

HALF SISTERS

by
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Episode #9

Kenneth Ferris... Is That You?

MILES OUTSIDE OF BOSTON...



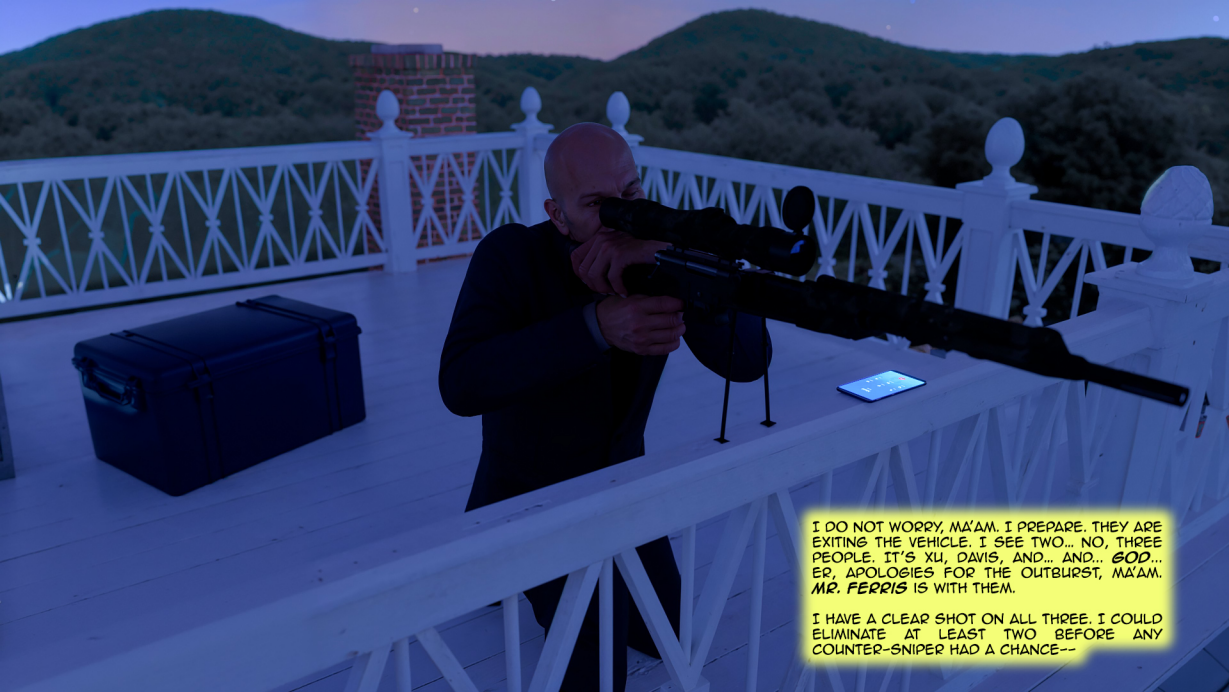




THEY'VE ARRIVED, MRS. FERRIS. ONE CAR ONLY. I DON'T SEE ANY BODYGUARDS.

OH, WE MAY NOT SEE THEM, BUT THEY'RE OUT THERE, MORTIMER. I IMAGINE THE HILLS AROUND THE ESTATE ARE CRAWLING WITH THEM. XU NEVER TRAVELS WITHOUT HIS SHADOWS. I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF A SNIPER HAD A BEAD ON YOU RIGHT AT THIS MOMENT - NOT TO MAKE YOU WORRY, OF COURSE.





I DO NOT WORRY, MA'AM. I PREPARE. THEY ARE EXITING THE VEHICLE. I SEE TWO... NO, THREE PEOPLE. IT'S XU, DAVIS, AND... AND... *GOD*... ER, APOLOGIES FOR THE OUTBURST, MA'AM. *MR. FERRIS* IS WITH THEM.

I HAVE A CLEAR SHOT ON ALL THREE. I COULD ELIMINATE AT LEAST TWO BEFORE ANY COUNTER-SNIPEER HAD A CHANCE--



NO, MORTIMER! WE'RE NOT ASSASSINS. AT LEAST, NOT TODAY.

BUT, MA'AM - **ELAINE** - THEY'VE CAUSED SO MUCH SUFFERING. ALL THREE OF THEM! PUTTING A HOLE IN THEM IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, AND IT WILL SAVE LIVES FROM BEING DESTROYED.

HOLD YOUR FIRE. WE'RE NOT RESORTING TO VIOLENCE UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. XU'S ORGANIZATION IS FAR-REACHING. IF WE START A WAR, IT WON'T END WELL FOR ANY OF US - INCLUDING SANDY.

UNDERSTOOD. WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS?

LET THEM APPROACH THE FRONT DOOR. WE'LL MEET THEM ON MY TERMS. KEEP A CLOSE WATCH BUT STAY HIDDEN UNLESS I SIGNAL OTHERWISE.

AS YOU WISH. I'LL MAINTAIN OVERWATCH.



GOOD. AND MORTIMER?

YES, MA'AM?

IF THINGS GO SOUTH, ENSURE THAT SANDY GETS SOMEWHERE SAFE. *SHE* IS YOUR PRIORITY, NOT ME.

I... YES, MRS. FERRIS.



WELL, ISN'T THIS A QUAIN'T COUNTRY ESTATE. ALTHOUGH, I HAVE TO ADMIT I DON'T PARTICULARLY LIKE THE RUSTIC CHARM. A BIT TOO PROVINCIAL FOR MY TASTES. AND THE PEOPLE TEND TO BE SO SMALL-MINDED.

OH, I KINDA LIKE IT, SIR. FRESH AIR AND ALL THAT! ANYWAY, I WOULDN'T WANT TO SPOIL THE HOMECOMING. I'M SURE THIS IS A VERY EMOTIONAL TIME...

A woman with long, light-colored hair is standing behind a black metal gate. She is wearing a black, long-sleeved, form-fitting dress with a deep V-neckline and a scalloped hem. Her hands are resting on the gate. To her right is a brick wall. In the background, a large, white, multi-story house with a dark roof and several chimneys is visible. The scene is set at night, with a dark sky and some lights from the house. The overall mood is somber and mysterious.

...FOR MY DEAR *WIFE*, KENDRA.





ELAINE, IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG. I MUST SAY, YOUR ESTATE IS QUITE CHARMING, IN A QUAIN T SORT OF WAY.

MR. XU... I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO COME IN PERSON.

WELL, SOME OCCASIONS WARRANT A PERSONAL TOUCH, DON'T YOU THINK? BESIDES, I HAD SOME BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO IN THE AREA. TWO BIRDS, ONE BULLET, AS THEY SAY.

I SUPPOSE SO. WHERE IS HE?

ALL IN GOOD TIME. FIRST, LET'S CATCH UP A BIT, SHALL WE? YOU'VE BEEN KEEPING BUSY, I HEAR. YOUR *NEW DAUGHTER* HAS CERTAINLY TURNED OUT TO BE QUITE THE PROJECT.

SANDY IS... ADAPTING WELL, YES. BUT I'M NOT SURPRISED YOU KNOW ABOUT HER. YOU ALWAYS SEEM TO HAVE YOUR FINGERS IN EVERY PIE.

WELL, THAT SOUNDS RATHER *STICKY*. BUT, YES, INFORMATION IS POWER, ELAINE. AND I MUST SAY, I NEVER EXPECTED YOU TO IMMERSE YOURSELF IN MY HOBBY, GIVEN HOW APPALLED YOU SEEMED BY YOUR HUSBAND'S INTERESTS. BUT PERHAPS YOU WERE SIMPLY DISAPPOINTED YOU WEREN'T INCLUDED?

MY *EX*-HUSBAND WAS A MONSTER. WHAT I'M DOING WITH SANDY IS DIFFERENT.

DIFFERENT? PERHAPS. BUT THE METHODS... WELL, THEY SEEM QUITE FAMILIAR, DON'T THEY? IN FACT, IF IT WOULDN'T BE AN INSULT TO YOUR MODERATE WEALTH, I'D OFFER YOU EMPLOYMENT.

IT'S ENDLESSLY FASCINATING, REALLY. HOW PEOPLE CAN JUSTIFY ANYTHING THEY DO, TWISTING THEIR ACTIONS INTO SOMETHING NOBLE, EVEN WHEN THEY MIRROR EVERYTHING THEY ONCE CONDEMNED. I'M GUILTY OF THIS MYSELF, I ASSURE YOU.

I'M NOT LIKE KEN. WHAT HE DID WAS FOR HIS OWN SICK PLEASURE. I'M TRYING TO GIVE SANDY A CHANCE AT A BETTER LIFE - THE LIFE THAT KEN *STOLE* FROM MY SOFIA.

AH, THE HUMAN CAPACITY FOR SELF-JUSTIFICATION IS TRULY REMARKABLE. WE ALL TELL OURSELVES LITTLE STORIES TO SLEEP BETTER AT NIGHT, DON'T WE? EVEN WHEN THE REALITY IS FAR DARKER.

LET'S NOT PRETEND WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE, MR. XU. I DIDN'T BRING YOU HERE TO REMINISCE ABOUT THE PAST OR COMPARE NOTES.

AH, STRAIGHT TO THE POINT THEN. VERY WELL. WHAT REMAINS OF YOUR HUSBAND IS EAGER TO SEE YOU AGAIN. MR. DAVIS?





PLEASE MEET KENDRA DAVIS
- MY LOVELY WIFE.

H-HELLO, ELAINE.



YOU... MARRIED HIM? YOUR OLD CHILDHOOD FRIEND?

I MARRIED *HER*. THERE'S NOTHING 'HIM' ABOUT MY WIFE ANYMORE - PHYSICALLY, AT LEAST. BUT, YES, LIFE'S FULL OF SURPRISES. KENDRA HERE HAS TURNED OUT TO BE QUITE THE PERFECT COMPANION.

THIS IS SICK! EVEN FOR THE LIKES OF YOU, DAVIS.

OH, COME NOW, ELAINE. I THOUGHT IT WAS A RATHER POETIC RESOLUTION. YOUR HUSBAND NEEDED A NEW PURPOSE. AND WHO BETTER TO PROVIDE THAT THAN AN OLD FRIEND?

BUT LET'S NOT DANCE AROUND THE REAL QUESTION HERE. WHY DID YOU WANT TO SEE HIM? AFTER ALL THIS TIME, AFTER EVERYTHING HE'S DONE, WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY HOPE TO GAIN FROM THIS RELINQUISHMENT? I AM *CURIOUS*.

CLOSURE, MR. XU. NOW THAT I HAVE SANDY, NOW THAT I'VE... I'VE FOUND A WAY TO MOVE FORWARD, I NEEDED TO SEE HIM ONE LAST TIME. TO PUT AN END TO THIS CHAPTER OF MY LIFE.

CLOSURE? HOW VERY... PEDESTRIAN OF YOU. BUT I WONDER, IS THAT ALL THERE IS TO IT?

YOU WANT THE TRUTH? FINE. I WANTED TO SEE IF HE WAS SUFFERING. I... I HOPED HE WAS. I KNOW THAT'S EVIL OF ME, AND I HATE MYSELF FOR IT, BUT THERE IT IS. I WANTED TO SEE IF THIS PUNISHMENT YOU INFLICTED ACTUALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE.

AH, THERE'S THE HONESTY I WAS HOPING FOR. AND WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY WORK, ELAINE? IS KENDRA SUFFERING ENOUGH FOR YOUR TASTES?



AT THIS MOMENT, ALL I'M REALIZING IS HOW DEEPLY THE HATE OF MY OWN SEX HAS BEEN WEAPONIZED AGAINST ME - AND I'M ASHAMED THAT I LET MYSELF GET CAUGHT UP IN IT. I'M NO BETTER THAN HIM IF I REVEL IN THIS.

HM. REVEL IN WHAT, EXACTLY?

IN THE IDEA THAT A MAN CAN ONLY BE TRULY PUNISHED BY ENDURING THE SAME INDIGNITIES WOMEN FACE EVERY DAY. IT'S REVOLTING. SEEING KEN LIKE THIS DOESN'T BRING ME JOY. IT JUST... IT JUST FEELS SAD.

GOD, WHAT WOULD SOFIA SAY TO THE NOTION THAT HER FATHER'S PUNISHMENT WAS HER DREAM?

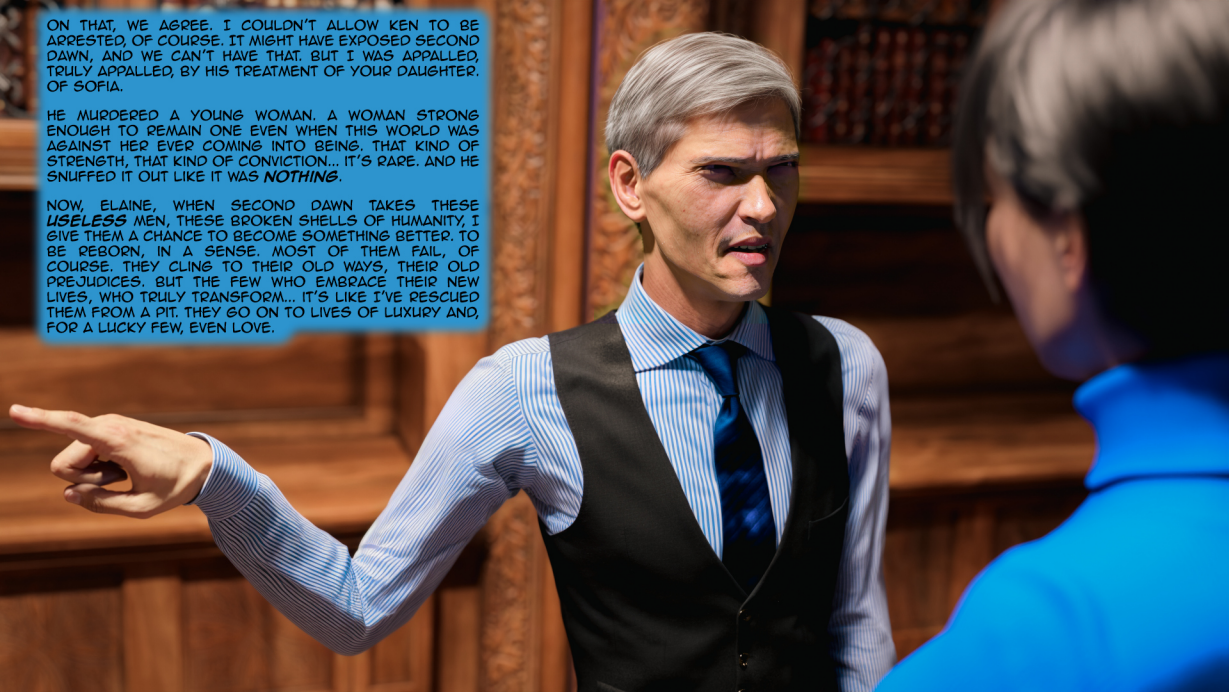
WHAT YOU'VE DONE MAKES A MOCKERY OF HER MEMORY. IT'S *OBSCENE*.

BEING A WOMAN ISN'T A CURSE, MR. XU.

ON THAT, WE AGREE. I COULDN'T ALLOW KEN TO BE ARRESTED, OF COURSE. IT MIGHT HAVE EXPOSED SECOND DAWN, AND WE CAN'T HAVE THAT. BUT I WAS APPALLED, TRULY APPALLED, BY HIS TREATMENT OF YOUR DAUGHTER, OF SOFIA.

HE MURDERED A YOUNG WOMAN. A WOMAN STRONG ENOUGH TO REMAIN ONE EVEN WHEN THIS WORLD WAS AGAINST HER EVER COMING INTO BEING. THAT KIND OF STRENGTH, THAT KIND OF CONVICTION... IT'S RARE. AND HE SNUFFED IT OUT LIKE IT WAS *NOTHING*.

NOW, ELAINE, WHEN SECOND DAWN TAKES THESE *USELESS* MEN, THESE BROKEN SHELLS OF HUMANITY, I GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO BECOME SOMETHING BETTER. TO BE REBORN, IN A SENSE. MOST OF THEM FAIL, OF COURSE. THEY CLING TO THEIR OLD WAYS, THEIR OLD PREJUDICES. BUT THE FEW WHO EMBRACE THEIR NEW LIVES, WHO TRULY TRANSFORM... IT'S LIKE I'VE RESCUED THEM FROM A PIT. THEY GO ON TO LIVES OF LUXURY AND, FOR A LUCKY FEW, EVEN LOVE.



YOUR EX-HUSBAND IS NOT ONE OF THEM. I WANTED HIM TO REMAIN IN THAT PIT FOREVER. TO WALLOW IN THE MISERY HE CREATED FOR HIMSELF.

BEING MADE INTO A WOMAN IS NOT A PUNISHMENT, EXCEPT TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE WOMANHOOD IS A CURSE.

HE'S HAD NO HELP, HAS HE? NO SUPPORT IN ADJUSTING TO THIS NEW LIFE? IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?

NONE AT ALL. I THOUGHT IT FITTING. HE DENIED YOUR DAUGHTER THE SUPPORT SHE NEEDED, SO HE SHALL RECEIVE NONE HIMSELF.

THIS IS... IT'S ALL SO TWISTED. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

THERE'S NOTHING TO SAY, REALLY. JUSTICE, VENGEANCE, PUNISHMENT... THESE ARE JUST WORDS WE USE TO MAKE SENSE OF THE CHAOS OF LIFE. IN THE END, WE ALL MAKE OUR CHOICES, AND WE ALL LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES. KEN MADE HIS CHOICE - AND NOW HE'S SUFFERING MY CONSEQUENCES.

BUT PERHAPS MY PART IN YOUR HUSBAND'S PUNISHMENT HAS RUN ITS COURSE. MAYBE IT'S TIME FOR A NEW CHAPTER.

WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING?

I'M OFFERING YOU A CHANCE TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF KENDRA. TO GUIDE HER DOWN A PATH OF YOUR CHOOSING. CONSIDER IT A GIFT, FROM ME TO YOU.

YOU WANT ME TO... WHAT? TAKE HER IN? AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED?





THINK OF IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY, ELAINE. AN OPPORTUNITY TO MOLD KENDRA INTO THE WOMAN YOU BELIEVE SHE SHOULD BE. OR, IF YOU PREFER, TO PUNISH HER FURTHER FOR THE SINS OF HER PAST LIFE.

THIS IS INSANE. I CAN'T... I WON'T BE A PART OF THIS SICK GAME.

BUT YOU ALREADY ARE. WITH SANDY. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THE PAWN. YOU'VE ALREADY SHOWN YOURSELF TO BE SKILLED AT HELPING SOMEONE ADAPT TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCES.

SANDY IS DIFFERENT. I'M GIVING HER A CHANCE AT A BETTER LIFE, NOT... THIS.

ARE YOU? OR ARE YOU SIMPLY FORCING HER INTO THE SHAPE OF THE DAUGHTER YOU LOST? THE LINES BLUR SO EASILY, DON'T THEY?

HOW DARE YOU COMPARE WHAT I'M DOING TO THIS... THIS TWISTED REVENGE FANTASY OF YOURS!

THEN THINK OF THIS AS A RESCUE, IF THAT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER. KENDRA IS QUITE MISERABLE, I ASSURE YOU.

AND WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF THIS? YOU'RE NOT KNOWN FOR YOUR GENEROSITY.

IT AMUSES ME TO SEE HOW PEOPLE HANDLE THE POWER I BESTOW UPON THEM. ALSO, IN EXCHANGE, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO ENCOURAGE SANDY TO HELP PUSH NIKKI - OR NICK AS YOU MIGHT RECALL - TOWARDS FEMININITY.

YOU WANT ME TO MANIPULATE MY OWN... DAUGHTER INTO DOING YOUR DIRTY WORK?

MANIPULATE IS SUCH AN UGLY WORD. THINK OF IT AS GUIDING HER TOWARDS A PATH THAT WILL ULTIMATELY BENEFIT EVERYONE INVOLVED. INCLUDING NIKKI. SHE SHOWS GREAT POTENTIAL BUT IS RESISTANT. OUR MUTUAL FRIEND, **HUTCHINSON**, IS BECOMING IMPATIENT AND HE IS A DANGEROUS MAN WHEN HE ISN'T PLEASED. FRANKLY, I'M AFRAID OF THE ACTIONS HE MAY TAKE IF NIKKI DOESN'T COMPLY SOON. AND WE BOTH KNOW HOW HUTCHINSON DEALS WITH... DISAPPOINTMENTS.



MY SPECIALISTS BELIEVE SANDY'S INFLUENCE COULD BE THE KEY TO UNLOCKING NIKKI'S TRUE POTENTIAL.

I HAVE NO LOVE FOR NICK PALMER, BUT I WON'T CONTRIBUTE TO HIS TORTURE.


I ASSURE YOU, OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILING INDICATES THAT NIKKI IS MORE THAN CAPABLE OF THRIVING IN A MORE FEMININE ROLE, GIVEN THE RIGHT ENCOURAGEMENT.




OH, GOD. ELAINE, PLEASE! I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE. PLEASE HELP ME... I'LL DO ANYTHING...

WHAT THE HELL, XU? KENDRA WAS PART OF MY COMPENSATION PACKAGE! I'VE PUT IN YEARS OF WORK HERE!

DAVIS, SHUT UP AND LET MRS. FERRIS THINK. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT DECISION FOR HER...



ELAINE, I KNOW I DON'T DESERVE YOUR MERCY. BUT **PLEASE**, I'M BEGGING YOU... I CAN'T LIVE LIKE THIS ANYMORE. I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU ASK, JUST PLEASE... PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME WITH HIM.



YOU'RE PATHETIC. THE MAN I MARRIED WOULD NEVER GROVEL LIKE THIS. BUT THEN AGAIN, THE MAN I MARRIED WAS A MONSTER. MAYBE THIS IS WHO YOU ALWAYS WERE UNDERNEATH. BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK A FEW CROCODILE TEARS WILL MAKE ME FORGET WHAT YOU DID? WHAT YOU TOOK FROM ME?

I LOVED OUR CHILD, TOO!

YOU LOVED WHO YOU THOUGHT SHE WOULD BE. THE SON YOU IMAGINED, THE ONE WHO'D CARRY ON YOUR NAME AND LEGACY. BUT WHEN SHE TURNED OUT TO BE SOMETHING ELSE, SOMEONE ELSE... YOU DESTROYED HER.



FASCINATING, ISN'T IT? HOW QUICKLY THEY BREAK WHEN FACED WITH THEIR OWN WORST FEARS. THE CHOICE IS YOURS, ELAINE. YOU CAN LEAVE KENDRA TO HER FATE, OR YOU CAN TAKE HER UNDER YOUR WING. MOLD HER INTO SOMETHING... USEFUL.

THIS IS BULLSHIT! YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE HER AWAY FROM ME. I'VE EARNED THIS!

YOU'VE EARNED WHAT I SAY YOU'VE EARNED, MR. DAVIS. AND RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE EARNING MY DISPLEASURE. I SUGGEST YOU REMEMBER YOUR PLACE.

WE WILL DISCUSS A REPLACEMENT FOR YOU, IF NECESSARY. ANYWAY, YOU'LL BE IN NEED OF A NEW PROJECT AFTER THE COMING OUT DINNER. IDLE HANDS ARE THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND, AFTER ALL. AND WE DON'T WANT YOU GETTING BORED -- THAT IS WHY 2014 WAS SUCH A BAD YEAR, IF YOU RECALL.

SOFIA LOVED YOU, KEN. DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT? SHE LOVED YOU SO MUCH. AND SHE BELIEVED IN YOU, TOO. OVER AND OVER AGAIN, SHE TOLD ME I WAS BEING PIGHEADED FOR HIDING HER TRUE SELF FROM YOU. SHE WAS SO CERTAIN YOU'D ACCEPT HER, THAT YOU'D LOVE HER NO MATTER WHAT. BUT YOU WEREN'T WORTHY OF THAT LOVE. YOU WEREN'T WORTHY OF HER BELIEF IN YOU.

AND NEITHER WAS I.

WHEN YOU WERE GOING TO KICK HER OUT -- YOU SAID SHE COULD LIVE AS A WOMAN ON THE STREETS, REMEMBER? -- AND WE FOUGHT, DO YOU RECALL WHAT SHE WAS YELLING WHEN SHE GOT BETWEEN US? I DO. I HEAR IT EVERY NIGHT WHEN I CLIMB THOSE DAMNED STAIRS TO GO TO BED.

"I'LL STOP BEING A GIRL! I'LL BE YOUR SON AGAIN! JUST PLEASE DON'T FIGHT!" BECAUSE OF YOU, OUR DAUGHTER'S LAST WORDS WERE A PROMISE TO DENY WHO SHE WAS, JUST TO KEEP US TOGETHER. AND THEN SHE FELL. AND I LOST HER FOREVER.

I FAILED HER. WE BOTH DID.

BUT... I WON'T LEAVE YOU WITH THEM. NOT BECAUSE YOU DESERVE MY HELP, BUT BECAUSE SOFIA WOULDN'T HAVE WANTED THAT. SHE WAS A BETTER PERSON THAN EITHER OF US EVER DESERVED. SHE ALWAYS THOUGHT PEOPLE COULD CHANGE. I OWE IT TO HER MEMORY TO AT LEAST TRY.

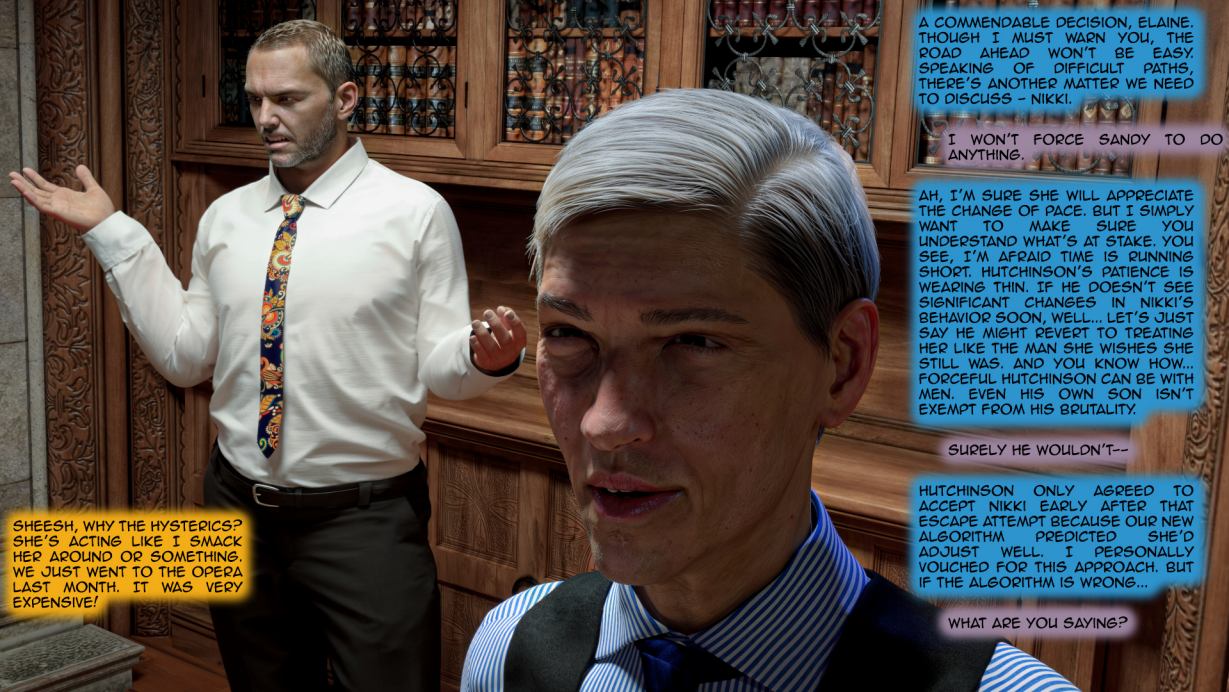




OH, GOD. THANK YOU!

THIS ISN'T FORGIVENESS. THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO PROVE YOU'RE EVEN A LITTLE BIT WORTHY OF THE DAUGHTER WE LOST. YOU'VE BECOME EVERYTHING YOU BOTH LUSTED FOR AND HATED. BUT MAYBE NOW YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU PUT SOFIA THROUGH. MAYBE NOW YOU'LL FEEL AN OUNCE OF THE PAIN YOU CAUSED. YOU'LL WORK FOR YOUR REDEMPTION, EVERY SINGLE DAY. I'M NOT SURE HOW YET, BUT YOU'LL EARN YOUR PLACE IN THIS HOUSEHOLD. AND IF YOU EVER, FOR EVEN A MOMENT, MAKE ME REGRET THIS DECISION, I'LL THROW YOU OUT MYSELF -- AND YOU'LL GET TO LIVE THE THREAT YOU ONCE MADE TO OUR DAUGHTER. *UNDERSTAND?*

YES. I PROMISE, I'LL BE GOOD.



A COMMENDABLE DECISION, ELAINE. THOUGH I MUST WARN YOU, THE ROAD AHEAD WON'T BE EASY. SPEAKING OF DIFFICULT PATHS, THERE'S ANOTHER MATTER WE NEED TO DISCUSS - NIKKI.



I WON'T FORCE SANDY TO DO ANYTHING.

AH, I'M SURE SHE WILL APPRECIATE THE CHANGE OF PACE. BUT I SIMPLY WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT'S AT STAKE. YOU SEE, I'M AFRAID TIME IS RUNNING SHORT. HUTCHINSON'S PATIENCE IS WEARING THIN. IF HE DOESN'T SEE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN NIKKI'S BEHAVIOR SOON, WELL... LET'S JUST SAY HE MIGHT REVERT TO TREATING HER LIKE THE MAN SHE WISHES SHE STILL WAS. AND YOU KNOW HOW... FORCEFUL HUTCHINSON CAN BE WITH MEN. EVEN HIS OWN SON ISN'T EXEMPT FROM HIS BRUTALITY.

SURELY HE WOULDN'T--

HUTCHINSON ONLY AGREED TO ACCEPT NIKKI EARLY AFTER THAT ESCAPE ATTEMPT BECAUSE OUR NEW ALGORITHM PREDICTED SHE'D ADJUST WELL. I PERSONALLY VOUCHER FOR THIS APPROACH. BUT IF THE ALGORITHM IS WRONG...

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

SHEESH, WHY THE HYSTERICSP SHE'S ACTING LIKE I SMACK HER AROUND OR SOMETHING. WE JUST WENT TO THE OPERA LAST MONTH. IT WAS VERY EXPENSIVE!




IF NIKKI DOESN'T SHOW PROGRESS IN SHORT ORDER, HUTCHINSON WILL ACTIVATE HIS CONTINGENCY PLAN WITH ME. SHE'LL BE SENT BACK TO CLINIC 12 TO BE... RECONDITIONED. AND I ASSURE YOU, IT WILL BE FAR FROM GENTLE.

MY GOD, YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.

DEADLY SERIOUS, I'M AFRAID. NIKKI IS SOMETHING OF A TEST CASE FOR OUR NEW METHODS. MY REPUTATION IS ON THE LINE HERE. I PUT MY NAME BEHIND THIS APPROACH, AND I DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO FAILURE. THAT'S WHY SANDY'S INFLUENCE IS CRUCIAL. WE NEED HER TO GUIDE NIKKI TOWARDS EMBRACING HER FEMININITY.

AND IF I REFUSE?

THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR INACTION. CAN YOU BEAR THE WEIGHT OF ANOTHER YOUNG LIFE DESTROYED, ELAINE? ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU HAVE THE POWER TO PREVENT IT? AS YOU SAID, LIVING THE LIFE OF A WOMAN ISN'T A PUNISHMENT. BUT WHAT HUTCHINSON HAS IN MIND... THAT WOULD BE.

A black Bentley Continental is shown from a rear three-quarter view, driving through a brick gate. The gate is made of red brick with two pillars topped with stone spheres. A paved driveway leads from the gate towards a large, two-story white plantation-style house with a prominent portico supported by columns. The house has a grey roof with dormer windows and a balcony. The scene is set in a lush green landscape with rolling hills in the background under a clear blue sky. A text box is overlaid on the driveway.

ABOUT TWO WEEKS LATER...





WELL... HOME, SWEET HOME.

A woman with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing large blue-tinted sunglasses and a metallic, grid-patterned bikini top, stands on a white gravel path. To her right is the rear of a dark blue car. The background is a green lawn under bright sunlight.

OR MAYBE... MANSION, SWEET,
STILL-KINDA-CREEPY MANSION?



I KNOCKED LIKE TEN SECONDS AGO! UGH. HELLO? IS ANYONE HOME? IT'S HOTTER THAN SATAN'S ASSCHEEKS OUT HERE! WHY'D I GET ALL DOLLED UP IF I'M JUST GOING TO MELT?


GOD, I ALREADY MISS JOSH, THOUGH. TWO WEEKS OF NON-STOP... "QUALITY TIME" AND I STILL CAN'T GET ENOUGH. WHO KNEW BEING A GIRL COULD BE SO... SATISFYING?

WELL... OTHER GIRLS, I GUESS. LIKE, *BORN* GIRLS. ARE THEY KEEPING IT A SECRET ON PURPOSE!/? PROBABLY. UGH, THOSE BITCHES!

GOD, I LOVED GIVING HIM BLOWJOBS. THE WAY HE REACTED, THE LITTLE SOUNDS HE MADE... IT WAS INTOXICATING. I COULD'VE SPENT HOURS EXPLORING HIS BODY, FINDING ALL NEW WAYS TO MAKE HIM SQUIRM.

AND THANK GOD HE SEEMED MORE THAN HAPPY TO RETURN THE FAVOR!





ALTHOUGH, WHEN I HEAVILY -
HEAVILY - INSINUATED THAT I'D
LIKE TO GO ALL THE WAY, HE...
HESITATED.



IT WAS SWEET, I GUESS. BUT PART OF ME COULDN'T HELP BUT WONDER IF HE WAS THE ONE WHO WASN'T READY. IF SOME PART OF HIM STILL SAW SCOTT WHEN HE LOOKED AT ME, NO MATTER WHAT HE SAID OR EVEN WHAT HE WANTED TO BELIEVE.

I TRIED TO PLAY IT COOL, ACT LIKE IT DIDN'T BOTHER ME. BUT THE DOUBT WAS THERE, NAGGING AT THE BACK OF MY MIND. WILL HE ALWAYS SEE ME AS HIS OLD BUDDY, JUST IN A DIFFERENT PACKAGE? OR WORSE, AS SOME KIND OF VICTIM HE NEEDS TO PROTECT?

GOD, I HOPE NOT. BECAUSE I DON'T FEEL LIKE A VICTIM ANYMORE. I FEEL... **ALIVE**. AND I WANT HIM TO SEE THAT, TO FEEL IT TOO.

BUT I THOUGHT WE WERE PAST THAT. IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE GOING ON?


MAYBE I'M OVERTHINKING IT. MAYBE HE REALLY DOES JUST WANT TO TAKE THINGS SLOW. EITHER WAY, I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO BE PATIENT. FOR NOW, AT LEAST.

BUT I WASN'T PATIENT ABOUT SPENDING MRS FERRIS'S MONEY, THAT'S FOR SURE! I MEAN, WHEN YOU'RE GIVEN A CHALLENGE TO MAX OUT A CREDIT CARD, YOU DON'T HALF-ASS IT!

FIRST STOP: JET SKIS. JOSH'S FACE WHEN I SURPRISED HIM WITH THOSE BAD BOYS WAS PRICELESS. AND HE THOUGHT I'D JUST RENTED THEM! HA! I'M NOT RENTING ANYTHING EVERY AGAIN!

WE SPENT HOURS ZIPPING ACROSS THE BAY, LAUGHING LIKE KIDS. I THINK I SWALLOWED HALF THE OCEAN, BUT IT WAS WORTH IT.



A man with a beard and tattoos is carrying a woman on his shoulders. They are in a clothing boutique. The man is wearing a grey vest over a white tank top and dark shorts. The woman is wearing a light-colored top and shorts. They are both holding red shopping bags with the Silhouette logo. The man is pointing towards the right. In the background, there is a clothing rack with various items, including a blue and white striped dress, a white dress with black polka dots, a pink dress with white patterns, and a white dress. A mannequin wearing a blue and white striped dress is also visible. The floor is white with a black geometric pattern. The walls are white with a dark brick pattern around the entrance.

THEN CAME THE SHOPPING SPREE. I DRAGGED JOSH TO EVERY BOUTIQUE IN BOSTON. POOR GUY LOOKED LIKE HE WAS GONNA PASS OUT BY THE THIRD HOUR. BUT WATCHING HIS EYES LIGHT UP EVERY TIME I STEPPED OUT OF THE CHANGING ROOM NEVER GOT OLD.





AND THEN, THE *PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE* - THAT FANCY STEAKHOUSE JOSH HAD BEEN DROOLING OVER FOR YEARS. I SWEAR, I THOUGHT HE WAS GONNA PROPOSE TO THE WAITRESS WHEN SHE BROUGHT OUT HIS PORTERHOUSE.

TOO BAD NICK'S *EXTREMELY* DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF HIS DIET AND BOWEL MOVEMENTS HAVE PUT ME OFF RED MEAT FOR THE MOMENT.


STILL, IT WAS NICE TO GET DRESSED UP ALL FANCY, THOUGH! GOD, JOSH LOOKED EVEN MORE DELICIOUS THAN THE STEAK...



I HOPE I'M NOT GETTING SPOILED BY ALL THIS. I MEAN, I COULD DEFINITELY GET USED TO--

UGH, HELLO!?! IS ANYONE GOING TO OPEN THIS DAMN DOOR? DID MORTIMER FINALLY SNAP AND DO MURDER?

UM. HELLO, MISS SANDY.



WHAT THE... WHO THE HELL ARE YOU? AND WHY ARE YOU WEARING ONE OF MY OLD UNIFORMS?

I... I'M KENDRA. MRS. FERRIS IS WAITING FOR YOU IN THE STUDY.

WHY DO YOU SEEM SO NERVOUS? BLINK TWICE IF MORTIMER HAS CONFINED YOU AGAINST YOUR WILL.

UH... P-PLEASE FOLLOW ME, MISS SANDY.



MRS. FERRIS! YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE THE TWO WEEKS I'VE HAD. I THINK I SINGLE-HANDEDLY STIMULATED THE ENTIRE BOSTON ECONOMY. THERE WERE JET SKIS INVOLVED. AND STEAKS. REALLY, REALLY GOOD STEAKS.

SANDY, I'M GLAD YOU'RE BACK. I TRUST YOU HAD A GOOD TIME?

GOOD TIME? IT WAS AMAZING! BUT... WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE SOMEONE JUST TOLD YOU THE STOCK MARKET CRASHED? DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?

I'M AFRAID I NEED YOUR HELP WITH SOMETHING RATHER URGENT. IT'S ABOUT YOUR FRIEND, NICK PALMER. PLEASE, SIT DOWN. THERE'S MUCH TO DISCUSS...



KENDRA, BE A DEAR AND FETCH US SOME WINE FROM THE CELLAR.

OF COURSE, ELAINE. ER... I MEAN, MRS. FERRIS. WHICH VINTAGE WOULD YOU PREFER?

WHY DON'T YOU BRING UP THAT '82 CHÂTEAU LAFITE ROTHSCHILD? I'M SURE YOU REMEMBER IT WELL.

THE... THE '82 LAFITE? BUT - I MEAN, YES, OF COURSE. RIGHT AWAY.



YOU BITCH.



THINKS SHE'S SO CLEVER, DOESN'T SHE? PARADING THAT BOTTLE IN FRONT OF ME LIKE I'M SOME TRAINED MONKEY. THAT VINTAGE IS A THOUSAND PER GLASS LAST TIME I CHECKED.

DAMMIT, I BUILT THIS WINE COLLECTION, AND NOW I'M FETCHING IT LIKE A COMMON SERVANT.

AT LEAST I'M NOT WITH DAVIS ANYMORE. GOD, THAT WAS LITERAL FUCKING HELL. THE THINGS HE DID TO ME... AND MADE ME DO TO HIM...

BUT ELAINE'S LOST HER MIND IF SHE THINKS SHE CAN KEEP ME UNDER HER THUMB FOREVER. THIS IS STILL MY HOUSE, DAMMIT. AND ONE DAY, I'LL TAKE IT BACK. I'LL TAKE EVERYTHING BACK. I SWEAR I'LL EVEN FIND A WAY TO BE A MAN AGAIN. THERE **MUST** BE A WAY!



CAREFUL WITH THAT BOTTLE. IT'S WORTH MORE THAN YOU ARE NOW.

JESUS! MORTIMER, YOU SCARED THE HELL OUT OF ME.

GOOD. FEAR KEEPS PEOPLE HONEST. AND YOU'D DO WELL TO STAY HONEST, *KENDRA*.

I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

I HEARD YOUR LITTLE... SOLILOQUY. YOU SEEM TO HAVE ALREADY FORGOTTEN YOUR PLACE.

I WAS JUST... LETTING OFF STEAM. IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING.

MAY I REMIND YOU THAT WE HAVE 47 ACRES OF FOREST. IF YOU WERE TO... *DISAPPEAR*, MRS. FERRIS WOULD SIMPLY ASSUME YOU RAN OFF. UNLIKE SOFIA, YOU WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE A GRAVE.

YOU... YOU WOULDN'T...

I'VE DONE FAR WORSE FOR FAR LESS. YOU EXTINGUISHED A BRIGHT LIGHT IN THIS DARK WORLD. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU'RE A BLACK HOLE, A *VOID* THAT NEEDS TO BE KEPT IN CHECK. SO, KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN, DO YOUR JOB, AND MAYBE YOU'LL GET THROUGH THIS ALIVE. ALTHOUGH WHY YOU'D WANT TO IS BEYOND ME.

I UNDERSTAND. I'LL... I'LL BEHAVE.

GOOD. NOW, TAKE THE WINE AND GET BACK UPSTAIRS. AND REMEMBER, I'M ALWAYS WATCHING.



HERE'S THE WINE YOU REQUESTED,
MRS. FERRIS. IS THERE ANYTHING
ELSE YOU NEED?

NO. THAT WILL BE ALL FOR NOW.





SO, WAIT, I WANT TO MAKE SURE I HAVEN'T COMPLETELY LOST MY MIND.

OF COURSE. ASK ANY QUESTIONS, MY DEAR.

I JUST WANT TO CONFIRM. SO, UM, YOU'RE SAYING THE MAID WHO JUST BROUGHT US WINE IS ACTUALLY YOUR EX-HUSBAND? THE SAME GUY WHO... WHO KILLED SOFIA?

I'M AFRAID THAT'S *EXACTLY* WHAT I'M SAYING.

BUT... HOW? I MEAN, SHE LOOKS SO... YOUNG. AND FEMININE.

OH, DON'T GET ME STARTED. HE CAME WITH A SKINCARE ROUTINE THAT WOULD PUT A HOLLYWOOD STARLET TO SHAME. AND I'M FAIRLY CERTAIN HE'S HAD AT LEAST TWO FACELIFTS TO MAINTAIN THAT YOUTHFUL GLOW.

JESUS. THIS IS... THIS IS INSANE. HOW CAN YOU EVEN STAND TO HAVE HIM HERE?

BELIEVE ME, IT WASN'T AN EASY DECISION. IT'S... COMPLICATED. BUT WE HAVE MORE PRESSING MATTERS TO DISCUSS BESIDES MY MURDEROUS EX-SPOUSE. NOW, ABOUT YOUR FRIEND, NICK...



IF NICK DOESN'T...PROGRESS SOON, HUTCHINSON TRULY WILL SEND HIM BACK TO THAT TERRIBLE ISLAND. THERE, THEY'LL SHATTER HIS PSYCHE.

SO WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? FOR ME TO MAGICALLY CONVINCING THE HYPERMASCULINE EX-QB TO ACCEPT BEING A WOMAN?

ALLEGEDLY, HIS **TRUE** PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE SUGGESTS HE CAN BE HAPPY AS A GIRL. XU MIGHT BE A SOCIOPATH, BUT HE DIDN'T STRIKE ME AS A LIAR. AND IF THERE'S EVEN A CHANCE NICK CAN FIND SOME SEMBLANCE OF PEACE, ISN'T IT WORTH TRYING? THE ALTERNATIVE IS FAR WORSE. AND THERE IS **NO GOING BACK**.

BUT HOW CAN I ASK HIM TO GIVE UP WHO HE IS?

YOU'D SIMPLY BE HELPING HIM FIND A WAY TO SURVIVE. TO ADAPT. JUST LIKE YOU DID.

YEAH, BUT I DIDN'T HAVE ANY DREAMS OR ASPIRATIONS. NICK HAD A LIFE PLANNED OUT. HOW CAN I ASK HIM TO JUST... LET ALL THAT GO?

I'LL TELL YOU A SECRET, MY DEAR - AN AWFUL, MEAN, HEARTBREAKING SECRET: LIFE IS ALL ABOUT LETTING GO.

DAY BY DAY, DECADE BY DECADE, WE LET GO OF DREAMS, PEOPLE, AND ESSENTIAL PARTS OF OURSELVES.

WE...ERODE.


WHEN I LOST SOFIA, I LOST MYSELF TOO. THE PAIN CONSUMED ME, TWISTED ME. I BECAME CRUEL, MANIPULATIVE - A SHADOW OF THE WOMAN I ONCE WAS. AND IN MY MADNESS, I HURT YOU. I TRIED TO FIT YOU INTO THE HOLE IN MY HEART THAT MY DAUGHTER LEFT BEHIND.

BUT THEN, EVERYTHING CHANGED. WATCHING YOU FIND YOUR OWN PATH WOKE SOMETHING IN ME. I STARTED TO REMEMBER WHO I'D BEEN, THE MOM THAT SOFIA LOVED. AND I REALIZED THAT BY TRYING TO HONOR HER MEMORY, I'D BETRAYED HER SPIRIT.

NOW, I'M WORKING TO FIGHT MY WAY BACK. TO BE THE WOMAN SOFIA BELIEVED I COULD BE. AND...I KNOW I DON'T DESERVE FORGIVENESS. BUT I AM TRYING.

THE POINT IS THAT LIFE TAKES SO MUCH FROM ALL OF US, SANDY. BUT SOMETIMES, IF WE'RE VERY LUCKY, IT GIVES US A CHANCE TO REBUILD OURSELVES FROM THE PIECES LEFT BEHIND.





I JUST... I DON'T WANT TO HURT HIM MORE THAN HE'S ALREADY BEEN HURT. HE'S MY FRIEND. I CARE ABOUT HIM - EVEN IF HE IS A COMPLETE ASSHOLE MORE OFTEN THAN NOT.

IT'S UP TO YOU, SANDY. I'LL HAPPILY SEND KENDRA RIGHT BACK TO WHERE SHE CAME FROM IF YOU DON'T WANT TO ENGAGE IN THIS... SOCIAL ENGINEERING.

AND WHAT? WAIT FOR NICK TO DISAPPEAR? I CAN'T DO THAT EITHER! UGH. OKAY. FUCK. OKAY, OKAY. BUT EVEN IF I AGREE TO THIS, I CAN'T DO IT ALONE. I'LL NEED HELP.

WHO DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?

OH, JUST A FEW GIRLS THAT NICK MENTIONED IN HIS EMAILS. I'LL TELL THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR, LET THEM THINK *SHE* WANTS THIS BUT IS RELUCTANT TO FULLY EMBRACE HER FEMININITY. FROM WHAT I READ, I BET THEY'LL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO HELP "GIRL" HIM.





I MUST ADMIT, I'M A BIT TAKEN ABACK BY YOUR WILLINGNESS TO HELP. WHAT CHANGED YOUR MIND?

WELL, I GOT AN EMAIL FROM NICK THIS MORNING. IT'S... IT'S NOT GOOD, MRS. FERRIS. HE'S IN TROUBLE.

WHAT KIND OF TROUBLE?

THE KIND THAT MAKES ME THINK TURNING A BOY INTO A GIRL IS THE *LESSER* EVIL.