relationship with the girl I loved was in tatters – all so I could infiltrate the organization headquartered in No. 5 Orange. I wasn't going to let those sacrifices go to waste.

So, I took a deep breath, squared my shoulders, and strode across the street and into the building. A hulking black man looked up from behind the bar. "You the new girl?" he asked. I nodded, and he hiked his thumb toward the back. "Dressing room's back there."

"Thanks," I said. "I'm...um...I'm Ashley."

"Maurice," the man answered. "Maurice Lee."

The name sounded vaguely familiar, but I was in no mindset to think about something that ultimately didn't matter. As I made my way into the back room, I was too focused on putting one foot in front of the other. When I finally got into the dressing room, I was assaulted by a variety of floral scents and the sight of a dozen half-naked girls. Or that's what I thought at first glance. Closer inspection told me they were boys. Or transgender women. Sissies. Whatever they were called, they were like me. Except that none of them were nearly my equal. They were cute, sure. Pretty. And feminine. But I knew I stood out. And that made me even more nervous.

I quickly found my assigned locker and started getting dressed. Some of the others made polite conversation. And some gave me what I could only describe as the stink eye. In any case, I tried my best to ignore it, and soon, I was ready for my first shift at No. 5 Orange. Or at least, I thought I was.

As it turned out, I wasn't prepared for any of it. But I endured. I smiled as men groped me. I laughed as they made jokes about the tiny bulge in my panties. And I did my best to flirt with the men I served. But all the while, I questioned my decision to accept the assignment.





“Can we not talk about it?” I asked. After spending the last couple of nights at the club, I decided to dress down. I wore a simple striped top and a pair of jeans – what I considered the exact opposite of my work uniform.

“Not really an option,” Sanders said. “We have to talk about it. That’s kind of the point of you being there.”

I sighed. “Fine,” I said. “It sucked, okay? I’ve never been in such a demeaning situation in my entire life. It was like I wasn’t even a person, you know? I was just there so they’d have something to grab, to look at. And what’s worse is that I didn’t even get to keep any of my tips. I’m still in training, and Brandy said I didn’t –”

“That’s not what I’m talking about,” he said, sitting on my couch. “I want to know if you saw anything noteworthy. Was Adams there? Any of his lieutenants?”

I shook my head. “No,” I said. “Some of the lower level guys were there. And I recognized the bartender from somewhere. But other than that, there was nothing. Do you want me to ask questions?”

“No,” he said. “Just keep doing what you’re doing. Keep your eyes open and your ear to the ground.”

“What am I looking for?” I asked.

“It might be better if you didn’t know,” he answered. “Just anything criminal. Anything suspicious. Drugs, mostly. If you hear anything about where they’re storing money or when the drugs are coming in, I need to know.”

“Oh,” I said, angry at myself for not figuring that much out on my own. “Yeah. Drugs and money.”

“Like I said, don’t push it, though,” he said. “Right now, just concentrate on fitting in. Do your job. Do whatever it takes to become a part of that club. Once they accept you, they’ll drop their guard. And then we both get what we want.”



"I've been doing research," said Travis, holding up a book. The title was "Supporting a Transgender Friend".

"Seriously?" I asked, narrowing my eyes. "You bought a book?"

"Yeah," he said. "I want to be there for you, you know? I want to help."

"You don't need a book for that, Trav," I said. "You just need to, you know, do it. And you've been great so far. Really, you have. I wish everybody was as supportive as you've been."

"I heard you dropped out of school," he said. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"I've never cared about school," I said, turning away. "It was just a means to an end. But now that the police department is kind of out of the picture, I don't need it anymore."

"I also heard you were working at that club on 9th," he said.

"You heard that, huh?" I asked. "From who? Brittany?"

"She's worried about you," my friend said. "She just wants you to make good decisions."

"And what do you want?" I asked, turning toward him. "Are you going to tell me how to live my life? Are you going to stand there and white-knight me? Are you going to tell me that I'm better than working at a strip club? Or that there's a whole world of possibilities out there for me? Are you going to tell me that —"

"I'm not going to tell you any of that, Sam," he said. "Or Ashley, I guess. Sorry. I just want you to be happy. That's what being friends is about, right? I don't care if you're a stripper or if you go to school. I'm in your corner no matter what — just like I've always been."

I actually teared up at that. Whatever else he might be, Travis was a good friend. "Thanks," I said, throwing my arms around his neck as I sobbed. "I needed to hear that."



"Sometimes, I wonder what he'd think of all this," I said. "My dad, I mean."

"If he was here, you wouldn't even be doing it," said Brittany, stating a reminder I didn't need. My motivations for taking the assignment hadn't left the forefront of my mind for more than a couple of minutes since I'd started working at the club. Three weeks, and I still wasn't comfortable with it – not completely, at least. But that wasn't nearly as troubling as the parts of me that were completely at ease with it. Sometimes, I got so lost in the role that I forgot that I was supposed to be disgusted at all the male attention.

"I know," I said. "I realize it's a stupid exercise, but I can't help it. I want to believe he'd be proud of me for my commitment to getting the job done. But I know he'd cringe if he could see what I've done. If he could see me prancing around in panties and a bra, getting groped by criminals, he'd drag me out of that club by my hair."

"Or maybe he'd support you," she said. "Like your friend."

I shook my head. "Dad wasn't built like that," I said. He'd been as hardboiled of a detective as the star of any mystery novel. Strong. No-nonsense. Tenacious. Sensitive wasn't among the words I'd ever use to describe my father. I'd never even seen the man cry.

"People can surprise you sometimes," Brittany said.

"In this case, I'll never know for sure," I responded.

"Then believe what you need to believe," she said. "Or focus on the positive. He was the kind of guy who valued hard work, right? Persistence? Commitment? That's you, right now. Not many people would do what you've done to get justice. He'd be proud of that."

I nodded. Maybe she was right. But then again, I knew she wasn't. Whatever pride he'd have had would have been outshone by the fact that I was a sissy.

"I hope you're right," I said. "But I guess it doesn't matter. I've made my choices."



"I don't know," I said, crossing my legs. "They just sort of disappear. Not permanently, but I've seen a few of the dancers move on to something else. And nobody wants to talk about where they've gone. Some come back. Others stay gone."

"Are they missing?" asked Sanders.

I shook my head. "No," I said. "They come back to pick up checks and stuff. But they don't really work at the club anymore. It's weird."

Sanders leaned back, his hand on his chin as he considered what I'd just told him. Finally, he asked, "I think they might be couriers or something."

"That's what I was thinking," I said. "What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to become one," he said. "Whatever it takes."

I nodded, but inside, I was terrified. I'd talked about advancing in the club. Ostensibly, that was my ultimate goal. But the idea of becoming a dancer horrified me. It was bad enough as a server. Actually getting naked onstage was markedly worse. But that was the only path to doing what Sanders wanted me to do. All of the chosen girls had been dancers. So, my task was clear. Become a dancer. Impress the men in charge. And become a part of their organization. It seemed so simple.

"I don't know if I can do this anymore," I mumbled. "It's too much. I just...you don't know what it's like, lieutenant. You can't. I just —"

"You're right," he said. "I don't know what it's like. I've asked a lot of you. If you want out, I'll make arrangements for you. We'll have to start over, but if you can't do it, you can't do it."

"I...I don't...no," I said. "I can. I just...I can do it. I will do it."

"Are you sure?" he asked.

I nodded. "I'm sure," I said. "I'll let you know when I find something else out."



“Jesus, Travis,” I said. “I can’t deal with this right now.”

“What? Why not?” he asked. “I thought we were friends.”

“We are!” I said. “But that doesn’t mean I want to go out on a date with you. I don’t know where you got the idea that I’d be into that.”

“You don’t like guys?” he asked.

“What? No,” I said. “I don’t know. Maybe. But that’s not the point, Travis. I’m dealing with so much shit right now. More than you can imagine. And I appreciate you being there for me through all this. But I don’t look at you like that. We’re great as friends, right? Why can’t we just leave it at that?”

I hated turning him down so brutally, but I knew from experience that if I didn’t, he’d think there was still a chance. I’d seen my friend obsess over one girl after the next, and I had no intention of becoming one of those. Not only did I not have any real interest in men, but even if I did, I saw him as a brother. There was nothing romantic about the way I felt about Travis, and he needed to accept that sooner rather than later.

He looked away. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I thought...I thought that maybe you’d want to give it a shot. Like you said, we’re friends. Best friends. And you’re really pretty. And...but it was stupid. I’m stupid.”

I wanted nothing more than to tell him he wasn’t stupid, but I didn’t want to give him any hope. “Listen,” I said, gripping his shoulder. “I’m not good for you. Think about what your parents would say. And I’m so fucked up that I’d be way more trouble than I’m worth. And besides, I’m not even sure where I stand on all the girl-boy stuff.”

“Yeah,” he said. “I know. I just...like I said, it was a dumb idea. I shouldn’t have put you on the spot like that.”

I waited a few seconds before I said, “But we’re still friends, right?”

“Sure,” he said. “Yeah. Of course we are. We’ll always be friends.”



"I'm so jealous of you sometimes," said Brittany. "It's honestly not fair."

"What?" I asked, giving my ass a subtle shake. I'd learned to draw attention to what I considered my best attribute.

"You're horrible!" she said, throwing a pillow at me. "How you have an ass like that, I'll never know. Guess it's genetics."

I shrugged. "Or hormones," I said. "You know – one or the other."

"Don't sell yourself short," Brittany said. "You had a girly butt even when you were Sam. But it just got better since you started this whole 'Ashley' thing. It's almost like you were born for this."

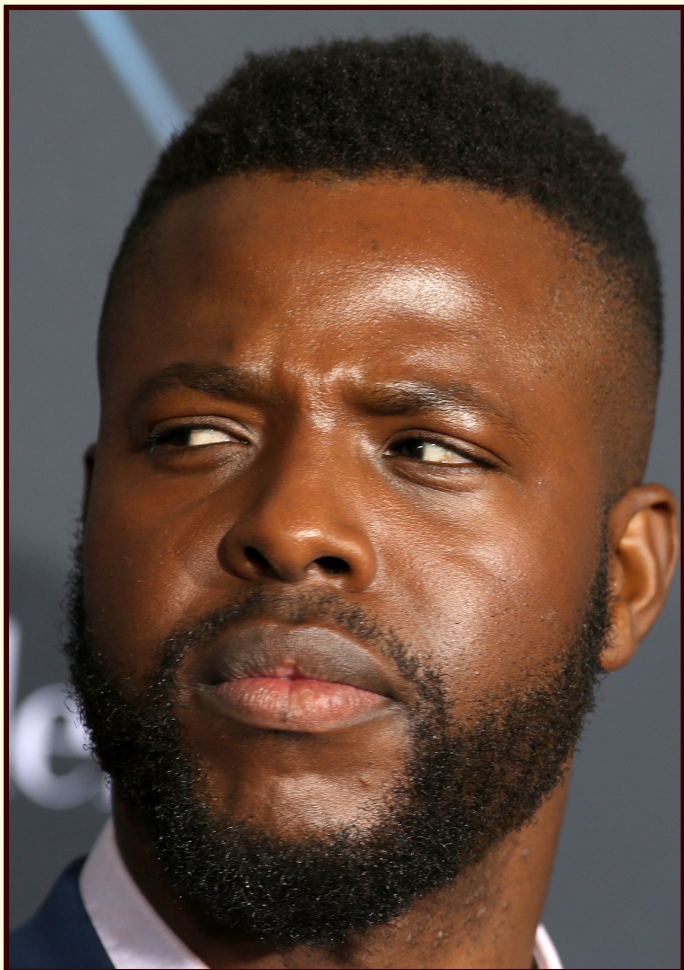
I didn't really know whether to take that as a compliment or an insult. However, I couldn't deny that I looked a lot more feminine than any of the other girls at the club. In fact, if I hadn't had a clearly visible bulge in my panties, I'm sure quite a few of the club's patrons would have assumed I was a genetic female.

"Hard work," I said. "That's what it is, then. You've seen all those squats I do."

"I do squats too," she said. "And my ass doesn't look anything like that."

Suddenly, I was struck by how surreal the conversation was. A year before, I'd never have expected to be comparing my rear end to Brittany's, much less that I'd come out on top of that debate. Of course, I wouldn't have predicted anything about my current situation.

"I guess it's genetics, then," I said. "Like you said."



“Ashley, right?” said Winston, looking me up and down as I set his drink on the table. He was as intimidating as he’d ever been, perhaps even more so because he’d been largely absent from the club since I’d started. In fact, I’d only seen him a handful of times in that time.

I nodded, saying, “Yes, sir.”

“Surprised you made it this long,” he said, leaning back in the booth. He moved like an athlete, all grace and power, as he threw his arm over the back of the booth. “You didn’t seem like the type.”

“I like it,” I said.

“Indeed,” he said, taking a sip of his whisky. “Maurice says you’re doing a good job. The customers like you.”

“Thank you, sir,” I said. “I’m trying really hard.”

“I bet,” Winston said. “Have you ever thought about dancing?”

“I...um...yes,” I said. “That’s my goal.”

“Why?” he asked. “Is it just the money? Or are there other reasons?”

I tried to maintain my composure as I said, “I like the attention. And I want to make more money.”

“Good answer,” he said. “Come to my office next Wednesday morning. I think we might be able to work something out.”

“Y-yes, sir,” I said. “Thank you, sir.”



I slowed to a walk as soon as I saw the lieutenant duck into a nearby copse of trees. I waited a few minutes before following him into the thicket. After about twenty feet, I spotted him in a small clearing.

“What?” I said. “If anybody saw me follow you in here –”

“Nobody saw,” Sanders said. “I’ve been watching you for the whole run.”

“You have?” I asked, a little creeped out that I hadn’t noticed him.
“What’s going on?”

“You’ve made progress,” he said.

I nodded. “I texted you about that,” I said. “I’m going to be a dancer. Or I think I am, at least. I’m supposed to meet with Mr. Adams in a couple of days, but I’m pretty sure that’s what it’s about.”

“Good,” he said, wiping his nose. His eyes were red-rimmed, and his complexion was pale. “Look – I’m getting a lot of pressure from my captain. He wants results. Soon.”

“I’m trying,” I said. “But I’m not getting much information. Like I told you before, it’s not like they’re conducting drug deals in the corner booth. There’s stuff that happens upstairs, but I don’t know how I could get up there without them noticing.”

“Right,” he said. “I know. I get it. I just wanted to remind you to tell me if anything happens, okay? Even the smallest detail can help. We need a win, Ashley. Sooner rather than later.”

“I understand,” I said. Then, I asked, “Are you okay? You look sick.”



“Seriously?” Brittany asked, leaning forward. She wore only her underwear – a really cute, pink lingerie set. “You ask this now? After what? Almost six months?”

I shrugged. “Maybe,” I said. “Is it crazy?”

“At this point? Yes,” she said. “It’s crazy. Maybe if you had made this move in the beginning, we could have figured something out. But now? I’m not a lesbian, Ashley. I’m not. I’ve never even experimented with other girls.”

I wanted to scream at her that I wasn’t a girl, but given my appearance, I knew that would come off as silly. Come to think of it, so was my suggestion that we could fool around “like we used to”. But I’d blurted that without thinking.

“Would it be so bad to try?” I asked.

“Does this have anything to do with Paul?” was her responding question. I shook my head, insisting that her new “boyfriend” was irrelevant.

It was, of course, a lie. I hated the fact that she routinely went out with other men. But I accepted it as meaningless in the grand scheme. She didn’t like those guys. They were just one-night-stands. But Paul? He was different. She’d been out with him four times. And each time, when she got home, she’d had that glow about her that was at least as annoying as the dates themselves.

“He’s a nice guy,” she said. “You’d like him.”

“I’m sure he is,” I said. “But this has nothing to do with him. I just...I’m just...I don’t know. I guess I just want things to go back to the way they were.”

“We’ve talked about this, Ashley,” she said. “Until Sam comes back, this is how it’s got to be. And I’m not going to put my life on hold. I can’t. I’m not saying I’m looking to get married or anything like that. I’m not. But I am saying that if I want to date a nice guy like Paul, there’s really nothing you can say about it.”

I sighed. “I know,” I said. “I know.”



"I used to be the hall monitor," I said. "They called me 'Snitch' all through middle school."

"What?" said Brittany. "Why?"

"You didn't know me back then," I said. She and I had met in our senior year of high school – after I'd been forced to switch schools when my father died. "But I was always telling on everybody else."

"Why?" she asked.

I shrugged, looking out the window. I wore a simple, sleeveless tee-shirt and a pair of matching, black panties. I'd gotten to the point where I barely noticed my feminine attire. It had started to simply feel right. It was like I'd worn them often enough that they'd lost their significance. They were just clothes.

"I don't know, honestly," I said. "I used to think it was because I had this innate desire for law and order. It wasn't like skipping class and smoking in the bathrooms was murder, but rules were rules. And I was nothing if not a rule-follower."

"You said you used to think that," Brittany said. "But you don't now?"

"I don't know," I answered. "Maybe? It occurs to me that I just wanted my dad to be proud of me. He was a cop. I knew him like a kid knows his dad, you know? I didn't see his flaws. All I saw was him with his gun and badge. He was practically a superhero to me. He enforced the law, and I thought that if I did the same, he would love me more or something. I don't know. It's stupid."

"It's not stupid," she said. "I used to do the same thing with my mom. She was super involved in church, and I just went along with it until I was halfway through high school. That's when I started thinking for myself, and I realized that I was there more for her than for me."

I didn't say anything. Instead just staring out the window, lost in thought.



I gulped down the water, thirsty and out of breath after my latest set. It was amazing to me how quickly I'd gotten used to dancing on stage. I barely saw the crowd. And when I did, the looks on their faces was actually kind of flattering – not that I'd ever admit that out loud.

"Ashley," said Dominique, one of the other dancers. "There's a guy out there who wants a private dance."

I sighed. "Does he look like a creep?" I asked.

She shrugged. "They're all creeps," was her predictable answer. "They wouldn't be here if they weren't."

I laughed. "You've got a point," I said, slipping on my heels. I stood, asking, "How do I look?"

I wore a white thong with a sparkly, gold accent around the waist and a matching top that accentuated my small breasts. I knew I looked good, but I wanted the affirmation of having someone else say so. And Dominique didn't disappoint, saying, "You look great, sweetie. He'll probably cum in his pants."

Again, I laughed. "I hope not," I said, making a face. I had no interest in grinding my ass against a man's cum-soaked slacks. Dominique giggled politely, though I knew first-hand that she didn't share my aversion to such things. In fact, I'd seen her on more than one occasion going a lot further than dancing for her customers. But that wasn't exactly abnormal.

Most of the other dancers did. However, that was a line I'd decided I simply wouldn't cross – even if the tips for doing it would be absolutely amazing.

"Alright – time to get to work, I guess," I said, setting down the water bottle. I adjusted my breasts, made sure my bulge – small as it was – was prominently displayed, and strode out of the dressing room and into the club proper. It didn't take me long to spot my customer – he was a weedy looking guy I'd danced for before – and when I neared him, I said, "I heard you wanted to see me, sugar."



"I don't know why you even wear a bra," said Brittany, watching me get dressed. "Your boobs are so small that you don't need it."

I didn't know whether to take her remark as a compliment or an insult. On the one hand, I'd endured enough teasing from the other girls at the club to feel a little self-conscious about my deficiencies in that arena. As good-natured as it was, I knew there was at least a little bit of jealousy in there. Even without huge, fake boobs, I was still more feminine than any of them could ever hope to be. Usually, I had to stop myself from pointing out bulging Adam's apples, veiny forearms, or big, hanging balls.

"I like the way they feel," I said, looking back. It wasn't a lie, per se, but it wasn't the whole truth. I did like the way wearing a matching bra-and-panty set made me feel more feminine. But I also liked wearing a bra because it made my diminutive assets seem a little bigger. It was silly, I know. I knew it then. But sometimes, we do things for the wrong reasons.

"I think you're the first girl who's ever said they like wearing bras," she said. "But then again, you don't have to deal with the straps digging into your shoulders, do you? That must be nice."

I ignored what I knew was a backhanded compliment. Brittany had never been good with other women, and because of that, she'd rarely had female friends. It was just part of her personality to get catty and jealous around anyone she considered a threat. And that's what I'd become to her. A rival.

"How are things at work?" I asked, trying to redirect her ire. "Your mom still being a bitch?"

She shrugged. "I don't know," she said. "Sometimes, I think she's actively trying to undermine everything I do. She actually stole one of my regulars the other day. Mrs. Rodriguez. Did her hair all wrong, too. But I can't say anything because she lets me cut hair there for free. Anywhere else, and I'd have to pay a chair fee."

"You could always open your own place," I suggested. "I'm making good money at the club. I'd be more than willing to take care of the bills while you get everything set up."

She shook her head. "You sound like Paul," she said. "He keeps asking me to move in. Like I'm going to do that after only a few months. No – I'll figure it out on my own."



"Can you please put some clothes on?" asked Brittany, walking into the apartment. "I really don't want to see that when I first get up."

"Can you please kiss my ass?" I asked, spreading my legs. "I'll walk around my own apartment naked if I want to."

"You're not walking," she pointed out. "You're sitting with your tiny dick hanging out."

"It's not that tiny," I said. At work, if someone had pointed out how small my genitals were, I would have taken it as a compliment. But the way Brittany said it made me angry. Almost angry enough to put on some clothes. Almost. I nodded to her smeared makeup, mussed hair, and the clothes she'd worn the night before. "Late night?" I asked.

"I stayed with Paul," she answered.

Once, I might have been upset that she was so blatant about her relationship with the man. But I simply couldn't muster the strength to care. It seemed practically normal for her to sleep over at his place. And the idea of being with my former girlfriend sexually felt almost inconceivable to me. I could barely remember what it felt like.

"Getting serious, huh?" I asked.

"Please don't start with me," Brittany said. "I'm not in the mood for one of these arguments. I don't care that you can't deal with it. I'm with Paul. I like him. He likes me. And if I want to --"

"I don't care," I said, my voice coated in sincerity. "Really, I don't. If you like him, that's cool. I hope you're happy together."

"What?" she demanded.

"I'm serious," I said. "It was stupid of me to think you were going to save yourself for me all this time. I know you have needs. And I'm fine with it. If we get back together when I go back to being Sam, so be it. But for right now, you deserve whatever happiness you can get."

The look of confused disbelief on her face made my taking the high road worth it.



"I can't stay here long," I said. "I've got to get in to work soon."

"You remember your mission, don't you?" asked Sanders, looking even worse than when I'd seen him before. "You haven't gotten lost in the woods, right?"

"What?" I asked. "No. Of course I haven't."

"Then why haven't you reported anything yet?" he demanded. "I told you I had the captain breathing down my neck, and you still haven't produced anything. It's been months, and nothing."

"I haven't found anything out," I insisted. "You said not to push too hard. I'm supposed to just be there, right? That's what I'm doing. I'm keeping my eyes open. My ear's to the ground. That's what you told me to do."

"Maybe I made a mistake with you," Sanders said. "I thought you wanted justice for your father."

"I do!" I said.

"Then prove it," he said. "I need results, girl. Real results. I need to know when the shipments are coming. I need to know about the fucking drugs."

"I...I'll try," I said. "I'll push harder. Maybe I can...I don't know...maybe I can..."

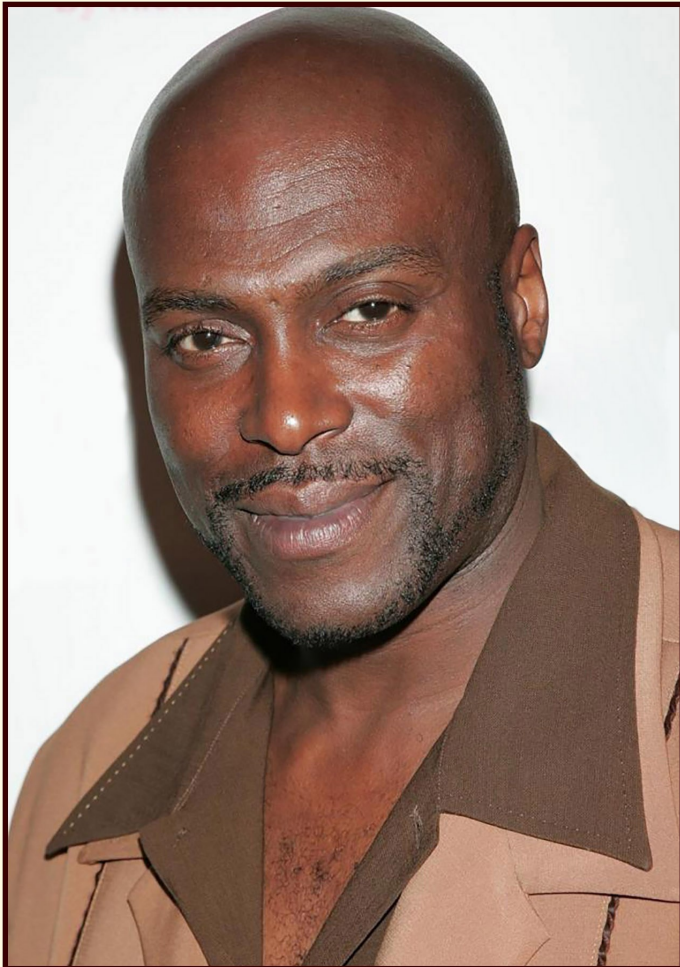
"You can get in with those special girls," Sanders suggested. "The ones who only show up for their paychecks. If you were one of those, you'd get plenty of intel."

"I...I can't just ask..."

"No," he said. "But a pretty sissy like you? I'm sure you know how to be persuasive. I'm sure you know who needs to be manipulated and just how to do it."

"I...I'll...I'll try," I said. "I'll get it done."

"Be sure you do," Sanders said. "Because I don't know how long I can justify this assignment to my boss."



"Lookin' damn good, Ashley," said Maurice with one of his half-smiles. He was an older man – probably closer to fifty than thirty – but there was something about the way he carried himself that made him undeniably attractive. To the other girls. Not to me. "Damn good."

I turned around and gave him a little booty shake. "Just for you, sugar," I said, giggling before turning back to the bar. I leaned forward, saying, "Look – I know you're the kind of guy who can get things done around here."

"Damn right," he said. "What do you need? Pills? Something harder?"

"What? No," I said. "No. I was just wondering how I get into the special program. You know, with the girls who don't come in anymore."

"You're not cut out for it," he said, his demeanor changing almost immediately. "That's not for you."

"What? No," I said. "I need...I need the money, okay? Just...please, Maurice. We're friends, right? We're friends. And friends help each other out. I know it's more money. I saw that new car Dominique got when she started on that program. I don't care what it is. I just...I just need this, okay?"

He sighed. "I don't make those decisions," he said.

"But you can make a recommendation," I said. "That's all I'm asking. Tell whoever's picking the girls that I want in. I'm the highest earning dancer here. You know I am. I just want the opportunity to make a little more. I'm a good worker, and –"

"Fine," he said. "I'll tell Winston. But I can already tell you what he'll say. You're too innocent for that kind of work. We're not talkin' about dancin' on a stage or grindin' against some guy's lap. This is serious."

"I'm serious," I said. "I can be serious. Just tell him that, okay? Please?"

"Okay," he said. "But just 'cause it's you."



“W-what?” I asked.

“The program isn’t one for the faint of heart,” said the man. Unlike the rest of Winston’s crew, he was surprisingly white and incredibly creepy. With sunken cheeks, dead eyes, and a receding hairline, he looked like nothing so much as a walking corpse. But he held the key to my entrance into the program, so I’d resolved to tolerate whatever he had in store.

Still, when I’d walked into the room – in a building a few blocks away from the club – I was surprised to see a series of interconnected pipes dominating the room. They looked like a torture device.

“I’ll do whatever it takes,” I said.

That’s when he slapped me. “You will refer to me as ‘sir’ or ‘master’,” he said. “Because that’s what I am from now until I say otherwise. Do you understand?”

“Y-yes, sir,” I said, rubbing my cheek.

“You are to be a slave,” he said. “Used in ways you can barely imagine. Until such time as Mr. Adams deems you replaceable, you are property. Well-paid property with some select freedoms, but property nonetheless. Do you understand?”

“Yes, master,” I said.

“Good,” he said. “I think you’re ready for your first session.”

I couldn't move, which I suppose was the point. I knew that. However, I couldn't keep a sense of claustrophobic panic from invading my mind. My limbs were clamped between pipes, bending me double with my bare ass in the air. I thought I'd gotten over any modesty I'd once felt. I was wrong.

I felt, rather than saw, the man approach from behind. I couldn't move so much as my head because of the restraints. He was silent as his fingers brushed against my asshole. "Tight," he said. "Are you, perhaps, a virgin?"

"N-n-no," I managed. He slapped my ass, hard, and I added, "Master."

"Perhaps I should have been more specific," he said, slipping his finger inside of me. I let out a tiny squeal. "Have you ever been fucked in the ass before?"

"No!" I tried to scream, but my voice betrayed me. It came out as a rasp.

"Good," he said, working his finger in and out of me. I could hear the smile in his voice, and it chilled me to my very core. "Very good. We don't get many virgins. They will enjoy that immensely. Try to relax. Enjoy this."

He fingered me for what felt like an eternity. In and of itself, it wasn't unpleasant. However, with my inability to move, to resist, I felt violated in a way I'd never felt before. I think that's when I truly began to understand what he meant by calling me property. I wasn't a person. What I wanted didn't matter. All that mattered was what he wanted to do. And right then, he wanted to finger my asshole – and I couldn't resist, even if I wanted to.

"Good, good," he said, withdrawing his finger. I heard him walking toward the door, which he opened. "That's very good. You didn't cry. Some of them cry."

And then he turned out the light, leaving me immobilized and crying in the dark.



I didn't know what to do, so the next day, I went to work. And I danced like nothing had happened. My master came back to release me after only a few hours, but it had felt like an absolute eternity. I'd cried. I'd screamed. I'd begged for someone to help me. But no one came. I was alone with my thoughts, with the reality of what I'd signed up to become.

Eventually, I came to a realization – I didn't care. Not about the bondage, at least. Sure, it was uncomfortable. And it was dehumanizing, but that was the point. And in any case, it was a means to an end. Was it some sort of initiation? Or was it a sign of things to come? I didn't know. And I couldn't afford to care. It was the first real step I'd taken towards realizing my goal, and I wasn't about to blow it. So, when my master came back, he found an uncomplaining, cooperative slave.

"Do you know why I left you here?" he asked.

"Because you'd finished using me," I answered. "Master."

He grinned that horrible grin. "Good," he said, unscrewing the clamp around my left leg. "Very good. You are an item. An object. A toy. Your comfort is of no concern to your betters."

"I understand, master," I said.

"I think you do," he said. "But your training isn't complete. You will go to work at the club like normal. But on Wednesday, you will return to this building. Do you understand?"

I told him that I did, and he released me back into the world. As I walked down the sidewalk to the bus stop, I had a new appreciation for the ability to move of my own volition. And I felt like I had a secret from the rest of the world. I felt dirty and used and more in control than I'd ever felt in my entire life. And when I went back to work that next night, I felt superior to the other dancers because I was.

I'd been chosen. And I couldn't wait to get back.

Wednesday couldn't arrive quickly enough.





"Your life is not your own," my master said, circling me. The ropes dug into my wrists, rubbing them raw. The same was true of the delicate skin on my chest and my sensitive nipples. But I didn't dare whimper. He hadn't given me permission for that. He reached out, a single finger tracing its way along my waist. "Do you understand that, my pet?"

"Yes, Master," I said. It was my sixth such session, and I was well used to the drill. It was intoxicating, giving up control in such a way. I didn't have to think. I didn't have to wonder if I was pleasing him. I simply had to do as he ordered, and I knew for certain that I was what he wanted me to be.

"Do you accept it?" he asked.

I nodded, swallowing hard. "I do, sir," I said, my voice barely more than a moan.

"What do you want?" he asked, settling in front of me.

"I want what you want," I answered. I knew it was what he wanted to hear, but in that moment, it wasn't just a meaningless platitude. I meant it. It was humiliating and dehumanizing, but I felt like I'd been living in a bubble. I'd never really had dreams of my own. I'd always just done what I thought others wanted me to do. But with my Master, it was more honest. There was no bullshit to it. And that felt good.

"I believe that," he said, his hand creeping down my bare stomach to my groin. He flicked my penis, and it quivered. A cold shiver ran up my spine. "What if I wanted to cut this useless thing off? Right here. Right now. Neuter you and make you a real bitch. Would you like that?"

I didn't hesitate. "If you want it, I want it," I said, though my mind was racing. Suddenly, it seemed more real than before. I knew it was a meaningless threat. He didn't really want to castrate me. Rationally, I knew that. But there was still panic in the back of my mind. Whatever ideas I had about going back to being a man would end, then and there.

"Good," he said. "You can keep it for now, though. Mr. Adams likes it."

He withdrew, backing away. "I'm going to leave you here, now," he said. "I want you to think about how much easier it is to surrender your will to someone smarter, stronger than you."

I nodded, but I didn't respond as he left the room, turning the light out before shutting the door. Instead, I started to do as he said. I began to think about how much easier life would be if I didn't have to make any decisions.



Work felt positively mundane. All the men drooling over me seemed pointless. I couldn't wait to get back into my Master's care. It was like he'd brainwashed me, hypnotized me. I was completely in his thrall. My only explanation is that our sessions were so intense that everything else just paled in comparison.

Rationally, I knew I wasn't what he wanted me to be. I wasn't an object or a pet or a toy. I was an independent person who could make his own decisions. I just chose not to for my own reasons. I wanted to obey him. I didn't need to, though. No – it was a choice. It was my own decision.

Or was it? I could barely even imagine disobeying him. Or any alpha male, really. I knew they were better than me. Or more appropriately, they were more suited to choose my path than I was. It only made sense to listen.

Logically, I knew it was all bullshit. I could walk away at any time. I could abandon my quest, and I could go back to being Sam. But I didn't want to. I liked being told what to do. I liked pleasing my betters. That was my choice.

But what did that say about me? Certainly, I wasn't a man. I couldn't be. Not anymore, right? Not after what I'd done. Not after what I'd felt. A man wouldn't have surrendered himself so willingly. But a sissy would. And I certainly fit that description, body and mind.

It's so hard to explain. Everything was in flux. My mind. My nature. And it had been for a while. So, when my Master took me in hand and gave me a clear, black-and-white order, it was like a beacon in the dark. I latched onto it. I practically worshipped it. And as it took hold of my life, I could think of little else. I was hooked.

My Master gripped my hair, and I swung, the ropes digging into my thighs and chest. I hung, suspended from the ceiling. “Do you think you deserve to serve your betters?” he growled. “Do you think you’ve earned that right?”

“Yes, Master!” I breathed, the words catching in my throat.

“Beg for it,” he said, releasing me. I swayed back and forth. “I want you to beg to serve me.”

“Please, Master,” I said, my head spinning. “Please, let me serve you.”

“How?” he asked. “What do you offer?”

“Everything,” I answered.

“Not good enough,” he said, pushing me away. “Be specific. What can a bitch like you offer?”

“M-my...my mouth!” I said. “Please, let me suck your cock!”

“And?” he asked.

I knew the answer. “My ass,” I said. “I want you to fuck my ass.”

“Louder,” he said, his voice barely more than a whisper.

“I want you to fuck me!” I screamed. “Make me your bitch!”

He chuckled softly. “No,” he said. “You have earned that right yet. Maybe you never will.”

And then he left me there to hang in the dark, and all the while, I begged for him to fuck me.



I don't know if I really wanted it or if I'd just been begging for it so long that I'd been brainwashed into believing I did. But by the time my Master pulled his cock out, I couldn't get it in my mouth quickly enough. There I was, my wrists and ankles shackled to a wooden box, with my lips wrapped around a man's cock, and I couldn't have been happier. I'd finally been allowed to serve him. I was finally worthy.

And it was good. God, it was good. It felt right in ways I wasn't entirely prepared to confront. As I bobbed my head back and forth inexpertly, I couldn't think of anything but how much I truly wanted to do please him.

"That's it," he said as I sucked his cock. "I don't care if you've got skill. I care about enthusiasm. And you've got that in spades."

His compliment set the butterflies in my stomach fluttering uncontrollably. I enjoyed that almost as much as I loved the taste of him on my tongue. Not quite, but almost.

And then he came, sending a jet of gooey, salty semen into my mouth. I savored the taste of it for a long moment until he told me to swallow. I obeyed without hesitation, thanking him directly after. He smiled at me, and I beamed back at him. I was so proud of myself.

"You did well," he said, looking down on me. "But you've still got a long way to go before you'll be allowed to serve your real master. I'll leave you to contemplate that."

He left me in the dark, and my mind was occupied by pride and a desire to do better.



“Please, sir,” I said, staring at his erect manhood. “Please, let me suck it.”

It had been almost three weeks since he’d let me suck his cock, and I’d thought of little else since then. He’d let me look at it. He’d let me smell it. And once, he had let me lick it. But in that entire time, I was denied what I really wanted, what I knew would please him most. Each day, I’d come to the room, I’d been strapped down, but I never got what I wanted.

“No,” he said. “Not today.”

I wilted, almost crying. I was so frustrated. I wanted to serve him, but he wouldn’t let me. And what’s worse, he wouldn’t let me practice so that when the time came to serve my real master, I would be prepared.

“But I do have something special for you,” he said, moving behind me. After a few seconds, he reappeared with a ball gag, which he strapped to my face. Then, he circled back to my ass, grabbing it roughly. I let out a whimper of pain; I was still sore from the spanking he’d given me a couple of hours before. “I think I’m going to fuck you today.”

My eyes flew open. I couldn’t believe what I’d just heard. I looked back at him as best I could.

“Is that what you want?” he asked. “Do you want me to fuck you?”

I nodded vigorously. I’d been begging to suck his cock. Getting fucked was light years beyond anything I could have expected. I wanted it desperately.

And he gave it to me. I wish I could adequately describe how it felt. There was pain, sure. Lots of it. I felt like he was ripping me apart. But there was satisfaction, too. Not pleasure, really. That would come later. But there was this undeniable sense of achievement, of gratification. It was almost spiritual.

That’s when I knew what I was. I was a sissy, fully and completely. I was his bitch. And I couldn’t have been happier about it.





I resisted the urge to tug on the patent leather collar around my neck as the two men greeted one another. One was my Master. The other was Adams.

"I've been looking forward to this," Winston said, shaking the other man's hand. "I know your methods are proven, but she's special."

My Master nodded. "I do apologize for the delay," he said, clasping his hands behind his back. "But there was something in there – a spark of defiance, perhaps. It's gone now. She knows her place."

"Pet," said Winston. "Come here."

I stepped forward without a moment's hesitation. "Yes, Master?" I asked.

He reached out, gripping my ass. I let out a moan, hoping for all I was worth that he'd let me serve him. That was my purpose, after all. Or was it? My thoughts were a jumble. Outside of that dark room, I felt more like myself. But I couldn't deny that my "training" had left its mark upon my mind.

"If I were to parade you naked through the police precinct where you used to work," he said. "What would you do?"

"Whatever you told me to do," I said. "Is that what you want from me, Master?"

He laughed. "No," he said. To my old Master, he continued, "This one used to work as an intern for the police. Got fired for God knows what. She didn't know I knew, of course. But I know everything. And now she's just another one of my bitches. Funny how that works out, isn't it?"

The two men laughed. And I remained rooted in the center of the room, waiting for instruction.

I'd been with Winston for the past two days, and already, I'd almost forgotten about my old Master. In fact, I'd stopped even thinking of him as such. He was nothing compared to Winston and his friends. Quickly, I learned my new purpose – to look sexy and to be available. That was it. I wasn't like the other girls. I wasn't expected to serve drinks to his guests. I didn't cook. I didn't clean. I was just their toy. And that afforded me some measure of status among what I'd started to think of as his harem of sissies.

"Is she good?" asked one of Winston's guests. He slapped my ass. There were dozens of people crowded into my Master's apartment. Some, I recognized from the club. Others, like the man who'd spoken, were strangers.

"She's learning," said a smiling Winston. "Try her out."

I knew enough to know that was my cue. I gripped his hand and started to escort him from the room, but I was soon stopped by Winston's commanding voice. "No," he said. "Right here."

I felt panic rising in my throat, but I knew better than to disobey – especially when there were other people there. So, I dropped to my knees in front of the man, and I unzipped his slacks. He wasn't wearing any underwear, so it was only a brief second before I saw the python he'd been keeping in his pants. I couldn't help but gasp as I wrapped my fingers around it.

"I think she likes it," the man said as I started kissing it lovingly. "That's why I love these white sissies. They know their place."

I ignored his comment as I applied every ounce of my expertise toward pleasing him. I still wasn't a great cocksucker, but I was getting there. In any case, his dick was so big that my technique was wasted. It was all I could do to get it in my mouth. But he didn't seem to care. The act was as much about my supposed humiliation as it was about any physical pleasure he might have. And I was perfectly willing to play my part, sucking him until he came in my mouth.

"Swallow," Winston said. And I did. It wasn't until I heard a cheer that I realized the whole party had been watching me. I looked up to see Winston grinning. "Now – who else wants to try her out?"





“Do you want to talk about whatever’s going on with you?” asked Brittany.

“Nothing’s going on with me,” I said. It was amazing how easily I could turn my submissive nature on and off. When I was with Winston or any of his friends, I was a different person than I was when I was at home. Still, there was a big part of me that was terrified that she’d somehow find out about the things I’d been doing. Something told me that she wouldn’t approve. “Why do you think there’s something going on?”

“Because I know you’re not working at the club anymore,” she said. “I went by there the other day. You weren’t there.”

“Why are you checking up on me?” I asked.

“I wasn’t checking up on you,” she insisted. “I was just...never mind. I’m just worried about you, okay? I don’t want you to get in over your head.”

“I’m fine,” I said. “Better than fine, actually.”

“You’re not doing anything...illegal, are you?” she asked. “I mean, I know you’re undercover, but...well...I just don’t want you to get hurt.”

I rolled my eyes. “So sweet of you to give a shit about how I’m doing,” I said, giving her a fake smile. “That’s new for you, isn’t it? Caring about someone other than yourself?”

“Fuck you, Ashley,” she said. “I was trying to be nice.”

“Don’t,” I said, the smile dropping away. “I don’t need nice. I just need you to let me live my own life, okay? Can you do that? I don’t want twenty questions every time I’m not where you want me to be.”

“Fine,” she said, raising her hands. “Fuck me for caring, right? Whatever. Do whatever you want.”



Winston Adams leaned back on the couch, lost in thought. His guests had all left for the day, and his mask had dropped. If it was possible for a man his size, he actually looked vulnerable. After a long moment, he said, "I hate this day."

"What, Master?" I asked, stepping forward. "Can I do something for you?"

"You can drop the 'Master' shit when nobody else is here," he said. "It's all for show, anyway."

"Oh," I said. "O-okay."

"Nobody remembers him," Winston said, looking away. "I don't suppose that's surprising, really. He was never very important. Not to anybody but me and mom."

"Who?" I ventured.

"My little brother," the big man said. "He would have been twenty-two today. If he'd made it past twelve."

"I...I'm sorry," I said.

"No need," was his response. "Tre wasn't a good kid. I wish he was. But he got in with the wrong people and ended up dead in dumpster over on Sixth Street. That's how I got all this, you know. I was so angry. I dropped everything. I didn't care about football. I didn't care about college. I just wanted revenge."

"And you got it," I said, sitting next to him. I leaned close, and he put his arm around my shoulders.

"I got it," he echoed. "And by the time I looked up, I was in charge. Funny how that works out, right? I'd give it all back if I could have my brother here. I never really wanted this. It's stupid. All these power struggles. Making examples. Making statements. I don't care about any of it. But I'm here, now. And as long as I'm in charge, kids who haven't even hit puberty yet aren't getting shot. I guess that makes it worth it."

I didn't respond. I didn't know how. So, I just snuggled up next to him as he draped his arm around me. He didn't say anything else. He didn't really have to.



"I don't know where you get them like this," said Winston's guest, a man huge named Leon Bettis. I didn't think it was possible for anyone to make Winston seem small, but Bettis certainly accomplished that feat. "She's perfect."

I almost blushed, standing before the two men. I was, as had become a common occurrence, naked but for my collar, the ring around the base of my dick, and a studded bracelet. The rest of my uniform lay on the floor, a crumple of vinyl and patent leather.

"It's not as hard as you'd think," Winston said, smiling. "They come to me."

"But this one's different," Bettis said. "That thing between her legs is barely bigger than a clit."

"Ashley is special," Winston agreed. "But we're not here to talk about my slave, are we? You wanted to talk business." Bettis glanced at me, but Winston practically read his mind. "Don't worry about her," he said. "She's as loyal as anyone I've ever seen."

My heart started to race. "The shipment's coming in Sunday night," Bettis said. "That motel by the airport. You know, Sunnyside Lodge. The rundown one. That's where the truck's going to be."

"Is it as much as we discussed?" Winston asked.

"It's all there," Bettis answered. "The guns too. Enough to start a war."

"Good," Winston said. "My guys will pick it up. In the meantime, feel free to use my slave. Ashley. Take care of Mr. Bettis."

I smiled reflexively. "Yes, master," I said, stepping toward the big man. I dropped to my knees between his legs and started to do my job. However, I couldn't wait to let Sanders know what I'd discovered.



"I really don't like meeting with you out in the open like this," I said, looking around nervously as Sanders approached. "Anybody could see."

"We're over an hour away from Adams' territory," he responded, pulling out the chair. He sat, and I followed suit. "Nobody's going to recognize us."

"I still don't like it," I muttered.

"You don't have to like it," Sanders stated. "You just have to tell me what you know."

"I'm not sure if it's worth telling you," I said. "But there's a shipment of something coming in two days. I don't know what it is – not all of it, at least – but Winston mentioned guns."

"At the Sunnyside Lodge, right?" Sanders said. "We've known about that for a week."

"W-what?" I said. "How?"

"I can't say," Sanders stated. "But that's not important. What you need to know is that we can't move on that yet. So, you need to go back to Adams, and you need to keep doing what you're doing."

"What? No," I said. "That's not how this works. You wanted information. You wanted me to figure out where his stuff's coming in. I did that. Now, I want out. That was the deal. I could go back to being me. That was always the plan."

"Plans change," Sanders said. "We don't just want Adams. We want his suppliers, too. And we're not there yet."

I looked away, my eyes narrowing in anger. "No," I said. "I'm done."

"What?" he asked.

"I'm done, lieutenant," I repeated. "I want out. I can't do this anymore."

A long silence stretched between us until, a few moments later, he started laughing. "You want out, huh?" he asked. "No. There is no out. Not until I let you out. I'm the only person who knows what's going on with you. This is my operation. As far as everyone else is concerned, you're exactly what you look like – a disgraced sissy who went to work for the enemy. That's it. And until I say otherwise, that's what they'll continue to think. So here's what's going to happen – you're going to march your cute little ass back into his house, you're going to be a good, little sissy, and you're going to keep doing that until I tell you that you can stop. Are we clear?"

I nodded.

"Good," he said. "Now that that's out of the way, let's get some lunch."



"I haven't seen you in months," said Travis. "And even before that, I barely ever saw you. And now you're what? Asking me for help?"

I shook my head. "I don't know," I said. "I honestly don't know, Travis. I wish I did. I just need to tell somebody what's going on."

"And what's that?" he asked.

"What's been going on for the past eighteen months," I said. "That's not me."

He looked me up and down. "It looks like it's you," he said. "Or am I missing something?"

"You're missing everything," I stated. "Listen – I hated lying to you, but I didn't have a choice. But now I'm in over my head. Sanders isn't playing by the rules. And I don't know what to do."

"Sanders? As in Lieutenant Sanders?" he asked. "The cop? Your dad's old partner?"

I nodded. "Look – I know this is weird, and I have no idea how to really explain this," I said. "When I go over it in my head, it sounds so stupid. But I don't know what else to do."

"Just tell me what happened, okay?" he said. "I'll try to help if I can."

"I guess it all started with my dad," I said. Then, I went on to explain how I'd been recruited to go undercover, how I'd been feminized, and how I had spent the past year working my way toward establishing trust with Adams. "But now, when I finally have something, Sanders doesn't want to act on it. He said that I can't get out. He told me that nobody else has any idea that I'm not what I've been pretending to be. And I don't know what to do now."

Travis didn't respond for a long few seconds, and I was afraid he wouldn't believe me. I wouldn't have, if our situations were reversed. But then, he said, "We'll figure it out. One way or another, we'll figure all of this out."

I threw my arms around his neck, weeping openly. "Thank you," I said. "Thank you so much."



Travis and I brainstormed for two straight nights, but neither of us were able to come up with a solution. I didn't matter from which angle we attacked the problem, the facts remained the same. Sanders was right. If he said I wasn't undercover, and I disputed that claim, the police would believe him. And the criminals like Adams would believe me. That didn't seem like the best way to go about survival.

So, I went back to work, knowing full well that I had no other choice but to keep doing what I was doing. And as frustrating as that was, I couldn't deny that I liked it.

I don't know much about sexual preference or how written-in-stone it is. But before my transformation, such as it was, I'd never even considered having sex with a man. I'd thought about it, sure. Everyone does. But never with desire. However, I was in absolute bliss every time Winston lent me out to one of his friends or guests.

Part of it was conditioning. I'd spent months being trained by my first Master. Some of it was hormones; I was as full of estrogen as any woman. But I was forced to think that maybe there was already a little bit of the cock-slut deep inside me. She was just waiting to be let loose.

In any case, I didn't have to act very much to convince anyone that I loved what I was doing. I was never happier than I was with a man behind me, thrusting his huge cock deep inside my ass. I cherished the brutality of it, the harder and faster the better. I craved the taste of them. I loved the feel of them cumming inside me. And yes, I loved having an audience, too.

I don't know if I was an exhibitionist or if I just liked the humiliation of it, but with people watching, the act seemed so much more intense, so much more fulfilling. That was good, because more often than not, I had a crowd cheering me on.



“Don’t you look sexy,” said Brittany, glancing in my direction. I wore a simple, red garter belt and a matching pair of panties. “What’s the occasion?”

“Work,” I said, not wanting to elaborate any further. She didn’t need to know what, exactly, I did for money. Or that I’d have done it for free, if Winston had just asked. No doubt, she would have judged me negatively if she knew. “Why?”

She shrugged. “Nothing,” she said. “I’m just...I was just thinking about some things lately.”

“What kind of things?” I asked.

“You and me kind of things,” she answered. “The kind of things where I’ve been wondering if I might have sold the idea of us staying together a little short.”

“Oh,” I said. “And what have you come up with?”

“Regret, mostly,” was her next answer. “Look – I’m sorry about how I’ve been since you started all this. I know it was hard for you, and I didn’t make it any easier. But I...um...I just think that maybe we could try to start over?”

“I’m still the same person I was when you said you didn’t like me anymore,” I said. “Nothing’s changed.”

“Yeah, no – I know,” Brittany said. “But that’s you. I’ve changed. And I was thinking that maybe we could try some stuff out. You and me, I mean. Together. Kind of like how it used to be.”

I shook my head. “I can’t do it the way I used to,” I said. “But if you really want to try, I have some ideas. But right now, I’ve got to go to work. When I get back, we can figure some things out, okay?”

She nodded. “That’s reasonable,” she stated.

I don't know if I'd already planned it out in my mind or not. Certainly, I'd had to look pretty hard at myself after discovering how much my sexuality had changed, but even after I came to terms with the reality of my preferences, I still dreamed of getting back together with Brittany. Maybe it was silly. We were such different people than when we'd begun our relationship. But I still loved her. And I thought she still loved me.

So, it was a lot easier than I might have expected to adapt my sexual expectations with the reality of being with her. It barely took me five minutes to come up with a plan, and throughout that whole day, I could think of little else. I was practically giddy when I went into the sex shop and picked out a harness and a dildo. And as I drove home, my stomach tumbled with anticipation.

"Is that for you or me?" asked a skeptical Brittany when I revealed the toy – a simple flesh-colored dildo attached to a black harness.

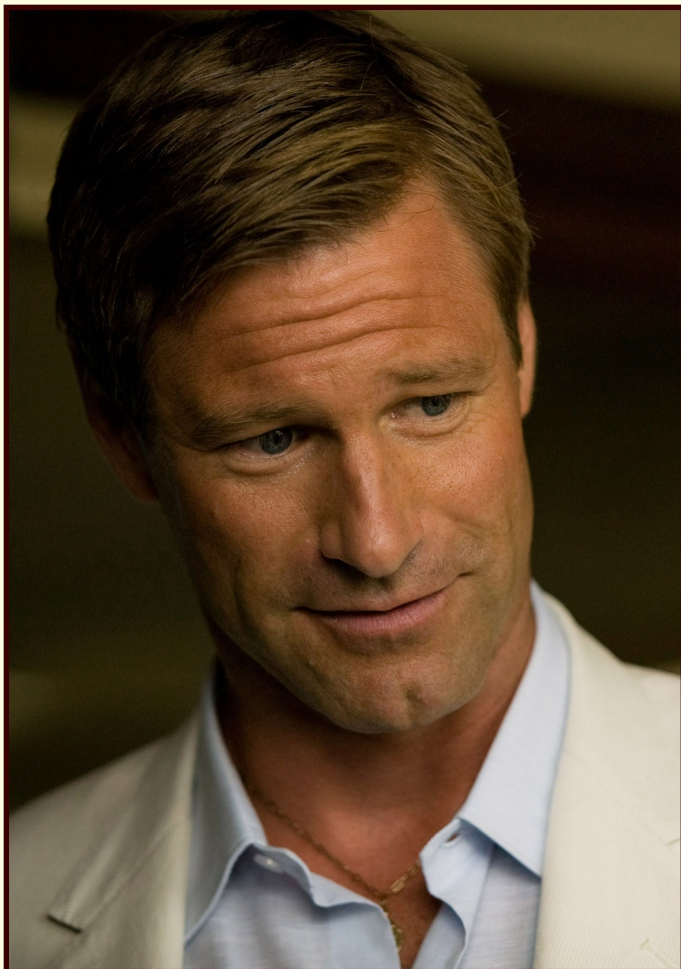
"I want you to wear it," I said, my confidence fading with every passing second. Had I miscalculated? Would she reject me outright? "And...you know...we could be...I don't know...we could be like two girls. We could pretend to be lesbians."

Pretend. The word struck me like a ton of bricks. I hadn't said we could be lesbians. I knew we couldn't be. Not really. But we could pretend for a while. In the back of my mind, though, I knew it was futile. No plastic cock could come close to measuring up to the real thing for me.

To my surprise, though, Brittany smiled. "I think I can get onboard with that," she said.

And that afternoon, I found out just where my sexuality stood. Even as I rode that dildo, I had to imagine – unsuccessfully – that she was someone else, someone far more masculine, so I could get off. It was okay for what it was. But it certainly wasn't what I wanted it to be.





“You got anything for me, kid?” asked the lieutenant, looking down on me. “Or are you still pouting about what happened last time?”

“I wasn’t pouting,” I said. “I was angry. I gave you good intel, and you just —”

“I probably saved your life,” he said, interrupting me as he sat down. “You think Adams let that shit slip around you on accident? No. He wanted you to hear it. He was testing you. And if we’d acted on your intelligence, he would have killed you.”

“But we would’ve still gotten the drugs,” I muttered. His claim made sense, even if I didn’t want to admit it.

“There were no drugs,” Sanders stated. “No guns. Nothing but a room full of Colombian assholes that were prepared to start a war in the middle of that motel. Like I said — we were tracking that ‘shipment’ the whole time.”

I looked away, embarrassed that I hadn’t seen the whole picture. But in retrospect, it made perfect sense. Winston didn’t trust me. He shouldn’t, either. Not when I hadn’t been tested. Part of me felt offended by that.

“Listen, kid,” said Sanders. “I know this is hard for you. God knows I couldn’t do what you do. But it’s necessary. You know that, don’t you? This is how we’re going to get these assholes. And when we do, it’ll all be worth it.”

I didn’t look at him when I asked, “Will it?”

He was silent for a moment before answering. “It will,” he said. “These guys, this crew, they were responsible for your father’s death. They killed him. And this is your chance to get justice. Don’t forget that. Don’t you ever forget why you’re doing this.”

I turned, looking him in the eye. “I haven’t forgotten a thing,” I said.



“Jesus,” said the man, staring down at me as I spread my legs. “That shit can’t be real.”

“I’m all real, baby,” I said, winking my asshole at him, practically begging for him to fuck me. However, I knew what he was talking about. My dick had continued to shrink, and I hadn’t seen my balls in months. I looked like I’d been castrated. Maybe whatever hormones Sanders had given me had done just that. As much as I wanted to feel alarmed at that distinct possibility, I couldn’t bring myself to care overmuch. I didn’t really need those things anymore.

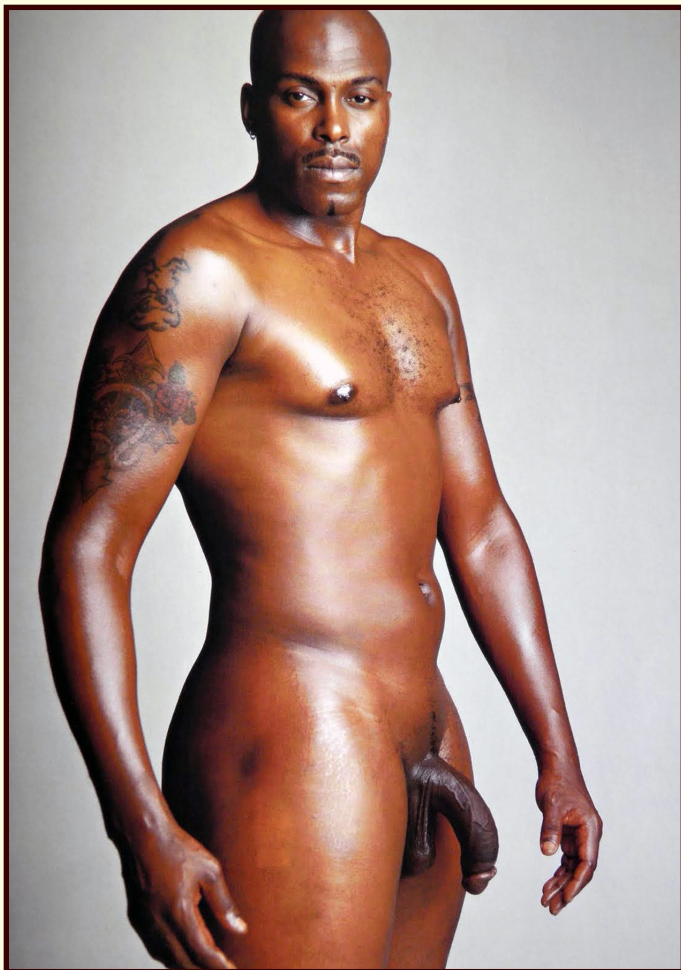
The man – I didn’t even know his name – reached down, gripping my tiny, still-limp cock between his fingers. He gave the miniscule thing a brief rub before letting it go, and I shuddered in anticipation as I saw his own massive manhood begin to harden. That’s what I wanted. It was what I needed.

And then he shoved it inside my well-lubed asshole, and I gasped in pleasure. Whatever pain I once might have felt in that situation was gone. I was so used to being fucked by men with huge cocks that I was able to focus on just how pleasurable it all was. And God, it was.

It wasn’t just the physical sensation of his thrusting cock. Certainly, each time he hit my spot, a thrill of pleasure arced up my spine. But it was so much more than that. It was mental. Emotional. Psychological.

He leaned in, pushing my legs out wider. That was my favorite position – him on top of me, us face-to-face, with him grunting away as he rammed his cock deep inside of me. I could feel his sweat-slick body, his rigid muscles rippling under his skin. I could smell his odor – a musky mixture of aftershave, perspiration, and sex. As he leaned in, shoving his tongue into my mouth, I could taste the alcohol he’d just drunk, the cigarette he’d just smoked. His bristling facial hair brushed against my cheek, and his rough hands gripped my waist.

He was a man. And in that moment, I was his woman. That kind of feeling lasts well past the act itself.



Staring at a naked Maurice, I hated the fact that he turned me on. But I couldn't deny that the massive man did something for me in a way most men didn't. He was enormous – since I'd first met him at the club, I'd learned that he had spent a stint in the NFL as a defensive lineman, and it showed. He was far past his playing shape, surely, but he was still a powerful, intimidating man.

And though he wasn't strictly a part of Winston's gang, Maurice still demanded respect from hardened criminals. Part of it was the fact that they needed him. He didn't have a criminal record, and he didn't ask questions, which made him a perfect front for the club. Ostensibly, he owned Orange No. 5 – a play on his college team's colors coupled with his playing number – but it was, in truth, Winston's club. But to Maurice, that didn't matter. As far as he was concerned, it was his. And nobody except Winston dared to make that distinction.

But my attraction, such as it was, went far past physical appeal. From the moment I'd walked through that club's doors, he'd treated me like a lady.

He was nice to me. He protected me. And he had done it without thinking about how I might repay him. In short, he was one of the few good people I'd met since I'd taken the assignment.

That, I think, is why I latched onto him. Nobody told me to have sex with him. Nobody made me give myself to him. It was my choice. And that, I think, made my relationship with Maurice feel more real than what I shared with anyone else.

I suppose the fact that he had the biggest dick I'd ever seen didn't hurt, either. But in my defense, I didn't know about that when I first dropped to my knees in front of him. But it was a very pleasant surprise. So was his ability to use that giant tool.

I don't know if it was love. Maybe. Probably not. Likely, it was just my confused attempt at feeling like a real, normal person. I imagined myself with him full-time. I dreamed of getting married and adopting kids. I fantasized about a life with him. But I knew it was useless. I knew it would never happen. To him, just like with everyone else, I was just an object. He was nice about it, but I could see it in his eyes. And I'd never be his princess.



“So,” said Brittany. “It’s over, then, huh?”

“I don’t know,” I said. It hadn’t been easy, but I’d just told my ex-girlfriend that our “lesbian” experiment wasn’t going to work out. “Maybe? I don’t know how I’ll feel when I go back to being Sam.”

She barked a harsh laugh. “Do you still think you’re going back?” she asked.

“What? Of course I do,” I said. “This has always been temporary.”

“Look at yourself, Ashley,” Brittany said. “I’ve never seen a more feminine person in all my life. And I’m not even considering what you get up to at ‘work’, though I have my suspicions.”

“You don’t know anything about what I do,” I said.

“No,” she admitted. “But I don’t need to be a genius to figure out that you’re some kind of whore or something. I mean, I don’t know the details, but the way you rode that strap-on told me enough about what you do.”

I stared at her, open-mouthed. It was stupid to think that I could hide it. Even before the strap-on, she’d obviously had her suspicions. But I’d naively expected her to remain in the dark about my sexual exploits.

“I don’t know what you want me to say,” I half-whispered. “I don’t know what you expect from me.”

“I want you to be honest,” she said. “With me. With yourself. I want you to realize that this isn’t about some assignment. Maybe that’s how it started, but it’s not anymore. I don’t know if you changed or if this was always in you. I really don’t. I think back, and I try to remember, but I can’t. I wish I could, but it’s all blurry now. Maybe there were signs or something. I don’t know. Or maybe you just changed. Either way, you’re not the person you were two years ago. And it’s time you started to accept that. It’s time you started to accept that you’re not going to flip some switch and suddenly go back to being Sam. That’s not how it works.”

“You’re right,” I said after a moment. “You don’t know anything.”



"Ah," said Winston as I bobbed my head back and forth, trying my best to deep-throat his enormous cock. I'd gotten better at it, but I still wasn't perfect. "Lieutenant Sanders. So nice of you to drop by. I'll be with you in a moment."

I didn't stop sucking Winston's cock. Months of servicing men in public had afforded me the ability to focus on what I was doing, seemingly to the exclusion of all else. However, I did allow myself a slight, sideways glance to verify that my handler was, indeed, in the room. He was. And my brief inspection told me that he'd had a bad couple of weeks.

Hair disheveled. Clothes wrinkled. Eyes darting this way and that. He looked like nothing so much as a trapped animal on the verge of chewing off its own leg.

"Jesus, Adams," came the man's familiar voice. "You really gotta do that now?"

Winston didn't answer. I knew he was close, so I redoubled my efforts, applying every ounce of skill I'd learned since ascending to my current position. Soon, he pulled out, gave his cock a couple of quick pumps, and came all over my face. One quick look told me that I shouldn't wipe it off. So, instead, I knelt in place, hugging the man's thigh.

"There," he said, making no effort to cover himself. It was a show of dominance, and one he'd employed on dozens of occasions. I knew my role well, though my mind whirled with questions concerning my handler's presence. "All done. What can I do for you, Lieutenant?"

My old boss spared only a momentary glance in my direction before saying, "You lied to me, Winston."

"I told you what you wanted to hear," my Master said. "You seized a shipment, didn't you?"

"While you brought in a bigger shipment on the other side of the city!" Sanders screamed. "You just wanted to get me out of the way!"

"And you wanted a big bust," Winston stated. "Which you got. Probably a medal, too. And I'm sure the Lieutenant Sanders retirement fund was bolstered as well. You should be happy."

"You used me," Sanders said.

"That's life," Winston said. "If you'd like to continue our arrangement, you'd do well to accept that. Or you could go back to chasing shadows. Maybe you'd catch me. Or maybe you'd end up like your old partner."

"Fuck you, Winston," Sanders said, pointing a rigid finger at the man. "You're going to get what's coming to you. Mark my words, you'll end up —"

"Spare your threats, Lieutenant," Winston said, interrupting the irate man. "We both know you can't back them up. So, scurry back to whatever bar you crawled out of, or I'm going to contact my lawyer. Police harassment would not look good on your record, would it? And God knows, you don't want them digging into your past."

Sanders started to say something, but obviously thought better of it. After a long moment, he simply turned and left, leaving me kneeling at my Master's feet, sticky, drying cum on my face as I tried to make sense of the exchange.



“Why are you dressed like that?” asked Sanders as he approached. He didn’t look much better than before, except that he seemed to have found a comb at some point. “You look ridiculous.”

“I don’t want to be recognized,” I said as he sat across from me. Even from a couple of feet away, I could smell the alcohol wafting off of him. “But you’re not the one who should be asking questions. I am.”

“You’re talking about what happened this weekend,” he guessed. “I shouldn’t have done that in front of you. I’m sorry.”

“Done what? You’re getting information from him?” I asked. “What else don’t I know?”

“I use what I have,” I said. “A couple of weeks ago, he came to me with a tip. He’s done it before, usually to get rid of his competition. So, I took it at face value. But when we seized that shipment, it wasn’t nearly what he said it would be. In fact, I’m pretty damned sure it was his stuff. I know it was a distraction from the real thing.”

I shook my head. “And what was he saying about the ‘Lieutenant Sanders Retirement Fund’?” I asked, dreading the answer.

“He’s needling me,” Sanders said. “That’s it. Just an asshole criminal being an asshole. That’s all. Nothing has changed for you, kid. I still need you to —”

“Keep my eyes and ears open,” I said. “I know. But I can’t do this forever. You know I can’t.”

“It seemed like you were enjoying yourself well enough,” Sanders stated. “That happen a lot?”

I didn’t answer immediately. “What did you think I was doing?” I asked after a long moment. “I’m not there for decoration. You knew what you were sending me into. And I’m doing what I have to do. You know that.”

“I know,” he said. “Just keep doing what you’re doing, okay? We’ll get him. I promise.”



Even as I stood outside Winston's office, my mind made up about what I was going to do, I knew it was a bad idea. I wasn't supposed to actively search for intelligence. My job was to simply be around, to watch, to listen, to passively gather data so that Sanders and his team could pounce on anything I discovered. But I was impatient. I was tired of my ruse. I wanted to do what I'd set out to do, which was to bring Winston and his ilk down.

So, I waited until I knew I was all alone in Winston's mansion, and when I was, I made my move. Pushing through his office door, I was surprised by its general warmth. He'd always struck me as something of a cold man, and the rest of the house's décor bore that impression out. However, his office was full of earth tones, leather, and dark wood. Perhaps, I thought as I crept through the office, he wasn't the man I thought he was. Or, at the very least, there was more to him than the two-dimensional, power-hungry criminal I had created in my mind.

"What are you doing?" demanded a somewhat familiar voice. "You're not supposed to be in there."

I wheeled around to see one of Winston's men standing the door. I'd seen him a few dozen times, but I didn't know his name. However, with his scraggly facial hair, pale white skin, and douchey fedora, I knew he was, at best, a low-level thug.

"Oh...um...I was just...uh...I was just looking for m-my Master," I said. I could feel his lecherous eyes roaming up and down my barely-concealed form. My attire, comprised of a lacy, translucent nightgown and a pair of barely-there panties, left little to the imagination, and the thug clearly liked what he saw. "I'm just so horny, and I hoped he would...you know...help me with that."

"He's not here," the man said. "Nobody but me is."

I plastered an eager smile on my face. "Then you can help me, right?" I said, stepping forward. I reached him in a pair of steps, my wide hips swaying seductively. My hand found his stomach, and as I leaned close, it crept down below his belt. I grabbed his hardening cock. "Oh. Somebody wants to play," I said, giggling. "Do you want to play with me?"

I knew what he'd do before he did it. Men, I'd found, were easy to read – especially when they didn't think of you as anything more than a sex toy. And this thug was no different. Before I knew it, his pants were around his ankles and I was massaging his hard cock. Then, I went to work, hating myself and my situation more with each passing second.



"It always amazes me how, one second, you look like a total whore," said Brittany. "And then the next, you can look like the innocent girl-next-door."

"Thanks?" I said, leaning against the counter, wearing only my bra and panties. I knew I looked cute, but I hated her characterization of me.

"Oh, don't get your panties in a bunch," she responded. "I'm giving you a compliment. Not many chicks can pull that off."

I smiled. My ever-evolving relationship with Brittany was a constant mystery to me. One second, she seemed like she hated me. I'd often catch her staring at me with open contempt. However, there were other times when she talked to me like I was her long-lost sister. But most of the time, she did her best to pointedly ignore me – like, if she didn't acknowledge I was there, she could forget that I even existed.

I knew it was a coping mechanism. After all, when I'd made the decision to take the assignment, I'd thrown her life into tumult as well. She didn't really know how to deal with my transformation, and she certainly didn't know how to deal with suddenly having another girl around – especially one who'd once been her lover.

If I was honest, I didn't either. It was an awkward situation, to say the very least.

"How are things with you and Paul?" I asked. They'd gotten back together soon after our failed attempt at a lesbian relationship.

"It's fine," she said. "I like him, I guess. The sex isn't great, though. He's not very big, you know. I mean, bigger than you ever were. But still..."

I knew it was an attempt to needle me, so I didn't take the bait. "Yeah," I said good-naturedly. "All the guys I fuck have huge cocks. I can barely fit my mouth around them."

She stared at me in combined horror and disbelief. I'd never really referenced my own sexual exploits, and certainly not so blatantly. And she had no idea how to respond. My smile broadened. "But yeah – I'm sure it's more about how he uses it, right? Size doesn't matter that much," I said, knowing full well that I'd won that sparring match.

“Do you really have to go, baby?” I asked, leaning in to kiss his neck. “I want you. Tonight.”

De’shawn, one of Winston’s men, frowned. “I wish I didn’t have to,” he said, his voice filled with regret. “But Mr. Adams needs me.”

“I need you,” I cooed, the statement rolling off my tongue with an ease that surprised even me. I had gotten very good at making the men feel wanted, and I’d come to realize how much power that gave me.

“I know,” he said. “But I’ll be back soon. Then we can have some fun.”

I almost asked him where he was going, but something told me that that would raise red flags. And those sorts of alarm bells couldn’t be un-rung. I’d already had one brush with being discovered, and I had little desire to repeat my mistake. Watch. Listen. That was my charge. And I’d vowed to confine my sleuthing to doing just that.

However, there was nothing that said I couldn’t use my newfound power to my advantage. “Bring me something back,” I said. “Something pretty.”

“Like jewelry or something?” De’shawn asked.

“No,” I said. “I don’t care about shiny rocks. Buy me some lingerie. Something skimpy. Something you want to see me in. And then, when you get back, you can rip it off me with your teeth.”

He grinned, the expression stretching across his face. I didn’t like him much – not really. He was just another in a long line of men I was expected to please. But he was young. And stupid. And easily manipulated. And that, to me, gave him value. I couldn’t help but wonder how far I could push it.

“Sounds good to me,” he said.





“So,” Brittany said, fishing a pair of panties out of her drawer. She tossed them on the bed next to a matching bra, a white blouse, and a dark pair of jeans – her work uniform. “Are black guys, you know...different? And please don’t insult my intelligence. I know what you do at ‘work’.”

“Why do you ask?” I answered, not bothering to dispute her assertion that I’d been sleeping with black men. I had, and I wasn’t even close to ashamed of it. “Are you going to make fun of me or something?”

“No,” she said, sitting on the edge of the bed. “I mean, I’ve thought a lot about this, okay? I don’t understand how you could change so much so quickly, but I accept it. I didn’t at first, but I do now.”

“And? Your first question is whether or not black guys are different?” I asked, shaking my head. “Jesus, you’re just as racist as your dad.”

“No, I’m not!” she replied. “I’m nothing like him.”

I knew I’d hit a nerve, but that was sort of my intention. Brittany hated her father, and not just because he was a racist. No – she hated him because he was a judgmental, holier-than-thou sort who thought that just because he went to church every Sunday, he was somehow better than everyone else. He hid behind a thin veneer of religious piety while actively flouting any part of the religion – like the whole “love thy neighbor” bit – if it was the least bit inconvenient to his worldview.

“Fine – you want to know the truth?” I asked. “Men are men. It doesn’t matter if they’re black or white or whatever else. Some can fuck. Others can’t get out of their own way. So, no. They’re not different.”

“H-how many men have you been with?” she asked.

I shrugged. “A few dozen,” I said. “Maybe more. I don’t keep track anymore. It doesn’t matter, though. It’s just work.”

“Do you really believe that?” she asked.

“I do,” I lied. However, I knew it wasn’t “just work”. It went way deeper than that. But I wasn’t ready to admit that fact to Brittany. Perhaps I never would.



I chose him. He didn't choose me. It's difficult to express how much of a change that signaled, but it was significant. I was using him, rather than the other way around. And I liked it.

The other girls in Winston's house had taken notice. They all knew I was special, and they'd started treating me with deference. I'd started jokingly thinking of myself as queen of the concubines. I embodied everything Winston and his men wanted – petite, but with curves. Almost flat-chested. Round ass. Tiny dick. And I knew how to work the cock like nobody else. To them, I was perfect. I had them drooling all over me.

So much had changed since I'd started working for Winston. I'd come to that club a scared, burgeoning sissy pretending to be something he wasn't. And I'd become something else entirely. Confidence oozed out of my every pore. I knew what I was. I knew what I wanted. And I knew exactly how to get it.

The manipulation that had started with Da'shawn buying me lingerie had netted me diamonds, a new car, more clothes than I could ever wear, and a new apartment. Ostensibly, I still lived with Brittany, of course, but I rarely went back to the apartment we shared. That wasn't home – not anymore.

And throughout it all, my assignment crept into the back of my mind, and I got to the point where I barely even thought about it. Certainly, there were moments when it all came rushing back – my charge, Lieutenant Sanders, my father's death – but it was easy to forget because it all felt like it had happened to someone else.



"We don't do this much anymore, do we?" I asked, trying to play down my own sexuality as I sat on the bed. It was difficult, considering the fact that I was a bit tipsy. I had just celebrated my twenty-first birthday with my only real friend, Travis, and I'd been drinking free drinks all night.

Travis, who wasn't much better off than me, collapsed onto the bed, face-first. "Why is the world spinning?" he groaned. "Make it stop."

I lay back, keenly aware of how close my friend was. If he were any other man, I might have felt a little trepidatious, lying beside him. But Travis was safe. He'd never do anything if I didn't ask him first, which made him very different from the men I was usually around. They took what they wanted, especially from someone like me, and as well as I'd come to manage it, I knew good and well that if they chose to ignore my wishes, I could do very little to stop them.

"Do you ever wonder what life would have been like if I hadn't decided to do this?" I asked.

"Do what? Get drunk with me?" he asked, rolling over.

"You know that's not what I'm talking about," I said, my words only slightly slurred. "I'm talking about all this. Me being what I am now. Sometimes, when I try to remember what my old life was back, it's like I'm watching an old T.V. show or something. It doesn't feel like any of it happened to me."

He didn't respond, and for a moment, I wondered if he was still awake. I glanced over at him, and he asked, "Do you remember that time we tried out for the basketball team in middle school?"

I nodded. "We were so bad," I said. "But we had no idea, did we? We spent hours practicing. Doing lay-ups. Shooting free-throws. We thought we were shoe-ins."

"Until we got out there," he said. "I knew from the moment I saw Ronnie Lawson that we didn't have a chance. I mean, I knew he was big. Like, really big. But once we got on the court, he seemed like a grown-ass man."

"And we were still little kids," I added. "That basketball dream didn't last long, did it?"

"No," he said. "No, it didn't. But I don't regret it, you know? Because we had fun that summer, didn't we? Shooting hoops. Pretending we were going to end up in the NBA. It was fun."

I smiled. "Yeah," I said. "It was."



"Meow, huh?" asked Brittany. "I guess it's fitting."

"Shut up," was my response. Increasingly, I'd begun to wonder how I'd ever tolerated the girl I once thought I loved. She was petty, jealous, and was almost as judgmental as her father. If ever there was evidence of nurture over nature, she was it. "What do you want?"

"We need to talk about our living situation," she said.

"I paid my half of the rent," I said. "What's there to talk about?"

"I want you to move out," she said. "For good."

"What? Why?" I asked. I hadn't been home in almost a month, preferring my own apartment instead.

"I want Paul to move in with me," she stated. "He just lost his job last week, and he's going to lose his lease. And you're barely ever there, so I thought you wouldn't mind."

"What does that have to do with me moving out?" I asked. "I don't care if Paul lives there."

"Yeah – no offense, but I'm not letting you within a mile of my boyfriend," she said.

"What the hell does that mean?" I asked.

"It means that I don't want to come home to find you having seduced him or something," she stated. "That's what it means."

"What? I would never...I mean...Jesus, do you think that little of me?" I asked. The look on her face was answer enough, so I just said, "Fine. Whatever. I don't like living there anyway. My other place is much nicer."



“What’s wrong?” I asked as Winston stared into the mirror. When he had gotten to the house, he’d been covered in blood, and for a moment, I’d been worried. In that moment, it didn’t matter that he’d been responsible for the death of my father. I wish I’d remembered that more quickly. However, as I stared at my Master, I’d almost panicked – until I realized that none of it was his blood. He said nothing to me before retreating to the shower, from which he’d just emerged.

“Everything,” he said, sighing. “I thought I was past all this.”

“What?” I asked.

“Examples,” he stated. “Or that was just hope. Either way, there’s always someone looking to climb the mountain. And I’ve got to kick them off before they take my place.”

I wanted to ask details, but I knew he wouldn’t give them. Besides, I knew what had happened. Some rival had gotten big enough to threaten Winston’s business, and he’d dealt with them accordingly. No doubt, he and whatever fools he’d convinced to follow him, were now rotting at the bottom of the bay.

He let out a deep breath. “I want out,” he said, massaging his brow with one hand. “I’ve got plenty of respectable businesses now. I could go completely straight.”

“Why don’t you?” I asked.

He shrugged. “Pride,” he said. “My nature. I don’t know. But every time I think of someone else taking my spot, I feel this swell of anger. I’m not proud of the things I do, but I’m not ashamed, either. That world out there, the world we live in, it’s a brutal place. This ain’t the suburbs. It’s a fucking jungle. And I like being the lion that rules this shit.”

“I know,” I said.

He smiled a humorless smile. “That’s what I like about you,” he said. “You get it. You don’t get tied up in morality. You’re here to survive. That’s it. Same as me.”

I returned his smile, but I was horrified by the implications of his statement. The last thing in the world that I wanted was to be the same as him.



"I need you to wear your uniform tonight," said Winston. "I've got some special guests coming, and I need you at your best."

I didn't need to hear any more to know he was serious. Over the months since I'd started working at Winston's home, the rules had relaxed. I wasn't expected to wear my collar, and I could refuse any advance I chose. However, I rarely did. I knew what made me valuable, and a toy that doesn't put out is worthless. And I hadn't stopped enjoying it.

"I understand," I said before going upstairs to don my uniform – a black bustier, a matching g-string, and my collar. When I appeared downstairs, I looked every inch the sex pet I'd become.

Winston's guests happened to be Colombian drug traffickers. I'd gotten quite good at multi-tasking, so even as I was expected to pleasure them – and I did – I was more than capable of listening intently to the negotiations. In the end, I was exhausted, covered in Colombian cum, and armed with enough information to bring both Winston's organization and the Colombians to their collective knees.

But later, as I stared at Sanders' number on my phone, I hesitated to make the call and arrange a meeting. He had ignored me before, and there was nothing to say he wouldn't do it again.

Briefly, I considered calling someone else at the precinct. Someone there might listen to me. But then again, they might arrest me, too. After all, I'd become an associate of a known criminal, and cops tended to apply a guilty verdict by mere association.

No – I didn't have a choice. I thumbed his number and raised the phone to my ear. When he picked up, I said, "I think I have something for you. When can we meet?"

“Well,” I said. “Are you going to say something?”

Sanders remained silent, lost in thought. No doubt, he was trying to process the wealth of information I’d just given him. I’d given him numerous locations, times, participants, and other details concerning Winston’s next few shipments. It was more than actionable. He just had to pull the trigger.

“I don’t know what to say,” he admitted after a while. “This is more than I ever expected. More than you should’ve been privy to.”

“I told you how I got it,” I said. I hadn’t spared any details concerning my activities during the acquisition of the intelligence. “They trust me. I’ve been with Winston for almost a year now. And I’ve been a good little girl for him, just like you said. And they let their guard down. It’s as simple as that.”

I was completely convinced that the intelligence was good, and nothing Sanders could say would dissuade me of that notion. After all, if I couldn’t trust any information I gathered, what good was having me imbedded in Winston’s organization?

“You need to act on this,” I said.

“Don’t tell me how to do my job,” was his response. “I’ll act when I think it’s appropriate to act, and not before. Certainly not on the word of some whore.”

“Whore?” I blurted. Months’ worth of frustration bubbled to the surface as I stood. “You put me in that fucking house! I’m only there because you gave me this assignment. And now you call me a fucking whore? Fuck you for saying that.”

He took a deep breath. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I’m sorry, okay? Please, just calm down. I’m just saying that I need to corroborate some of this, okay? It sounds like good intel. I just need to make sure. That’s it.”

“Well, make sure,” I said. “And bust these guys so I can have my life back.”

Left unsaid was the fact that I didn’t know if I wanted to go back. I didn’t know if I even could.





I liked fooling civilians; that's what I called people who weren't part of Winston's organization. I know that's dishonest, and perhaps it makes me a bad person, but there's something to be said for tricking a completely straight man into sleeping with you. And I loved that look on their face – it was always the same expression – surprise, arousal, and a bit of shame.

Sometimes, I wondered what they were thinking. Was the shame real? Was it simply outweighed by desire? Or did they bargain with themselves, thinking that I didn't qualify as a real boy? What did they think when they had my tiny dick in their mouths? When their tongues were busy exploring the depths of my asshole? Did they tell themselves it wasn't gay? Did they care? I don't know, but it was fun to think about.

I loved hunting at my apartment's pool. One look at me in a skimpy bikini, and they thought they'd hit the jackpot. It never occurred to them that I might be hiding a little something extra between my legs.

But I also liked hanging out there because, for a little while, I could pretend I was normal. I didn't have to think about Winston or his criminal empire. I didn't have to think of the ex-girlfriend who alternated between hating me, loving me, and being jealous of me. Nor did I have to think about my dead father, the shady detective who'd set me on my path, or my overall mission. I could lay out on one of the pool chairs and just chill out with the other pool patrons.

I guess it was all a mirage, but it was real enough to me. I even made a couple of casual friends. You know the type – you know their names, you might have hung out a bit, and you definitely say hello when you see them, but it doesn't go any deeper than that. There's no real connection. Just a polite acknowledgement that you don't dislike one another.

But lingering in the back of my mind was the knowledge that it wasn't real. I wasn't what I was pretending to be. I had responsibilities. I had the weight of an entire investigation pressing down on me. And soon, I kept telling myself, it would all be over. Then, I'd have to figure out what in the world I was supposed to do with the rest of my life.

That, I think, was scarier than all the rest because I had no idea what I wanted for my future. But when I was at that pool, I could pretend I was normal. I needed that, I think.



“What the fuck are you doing here?” I asked, peeking out from behind one of the trees to see Sanders squatting in a small clearing.

“You’re going to get me killed.”

“Adams isn’t here,” he said. “And his men never check this area.”

“But they know where I am, idiot,” I said. “They could have followed me or something.”

“I’ll be quick, then,” Sanders said, looking more desperate than ever. I barely recognized him, he looked so tired. His skin was waxy, and his eyes were furtive. “Your intel was good.”

“I know,” I said.

“I’m moving this evening,” he said. “But I can only hit one of the locations.”

“What? Why?” I asked. “Don’t you have your task force with you?”

“About that...the captain pulled me off the investigation almost six months ago,” Sanders said. “I’ve been working it on my own ever since. But that’s only because I think Adams paid him off. I think the corruption goes deep, kid. Really deep. And it’s been that way for a while.”

One of Winston’s dogs barked in the distance, and I glanced in that direction. “Jesus,” I said. “Fuck. Look – I can’t stay out here. But don’t do it, Sanders. You can’t take something like that on your own. There’ll be six or seven guys there. And –”

“I can take care of myself, kid,” he said. “Just go back. Play your role. I’ll let you know when I’ve got it wrapped up.”

I looked around the room. I'd expected a lot of things from Lieutenant Sanders, but a cozy, well-decorated home was not one of them. The Christmas decorations made it look almost cheerful. However, his appearance ruined the effect.

"I don't know what to tell you," he said, looking for all the world like a semi-respectable hobo. He stank of booze, his hair was disheveled, and it looked like he hadn't shaved in a week. "Your intel was bad. There was nothing there."

"Nothing," I echoed, crossing my arms. "Are you sure? What about the other sites? Oh yeah, you wouldn't know because this whole operation is your personal vendetta that isn't even close to sanctioned by the police department. I mean, it's a good thing I didn't throw my whole fucking life away on this."

"It was legit," he argued. "They just got tired of the lack of results. I tried to tell them I had someone on the inside, but you know I couldn't identify you."

"Because of the mole you're sure exists," I said. "Look – I can't do this indefinitely. I need to know you have an endgame here. I gave you good intelligence, and you did nothing with it. That can't happen again."

"I'll bring in some people I trust next time," he said. "I promise."

I sighed. "I hope you know what you're doing," I said.

"I do," was his response. He ran his hand through his mussed hair. It barely moved. "Listen, kid – my family's going to be back in about an hour..."

"And you don't want a whore here when they get back," I said, bending down to grab my purse. "I know. I get it."

"Not what I was going to say," he stated. "I was going to ask if you wanted to stick around for dinner. It is Christmas, and...well...I know you don't have much family."

I didn't know how to answer. Part of me wanted to stay, to feel like I was part of something. But I knew I didn't belong. Not with Sanders and his family. Not with anyone. So, I shook my head. "I'm good," I said. "Get a shower, for God's sake. Get cleaned up. And have a nice Christmas."





"I feel like I'm going crazy, Travis," I said. "I don't know up from down anymore."

"I've ready about a few people who've been undercover for long periods of time," he said. "It's easy to get confused."

"I'm not confused," I said. "I'm pissed off. I keep giving Sanders information, and he just fucks it up. He hasn't made a single arrest. And all the while, I'm sitting there doing...what I have to do. And there's no end in sight."

It was true. I'd gone back to Sanders twice since Christmas, each time with good intelligence. And both times, he'd squandered any chance to act on it.

On top of Sanders' incompetence, Winston was on the warpath. He was convinced that one of his guys was leaking information to the police, and I knew it was only a matter of time before he trained his sights on his favorite pet. No amount of cocksucking ability would save me, then.

"You could run away," he suggested. "Just pick up whatever you can carry and go somewhere they can't find you."

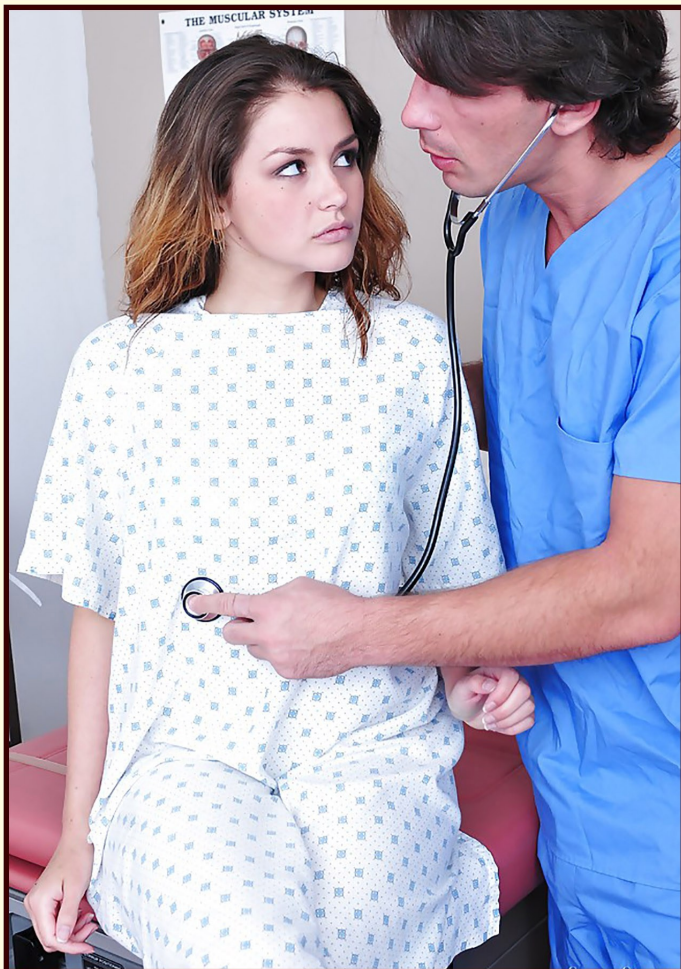
"That'll paint a target on my back," I said. "If I run, Winston will know I'm the leak. I don't even know how he knows anybody's leaking anything. Sanders hasn't made any arrests. He's too drunk most of the time."

"You could go to his boss," Travis said. "Turn state's evidence or something. Maybe get into witness protection."

"With what?" I asked. "Hearsay? Overheard conversations? It's not enough."

Travis shook his head. "I don't know, Ashley," he admitted. "I don't know what you should do, but I want you to know that I'm here for you no matter what. If you want to run, I'll run with you. Whatever you need, I'm your guy."

I looked into his earnest face. "You're sweet," I said. "But I don't have any choice but to keep doing what I'm doing. I wish it was different, but that's all I've got."



"What do you mean?" I asked, sitting on the examination table. "I thought e-everything was reversible."

"I don't know who told you that," said the doctor. "But you've been on some form of synthetic female hormones for over two years. Even if you stopped taking whatever you're taking right now, your body has been irreparably changed. There's no way you can go back to normal manhood."

"I...I don't understand," I said, a little stunned by his proclamation. I'd gone to the doctor on a whim; I knew that my time with Winston was winding down, one way or another. I couldn't continue down my current path, whether Sanders held up his end of the bargain or not. So, I'd gone to the doctor to get my options.

Sanders and the doctor I'd seen before had been adamant that I could simply return to manhood any time I wanted, but I'd rightly begun to mistrust anything that came out of Sanders' mouth. It turns out that that distrust was well-founded.

"What are you taking?" he asked. Mechanically, I told him that I didn't take anything. Sanders' doctor had put some sort of time-release implant in my hip. "That's really advanced stuff. More advanced than what I'm familiar with. But judging by the results, it's a very effective treatment."

"Yeah," I said.

"Even if we took it out," the doctor said. "There's no way you could be a normal man. It would take multiple surgeries and a full course of testosterone replacement therapy, but even then, you'd display feminine characteristics."

"Shit," I muttered. "So, I'm stuck like this?"

He nodded. "We've seen this a few times," he said. "Some transgender women regret their transition. I can refer you to a psychologist who specializes in —"

"No," I said. "I'm fine. Really, doc. I'll be fine."



I really didn't know how to feel about myself. For all intents and purposes, I was stuck. I think I knew it all along, at least in the back of my mind. And I'd certainly considered living the rest of my life as Ashley. But being told that I didn't have any choice in the matter made me feel incredibly trapped. Suddenly, I couldn't stop thinking about all the things I'd lost along with my masculinity – chief among them, my relationship with Brittany.

But I couldn't allow myself to wallow in self-pity. At work, there were certain expectations, and if I failed to meet them, there would be consequences. I didn't think Winston would outright harm me, but I couldn't put it past him. He was, after all, a criminal and a murderer. He'd done worse for less. So, I trudged along like nothing had changed, wondering all the while what the doctor's prognosis meant for my future.

I was standing near the pool, lost in thought, when Winston said, "You seem distracted."

Immediately, a fake smile bloomed on my face. I'd gotten good at faking happiness. "I'm fine," I insisted, balancing on my five-inch heels. "Better than fine, baby."

"Don't do that," he said, leaning back in his chair. "You can fool all those idiots, but you can't fool me. Tell me what's the matter."

Briefly, I considered maintaining the lie. He'd see through it, of course, but maybe he'd let it go. Or I could tell him a half-truth. "Just thinking about my old life," I said. "I ran into some people from my past the other day, and it's made think about a lot of things."

He nodded. "I know the feeling," he said. "I saw one of my old football coaches the other day. Good guy. He really made an effort to help me. I would've never gotten into college without him. He knew what happened. You know, about my brother. And he knows what I am now. I don't put much stock in what other people think of me, but the disappointment in his eyes – that hurt. But the fear? That hurt worse."

"That must be difficult," I said, sliding into his lap.

"Yeah," he said. "But I can imagine it's harder for you. People don't understand situations like yours."

"No," I said. "They don't. They really, really don't. I guess that's why we're so good together. We're both misunderstood."

He smiled one of his humorless smiles. "Yeah," he said. "Maybe."

“So,” said Paul, blocking the doorway. “You’re the famous Ashley, huh?”

“I don’t know about famous,” I said, looking the man up and down. He wasn’t particularly handsome. In fact, with his scraggly beard and unkempt hair, he looked like someone’s creepy uncle. But he seemed nice enough. “But yeah. That’s me. I guess Brittany told you about me, huh?”

“Some,” he said. As if remembering his manners, he stepped aside, saying, “Sorry. Come on in.”

I did, entering the apartment I’d once called home. It was largely unchanged, if a little dirtier than I might have liked. That was the price of living with a man, I thought. “I just need to get my things,” I said. “Brittany said she put my stuff in a box or something.”

“Yeah,” he said, closing the door behind him. “But first, I think there’s something we need to do.”

“What?” I asked, immediately recognizing the lust in his voice. I’d heard it often enough that it was as clear as day.

“You know what,” he said. “And just in case you’re thinking about saying no, I know your secret. I know all about your little assignment. You know how Brittany can get when she’s drunk. But I won’t tell anybody so long as you do this one little thing for me.”

“Are you blackmailing me into having sex with you?” I asked. “Seriously?”

“Seriously,” he echoed.

“Jesus Christ,” I said, resisting the urge to roll my eyes. I didn’t care about the sex part. However, there was a small part of me that still cared about Brittany. And that part wanted nothing more than to kick her lecherous boyfriend in the balls. However, I didn’t have much choice as far as I could see. So, I started unbuttoning my shorts, asking, “Where are we going to do this, then? Here in the living room? Or the bedroom?”

He grinned, thinking he’d won some battle. “The bedroom,” he said. And that’s where I let him fuck me. If I’m honest, the act itself wasn’t half bad, but it left me feeling dirty in a way I’d never quite felt before.





“What are you doing here?” asked Brittany, standing in the shower.

“Nothing,” I said automatically. It was a stupid answer, and I knew it. But I was a bit panicked. I wanted to tell her the truth, but I didn’t know how. Telling a woman you’d been blackmailed into sleeping with her boyfriend was bad enough. Telling her as her ex-boyfriend made it worse. But she deserved to know, which is how I’d convinced myself to go back to her apartment.

“Did you forget some of your stuff or something?” she asked.

“No,” I said. “Listen. I need to tell you something. And it’s not going to be easy.”

“Sounds serious,” she said, wrapping a towel around her torso. “What’s up?”

“It’s about Paul,” I said. “You told him about me, didn’t you? About the assignment and everything, I mean.”

“He told you,” she said, her voice losing a bit of its confidence. “Why?”

“H-he...um...he threatened to out me,” I said. “To blow my cover. Unless...unless I...”

“Unless you slept with him,” she guessed. I nodded, apologizing, but she interrupted. “It’s not your fault. He’s an asshole. And this isn’t the first time he’s cheated on me.”

“L...It’s not?” I asked. “Why are you still with him, then?”

“Honestly? I don’t know,” she answered. “Maybe he’s the best I can get. Or it’s what I deserve. I don’t know. But he won’t tell anybody about you. I can promise you that. He’s all bark and no bite. He’d probably piss himself if he ever even found himself in the same room as a guy like your boss.”

“Oh,” I said, feeling a guilty sense of relief. “Look, Brittany. I know this isn’t any of my business, but you do deserve better than that. You do realize that, don’t you?”

“You’re right,” she said. “It’s none of your business.”



I sat in Maurice's lap, trying not to let my anger, surprise, and overall frustration show. I was dressed – if you can even apply the descriptor to what I was wearing – in a simple, black corset and a pair of thigh-high boots paired with some fishnet stockings. Otherwise, I was naked. Or more appropriately to how I felt, exposed.

"I need to see him," Sanders said, keeping his eyes trained on Maurice. "Come on, man."

"He doesn't want to see you, pig," the former football player said. "Not after what happened in Niceville."

"That wasn't my fault," Sanders stated. His appearance hadn't improved. In fact, if I didn't know him, I would have pegged him as one of Winston's less-successful men. "Adams knows that."

"Doesn't matter," Maurice said, idly squeezing my ass. "He's not going to see you. Find somebody else to deal with your shit."

"My shit?" Sanders demanded. He stood, pointing a quivering finger at Maurice. "My fucking shit? You need to remind your fucking boss that my shit is the only reason he's not in jail right now. My shit is the only reason he's still alive."

Maurice stared at him for a long moment before removing his glasses. He handed them to me. "Get up, honey," he growled. "This asshole needs a lesson in manners."

I obeyed, backing away as Maurice rose to his impressive height. But Sanders didn't back down. Either he was just that stupid or he was high. Whatever the case, Maurice towered over him. "You want to leave right now, little man," Maurice stated. "Before you get hurt. I don't care if you're a cop. I ain't got nothin' to lose. You know that. So stick around. Test me. And you'll regret it."

Sanders' confidence wavered for a long moment, then broke completely. He raised his hands. "Not trying to pick a fight, Maurice," he said. "I'm just sayin' that I need to talk to him. That's all I'm saying."

"You've said it," Maurice said. "If he wants to see you, he'll call. If not, well...he won't. Now get the fuck out of here."

And Sanders did, leaving me to puzzle out what that exchange meant.

"You don't need to know that," Winston said bluntly. It was one of the few times he'd rebuffed my questions, but I had expected it. I'd tried more subtle ways of figuring out what, exactly, Sanders' relationship was to Winston and his crew, and I'd come up empty. So, I'd simply asked the man in charge, hoping that his soft spot for me would extend far enough to keep me safe from repercussions.

"I feel like I do," I said, trying to keep a quiver of very real fear out of my voice. "He's a cop. And what's worse, I know him. He was my dad's partner. I deserve to know what he's doing here. I deserve to know why he's demanding to see you."

He sighed. "I sometimes forget your history," he said. "Tell me, what do you think of Lieutenant Sanders?"

"I don't know him," I lied. "I used to, I guess – back before my dad died. But I've only seen him a couple of times since then."

"Would you consider him a stable person?" was Winston's next question. I shook my head, saying that he didn't seem that way. "Good. The man is a drug addict. And I think he's been stealing from me. He hides behind that badge, acting like he's better than us, but he's not. I know for a fact that he raided one of my stash houses a couple of months ago. He took everything for himself. No arrests. He just stole it."

"H-he did?" I asked.

"He did," Winston said. "I can respect a man who's just doing his job. That's most cops. I'll protect what's mine, but I don't hold any animosity toward them. But men like Lieutenant Sanders? He's worse than normal criminals. He hides behind that thin veneer of legitimacy while just taking whatever he wants. He's killed men in cold blood. Men like your father."

"W-what? What are you talking about?" I asked, dreading his answer.

"He killed your father," Winston said. "He and Sanders made a bust. Took one of my biggest suppliers. But when it came time to call it in, Sanders hesitated. He wanted to take a cut, then and there. Called it a tax. Your father objected, and Sanders killed him. Right then and there. In cold blood."

"I...I didn't...I thought..."

"You thought your father died in the line of duty," Winston said. "But he didn't. It wasn't a criminal who killed him. It was his own fucking partner. I can't respect a man who'd do that. I might have to live with Sanders for now, but that won't last forever. One day, he'll fuck up. And I'll be there to make him pay."





“You don’t believe him, do you?” asked Travis. “He’s a criminal. A drug lord. He’s the freaking boogeyman, right?”

I nodded. “But he’s not a liar,” I added. “I know him. And I know he doesn’t need to lie. Why would he?”

I’d left Winston’s house reeling from his revelation. My first instinct was similar to Travis’. He had to be lying. But the more I thought about it, the more it made sense. I didn’t want to believe that Sanders was crooked, and I definitely didn’t want to think that he’d killed my father. But Winston’s story made far more sense than Sanders’.

“Okay – so, let’s say that you believe him,” Travis stated. “What does that mean? What do you do now?”

“I don’t know,” I admitted. I’d spent almost three years with the singular goal of bringing Winston down, and it was all for naught.

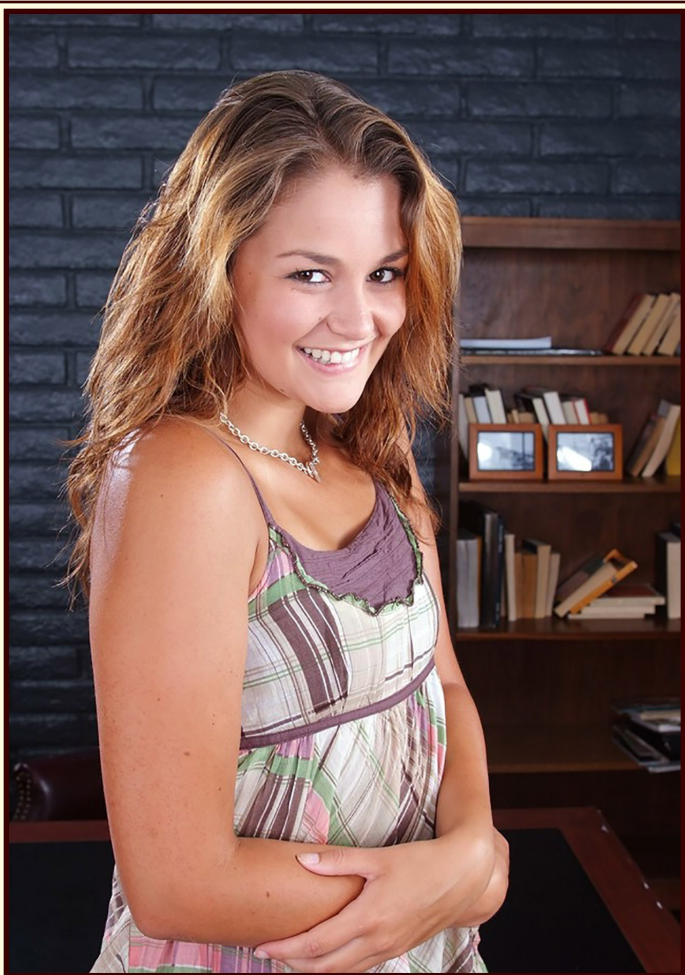
I’d done so much, I’d come so far, and for nothing. The information I’d given Sanders had been used for his own gain. “It just occurred to me that there probably was never a real assignment. He just wanted someone on the inside, and I was dumb enough to believe him.”

“It’s not your fault,” Travis said.

“I know,” I said. “It’s his. But that doesn’t make it any easier to accept that I’ve spent the past three years doing...what I do...for nothing. As far as anyone in power knows, I’m just another of Winston’s pet sissies. I may as well be a criminal.”

“It’ll be okay,” he said. “I know the truth. So does Brittany.”

“Yeah,” I said. “That’s really comforting.”



"I need to know," I said. "Can you make it happen?"

Travis, who'd just gotten a job as a junior writer at a local newspaper, ran his hand through his hair. I know that he wanted to tell me that he could do whatever I needed him to do. He wanted so badly to be my knight-in-shining-armor, but he wasn't sure if he had the professional capital to do what I'd asked.

"I'll get it done," he said after a long moment. His voice was filled with resolve, but I knew him well enough to see through that confident façade. He was afraid, and not just of the professional ramifications of going out on a limb for me. There were very real dangers associated with exposing corruption.

"One way or another."

I knew he didn't really want to do it. He wanted to be a sports reporter, for God's sake. He wanted to cover college football recruiting and March Madness. He didn't want to write about police corruption and drug dealers. I knew he wasn't really the right man for the job, but he was all I had. Anyone seasoned reporter would have laughed me out of the building.

The plan was simple enough. I'd keep doing what I was doing, with the lone exception that I'd keep copious notes about the goings-on with Winston's game. At the same time, I'd figure out if Sanders was the only dirty cop in the police department. It wouldn't be easy, but I was uniquely equipped to do the job. When I'd gathered enough information, Travis would write his story. It would go to print, and, hopefully, it would draw the right sort of attention, and everyone involved would be punished for their crimes.

Simple. But dangerous. That was the story of my life.

"Good," I said. "Hopefully, this'll all be over soon."



“I didn’t think you knew,” I said, pulling on my panties. “About my dad, I mean.”

“I think you should probably assume I know everything about anyone I let get this close to me,” Winston replied, leaning back on the bed. We’d just made love, which meant that he was in a contemplative mood. “I know exactly who you are.”

“Do you?” I asked, clasping my bra and settling my small breasts into the cups. I gripped the straps, absent-mindedly toying with them. “Tell me what you know about me.”

“I know you were an indifferent student,” he said. “You were never very popular. The girls liked you – you’ve always been pretty, after all – but you didn’t know. Or maybe, given your current state, you didn’t care. Either way, you didn’t have a real girlfriend until Brittany Dodge. For a while, you thought you were happy. But there were cracks, even in the beginning. You tried to make it work, even after your transition, but neither of you wanted what the other could offer. Still, you lived together until fairly recently.”

I was stunned, not only at the breadth of information about me, but also at how easily he’d recounted my life story. It wasn’t all there, of course. I was more complicated than a few sentences could convey. But his assessment of me wasn’t inaccurate.

“So succinct,” I said, trying to appear unconcerned. “What else do you know?”

“Like I said,” he answered with a smile. “I know everything.”

I returned it, but I left unsaid that he didn’t quite know everything. He was overconfident, and I was content to let him remain so.



"I've got something juicy," I said, bursting into Travis' apartment.
"You're not going to believe it."

Travis looked up from the folder he'd been studying. "I think I found something too," he said. "I was just going to call you."

"You first," I said, smiling as I settled into the chair across from him.
"But I can guarantee what I've got is going to blow your mind."

"I think you'll be pretty surprised about this," he said, shifting the folder across. I picked it up, seeing that it was a series of spreadsheets.

I shrugged. "What's am I looking at?" I asked.

"Political donations," he said.

"Let me guess – Senator Castel, right?" I said.

"What? How did you know that?" he asked.

"He was at the house today," I answered. "That was my big news. Something tells me that state senators aren't supposed to be rubbing shoulders with known criminals." I didn't say that I'd seen the Senator doing drugs or that I'd been his personal "escort" while he was there.

Travis didn't need to know that.

"So, that's the first piece of our puzzle, right?" he asked. "He's paying off government officials. We have proof. We have your word. That's enough."

"For now," I said. "But we need a lot more before we do the story. This has to be airtight. Otherwise, everyone's just going to shrug it off."

"It's a good start, though," he said, smiling. "We just might pull this off."



"It's difficult," said Winston as I threaded my arm through his. Increasingly, he had let me drop my "sex pet" routine in favor of something far more respectable. To any onlooker, we looked like a normal couple. My outfit was about as far from my old "uniform" as it could get – vinyl and collars had been replaced by denim and cotton. "You've been with me much longer than any of my other girls."

"I know," I said as we walked down the sidewalk. I'd seen the constant parade coming and going. Some lasted a couple of months. Others were gone within a day or two. But I had remained. Part of it was my mission. However, I was honest enough with myself to realize that the assignment wasn't the only reason I'd stayed. I was well-suited to my role.

"It's easy to forget that we're not a real couple," he said.

"Is it?" I asked. "I never forget."

"It's been years since I had a real relationship," he responded, ignoring my statement. "And even before that, they were few and far between. My work leaves little room for that sort of thing. That's why I bought the club. That's why I started the special 'program'. I didn't want my men to be manipulated by some woman. Or man, if that was their preference."

"Makes sense," I said.

"But you, you're different," he said. "You have them all wrapped around your little finger, don't you? I'm sure some of them have offered to rescue you from this lifestyle, haven't they? They buy you things. They give you gifts. But you walk that line where they know they don't own you. It's impressive."

"I'm not sure how you want me to respond," I said.

"I'm not looking for a response," was his answer. "I just want you to know that I admire that about you. That's why I like having you around."

"Is it the only reason?" I asked, snuggling close to him.

"No," he said. "You know it's not."

"Good," I said. "I'd hate to think I'm losing my touch."



"Listen – I don't have much time," I said. "I've got to get back soon, but I have some information for you."

I knew I'd lost Travis. He was too busy staring at my half-clothed body. Sometimes, I forgot that normal people weren't used to the near- or complete nudity that pervaded my everyday life. So, when he saw me standing there in only my bra and panties, he was understandably distracted, especially given the way he felt about me.

"Travis!" I half-shouted, snatching his attention back to reality. "Listen."

"What? Okay," he said. "Sorry. I just...never mind. What's up? What did you find out?"

"Cops," I said. "Captain Jorge Santiago, seventh precinct. Detective Lester Conway, eighteenth precinct. Lieutenant Mark Lewis. Not sure which precinct he's from. They're all in Winston's pocket."

"How do you know?" he asked.

"One of the guys mentioned meeting with all three of them," I said, leaving out the fact that my informant, a man named Ramon Foster, was one of my more frequent sexual partners. He liked to talk after sex, and I liked to let him.

"That's not enough," Travis said. "We need more than hearsay."

"Bank records," I suggested. "You still have that friend who works in finance, right?"

"Dom doesn't work in finance," Travis said. "He's a white hat hacker who –"

"Yeah," I said, interrupting him. I didn't have time to listen to Travis' explanation of his friend's abilities. "Him. Contact him. We'll need his help."

"He won't give it," Travis said.

"Just get me in touch with him," I said. "I'll do the rest."



“Dom” turned out to be Dominic Peralta, a man who made his living looking for holes in banks’ network security, which meant that he knew every backdoor imaginable. If he wanted to know something about someone’s finances, the banks would be hard pressed to hide it from him. So, he was a perfect fit for our informal investigation.

The only problem was that he didn’t want to do it. Travis, it seemed, was unable to convince him to help, so it fell to me. And as soon as I met him, I knew how it would go down. I had seen lust so often in men’s eyes that I would have been more surprised if he hadn’t wanted to fuck me at first sight. As it turned out, I wasn’t surprised. Not even a little.

“We both know how this is going to go, right?” I asked, taking a sip from a martini I’d ordered before he arrived. He sat across from me in the hotel bar. He was handsome, fit man who didn’t look anything like the computer nerd I might have expected.

“Do we?” he asked, signaling the waitress to get her attention. A moment later, he ordered an expensive, German beer. “Why don’t you just tell me, then?”

“I’m going to ask you for your help,” I said. “And despite the fact that it would be the right thing to do, you’ll refuse. Then you’ll flirt with me. I’ll let you think you have a chance. And then, we’ll come to an agreement. I sleep with you. You do what I want. So, why don’t we just skip the bullshit and skip right to the good part?”

He laughed. “Oh,” he said. “I do like you.”

“I know,” I said. “So, let’s get out of here. I have a room upstairs.”

“You know what? Okay,” he said. “I was probably going to ask for money, but this is better.”

And by the next morning, Dom was willing to do whatever I wanted him to do.



“Don’t you look respectable,” said Travis. “What’s the occasion?”

“I’m going down to the government building to process by name and gender change paperwork,” I said. “After today, I’ll officially be a girl.”

It hadn’t been an easy decision, even though I’d been thinking of myself as a woman – or at least, woman-adjacent – for quite some time. However, there was a certain finality to filling out official paperwork that made it seem like a bigger deal than it should have been. I guess that was my masculinity’s last gasp before I put to permanent rest.

“Big step,” he said. “Dom found those records you were after. And he tracked some funny stuff to one of the Senator’s offshore accounts, too.”

“Add it to the file,” I said.

“I still don’t know how you got him to do what you wanted,” Travis said, shaking his head ruefully. “He turned me down without even hearing the details. But one meeting with you, and he couldn’t be more eager to help.”

“I guess I’m just that persuasive,” I said, grinning as I threw my coat over my shoulder. I didn’t have the heart to tell Travis my preferred persuasion method. I felt sure that he couldn’t have handled it. In any case, what he didn’t know couldn’t hurt him – not that he had any right to tell me who I could and couldn’t sleep with. He didn’t.

“I guess you are,” he said. “Whatever the case, keep doing what you’re doing. We’re almost there. Everything’s coming together just like you said it would.”

I nodded. I knew the investigation would soon draw to a close. People would be arrested. And I would be free to live my life however I wanted. Never mind that I had no idea what that even meant. But that was a problem for another day.



“I’m not sure,” I said. “Does it matter?”

“Of course it matters,” Travis stated. “Why would it not matter?
It’s the rest of your life.”

“I’m not thinking about that right now,” I lied. In fact, anytime my brain went idle, it drifted to questions about what I might do with the rest of my life. And to date, I hadn’t come up with any answers. “I just want to get through with this investigation. I’ll worry about everything else when the time comes.”

“There has to be something you want to do, though,” Travis insisted. “Do you have any hobbies? Interests? What do you want to do?”

Once, Travis knew me better than anyone. We’d been best friends, and we had spent almost every waking moment together. That, however, had changed the moment I had taken the assignment. And I’d changed so much that I barely resembled the person he’d once known – in body or mind. But he knew enough to know that I’d spent most of my life dreaming about being a cop. With that possibility off the table, I had no idea where to turn.

“I don’t know,” I said. “I wish I did.”

“We’ll figure it out,” he said, brimming with infectious confidence. “We’ll break this story, and we’ll figure out what to do next. And I’ll be there every step of the way.”

I smiled. “You’re sweet,” I said. “Thanks.”

However, I knew that wasn’t what I wanted. As much as I liked Travis, I couldn’t be what he wanted me to be. Not for him. I simply didn’t feel the same way as he felt about me, and I never would. I dreaded the day I’d have to break that to him.



“I found it,” I said, smiling broadly. “I found it, Travis.”

“Found what?” he asked, returning my smile even though he had no idea why I was happy.

“I found the evidence we’ve been looking for,” I said. Then, I told him how, after Winston had gone to sleep, I’d crept into his office and found a file on his computer. It contained details about his every financial transaction. Everything from bribes to drug revenue was there. “I emailed it to myself. I mean, it’s encrypted, I’m sure, but it’s nothing Dom can’t break.”

“That’s...that’s everything we’ve been waiting for,” he said. “And he just left it on his computer?”

“I’m pretty sure he didn’t expect anyone to know his password,” I said. “Tre2007. His brother’s name and the year he died. I figured it out a while back.”

“That’s...that’s amazing,” he said. “Really. I mean, this is it, isn’t it? The smoking gun, I mean.”

“It is,” I answered, grinning. “You’ve got everything you need to write your article. And when it’s done, the FBI will have what it needs to arrest everybody involved.”

Suddenly, my giddiness faded, and it was replaced by an emptiness I hadn’t really expected. In a single night, I’d lost my purpose. There was no assignment anymore. No investigation. It was all over. And now, I had no choice but to confront the reality that I didn’t know what else to do.

“What’s wrong?” Travis asked. “This is what we wanted, right?”

“What? No,” I said, forcing a smile. “I mean, yeah. Sure. Of course it is. It’s awesome. Great. We can finally do what we set out to do.”

“You think you got me, huh?” Sanders said, looking like the criminal I knew him to be. “You’ve got shit, and you know it.”

I didn’t flinch. He was handcuffed to the table, and I was behind a two-way mirror, but even then, I could see how dangerous the man was. He was desperate. Unhinged. Angry. I don’t know how I hadn’t seen it before.

“Accepting bribes,” said the FBI agent in the interview room with him. “Murder. Racketeering. Grand larceny. Armed robbery. The list goes on and on, Sanders. You’re going away for a long, long time.”

“Fuck you, asshole,” Sanders spat. “What do you think you’re going to get, here? A confession? You want me to flip? Fuck you. That’s my answer to every single question you’re going to ask. Fuck. You.”

“I don’t need to see this anymore,” I said. “Just show me the way out.”

As another FBI agent escorted me out of the building, I took a moment to process the past few days. Almost as soon as it was published, Travis’ article had been picked up by almost every national news outlet in the country. Law enforcement had had little choice but to act on his information, which we’d turned over without an ounce of protest. The result was that almost forty people, including Sanders and Winston, had been arrested. And there were more coming. We’d accomplished our goal. No – more than that, we had achieved at a level we hadn’t dared expect.

I should have been happy. The man – or men – responsible for my father’s death were going to spend the rest of their lives behind bars. That was the whole point of the assignment in the first place. So, why wasn’t I happy?

“What now?” I muttered to myself as I made my way to my car. No job. No prospects. Little education. I was adrift, and I had no idea how to get back on course.

But at least I’d made the world a better place. That had to count for something.





"I don't know," I said, looking down at my notes. "I don't know if I can do this."

"It's just a deposition," Travis said. "I went through the same thing yesterday. They don't think the prosecution will need it – not with all the evidence we've provided – but it's better to be safe than sorry."

I turned, looking in the mirror. I'd dressed very conservatively in a simple, black skirt suit and a white blouse, hoping to seem respectable. But modest clothing couldn't hide what was on that page. It wouldn't hide the answers to the questions I feared. If they asked me about the things I'd done, about what I did for Winston and his crew, I would have no choice but to answer truthfully. And that scared the hell out of me.

I'm not typically one to run from judgment. I don't usually care what other people think of me. But having my life laid bare in front of a half-dozen people made me want nothing more than to get in my car and drive off into the sunset. But I couldn't. I knew I couldn't. Regardless of how bad the deposition would make me look, I had a responsibility to give my testimony.

It wasn't some sense of civic duty driving my actions. I couldn't have cared less about drugs on the streets or weapons in the hands of criminals. If Winston didn't do it, someone else would. That was just how the world worked. I wasn't the naïve kid who'd once dreamed of cleaning up the streets. I knew it was a fruitless endeavor because I'd seen that seedy underbelly. I'd lived in it. And one way or another, it would survive.

No, I had a responsibility to my father. He had spent his whole life in that pointless pursuit. He'd sacrificed. He had given it everything. And in the end, they'd killed him for it. I wanted them to pay, and if my testimony, as embarrassing as it might be, could help make that a reality, I was going to give it.

"I'm fine," I said, as much to convince myself as it was to let Travis know. "I can do this."

"Good," he said. "Let's go, then. Let's do it."



"I...I don't want to be alone right now," I said, standing in front of Travis naked.

I knew it was a bad idea, but I needed something tangible. I needed someone to want me, to wrap his arms around me and tell me everything would be okay.

And Travis was there.

The deposition had been worse than I could have imagined. Both the defense and the prosecution grilled me about the details of my life – everything from the particulars concerning my "assignment" to the nature of my job at Winston's was fair game. And I answered every question as truthfully as I could. But the looks in their eyes – the judgment, the loathing, the outright contempt – took its toll.

They all thought I was trash, pure and simple. To them, I was one of the dregs of society, and I wasn't fit to lick their boots. None of them respected the work I'd put into the investigation. None of them appreciated the risks I'd taken. And they certainly didn't think of me as one of the good guys. At best, I was a willing victim. At worst, I was a criminal's groupie.

"You don't want to do this," he said, draping an old, button-down shirt over my shoulders. He closed it, buttoning it with trembling fingers. "I know you don't."

"Can you just hold me?" I asked, tears streaming down my face. He'd been there through it all. He knew what I'd done. There was no hiding. No shadows. Everything about the previous three-and-a-half years was on full display.

"I can do that," he said, wrapping his arms around me as I wept.

"Am I what a horrible person?" I asked, my words barely coherent through the sobs.

"No," he said without hesitation. "You're one of the bravest people I've ever known. You're beautiful. And smart. And I love you for who you are. Those people, they don't matter. None of them do."

I didn't respond. Instead, I just cried into his shoulder, wishing for all the world that he was right. But I knew better. I knew that I'd never escape the things I'd done.



“Are you ready?” asked Travis.

“You know you don’t have to take me with you,” I said. “I’m completely okay with that.”

It had been a few months since my deposition, and I’d come a long way from sobbing onto Travis’ shoulder. We weren’t exactly intimate, but I hadn’t ruled out the possibility that we might someday get there. While he might not have been the very picture of what I found attractive in a man, he had something nobody else had – he was there for me. Thick or thin, better or worse, he was there. And his friendship, his love, it wasn’t dependent on how good I could make him feel. It was constant. And there’s something to be said for that.

“You’re going,” he said. “This award is as much yours as it is mine.”

“You wrote the article,” I said. “That’s what this is for. I just did a little digging.”

“You did a lot more than that,” he said. “Right now, there are almost a hundred people in jail cells because you chose to do the right thing. Most of them will never be free again. Murderers. Thieves. Drug traffickers. They’re all there because of you.”

“More you than me,” I said.

“You were the driving force behind this whole thing,” he said. “I was – I still am just a sports reporter. You convinced me to write this article. You put your life on the line. That makes you as much a part of this as I ever was. So, you’re going. You’re going to be there onstage with me, and we’re going to accept it together.”

“A Pulitzer,” I said. “I bet none of my teachers would’ve expected that.”

“They sold you short, then,” he said, leaning in to kiss me on the cheek. He gripped my hand. “Come on. Let’s go get an award.”



“What did you just say to me?” I asked, staring, incredulous, at the old man. He was at least seventy-years-old and looked every minute of it.

“I said that you and that young man are an embarrassment to the profession,” he stated. “A whore and a stupid kid who got lucky. That’s it. The Pulitzer used to be much more prestigious than that.”

“I’m not a whore,” I whispered, unable to give the rebuttal a proper voice. I was too stunned. Everyone else at the after-party had been incredibly cordial, and the old man had taken me by surprise. “And we risked our lives for that article.”

He waved an age-spotted hand dismissively. “You have no idea what —”

Suddenly, Travis was by my side. He gripped my arm in support. “Is this guy bothering you?” he asked.

“He’s just an asshole,” I said. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Asshole?” the old man scoffed. “I’ll have you know that I’m —”

“Listen – I don’t care who you are,” Travis interrupted. “If the lady says you’re an asshole, you’re an asshole. So, why don’t you just leave us alone, okay?”

The old man stared at Travis for a long moment, his face a mask of disbelief, before turning away. “Goddamn kids,” he muttered as he shuffled away.

“Sorry about that,” Travis said.

“Not your fault,” I answered. “Let’s just act like that never happened.”

He smiled, extending his arm. I wove mine under his. “Such a gentleman,” I said. “Let’s go enjoy this fancy party.”



I wish I could say that everything worked out perfectly, but that would be a lie. Nothing's ever perfect. But my life after the article skewed as close to that as I could have possibly anticipated.

My relationship with Travis continued to develop, and eventually, we made it official. We dated, we moved in together, and then, we got engaged. We were married almost two years after the article, and I think we're about as happy as any other married couple. Sure, there are times when I want to strangle him – and I'm sure there are times when he's just fed up with my crap – but we love one another. And that's all we really need, I guess.

The trials progressed as well, and most of Winston's crew went to jail. Some cut deals, reducing their sentences. Others remained stubbornly silent. I still get letters from Winston from time to time. I throw most of them away, but sometimes, I allow myself a peek. Even though I put him in prison, he thinks he loves me. And as long as it keeps him from exacting revenge, I'm content to let him continue thinking that.

Sanders is another story. Prison, for him, has been rough. He made a lot of enemies, and many of them ended up in prison right alongside him. And they don't make things easy on the former cop. Last I heard, he'd narrowly avoided being killed on numerous occasions. I wish I could feel some sympathy for him, but all I really feel is a sense of vindication. He deserves whatever he gets.

Travis parlayed his Pulitzer into a recurring gig on one of the twenty-four-hour news networks. It's not as glamorous as it sounds, but it's good work, and he feels like he's making a difference. Even though I know that no amount of reporting will make a difference, I let him think that. He needs that optimism, I think. I wish I could delude myself into believing the same thing.

As for me, well – I'm not really sure what to say. I still don't know what I want to do with the rest of my life. I help Travis with his research from time to time, but that's not a real career. And sometimes, I wish I could go back to something like my old life. It's not the sex, really. It's the power I miss. I was little more than a slave, sure, but at one point, I had some of the most dangerous men in the city wrapped around my little finger. I miss that, sometimes.

But that's not me anymore. That's not who I want to be. So, I have to be content with what I have – a loving husband, a safe life, and the knowledge that I avenged my father's death. I hope that's enough.