

Meline's Manipulation

Chapter 1 of 4

"One. And you're awake."

Through the foggy haze in my mind, past the mixed dizzy and tired sensations, I could hear the soft crackling of static. That was odd. Static? We were watching a DVD, why would there be static?

I opened my eyes and immediately jumped in my seat. The gangly form of my brother, Max, was looming over me - greasy black hair covering the upper half of his face and a silly grin curling his thin lips.

"Jesus Max," I swore, putting a hand on my chest, over my now racing heart. "What are you doing? You scared the shit out of me."

"You fell asleep," he said, grinning even more for some reason, "Movie's over, Meline. Figured I should wake you up before heading to bed. Don't want Dad catching you sleeping in here."

I nodded, still groggy. Our father was barely okay with us staying up after he and Mom went to bed - something about learning responsibility for adulthood or some bullshit - him catching one of us sleeping in the living room would be a pain. Still, it was unusual for Max to be looking out for me. Me and him barely ever spoke. Close and loving siblings we were not. I suppose he must have been worried about losing late-night TV privileges or something.

"I'll turn everything off, you just head to bed," Max continued, turning away from me and walking over to the TV.

"Okay," I nodded again. Something felt odd, unusual, but I was too tired and groggy to think about it right now. I was feeling very sleepy. So tired that my eyelids actually felt heavy. I got mumbled a quiet "thanks" before ambling my way to my bedroom.

I woke to loud, repetitive beeping. Nothing new there. First thing in the morning, the sky still mostly dark. And, as usual, I was still tired. That's the whole point of the alarm, I guess. To get you out of bed when your body is telling you to go back to sleep.

How late had I been up last night? Past midnight for sure.

My mind, already misty from the fact that I'd just woken up, blurred. Had I been up past midnight? I couldn't remember. Nor could I remember what movie we were watching. I think... I fell asleep? Did I? It felt wrong somehow.

Not important right now.

School was a pain in the ass, but it was a necessary one. And even if it wasn't, Dad would kill me if I started skipping it. So I summoned up all the willpower I could manage and sat up.

Isn't that just the worst? When you're all warm and comfortable snuggled up in bed, and then you sit up or get up and all that warmth and snuggly-ness is disappears in an instant.

I turned on my bedroom light, grimacing at the reflection in my full-body mirror.

My hair, usually a neat and wavy dark brown, was a total mess. My clothes - I always sleep in pyjamas - were ruffled and dishevelled. Dark circles were prominent under my chocolate brown eyes, making it look like I hadn't slept at all.

Sighing, I collected up the folded clothes on my desk and headed to the bathroom.

My morning ritual is pretty simple. Wake up (and complain silently about having to wake up) then head to the bathroom to shower, put clothes on and apply make-up to make myself look at least somewhat presentable.

And so that's what I did. Stripping out of my pyjamas and bra and panties, tossing them into the little washing bin we keep in the bathroom, and hopping into the shower.

Nothing wakes you up quite like a constant, unending barrage of water when you're

butt-naked. Not that I'm complaining - that feel of warmth running over my skin, painting a thousand invisible trails down my lean body, is a feeling that I adore. And the oh-so-gentle tickling feeling of water dripping off me; my breasts and nipples, my butt and elbows and fingertips, my nose and chin. If I had more time, I'd have stood there and basked in those sensations for a while.

Fifteen to twenty minutes (okay, maybe a little longer than that) later, after drying myself off, I put on the fresh set of bra and panties (a cute baby-blue matching set) and my school uniform - white shirt with black skirt and black sweater, complete with knee-length socks and striped tie.

A quick dash of concealer and foundation later and I was back in my room, slipping on some shoes and getting my school backpack.

Downstairs, Mom had thrown together a quick breakfast for the three of us - Dad had left for work hours before - and we ate.

Mom asked the usual questions of 'do you have everything you need for school?' and 'what time will you be home?'. And, when she was done, left for work a few minutes before us.

That left me and Max alone. Which usually meant absolute silence as we both finished off breakfast and did our own thing until it was time to go.

"Did you sleep okay last night?" Max said, attempting nonchalance. My brother is no prize actor, I can tell you that much. Poor awkward guy.

I raised an eyebrow. "I suppose. You?" I couldn't remember my brother ever asking how well I'd slept before. It was almost touching.

"That movie last night," he sounded awkward and nervous, "did you like it?"

Again, I had a feeling that something was off. I tried to think back to last night, but I was coming up blank. "I'm not sure," I said, my voice sounding as uncertain as I felt. "I can't really remember."

"Are you okay, sis?" Max said. It sounded less like a question and more like a bad actor reading a rehearsed line. "Maybe you should rest."

A haze washed over me out of no-where. A feeling of utter blankness, nothingness, that wiped away every thought and emotion. I felt like I was floating away. Then I was gone.

"Sis," Max's voice said, cutting through the sudden haze. "Wake up, it's almost time for school."

"Huh?" My mind was still hazy, but just as sudden as it had come, it was fading away. "What happened?"

"You fell asleep. We've got to leave in two minutes."

In that single moment, through the dizziness, I was aware of only two things. First was my brother's voice, which seemed to be washing away the mist of my mind with every word it spoke. The second was my bra. It was uncomfortable. Really uncomfortable. Itchy and tight and wrong.

I sat bolt upright, knowing on some base, instinctual level that I needed to change my bra right now or else I'd be stuck like this all day.

"I'll be right back," I told Max, ignoring his odd expression, and ran to my room.

As soon as my bedroom door was shut, I stripped out of my sweater and shirt and unclasped my bra. The moment I let it fall to the floor, I felt a surge of relief. The discomfort was finally gone. It had been itchy and uncomfortable all morning.

Had it? A quiet part of my mind questioned.

Your-bra-has-been-bothering-you-all-morning.

Of course it had. Since I put it on after the shower, it had been constantly bothering me.

You-need-to-take-it-off-before-school.

I needed to remove it before we went to school. Or it would have been bothering me all day. I sighed, thankful that the uncomfortable feeling was gone now, and reached for my dresser to find a new bra.

You won't have time to put on another one.

My hand stopped. We had to leave like now. Right now. I didn't have time to mess around trying to find a bra. But I couldn't just go to school without one.

You'll go to school without wearing a bra.

But... It wouldn't be that bad, right? It's not like anyone would notice I wasn't wearing one. And it was only for one day. It would be fine. Right?

I glanced at my alarm clock. Swore when I saw the time.

No time.

Without another thought, I reached for my plain-white shirt and quickly started putting it back on, trying to ignore the not altogether unpleasing feel of the cloth on my nipples.

As me and Max left for school a minute or two later, half-walking half-jogging in the hopes of not being late, I tucked my arms under my chest. Hoping beyond hope, that no-one would notice them jiggling and bouncing.

No one did. Or, at least, I don't think anyone noticed. I doubt any boys would tell me if they did, but I'm sure my friends would have said something. And they didn't. So hopefully no-one noticed.

The moment I was back home after school, I rushed up to my room and changed clothes. Tossing my school uniform aside and finding a bra to wear. I put on some pyjamas - a bit early but that was fine - and breathed a sigh of relief.

Never again.

Next time, I'd rather be late. The constant worrying over if people could see my breasts moving freely, the unnecessary stress of it all, was not worth the handful of seconds it would have taken to put on a different bra.

And what was that about? Why had my bra been so damned itchy and uncomfortable? That had never happened before. I'd have to ask Mom about it sometime. Maybe she was using a odd new washing powder that my skin was evidently not a fan of.

The rest of the afternoon passed uneventfully. I did homework and set out tomorrow's clothes, washed my face, had dinner with the family and watched TV while texting friends. Apologised to them for not hanging out after school, told them I wasn't feeling well - too embarrassed to tell them I'd gone the entire day without a bra on.

Eventually Mom and Dad went to bed and it was just me and Max left up again, watching some bad comedy movie or another.

We sat there quietly for a long while, an hour at least, before Max spoke.

"How was your day?"

The question, out of no-where, caught me by surprise. "Uh. It was fine, I guess."

"You look tired, Mel." Max said, smiling for some reason. "Maybe you should rest."

There it was again, that haze from this morning. Washing away everything, scattering my mind until nothing was left. Until I, me, Meline, was gone entirely.

A quiet voice, my brother's, telling me take wake up.

Awareness came flooding back. I was in the living room with Max. It was night, our parents were in bed. We were watching TV and I'd... fallen asleep? No, that didn't seem right. Zoned out? That felt closer, but still not correct.

"You okay there sis?" Max's voice. He sounded concerned. Had something happened?

"Yes," I managed, groggily. "I think."

"You fell asleep again," he said.

"I did?" Again, that feeling of wrongness. It didn't feel like I'd been asleep.

"Yeah, you fell asleep." He really did sound worried. Was he really that concerned about me? We're not that close, but I guess we are still family. Makes sense that he'd be worried about me.

"I'm fine," I said, as much to myself as to him. "I'm fine. Just tired. I should go to bed."

I tried to get up, stumbling slightly. My legs wobbled like jelly, but I managed it. Max watched me go, looking concerned as I left the room.

Shakily, I made it to my bedroom. I felt exhausted. But not like after a long work-out. My body was fine. It was more like I'd just the day taking exams and my brain was fried. Guess I've not been getting enough sleep lately or something.

With clumsy fingers, I took off my pyjamas, unclasped my bra and stripped out of my panties, tossing them all haphazardly onto the floor. Finally free of the restrictive clothing, I flopped down into bed and curled up under the blankets. So nice and snuggly, so soft and warm.

It's why I've always, for as long as I can remember, slept naked.