



ACQUIRED

solar harris

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Solar Harris

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Table of Contents

[1. Acquisition](#)

[2. Cocoon](#)

[3. Out](#)

[4. Theft](#)

[5. Conquest](#)

[6. Underground](#)

[7. Showroom](#)

For
AK and MD

1. Acquisition

He checked me out on the gear extremely thoroughly for a man with a black market shop in an extremely rough part of Bangkok. He ran me through the diagnostics twice, quizzing me in English peppered with a liberal amount of sing-song Thai that hurt my ears. He showed me how to clean the gadget and was careful to mention all the safety precautions, again twice, making sure I repeated most of them back to him before he would even take his hands off the device.

Then he walked the girl in. Beautiful. Hair down past her shoulders and so fine that it was like silk. It shimmered when it moved, catching the neon outside and the glow of computer screens in this dimly-lit little shop. She was wearing a tiny silk dress (barely a shrift) and as she approached me she let me see that there was nothing on underneath it.

With the thin little garment in my hands, she placed her perfect caramel ass down in my lap and put her arms around my neck so that I could see the birthmark. The famous birthmark behind her ear that millions of vidfilm viewers knew on sight. The rest of her was a perfect ringer, too. I'd studied those breasts as a teenager, downloaded every scrap of vidfilm and tabloid I could find with even a trace of sideboob. She'd been kind of an obsession of mine. Of course she'd been an obsession of plenty of guys my age.

This, I could see, was more than just a clever celebrity lookalike. No, the details were too close. And the birthmark made it impossible it was a twin. I was impressed. And that was before she started to unzip my pants.

She used her mouth. A little lapsitting already had me more than eager to go, and when I felt her warm mouth close over me and begin to gently, but expertly perform the act, I recognized experience. Her teeth scraped ever so faintly beneath, enough to make me grunt in surprise. She tightened the seal, flitting her eyes up to me in a soft comely gesture that was delightfully obscene. Her hands stroked my thighs. Nails dragged lightly over my skin.

I didn't last long. She swallowed, gave me a lewd smile, and tucked my cock back in my pants, striding away with a satisfied wink over her shoulder. For a second I felt an odd mixture of shame and delight. Then the man was in front of me again, grinning like an idiot. His teeth were in appalling condition, but I bravely smiled back and tried not to look too hard. "You see," he said in a voice that was equal question and proof.

"Yes," I said. "Now let me see the gadget."

When he finally let me hold it, I turned over both pieces gently in my hands, mindful of the delicate metal tracery on the gauntlet and the thin and so-breakable filaments of wire on the headgear. Tiny blue and green lights winked at me in the dim light of the shop.

I was on the fence about the whole business. The shopkeep, on the other hand, was now making the hard sell. "You have optical port," he asked me, tapping at his temple.

I brushed my hair aside to show him I did, indeed have a port, and a good one at that. A Proxima S, with 5 tb/s transfer speeds. Clean and shiny with a self-sanitizing portlock. I wouldn't even be in this guy's shop if I didn't have a port yet. Sure, they were cheaper in Bangkok, but you didn't skimp on wetware, especially wetware that involves drilling into your brain and patching into an optic nerve. You got that done at an American facility that got inspections and certifications, or if you could afford it, from the fancy clinics in the Bahamas that were more like spas than cyber hospitals.

"You need a double wrist port, too," the guy pushed, already drawing back a curtain to show me his surgical chair. "At least a D-class."

I tugged up my sleeve, showed him my triple, also a Proxima, and cracked a tiny smile. He nodded back, not able to compete. The wrist port, that was something I used all the time for work. They paid for the double and to be future-proof, I kicked in for the third socket while they had me cut open. "This is all compatible," I asked him. I knew the answer. Of course it was compatible. The questions I had were about how well it worked. And if it would be any fun.

"Yes, yes, compatible," the man assured me, pressing his palms together and making the quarter bow everyone here makes to show a certain amount of deference and service.

"And how do I know it really works," I challenged. "You trotted a pretty girl out here, but I didn't get to see it in action."

"Not just a pretty girl. A famous girl. Impossible unless I tell you the truth about this."

"Maybe. It was a good show. But I never saw the actual change."

"The cocooning takes over two hours," he said, just as he'd told me the first time I'd asked. "If you want, I have her activate it. You find your friends at ping-pong show and come back to see. But this is my last one. No more for a while. Maybe someone else just walk in and buy."

I winced. The rest of the group I'd been with had ridden the tuk-tuk all the way to the theater, determined to see a real-life ping-pong show with their own eyes. I'd been along for the ride, but had chickened out at the last minute, images of the Mexican donkey show I'd seen at a bachelor party years ago still uncomfortably lodged in my memory. I had about an hour

according to what the tuk-tuk driver told me. And then we'd be getting a real goddamned cab to take us back to the hotel instead of that overpriced motorized rickshaw that smelled mostly like gas and piss. We'd sleep for a few hours and be back on a plane to the States, business concluded. No, this was my only chance and he knew it.

"How much," I asked, savvy enough to know that there would be some bargaining involved.

"Thirty thousand."

"Thirty thousand U.S.?" I cocked an eyebrow at him, letting him know this seemed a tad steep and that he'd need to work with me here if he wanted the sale.

"No," he said, shaking his head emphatically. "Thirty thousand baht."

I blinked at him for a moment. The baht is worth just cents on a dollar. Even doing the conversion in my head, I knew that this was at worst 1/25th the price I'd thought he was quoting me. It was an insanely good price. Too good to be true, almost. I was suddenly on guard.

"Now I'm suspicious," I told him frankly. "That's too good a price. How can you make money?"

"Oh, I make money," he assured me. "I make plenty. Thirty thousand baht. You buying?"

Unconsciously, my hand had found the credit chip in the carefully-concealed pocket in my traveling slacks. At that price, it would basically be covered by the per diem I'd almost not touched during the trip here. I could buy this thing and not even miss the money. But I didn't want to be taken for a sucker, either.

The shopkeep seemed to sense his sale slipping away. He reached under the counter and pulled out a small black box, hinged at one end. He flipped it open, giving me a conspiratorial smile as he did so. "I throw this in. Free. Gift for buying."

I looked inside the box. It held a single thin card with tiny buttons on the ridges. When his fingers brushed them, the card lit up, displaying his image and drawing in a lot of official government seals and watermarks. The card embossed itself over some of those seals. It was a Russian passport. With this obviously Thai guy's photo.

He gestured for me to touch the card. It felt real, it had the odd uneven weighting an official passport has, part of the counterfeit-prevention protocols enacted two years ago that this piece of tech was clearly defeating. When I touched the card I felt a tiny little prick, then marveled as the card reconfigured itself, replacing the shopkeep's photo with one of me, and filling in a lot of fake details below it. It was an Irish passport now, and I was Kevin O'Malley, and even with my coarse black hair and deep brown eyes staring out at their duplicates from the photo, it seemed plausible. "That's quite a trick," I said, pulling my hand back. "Illegal as hell."

"I trust you," the shopkeep said, repeating the Thai bow. This time I felt compelled to give him one in return. He smiled, a big toothy smile that bared two blackening teeth to me. "Links with reconfigured DNA. What's the fun in a new body with no way to party in it? You need ID."

I hadn't considered this part of it. But the little man had it right. The gadget had a lot more potential for fun if there was ID to go along with it. Hell, the ID by itself, though incredibly illegal, was probably worth the thirty thousand baht all by itself. Now if the gadget worked or not hardly mattered. The shopkeep continued to grin at me. He had a sale and he knew it.

I took out my credit chip and let him scan it. Like most places in the redlight district, they frowned on using credit-linked palmprints or DNA coders for transactions. No one, merchant or shopper, wanted a digital trail for the things sold in neighborhoods like these. It was a cash transaction. Cash I had.

The man handed me the chip back, a sum of thirty thousand untraceably moved from the chip to his reader where it would get laundered a half dozen times a second for the next minute across anonymous peer-to-peer accounts before emerging clean and in his account - the opposite of the method used to put fifty thousand of my company's money on the chip for incidentals and expenses I might incur while doing business for them here. Probably all fifty thousand of each of my colleagues' per diems was being laundered on its way to the account of the ping-pong house and its comely performers for "additional services." No one was going to care.

The ID went back in its thin ray-shielded case, which the man handed over to me with a few quick instructions on its use. Stroke one way to blank the card in the event of a search. Stroke the other way and linger on these three nubs for a half second longer to recode the card and lock it in. "I already pair it with the wrist augment," he explained, though I didn't quite follow his broken Thai-English as to why this was necessary. I'd have a friend I trusted stateside look into it all before I used it, I decided. Just to make sure it was all on the up-and-up.

"Thanks," I muttered, checking the time.

"You want to wear out of the store? Plenty of nice acquisition opportunities on these streets." He gave me kind of a slimy smile.

"No thanks," I said. "I'm flying tomorrow. Need to get through security."

He shook his head emphatically. "Goes through security. Semi organic. Scanners barely beep. No need to ever take it off. Anyone asks, it's a game console." He took the wrist unit from me and flipped it over, showing me a switch that had a removable tag on it that read: "BOSS." The shopkeep grinned. "Boss key. Plays one hundred classic games. Can even project

from optical augment. Multiplayer. Very convincing. Good product, right?”

“Yes,” I said, chuckling. “Very good product. Fine. Strap me in. But show me how to remove it, too.”

Getting me kitted out only took a few minutes. The optical augment was thin and the filament wires (which I expected to make me feel sick like they usually did when fed through the port into my skull) instead only tingled pleasantly. I heard a tiny click deep in my head and the faint hum as it powered up. Next the guy braided the fine shiny tracery of the wrist augment around my wrist and forearm, plugging into the double ports on the underside of my right hand wrist. This one felt weird, like something in my forearm was contracting. I felt a burning sensation and cried out in alarm, but when I moved my left hand to pull the thing off, the shopkeep caught my hand and held it back. “Don’t worry. Needs subcutaneous contact. Normal to sting, yeah?”

“It does more than sting,” I complained, watching in horror as the tracery seemed to eat its way into my flesh, and then graft new skin over the burned-away bits. The tightening relaxed, and I felt a sharp prick in my fingers. “Ouch.”

“Diagnostic,” the shopkeep explained. “Sampler test. Look.”

He held up my hand to me, close enough so that the light caught the microfilament sampler needles now protruding a few millimeters from my fingertips. “Damn,” I marveled.

“Light touch, seconds only,” he assured me. “Acquisition target barely feels it. Two minutes for the processor to sequence DNA once acquired. Visual map needs longer. Full scan, preferably in motion for skeletal projection and weight/muscle distribution.” Now that he was in technical speak, this guy’s English was suddenly much, much better.

I flexed my hand, watched the little sampler needles retract. I was going to say something else, anything else, when text glowed in front of my right eye. It futzed and then resolved into a single word.

<ONLINE.>

I heard a light pinging sound inside my head.

“Maybe you try it one time now,” the man pressured again. “Try acquisition. Thai girls. Among the prettiest in the world.”

“I’m not going to be doing anything kinky with it,” I said briskly. And I wasn’t. “I just want a little anonymity is all.” A night out doing questionable things. Maybe some debauch or some gambling with a borrowed identity. Minor stuff. A little fun to break away from the ordinary without putting my own reputation on the line if someone saw me.

The man gave me an encouraging smile. “Many thanks, sir,” he simpered, giving me another and deeper Thai bow. “Mai lornng mai roo.”

“Thanks,” I said, not having the foggiest idea what he might have just said to me.

And then I was out the door and on the street. The ID case rested tight against my thigh in a pocket with a button. As I exited the shop, the gadget pinged every time another human being crossed my vision. Sometimes, when I got a good look at them, the optical augment’s HUD traced a fine glowing line around their outline, and began computing their age, weight, and approximate skeletal structure. I learned to shut this off by simply thinking it away. All the visual clutter was annoying.

Once it was all clear, a status bar blinked at the bottom. <SCANNING> changed to <PASSIVE>.

I walked another block when the HUD flashed a new message.

<MAI LORNG MAI ROO>

and then, when I felt puzzled, it shifted to English.

<IF YOU DON’T TRY YOU DON’T KNOW>

Enigmatic Thai wisdom or maybe just a subtle suggestion to take the gadget for a proper spin. Either way, it’d have to wait. Up ahead I saw the rest of my party stumbling out of the ping-pong theater, shouting and laughing in their drunken merriment. When they asked where I’d been, I played it coy, said only that I’d been browsing the back alleys and looking for something unique. I told them I’d found nothing. No one noticed the slimline augments nested against my optical port or my wrist ports. A dress shirt and a shaggy haircut concealed them from all but the most determined gaze. As they should. I paid good money for discrete port placement. In the business world, your ports showing is like your bra strap showing. It’s fine, it happens, but one does make the effort.

In any case, the party was too drunk or tired to press the issue. We piled into a cab and sped back towards the hotel. Jonah was in my cab, blazed to hell, but determined to share some of his newfound life experience. “Buckner, you missed out, my man. I mean, you hear about the ping pong balls, of course, right? But did you know there were scarves?!! Scarves, man, I’m telling you, like a pair of goddamned magicians. Or cannons. Jesus H. Christ, my life is never gonna be the same.”

I nodded politely, slapped him on the back. “Glad you had that special moment, man. Really glad. Were they pretty?”

“Of course. All Thai girls are fuckin’ gorgeous, I mean, am I right? I’ve got a stiff neck from how often a headturner’s gone past. Still, though, Thai girls freak me out, man.”

“What? Why?”

“You never know which of them used to be dudes.”

I laughed. “And this bothers you?”

“Well of course it does. You don’t wanna be making it with a dude.”

“Sure. Right. Even if they’re full on ladyparts now?”

“A dude’s a dude. I can’t believe I have to explain that to you,” said my suddenly narrow-minded friend. “A dude is a dude is a dude.”

“How poetic.”

“How fuckin’ true. Let’s go kill whatever’s in the minibar, huh? I can’t believe how early the bars close here. It’s fucking disgraceful.”

And so went the evening. In the morning we boarded our airplane and settled in for a long transpacific flight.

#

I dozed for the better part of the flight from Bangkok to Tokyo. At the airport in Narita we had about an hour to kill, so I wandered for a while, lingering in the curio shops and picking up some fun snacks to surprise my assistant Jenna with when I got back. None of the other principals were coming back with anything other than maybe a disease. I tried to be better. Slightly.

Strange gums and candies featuring bizarre cartoon characters acquired, I made my way back to the gate. Here I found Jonah and Miguel shouting at a hapless desk attendant for the airline. I didn’t bother joining them. I could hear from clear across the waiting area that something had happened and we weren’t in business class like we were supposed to be.

Me, I didn’t care too much. I was going to take a sleeping pill to reset my clock and beat the jetlag. It didn’t much matter to me where I slumped unconscious and drooling.

In general, I was just a little tired of my colleagues. There’d been too much drinking and too much truth during Jonah’s adventures with the minibar and I think I was hoping that we might be split up for the flight back to the states. I didn’t want to have to talk to anyone for the next 10 hours.

My hopes came to fruition when we boarded. We had indeed been split up. Miguel and Jonah argued everyone back up to business, but we were scattered. I found myself next to a tired-looking woman maybe ten years my senior who was already changing into the provided slippers for the transpacific flight. We nodded quietly to each other and settled in. I popped my pill and pulled the sleepmask down and that was it for the next five or six hours.

I came out of the drugged sticky haze those pills always leave me in to find I was just in time for a meal service. My seatmate and I both had a white wine and chose the chicken, which was pleasantly edible and not the dark greasy meat favored in a lot of Japanese airline food. We barely spoke until the coffee cart came. One of the creamers the flight attendant handed her slipped and bounced in my lap. The woman next to me made a half-grab and came up short, almost sloshing her coffee on me.

“So sorry,” she muttered.

“No, no, it’s fine,” I assured her. I handed her the creamer.

“Thanks,” she said, taking it from my hand. Then she jumped a little, pulling her hand back. “Yikes,” she said, touching a spot on her wrist where we’d touched. “I guess we gave each other a little static shock. I’m a menace to you.”

I hadn’t felt the zap, but gave her a friendly smile in return. “It’s an incredibly minor menace.”

She smiled a lopsided smile and settled back in her seat, busying herself with the ritual of coffee. It was then that I heard the ping deep in my skull.

I blinked, wondering if I had imagined it. The act of wondering about my new toy was enough to wake the HUD. Tiny glowing letters and graphs winked into existence over my vision.

My stomach lurched. The <PASSIVE> icon was not there. Instead the status bar said <PROCESSING>. Then it turned green and changed to read:

<SAMPLE FULLY SEQUENCED.>

I blinked, instinctively looking over at my seatmate, wondering if she’d figured out it hadn’t been a shock at all. As I’d been sleeping, I must have switched the sampler to active mode. When our fingers touched...

It was an incredible violation of privacy. And totally unintentional. What should I do? Tell her? Apologize? No, there was too much explaining to do and some of it was bound to get me in a lot of trouble. Why had I worn the thing on the plane instead of packing it?

As I studied my seatmate, a thin glowing line drew itself around her. Little squares of mesh flashed over her face and hair, down her shoulders. The optical implant was processing every tiny little physical detail of this stranger. Her dishwater blonde hair, dark roots showing in patches. Her brown eyes and her clear pale skin with meticulous makeup, even for travel, concealing the faintest of crow’s feet and creases of age. Even that the implant was starting to take a guess at, putting her age at 43 with an 82% probability of accuracy. A progress bar in the leftmost corner of my vision slid from 0% to 18%. Then I got a new message.

<INCOMPLETE VISUAL SCAN. RECONSTRUCTION NOT POSSIBLE.>

Son of a bitch. It was compiling.

“Excuse me,” she said. My blood ran cold.

“Yes,” I croaked.

“I’m just going to get up and freshen up. Coffee’s too hot to drink.” A new message appeared superimposed over her face.

<VOICEPRINT 36% complete>.

Her hand touched mine again, and then she was standing up. I pulled my recliner up enough to let her comfortably pass. Her hips passed in front of my vision. The main progress bar jumped to 41%. New data. Wide hips, slightly pear shaped, good gait. Likelihood of arthritis in the hip joint. How the hell was this thing doing all of that just from a visual scan and a microscopic amount of DNA?

I couldn’t help myself. I watched her walk down the aisle to the forward lavatory, open the door, and step inside. 5’3”, waist-hip ratio at .87, 134 lbs. The door shut. The progress bar rested at 87%. I sipped my water and looked around the cabin. My colleagues were either asleep or absorbed in in-flight movies. The rest of the business class cabin seemed largely uninterested.

I could feel my heart beating rapidly. There was nothing about this woman that was singular. I had no great desire to have her be the device’s first acquisition. Hell, I didn’t really relish the idea of doing a little gender swapping. But on the other hand, it was so close to done. The hard part was already done by accident. I’d just finish it up, save it to the buffer, and then just have it. I could use it or not use it. All up to me. It wasn’t necessarily a creepy thing to do, not if I didn’t use it. All I was doing was taking the acquisition part out for a test drive.

The lavatory door opened and she exited, striding back to our seats and stepping over me with just another “Sorry, again.” The voiceprint inched to 42%. The visual map, on the other hand, leapt all the way to 100%. If I wanted to do this, all I’d have to do is break my rule and strike up a little friendly conversation.

#

I last saw Marilyn somewhere in the customs line, rolling her red tartan suitcase behind her and giving me a last casual smile. We’d chatted amiably for about an hour on the plane and I’d even helped her get her roller bag down from the overhead bin.

I was feeling progressively scummier about leaving the implant on and continuing to map, but my friend in the shop had explained that oversampling was better than baseline sampling. The more the implant could map, the higher the resolution would be. The higher the resolution, the less the gauntlet would rely on preloaded template data and the more accurate the simulacra would be.

When I rolled my bag out with Jonah to the cabstand, I was now so used to the HUD that I didn’t even really notice its presence. A quick check revealed the final voiceprint to be at 340%. The visual map hung at 120%. She’d been in a sensible traveling suit. There was only so much the device could scan and infer. But it was enough. Marilyn was saved to one of the device’s buffer slots and I’d switched back to passive mode.

“Okay, Buckner, see you mañana,” Jonah said, clapping a hand on my back. He hopped into a cab and gave me a little salute. “Way to crush it out there,” he shouted from the cab’s open window. And then he was gone. The rest of the team was taking a shuttle. I got the next cab and rode home in silence, resisting the urge to look at my wrist or play with the implant. But the idea was in my head. Was nagging at me.

By the time I was back inside my apartment, I was actively debating the pros and cons of taking things the rest of the way. We’d landed in early morning. We weren’t expected to make it to work until the next day. Effectively I had the better part of a day to myself. Two hours to cocoon, he’d said. Even with a revert... there was time.

I stood in the bathroom for a long time. My hands shook a little and I realized I was talking out loud to myself, alternately arguing either for or against it. I lived alone. No one would even be checking on me. If this back alley rig had a virus or a defect, I’d probably or die before someone found me.

But what had I gone to all this trouble for if I wasn’t going to try it? I’d seen the girl. I’d even heard rumors that this tech existed and worked. The guy had a mostly clean shop and seemed pretty on-the-level.

But still. The risks.

I realized I had the HUD open again, had Marilyn’s saved print highlighted. And then I saw the phrase again.

<MAI LORNG MAI ROO>

Fuck it.

I went to my desk, opened up my work console and composed a quick message to Jonah.

JONAH - CALL PARAMEDICS. SEND TO MY PLACE. DISCRETION. - DALE

I then scheduled the message to auto-deliver in three hours. Three hours was long enough to pad the shopkeep's estimate but hopefully not so long that if there was some kind of serious error, an emergency team would get to me in time to revive me.

For a moment I wished I'd bothered to make a few closer friends on the rise to the top. The fact that I defaulted to Jonah was not encouraging. Sure we got along okay, but I had cut him out of a few career-makers a while back. I still felt guilty about it, but then again, we had a great time in Bangkok. Sure. We may not be best buds, but I trusted Jonah enough to understand that if something went wrong he'd at least keep a lid on it. A little discretion between business bros could come in handy, and he owed me for Amsterdam. To remind myself, I set a timer with a ten-minute warning on my phone and placed it next to the terminal.

Fearing I'd lose my nerve and now most definitely on the clock, I returned to the bathroom and stripped off my slacks, my shirt and tie, and even my boxers. The gauntlet was barely visible, barely a mark where the tracery was embedded and only a tiny innocuous little augment hovering above the wrist port.

I stood in the shower, leaned against the wall, and called up the acquisition. The HUD asked me a simple question.

<BEGIN?>

"Yes," I thought, and saw the HUD flash. There was a clenching pain in my wrist again and then a warm feeling that seemed to spread from the wrist up my entire arm. It stung. I tried to move, or cry out, or anything, and found that I could no longer move my body. It was lucky I'd been sort of leaning against the wall of the shower, because I was now paralyzed.

The warm tingling continued to spread and with it a sharp pins-and-needles sensation that I could feel washing over me like I was being coated in something. I took a breath automatically. I felt it hit my heart. The next second, it hit my brain, and then it all went red. And then black.

2. Cocoon

Cold. Stiff. ...wet?

I became dimly aware of sensations one at a time. There was the faint hint of menthol in my nostrils and the growing feeling of something like aloe gel against my skin. It was cold. Very cold.

I couldn't remember where I was at first. My first instinct was that I'd come down with some terrible cold or flu, maybe picked up in Asia, and that I was bedridden and miserable. It was dark, too dark to see a thing, but when I moved, it was clear I wasn't in bed.

CRACK.

I moved again, heard the sharp crackling sound again, and then saw a sliver of light open up in front of me. A single thought strayed across my growing consciousness: cocoon. The rest of it came a moment later, but I was already lurching forward, thrashing my way free of the thin shell.

Fresh air hit my lungs. My eyes burned when the light of the bathroom reached them. Shards of something thin and unfamiliar crackled free of my skin. Then I was in front of the bathroom sink, head hovering over it, dizzy and dry-heaving. I had no idea how long I'd been out. I had no idea exactly what was happening. I was just happy to still be alive.

That's when I saw the hair hanging in front of my eyes. Long. Shoulder-length easily. Dishwater blonde.

I raised my head slowly, my heart taking the express elevator straight to my stomach mere seconds before I got a look at myself in the mirror. Marilyn the business class traveler stared back at me, bewildered, naked, and shivering in my bathroom. I checked the HUD and saw confirmation from the device.

<RECONSTRUCTION COMPLETE. 0 CRITICAL ERRORS.>

There were too many thoughts in my head all at once. I was dizzy. I needed to sit. Think. Figure out what to do next.

On unsteady feet I lurched from the bathroom to the bedroom. Things were different. My legs were not really my legs any longer, my center of gravity not where it had been before. Where my arms and legs were used to being and moving was now totally different. I barely made it to the bed.

I lay there on top of the covers for a long moment, just looking at the ceiling. I breathed in and out, felt flesh move and settle in a way I was unaccustomed to. I was afraid to look at myself at first. The psychological disconnect from what my brain was used to seeing when I looked down and what was there now made my head spin every time I dared a peek. But at last, of course, the curiosity was more than I could handle.

It was a woman's body, that much was instantly obvious. I held a hand in front of my face and turned it over. It looked familiar, a match for the one that had touched me on the plane. Some loose skin, and a few prominent veins, but overall Marilyn kept herself in excellent shape for a woman her age.

Slowly I sat up, watched the soft pale flesh of my breasts shift and settle with only a little sag. Large dark nipples poked out erect, reminding me that it was cold in here, colder than I remembered liking it. But of course, I had a different circulatory system than I'd had earlier.

Only now did I really realize how different the lover half of my body felt. It was fascinating. A lightness. The absence of my genitals was disorienting whenever I thought about it directly, but got more comfortable if I didn't push my brain to remember the previous body map it had built over the past thirty years. A tuft of dark hair obscured the details, and I resisted a closer inspection at first.

I could not shake the sensation of being an intruder or a voyeur. This was not my body. I'd borrowed it without asking and was now staring at it and examining it like a specimen. What seemed exotic and exciting back in Bangkok felt obscene and disturbing now that I was alone with this woman's body in my apartment.

This had been a mistake. I would go back to the shower, call up my own genetics, and revert. And then I'd rip this thing from my arm and be done with it. Yes. That would be the end of this. No one would ever need to know.

I stood, walked slowly to the bathroom, expecting another dizzy spell, but felt to my amazement that I'd already learned to compensate. The walk to the bathroom was graceful, hips swinging even by the end of it. It felt good. Strangely good.

I could give it a few more minutes, I decided. Maybe I hadn't given it long enough. "If you don't try, you don't know," I said to myself in the breathier, smoker's voice of the woman whose skin I'd borrowed. This brought on a tiny wave of dizziness again, but then, strangely, I found this to also be pleasurable.

"This is my voice," I said out loud to the empty apartment. Marilyn's voice had a charming alto quality to it, comely and polished, and the way it traveled from my vocal chords tingled pleasantly.

I left the bathroom, walking with growing confidence, experiencing a delightful little surge of pleasure the more I learned to walk with my hips. My breasts swayed gently in contrasting movement, and now I was feeling more than just the pleasure that comes from mastering a skill. It was hard to pinpoint the exact source of the pleasure. The closest thing that I could put my finger on was the pleasure of fitting in, knowing this was the right way to do something.

<the right way to be>

That thought crept in all on its own. But then it made sense. The most natural thing in the world.

<no shame and no regret>

And no sooner had I thought this then I felt my revulsion at the hazy morality of my actions fading away. No, it'd be fine. This was harmless. No one would ever know. It was behind closed doors. It was safe. And it felt good. Like a particularly sweet cigarette after some energetic and satisfying sex.

<sex>

That thought was accompanied by a flurry of imaginings, images and situations I'd not known were even in my head. Big wide hips settling over an erection, sliding it in slowly and rocking. Hands holding up small, pert breasts with big dark nipples. A flurry of blonde hair with dark roots.

I was on my knees in front of the bed, one hand running over the gentle round paunch of a slight belly to the tufts of dark brown hair between my legs. My other hand, warm now, cupped my left breast, teasing the soft, surprisingly sensitive skin and tweaking the nipple. That felt better than it'd ever felt, I remember thinking. So much more...real. Alive. So confusing.

My fingers found lips already open and slid inside as if on instinct. A frustrated moan escaped my mouth and it was in that moment I stopped thinking of any part of this body as being Marilyn's. It was mine. And it wanted this. All of this.

I found myself on my back, breathing heavily, my knees spread apart with my hand moving slowly and purposefully between my legs. My hips bucked the first time my palm grazed my pubic bone, no doubt finding a spot I'd always had difficulty finding when on the other end.

It felt like electricity running up my veins. It lit up my spine, then went straight to my head - straight to the deepest part of my chest. I sucked in a breath, held it, let it go slowly. And gave in to it. My hand probed deeper, until my fingers felt thick and moist and I was warm and clammy all over. My body felt charged. It had begun by feeling like a shell, but here, on the floor of my apartment, a sheen of sweat, it felt full, infused with warmth, life, and pleasure.

I writhed on the floor for what felt like just a few short moments, letting my eyes close and my breathing slow. I had been crazy to think about immediately undoing it. I had been crazy to think about destroying this marvelous new toy. I would never destroy it, I found myself thinking. I would never take it off. I would never go back.

The trilling of my phone snapped me back, but it wasn't instantaneous. No, as the insistent blaring of the phone grew louder and louder, I found myself thinking about an alarm clock bringing you out of the best dream of your life, the kind you want to go back to sleep and pick up where you left off. My two fingers were still moving in slow circles, exploring the warm velvety tunnel that kept rewarding me with every probe. A few more minutes. I could feel it building, now, and was learning how to bring myself to release, I was sure. Let the phone ring. Besides, if I answered it, it would not be in a voice the person on the other side was expecting.

And then I remembered. It wasn't a call. It was an alarm. The message to Jonah. The failsafe in case this thing had backfired. If the message was delivered, Jonah would send paramedics. Disaster.

With great reluctance, and using every bit of strength I had, my fingers left my sex. The smell as I held them up to my face was gentle but thick, and almost dragged me back down into a fog again. Only my desire to prevent the paramedics from spoiling the fun made me get back to wobbly feet and cross the room to my terminal.

I canceled the message to Jonah with only about a minute to spare and settled into the desk chair with a shudder of relief.

<more>

Yes, of course. Now there would be time for more. So much more. Strange, I remember thinking to myself, how I sometimes even seemed to be thinking in a voice that was not the usual voice I heard in my head. This technology created such a marvel. My new body could speak to me, share things it wanted with me.

<want>

The idea came to me then. It was such a good likeness. No one would ever suspect a thing. What fun to take it outside.

I only had to picture myself walking out in public, the gentle pear shape of this MILF-ish woman still very much in her prime, to experience another pleasurable rush. A reckless feeling invaded my heart. My pulse quickened. Yes. Go out. Just an hour.

Fear took me then. Some rational part of my brain, a part that was still Dale Buckner, reminded me that this was dangerous. Illegal tech and identity theft in every sense of the word. The actual Marilyn was somewhere in this city. She might see me.

What would happen? No, this was going too far. It had to stay here in the apartment and under no circumstances-

<It will be such fun. Go out. Be her. Experience. Want.>

The fear went away. The reckless feeling was stronger, so strong now. It would be permitted. It would be allowed.

I was already in my closet, looking for something to wear. So great was the euphoric cloud of excitement that it took me a long minute of rummaging to realize how completely unprepared I'd been to do a proper public test drive. I was a single man in an admittedly posh but still tiny one bedroom. There were no clothes here that were appropriate for a middle aged women to wear. I lacked pretty much everything that was necessary to do anything other than run down to the bodega for a cup of coffee.

There was no other option. Back into the shower. Two hours to cocoon and then I'd be back in a body that I had clothing for and then I'd go out, get some women's clothes, avoid any weird stares I might get as to why I was out buying a full wardrobe for a woman in her forties, and then come back, cocoon for two more hours, get maybe an hour or two out and-

<now>

The impulse this time was so strong it actually interrupted my thoughts. It was a word and a feeling, more like a compulsion, that took me by surprise with its sheer intensity.

Back to the closet I went, my hands and eyes moving through the collection of clothes with a determination and purpose that did not feel like it was entirely coming from me. The next thing I knew I was wearing a loose-fitting track suit and running sneakers I'd not bothered to wear since an ill-fated fitness kick last New Years. I picked up the contraband ID card in its case and slid it into one pocket, but also took my own wallet, which I slid in there as well. I'd be shopping, it seemed like, and we'd sort out the issue of this not-Marilyn shopping on Dale Buckner's credit chip when the time came. There was still a couple hundred in per diem on the traveler chip, I reasoned, and there wouldn't be too great a likelihood of identity check on a traveler chip, but still, just in case, it would be good to have a backup.

And then I was in my car. And I was driving. I was out in the world in a body that was not my own. The pleasure was overwhelming. Even in these uncomfortable and poorly-fitting clothes, my body felt so alive it was buzzing.

#

I drove to one of the dying shopping malls on the west side of the city. Most of the name stores had long since vacated the mall and the empty space was filled by mall-only semi-off brand retailers. The chances that I'd see anyone who knew Marilyn here seemed unlikely if the cut of her suit and the size of the ring on her finger were any indication. Still, there was no point in being too reckless, even if I did seem to be acting on impulses that didn't seem to be coming wholly from myself.

It took a moment, though, to work up the nerve to leave the car and enter the mall. As good as I looked, I suddenly felt like a counterfeit. Worse than that, I was sure that no matter how perfect I thought the simulacra was, it would take only a moment for someone to look at me and see right through the clever facade. These strangers would see me. They'd point and laugh. Or call the police. Or hurt me.

I sat behind the wheel of the car with the doors locked, just watching the entrance to the mall. It was in the afternoon on a weekday. Hardly anyone was coming or going. It was a short walk to the mall. I could do it. But then what? Inside it would be worse. I'd have to buy things, things I had only a basic understanding of. Salesgirls would mock me. Other customers would whisper or think terrible things.

This was all suddenly seeming like a terrible mistake. The more I thought about it, the more the fears started piling up. The distance from the car to the mall seemed to be growing, an infinite hallway extending out in front of me. No, no, this wasn't going to happen. I'd drive back home as quickly as I could and shut the door and lock it and never do any of this ever, ever again.

I was sweating a little. I mopped my brow, looked in the rearview mirror, became painfully aware that I wasn't wearing makeup. In the harsh light of day, I looked less put together. In the harsh light of day, I looked, frankly, like hell. This would never work.

<MAI LORNG MAI ROO>

The thought, which was accompanied by a blink-and-you'll-miss-it flash of text across my eyes snapped me out of the spiraling panic attack. I found my hand on the door latch, found myself exiting the car and shutting the door behind me and now striding purposefully across the parking area to the mall entrance. There was no telling how long this surge of bravery was going to last, but I was now almost to the doors. Another deep breath and I was in.

The mall had maybe a dozen other people wandering around the two main levels. I'd come in at the top and could see down into the atrium below. All but dead. A few shoppers passed me without so much as a look. The overall fear subsided. When I passed a small kiosk and the man behind it smiled at me and offered to give me a demo of his company's new automated styling assistant, I relaxed completely. If anyone saw anything odd about me, they were keeping it to themselves. I suddenly felt silly for being scared. Being in here, walking in this borrowed body, becoming more and more accustomed to its gait until it felt completely natural, I felt an overall lightness of being. The voice in my head was quiet. I was Marilyn and I was here to shop and that felt very good indeed.

Best to get the hard one out of the way first, I decided. Ahead there loomed the big pink-and-black interior of a store selling

women's intimates. Every step I took in these boxer briefs was uncomfortable and while the baggyish track top hid any major fashion problem with going braless, I was noticing it was uncomfortable. The big swinging steps my hips seemed happiest making made the breasts bounce too much, and after too many steps, there was an uncomfortable and painful tug with each step. I'd only ever been in these stores on holiday errands during the seasons when I'd been fortunate enough to be dating exactly the kind of woman who wanted lingerie as a Christmas gift. Here on more practical and specific errands, I was suddenly overwhelmed with options. If you left the impractical land of lace and crotchless and entered the everyday section, there were suddenly a dizzying array of bra types, all with unhelpful names and descriptions. Did I want lift? Wires or no wires? Sexy or Drop-Dead or Breathless?

"Is there anything specific I can help you find, ma'am?" The voice in my ear was young and bubbly and incredibly solicitous. All the same, I jumped about a foot in the air. I didn't even hear this salesgirl come up behind me.

My pulse raced again. I didn't know what to say to her. What if I said the wrong thing? "Oh. Well, I'm not sure..." The words kind of fell out of my mouth. I inwardly cringed.

The girl just smiled back and nodded. She was short and cute and something about her smile was sweet. "First time in here," she asked. "You have a lost look about you, like, 'oh my god, there are too many choices.'"

I froze. She'd guessed it was my first time. I'd been found out. I opened my mouth and shook my head, intending to tell her that no, don't be silly, of course I as a woman who'd been a woman her whole life had bought a bra before. I also eyed the exit. I wondered if I could just run.

I guess she read that look as a confirmation, though. "Yeah, we're a local boutique," she said breezily. "The guys who started the store are setting up these kinds of places in all the abandoned malls around here. They own the men's shop upstairs too. Really cool guys. But if you're from out of town, you probably haven't heard of us yet."

I latched on this. "Yes," I said. "I'm... well, I'm traveling. Lost my luggage. I kind of need everything."

The girl took a moment to size me up, looking me up and down, and then bobbed her ponytail again. Her smile got bigger and her eyes just about twinkled at me. The sales polish went away and she shared a look of genuine sympathetic look with me. "Ugh, that is the worst. I have totally been there. It's daunting having to replace everything. You're so used to having the basics at least taken care of. Tell you what: give me your sizes and I'll pull some things. I'll bring them into the dressing room and we'll get you kitted out in a hurry. You probably have, like, actual things to be doing while you're here instead of trying to have, like, your clothes and things again."

I nodded dumbly, not bothering to conceal the look of incredible relief spreading over my face. "That would be amazing, I confessed." And before the possibility of another awkward moment could manifest, I saw my HUD helpfully displaying Marilyn's exact measurements. How did it know this was what I needed to know? The optical implant must be patched into my cognitive wetware. Funny. The guy hadn't said anything to me about that.

The salesgirl, who told me her name was Whitney, led me to the rear of the store and showed me to a spacious private dressing area. There was a large upholstered couch inside, gentle lighting, and a full-length mirror etched with motivational phrases. "Be as sexy as you feel. Every day is a runway. Mai lorng mai roo."

I blinked. The last one hadn't been on the mirror. It was being projected from my eye. Something about all this was wrong. But I couldn't put my finger on quite what that thing was.

I didn't have the time to think about it anymore, though. Whitney was already back, passing things over the divider with the utmost discretion. I took them and quickly stripped off the tracksuit. The sight of my body in the mirror was enough to trigger another deep rush of pleasure that I had to fight off.

If I'd expected to have problems figuring out the bras in particular, I shouldn't have worried. Whatever muscle memory was active to help me find the optimal way to walk in Marilyn's body seemed to extend to semi automatic tasks like dressing myself. Before long, I was looking at myself in the mirror wearing a simple set of basic intimates in a neutral beige.

"Does everything fit okay," Whitney asked over the divider.

"Yes," I said without thinking. "These fit fine. Do you also think you could find me something... flirtier?"

The giggle from the other side of the divider made me smile in spite of myself. "Say no more. I'll pull a few options. Hey, also, not to be too pushy a salesperson, but we sell dresses, too. Nothing fancy, but some basic stuff. If you lost everything, I could bring you some things to try. Some casual stuff, something for your big night?"

Nearly one stop shopping? The daunting nightmare of trying to put this all together solved almost in total by one helpful salesgirl? Too good to be true. I jumped at it.

#

I left the store with three large pink-and-black bags clutched tight in my hand. The traveler chip had been taken without question and was now basically cleaned out. But I had a treasure trove in my hands. More than enough to take this body out for

a proper test drive. I'd spent too much money on one night's adventure, I thought, but on the other hand, this was the kind of experience hardly anyone would ever have. You couldn't really put a price tag on that, could you?

When the transactions were concluded, she held out her hand for a professional shake and I took it gratefully, clasping her hand in both of mine. "Thank you," I effused. "You're a lifesaver."

Her face winced just for a second, but then the smile returned. "Have a good rest of your trip, Marilyn," she said sweetly. It was only when she turned back to the shelves and I dared to look at my HUD that I saw the reason for her strange reaction.

The damn thing had sampled her. More than sampled. The full body and voiceprint acquisition was 50% complete. I hadn't meant to do that. Not even a little. The gadget was defective. It wasn't supposed to sample unless I consciously put it in acquisition mode. This was troubling. But also a problem for later.

Whitney had been good enough to let me wear a few things out of the store, I think sensing my discomfort in the track suit. Now I walked across the mall in a simple blouse and leggings combo, the sensible everyday lingerie already making a world of difference in now only how I felt but how comfortable it was to walk. Whitney had given me the name of a good low-cost store that would get me set up with a pair of multi-purpose heels. My confidence was buoyed from the first shopping experience and now that the fear was gone, shoe-shopping was easy.

On my way out of the mall I passed a makeup kiosk flanked by a couple of body-sized vidscreens showing all kinds of wild makeup applications on professionally pouty models. Brightly colored eyeshadows. Glossy lips. Streaks of color across cheeks and dark liner under eyes.

I remembered I needed makeup. The Marilyn on the plane was flawlessly made-up and it did wonders for her. Seeing myself again in the mirror on the counter, I realized that I'd need to put in some effort. Problematic. I'd obviously never applied makeup and I couldn't rely on muscle memory alone. The hands might remember how to apply, but the brain needed to know what to buy and in what combinations to use. This would be significantly more complicated than putting on a bra.

Once again the implant seemed to be sensing my thoughts. As I helplessly studied the models on the vidscreens, the HUD outlined each face, charted it, saved snapshots and performed image analysis.

Words across my vision again: <4 COSMETIC VARIANTS ACQUIRED. SAVED TO MAIN MEMORY. ALLOW FIVE MINUTES FOR NANOAPPLICATION.>

I puzzled over the words for a moment before I understood the implications. My ocular implant had copied and processed all of the demo looks on the models in the advertising. It seemed like all I needed to do was go somewhere private enough to let it cocoon my face. No makeup purchase or skill required.

"Incredible," I marveled to myself.

"Something I can show you," a clerk said, hurrying to me hopefully.

"Oh, no," I said quietly, and then in a louder voice asked "but you can point me towards the ladies room."

Nanoapplication only took three minutes for the least complex of the looks my implant captured. I locked myself in a stall and triggered the process, making a slight cry of pain that I hoped no one else heard. My vision darkened and I went numb in the face, feeling that cool aloe feeling spreading over my face and hardening. My skin underneath stung and then burned, and then rapidly cooled. I heard another small ping! in my head and felt something crack.

COMPLETE.

I brought my hands up to my face, touched a smooth shell marked by deep alien veins, tapped it, heard it crack and then crumble to dust.

I stood up, flushed the toilet for the benefit of anyone else in there, and then exited the stall, stopping just long enough to look at myself in the bathroom mirror.

I looked flawless. Stunning. Mature, yes, but vivacious. More youthful and alluring even, than the business traveler who lent the DNA to me. Some younger clothes and a more "now" makeup look did wonders, just like the ads firms like mine put out claimed they did.

The drive home was a blur. My mind was going into overdrive thinking about the possibilities for what remained of the evening. I looked so good. And I felt good, too.

Still, it would be a good idea to exercise some caution. The gadget wasn't behaving as expected and the shopkeep had said nothing about the way the borrowed body would have its own impulses and desires. Yes, caution was going to be required. I could already feel my legs close together tight, squeezing against a desire that grew hard to ignore if I let even casual thoughts dwell on it.

I carried the bags up to my place and was relieved to not pass any other tenants I knew on the way there. I was no longer as terrified of being caught or discovered, but I also didn't want too many questions. This wasn't going to become a regular thing, I was promising myself. After tonight, if I used the gadget again it wasn't going to be for spending the night in a woman's body. It'd be back in known territory. Genitals I knew how to handle. Clothes I knew how to wear. Urges I knew how to master.

<master>

I blinked. I was in the middle of my bedroom and somehow naked. Somehow, twenty minutes had passed. I swallowed hard. Daydreams while using this gadget or even letting thoughts wander was proving dangerous. In my hands I held the thin silk and lace of the “flirtier” underwear I’d requested from Whitney.

The bra was a deep red, a push-up with little gel inserts carefully concealed in the cups. With my soft heavy breasts properly positioned inside of them, the effect was stunning. They were lifted up and pushed together, a deep valley created between the soft pale orbs. The panties that matched were little more than a scrap, stretchy in the front with a strip of cloth barely large enough to fit between my legs. A tight little thong that ended in a little lace “V” over my tailbone. Tugging it into place made the bit between my legs temporarily wedge itself between my pussy lips.

I didn’t immediately move my hand to correct this. For one thing, I worried what would happen if I let my fingers stray that close. For another, the effect in the mirror was staggering. I was transfixed. This simple little detail captured my attention. Standing here in the mirror in front of me was a woman confident in her sexuality. Even at this age, she looked alluring. Powerful. Predatory. Lustful eyes stared back at me from behind smoky eyeshadow. Full glossy red lips pouted out just a little. The gloss was almost the same color as the underwear. The naughty little slip of my underwear, the hint of a one lip poking out - the message clear. Not just for looking at. For touching. Using.

“Yes,” I said out loud, in that low sensual smoker’s voice I now felt entirely at home in.

The going-out dress Whitney selected was a simple affair, your standard little black dress with a cowl neck that once tugged over my head and fitted around my generously wide hips, hugged and accentuated. The cowl wanted to slip forward and to its credit stopped just short of revealing the bra but bared plenty of my now mountainous cleavage. By the time I had the heels on, my posture was pushing my ass out and my chest forward and I was all but raring to get out into the world. The predator I’d glimpsed earlier in the mirror was now ready for the hunt.

I paused only once, to lift up the hem of the dress and correct the panty wedgie. When I did that, I couldn’t help but graze a fingernail over the smooth silk panel, reveling in the electric shiver that it sent coursing up my spine. I felt warm through the fabric and I was on the verge of becoming moist. A desire to not immediately ruin my fancy underwear was the only thing that stayed my hand. There was something better than my hand waiting beyond that door, I just knew it.

After an appreciative look at the sight of my round asscheeks peeking out around the tiny strand of red fabric and an almost feline smile in the mirror, the dress was tugged back down and I was out the door, pausing only to tuck a little cash and the ID shifter in the small clutch I hadn’t even remembered Whitney adding to the pile of my purchases. Lucky thing, too. I hadn’t thought through the problem of wearing clothes with no pockets. Being a woman was fraught with incalculable small details I wasn’t prepared to anticipate. It wasn’t until I was out the door that I realized I had no plan for where to go or what to do when I got there.

3. Out

In the elevator, I managed to concentrate on something other than the peculiar sensation of having underwear wedged up my ass long enough to make a rational plan that was not too ambitious. My complex abutted a relatively new boutique hotel that had a pretty nice little bar attached to it. I'd stopped in there once or twice and seen that it catered to a nice mix of young hip types and business travelers who were free to choose somewhere other than the usual corporate points monoliths with their sad little lounges and economy breakfast buffets. The lights were low and if I lost my nerve I could just sip a martini and get the hell out.

Driving the car in heels took some doing, but once again the body's muscle memory kicked in. I could have walked there, but I was still feeling edgy. I had a sensation of intense vulnerability when out in the open air.

I opted for self-parking. The walk through the garage was brisk. My nerves were climbing again as I rode the elevator up to the lobby, but I took one last deep breath and entered the lounge.

<You belong here.>

The thought gripped me powerfully, propelled my legs to the bar. It was reasonably crowded, with maybe a dozen or more people sipping drinks and chatting over the low pulse of house music. I didn't trust myself to gracefully mount the high stool in my short little dress, so I leaned against the bar. My hips unconsciously pushed out, my spine going into a lazy "S" shape that I'm sure looked just a little too wanton for first impressions. But I didn't care. I belonged here.

I was about to order my usual, a martini with two olives, but realized that was Dale Buckner's usual. Not mine. I asked for a vodka tonic with a twist, smiled patiently at the mustached bartender and drummed my nails once on the counter.

"What's the twist?" The voice came from my right. He was middle-aged, in a nice suit that was a little rumpled. I knew the signs. I'd been this creep so many times. Fresh off a long international flight. Too jetlagged to do the sensible thing and take a sleeping pill up in the room and unwind. Antsy after a solid day in a cramped airplane and various terminals. Hoping for something to make today special. He was balding prematurely, had his hair combed forward and a little too long. A days' worth of international travel stubble on his chin.

I stammered a little. "Sorry. What?"

"The twist. You ordered a twist. Twists are good." He smiled a little. Didn't even hide the fact his eyes were dropping low. God, was it that obvious? I did that all the time, just stared straight at the breasts, thinking I was being subtle. But here on the other side it was all too easy to trace his eyeline. God.

"Um. Yeah. Goes with the vodka." I didn't know what else to say to this guy.

He seemed to sense it was getting awkward too. "I meant more like plot twists," he added awkwardly. "Kind of a joke."

I gave him a sympathetic half-smile, recognizing for the first time what a flame-out looked like from the other side. "Yeah. But also. For vodka."

Mercifully the bartender arrived back with my drink and it was mercifully a tall one. I slid a little cash to him and left a generous tip, which made him smile and give me a little wink. Just like that, I knew I was taken care of for the night.

The guy to my right was making one more increasingly desperate attempt to get my attention. I suddenly became aware that my lean against the bar had become more pronounced, and that I was pushing my ass out for the rest of the lounge to get a long look at the ever-rising hemline. I straightened up, not wanting to entice this guy any further. Just that easily, I'd shut out the first man to ever try to pick me up. It was so easy. And it felt good.

I gave him another half-smile and a non-committal "that's nice" to something I hadn't even paid attention enough to hear. Then, to make the point more clear, I angled my body away from him, looking out over the rest of the lounge, looking for a good place to sit and figure out what to do next. I found myself wishing that I had a friend here. It had been a long time since I'd gone out to a bar or a club totally by myself. It was hard to be social as a solo person. Nothing to fall back on. Either you were bold enough to go out there and make yourself a new friend or you sat quietly and hoped a new friend would come to you.

Quite by chance, I ended up smiling at another guy sitting about two stools down. He smiled back, looked away from his pretty young companion and then let his eyes move over my shoulder to the poor old businessman still fumbling for the right words to get me upstairs to his room. The young guy rolled his eyes a little and winked at me. I winked back, smiled a little in return and then, lacking anything else to do, sucked at my drink through the pair of tiny little black bar straws.

This guy was from the young hip set, no doubt here for the bar's "artisan cocktail" menu. His companion was already putting in an order with the bartender who was pulling out what looked like half the bar to prepare the drinks. To keep from obviously checking him out, I watched the bartender muddle a blood orange, pour some kind of hand-distilled something in a shaker with the muddled orange and a couple different liberal pours.

“Sorry for all this,” I heard the young guy tell the bartender. “We didn’t realize how much work it was going to be.”

“Don’t mind,” the bartender replied gruffly, shaking vigorously and lining up a pair of highballs. “They’re on the menu after all.”

“Still, you must be grateful for the simple ones like her,” the guy said, jerking his head in my direction.

I could hear the guy behind me inching his barstool closer to me. I felt my feeling towards him turn from sympathy to vague disgust. Could he not get a hint? A clumsy hand landed on the small of my back and traveled down over the curve of my butt, lingering there just long enough to make it clear that it was anything but accidental. “Sorry about that,” my harasser muttered in his still awkward way. “Different kind of twist.”

The only thing more pathetic than his attempt was the way he was still clinging to that terrible not-joke. Gross. I needed to completely shut him out.

“Oh, I’m simple, am I?” I lifted my drink to the young man and his pretty brunette companion and arched one brow in a mock challenge.

“Naw, I’m sure you’re anything but,” the guy countered. “But your drink is.”

“Can’t fault the classics,” the bartender added, pouring their fancy blood orange cocktails through a strainer.

“I can be a little more adventurous,” I offered. I was watching the young guy’s companion carefully. If she so much as frowned I was going to have to back off. I didn’t want to insert myself in the middle of anything going here. I just needed an escape from the creep behind me and they were giving me an opportunity to escape that I needed to take. The brunette smiled at me. Relieved, I took my glass and crossed one stool closer.

“I just hate the taste of alcohol,” the brunette said with a smile. “It reminds me of visits to the doctor’s office.”

“What the hell are you drinking ordinarily,” the bartender demanded. “Rubbing alcohol?”

“Pretty much,” her companion offered. “She’s giving it one more shot. So I’m counting on you.”

“Oh, these are pretty damn delicious,” the bartender assured him, placing the pair of drinks on napkins in front of him. “I’m pretty good at reading people. It’s classy. Not too fruity, so you can be a guy and not feel bad about drinking it, but it’s not harsh either.”

The young couple lifted their drinks and tried them, gave the bartender an appreciative smile.

“You’re talented,” I told the bartender. He shrugged a little and made change for the couple. They left it all on the bar and after a reasonable time passed he collected it and nodded his appreciation and then turned to me.

“Get you something else, or are you good?”

I didn’t have a chance to reply. The young guy to my left jerked his head at me and smiled at the bartender. “She says she wants to be more adventurous. Give her a read.”

The bartender looked over at me. I nodded my head permissively. I was invited to the group, now. My creeper would see this and back off and I wouldn’t have to cut my night short prematurely.

“Something aromatic, that’s what I’m thinking,” the bartender said, wriggling his moustache as he thought. “And spicy. Hang on, I’ve been working on something you might like.”

As he busied himself behind the bar, I turned back to the couple and gave them both a daring smile. “What am I getting myself into?”

The girl handed her drink to me. “Have a taste of mine. I think you’re in good hands.”

I had a little. It did taste nice. Having a drink also gave me a chance to think and regroup in my head. Now that I was safely extricated from the creep at the bar, I had my options back open. I would make some polite conversation with this couple, and then see if there was any other fun to be had in the bar. Then home. There was no reason to overdo things. This had been fun, but I hadn’t seriously been hoping for sex. That wasn’t the point of the evening.

<It will feel so good. Give in. Just give in to it.>

I stood up straighter, sucked in a short breath. The intensity of the thought and the urgency of the voice that was not mine caught me by surprise. And then I realized the young guy’s hand had been on my leg. He gave me a questioning look and I realized that my reaction had made him think I was shocked. And I was shocked. But-

<Let him. You want to. You need to.>

And then I smiled. He smiled back. Under the bar, his fingers returned to the hem of my dress, started inching their way under the hem. His fingertips tickled lightly at the skin of my thigh. I tried not to smile too much. As good as it had felt to use my own hands on this body, the touch of another was far more rewarding.

<This is your reward. This is what waits for all who give in.>

That made me feel even better. In a wonderful glow. Yes, I thought to myself. This was the point. Feel. Experience. Live it. I belonged here.

The bartender brought me my drink, in a tall Collins glass, a mostly clear liquid with a basil leaf and a tall straw. “Give that a try,” he said to me. “If you hate it, it’s on me.”

“If not, it’s on me,” said the young guy next to me. His fingers were now lifting my dress, not so much that it rode up in the back, but enough that I felt a draft rising. I tried to smile nonchalantly at him. Now the fingers were wandering inward, between my thighs, his calloused fingertips pushing across my soft skin. To stifle a noise, I tried the drink.

It was strong. I could taste the vodka. But I also tasted herbs and when I swallowed it, there was a warm finish, like spicy food. The warming sensation was just what I needed. Now I was able to turn to my companions and smile convincingly, as though this girl’s boyfriend was not attempting to finger a strange woman underneath the bar. As though this woman was not allowing it. As though she hadn’t just widened her stance, opening her thighs permissively and riding the high of this illicit public contact like it was a street drug.

“Do you like it,” the guy asked me rather pointedly. His eyes met mine. I looked back at him. Dark eyes. Confidant eyes. Used to getting what he wanted. And now he wanted me. How often had this been me? I never considered myself an alpha. I was never that guy who walked into any bar like he owned it and knew he’d be going home with whichever girl he set his sights on. But I’d been out with Jonah and the rest of the crew on a few occasions. I’d had my share of conquests. I don’t know what I expected it to feel like with the roles reversed, but it wasn’t anything like I could have imagined. I felt nothing other than elation. Excitement.

“Yes,” I answered him. “I do like it.”

“Then we’re buying,” his girlfriend said with a smile. She was already nodding to the bartender. “And could you close us out, please?”

“That’s really far too generous,” I protested. Her date’s fingers were now wedged solidly between my thighs, tickling the tender inner flesh as they wandered up, closer to my groin. I could feel the hem on the back of the dress clinging for dear life to my buttocks, threatening to be lifted over it at any moment. I shot him a look. He stared back into me.

<Be still>

I couldn’t tell if it was a voice in my own head or my imagined translation of the look he gave me. But I did what I was told. I stopped resisting. I was still. His fingers touched the thin scrap of red satin between my legs.

<Give in>

“Oh, no,” the girl was saying to me as I spread my legs, let him palm my mound and start rubbing me there. “We like sharing. And you seem like fun.” She gave me a very significant look. And then my skin tingled.

She knew. She knew exactly what was happening here. This was what they did. And they’d chosen me.

“What’s your name,” he asked me, one finger pressing the fabric between my lips. The panty wedgie returned. And then pushed in deeper.

“Marilyn,” I gasped, before I’d even thought it through.

“Marilyn, I’m Josh. This is Lily.”

“It’s nice to meet you.” His finger pushed, unrelenting. His dark eyes were locked on mine now, colder, more demanding. I felt my knees buckling.

“You should drink up,” Lily advised. Her smile went more feline. She downed her own drink and licked her lips. Took a long time to lick those lips. Held my gaze the whole time. “And then come upstairs with us.”

There was no question in any of that. There was no asking me if I was going to be coming with them. There was only the suggestion. This is what I should be doing.

<It’s what you want. It’s what you’ll do. You’ll give in.>

The voice in my head got louder. The finger in my sex slipped around the tiny scrap of satin. He was in me and my body was giving way to the probing. I made a tiny moan, and stifled the rest by sucking down my spicy warm drink through the straw. The gentle calming warm spread over me. My throat burned pleasantly. I was leaning into his hand now. But still, I retained enough of my rational brain to recognize that this was going far faster than I’d planned.

“I don’t know...” I faltered as I said it. Whatever was in the drink (chili oil?) made my throat feel a little irritated.

“Yes you do,” Josh said calmly. And then he leaned in, brushed his lips against my ear and whispered, “your body knows. Don’t hide it. I have my lie detector buried halfway in your snatch.”

I couldn’t help it. His breath in my ear and the strong, dirty way he spoke to me resonated with my body. I felt it tighten and then release with a little wave of pent up pleasure.

<Obey.>

And I did. I nodded. Both Josh and Lily smiled triumphantly. Josh removed his hand from my pussy, letting me pull the hem of the dress down, but swatting my hand away when I tried to correct the panty wedgie. “Leave it like that,” he commanded. “We don’t want you chickening out on the way up there. We want every step reminding you of what a hot little slut you’re going to be for us.”

I gasped, genuinely shocked. But then he held his fingers under my nose for just a moment. I wasn’t sure if I would actually smell anything. It didn’t matter. The gesture alone was enough. I nodded dumbly, submissively.

It was time to go. Lily led the way, taking my hand and leading me out of the bar and to the elevators. She had a keycard already in her hand.

When the elevator doors closed behind us, Lily put her arms around my neck and leaned in close. Her breasts brushed against my own. She had a classy expensive scent on. And she knew just where to put her body. It was enough to make me feel a little jealous. Jealous of how good she was at being who she was. I thought back to how I'd felt alone in my apartment. Like a predator. Out on the prowl. What a failure I'd been at that. Here was a true predator in front of me.

Josh was behind me. In the privacy of the elevator, his hands were now roving my entire body. He pressed his groin against my bottom. I felt his warm bulge through the thin fabric of the dress. My buttocks practically quivered.

"This is mostly a present for Josh," Lily was telling me, her lips brushing ever so slightly against my lips as she spoke. "He has kind of MILF complex and I figured this would be safer than seducing his actual mother. Or mine."

Josh growled in my ear. "Fuck you're so fucking naughty."

Lily smiled, looked pleased with herself. She was winding him up. The bulge against me felt bigger. More insistent. Josh's hands on me got grabbier. More possessive. More urgent. "Oh, baby, it's just how I am. You make me this way," she teased her boyfriend. And then to me, she added, "and what a surprise to find such a responsive cougar. You looked so lonely and desperate. You shouldn't make it so easy, honey. you have to make them work for it. How'd you get this far in life?"

"Maybe she just likes to be on her knees," Josh rumbled. His hands found my ass, gave it a possessive squeeze. I grunted. I couldn't keep it in. "Is that it, Marilyn? You just like the view from below?" And then his tongue was in my ear, lewdly sliding over it before pausing so he could whisper a word in my ear. "...slut."

<Slut>

It felt good. Right. I took down the mental barriers and let the thoughts flow into me and wash over me. My lips found Lily's. She kissed me back, then went farther, pushed her tongue into my mouth. Like every part of her, Lily's tongue knew what it wanted.

I felt Josh's strong hands lifting the hem of my dress, this time from the back. The tight clingy fabric rose over the curve of my butt, baring it and resting there at the small of my back. The hem in front also rose, but not as high, stretched like that to look mostly decent from the front, but showing my thonged ass to anyone who might look at me from behind. His hands were squeezing each cheek in turn, inspecting my ass like a piece of choice meat when the elevator dinged.

"You leave that dress just the way I put it," Josh commanded.

<Obey>

I nodded dumbly, and was rewarded by one more kiss from Lily before she again took my hand and led me out of the elevator. "Come on darling," she cooed seductively. "Let's go. Josh will follow. I know he's been wanting your ass since the moment you waddled into the bar with it. And judging from how you were leaning at the bar, I'm pretty sure your ass has been wanting it, too."

I gaped at her. She shushed me with her fingers and then dragged me by the hand out of the elevator. "Someone will see," I meeped as we walked down the hotel hallway.

"Good," Lily replied casually. "They should see. Gawd, you have me so wet right now. I cannot wait to see him buried in your mom ass."

A heavy hand slapped me from behind. Josh. Wound up again by Lily. "Slower," he commanded. Lily obliged him, halving her pace, still dragging me, but more or less driving me by how hard she squeezed my hand. A tug and a light grip would speed me up. A squeeze warned me to never overtake her or face the consequences.

"Gorgeous ass," Josh whispered.

<You belong->

"...here," I finished in my head.

<to them>

The voice corrected. And when Josh put his hand back on my rump, put a finger between my asscheeks to tease the thong, I knew that at least for tonight I most definitely did.

We were in the hotel room a moment later. The lights came on and the door slammed shut behind us, and my dress stayed on five whole seconds more before Josh had it off, pulled over my head and tossed in the corner without a second thought. He reached for me again, but this time, Lily slapped his hand away.

"Naughty boy, we mustn't be so eager," she chided him. "You'll scare poor Marilyn so badly that she won't let her inner slut out. And I think we all want Mommy to be as slutty as she knows she wants to be tonight." Lily was half undressing herself, unzipping her trendy sheath dress and then standing there in nothing more than a pair of panties and some pasties. Jesus. Her breasts were just that perfect. They did on their own what a sixty-five dollar bra was doing less successfully for me.

Lily pulled a few pins from her hair and let them down. She came up close to me, rubbed my shoulders, slid her fingers over my sides, avoided any of the hot-button areas. I started to relax. She was so gentle. So beautiful. I was in awe of her beauty and

her youth and her confidence. I wanted to please her. I wanted to make her happy.

<I want to be good for her>

It was the first time my thoughts had been in synch with the voice in my head. I cannot even describe the sensation of pleasure that followed this. There was a reward for being in synch with this voice. The reward was pleasure itself. From that moment on, I knew I was going to be good. I was going to let it all happen. I was going to forget Dale Buckner. I was going to be this woman tonight. And she was going to do anything this couple wanted.

“Give me a moment to freshen up,” Lily said simply. She withdrew from me, gave me a reassuring look, and then turned to her boyfriend. “Why don’t you help Josh get undressed, Marilyn? And then I’ll come meet you on the bed.”

I nodded, turned to look back at Josh. He already had his shirt off. He was muscular, pleasingly so. Even this realization was feeling normal. Dale Buckner should have done little more than admire his well-maintained upper body. But I’d just let Dale Buckner go. And Marilyn did more than admire. She felt her heart leap.

Josh led me from the room’s narrow entry to the bed in the suite’s main living area. He stood at the edge of the bed, nodded expectantly at me. And I did what he wanted.

I got on my knees, in nothing but my flirty underwear and my wobbly heels. I put my hands on his jeans, found the button and the zipper, and undid them. He helped me a little, easing the tight jeans down for starters and then grunting and touching my head to indicate I should pull them the rest of the way down.

I complied. He stepped out of his jeans and left me staring eye level at his purple briefs, and at the large bulge projecting forward. Purple, I thought to myself, was the color a man wore when he was very comfortable with what was inside those tight briefs. There was a wet spot, dark and glistening, where the bulge was thickest.

“Take me out,” Josh commanded.

I did what I was told. It wasn’t until I was pulling the waistband of his underwear down and freeing his semi-erect member that I realized this was the first time I’d ever been confronted with another man’s penis.

<not another>

And of course. Yes. I wasn’t a man. This wasn’t another man’s penis. This warm, thickening member, already stiff and in fact brushing at my nose, my lips, and over my eyes, was the penis of a man I was going to please tonight. His cock.

Josh’s hands were in my hair, fingers looping through strands and tugging gently. He was pulling my face forward. The sight of his cock filled my vision. The musky smell of him, a thick smell of male sex, hit me like a wave. It seeped into my nostrils. I found myself breathing in hard, holding it there like the smoke from a cigarette, letting it infuse me with the smell and desire of his sex. When at last I opened my mouth to exhale, he pushed himself past my lips.

I sucked. I closed my lips over the tip and as if obeying more locked-away muscle memory, I drew him gently into my mouth. Some air escaped, making wet slurpy noises that seemed deafeningly loud in the quiet room. Josh’s hands tugged at my hair and I clamped my lips down tighter, sealing it off. He let out a slow groan of appreciation.

I wasn’t sure quite what to do next. Muscle memory was one thing, but the knowledge of what to do and in what order was distinct. I looked up at him, hoping for a hint, and came to terms for the first time with my position and the reality of my situation. I was a woman in her underwear in a stranger’s hotel room, and I had his dick in my mouth.

My looking up at him must have been some kind of turn on, because Josh’s next move thrust himself deeper into my mouth. My tongue was forced down, sensing keenly the thick vein of the underside as it glided over the surface of my tongue. I tasted him. The taste was strong, overpowering, all encompassing. I moved my mouth back, to get some room in my mouth, but he held my head in place, and soon was guiding my head to move on and move off like a stroker toy.

“Not the teeth, not the teeth,” Josh snarled, and I tried to pull my teeth back in. “Come on,” he goaded. “Put a little more effort into it.”

“Is she still being too proper,” a voice called from behind me. I tried to turn my head but received a sharp tug on my hair, hard enough to make my eyes water. I was aware that Lily had re-entered the room, was standing somewhere behind me and to the left, and that she sounded positively delighted with the sight she’d found. I felt her hand on my bare shoulder, easing my bra straps off each in turn. “Mmm,” she purred. “It’s okay, Marilyn. You’re with us. No one else can see you. Be who you want to be. Suck my boyfriend’s dick until he’s worked up a powerful urge to fuck you. I already told you - I want to see him hilted in you. I might cum just from watching that.”

Something clicked in my head. Being goaded, being talked to in that fashion, was like some kind of automatic shot of nitrous to my body’s engine. My senses flared. My skin tingled. My mouth clamped down tighter around the thick salty-tasting penis in my mouth, drawing him out and in, now, pouting my lips and cushioning it as it slid.

I was feeling bold, I guess, and that’s why my hand went up to grip him around the base. I was feeling timid, still a little like Dale, not wanting to touch another man’s penis. But the impulse of the moment had me closing my fingers around it, and once that act was done, it didn’t feel gay. It had nothing to do with that, actually. It was more about what felt natural. And all of a sudden there was nothing more natural-sounding than the idea that I should be stroking this handsome young man’s erect penis

into my open mouth.

I pulled off, kissed the tip, watched his reaction, and planned to lick it with just my tongue, but the sight seemed to encourage him enough to take my hand in his and guide it to slap my face back and forth with the head. I took two or three swats without blinking. It was a cheesy porn movie thing to do. I always felt cock-slapping was too far, too degrading. And yet, here I was on the receiving end of it. And then here was me with my mouth open, guiding him back into my warm and willing mouth to the sound of an appreciative groan from Josh.

“Now that’s more like it, darling,” Lily said with noticeable pleasure. She reached down and unsnapped my bra. “Now let’s let those girls out for some air.”

No longer held in place by the helpful push-up bra, my breasts fell, bouncing twice as they settled, then swinging lightly as Josh guided my head and in fact whole upper body in faster, deeper strokes over his now-throbbing cock.

Something had felt strange about Lily’s touch. Now she moved more to new side in order to enjoy the sight of me on my knees and blowing her boyfriend from the profile view and I could see her in my peripheral vision. I’d expected she would be naked, but in fact she was more dressed than before she’d gone in the bathroom. She was wearing a tight-fitting latex dress, real fetish wear, in a bright pink color. There were holes in the chest and her pert breasts poked through, which she was massaging with shiny pink-gloved fingers as she watched us. Her auburn hair hung dramatically in front of her eyes. When she saw me looking, she paused playing with her nipples long enough to blow me a kiss.

“I think he’s ready,” Lily announced. “You ready, baby?”

“mmmph,” Josh replied in a throaty voice.

“Then I’ll ask you gently, Marilyn. Do you want my boyfriend to fuck you, now? It’s a real question. You can say no, and we’ll give you your dress back and you can go home and I’ll ride him until he pops.” Lily tapped her fingers on her forearm, and then Josh eased me off his cock. I hadn’t realized I’d still been sucking.

“Well,” he asked.

“Choose quickly,” Lily ordered. Where had this kinky fetish thing come from? What was going on? I knew they were kinky enough to pick up a stranger as a couple, obviously, but how deep did it all go?

<Deep. Want him deep.>

Oh, how I did. Desperately. The memory of my masturbation session hours before came back strong and sharp. There had been images in my head, even then. Images of myself lowering myself on an engorged penis, of feeling filled. Complete. How could I answer any other way?

“Yes. I want Josh to fuck me.”

Lily clapped excitedly. She helped me up, put her arms around me, and kissed me again, holding it a ten-count. Her tongue slithered around in my mouth and danced with mine. Her bared breasts teased against mine and I now felt the subtle poke of her nipple piercings dragging against my skin. She was so young. Her skin was tight and supple. I loved that feeling, of being woman-to-woman against her. Still she kissed. Her fingers wandered down my spine to tease at my asscrack and snap my thong playfully. She at last chose to end it, stepping back and holding my hand as she guided me to the bed. I gasped when I felt her slippery rubber-clad fingers close around the waistband and yank the underwear down.

“Do you want to look at me while we do it,” Josh asked. His voice was commanding, but also solicitous. For some reason that made me answer the way I did.

“It’s up to you.”

“You know, I like how she acts around us,” mused Lily. “Maybe we should keep her with us for this weekend.”

“One thing at a time,” Josh answered her.

“Oh fine,” Lily said, a mock pout entering her voice. “But can I puh-wease watch you take her from behind?”

I must have made a small noise of alarm, because when Josh touched me next it was with far more care and gentleness. “We don’t have to do anal,” he said gently, already subtly guiding me to my hands and knees on the hotel bed. “But I get the feeling that you want to just be taken. Am I right?”

I nodded. I didn’t know what else to do. He was right. I was so completely unprepared for how to play my part in this dance. The idea of just being taken, acted upon, used, was appealing. I wouldn’t have to risk doing something wrong or betraying an inexperience that a woman my age should never have. I would just have to present myself and be used. Gloriously used.

Lily joined us on the bed, knelt in front of me with her knees spread and one hand between her legs. Her lips hovered in front of mine and she looked me in the eyes. “She’s ready, lover,” Lily breathes, and then I felt him press at me from behind and then my wanton body give way to him.

Josh grunted loudly, taking it slow at first as Lily held my gaze, touching my face with her gloved fingers and running little patterns down my face and over my eyes, lips, and nose. Below, I felt the intensity of the penetration, my own unfamiliar sex giving way with a thick, frictioned slide. Josh’s hands were on my hips, pulling my buttocks gently against him, easing more of my pussy over his member. I think somewhere in here was when I made my first audible groan.

The noise seemed to only delight Lily, who kissed me to silence the moan. Behind me, Josh withdrew. It felt as though half of me would go with him, be pulled inside out, but then he was out almost all the way except for the tip and plunging back in with methodical precision.

There was a rhythm to what he did. I felt myself rocking back and forward on my hands and knees. At first, the steady downbeat had me moving with him. He pushed forward, I moved forward. He pulled back, and I eased back. A hard slap to my buttocks corrected the rhythm. I knew what he wanted me to do. In an ordinary situation, being the one doing it to a girl from behind, I wanted her moving opposite to me.

<This is ordinary. This is right. This is you. Slut. Dirty, dirty girl. Want it. Need it in you. Need to please him. Obey.>

I moaned into the next kiss Lily gave me, moved forward when he pulled back, and brought my ass back when he pushed in, meeting him halfway. This time I felt the ticklish scratch of his balls against me, knew that he'd just entered me fully. I groaned. Lily pushed a bared breast to my mouth, whispered "suck," and I did what I was told.

Josh wasted very little time from that point forward. His thrusts came harder, heavier. There was no other sound in the room save for the occasional smack of my lips against Lily's breasts, her soft panting, and the steady slap-slap-slap of Josh looming over me, forcing himself into my now extremely willing snatch. When I was good, he'd give my ass a rough squeeze. When I needed correction, he gave me a mild smack on the other cheek. It was like he was riding a horse, and, astonishingly, I was responding. Soon he was making appreciative noises and I was doing just what he wanted.

He came without warning, without so much as a grunt. All of a sudden I felt his heavy body collapse above me, hugging me tight to him, and the curious feeling of a warm, wet something in me that spread out and started almost immediately trickling out of me and down the inside of my thigh. It was uncomfortable, but also not entirely unpleasant.

"Jesus," Josh panted, at last sliding off me. When he left this time, it made me shudder.

"Oh baby," Lily chided. "Manners. Manners. You've been bad. Neither of your ladies has gotten her pleasure."

"I'm sorry, miss," Josh said, giving me a gentle caress.

"Not good enough," Lily declared. "You'll wear the belt tonight. But first, come here and service me. I'll make up for you short-changing our guest."

I had no say in the matter. But in truth, I was so revved that I didn't really protest when Lily gently flipped me over and pulled my legs apart. I was mostly surprised. I was used to a shout of pleasure and a girlish squeal from my partner whenever I finished my business. Didn't girls just cum whenever the man was finished? Why hadn't I cum?

"Mmph, and such a mess you left. Really, you naughty boy, you'd better pray your tongue makes me squeal," Lily teased Josh. Her hands were already pushing my legs apart. Her mouth was already pressed to my slit, her tongue teasing my folds and lapping up the fluid leaking from me. I lifted my head, saw her on her knees with her head between my legs, presenting her rear up to a tired-looking Josh who nodded and then put his head under her little latex skirt.

This was not the first time Lily had ever done this. Not by a long shot. No sooner was her tongue on me then I was breathing rapidly. I felt my face flush. I saw my entire chest flush in fact, and realized with a sharp pang of sensation that what I'd been feeling before was nowhere near as intense as it was now that she was doing whatever it was she was doing with her tongue. It made me want to squirm and writhe. It was like the opposite of a tickle - something so good you want more and more of it but at the same time you want to get away from it. That intense. That personal. I was in heaven.

"Mmm," Lily announced, lifting her head to smirk at me, wiggling her rear sassily against her boyfriend's face. "I think we found something mama kitty likes. Should I keep doing it?"

I nodded frantically. With a satisfied smile, Lily dropped her head back down, and I felt her tongue explore my folds, circling the spot that made me squirm but never quite getting there. Damn her. She was prolonging this. She was prolonging it on purpose, to see how loud I'd be, how desperate and red-faced I'd get.

Every so often I'd look up to see Josh's hands on Lily's rump, hear her purr loudly and then push back against his face. Then her tongue would go somewhere sensitive, press down lightly, and I'd have to thrash my head back against the pillows.

I have no idea how long it went on. I know it wasn't quick. By the end, I was covered in sweat, making audible moans and pathetic little begging noises. Lily had brought me close to the edge and denied me no less than three times before at last she let me have it, a long, tender suck straight on my clit, with two fingers buried to the second knuckle in my slit. And then my vision went blurry and I was panting, dizzy, and then collapsed, like every bone in my entire body was turned to jelly.

I dimly remember her making a similar noise, reaching behind herself to hold Josh's face against her, and then climaxing.

Then we were all three of us just laying on the bed, staring at the ceiling, breathing hard and recovering. And then I lost consciousness.

4. Theft

I awoke a few hours later to the sound of a gentle pinging noise in my ear.

I stirred, made a soft noise, and realized that I was still in the hotel room, nude but still in my shoes. Lily and Josh were asleep next to me, naked and cuddled tightly together.

How gauche. I'd fallen asleep.

I realized then, that I didn't really know the protocol for this. I think that even if you have a kinky three-way, if you get picked up in a bar, you're not really expected to stay for breakfast.

Breakfast. Morning. Gawd. I was supposed to be at work in the morning. As Dale. Morning. It was morning. Two hours to cocoon. Gawd.

I slipped off the bed and scanned the room, trying to gather up my clothes as quietly as I could. I looked a fright, almost assuredly, and there'd be no confusion if any of the hotel staff saw me exiting about what I'd been up to. On the other hand, I wasn't me. I was going home and I would cocoon back to Dale and never do anything like this ever again. I'd destroy the file data. I'd go back to my own life.

I tugged the underwear back on, feeling less sexy about the thong and the panty wedgie that returned almost right away. The bra went back on and then the dress. I paused to check myself by the glow of the bathroom safety light in the mirror.

And that's when I noticed that something else was glowing in the corner of my vision. The HUD.

<ACQUISITION COMPLETE. MAXIMUM SAMPLING.>

I concentrated on the icon and to my horror saw that the gadget had malfunctioned again, and sampled both Josh and Lily without my instruction to do so. It was impossible to know when it had happened. I'd been pretty caught up in the moment and there were admittedly other things on my mind. But in the midst of the orgy, I'd sequenced their DNA, gotten a detailed voiceprint, and, obviously, perfect scans of their bodies.

The buffer was almost full now. Three complete profiles, one in progress. One empty slot.

I paused in the doorway. Thought about what I'd actually intended to use the implant for. And reflected that Josh had a very nice body. A confident voice. Striking eyes. And they were here from out of town. He'd be a far less risky skin to borrow than Marilyn, who almost assuredly lived in this city and would get me caught. Plus, it was a man's body. A man's body was something I could handle.

I saved his data, accidentally saving Lily's in the process. Then my gaze fell on the suitcases.

In their haste to come down, pick someone up, and bring that person up for Josh's naughty present, the couple hadn't unpacked their suitcases hardly at all.

A horrible thought crept into my head.

Shopping had been such a pain in the ass. Had it not been for Whitney, it could have been slow, arduous, building a wardrobe for a completely new person. Here in front of me was a packed starter kit. Just ready to be taken.

No. That would be wrong. It was stealing. It was an incredible invasion of privacy.

But so was borrowing their bodies. Their identities.

I looked in my purse. There was cash in there. I'd intended to buy my own drinks. And have cash on hand in case of some kind of emergency. Untraceable currency chips, no way to tie them back to Dale Buckner.

I'd take a suitcase, leave all the cash behind as compensation. Yes.

<Take hers.>

But that was not what I'd been planning. No, of course not. It made sense to have Josh's things. His was the one I'd be using.

<You know what you want. What you really want. Feel so good.>

I shook my head to clear it. I'd been in this body too long. Why hadn't they warned me about this? The longer I wore this other skin, the more natural it was feeling. The voice that came with this body was getting bossy.

I grabbed Josh's suitcase handle, and carefully lifted it. On the bed, neither so much as stirred. I cracked the door open, slunk out, and then set the case down on the other side of the hall. I shut the door, making sure it latched, and then, in case the sound roused them, I ran, dragging the suitcase behind me.

It wasn't until I was in the garage, walking briskly, eager not to be seen or inspected too clearly, that I realized my terrible mistake.

I'd driven my car. Dale Bruckner's car. If Josh and Lily called hotel security, they'd see Marilyn and the stolen suitcase getting into a car that could most definitely be traced back to me.

But on the other hand, I'd left quite a bit of money behind. Probably twice the value of whatever clothes and personal effects

could possibly be inside.

I started the engine, drove quickly, but as naturally as I could, breathing hard and trying to slow my heart rate. This had been a terrible idea. Absolutely terrible. I had no idea what I'd been thinking.

It was four in the morning when I got back in my own elevator, suitcase in hand. Luck was on my side. I met no one in the elevator and no one on my way down the hall to my place.

Safely on the other side of my own door with the bolts engaged, I breathed a long sigh of relief.

Four in the morning. Two hours to cocoon. Out by six, showered, dressed, and ready to go to work albeit still feeling pretty wrecked by seven thirty. At the office by eight fifteen. A little late, but acceptable. There was no time to waste.

I stripped off Marilyn's clothes and gratefully took the heels off my feet, surprised at how pinched and achy they made my feet feel now that I cared to notice them. I left a trail of Marilyn from my foyer to my bathroom and stood in the shower, prepared myself for the cocooning.

I concentrated on activating the HUD, felt it mercifully respond, and mentally navigated the menus flashing in front of my vision until I found the option to revert to my source DNA.

<EXECUTE?>

Yes, I thought to myself. For the love of god, get me out of this body. I will never, ever do anything this wild again as long as I live.

I felt the sharp sting in my arm, the tightening spreading feeling like an iron net encompassing and constricting my body. Then came the burning sensation. Then came darkness.

#

This time, there were dreams.

In the dreams I was not in my own body. I was watching Marilyn from afar, seeing a replay of my night's debauchery from an outsider's perspective. It was and was not an accurate recreation all at once. For a while she/I was engaged in the one-on-one scene with Josh, but in the way that dreams tend to go, little details that were out of place became bigger details and more marked differences.

Soon enough I was standing in a line of people of all shapes and sizes and in varying states of undress. We were all waiting to take our turn with the middle-aged blonde on the bed.

I felt incredible satisfaction at that thought. It was only right that she service every single one of us here in line. The thought that I'd get to watch a half dozen people take their turn on her before I had my chance was exciting. Thrilling. I was aroused already. Suddenly I was wondering if I could wait my turn.

"You don't have to wait," someone whispered in my ear behind me. "I bet you want to have it. I bet you want to have it right now. And be so dirty. Such a dirty, filthy girl."

And then to my horror I became aware of my body. I was still in a woman's body. I wasn't in Marilyn's anymore. But there were still breasts peeking out from a too-tight blouse. There was that same warm, swampy feeling between my legs. There was still this incredible need to have something in me. Deep.

"Go take your place," the voice whispered in my ear. "Take your place. It's what you were born to do. This has been what you were made for. You belong on your knees, offering yourself up. Give in and it will feel so much better. Pleasure unlike anything you've ever imagined."

Those words were ringing in my ears. I was repeating them to myself again and again, like a mantra. "Pleasure unlike anything. Pleasure unlike anything." Even saying it made me feel good, made a deep good tingling needy shiver run through my limbs.

And then I was stepping forward, letting other people in the room strip me. They put cuffs on my wrists and ankles. They put a silver collar around my neck and ran a chain from it to a gleaming device covered in glowing strips and blinking lights. Someone held the cylinder up to my mouth. "Kiss your enslavement," the faceless person whispered. And I did, kissing it. Then the faceless person slid the device down between my legs and inserted it.

#

I woke then, gasping, stumbling forward and breaking through the crackling candy membrane before I was fully conscious of where I was and what I had done. It was such an intense dream. Fragments of what had been said in the dreams were still echoing in my head. I was dizzy and disoriented. I wanted to throw up.

Shards of greenish dried cocoon shell were still falling away from my face when I flipped open the lid to retch, landing in the bowl and dissolving into a sickening bright green gel. Now I was definitely going to be sick. I pulled my hair back instinctively

to keep from throwing up into it and-

Hair.

Long auburn hair.

The impulse to vomit paused. Everything in the vicinity of my stomach was suddenly frozen.

It couldn't be. Impossible. I'd been so careful to select the Dale Buckner pattern. This was a mistake. Maybe still part of the dream. It couldn't be.

I looked in the bathroom mirror. But I already knew deep down who was going to be staring back at me.

Lily.

I was her, down to the tiniest little detail. Silky auburn hair, straight and hanging past my shoulders, just long enough to cover pert little breasts with large puffy nipples ending in cones with a subtle upturn. Slim waist, pale alabaster skin. Even the tiny landing strip that was the sum and total of her pubic hair was reproduced exactly as it had been the previous evening.

Astonishing. And terrifying.

An alarm trilled from the bedroom. A new, wholly different terror gripped me now. Work. I was due to be at work soon. Even on my original schedule I was slated to be a little late. But that was assuming that I'd emerged from the cocoon as Dale Buckner.

The gadget was defective. It had been malfunctioning since the airplane. It was time to face facts. Not only was it malfunctioning, but the malfunctions were getting worse. I hadn't told it to sample Marilyn, but I'd at least been aware it was happening and had chosen to continue. I hadn't told it to sample Whitney, or to acquire the makeup patterns, but I assumed this was the implant obeying subconscious impulses from me and helping out. But sampling Josh and Lily had happened completely in the background. I wasn't aware it had happened until I got the confirmation that it had fully mapped the pair of them. It was possible, I suppose, that I'd been distracted by all the wild sex. But I was certain, unquestionably certain, that I'd not chosen to load Lily's pattern. Mine was the primary pattern.

There was nothing to be done. I would be missing work. I'd make up an excuse, then try the cocoon one more time, making damn sure it was going to revert me back to Dale Buckner. I'd delete the other profiles in the buffer to ensure there was no mishap, no way for the gadget to spit me out as anyone other than Dale Buckner. Then I'd find a discreet but reputable nanotech surgeon to yank the infernal thing out of my wrist and brain and that'd be the end of it.

Still stark naked, I walked Lily's body through the apartment to the terminal at my desk and typed out a terse explanation of some kind of airplane-acquired flu. For extra flair, I made it sound magnanimous, my staying out of the office. I was trying to keep from spreading it because this was a it-comes-out-of-all-ends kind of bug. No one would want me around.

Sure enough, I had a reply back from our germophobe VP pleading with me to stay the hell away in under a minute. Take your time, Dale, wash your hands, and don't come back until you're sure you're good.

Immediate problem solved. I headed back to the bathroom, avoiding too many looks at myself in the mirror. There was no time to get caught up in the antics that landed me in the predicament I'd been in with Marilyn's body.

In my haste to avoid looking in the mirror, though, my gaze landed on the suitcase parked by the door to the apartment. I had forgotten about the suitcase theft. What had I been thinking? Marilyn's dress, shoes, and underwear were scattered in a trail from the case to the bathroom. That was clear enough. I hadn't been thinking.

The suitcase was pink.

My blood ran cold. I distinctly remembered deciding to take Josh's suitcase. And yet, here was a pink suitcase trimmed in leopard print. The chances it belonged to Josh were so slim.

<Open it.>

The voice in my head was still there. But it was different than how it had sounded in Marilyn's body. This voice was more forceful. Domineering.

<Do it. Open it. You know you want to know.>

And suddenly I realized that of course I did want to know. I was, in fact, intensely curious to learn what was in the case. And the damage was done. The case was stolen. There would be no graceful way to get it back to Lily, none that might implicate me. The safest thing to do would be to just toss it in a waste chute, but one from somewhere else in my complex.

Still, a quick little peek couldn't hurt.

<Try it on. Enjoy her.>

No, I remember thinking as loudly as I could. I would not be making any of those same mistakes again. I would not be trying anything on.

The suitcase was jammed full of clothes. Rubber. Leather. Chains. Collars. Sex toys. It was insane. What had they been planning? I thought back to the kinky dress Lily changed into while I'd been busy blowing her boyfriend. Had they talked about going somewhere? Bringing me with them?

Something at the bottom of the case was flashing. I pulled out a rubber dress and then some kind of full-body thing and found

the source of the blink. It was a disk about six inches in diameter. A pair of cameras jutted out from a little arm attached to one side of the disk. There was a single glowing light flashing on the center of the disk.

A graphic flashed in front of my vision.

<ATTEMPTING CONNECTION>

No, no, I thought. Do not attempt connection. Stop. Please.

The disk flashed in my hand. And irised open. Light.

I knew what I was holding.

<PAIRED>, my HUD informed me.

<INCOMING CONNECTION>

I gasped, tossed the disk away from myself. But it was too late. The light radiating from the disk was resolving into a foot-tall holographic projection of whoever was on the other end of the call.

These devices were super expensive. Brand new tech only for high-powered business types a few rungs above my pay grade.

And, of course, as with most technological advances, for sex workers.

The figure on the holopad was short and rotund. There was some kind of image filter on his face. It blurred all his recognizable features away. When he spoke, the voice was also heavily modified.

“Hello pet,” the mysterious caller rumbled with oozy delight. “But what’s this? Aren’t you ready? Tsk, tsk, darling. You’re not dressed. I appreciate the lovely surprise, but you know what I prefer, pet. Dress, please. Something tight. Shiny. And no dresses today. I want you...encased.”

I stared numbly at the projection. The twin cameras swiveled and pointed right at me, imaging me and building a three-dimensional projection for him on the other side.

Oh gawd. He could see me. And I was naked. This was some kind of regular appointment Lily kept. She danced and presumably fucked on camera for horny businessmen. Oh gawd. Had she been broadcasting last night?

No. The gadget was at the bottom of the case. I’d been spared that indignity. But now. I needed to kill this call.

<Do it. Obey.>

The voice again, so insistent. But I had some willpower.

“I can’t today,” I rasped. Lily’s voice was, like Marilyn’s, a little sticky at the beginning. “I’m - I’m not feeling good.”

The portly man in the suit drummed his fingers together. “Oh, honey, sweetness, that’s a tragedy. I’m so looking forward to all your shows this week. I suppose I should be a good boy. And be patient. But.. I confess, I’m not feeling very good. I’m feeling quite naughty indeed.” His chuckle made my skin crawl. “I’ll tell you what: Let’s have a quick show. I’ll double the usual rate. Indulge me, pet.”

“I- I can’t.”

I couldn’t. For any number of reasons. I decided to list some of them. “I get dizzy. I won’t dance well. And I’m not feeling creative enough to be- to be worth that kind of money.”

The caller chuckled again. “Oh darling, you needn’t worry about thinking on your feet. It will be the usual routine. I want you to be my doll. And dollies need not think for themselves. They just need to follow commands. Am I right?”

<Yes. Obey.>

I made a soft noise. Almost a grunt. That thought had been accompanied by a strong impulse of deep arousal. I felt it in my bones almost.

“Go on, dollie. I see your pay chit’s already in the slot.”

An alert flashed in front of my eyes.

7,000 CREDITED

7 grand. For a holocam show. Jesus. And it wasn’t it Lily’s account. It was on an untraceable chit like the one I’d used for traveling in Thailand. It was mine. If I just did what this old perv wanted. More than a fair compensation for my ruined morning, I thought to myself.

“I’ll give you a few minutes. Don’t keep me waiting,” the faceless voyeur all but purred. I got a message the cam feed was blocked. And then I was alone with Lily’s suitcase.

<Get dressed.>

I looked at the contents of the suitcase for the first time with any real interest. He’d said no to dresses. He wanted a full-body outfit. Where had that one gone?

I found it folded to the side of the suitcase. It was a deep black with some lighter smoke-colored panels. It went from feet to the neck, with shoes built into the base. Heels. I’d never seen anything like it before. And I had no idea how to put it on.

<Dress>

I didn’t know how. But Lily’s body knew. Muscle memory kicked in, the same as it had when trying on bras in the changing room. Feet went first, and then I was putting my arms into the sleeves and pulling the outfit tight around Lily’s skinny but toned

body. The garment was so well-fitted that it seemed like a custom job.

The zipper went from my tailbone over my crotch and all the way up to my neck. I was terrified of it snagging in something uncomfortable, but I supposed that was one of many reasons why Lily kept her genitals so well-groomed. Once zipped, the tight latex suit tightened in a half dozen places, pulling me in and pinching a little. I felt the pressure keenly on my crotch, and again on my breasts, which were pressed into pockets that wrapped around them perfectly. The smoke-colored panels were in fact transparent. You could see strips of my midriff, my crotch, and my breasts clearly through the material.

I stood, looking at myself in the mirror and ran a hand along the tight shiny material. It was like wearing a second skin. And there was no way I looked like anything other than a girl who wanted, needed, existed for sex. I felt revulsion for all of ten seconds. And then I let myself appreciate how fucking hot I looked. And then I let myself enjoy how good it felt to wear something that wrapped around every available inch of my skin, touching it, squeezing it all at once. For the first time I fully appreciated that quiz-show fact that the largest organ in the body is the skin, that skin counts, that there are so many nerve endings in your skin that it makes a penis or a clitoris seem inconsequential. I suddenly felt like I understood Lily a little better now.

“Ready, pet?” The voice chirped from the disk, and I saw an icon blinking in the corner of my right eye.

“I think so,” I said hesitantly.

“That’s a good girl.”

Good god it felt so good to hear him say that to me. All on their own my feet moved. I picked up the holocam and set it on my bureau. Then I took a few steps back, let the cameras find me and isolate my body from the background of the room. Then my mysterious patron unmuted the call. His projection returned to the disk. The cameras winked on. He could see me.

“Oh. Excellent. You always have such exquisite taste, dolly. I’m so pleased right now.”

“Th- thank you.”

“Thank you, Sir,” he corrected gently. “Let’s remember our manners, dolly.”

“Yes, Sir.” I found myself nodding, falling into this routine with astonishing ease.

“Now give us a slow turn. Let your owner see his pretty doll.” From the disk, the round little man made a slow turning gesture with one finger in the air. “Palms down and out at your sides. Looking prim and cute.”

I did as he asked, feeling like a music box dancer. When I finished the turn, my patron clapped appreciatively and demanded that I repeat the motion. The sounds he made while I did this were like low growls.

“Delightful. You’re such a picture. Tell me how it feels. Touch yourself. All over. Slowly. And be descriptive.”

I felt funny doing this, the most a stranger in a body I’d felt since this surreal experience began the day before. I was self-conscious, and my hands were moving in little tentative motions. Knowing he was watching while I did this was what, I think, made it feel so strange. Once again I felt like I as in danger of being caught and found out as an imposter.

“You’re displeasing me,” the caller growled. “I know you’re capable of so much more. We don’t need to play the shy game,” he drawled. “I have seen you do all the most depraved things. Such a glorious slut. Done up in your pony gear with your ass thrust out proudly behind you while stud after stud mounted and defiled you. I’ve seen you kneel with a circle of men around you until you wore their spunk on every square inch of your body. And I’ve seen you dress up in your pretty dolly outfits and give me control of your toys. You’ve worn them under your clothes to work for me. And you’ll do it again. So don’t be shy, dolly. You’re my favorite toy and there’s no secrets between the two of us... slut.”

<slut>

The last of his words hit me like a freight train. I gasped, wobbled on the shiny latex-covered heels, and realized that while he’d been speaking, my hands were now roaming my body gladly. My fingers teased my nipples through the tight shiny material, tweaking them until they were painful. In a resting state they were already pointy and puffy, but when stimulated, they were an inch long, little cylinders poking out against the tight latex.

“Better. Now speak, slut. Tell me what you’re feeling.”

“I’m getting hot,” I stammered truthfully. It was suddenly impossible to be anything other than truthful. Every time I did what this man asked, I was feeling the most glorious rush of pleasure. It was like a drug. And I knew what those felt like. You didn’t climb as high on the corporate ladder as I had without accepting a few substances at the company retreat. “I want to do all those things you talked about. I can picture myself doing them. And when you talk about them I want to be naked so badly. I want to be fucking.”

The man on the holocall chuckled merrily. “Better. Much better. But no, I don’t think you can be naked. You’re my doll. This is your skin. Shiny. Rubber. Smooth and slippery and scrumptious.”

I squeezed my breast hard through the suit. It hurt, but I didn’t care. It dulled the ache I was suddenly feeling between my legs, distracted me from the sudden and intense mounting desire.

<Never stop. Stay this way. Be his doll. Do it. Yes. Now. Always. Obey.>

“Please,” I whimpered. “Please, Sir.”

He made a mirthful noise again and clapped his hands twice. "Tell me. Tell me more. Your skin. What do you feel?"

I was dropped to a crouch. I needed to run my hands over my thighs, feel something on the smooth roundness of my buttocks. Rub my pussy through the tight suit. "I feel... want. I want. It's all I can think about. It's so tight. It's like being touched everywhere at once. I want...sex. I want you to touch me."

He made a pitying noise, clicked his tongue. "No. You know the rules, dolly. I never touch. I only look. And you are my favorite thing to look at. So you may keep touching yourself. Through the suit."

I squealed. I made such a pleading noise. Lily's voice was a tiny cute little voice and when it became pleading it took on the pouty little girl quality I'd heard her use last night. I was using it all the time, now.

He called out more commands. And I obeyed all of them. Every time I did, he sounded more pleased and I in turn felt another rush of pleasure. I think, in fact, I orgasmed somewhere in the middle of his praise, but I was too distracted to recognize it at first. The voice in my head was there fulltime now. And it was relentless.

<What were you thinking? Why would you have ever wanted this to end? Isn't this so much better than your regular life? What do you have to look forward to if you stay as Dale Buckner? Work? Sleep? Repeat? No, this is what you were born for. You belong in a body like this. You belong to a life of obedience and unending pleasure. You want more. Don't deny that you want it. You're hooked. It's the best drug you've ever had and you'd do anything for another taste. You'd do the most filthy vile things you could imagine.>

<You WILL do those things.>

<You will obey. You will surrender. It's inevitable. You're mine.>

I gasped, threw my head back. My hair stick to the sides of my face, perspiring and flushed. I was dizzy. And disoriented. And making the most pathetic girlish little squealing whimpers.

The zippers were undone in the suit. I was squatting on the floor of my apartment, rubbing at my engorged pussy with the back of my palm in frantic circles. I was practically slapping it. My breasts hung out of the suit, nipples so hard and achy that I felt them as distinct points almost outside my body.

"I'm afraid our hour is almost up," the caller announced with a playfully rueful tone in his voice.

I gasped again, blinked hard. An hour? We'd only just begun. Hadn't we?

"You've been so good. I don't think you're even feeling as poorly as you said you were before. The healing powers of a good hard cum, perhaps?"

I squeaked, looked up at him, my eyes suddenly wide. "Cum?"

"Yes. And you should cum, now, dolly. You've been such a well-behaved pet. I let you touch yourself, and now you may finish. Say thank you."

"Tha- thank you, Sir."

That did it. To my shame, obeying that simple command was enough to take me. My vision blurred and fireworks popped in my head. My ears rang. I teetered over, unable to hold my balance. I came against my hand, spasming there and curling up in a ball on the stage, shuddering and even weeping a little. It had been far more intense than I thought.

"Feel better, dolly," my caller purred. And then he killed the call, leaving me on the floor of my apartment. The smell of sex was everywhere. All over my hand. In the air.

I caught my breath, got to my feet shakily, and for just a moment had enough clarity to think like Dale Buckner again.

Shame and revulsion took me. Not even the credit chit in the machine was consolation. If anything it made me feel worse. Cheap. Dirty.

I had to stop this. While I was thinking clearly.

Once again I was hustling to the bathroom, peeling the catsuit off and running for the shower.

I vomited into the toilet, coughed, and shivered. Then I was in the tub, sitting there and holding myself as I trembled.

It was time to stop this. Now. Before I lost the nerve.

I deleted Marilyn from my buffer. I deleted Whitney's unfinished profile. I deleted Lily. I was about to delete Josh, but I stopped when I saw how perfect the capture data was. That one. That one I could control. And the chit was coded to him. I'd get the money. And then delete him. Just... no more girls.

Now, though, it was time to be Dale again.

I made certain I had my original pattern selected. Deliberately thought hard to confirm it. Then came the pinching burning pain. Then the cool ooze. Then the darkness took me away.

5. Conquest

This time was worse.

It was all bad. It all hurt.

My sight did not immediately return this time. The pain I was in was keen and sharp and when I broke out of the cocoon shell, I noticed the shell was thicker and sharper.

Gradually my vision returned, but at first it seemed like there was a problem. It was so dim everywhere. Then I noticed the time.

It was dusk. I'd been in there for far longer than two hours. I hurt everywhere in part because I was so stiff. I'd been immobilized for the better part of the daylight hours. But at least, yes, that was a penis I felt between my legs. It had worked. I was back.

There would be no cause for concern. I'd put on my normal clothes and get myself immediately to my standard and very discreet biotech dealer and get him to remove this crazy Thai implant and then I'd take no more chances. This was the end of the adventure. And my god, it felt pretty good to have a penis again.

My elation lasted about ten more seconds.

Then I realized that while familiar, the flesh between my legs was not mine.

Josh.

No.

How had this happened? I'd been so careful. Panic threatened to take me.

"Enough is enough," I said out loud, in a baritone that was not mine. "No more messing around. I'm just getting this fixed."

The pain I felt then was excruciating. I don't as a rule get migraines, but I've heard them described by friends and coworkers enough to imagine that this was sort of what it felt like: a migraine in my entire body. The next thing I knew I was huddled on the floor of my apartment. I was wrapped up in the fetal position while my vision blurred and my body quivered and twitched with sharp deep pains.

My skin burned. Only when I opened my eyes and found myself staring at the discarded catsuit did the pain abate even slightly. Another torturous spasm wracked my body. I reached out on instinct and grabbed the outfit, meaning to grab it, wad it up, squeeze it, bite down on it, anything to keep from screaming out loud.

The moment I touched the garment, though, the pain went away.

<You have a thing to do. Go do it.>

I grunted loudly, let go of the catsuit, felt another tremor tear through me from my eyes down to my toes.

<This is the means to an end. Do not waste time.>

I stood up automatically, gasped for breath, found my body moving all on its own. It was terrifying, like being kidnapped and dragged around my own life in a body that didn't belong to me. Josh was going through my closet while I watched as a helpless passenger in his body. He put on a sharp pair of slacks and one of my best shirt/blazer combos. He laced up my shoes and paused just long enough to give me a devilish smile in the mirror. Then he walked me over to where Lily's holocam disk was resting on my bureau.

<You can choose this. Or the this can continue.>

Was I really powerless? No, I don't think that I was. Did I want to think that? Yes, desperately. Did I know what "this" was? Consciously, maybe not, but I remember that the idea of what to do next didn't feel like it was coming from the implant. It was coming from a giddy desire that was buried deep in my core.

I extracted the pay chit from the holocam, rubbed my thumb on it, and heard it ping loudly and flash green. Yes. The chip was keyed to me. Ordinarily this would pose a problem. Unlike my traveler chit, this would require ID to use. But then... I had ID.

The shifter went into my slacks pocket. My keys were in my hand. And the plan was in my head already.

I would put on more of the kinkwear in Lily's stolen suitcase. I'd go out where I could feel hands other than mine on my body. I'd use that ticket in her suitcase. I'd have a proper wild night. Then I'd quit. I'd keep Josh's body or mine, any male body and cash out. But I'd appease whatever had been awakened in me so fully it'd be too exhausted to override my plans.

This made logical sense to me at the time. I remember that clearly. It made perfect logical sense.

It would be one thing to wear Lily's clothes and use her ticket to this underground fetish ball. It would be quite another thing to go there in her skin. People might know her, expect her to behave a certain way. Worse still, I half expected Lily (who had come all this way with Josh) might just buy another ticket and outfit and be there. If she saw me, there would be trouble and probably the kind of trouble I would not be able to talk my way out of.

So yes. I was driving to the mall. I was going to re-steal Whitney the lingerie clerk's body. The implant was already telling me that the body sizes would be a close enough match. Whitney was probably curvier, but a little tighter fit in those latex outfits would feel extra good. My erection was distractingly stiff in my pants even at the thought.

Extra good.

<Extra good girl.>

#

My walk through the mall was swift and automatic. In Josh's body, I felt this incredible wave of confidence. More than just being in a male body again, I felt in control. I looked good. I was in some of my best clothes. I knew what I wanted. I knew I was on my way to get it.

Fortune smiled on me. Whitney was working today, manning the register at the front. When she saw me, she smiled courteously and crossed the floor to greet me. "Good morning, sir. Is there anything I can assist you with?"

The old Whitney profile had been deleted, but I was well on my way to making a new acquisition. Already the implant was taking her measurements and mapping her voiceprints. I just had to keep her talking and keep my vision focused on her while she moved.

"Yes," I said, smiling casually. "I was in the market for a few things for... someone special."

Whitney nodded professionally. No conspiratorial smile or anything that might make a man any more uncomfortable than he already was to be in a lingerie store. Instead, she just led me to the back part of the store, where the raciest stuff was on display. Her shiny black hair bounced as she walked. I kept up a few steps behind her, keeping my vision focused on her wide hips as they swung in the tight grey pinstripe pants she wore.

"And do you know the sizes of this someone special," Whitney said, turning to face me.

"No," I confessed, rubbing the back of my neck in what I hoped was a convincingly befuddled-looking manner. "I mean, she's about your height. Actually, she looks a lot like you. In the body region, that is."

Still the consummate professional, she just nodded in return. "And do you know the kinds of things she likes? Garters? Thongs? Or, maybe there are things that you like?"

There. I caught it there, just for a second. I'd been hoping for it, but hadn't been sure. She'd checked me out. Maybe my time as a woman had me a little more sensitive to where someone's eyes go when they are talking to you, but I'd definitely just seen Whitney's eyes give me a quick rove. The corners of her lips twitched just a little upward. It was all I needed.

"I'm more than a little intimidated," I said, laughing and giving her a casual smile. I touched her wrist, just once, lightly, hardly a touch at all. Just enough to communicate something. "Is it an imposition to ask what... you'd like? Not you specifically, just... as a woman?" I smiled again, wincing at this supposed slip-up. But one look at her face and I saw the message was received. We were now most definitely talking about what she liked. And she welcomed this.

"Well, to be honest, you want to feel comfortable in what you're wearing. That's a big part of feeling sexy. Some of these things, you're putting yourself on display in a big way, and unless you're super comfortable with displaying that, you're not going to feel good about it and you won't feel sexy."

I nodded solicitously. "Yeah, that makes sense. And I don't want her to look like a complete stripper. I'm rotten at this. Please don't laugh at me, but I just want her to know that I think she's beautiful. Amazing. I want to make passionate slow beautiful love to her. Constantly." I never stopped looking into her eyes when I said this. I watched her face. It twitched only once, but I saw that I now had her undivided attention.

"Wow," is what she said eventually. "Yeah. And what a lucky girl. Seriously."

I touched her wrist again. Held it for longer. "Does that give you an idea of what I'm looking for?"

She nodded once. "It gives me a few ideas." And then she was moving. Her hand brushed my pants as she scooted past me. Dragged just a little too slowly to have been purely a casual contact. I had to keep from making a noise of any kind. The game was most definitely being played now.

Whitney moved slowly through the store, choosing a few things and draping them delicately on one arm while she made her selections. "I think you're shopping for something elegant and sophisticated. But completely sexy, too. A girl like you're... describing, she likes to feel like an absolute luxury. Fine. Adorned. And then... ravished." She made sure to look at me when she said the last part. Licked her lips once.

I nodded. Held her gaze. Smiled just a little.

"Does that sound about right?"

"Yes," I responded. "That sounds more than right. Assuming she wants that."

"I'd want that," Whitney responded. Looked at me again. Daring me, almost.

I nodded at the assortment of lacy little things draped over her arm. "I wish I could get an idea of how those things were going

to look on her. I'd hate to make a mistake."

Whitney just looked back at me for a long moment. I stared back at her, took her in in her entirety. Short, curvy, big doll-like eyes and soft plump lips. In her twenties, but really her absolute prime. Soft in all the right places, but in good shape. Round breasts that stood out proudly, well-defined even in the businesslike blazer uniform of the store. I let my erection grow just a little. We were well into this phase of the game. If she saw a growing bulge, I didn't care. I wanted her. Badly. And I wanted her to know that.

She looked around the store. Empty save for us. The mall was as empty as it had been the other morning. I'd factored that into my strategy. She looked back at me, let her smile grow. "I really shouldn't, but... come with me."

Whitney selected a few more things as she led me to the rear of the store. I guessed there were some things in here she'd had her eye on for some time. As she headed for the changing rooms, she unholstered the smartdevice hooked to her hip and punched in a code. The gate at the front of the store slid down, followed by the shutters. I didn't comment. It would kill the mood.

When we reached the dressing room, Whitney ushered me to a bench situated near a mirrored area. "Wait there a few minutes. You're getting the VIP treatment, so I'd better be making a couple of big sales here. And obviously, none of this ever happened."

I nodded, smiling a little more. "Oh, I'm prepared to drop everything I have in here," I said, meaning it.

"Interesting choice of words," Whitney responded with a flirty smile, then vanished into the nearest changing room. The door shut behind her. I sat still. Waited. Willed myself to stay still.

<soon>

The voice in my head had been far from silent during this entire exchange, but somehow it slid more into the background than it had in the past. I think it was more in line with my natural instincts than it had been in the past, or maybe it was the reverse and I was just falling more in line with it. Thinking about it now, I'm terrified to imagine it might have been the second. In the moment, however, it felt natural and like I was most definitely the one in control of both my thoughts and decisions.

The door to the changing room opened.

Whitney emerged, clad in a black-and-white satin and lace bustier. The cups lifted up her ample breasts and the bustier cinched her tight at the waist. It ended just above her belly button, and below that, the thinnest satin panties rose in a low-slung arc around her hips. She was wearing black seamed stockings and her work pumps. Her hair hung dramatically in front of her eyes, which felt like they were boring straight into mine.

"Well," she asked with an innocence that was arousingly incongruent with the situation, "is this more or less the look of a woman you want to enjoy passionate lovemaking with for hours on end?"

She didn't give me a chance to respond. She was already turning around, giving me an eyeful I'll never forget. I'd guessed the pants were flattering, but the sight of Whitney's gorgeous round bottom with the triangle of satin fabric wedged between those juicy cheeks about knocked me out. It had been a good ass to begin with, but there was yoga at work here, almost assuredly. Perfect bubble butt. She turned her head to smile over her shoulder. She knew it was a killer ass. That was the first time I'd ever seen her look smug.

"It's.... you are." That's all I said. It's all I had to say. Now we were playing. Her smile got bigger as she turned back around and strutted to the couch, looming over me.

"Are you sure? Do you need to get a better look?"

"Oh, I'd like to do a lot more than look."

"Naughty boy. You're shopping for your lady, remember?"

"Well maybe I'm just... shopping for a lady. And I like the one I found."

Whitney turned, slowly, making like she was going to walk back to the dressing room. But I didn't feel like being coy anymore. I reached out, grabbed her by the waist, and pulled her back.

That big round bubble landed perfectly on my lap. She made a shocked noise, but then I had my hands on her and she got suddenly quiet. Her hips moved against my growing bulge and she made a long, slow purring noise. "That's better," I breathed in her ear.

She was warm and soft and delightfully heavy in my lap, just the right amount of weight. I've gotten more than my share of lap dances on the road and if there's one thing I hate, it's a bony ass when it's grinding down on you. My hands slid from her breasts to her hips, holding her in place and guiding her as she wiggled in my lap. I nibbled at her neck, breathed hot air in her ear, and then nibbled on the lobe. This last bit made her arch her back, laying against me and baring her neck with a needy girlish moan.

<take her>

Yes. God, I wanted her all of a sudden. But I loved the noises she was making. Sure, I was an attractive guy, but this was something more. She was so into this, had initiated so much so quickly. Doing it at work with a stranger was clearly a fantasy

she'd been harboring long before I ever entered her store. All the better.

"I want you. Right here. In this dressing room." I whispered it in her ear, then nibbled at the nape of her neck, biting just a little and sucking. She squealed again and wiggled that big squishy butt harder into my lap. She grabbed my hand and pulled it between her legs, urging me to rub at her crotch with the palm of my hand. I was all too happy to oblige.

"Yes," she gasped. "Okay. Quick. The other girl will be showing up in half an hour."

"Then you had better hurry up and undress me."

She moaned again, slid off my lap and helped me get my blazer off before working on undoing my belt. "Are you sure," I teased. "I thought you wanted hours and hours of passionate lovemaking."

"I want anything I can get," she whispered back, tugging my pants down low.

I pulled my shirt off and tossed it aside just as she was tugging my boxers down. My erection was stiff and throbbing when it came free and I saw Whitney recoil just slightly, inhaling sharply. Then she got a glazed, kind of look on her face and then a hungry one. She stood up and climbed into my lap, draping her arms over my shoulders. Now I understood the reason for the recoil. There was already a powerful smell of sex in the air. I realized that Josh must produce a far more powerful musk than I did. I wondered about this, but didn't have long to concentrate on it. There was a curvy petite girl in sexy lingerie writhing in my lap.

Our lips met for the first time. It was frantic, anxious, and a little clumsy. Our mouths didn't quite line up on the first attempt, but so great was her sudden interest that she was quickly wiggling up and down against my painfully hard member while her tongue slipped between my lips. I liked how she tasted. She tasted pretty, sweet, and sure of herself. In that moment, I no longer cared that I was in Josh's body and that my own had proven more difficult to get back than I'd anticipated. I was just grateful to be in a body that had a penis, because I had never in my life been so anxious to put that penis inside a girl.

<now>

Yes, now. It had to be now. We were breathing hard and our hands were all over each other. Frantic exhalations mixed with the wet smacking sound of our lips meeting and breaking free. My hand found the round fullness of her ass and gave it a little slap. She grunted and rose up on her knees, pulling the satin panties aside and baring soft shaved lips that were already red and puffy and parted. Her hand found my cock, squeezed it hard, and then positioned it at her entrance.

I think she'd intended to slide slowly down on it, falling back into my lap, but I couldn't wait for that any longer. I wanted her. Wanted it now. And so I lifted my hips up, thrusting into her in one long, insistent stroke. I thrust upwards, ignoring her strangled shout, ignoring the loud gasp and the little grunt of pain that followed. I held her in my strong grip and penetrated her, pulling her down onto my cock as I took her.

"Oh, Jesus, fuck," Whitney moaned, but she offered no further resistance. I didn't give a fuck, to be honest. From the moment I was in her warm, wet tunnel, the only thought in my head was of fucking her senseless. I became like an animal. It wasn't enough to fuck her. I wanted to possess her completely. Take her. Put myself into her until I was in her fully. In under a minute, I had her bouncing on my lap. One breast was out of the bustier, her long, cylindrical nipple in my mouth and being sucked mercilessly while she squealed and moaned.

I don't even know how I did it, exactly. I just stood up with her still impaled on me, held her ass and back and slammed her against the wall, pushing in and out of her while keeping this curvy salesgirl pinned. I looked to my right, to the wall of mirrors in the changing area and reveled in the sight of the two of us.

There was me, strong, youthful, in Josh's tall, muscular body, pumping my erection in and out of the dark-haired beauty with her legs wrapped around my waist. Whitney's face was contorted in a masque of pleasure and pain, head lolling to one side as I fucked her like a rag doll. I heard a snap of elastic and a little gasp from Whitney and realized we'd snapped the waistband of the outfit's panties. They hung from the intact side and were getting bunched up as my dick forced its way in and out of her pussy. I reached over, found the elastic securing them to her other leg and yanked hard.

The panties snapped free, accompanied by a terrified squeal from Whitney and then fell to the floor. "I guess I just bought those," I grunted in her ear. "You're a talented salesgirl. I wonder what else you can sell me like that."

"Oh please, oh please no," Whitney pleaded.

"No? No? Oh, I don't know if I like how you say 'no,' little girl," I teased. I was reveling in the dominance of this. Every time I embraced it, I was rewarded with a pleasurable throb in my cock. I was close to cumming now, I just realized. And in that moment, I also realized what I had to do. "Come on, Whitney. Say 'yes' instead."

Her head snapped up, looked at me, a moment of clarity coming to her in the midst of her passions. "I didn't tell you my name-oh!"

I had realized this mistake, too, but more or less silenced this thought with my next thrust. This one I held inside her, trapping her there and just letting myself throb in her. I was looking in her eyes, staring deeply into them. "I want you," I whispered to her again.

<to make you good>

“I want to make you good.”

<obedient>

“Obedient.”

<owned>

“Owned.”

I was half out of my mind. But to speak aloud the thoughts in my head made me feel greater and greater pleasure.

<slave>

“Slave.”

Her eyes widened. She opened her mouth to scream.

I screamed instead. The force of the climax was mind-breaking. I pulsed and thrust and felt my hips bucking involuntarily as I emptied myself in her, cumming hard and long and loud.

I saw the scream die on Whitney’s lips. I felt her tensed muscles go limp. I felt her convulsing against me and the wall, spasming more like a seizure than an orgasm, and then slumping limp against me like the rag doll I’d thought of her as when we began.

My cries became heavy breathy grunts and my vision blurred at that point. I felt light on my feet and dizzy and we more or less toppled back to the couch in a messy array of limbs and sweaty bodies.

When I opened my eyes, I saw something on the ocular implant HUD that I’d never seen before.

<INJECTION COMPLETE>

And then a second new message.

<THRALL is READY>

I looked at Whitney, withdrew my still throbbing penis, and saw the ejaculate leaking from her was glowing in the dim light of the dressing room. Blue. A dim blue light.

Whitney stirred, opened her eyes, blinked once, and I gasped. There was a faint blue light behind her eyes. She didn’t speak, just stared mutely at me with a glassy, checked-out expression on her face.

“Get dressed,” I heard myself say in Josh’s voice. Whitney obeyed wordlessly, retreating to the dressing room and not bothering to shut the door behind her. Could it really be?

I was still speaking to her, in a voice so quiet I didn’t even really hear myself at first. The words were just flowing out of me until I realized where they were coming from. The script was flashing in tiny letters in front of my eyes and I was reading along. “You’re mine now. Every time you so much as look at yourself in the mirror you’re going to feel need and want and desire. Your body will hum with your need. And you are mine. So good. So perfect. So obedient.”

Whitney emerged from the stall, her hair still disheveled but back in the tight pinstripe pants and blazer. She looked at me with a faraway expression on her face, but a perfectly placid one. The things I was saying to her were insane. I knew they were insane. But I couldn’t stop myself. No woman would react the way she was reacting, not without something acting on her.

This was the moment that I should most definitely have realized there was something wrong, more wrong than even I’d suspected. This was the moment that I should have run. Gone straight to a hospital. Turned myself in. Done anything other than what I did, which was to pull Whitney close to me, placing one hand possessively on the curve of her ass, squeezing it while my tongue invaded her mouth.

Her mouth opened willingly, her tongue laying flat and submitting to mine as it roved and explored every little space in her mouth. When I at last released her, I felt high, like I’d taken the best drug of my life. “You’re so very pleasing. Wait for me. I’ll come for you. Be good.”

“Yes,” she said, her voice dry and froggy-sounding. “Yes, Master.”

6. Underground

The cocooning passed like a blink of an eye this time. When I broke out of the shell, I was breathing hard and already desperately wanting. I could hear a voice repeating in my ears, over and over and over.

<This is good. This is right. Gonna be a girl again. Gonna be a good girl. So good. Good girl.>

As incredible as it was to fuck it as a man, Whitney's body felt simply amazing on the inside. I don't know if it was the implant goading me on or my own natural excitement or something about the body itself, but it felt right. Alive and virile and mine, all mine. It was everything I could do to not let myself be distracted by the mirror. Not this time. There was much to be done.

Lily's suitcase was a treasure trove of forbidden delights. Some of the outfits and accessories were so completely foreign to me that I didn't know where to start, but one outfit in particular stood out. It was a shrift of a minidress made of colorblocked pink and white rubber. The scoop in the back plunged to about two inches that gathered at the hem. The moment I had it on me, I knew it was not the kind of dress that had ever been designed with the wearing of underwear in mind. The scrap of fabric in the rear was designed to ride right below the sizable curve of my buttocks, leaving most of my ass supported on the sides but bared to any and all who wanted to see. It was scandalous and skintight and when stretched around Whitney's more pronounced curves felt like a dozen or more hands touching me everywhere at once.

There were rubber stockings and a pair shiny pink boots in the exact same shade that clearly went with the outfit. I found a pair of white rubber opera gloves that may or may not have been intended to go with this look but seemed the perfect thing for me.

<Perfect. Ready.>

No, I felt myself thinking. Not quite. There was still hair and makeup. I realized I didn't have much of a clue about what was appropriate for wherever it was that I was going to.

The cocoon slid over my face all on its own this time. I was barely even thinking about it and then I felt my face get wet and run with the cool gel. Then the tell-tale hardening. I felt it in my scalp this time, too. Funny thing: I had the distinct impression of the gel seeping past my scalp, worming its way through my skull and into my brain. You sort of dream in the cocooning, I think, and probably that was all it was, a kind of half hallucination imagining. The funny part was, as the green slime shell dried, cracked and fell away from my now-flawlessly made-up face, I had a deep pleasurable impulse in my head. I climaxed leaning against my closet while little shards of dried cocoon fell off my face and out of my hair.

<Perfect. Ready. Time to go. Time to go be a>

“-good girl,” I heard myself say out loud in Whitney's voice.

The creature wiggling out the door in the rubber dress looked only passingly like the hippy salesgirl from the lingerie store when I passed the hall mirror on my way out. With her wide bottom wiggling in the open air out of the back of the painted-on dress and her ample breasts pushed up and all but spilling out of the pink dress' ultra-low neckline, there was no mistaking my probably intentions tonight. The makeup was extreme, too, thick lines and heavy eyeshadow and dark lipliner that contrasted with Whitney's pale alabaster skin and complimented the dark shiny hair now piled on top of my head in a sweeping up do. I was a living breathing fetish object. And loved it.

Lily's credit chip and the shifter were tucked into the lining of my right glove. The ticket and address were in my hand. I left my apartment and didn't so much as look back. Not this time. There were no nerves. There was no fear of getting caught or being seen. On the contrary, I wanted to be seen by as many people as possible. Seen. Desired.

<Owned>

That thought came as a surprise, an echo of the terrible thing I'd done to the actual Whitney. Owned. And that word. Thrall.

I drove on autopilot. I don't remember making a single turn. I was consumed by the memory of what had transpired in the dressing room. I hadn't really had a time to process it, so great was my elation at the powerful sex and the success of acquiring a fitting body for the night's event. Now, though, as I drove to a part of the city I rarely visited since leaving my early twenties, I re-lived the experience.

What had happened? The implant couldn't be controlled. It was getting worse and worse, revealing functions and features I'd not been told it possessed. And what about the voice that echoed in my head and the puzzling words it burned in front of my eyes? I was concerned, maybe, but also not afraid. As I turned the vehicle down a darkened street and towards a line of cars waiting for valet service outside an illuminated but largely ruined warehouse, I found those kinds of thoughts slipping from my mind entirely.

I thought of Whitney. She would be mine. Mine to possess and control and she'd know nothing but pleasure for the

experience. The rest of her life was perfectly normal, it wasn't a violation, I was now thinking. Just an... enhancement if we ever felt like play.

There was a dark thought here, a troubling one. An evil one. Something about this new thinking was wrong, criminal, and even inhuman. But like the name of a song that's familiar but you can't quite place, these moments of rationality were slippery and hard to hold onto. When the valet opened the door and held out a hand for me, when his eyes dropped to get lost in my cleavage and never really came back up, the thoughts went away entirely. I was desired. I had arrived. Arousal surged in my nethers.

The ticket-taker also took a long look but let me past the velvet rope and into the dark of the party without a word. Oh, but I felt his eyes on me as I walked, however. He was staring at my ass. I could just feel it. Delight overtook me. I stepped deeper into the mass of bodies, forms, and perversions the night offered.

Outside of films and the occasional interactive, I'd never seen anything like the party I was now in the middle of. It was like landing on another planet. Even Bangkok with its dimly-lit clubs and back alleys of interesting perversions paled in comparison to what was before me.

The warehouse was divided into rooms by halls and winding passages. There were big open dance floors teeming with rubber and leather-clad bodies. There were stages in some rooms. On a main stage, a woman in head-to-toe leathers lovingly wrapped a heavy white rope around a naked redhead, binding her to a bamboo frame and then looping the rope in complicated patterns around her body, encircling her large breasts and tightening around them while the redhead moaned and her breasts took on a blueish purple hue. Other stages had similar exhibitions. Some were devoted to groups of five or six masked participants taking turns and fucking each other in every possible combination.

The outfits went from daring but simple fetish looks like my own to the outright bizarre. The deeper I wandered through the party's halls and rooms and dance floors, the stranger and more outlandish partygoers became more prevalent. Men and women totally encased in rubber suits that augmented or disguised their anatomy in every possible fashion. Outfits that resembled horses, dogs, cats, and (in a dark room I left quickly) a tentacled demon with twin rubber cocks that rose up tauntingly every time the thing in red rubber thrust its hips.

I wandered without purpose. My legs carried me and my curiosity drove me from one room of skin and rubber to the next. The music became more primal and the rooms got darker the deeper I wandered into the maze. I'm certain this was not my imagination. By the time I reached the red room, it was little more than a pulsing pounding driving relentless beat.

The room was red and lit with faux torches that cast a dim flickering orange light over the room that made the walls seem like they were on fire. I stepped inside thinking I'd find a door to the outside and get a little air. This body that wasn't truly mine could probably even handle a smoke, something I'd not permitted my natural body in over two years. A smoke would be good. So very good.

There was no other door to this room. It was just a red room with leather walls and an oddly spongy floor that made me wobble on Lily's spike-heeled platform boots. I turned to retrace my steps and found the way suddenly blocked by a pair of twins in matching white rubber bodysuits. They wore carnivale-style masks and had the longest fingernails I'd ever seen.

I tried to push past, but those clawed fingers reached out and held me lightly back. "Excuse me," I tried, but the one to the right shook gently back and forth. The other gave me a more forceful shove and on the spongy uneven floor, it was enough to tip me backwards. Down I went, landing on the soft ground while uttering a surprised cry.

The one who pushed me was fast. No sooner was I lifting my head and wondering what this floor could be made of was she down on top of me. She straddled my torso and clamped tight with shockingly powerful thighs. I tried to protest but her hand shot out and grabbed my throat, holding me there. I gagged and was forced to relax my head back against the soft foam floor. Her hand stayed right where it was.

I had only a moment to wonder what was happening or where the second twin might be. Then I felt her, crawling between my legs, forcing them open and bending them at the knees. The short little rubber dress I was wearing rode up when my legs were pushed apart. Rubber-covered fingers teased at the edges of the little matching rubber thong I wore with the dress. One finger wiggled under it with a loud squeak and snapped it against my skin.

I squealed, felt the hand at my throat tighten, and bit down hard on my tongue. I'd not had long with Whitney's body yet and was unprepared for the difference in the sensations felt in the same body parts between the different bodies I'd been borrowing. Whitney's was young, nubile, and largely unaccustomed to some of the touches now being given me. It bucked and writhed and my mind lit up with white-hot sensations and I realized I suddenly wanted to be very, very loud.

A stray memory - just how noisy Whitney'd been when I took her in the changing room. I squealed again, ignored the tightening grip on my throat. The fingers probing me from below were wiggling beneath the snug thong and pressing gently on my mind-breakingly sensitive perineum. Another finger pushed gently between the folds of my sex. My squeal became a gentle moan. I relaxed and lifted my hips, felt the twin straddling my chest relax her grip. She smiled down at me from behind her mask. As her twin pushed a second rubber finger into my pussy, I saw her deep blue eyes all but glow.

The fingers withdrew from me and I made a pleading little whimper in response. Deft fingers removed the thong entirely,

sliding it down my smooth thighs. I whimpered again for the fingers, wiggling my hips earnestly, but I didn't get them.

I got her tongue.

I forgot all about wanting the fingers, at least at first. I couldn't see the twin with her lips now pressed to my sex and her tongue teasing into my folds. Somehow this only intensified the experience. I writhed and made little whimpering noises and was rewarded by the straddling twin, who placed her free hand on my breast and began to knead it and massage it through the restrictive rubber dress.

Between my legs, her twin's tongue danced in and out of my pussy, pausing to lay flat and put pressure on my labia. I groaned, my mouth open and my pulse racing. These two strangers seemed to know all the places my body would respond with the maximum amount of pleasure. Even as I thought this, fingers found a nipple beneath the rubber dress and tugged it hard enough to make me moan in a most wanton fashion.

I was losing control of myself in a hurry. My heart beat rapidly in my chest. My cunt throbbed. My breasts were aching for even more of this exquisite torture. I was panting, I now realized, and my lips were moving of their own accord.

"Please," I found myself begging these mysterious women. "Wanna cum. Wanna feel you. Please. Anything. Anything."

This seemed to please the one straddling my chest. She tugged harder on my nipple and gave it a little twist that made me shudder and exhale loudly. Her smile behind her ornate alabaster mask was one of pure triumph. And then she let go of my throat and released me from the grip of her powerful legs - but she didn't get all the way up. At the exact same time, I felt the tongue worship cease beneath me and felt the other twin lifting her head.

I couldn't see what was happening down there, but in front of me, the first twin was fingering clasps at her hips. I realized when they popped free and she quickly and with practiced grace started to peel a panel off the bottom of her kinkwear that the crotch region of her outfit was detachable.

I would be expected to reciprocate the pleasures I'd been getting from her twin's mouth. That was fine. Even as a man, I've never shied away from eating a little pussy. And this? This was even hotter. I felt my own sex throb warmly at the thought of participating in this sapphic act. The panel of her outfit came away.

Penis.

I was looking at a rapidly-engorging penis that, now freed of its tight latex encasement rose urgently up to brush my lips. I gasped, opened my mouth to express my surprise, and then this astonishingly-convincing trans pushed her member into my mouth and silenced me.

I don't know what made me do it. Maybe I was shocked. Maybe I was so deep in the throes of the eroticism of the scene that I didn't care. Maybe I was becoming so comfortable in the body of a woman that this felt like a natural act. More than likely, though, it was what she said as her swollen cockhead pushed past my lips. It echoed a phrase flashing across my vision.

<good girl>

I can't delude myself. That's what made me suck. That's what made me purse my lips tightly and form a seal. That's why I moaned around the cock in my mouth, tasted the secretions on my tongue and flicked my eyes up urgently at the cocks owner, who only smiled wider.

I'd forgotten all about the twin until that moment. I felt strong insistent hands lifting my legs into the air and rest them on shoulders I couldn't see. And then I felt the second erection penetrate me.

It was surprising. I hadn't been expecting it, not truly, not even after the revelation of what even now was pushing in and out of my lips as I sucked and teased with my tongue. The salty taste of the precum in my mouth was growing strangely sweeter the more I sucked. It was pleasing, addictive even. It turned even sweeter when the second erection slid between my legs and pushed in one fluid motion into my sex.

Pleasure. It was more than I could take. I felt bad for not being able to last very long, but this body... it just felt things so intensely. I remember thinking even as I climaxed that I would have a hard time saying goodbye to this body. I'd never cum that hard, not in any body. It blanked my head and made me moan like a dirty, dirty whore. The one straddling my chest didn't let up any more than her twin did. Neither felt any pity or took any consideration for my orgasming and shuddering body. They just continued to use me, pistoning in and out in synchronized rhythm.

As I was blissing and already feeling my arousal return, one of them spoke. I'm not even sure which was the one who spoke. I was that far gone. I heard what was said, though. I heard that incredibly clearly.

"Slave," she whispered at me.

"Thrall," the other echoed.

My eyelids flew open. But it was too late.

They came together, in perfect synchronicity. I tasted something sweet and warm and soothing at the same time that I felt my sex flooded with a warming sensation that spread impossibly through my whole body. The world glowed blue behind my eyes and I orgasmed again. At least, it felt that way at first. But then it didn't fade. It stayed. Pulsed. Wrapped itself around my mind like a warm blanket and kept me awash in the stunning hum of it all.

“Injection complete,” I heard one of them whisper tonelessly.

“Rise, Thrall,” one of them commanded, even as they both withdrew from me and re-fastened the crotch panels of their outfits.

<Rise.>

I did. I did not so much as hesitate. To do anything but obey would result in the loss of the pleasure that gripped me and held me tightly.

“Strip, Thrall,” one of the twins commanded.

<Strip. Obey.>

I unzipped the dress and peeled it over my wide hips and ample behind.

<Good Girl>

Oh. I was such a good girl.

“Time for an upgrade,” a voice I had not heard before whispered in my ear. And then it all went black.

7. Showroom

The cold, dark, sticky feeling of being cocooned was different this time. It took a much longer time for me to awaken and become cognizant of where I was or what was happening to me. I felt sluggish and stiff, as though I'd been still for a long time. Hours. Days.

<Awake. Time to Obey.>

I moved. The shell cracked.

Someone was helping me this time. Unfamiliar hands were peeling large chunks away from my body.

The light was blinding. My eyes ached and I shut them for a moment to acclimate.

<Open.>

I couldn't help myself. I opened my eyes.

I was in an unfamiliar place. It was a large windowless room, pristine and antiseptic and flooded with a pure white light. The man peeling the shards of cocoon from my body wore a white surgical outfit and leered at me from behind his surgical mask.

"Excellent," this stranger spoke in barely-accented English. "Responsive and perfectly matched."

Something moved in my peripheral vision and I saw a second technician peeling a cocoon away from another figure next to me.

It was Whitney and it wasn't all at once. Her formerly straight brunette hair was now wavy and strawberry blonde. Her pale ivory skin was a deep caramel. The love handles and other imperfections were all but gone from her body as well. Her buttocks were a little rounder and more toned and her breasts rose proudly from her sculpted chest. She was staring straight ahead. When the last shard of the cocoon came free from her sex, she gasped and then turned her head to look back into my eyes.

I didn't need to look. I saw it in her eyes. Without even inspecting myself, I knew we were both at this moment looking into a mirror and seeing this same transformed but familiar person staring back at them.

I felt a buzzing deep in my skull, winced, and saw Whitney wincing as well. Something compelled us to both look straight ahead. My muscles were not responding to my own control anymore.

"Would you look at that," a familiar voice echoed in the nearly-empty showroom. "I have to hand it to you, Charlie. I was a little skeptical when you approached, but I must say I'm impressed. Which one is Dale?"

Two men were standing behind me. One crossed in front of me.

"This one," said the Thai shop owner who sold me the implant - without a trace of the accent he'd been using in Bangkok red light district. He hefted one of my breasts and gave it a gentle squeeze. I moaned as slutty a moan as I'd ever made. He smiled, showing rows of teeth no longer yellowed and crooked but pristine and straight. "I apologize for the delay. I tried to get him to turn it on while he was still in Thailand."

The second man circled me. Moved into my field of vision. "No, no, man, it's cool," said business-bro-turned-traitor Jonah. He took a long time, looking me up and down as though appraising something fine. "Definitely worth the wait. How much of this is what he dialed in and how much of this is you polishing it up?"

"Largely an acquisition," Charlie the fake Bangkok contraband dealer confirmed. "We just made a few final tweaks once we had full control. She meets your specifications?"

"Oh hell yes," my former best friend said with a positively douche-y grin on his face. "More than meets the specifications."

He reached out and thumbed my left nipple. It stiffened almost instantly and I made another involuntarily slutty moan.

"Dale. Buddy. You still in there," Jonah inquired.

"She can't respond. She's in showroom mode," Charlie told him matter-of-factly. "I will undo the locks when the purchase is complete. And of course you can keep as little or as much of the personality as you wish. We do recommend the complete wipe and overwrite," the dealer continued.

"Yeah, yeah, I paid for the full personality package, didn't I," Jonah groused. Then he looked to my right, to Whitney. "And what's with her? What's with the two-for-one special?"

"Ah," Charlie said with just a hint of regret. "I'm afraid we had some difficulties. Your friend tried to fight the suggestions. The same implant is used for our recruitment efforts. Most regrettably, the thrall injection cannot be undone. This is why I was against allowing it to deploy here in the States. It's going to be very expensive to cover this girl's disappearance."

Jonah glared. "Hey now, you're not going to charge me for THAT. It's your fuck-up, man."

"I'll let you have her at-cost," Charlie offered. "Package deal. I can't keep her around. Plus, who doesn't want twins?"

Jonah frowned, rested a hand on my breast while he contemplated, then thought the better of it and put the hand between my

legs. I was wet down there, nervously anticipating any chance of sex. “I don’t need two,” Jonah countered, lazily dipping a digit into my pussy and making me shudder and moan again.

“Sure you do,” Charlie countered. “Mai long mai roo.”

“The pair of them for two hundred k,” Jonah offered.

Charlie looked insulted at first, but then nodded. “Very good.”

“And I want a distinct personality package for the salesgirl,” Jonah added. “Don’t pull a fast one and upload carbon copy personalities.”

“What would you like,” the now-cranky dealer groused.

“Let’s see,” Jonah mused, still idly fingering me as though this somehow would help him think. “Let’s make one the good girl and one the bad girl. That could be fun. One sweet and virginal and one a complete whore. Just for variety.”

“Of course, sir,” the dealer said, unable to disguise his disdain for the complete lack of creativity my former colleague was displaying.

“And you’re sure this one was Dale,” Jonah said, wiggling his finger deep enough into me to elicit an even more whorish sound from me.

“Yes.”

“Dale. Buddy. Sorry about this. You were in my way for the promotion. You were in the way of a lot of things, actually. I had actually considered the possibility of hiring a hit man to arrange an accident while we were in Bangkok, but then I met Charlie here. Quite the international businessman. And he’s got a hell of a product here, does he not?

I could do nothing but moan.

“This is better, isn’t it, gorgeous? Yes. Yes, it is. And wait until we get you home and you two see what you’re going to be wearing for me.” He smiled absolutely wickedly. “Oh. Right. Well, you won’t really be you anymore. We’re gonna do the wipe now. But I wanted to thank you right now for being such an absolute sucker, Dale Buckner. You’re going to enjoy your new life, though. I can say that for absolute certain.”

Charlie the slaver held out a silver cylinder, which Jonah took quickly. “Free gift,” Charlie explained. “Latest tech. Makes her upgradeable in the future. Just pop it in. Added bonus: it patches into those same nerve bundles that end in the clitoris. Zero to desperate at the push of a button.”

Jonah seemed bemused by this. He held it up to me, let me have a long good look at it and chuckled. “Hmm. Now that’s gonna be fun, isn’t it, baby girl? Be good for daddy now. Kiss your enslavement.”

I did. I had no choice. But I think here, for a moment, that even if I had a choice the seductive promise of it might have made me do it anyway. I’d been well primed by my deviances with the gadget. There was no going back. There hadn’t been for a long time.

Jonah slid the cold silver cylinder between my legs and inserted it with not a peep of protest from me. There was a sharp pain and then a numbness that gave way to slow, twisting arousal.

And then, as I watched with my last conscious thoughts as Dale Buckner, Jonah ran his credit chip on Charlie’s palm scanner. I had a moment to think back on everything that had transpired. I wonder now, briefly, in the moments before they throw the switch and blank me out, if I’d do anything different.

I am experiencing such a disgusting amount of pleasure at the anticipation of who I’ll become when I wake. I can hear Whitney now, also moaning as she powerlessly reflects on the same kind of things.

No. I don’t believe I’d do anything different. I couldn’t give up this pleasure. And I don’t think you’d be in any position to judge me if you could feel this too. After all, it’s like the man said:

Mai lorng mai roo.

About the Author

Solar Harris resides in southern California and retains dual citizenship in assorted virtual worlds on the internet. Having recently been ordered to do a better job being a writer in the 21st century, Solar keeps a tumblr of assorted musings, porn, writing sketches, and other quickies at:

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Solar's next book will be published in Q1 2014. If you liked this story and want more, you should also totally let her know that via social media.