



DEMONIA

Story by an unknown German Author

Illustration by Tawny Tomsen

English Localization by WalkingInShadow86

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T&T Products





PART I

Being a young blonde woman living alone has its downsides.

One is being constantly wary of creeps who want a piece of my skinny, finely-toned butt. Another is that said skinny butt, for all its toning, didn't have the weight necessary to jam my overstuffed luggage closed. I sighed as I pressed my posterior into the plastic shell hard enough to leave two perfectly round dents, but it refused to shut. So much for all those workout videos. Buns of steel, my butt! I thought redundantly. Later, when my mind would frequently wander back to these last few moments of freedom, the stupidity of that statement would occur to me. But at the time I was running on willpower and dying embers of coffee. All I wanted was to feel the Australian sand under my toes. As I tried in vain to close the suitcase, I lamented that my vacation wouldn't start until tomorrow.

Little did I know the vacation I had planned would never start at all.

The doorbell's authoritative tone interrupted me. In a fit of frustration, I stood up and marched to the door. Unleashing my pent-up annoyance on the humble hinges and throwing the door wide open felt good in the heat of the moment, but it was the biggest mistake of my life.... so far.

As I said, one downside of living alone was taking precautions against creeps and opening the door wide for strangers in the middle of the night was a pretty big violation.

I should've checked the peephole.
I should've put the chain on.
I should've done a lot of things....



Her face was the pale silver of a new moon. Her chilly, brooding demeanor was the wisps of cloud passing in front of it. Her long black hair was a river flowing through the nighttime.

"Uh, hi," I said. "If you're here for the Kate Beckinsale lookalike contest, that was last week."

The woman in the doorway smiled. She had the catty catwalk air of a haughty supermodel and the heroic chic figure to go with it, with skin like a stretched membrane over brittle bones. But unlike actual heroin addicts, who shook like fragile leaves waiting their turn to fall from the branch, an incredible inner strength radiated from her. Every movement was slow, but precise and purposeful. Also, I doubted she could afford both a heroin habit and the expensive black leather getup she wore, unless she really was a supermodel.

Then I noticed the blue duffel bag next to her boots, and--I kid you not--my first thought was, She went to the gym in an outfit like that?

I wanted to burst out laughing. Probably because it was the dead of night and I was running more ragged than a mummy on a marathon through a briar patch 26 miles long. Faint police sirens and dog barks came through my window. I longed for some actual cops and/or dogs to come through my window and rescue me from this awkward encounter, but alas, it did not happen.

"Sorry," I added tersely. I don't know why.



"Hello, Claudia," she purred. Her voice had an Eastern European accent, which accented her very Slavic cheekbones.

A smile spread across her face. Her dark lipstick made it look eerily like blood oozing from a prone dead body. She raised her head and, as the lights glinted in her eyes, I noticed her irises and pupils were so dark they blended into one. Before, I wrote that off as her hair throwing shadows across her face, but now I realized her eyes were just two soulless pits. The warmer her smile got, the chillier I got. It went through my body and cut me to my core.

Suddenly, decades of women's lib fled from me. My body felt like a frail, fragile, delicate little flower that had to be sheltered from the world before my tender flesh was mercilessly torn open and penetrated. Normally, I wasn't one to say 'Get back in the kitchen', but if getting in the kitchen would keep the thing in my doorway at bay, I'd gladly outrace Phyllis Schlafly herself. My exposed skin crawled like a million invisible insects were pouring off the goth chick's body and clambering up mine. Why did I wear Daisy Dukes? Why did I wear a breezy little top instead of, I dunno, a parka?

"Did you want something?" I asked. "A subscription to the Watchtower? Or I guess for you people it'd be, like, the Pitchfork?"

"Do not worry," she cooed, putting an odd sing-song lilt on all the wrong syllables. "I have found what I am looking for."



From a dead stop, she lunged at me faster than my eye could follow and rammed into my chest like a cannonball traveling at light speed.

My ribcage threatened to splinter from the strain. 'Don't!' I wanted to cry. 'Most of me is inside there!' Heart, lungs, stomach.... Except for my brain, which frankly gets me into trouble more often than not, everything that kept me alive was inside my chest. Although I had grown accustomed to being a discrete, complete entity whose existence in the world was guaranteed and inviolable, truthfully I was just a little sack full of meat, blood, and delusions of grandeur. All a human being is, really. Just a sack, falling through time and space, waiting for the inevitable moment it splatters on the cosmic pavement.

As my back slammed into the ground, I was convinced this was that moment.

My relevance to the universe was just a fleeting dream. Row, row, row your boat.

Then my head hit the floor; the back of my skull must've been the gatekeeper for all my weirdo thoughts, because a few dozen of them got knocked loose and scattered around my skull.

The woman straddled me and bent her head forward until her pale porcelain face was two inches above mine. I wanted to run my tongue along her skin and suckle her eyebrows. I wanted her to whisper sweet nothings in my ear in Manatee. I wanted her to draw a pretty picture on my butt with crayon and hang me, exposed, in the Louvre for all to gawk at.

Like I said.... weird.



Her hands pressed into my shoulders like steel beams. Her thighs tightened around my hips like a vice. I tried to squirm free but having a writhing young woman between her legs only seemed to excite her. She pressed her hips into mine, making pain explode inside my crushed pelvis. There was no feminine softness between her thighs, only the same machinelike strength that radiated from the rest of her. She smiled, exposing her gleaming, bone-white teeth.

"Let us know each other better," she said. "Let me peel away your human skin and expose the animal underneath."

"Oh, God!" I moaned.

"He cannot help you now." She licked her gleaming teeth.

I was supposed to be safe inside my habitat, the place I called home. But this predator had invaded it and turned it into my grave. Her hand slipped around my throat. Her hard grip made the blood pumping through my artery ten times as noticeable. Reminding me I was just an easily-punctured sack of meat and blood. The blood pounded in my ear, throbbed in my throat. I begged for my heartbeat to stop pounding so hard I couldn't ignore it. She pressed her thumb right into my trachea, sealing my airflow with surgical precision.

As I gasped for breath, I threw my arms out and beat my palms against her face. She didn't flinch once. Primal instincts took over and made my body thrash and spasm. Billions of years of evolution compelled it to keep existing. But I was the prey and the woman was my predator, and my weak little body wasn't enough to fend her off. She had cut my airflow off as surely as a guillotine blade.

The world dissolved into blackness, as deep and dark as the eyes of the woman above me....



As I dove into the deep end of my unconscious mind, I found myself drowning in memories. Like bubbles floating carefree through the air, a procession of dazzling illusions of days gone past drifted through the mire of my mind. I sank like a stone among old crushes and familiar books and moments of melancholy. Fragments of who I once was, before I evolved into what I am today.

I drifted past the graduate student part of myself, who lectured, "Individual organisms don't evolve. Evolution only happens through successive generations."

"Shut up," I replied. "I was being poetic."

She raised her nose at me and tutted, "Alright, Jodie Foster."

God, I was so insufferable I wanted to reach out and slap her. Make her suffer for being so insufferable. However, since I knew her intimately, I also knew how much of a turn-on it would be for her.

"Anyway," I said as I drifted away from her. "Joke's on you. You spent all those years studying for a biology degree, and you're going to be murdered before you can use it."

"You don't know that!" she yelled. Mostly to be heard over the distance between us, but I swore I heard her composure cracking a little too.

The deeper I went, the darker my surroundings got. The water pressure intensified until moving my limbs was a chore. It solidified around me. My hands were pinned by silk and my face was smothered by cotton. As the fabric crushed me, I could see nothing but darkness and hear nothing but the muffled sound of my own crying. I couldn't move. I couldn't breathe. Everything pressed around me....



This is my earliest memory, I realized.

On the eve of my first vacation, I decided to be a little scamp and hide inside my parents' luggage. I even prepared a little joke for when they discovered me. 'Look!' I would shout. 'Mommy packed ME for the trip too!' They would laugh and we'd all have a perfect Kodak Moment. But the soft fluff was too comforting and I was soon asleep. By the time I woke up they'd already zipped the luggage up, parked it by the front door, realized I wasn't home, and spent hours frantically searching the neighborhood.

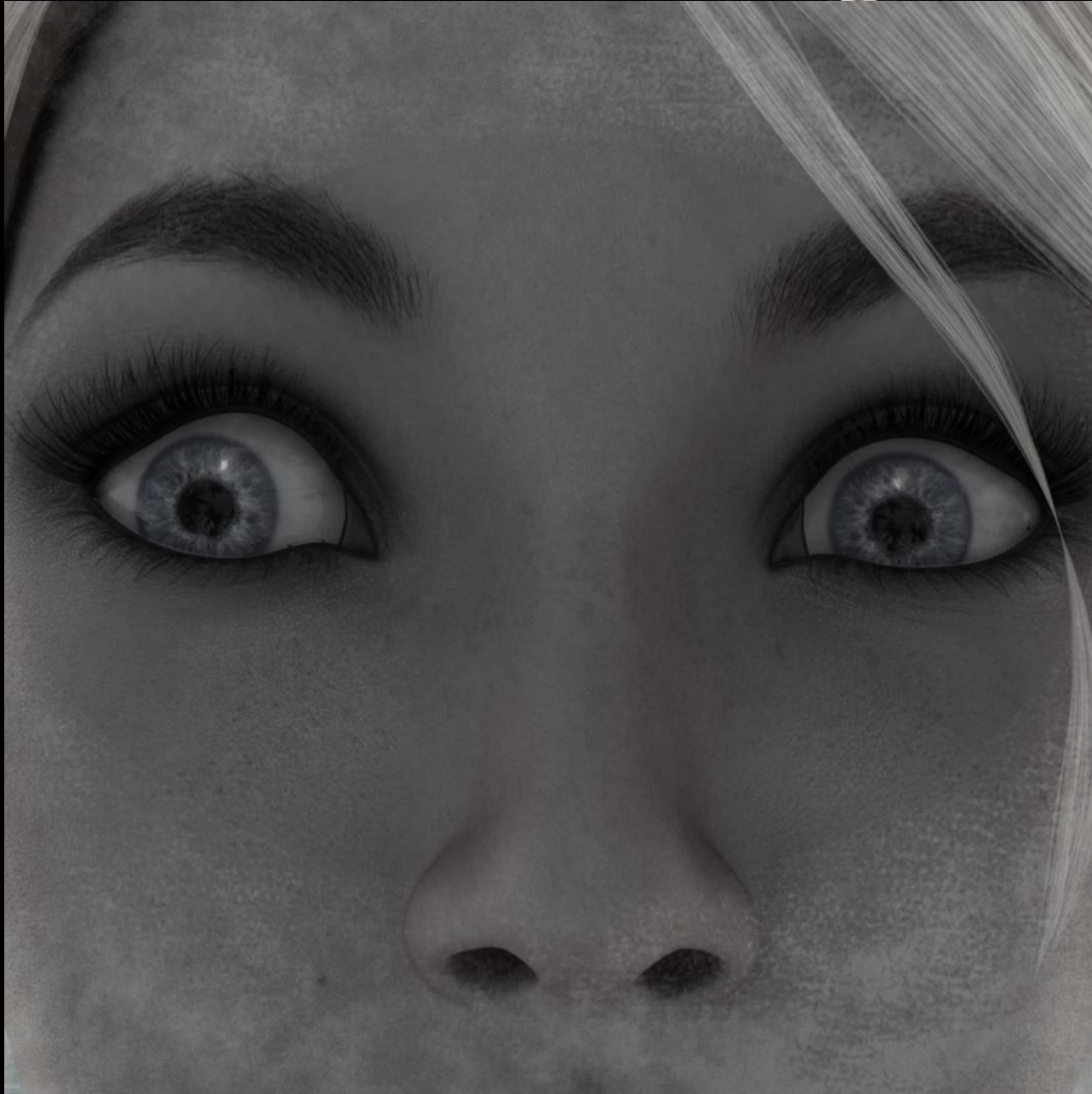
At first, I screamed my head off inside my cloth prison, but as I lost the energy to keep screaming I relaxed into its gentle, all-encompassing embrace. What was so bad about this? I wondered. If I couldn't move, everybody would have to pay attention to me. If I couldn't move, nobody could blame me for anything. If I couldn't move, everybody would have to make my decisions for me.

As a little girl, I discovered I kind of liked being restrained. Looking back, it was probably a return-to-the-womb thing. Longing for the pre-conscious unity of an infant, not wanting the responsibility of making choices, or something. Either that, or I secretly longed for the life of a veal calf.

Suddenly, a rope net wrapped around me, scooped me up like a sardine, and lifted me out of my watery grave. The ropes whipped into my body hard enough to sting; the rough fibers tore my skin like a dozen Indian burns. Burning cuffs of fire wrapped around my wrists and ankles and thrust me into the hot, burning light above the surface of my mind.

It was like being born again.

Especially the part where I wondered what the heck was happening and why it was happening to me.



I woke up on my bed, soaking wet. As my dreams crashed against the sharp surfaces and hard edges of reality like waves breaking on the rocky shoreline, I assumed the oceanic and birthing symbolism that filled my dreams had somehow manifested itself in reality. That the water rolling across my reclining body had been summoned from the ethereal dreamscape and manifested into existence by the force of my will alone. That I had become a goddess of the seas, who could wreck coastlines with a sweep of my hand

Then I realized it was because the thermostat was turned up hotter than Chris Hemsworth covering Motley Crue's "Red Hot" in the noontime Sahara Desert.

God, I have weird thoughts. We women keep every bizarre thought bottled up inside until the instant we lose control and it all spurts out.

I tried to lift my head off the pillow and sent a sheet of water sliding off my face and pouring down onto the pillowcase like a one-woman rainstorm. My shirt clung to my chest like a serial groper and my Daisy Dukes rubbed my inner thighs like coral. No wonder water had figured so prominently in my subconscious mind. I was leaking it at an alarming rate. They say seventy percent of the human body is water; with how much I'd sweated out, I was down to twenty percent. Thirty, tops. As my fuzz-filled mind slowly embodied more of my body, and my terra incognita--my undiscovered land--rose from the seas into which it had submerged, I decided to try some exploratory measures.

I decided to try moving.

Big mistake.



I was in a box tie.

My arms were crossed at the small of my back. A rope wound around my forearms and wrapped around my chest so tight I couldn't move. When I tried to move my hands, the rope cut into my torso like dozens of flaying knives trying to slough my skin off and butcher me into pieces.

Come one, come all. Get yourself some authentic human sirloin, brisket, flank.

Flexing my shoulders like a circus strongwoman, I pulled harder. Tried to rip free of my bonds and make my triumphant escape. Unfortunately, the ropes pulled harder too. Now, they carved into me like sawblades and cut to my bones. The length of rope between my breasts pressed on my sternum until it was about to snap like a wishbone. The length of rope around my flat belly crushed my waistline like a boa constrictor. The length of rope across the nape of my neck yanked my head forward like a simpering supplicant to that.... that goth.

Every breath was a struggle against the cords cutting into my body. As I gasped down lungful's of air and attempted to fill my crushed lungs, I realized the wad inside my mouth wasn't just cottonmouth. It was a ballgag, pre-etched with my teeth marks. A piece from the Claudia Miller collection--by which I meant the sack of BDSM toys under my bed.

I screamed into the gag and thrashed around on the bed to free myself. I kicked my legs out, but a thick rope around my ankles held them together like a mermaid's tail. I flopped around like a fish plucked from the water. Most human beings are gifted with four limbs. To walk. To run. To crawl. To give us agency over our own lives. But she had taken mine away and reduced me to one, long slab of meat.

I stopped moving and stretched out on the bed, waiting for the butcher's knife to fall.



I relaxed.

Well, I went limp, anyway. Nothing about this was "relaxing", per se.

The creature in female form had expertly knotted the ropes so they tightened when I struggled and loosened when I stopped. What was she after? She invaded my habitat like a predator in search of a killing ground, trussed my limbs and stuffed my mouth like a roast pig, and.... left me in a kinky bondage position? No matter how much I loved BDSM, this was not safe, sane, or consensual. It wasn't any other kind of sensual, either.

Alas, my body did not get that memo....

As I gasped for breath, my bosom scraped my sweat-drenched shirt. The wet fabric licked my nipples like a roughened tongue. The rope burns still ached, which made the tingling pleasure of my teased tits worse. I was powerless to control the waves of pleasure coursing through my body. As a biology major, I was well aware how organisms responded to stimuli. Particularly at the bottom links of the food chain. Stimulus responses were primal and ancient; they had evolved long before the screaming voice of consciousness started asking, "Where am I? Why am I here? How can I stop that wolf from clawing my face off?" I moaned with pleasure and groaned with pain; I wanted to flee the contradictory stimuli, but this "rope"--this tool invented by human intelligence--kept me firmly in place.

The human mind is a double-edged sword, capable of insights both wonderful and terrible. It let me understand my subconscious mind went deeper than I was aware of, and it let me recognize I was terrified of what lurked down there.



Her heels clicked the hardwood floor outside my bedroom door.

She slipped into the room like a shadow, carrying a glass water pitcher. Despite the weight, her wrist was straight. As her silhouette eclipsed me, my heartbeat thundered against a ribcage as flimsy and fragile as balsa wood. It was like my heart wanted to get as many beats in as possible before it was stopped permanently.

I wriggled my bound body and shimmied towards the other side of the bed. My butt sank into the mattress, desperate for purchase and finding none. She sat on the edge of the bed and ended my futile escape attempt by placing a firm hand on my shoulder. She gazed down at me like a lab rat she'd grown fond of, and I glimpsed artifice in her smile. Her face was something theatrical. As if she was masking a sinister visage with human facepaint, like Gene Simmons in reverse. That, or copious amounts of plastic surgery had lent her an unreal beauty.... Also like Gene Simmons in reverse.

When her fingers grazed my skin, my overstressed sense of touch felt it as an acidic corrosion.

I wanted to scream at her, but the ballgag kept my tongue from working the way it should. Like the song says, you don't know what you've got until it's gone. People take their bodies for granted until they're threatened and suddenly every nerve ending lights up like a live wire and we become exceedingly conscious of how puny and fragile our bodies are. Sometimes, we crave that; we ride roller coasters, watch horror movies, and let our lovers cuff us to the bed and spank us silly, all for that artificial high from putting ourselves in fake danger and then escaping from it.

But I didn't see any escape from this.

I'd keep my eyes out for any big yellow taxis, though.



She stroked my cheek. Her nails did not draw blood, but they scratched me like razor blades. I flinched at her touch, but it was as effective as a baby turning away from an incoming spoon. Suddenly, it occurred to me I was a helpless infant in the woman's dark maternal embrace, but unfortunately ageplay wasn't one of my fetishes.

"If I remove this gag, you will not make trouble, yes?"

I fantasized about lying to her, deluding her into thinking she could control me, getting her to untie me, winning my freedom with one well-placed punch--

She grabbed me by the chin and squeezed my cheeks until they mashed against the ballgag. Every orifice on my face was leaking: tears from my eyes, snot from my nose, drool from my mouth, sweat from my pores. I felt so hot and sticky and uncomfortable in my skin, while she had the cool, calculating presence of a robot. Her grip loosened enough for me to shake my head, which I did. She let go of my face, set the pitcher of water on my nighttable, and sighed like a vampire rising from its dirt nap and exhaling the ancient dust of its homeland.

"Pity," she said. "I like troublesome girls."

She slid her hands over my cheeks and around to the nape of my neck, found the clasp of the ballgag, and undid it. She pulled the spittle-coated sphere from my mouth with a wet slurp.



The beast in human form tossed the ballgag aside, then picked up the pitcher with one hand and cupped my chin with the other. She tickled my chin and cheeks; her sharp nails crawled like spider legs over my skin. I shuddered so hard the ropes drew tight enough to dismember me. This seemed to amuse her; while she drank from the pitcher, her black lips arced into the barest hint of a smile.

"Claudia Miller," she purred. "23. Graduate student."

"Great," I muttered. "You read my Twitter profile."

She drew her hand away from my chin and whipped it into my cheek so hard and so fast I thought a sniper had shot me. The rope looped around my neck made my spine crack; the loud pops that reverberated through my skull sounded like gunfire and enhanced the illusion. My head lolled against the bed. Once I realized it was not, in fact, stained with blood and gray matter, I realized she had slapped me. I marveled at how inhumanly fast she was. And more particularly, I relished the thought of doing my duty as a biologist and dissecting her slowly and at great length.

"Even now, you joke," she said.

"It's a defense mechanism," I grunted.

As she took another sip, her spiderlike hand crawled along my chest and belly; I was powerless to stop her fingers from wandering where they wanted to roam.

"It does not defend you much," she said.



"What do you want from me?" I asked, my voice cracking.

Her fingers curled around my breast. Her hold was not hard, but it was firm. Sure. Unyielding. I'd spent my life since adolescence thinking the breasts hanging off my chest belonged to me, but by her sheer strength she laid claim to them. I wanted to wrest her hand off, but trying to move made the ropes dig in. She'd subverted my natural human instinct to protect myself into an instrument of torture. All these different systems made up my body, survival instincts and pain responses and skeletal mechanics.... she had turned them against one another.

"That, my dear Claudia...." she replied, "is a long story."

She stroked my nipple with her thumb. Inside my sweating, sweltering body, the sweet tingle seeped throughout my nervous system and made my hips, glazed with sweat, pump reflexively. My clit grinded painfully against the denim of my Daisy Dukes; it was like getting cunnilingus from a power sander.

The woman had turned my pleasure responses into an instrument of torture, too.

I threw my head back into the pillow and bit my lip as agony bloomed inside my pelvic bone.

"I am Narlinea," she said. Her voice was now as soft and scratchy as wind through bare oak branches in the moonlit night. "I have traveled very far to build a new demesne here."



"A d-demesne?" I asked.

She slid her hands off me and stood up. Her body flowed as smoothly as a cloak highlighted by the silvery new moon.

"A domain," she replied.

"I know what it means." Despite my situation, I couldn't help feeling a little annoyed. It's like people get one glimpse of blonde and write you off. "Demesne. It's a little.... old-fashioned, don't you think?"

Her lips curled up into a smile. "I am an old-fashioned woman. Very old-fashioned."

She went to my first floor window and gazed out at the rain falling on the trees outside. As her reflection was superimposed over the land she sought to claim, I realized there was no difference between her reflected visage and her actual one. Her face was perfectly symmetrical. I told myself that couldn't be, that every single human being has tiny imperfections that lend their lopsided features some character, that I was wholly imagining this, but.... there she was.

"You shall be the first of my servants," she said. "The first of my family. I shall not kill you, rob you, or drug you. But in four weeks, when you return from your 'vacation' and resume your normal life.... you will be mine."



She turned her willowy body away from the window. Standing there, she looked as stout and firm as the trees behind her, like she could weather the cutting winds and the pouring rain easily.

"Most of them struggle more," she said.

"M-most?"

Her hips flowed like honey in a glass jar rocking from side to side as she strolled back to the bed and stood at the foot of it. She stared at me up the length of my body.

"Do I look that inexperienced?" she asked. "You are not my first servant. But, as you say in this country.... good help is so hard to find."

It was true; the hair falling across her face disguised it, but her face itself was totally symmetrical. Coupled with her irisless eyes, her face was creepy and unreal, like a CGI recreation of a dead actor in a big budget film. People needed an iris to regulate the light entering their eyeballs, but she obviously didn't. She had a symmetrical face, eyes that were all pupil, and an incredible tolerance for heat. I asked the obvious question:

"What the hell are you?"

She licked her lips and drank up the silence and then, as if one word would explain it all, she simply said:

"Demonia."



Now, she had bound my wrists above my head and strung them between the bedposts. Try as I might to unleash my inner Samson, I could not pull myself loose. The only thing I could pull was a muscle in my aching, overstressed shoulder muscles. At least she'd removed the ropes from my chest and stomach, so I could breathe easy.

"Demonia is a branch on the tree of life few study," she said as she loosened my ankle bindings. "You and I share a common ancestor in the chimpanzee, but have evolved in parallel."

I flirted with the idea of kicking her in the face once the ankle rope came off and making a run for it, box tie be damned. But my attempt at flirting was shot down when she wrapped more rope around my shins. She tied the ropes so they clutched my legs like zombie hands bursting from the ground, but left plenty of extra length sticking from the knots. When she took the lengths and brought them outside the bedposts, I hoped my poor labia could endure what was about to happen. I tried to pull my hands free again, but the ropes held them firm. My fingers, for lack of anything else to do, dug into my palms.

"Claudia, my sweet morsel," she said, licking her lips. "We have much to discuss, but I traveled far and wide and I long for a shower."

She backed away and pulled the ropes, using the bedposts as pulleys, taut. I tried to keep my knees together and protect my femininity, but she pried my legs apart with the strength of a pneumatic jack. My inner thighs peeled away from each other and exposed their supple skin, which was so delicate it cried out not to be beaten or bitten, to the sweltering air. When she tied the taut ropes off, my Daisy Dukes rode up and cleaved my clit like an axe swung by an iconic slasher movie villain.

"Comfortable?" she asked, rubbing my outthrust big toe.



She sang in the shower.

There I was, trussed up on the bed I had paid for, and she was singing in my shower, using up my hot water, hiking my water bill.

This is a dream, I told myself. This can't possibly be real.

I pulled at my bonds and wriggled my hips, but the bedposts that stretched my limbs out held them securely. The little lump of flesh that was my torso was strung between them, vulnerable and quivering. As a biologist, I'd performed my fair share of experiments on animals. Although I prided myself on being ethical about it, I felt a shred of fatalistic defeatism lodge itself in my mind; was this karma being thrown back in my face?

'Narlinea,' I thought. Bull. She's just some crazy goth Satanist with an eye defect and a drug habit. What did they say in *The Terminator*? That people on PCP can punch through car windows? That had to be it. She was probably in my biology class or something, overhead my name during role call. Nothing supernatural at all, except for a supernatural skill at pissing me off.

At least she doesn't have fangs. I could deal with anything but that trite little cliché.



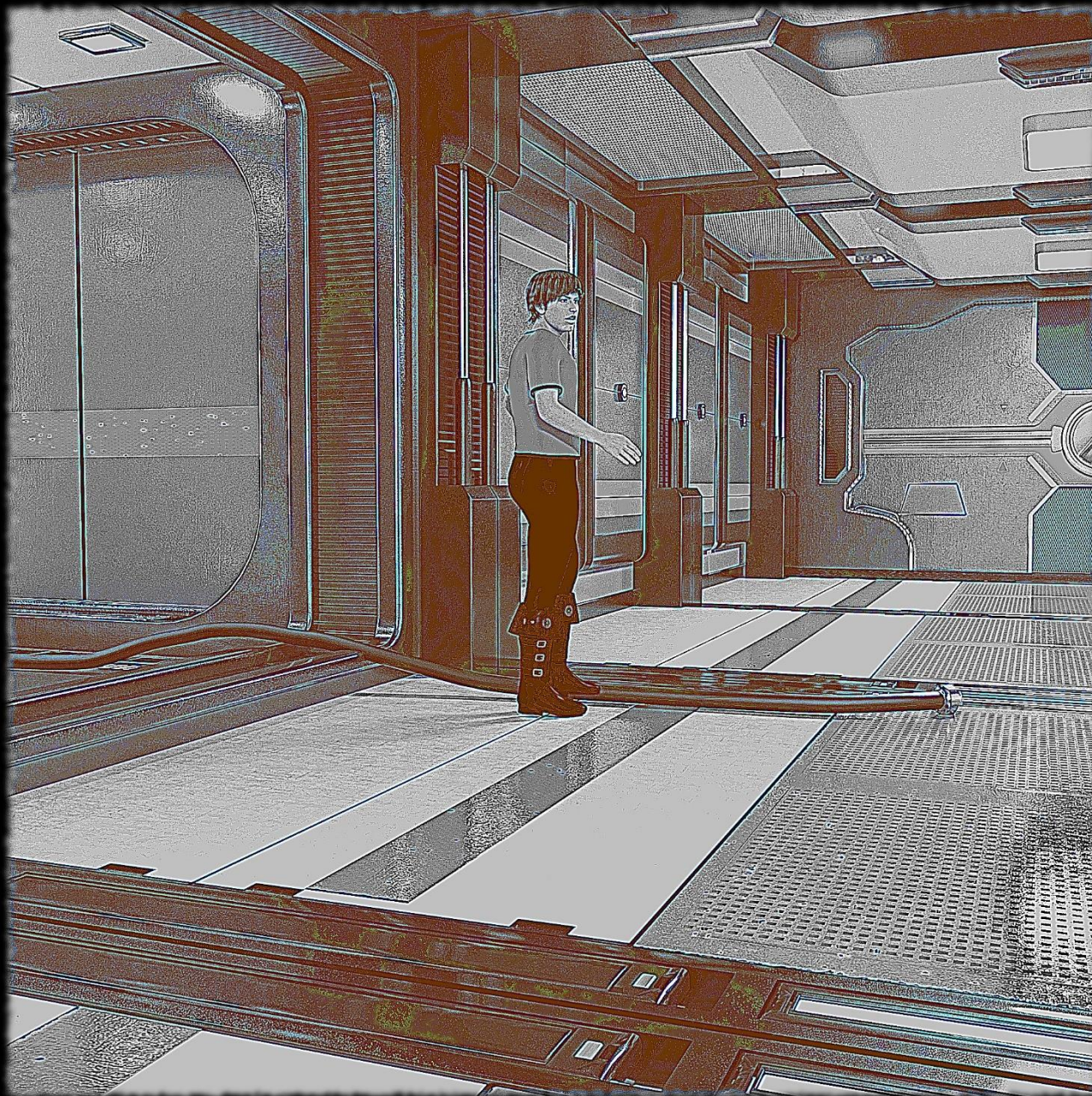
With a creaky squeak of the knob, the cascade of shower water in the bathroom stopped.

My tense body tensed further. Inside the loops of rope that bound them, my hands and feet twitched. The steam wafting out through the open door mingled with the sweltering air, lending it a fresh, springy, medicinal quality. As the denim shorts dug into my crotch, my labia felt like a volcano spewing hot lava that welled around my throbbing pelvic bone. She walked out of the bathroom wearing a black T-shirt and miniskirt. After parading around in that slutty dominatrix getup, this sporty outfit seemed almost too normal. It was like seeing Darth Vader going through his morning routine, weirdo black mask and helmet sticking out of a plain black bathrobe, cup of coffee in hand, shambling around in a pair of slippers. Wildly unnatural and off-putting. Carrying the pitcher again, now full of sink water, she sat on the bed. I noticed right away that her fresh skin had no hair aside from that on her scalp. Nor did it have the veins that pale white people sometimes had. She was like a solid mass of... albumen?

She sipped the water. "Much better, Claudia."

"How do you know my name?"

"My eyes have been on you for a very long time," she purred. "Surely you felt my gaze? Surely you have been unconsciously presenting this..." She ran her sharp nails along my arm, which trembled at her touch. "Magnificent body for your future mistress's approval?"



PART II

"And, uh--" I swallowed heavily. "--what makes you so sure I'll be part of your world, or whatever?"

She craned her head towards me, flared her nostrils wide, and smelled deeply of my sweaty, unwashed body. "Because I can smell the masochism on you."

"Is that by Dior?" I asked sarcastically.

She dropped the sultry tone and instead adopted the clipped, hurried tone of a bored scientist dealing with laypeople. "The human body secretes an admixture of chemicals we Demonia have evolved to sense. Moods, fears, lusts; these come to us as olfactory data. What do you know of brain development?"

"I little, but you might have to dumb it down a bit. I'm blonde, in case you didn't know."

"Our evolutionary mutation affects a certain type of nerve cell found in the olfactory system, the intestines, and--for the male of our species--the sperm canals. This nerve cell is responsible for emotional reception."

'This is some heavy-duty Star Trek crap,' I thought. 'Technobabble. Deflect the warp fields into the forward reflector so we can regress the tachyonic matrix. Make it so, Numbah One. But this woman seems to believe every word of it.'

Ever the dutiful scientist, I took it upon myself to test her theory and asked, "How does fear smell, then?"

"Like the copper of an old penny."

"Lust?"

"Glittering gold."



As she chugged the water from the pitcher down, one of her long, beautiful, and very, very sharp fingernails traced my cheekbone. Tickled the flesh, scratched away at it, marked me with red ink. I turned my head away, but with my head anchored to my neck there was only so much I could do.

"Speaking of lust," she said, lowering the pitcher, "You glitter very brightly indeed. Of all the emotions humanity generates, lust, pain, and humiliation are the only ones that satiate our hunger."

"Hate to break it to you--" I gulped. "--but, uh, all that glitters, and all that..."

She scoffed and tossed her hair. "Spare me your Shakespeare."

Meekly, I replied, "I was doing Smashmouth, actually."

Her smooth, featureless face finally cracked. Brow furrowed, she sounded the words out carefully: "Smash... Mouth?"

Of all the bizarre, odd, weird things that'd happened to me over the past day, this seemed like the strangest thing of all. In an awed whisper, I asked, "Did you hibernate for, like, all of 1999?"

She squinted like an actor pretending to have a 'Nam flashback. "The year did not hold my interest, no."



"Narlinea..."

When I spoke her name, the word echoed around my kitchen, but the silk scarf wrapped around my head kept me from seeing her. She'd even put cotton balls under the impromptu blindfold to make my isolation absolute. She dug through my toybag, but the hard kitchen surfaces made the sound echo around and surround me. My toys clinked together: clothespins surreptitiously squirreled away from a dozen different stores; leather riding crops that made fat, delicious whacks as dead skin hit my live skin; a magic wand vibrator and dildo vibrator I used together so often I might as well duct tape them into one...

All that and more. Little old Gnarlie had her pick.

"No masochist likes this," I pleaded. "S&M is based on trust and love and security and... and all that crap!"

My mouth was dry, but my Daisy Dukes were wet... and not just from the heat. I told myself it was an autonomic reaction and tried to press my thighs closed, but I was tied to a stout oak chair an ex of mine used to call the Torture Chair, and that was before we got to the S&M phase of our relationship. After we did, we silently agreed it was too imposing to mess with. Ropes wrapped around my shoulders and waist and strapped me to the chair like a five-point harness; I felt like an Air Force pilot in an ejector seat or a Formula One racer in the driver's seat. Whatever the metaphor, I felt like I was in for a wild ride. But with my arms tight tied behind my back, I knew I wouldn't be doing the steering. My ankles were tied to the chair's back legs, forcing me to straddle the seat like I was riding a particularly edgy horse--and not in the black comedy way.

Though goodness knows somebody watching me might disagree.



My ex-boyfriend hated blindfolds and never used them on me, no matter how much I begged. He said it was 'dehumanizing' to take my eyes away; I told him that was kind of the point. I used to love not knowing what my lover was doing to me. Skin tingling with anticipation. Sweat tracing sinuous arcs along my curves. Underwear or, more likely than not, bare clothing rubbing against bobbing tit and throbbing clit. S&M is all about becoming a passive body in the hands of a lover.

But now...

"This will be much easier if you relax, Claudia," she said.

I couldn't tell where she was until a sharp click exploded beside my ear. I jerked my head away from it, but judging by her soft snicker she was already on the move again.

I knew that sound well. It was the sound of a clothespin snapping shut.

"Please," I moan. "Let me go."

"Let you go?" her silken voice said. "No. Let you cum...?" I heard the smile in her voice. "If you behave."

Suddenly, her hands were on me. They dug into my shirt and ripped it open to my solar plexus. The sweat had made my shirt thin, so thin my breasts pushed mightily through the fabric and burst out the plunging neckline. Advertising their presence to the world, begging people to have a squeeze. I wanted them to go back inside me; I wanted a flat chest again. I didn't want pieces of me hanging out like this, exposed.

She ran her hand along the underside of my left breast and cupped it like a stainless steel ice cream scoop. With how much I was shivering, I honestly wouldn't be surprised if my milk came out frozen solid.



Cotton balls in my ears complimented the cotton balls against my eyelids, and my noise-canceling headphones further accented them. I could neither see nor hear; my darkness and silence were absolute. Not content with making me deaf and blind, Narlinea had slipped my facial harness on so I was rendered dumb as well, and then tightened it so hard it felt like a migraine. Of my five senses, only smell and touch were left available to me. And, since my nose was currently busy breathing through the sweat clogging it, that really only left touch.

And God, did Narlinea take advantage of it.

Playing with my tits--taking them in hand, rolling the areolae around on my fingers, squeezing the nipples between thumb and forefinger so the rusty daggers of shot up my neck and tingled my face--that was amateur hour. I didn't understand true pain until I, a tall and gawky sapling of a teenager, decided to take things to the next level and snuck some clothespins from the laundry room. In my sensory deprivation, I remember that day vividly.

Like rats in a heated bowl, the clothespin have been biting into my nipples for a half-hour now. Unlike rats in a heated bowl, they were no closer to gnawing through to my ribcage and ending my misery. The soft pink peaks that tipped my feminine frame were being chewed like delicious morsels by wooden teeth. It had ceased to be a bright pain and settled into a throbbing dullness that pulsed through my chest like a long, slow sonar. Every woman thrusts her femininity in front of her and begs the world not to abuse the tiny nubs that can weave a web of pain throughout her body.

Narlinea ignored my pleas.



Back then, I scoffed at the idea that a psycho goth stalker could know me better than I knew myself. That she could give a hardcore masochist "what she really wants". What I wanted was to be sunning myself on the beach, not roped to this stiff behemoth of a chair. Sure, my vagina was sopping wet, but I told myself, over and over again, that it was just an autonomic reaction to stimuli, and that I was under no circumstances actually aroused by this.... this violation of my feminine being.

Not in the slightest.

A deep, dull throb pulsed through my hips, as ponderous and powerful as an ocean wave. The edges of the seat cutting into my thighs must be making them go numb. My pelvis felt heavy, full, soaked with sweat.... about to burst.

I realized I had to take a leak. The urine was as eager to escape my swollen bladder as I was to escape my bonds. Now how the hell did I communicate that to her? Or did she hope I'd just piddle on the chair and make me clean it up?

I tried to form words and push them out my mouth, but the ballgag filled my jaws and blocked them.

The swelling was getting worse. It throbbed and ached, overpowering even the pain in my nipples.

What the hell was I supposed to do now?



Was she walking toward me, or was I just shaking so much I thought the floor underfoot was vibrating?

Can't think. Can't feel. Can't know.

Everything about my body was either a throbbing blob of dull pain welling under my skin or a sharp bite that cut through the haze and raked my skin like steel. I couldn't tell where my body began and ended anymore. It was just a patchwork quilt of pains and aches stitched together by a madwoman and wrapped around my tiny screaming voice. I tried to flex my fingers but they moved clumsily, like they were glued on. The scent of leather filled my nose and reminded me that my skin is just hide waiting to be stripped off and tanned.

Biting, gnawing, aching, sweating. I was at the center of so much sense data goading me into action. Every living thing seeks stability. Whether from predators or predatory debt, we all seek balance and harmony with our surroundings. This impulse occurs from the lowliest tapeworm to the mightiest whale, this impulse to free ourselves from pain and terror. But I couldn't be free. I was reduced from a human being to a bundle of nerve endings alighting at once. I had no power to act and could not do anything to solve them--

Suddenly, my hair was brushed. The brief moment of new sensory data made me pause. And then...

Light and sound filled the world again. She pulled the headphones and blindfold off, allowing my poor little head to exist again.



Narlinea knelt behind me and tugged at the ropes binding my arms. "Mmmm," she moaned as she sniffed my hair. "Delicious. But come, we've strained your bladder long enough."

"How could you possibly know....? Wait, lemme guess. You 'smelled' it."

She pulled the rope off my arms like a ripcord but kept the rope around my wrists firmly affixed to my flesh. She pulled me from the chair, marched me down the hall, and thrust me into the bathroom. As my breasts bounced, the clothespins valiantly hung on like brave mountaineers in an avalanche of sweat. No sooner had I entered than she grabbed me around the waist and stopped me. My hands flexed inside the loops of rope, but she pressed her body against mine and squashed my hands into her belly. It was as steely as her smile.

Her fingers traced the waistband of my Daisy Dukes. Teased the threshold of intimacy.

Then, she pantsed me. Yanked them right down and exposed my bare bottom and bush to the world in one short, sharp stroke. The things that girded my loins were stripped away from me and the cold breeze of my AC-cooled bathroom brushed between my thighs.

With a hard slap on my exposed cheek, she propelled me towards the toilet.

As I sat down, I stared up at her. "You just going to watch?"

"Humiliation tastes like honey," she said by way of explanation.



Narlinea was an arbiter of indignity, yet when dinnertime rolled around she allowed me a fork instead of making me slurp food off my plate. It was for the best; the thought of her and I having some kind of twisted Lady & and Tramp kiss made me want to burst out laughing or vomit or, more likely, both.

I knelt beside my coffee table and twisted my wrists so I could dig my fork into my plate of spaghetti rather than my opposing palm. I kept my arms tight against my chest and tried to keep my bare tits from swinging into my food. My plea for a shirt had gone unheeded. She knelt at the end of the table and watched me, occasionally reaching out to pat my head or tuck a flyaway strand of hair behind my ear. I supposed being treated like a pet was a kind of humiliation, but at that point such gentle treatment seemed almost acceptable. What was Glenn Beck's book called? *The Overton Window*, I think. Gradually shift the range of acceptable ideas as a way of accustoming people to tyranny.

Speaking of right-wing crackpots...

She had set my TV to stream InfoWars from the internet. Occasionally, she glanced at it.

"Figures," I muttered. "I didn't think Alex Jones was human anyway."

"Jones is not a Demonia," she replied. "He is our thrall. The humiliation and embarrassment he brings upon himself daily is like a five-star gourmet meal for us."

Suddenly, the world made a lot more sense.

"I tasted him once," she said, licking her lips. "He was.... delectable."



Then, a thought entered my head: if this wasn't just the ramblings of a delusional goth and there really was some kind of whacko conspiracy going on, I could write a book that would blow it wide open. But, to avoid sounding like David Icke, I'd need more information. As I questioned her further, I chalked it up this up to my academic streak. After all, what professor doesn't have the next great pop-sci book gestating in their brain?

"So, Alex Jones embarrasses himself just so you can feed on him?" I asked.

"Not 'just'. We Demonia are expanding, and we tasked Jones with polarizing this nation so our infiltration would be successful. By polarizing discourse, information can be contained and discarded on ideological grounds. Of course, when we originally sent Jones here, 'post-truth politics' was called 'postmodernism', but you humans have a curious habit of ignoring the cyclic nature of your history."

InfoWars was now deconstructing a speech from the LA Chief of Police explaining the crime rate and rationalizing it away as disinformation by the establishment. To disguise my inquisitive nature, I took another forkful of spaghetti and crammed it into my mouth.

"What do you mean, 'expanding'?" I asked through a mouthful of food.



"The Council sent me here to establish a new demesne," she said. "I would have preferred to stay in Europe, but they forbade it." She sighed heavily. "It is unwise to have too many female Demonia too close together, they say. Too much competition for... 'prey'. So I came to the New World to establish my demesne."

I finished my spaghetti with a wet slurp and picked up a bread stick. My mind whirled with all these revelations. There was a 'council' now? Just how deep did her delusion go? Behind me, InfoWars was playing footage from CNN about the identification of a Polish serial killer; momentarily, I thought they would name Narlinea, but it turned out to be a man. Still, for what it was worth, she muttered under her breath like a manager watching a flustered subordinate during a heated press conference.

"Our westernmost territory," she added.

Despite the bread in my mouth, I muttered, "Westward, ho."

"Are you trying to insult our noble work?" she asked sternly, with a cold fire in her eyes that threatened to scorch me where I stood.

My mind wheeled while I tried to figure out what she meant, until finally I explained: "No, no. 'Ho' means, like, a rallying cry. Like, 'Let's all head westward'."

She shook her head. "Your American slang confuses me. I shall have to see about eradicating it."

I averted my eyes and tried to sound as meek as possible. "And, uh, how do you go about that?"



PART III



"The same way we have done since antiquity. As dominae."

"Huh?"

"Europe knows us. The Old Country has such ancient, weathered skin, and it shivers when we walk upon it. All the princes and princesses knew us. Knew our power. Most feared us; our name, 'Demonia', became the origin of both 'Domina' and 'Daemon'. Some strove--in their clumsy human way--to become us. Elizabeth Bathory. Darya Saltykova. If we are the shadows, those messy and useless fools are the shadows' shadows. For centuries, we strode through the night and made the realms of men our domain, and when our silhouettes passed before their windows they fell to their knees and prayed to their God that we would not glance inside like a hungry child staring at a plump leg of meat through a store window. And we would smile to ourselves, and bask in the glory of our mastery--or mistress-ery--of the human race."

"So you're an entire race of Dominatrices, basically?"

"Ugh. Once again, Claudia, you display your knack for siphoning the grandeur out of a conversation."



"Your dominatrices," she said. "They came after us. After we... diminished."

She crossed her arm across her belly, accentuating her breasts. They were firm through the fabric, and the constant rubbing raised them sharply. She might not be a vampire, but she sure was a vamp.

"How did you 'diminish', exactly?" I asked.

"That is--"

"Lemme guess. A long story?"

"Clean the table," she said. "Then you shall hear the tale of my people."

I wanted to refuse, but my bag of toys contained plenty of things to 'motivate' me, so I decided to play along. Then again, complacency always starts that way, doesn't it?

Just a little bit longer.

I'll do it tomorrow.

It'll get done when it gets done.

I'd have to stay sharp. Speaking of, as I carried the tray to the kitchen the knife caught my eye. As I crammed it into my dishwasher, I briefly considered taking it. But alas, I had only a pair of Daisy Dukes on, and it was too tight to fit a razor-sharp knife in there safely. I drop it into the dishwasher as well and turn it on.



When Narlinea stripped my shirt away, it was undoubtedly to humiliate me. Teach me that only she could decide what I could and could not have. Instruct me in her power. But as I laid on the couch and felt the sweltering heat against my skin, I was suddenly very glad that my sweat could flow freely. It felt more natural. Humanity evolved to run naked through the jungle, after all. Clothing came much later, once we left our natural environment and especially after we invented status symbols to lord our power and wealth over others.

Appropriately enough, the apex predator reclined easily on my rocking chair. She had one hand behind her head, causing her breast to rise, but she kept it concealed behind her shirt. Of her body, she let me see only what she wanted me to see. She took her sweet time crossing her legs, offering a brief glimpse between her thighs before snatching it away again.

As a beeswax candle gifted from my grandmother burns on my coffee table, she regales me with the history of her people.

Until now, they existed solely in Europe and Japan. They had scouted the land, sent thralls to pave the way for them, planned and plotted its conquest, but they had never established a proper foothold in the Americas. Narlinea was the first.



"We evolved in concert with the cruelty of the human race. Wars, inquisitions, executions... we feasted on all of them. You people wrought such delicious bloodbaths against your own kind, while we waited in the shadows and supped on the carnage. It was in the crucible of the Middle Ages, when Catholics and Protestants made rivers of crimson flow across the fields of the Continent, that we truly feasted on your pain. Ah, the Protestant Reformation! A time of self-flagellation and religious asceticism and Holier-Than-Thou armies of God massacring each other to prove their doctrinal interpretation was slightly holier than the other side. What a time to be alive! But then... you people fought back."

"You mean the witch trials."

"Ha ha, those things? No, my dear Claudia. We had a front-row seat to that parade of idiocy. No, your race fought back in a much more insidious way. Just as we evolved to feast on your worst excesses, you evolved to deny us our feast."

"How did we do that?"

"The Enlightenment. The rule of law. Separation of church and state, Bills of Rights preventing petty religious conflicts. So we evolved; we evolved to feed on the exquisite combination of pleasure and pain that defines the modern era. At least, we think so--the study of evolutionary mutation was, understandably, not as advanced as it is now. Regardless, the Domina as we now know it came into being."

"But... the mutation would have arisen in only one population, right? What about the rest who didn't have it?"

"They... died. Sooner or later. Fortunately, we Demonia have big families."



She's not telling the whole truth, I thought. I know it. One of these new-breed Demonia would've come together with a masochist, right? The new masochists would've had a selection advantage, and...

I shook my head and realized--Of course she wasn't telling the whole truth. She was CRAZY. A nut job rattling off a bad Star Trek: The Next Generation fanfic. She has an explanation for everything; her delusion is self-complete.

"I bet the reign of Queen Victoria was paradise for you," I said. "All that sexual repression bursting at the seams of those poofy dresses and dinner jackets."

"It was a golden age, yes. For us female Demonia, the world could hardly be better. London was our playground."

"And the males?"

"There were... not many of them left for a time. Since the Second World War, all Demonia in western Europe died out. I am the first to settle in the west in over fifty years."



"For a time," she said, "our only enclaves were behind the Iron Curtain and in Japan. We were driven to the edge of extinction."

"To the edge? What's that they say about one last push?"

I imagined how it would be for them behind the Iron Curtain, dealing with gulags and Stasi torture chambers. Was it tasty? No, probably a bitter pill to swallow. Too grim and foreboding to feast on the joyful ecstasy of religious enthusiasm, too mechanized to feast on the hot-blooded self-righteousness of overeager zealots.

"So what made you move here?" I asked. "Good old-fashioned American cuisine?"

She stood up and, on her long-striding legs, walked over to me. She towered above me with her hands on her hips; maybe somebody tied up like a roast roll shouldn't push other peoples' buttons, I reckoned.

"We are mutating again," she said. "It has changed everything, and now we grow in number again. We come to bring back... what is ours."

She bares her teeth in a thin smile.

"I don't belong to you," I growl.

"Not yet."



Like a true vamp, Narlinea's strutting body undulated like a snake. Her hips swayed to one side while her strong spine curves her shoulders to the other side. The organic mechanic grace of her body was almost hypnotic.

She laid the far end of the ropes that bound my wrists across her shoulder and circled my dining table. Once she and I were on opposite sites, like a fashion model on the walkway she spun on her heel and stomped her front foot down. The loud click of her high heel stabbed my eardrums and made me wince. She plucked a virginal white pillow from the chair and threw it onto the table in front of me like it was a plate. Or one of those cloths that cover an altar.

I stared at it, then at her coolly calculating face. Was this performance some kind of John & Yoko abstract art piece? If so, I hoped to play the part of Mark David Chapman.

Then she tugged the ropes with her considerable might and drove me right into the table. Its edge smashed against my thighs like an axe and pitched me forward. My face slammed the pillow's wintry fields. Its cloth filled my mouth and eyes. Even fabric stings at the right speed; it slapped my face like a dozen palms at once, coming in from every direction. With my shorts stripped away from me, my butt thrust out behind me. The sweat-soaked air exhaled hot breath across the tender skin of my inner thighs.

I raised my stinging face from the pillow. To my surprise, Narlinea was gone.

She couldn't be that fast, could she...?

The two loops of rope around my wrists tightened. I tugged at them and found them fastened to the table's underside.

Narlinea popped up from under the table, smirked at me, and shook the riding crop loosely clutched in her iron fist.



"Mistress is hungry, Claudia."

I pull at the ropes so hard the bunched muscles along my upper back feel like they're going to burst out of my skin and unfurl into wings. If it got me out of this, I didn't mind. When that proved fruitless, I fell back on getting sour:

"Didn't you already eat?" I grunted.

She strolled around the table and gently traced her steel fingers along the curves of my strained muscles. She pressed into them, probed them, prodded them. Like I was an ox she was preparing for a long journey. Like she wanted to make sure my body could endure the hard ride it was about to endure.

"Time for a second helping," she said.

"Kiss my butt," I said.

The moment those words left my mouth, I realized that wasn't a wise thing for somebody with their butt exposed to say to somebody else holding a riding crop. Suddenly, my mouth was stuffed; I tried to spit out words, but the hard ball gag blocked them. I thrashed my head to prevent her from buckling it, but she dug her elbow into the top of my spine and drove my head into the pillow again. The gag's buckle tinkled right in my ears.

"You shall find my kisses are more leathery than feathery," she said.

She laid the crop across my cheek, but didn't strike. Instead, she stroked the surface, toned by years of Buns of Steel into a hard sphere, as lightly as a butterfly's kiss. Shivers ran up my body. I couldn't move my bound hands, which were trussed up like a horse's, to knock the crop away. But a horse has other ways of expressing its displeasure. I thrust my leg out behind me and tried to kick her. Alas, she easily caught my ankle and whipped the sole of my foot three times. It felt like red hot pokers being driven into the seams between the calloused pads.



WHAP! WHAP! WHAP!

Narlinea whacked my tender loins like a butcher whacking a piece of... Well, you get the idea.

WHAP!

I screamed around the ball gag as the crop struck my derriere and thrust my hips forward. My thighs banged against the table, leaving a fresh layer of bruises across them. I wanted to move myself, but she'd bound my thighs to my ankles after my disastrous attempt to kick her, so I could do nothing to reposition myself but wriggle my hips. Naturally, such a display enflamed Narlinia's sadism.

WHAP! WHAP-WHAP! ...WHAP!

Her blows were erratic and confusing, in the way only a self-indulgent sadist could be. First one cheek, then a double tap on the other, then a slight pause to drink up the anticipation before slapping the first one again. Like she was trying to flatten the dents out evenly. Her shadow raised the crop and I tensed in anticipation of yet another stroke against my raw buttocks. My fingers curled around the ropes and my teeth bit into the gag like I was expecting her to pull out a bullet.

Instead, the little leather tongue merrily licked the wounds it had made on my backside. Lightly, its impish tickle rubbed the raised welts. It hurt, but I'd take it over the merciless whacking anyway.

As the leather teased my raw flesh, I felt it lulling me into submission. I rested my cheek on the pillow, let the light, nimble crop toy with my cheeks, and started to settle into the blissful high of an endorphin rush.



The crop's gentle caress was violently broken by a stinging whack that came out of nowhere.

WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! WHAP!

Her hand was no longer erratic. Now it was strong, sure, and swift. It blitzed my aching backside and switched between cheeks in a relentless mechanical rhythm, like a military march. Left, right, left, right... But I could march no more. As the flames of shame engulfed my body and reddened the cheeks of my face until they matched the ones on my behind, I moaned and gasped for relief. My broken body, bent over the table, was straining at the joints to hold itself together.

WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! WHAP!

"There are seven billion of you," she spat out in rhythm. "Walking. Talking. Playing. Praying. To be dominated by a Dee-moan-eee-ah."

WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! WHAP!

I let the crop carry me like an ocean wave, let the pain it brought wash over my bent body and flow together with the thick pools of sweat that clung to it already. Go with the flow, I thought. Don't fight the pain; ride it out and hope your body goes so numb you can't feel anything anymore.

"You reek of silver," she snarled.



I didn't realize she'd stopped whipping the crop into outthrust backside. My body had grown so accustomed to its everpresent pelt that my pounding temples and my pulverized pelvis kept up its pace in its absence. Already tensed to my maximum, I could not seize up and await its next blow. All I could do was remain bent down and aching, my back stretched so thin the muscles burst up and formed sculpted rock ridges.

"That is enough for first lesson," Narlinea said.

I sighed and let my body go limp.

WHAP!

One final sting struck my relaxed cheek and mashed its soft mass into my hipbone.

"Second lesson: always be ready for learning more."

I screamed obscenities into the ballgag; for once, I was grateful for it. She probably would've whipped me bloody if she knew what I said.

When the crop touched me again, I was startled into tugging the ropes around my wrists. But it did not strike me. It gently followed my spinal crease, the central pillar of the human architecture that let beasts of burden like me carry our weight. It tickled my virginal, uncropped skin and followed my vertebrae down to my lower back.

"Was that so bad, Claudia?" she cooed.

It was like the crop was tapping hidden pockets of endorphins buried under my skin and releasing them into my central nervous system. Waves of pleasure spread through my tense shoulders and torn hips. Like my sweat, I melted into the pillow.



PART IV



Every shuddering breath filled me up and every shaking exhalation deflated me like a balloon. My nipples, buried in the waterlogged pillow, rubbed against the roughened fabric and stiffened so much they felt like two corkscrews embedded in my chest. The gallons of sweat stuck my cheek to it, so that my exhausted frame couldn't even lift it.

I was so exhausted I couldn't even react when her fingers brushed my hair back and cupped my cheek.

"You smell of gold and silver, my precious Claudia," she whisper to the back of my head. "Lust and pain, they form such a potent alloy."

I couldn't even begin to process her insane ramblings, and even if I did, the ballgag was still choking my words.

"You almost like it, didn't you?"

My spirits lifted like a sapling springing from the dirt. The pain was over, the agony was over, and every moment of unpained breath made me appreciate it with all my bloody, aching heart--

I jerked my head away from her and tried once more to pull my hands free. To reject her. To deny her the moment of victory she craved. But her ropework, like her words, was inescapable. She chuckles softly and kneads my shoulder, rolling the loose skin back and forth while thrusting her iron thumb into my neck. I can't struggle anymore, can't fight it anymore. I lay there and accept that I cannot remove her hand.

But why would I want to? Her massaging touch felt so good, like she'd been given an instruction manual for my pleasure points. She knew my body better than I did...



I felt dirty, but no matter how much I washed my body I couldn't clean it off.

Maybe 'dirty' wasn't the right word. I felt... used. A filthy husk of a human being. As a rigidly scientific woman, I always saw through the smooth-talking boys and treated one-night stands like the fleeting, momentary encounters they were. But after having my body betray me so thoroughly under my captor's capricious hand, I felt like a used condom washed up on a cold shore. My flesh was stained through with impurity and its virginal consecration undone. But it wasn't just the way she'd aroused my pleasure by force that troubled me. It was that she had given me exactly what I'd wanted for practically my entire life.

My thoughts chained me so heavily that I could not even enjoy the fact that my hands and feet were free.

The warm, sudsy water ran down my back and licked the welts on my cheeks from her crop. It stung, but it was the soothing, refreshing sting of medicinal treatment. She might not be a vampire in the literal sense, but she had definitely left a mark upon my body that enthralled me.

My body.

Her mark.

Hers.

She had ridden my body to the breaking point and then withdrawn, like the "Check Engine" light of the soul inside it had dinged on. I got exactly what I wanted, felt my body quite literally whipped into shape. The brokenness, the endorphin rush, the tide of relief that washed over me when the grueling experience was over... Nobody had ever treated me so right before, and she did it by treating me wrong.

I tried to rationalize it by blaming Stockholm Syndrome, Battered Spouse Syndrome, a whole lot of -dromes. But, no matter how hard I tried, my body longed to be broken by her and it didn't care what I, its soul, had to say.



What an odd domestic scene we made.

She, casually laying on her side on my bed and leafing through a magazine, dressed down in a black baseball shirt and panties. Me, stripped naked and tethered to the bed by a single ankle cuff. The nudity would have bothered me if the air inside my home wasn't approaching the heat and humidity levels of a typical tropical jungle. As it was, the sweat coated my body thickly enough that I barely felt nude.

The page rustled as she flipped it.

"More hidden messages from your thralls?" I asked coldly.

"Just accessorizing."

I scoffed. She rustled the magazine again. The tiny ticking of the clock tried its hardest to fill the silent gulf between us, like we were a married couple who'd brought the ashes of a heated argument into the bedroom.

"Can you help me?" I asked as I held my foot up and wiggled my toes. "I'm looking for something with less of a 'padlock' look to it."

She murmured, "Once you are chained by my will alone, then I will remove it. Not before."

I thought in response, *Depending on how sturdy this bed is put together, I may be leaving a little sooner than you think.*



I wanted to sleep, but my bondage prevented me. Not only because I was terrified of what the quote-unquote woman next to me would do to my nude body, but also because I feared the inevitable moment I would awaken thinking this had all been a dream, only to find myself still chained.

"Why do you always wear black?" I asked.

"My body is not yours," she replied.

Likewise, you vamp, I thought.

She put the magazine aside and lectured, "It does not function like a human being's. As our body temperature is lower than yours, we require black for its heat-absorption properties. It ensures we have the body heat and muscle energy for certain metabolic processes."

"That explains the tropical temperature. And the water?"

"Our bodies require its hydrogen molecules to function. Along with carbon dioxide from the air and emotional energy from the intestines, it gives us the sustenance to continue functioning."

"You can take carbon dioxide out of the air? Does that mean you're part-plant?"

"Haha, no, my sweet Claudia. Chlorophyll is quite similar to the haemolecules of red blood cells. Our body merely uses a modified version that can absorb energy from carbon dioxide. But in our case, the synthesis is powered by human emotion."

I didn't even know what to say to that. It was patent medicine-grade quackery.

"My poor fool, you still disbelieve me. You think I am human still."



"It's the post-truth era," I said, mumbling and feigning sleepiness. "Nobody knows what to believe."

I rolled over on my side, facing away from her, and tried to pretend to try to sleep, but my mind was abuzz with a plan to win my freedom. First, though, I needed her to go to sleep for real. Sleep, dammit, sleep! I thought. But she, so stolid and unmovable, remained sitting up and reading one of my magazines, that I paid for, with my own money.

"It has been the post-truth era for a long time," she said calmly. Judging by the way she leafed through the magazine, her eyes were still fixed on it. "Americans," she scoffed. "You ignore the thoughts that occupy the rest of the world, until they becomes inconvenient for yourselves. In the 1980s, the French called it postmodernism. In the 1930s, Borges wrote of academics dreaming up a fictional nation and making it into reality. In the 19th century, Lewis Carroll wrote a childrens' book about the confusion and illogicality of life under imaginary numbers. The gulf between 'reality' and 'words spoken and written' has long consumed the minds of non-American academics."

"Lemme guess. That was--Yawn--you guys?"

"Would it impress you if I said 'Yes'?" She flipped the page. "Perhaps it was our doing. Perhaps we used the Zeitgeist. Perhaps both at different times. I shall leave you to wonder which."

"OK."

Come on, Gnarlie. This talk is enough to put anyone to sleep!

I closed my eyes, slowed my breathing, and calmed my nerves, to enhance the illusion I was falling asleep. But still, I heard her flip, flip, flip that magazine well into the night. That crazy woman who was convinced biochemistry was breaking new ground in her intestines.



I woke with a start in the stillness of the night. My sore ass still throbbed, but now it was a slow, subtle throb that seeped into my weary body like a deep tissue massage.

The bed next to me was empty. Her brooding presence was gone from my awareness; that heavy, pulsating abyss that sucked every room dry of light and happiness.

She had expertly worked my body over, and in the throes of my sour ecstasy, I felt it was everything I wanted. But how long before she started with knives, needles, scatplay, and all the other fetishes I had no interest in? I had to get out ASAP.

I froze and held my breath, straining my ears for the tiniest sound. I hear the soft murmur of the TV, still playing in the other room. A creaking floorboard, the glass clink of the pitcher being put down. She's in the living room. I cracked my eyes open and saw her standing there in her underwear, raptly watching it. The rectangle of light played over her pale white skin like a movie screen.

Doesn't that woman ever sleep? I thought.

Pretending to curl up in my sleep, I slithered my arm along my body and gave the cuff's lock a tug. Still secure. Take it apart, maybe? It'd be a big job, and I couldn't do it when she was so close by.

Huddling up, I ran my hands along my body, as if I could reclaim my ownership over it.



As the dappled sunlight issued through the window and fell across my bed, I think of the shining, sandy beaches of Australia and the shining, oiled pecs of the hunky men standing on it. Beckoning to me, calling out to me, sanding over hot dogs on a grill and innocently asking me if I wanted some of their hot buns while their tight buns bulged inside their tight trunks--

I threw the covers aside and sat up. Escaping into my dreams wasn't going to help me.

Narlinea was still in my living room. It was like she'd never gone to sleep at all. Many thoughts went through my brain: if she's delusional, how does that affect her metabolic processes? If she's convinced she doesn't need sleep, can her body override its basic programming like the Vietnamese man who allegedly hasn't slept in thirty years? When I freed myself of the waking nightmare, I promised, I would personally strap her to a table and investigate her to my heart's content.

Unable to stand on the floor and unwilling to stand on my bed, all I could do to move my muscles in any meaningful way was to curl into a ball. I rubbed my head and waited for my eyes to adjust to the morning light.

The chain anchoring my ankle to the bedpost jingled.

Narlinea's footsteps stopped.

God, she even heard that? I thought.

Moments later, she came in with a tray full of breakfast. She must've made it and put it aside.

"No coffee for my famula," she said. "Bad for your body. By which I mean my body. Black tea will do."

She smiled coyly as she set it on the bed next to me and then stepped away.

"No Fancy Feast?" I asked dryly. "How about some Beggin' Strips?"



I was bound, but I was free.

When Narlinea went shopping, she roped me naked to a kitchen chair and left me to ponder the strange duality. My body was secure in its bindings, both the ropes and the emotional ties to that woman. My arms were tied behind the chairback and my legs were tied on either side of the seat. My breasts were pushed out like a meal on a dining tray and my legs were pried open like a brothel opening its doors for any business that came its way. A ring gag made my jaw ache and made spittle drip from my mouth; it hit my outthrust breasts and mixed with the thick coat of sweat the quasi-tropical heat siphoned out of me. The liquid on my body was so thick and viscous I felt like I was in a sensory deprivation tank.

The blindfold and headphones severed my head from my body. My thoughts floated in the endless dark; they crashed down and broke apart into a random jumble, saturating my mind with tantalizing snippets of ideation.

A woman on her knees has a black eye. Her partner--man or woman, I cannot tell--stands over her with a clenched fist. Why do battered women return? Because the devil you know is better than the devil you don't.

Vladimir Putin rides on horseback across the rolling steppes. Why do Russians embrace him? Because the failure of market reform destroyed their economy.

Life under an iron fist is harsh, but orderly. The rules are known, the expectations are known, the consequences are known. Outside, the law of the jungle. But under the dictator's roof, under a strong guiding hand, there is freedom from the harshness of surviving on your own.

Being a scientist, I naturally offered a hypothesis: human beings, as pattern-seeking organisms with physical wants and needs to fulfill, tended to favor security and stability over freedom and chaos.

Being a moral human being, I naturally balked at learning if it was verifiably true.

The congealed layer of human consciousness that was my ego wandered through the depths of itself, while the body under it sat patiently and waited for its mistress's return like an obedient animal.



In the swirling darkness of my mind, I was a puppet and Narlinea was my puppeteer.

High above, she pulled my ropes and made my limbs move to her whims. Then, she set the handles down and I can no longer move them. The muscles corded over my frame, the axons spiderwebbing through my limbs, the ADP that suffused my flesh with functionality.... all useless.

Only she moves me.

Only she can make me move.

I clenched my fingers. They felt fat and weak; I had the pudgy grasp of a child. I unclenched them and let them dangle, limp and useless. I needed something, anything to grab hold of, but my bounds arms were angled away from anything tangible. In the haze, I imagined I was the main sail of a wooden ship. Bound by the rigging; limbs stretched out and firmly tied to the spars, my nakedness exposed for all to see, my pliable skin waiting for a beating from the harsh elements. Hardy, rugged men crawling all over me, digging into me with their dirty clawed hands....

The men? Something about the men.

The thought pressed itself against the wall Narlinea had built around me, but didn't break through. Like Freddy Krueger, its impression leered at me.

Suddenly, the world poured itself around my again. The blindfold and earphones were stripped away, and the sudden shock of sight and sound smothered me like a thick blanket. I lidded my eyes against the brightness.



"Hello, Claudia," she said, rubbing my chin lightly.

"The men," I croaked.

Though my eyes were still adjusting to the overpowering light that erased colors and blurred edges, I saw the blown-out woman straighten her back and cross her arms.

"Am I not enough for you?" she asked playfully.

"Your men," I croak again. "Th-they move around. Because they're mutating? Wh-what is the.... m-mutation--"

I descended into a coughing fit. My chin lolled against my clavicles. I saw her circle me and put a plastic bag on the kitchen counter. Her movements were slow and deliberate. Under pressure, normal people got excited or nervous. But she just got calmer and more calculating.

"I did not wish to delve into this so soon," Narlinea said. "But...."

I leaned as far forward as the ropes would let me and gazed into her eyes.

"Please."

She strolled over to another chair, pulled it close to mine, and sat down. With my legs spread wide, it like a gynecologist visit. But on the cusp of a major revelation, I couldn't care less.

"Our men, they do not feed on lust. Only pain and humiliation. They do not know how to, er, 'treat a girl right', as you would put it."

"Whatever it is, it gets your men in a lot of trouble."

"How astute." Narlinea took a deep breath, stared directly into my eyes, and stated: "Their threshold for pain and humiliation is so high, they can only be satiated by death itself."



PART V



"To survive," Narlinea said, "our men must kill."

My throat shriveled up and refused to let any sound through. The porcelain-pale face and rivers of black hair hovered in front of me like a new moon curtained by the lush night. Watching over me like some remote lunar face, uncaring and unfeeling for my silly mortal troubles. An ancient entity that saw a billion knives spill a billion drops of blood and remained unmoved and above it all.

What did the sun and stars care for the pain of the flesh and the ache of the spirit? They shone on the living and the dead equally.

"How often?" I croaked.

"Every eight months," came her reply, as blunt as a lead pipe.

I preferred that to my professors, who engendered in us a love of euphemisms even as they extolled the virtues of scientific materialism. I, the specimen, was about to be 'devitalized'. My body was just a wad of meat moving under its own power, waiting for the fangs of a killer to rip it apart. I was a prize cattle, fattened in preparation of the day I would fall under the butcher's knife. My flesh was an investment for carnivorous speculators....

I shook my head. No, no, it was crazy, I told myself. None of it was real. The sensory deprivation must have scrambled my mind. *This was not real.* She was a crazy person.

But that didn't mean I was safe. If she had some boy toy who shared her delusions, I might end up their meal regardless.



"Is that why you keep watching the news?" I asked.

The revelation that I was a fattened calf awaiting the butcher's blade emboldened. I could neither fight nor flight, bound to the chair as I was, except with my words. So I sharpened my tongue and stabbed a sentence at her.

"Waiting for whatever mass-murdering freak you're paling around with to evade the cops and make me your dinner?"

"No, no, Claudia, you misunderstand. That is the old way. The mutation.... it affects exactly that quality."

"Huh?" I asked, feigning confusion to try and keep her talking.

"The environment has changed. Do you see? The quality of policework and the availability of mass media has increased drastically over the centuries. This new mutation has lowered the threshold for.... *stimuli*. To better fit our new surroundings. It began with one of our kind. He could produce issue without needing to kill. Already, he is grandfather. His male grandchildren are toddlers still.... although with time, the gene will propagate. But the old ones, the obsolete ones, fight on."

"That's the guy you're looking out for?" I asked.

"Yes. Unable to accept that his genes are now worthless, he wages war on the new kind. The children who do not need to kill." She moved behind my chair and started to untie me. "Females are beings of life, Claudia. We do not wish to kill. To cause pain, to cause humiliation, yes. But such a thing pleases domina and dominated alike. All things in their proper place. But to end a life.... to cease its pleasure and pain for all time...."

She laid her hand on my shoulder and ran her thumb along my jugular.

"It is a terrible thing."



An unfamiliar metal hook was poked through my ceiling; Narlinea had been busy while I was blind and deaf.

My bound hands were tied to it. Pulled taut by the weight of my body, my arms threatened to snap like fraying rope fibers. My toes touched the floor, but only barely. A makeshift spreader bar crafted from a broom handle spread my legs and widened my suspended stance. The balls of my feet grazed the floor, scraped along it, tried vainly to give my stretched-out body some stability. The little bones of my toes were like brittle sticks about to break. I could put more weight on them, but that painfully stretched out my arms. A nifty little bit of predicament bondage.

When she untied me, I had asked her what my role in her plan was.

'First,' she had said, 'you must feed me.'

Now, she sat in my armchair and drank up the sight of me. Her body was relaxed, limber. A lioness on a rock, watching the herd below.

My body was the centerpiece of my living room, like an off-season Christmas tree. Weighted clamps and clothespins dangled from my breasts like ornaments. Ropes wound around my chest and hips like garland. Planks of wood, screws, and home improvement tools were gathered at my feet like unwanted presents.

Refreshed by my misery, she stood up and strutted over. She ran a finger along my sweat-slick belly. Dug the nail in at the end; as my tender flesh felt the pinch, my muscles contracted. My body arched itself like a drawn bow and my joints blazed with pain.

Then she winked, bent over, and got to work building whatever contraption was inside her sick little mind.



As Narlinea's little project erected itself in front of me, pins and needles prickled up my spine until my aching back was an oversized pincushion. Unlike acupuncture, which'd frankly be a welcome relief by now, the prickles didn't ease my sore muscles. Instead, they wormed under my skin and made it crawl. My back was a swollen mess of twisting and burning muscles making a dizzying labyrinth. I found no relief in it.

When she finished, a massive wooden frame held together by steel bolts stood in my living room like a doorway to a new world of pain and humiliation. It was a relic, from an age when public entertainment meant putting the town drunk in a pillory to shame and demean them. The ancient equivalent of reality TV, in other words. The beastly frame was intended to hold a human body in its maw, suspended and helpless, and worry away their human dignity and bodily autonomy.

Narlinea ran her finger down its freshly-laminated surface. "Give it time to dry, and you shall have a new toy, Claudia. For now, I shall leave you to... Hmm, what is saying? About watching paint dry?"

She strutted out of the room and left me to stare at my immediate future. And, honestly, after I got rid of the woman, I might keep the bondage frame. Something like that was right off my Christmas wish list. I'd have a hell of a time disguising it as normal living room furniture, though.



Her little construction project complete, Narlinea finally undid the rope anchoring me to the ceiling. Like a puppet with its strings cut, my stretched-out body flopped to the floor and I was too stiff to do anything about it.

Narlinea had the reflexes of a cat, and could've easily caught me. Of course, she also had the disinterested, faintly amused detachment of a cat, too.

My arms were still tied at the wrists. At least, I thought they were still tied. They just felt like rubber at that moment. But I managed to make my muscles move anyway and tuck my elbows against my chest, and cushion my body before I slammed into the ground. Luckily, the numbness ensured my arms could not feel any pain; unluckily, the impact was transferred through my arms and into my solar plexus; my ribs nearly cracked like a wishbone. I hurt, but since my body had at long last shifted to a new position, it was at least an interesting pain now.

My nipples, gnawed at for hours by metal teeth, dragged along the floor every every expansion of my heaving breasts. I tried to roll onto my back, but the broom tied between my legs kept me from going all the way. I ended up putting my torso into an awkward twist that put even more strain on my aching spine. My options exhausted, I headbutted the floor and tried to keep my breasts off the floor with my head.

Her boots clicked against the hardwood floor near my head. She circled me like a conquering predator. "Mmm, you taste delicious," she said. "I suppose, since I am well-fed, it is now your turn to eat."

While the thought of sitting at a table was painful enough, plots and plans put my fevered mind into overdrive and I acted even more broken and limp than I actually was. "Can't," I gasped. "Hurts. Want to.... lie down. Please."

"Oh, supper in bed, is it?"



"Thank you..." I groaned.

Narlinea finished securing my ankle cuff to the bed. Her nimble fingers tickled my sole playfully; I thrashed my leg around, but the chain wasn't long enough to pull my foot away from her. She stood up and smiled down upon my nude body like a twisted nurse in a mental asylum.

"A good domina knows when to be firm, and when to be gentle," she said simply.

She laid a dinner tray beside me. A bowl of salad rested on it. Salad, and...

My heart leapt into my throat, but I kept my face fixed and masklike to avoid arousing her suspicion. But I saw it, the gleam of sharp silver. *Please, please, please leave the knife*, I thought.

She strutted out of the room and left me to my supper. My pumping heart made my whole chest feel light and airy, but I didn't dare make any sudden movements like it wanted me to. Carefully, like a lab technician manipulating a robotic arm from inside a cleanroom, I reached out, lifted the tray up, and set it on my lap. Stuffed the greenery into my mouth and pretended nothing else existed but its leafy flavor rubbing against my taste buds like soothing menthol cream. Now that the knife was within my reach, I couldn't afford to drop it. In the other room, meanwhile, she was watching TV again, masking my minute sounds.

I finished my meal, licked the knife clean, and then--watching the door intently--slipped it under my pillow. Now, the moment of truth. I picked up the tray, set it on my nighttable, and then tipped it down with my finger until it spilled onto the floor with a terrific crash.

She appeared in my doorway.

Feigning weakness, I said, "I tried to put it on the nighttable, b-but it fell...."

Her razor-sharp glare swept over me, but I was nude and couldn't hide anything, except the rigid mask of weakness I affixed over my face.

She smiled and picked the tray and bowl up, but the fork had gone awry under my bed and she didn't go looking for it. "Accidents will happen. Tomorrow, you can clean it up."

Then, she walked out of the room, completely unaware of the knife hidden under my pillow.



Patience, I told myself. Patience.

My head rested on the pillow that concealed my means of escape. Though I couldn't really feel its hard metal through the soft downy fluff, I imagined I could. Just knowing its reassuring weight was in arm's reach massaged my frayed nerves and helped me lie limber and relaxed on the mattress.

Narlinea was still in my living room, watching TV. I didn't believe a word of her story--Not one word.--I was still baffled as to when that woman slept. She went all night, it seemed. A regular Energizer bunny. But at least with the noise I'd have some cover.

The clock on the wall said 11:52.

Now or never.

I slithered to the edge of the bed and gradually lowered myself to the floor, taking care to distribute my weight evenly, so when the strings squeaked it sounded like I was merely rolling onto my side. I hit the floor on my hands and one knee, but the other knee--the one with the ankle cuff--I kept elevated and at an angle, so as not to make the chain jingle. I curled my body up and crept close to the bedpost the cuff was chained to.

Maybe I couldn't get the cuff off, but the bedpost was another story...

I slid a piece of luggage under the bedframe to keep it from falling, held my breath, and leaned forward so I could reach the screws holding the leg of the bed to its frame. I pressed the tip of the knife to a slit, and--self-conscious of the phallic imagery--began to twist it.



I stared psychotically at the screwhead.

As I twisted the knife, the screw went round and round; each twist brought me a step closer to freedom and every metallic scrape brought me a step closer to recaptivity. The looser the screw got the more my fumbling fingers sped up. They wanted to be unchained. But they made too much noise. Shook too much. Couldn't handle the pressure.

I twisted too much and made the knife glance off the tiny groove in the screwhead. It went astray and cut into my palm. Gasping softly, I cradled my wounded hand. To calm myself, I closed my eyes and pressed my forehead to the bedframe. *Focus, dammit!* Exhaling a shaky breath, I opened my eyes again. *Focus on the screw, I told myself. Nothing else exists.*

I slowly and deliberately pressed the knife's tip into the screw groove and began to turn in short, sharp, curt twists of my wrist. One turn at a time at forty-five degrees. No more, no less. *Come on, come on.* The screw trembled in its hole like my heart in my chest. Spun around wildly, widened its spiral, shook itself loose...

It freed itself from its hole with a bright 'clink' and dropped to the floor.

Gasping with amazement, I pried the loose bedpost away from the frame and slipped the chain down it and under its foot. The foot hovered an inch in the air, since my piece of luggage wedged underneath it kept it from falling. The frame connecting the tops of my bedposts kept the dislodged post from falling over.

The cuff was still around my ankle, but I was free.



My ankle was still cuffed, but I was free.

I wrapped the loose chain around my fist and over my knuckles, clutched the knife tightly in my other hand, and crept to the window. Curling my palm around the knife, I extended my index finger to open the latches holding the window closed. But... they wouldn't come loose. I shook them harder, but it was no use. They felt much sturdier than usual, and their internal mechanism had no give. Almost like somebody had tampered with them...

"Did you think I would not notice?"

Her voice slithered into my ear like a snake. I spun around and put my back to the wall. She stood in the doorway, lithe body unlimbered and unhurried. Even the arms crossing her ample chest suggested boredom, rather than aggression. Within these four walls, I was supposed to be the relaxed one. Like a virus--like a predator--she'd invaded me and made my home her own.

"Y-you knew?" I asked. My hand tightened around the knife. If she noticed, she didn't seem to care.

"Of course. Your body is like an open book to me."

"Then why did you... ?"

She drifted from the doorway as gently as a ship on a crystal clear lake. "Claudia, Claudia, Claudia. Why do you put rats through mazes?" She clucked her tongue. "To test the specimen."

"No," I sneered. "It's to test the experiment the examiner is doing to the rat."

"Semantics."



Propelled by the sinuous, almost hypnotic curves of her hips, she sashayed towards me. Her thighs glided across each other as one leg snaked out and planted itself firmly on the floor, then the other. Serpentine, like the cold blood that pumped through her veins.

She strutted closer and closer, but my back was already against the wall.

"Do you truly think--?"

I lunged forward, stretched my arm out, and thrust the knife as hard and fast as I could. To drive it into the heart of that lizard in human skin.

She puts the 'ick' in David Icke! I thought.

Give me a break, I only had a split-second to come up with a one-liner.

She swept her arm out, flicked her wrist, and caught the blade between her index and middle fingers. Her other hand shot around my throat and forcefully stopped me. Like dynamic Renaissance statues frozen in mid-action, we stood there nearly entwined. My body was arched backward, firmly caught in her grip, while she had the tense poise of a javelin thrower.

Her eyes darted from my face, to the blade in my hand, and then back again. She cocked her head to the side and raised her eyebrows. I couldn't tell if she was annoyed or amused. Probably both. I stared into her overly-black eyes and saw my own face. It accused my body of betraying it.

Narlinea plucked the knife from my hand like I was a toddler and tossed it aside.

She marched forward; my bare feet kicked against the carpet in a last-ditch effort to keep my balance. My shoulders and butt suddenly flattened as she pinned me against the wall. Like a steamroller, there was no way to keep that indomitable woman at bay.

"Naughty girl," she said.



"Come, Claudia. It is time we clarified something."



PART VI

The rack was designed to expose every inch of me. Smooth out every fold of skin, put my limbs at the proper angles so that no patch of flesh was hidden, and allow frighteningly easy access to every single square inch of my most private, intimate areas. I hung spread-eagled from the wooden frame; it reeked of wood preservatives. My feet dangled, unable to touch the floor. My fingers wiggled, unable to touch the ceiling. I was suspended in the air, untethered to anything solid, unable to affect the world in any meaningful way.

Steel teeth nibbled away at my femininity like an iron squirrel attacking nuts. Narlinea meticulously scraped the razor across my pudenda. Scratched away at my pubic hair. Sheering my protection away. Making me even more naked than I already was.

I grimaced as the metal teeth worried my sensitive, vulnerable skin overzealously.

I dug my fingers into my palm, only to be reminded that she'd already clipped my long nails down to the fingers. They were too dull to dig into my palm, and certainly too dull to leave scratch marks in a firm chunk of male buttocks.

I dared not look down, for fear of what kind of expression I'd see on Narlinea's face. I threw my head back, ignoring the pain in my unsupported neck, and tried to ignore the fingers and the steel working over the underside of my hips. Stripping me of my dignity further. I wanted to cut myself off from my lower half, fling myself away from the violated zone between my legs.

The busy little steel beaver continued nibbling away at my nubile pink beaver.



Like Samson, every snip of the scissors sapped a piece of my strength.

But no matter how hard I pulled my outstretched arms, I could not bring down the great wooden pillars that strung my dangling body up inside the frame.

My long flowing hair fell through the sweltering air, sliding and slipping on the sweat-drenched oxygen molecules, and dropped to the ground in strands that lay useless and curled up like dead rodents. Like a knight without a helmet, my scalp felt unprotected and vulnerable. My feminine curves were brutalized and made short and ugly. We women carry so much of our identity in our hair; fun and flirtacious, dour and depressed, severe and serious. Now, my identity itself was stripped away; Narlinea and her scissors were denuding my sense of self piecemeal.

It's just a layer of filaments that protects us from cold and from sunlight, I thought, rational and scientific. The idea that it's important is just human vanity.

As each lock of hair twisted and turned on its descent, it brushed against my body. A final parting touch for the body that generated it? The feathery fingers caressed my breasts, kissed my collarbones, flicked my nipples.

I thrashed my head, trying to shake Narlinea's fingers off like the overgrown lice they were. But she simply laid her palm across my crown and forced my head to be still. And then the scissors resumed their work. Cutting ribbons of hair off. Making me less than I am.

And then she was done. My head, shorn down to a fine pixie cut, rolled weightlessly around my neck.

"There," she said.



The hairbrush's clawmarks covered every square inch of my body. "Do you know why I do this?" Narlinea asked.

My fists tightened in their cuffs.

"To make the body tender," she whispered. "For what comes next."

My nude body, suspended in the living room like a picture at an exhibition, was an open field, ripe for sowing seeds of pain. It'd been stripped of hair like a vigorous weeding. Now, the brush she ran over my skin was the hoe, breaking the soil up in preparation of the planting. The woman was impenetrable. She stood right in front of me, slightly below my eyeline. Yet she towered over my bound body regardless. Her posture was so rigid, her stature was so stiff. Like a stone pillar, she could not be moved.

Its bristles bit into my thigh, down near my knee.

I threw my head back, but I couldn't rise above the pain creeping up my inner leg. Brutally peeling the quivering flesh away. The bright lances of pain crawled towards my hips. My feminine instinct to press my thighs together and deny invaders my body was frustrated by the chains pulling my legs apart. I jerked my hips from side to side, but my ankles caught the cuffs around rolled around the narrow wriggle room I had. My spinal column was already crumbling from the weight of holding me high off the ground. I could arch it no further. I sucked in my stomach, trying to lift my precious pudenda just one inch higher... one inch of reach...

My clit pulsed with blood, throbbing and aching and swollen...

The brush's clawmarks slipped towards home.

I bit my lip.



"Say my name," she said.

The black leather serpent in her hands struck out and sank its fangs into my back again. My skin, scraped by the hairbrush until it was raw, felt like tissue paper against the whipstrike. The crack, it resounded to the ceiling and filled the room. The angry trench along my back felt like it was filled with lava. Burning and burning. I was just a pile of flesh; how was I supposed to withstand lava without going up in flames myself?

"Arghhh!" I screamed.

"Say my name," she repeated.

"Go to hell!"

The serpent bit into my butt cheeks. Pierced them right through to my pelvis, it felt like. The fatty tissue--not that there was much of it--bounced against my bones and then popped back into place.

"Say my name."

She strolled in front of me, gripping the serpentine whip tightly. She held it up, giving me the choice to acquiesce or suffer the consequences. But it was not a malicious threat, not quite. It was, in her own words, a researcher putting a rat through a maze.

"No," I sneered.

The serpent's tooth prepared to bite into my skin again.

My body screamed at me to say her name; all its evolutionary instincts to protect itself were denied to it, but it didn't seem to understand that the woman in front of had denied them. Only I, the consciousness, had puzzled that out. I could neither hide nor protect myself. She had taken my instincts themselves away from me.

I could do nothing to protect myself, except...

"Narlinea."

But it was too late to keep the serpent from speeding between my thighs.



Every piece of me was pulverized.

My breasts, belly, back, buttocks... The pain pulsed inside my flesh; it was a deep, soul-weary ache that made my whole being throb in sync. My curves were pounded flat. Femininity had been thrashed out of me. My tender body had been tenderized. Little more than a slab of meat on a hook, I was.

I couldn't even raise my head. I tried to roll it around, but my chin refused to leave the dimple between my collarbones.

Strands of drool trickled out of my mouth, but it refused to close.

The saliva splattered on my breasts. Ran down the sore skin dented by the serpent's fangs. My normally pert breasts, downtrodden by the iron-willed domina, sagged uselessly from my hollow ribcage. Almost as if the latest round of brutality made them realize they'd never nourish a new life, and so they lost the will to retain their fullness. They could escape the relentless pull of gravity no longer.

I wanted to look away from the wilting of my femininity, but I had neither the physical strength to lift my eyes nor the mental strength to think about anything but the visual signals my eyes were passively receiving.

The demoness stepped forward until my forehead nearly pressed against her chin. My sore nipples were like two pink knots; she squeezed them between her iron fingers and tried to open them. Like bolts of lightning splintering across the sky, the intense, searing pain radiated outward from my areolae and made crackling tendrils of pain fill my whole ribcage.

"Say my name," she said.

"Narlinea! Narlinea! Narlinea!"

She continued to twist my nipples. As the pain hollowed me out and gutted my femininity, she kissed my forehead.

"Good girl."



I was wrong. Narlinea wasn't a butcher. She was a goddamn gourmet chef.

She'd sliced me up, tenderized me, and fired me in the oven of sexualized torture. Now that the cooking was over, my succulent body was a feast of pains. Sharp pains, which cleaved the hardened flesh of my nipples; broad pains, where the whip had carved long trenches in my back; sour pains, from the rumble in my unfed stomach; prickling pains, where my wrists and ankles pinched against the cuffs. I, Claudia Miller, was a banquet meal for a Demonia.

And Narlinea would have her fill of me.

Tried as I might, I couldn't bring myself to call her 'the devil woman' or 'the fiend' or any of the other epithets I'd come up with. I could only receive visual data, I could no longer process any; the torture had hollowed the thoughts out of my mind and filled them with her towering apparition. In my fever-filled mind, she was the only solid thing. I also knew the words 'Stockholm Syndrome', but they were in a language I'd forgotten how to speak.

She stood across the living room, chugging water from a pitcher. When she finished, she licked her lips and glided her dark, viscous eyes up and down my nude torso; her heavy stare felt like my naked torso was being coated with molasses. Slathering my skin, letting it run and drip across the marks and welts her whip had made, making my curves all sticky and disgusting.

She breathed deep with a shudder. Breathed deep of my pain and humiliation.



Like an angel whose wings were ripped off, when she unchained me I fell to the filthy, sinful ground. My shoulders blazed; once she undid the chains holding me up, the overstretched muscles in my back contracted into a knot that wrapped around itself until the pain of my pinched flesh made me sob.

I dropped to my knees. My bent calves stuck out to the sides awkwardly and the weight of my body pressing against my ankles made them hurt all the more, but I couldn't move my legs. The cuffs exerted a psychic weight on my soul that far outstripped their physical weight on the battered shell that held it. My heavy head pitched forward. I let my arms dangle out and folded them so they absorbed the impact. The shock made my bones feel like brittle pretzel sticks on the verge of snapping. But, fortunately, they were like pretzel sticks left out so long they were too tough to break. My chest and face mashed the floor while my hips were forced into the air by my curled legs.

It was the ultimate position of submission, and I had neither the physical nor mental willpower to change it.

Narlinea pressed her chest to my back and curled her arms around my chest. Enveloped me in her iron embrace. Overwhelmed my bruised body like a shroud. Her hand clawed into the breast that armored my heart. Its everpresent pulse struggled to beat freely inside her steel fingers.

"Do you understand?"

Her voice was soft, but it was velvet around steel. Hard enough to make me flinch. I had no words. All I could do was grunt like an animal.



PART VII



"Clean it again," Narlinea said.

She stood in the kitchen. What was once my kitchen, but--let's be frank--she'd moved in and claimed it for herself. The linoleum tiles under her feet glistened like frost on a frozen lake. Something told me, however, that even if it were a frozen lake, she wouldn't slip on it. She was too firm, with her fists on her hips and her heels digging into the ground, to ever misstep.

I'd already cleaned the kitchen floor six times. I wanted to protest her request, but she'd allowed me an apron. It wasn't a very large apron; it had a low neckline that constantly flicked my nipples, a high hem that didn't even hide my vagina, and an open back that left the smooth contours of my back exposed for her whip. But it was clothing nonetheless. And even though I knew it was her true intent--clothing as a way to modulate behavior--it was an effective one.

"Yes, mistress," I said thickly. I reached for the mop leaning against the wall. But her long arm lazily reached out and plucked it from my reach. "Mistress, I--" I struggled to control my panic. *Don't dispute her. Don't ever dispute her. Ask for her wisdom.* "How do you wish me to clean without a mop?" I asked politely.

She strode up to me and placed her hand on my cheek. Tenderly stroked the curves of my face. Her eyes were filled with such warm compassion--

Then she reached into my mouth and pulled my tongue out. Wriggled it around between her pincer-like thumb and forefinger.

"With this."



"Buhhh mith-reth..." I said. "Ithhh dur-thee!"

She clicked her tongue. "It should not be dirty. Unless you were slacking, last six times you cleaned it?"

Her trap was as ruthless and efficient as she herself was. With my head tilted back, my forced-open jaw aching, and her iron fingers digging into the stippled, spongy flesh of my tongue, I had no firm ground to stand on.

"Yeth, mith-reth."

She let go of my tongue. It snapped back into my mouth, which I immediately clamped shut and covered with my hands. Her opened hand reached out and pinched my cheek.

"Good girl. And by spry about it. We must make this house look nice for company."

"C-company?"

Rather than answer, she strode past me and stood in the doorway to watch me. Her whip dangled from her hands; I knew--from intimate experience--that she could deliver a pinpoint-accurate whip strike to my backside from there.

And so, I licked my kitchen floor clean. There wasn't s a speck of dust on it; I'd already seen to that. It was purely for her own enjoyment, and probably the enjoyment of her 'company' too. Could Demonia pick up the psychic resident of humiliation? Or, at least, did this crackpot cuckoo think that?

I ran my tongue along the lines between the tiles, worked it across the flat surfaces, and lapped at the hard-to-reach corners like a cat. I tried to hold back the tears, but even though I knew she would drink them up, I couldn't keep myself from sobbing silently.

As they mixed with the coat of water already covering the tiles, they made my task much saltier than it needed to be.



I stood in the center of the kitchen, presenting to the demon queen my hard work for the seventh--and hopefully last--time. The taste of wet linoleum would not leave my mouth. A kink in my neck, the result of bending it forward constantly, made it painful to keep upright. She circled around me, her heels clicking on the floor, paying more attention to my winded body than my labor.

"Mmm, delicious," she said. "Now, be a dear and make dinner."

I bit my tongue to keep from making a joke. I was too weary to withstand more punishment. "Wh-What would you like, mistress?"

"It is not what I would like. It is a matter of being polite hosts."

You've long since overstayed your welcome, Narlinea. I scoffed before I could help myself. As her eyes sharply cut into me, I blanked my face like a mask and stared directly in front of me. My skin itched and quivered at the thought of being slapped and sliced into again.

But she only smiled, thin and cold as ever.

Ten minutes later, a jug of water, two of my finest wine glasses, and a small bowl of salt stood on the table. Nothing else. The sparse, tiny portions were either extremely high-class gourmet or an avant-garde art piece. I sensed another one of Narlinea's mind games in here.

Trying to keep my voice as polite as possible, I asked, "Is this all, mistress? Where's the main course?"

I turned to see her holding a pair of handcuffs and nipples clamps out to me. Of course, I realized; they were both Demonia. I was the main course.



When Venarius entered the dining room, his long black hair flowed behind him like a panther stalking through tall grass. He wore a black button-up shirt that was barely buttoned up, exposing pecs cut from the same quality European textiles as Fabio. His upper body was bent back slightly, leaving his arms to dangle stiffly from his shoulders and his hips and thighs to permanently thrust out in front of him. Like Narlinea, his face was symmetrical and his irises were pitch black.

That doesn't mean anything, I thought. Th-They could just be inbred, or something. It doesn't mean they're Children of the Night, or whatever grandiose name they slap on themselves.

Venarius strode assuredly and turned sharply. With a marching stride like his, he'd make a good Gestapo officer. He paused in the doorway and swept his eyes across the room. Left to right, neither hurrying nor lingering. If the sight of me on my back on the table, with my wrists handcuffed to my ankles and my heels digging into my butt, shocked or surprised him, he didn't let it show on his expertly-sculpted face. It looked like chiseled marble painted with pale skin tones.

I clenched my fists and tried to break the steel cuffs, but that only made my ankles hurt. I relaxed and tried to keep as still as possible; the nipple clamps were worrying my tits like a drunk alcoholic trying to undo a wine cork with his teeth, and the slightest tremor made them jiggle. With every new position they settled into came a bitter new flavor of pain.

Narlinea sidled up to him like a lovesick teenager. He threw his arm around her shoulders and pulled her close to his side, but didn't turn his body towards her.

"Come," she said. "Dinner is ready."

As he fixed his eyes on me, I saw the same haggard, hungry look on his face that Narlinea had when she first knocked on my door.



The conversation between Narlinea and Venarius went over my head.

Literally.

I was hogtied on my back while they sat on opposite sides of me, tossing around names I didn't know and places I'd never been, while the clamps on my nipples were trying to gnaw my womanhood away like hungry rats. Every quivering breath sent the clamps shaking. The pain dug deep into my body; its burning tendrils wove themselves itself throughout my chest cavity until my torso felt like a diseased root system, and I was the wilting flower losing its virginal petals.

They both drank water by the glass. Pounded it down like alcoholics. They didn't eat any food, though. No, they were feasting on my burning torment.

No, it's...it's all lies, I thought weakly.

Now that Venarius was closer, I could see the scars on his body. Ragged, feral scars, like he'd been cut by an animal's claws. One particularly nasty cut wound across his neck, like something had tried to rip his throat open. With the general air of exhaustion and fatigue that clouded around him, he looked like he'd spent a hellish weekend trip to the woods and narrowly escaped a horror movie cliché. But, as the dinner wore on, a change seemed to overcome him. He seemed less haggard, more fresh. Rejuvenated. But this wasn't a late night infomercial for fraudulent beauty creams. He literally got his vitality back, and I couldn't explain how.

Except...I was in quite a lot of pain. Pain he seemed to relish.

It's not true, I thought uncertainly. *I-isn't it?*

I didn't know what language they were speaking, but with my pain-soaked mind swimming in torture and barely able to keep my head above water, I didn't have the luxury to try and decipher it. It sounded like they were discussing plans, stratagems, taking stock of a situation.



There came a pause. A weary pause. A solemn moment of reflection.

Then Narlinea changed the subject. Wished him well? No, she was admiring his healthiness. And it was true, he looked even better now.

His eyes flicked down to me. Before he gulped down yet another glass of water, he eyed me like a succulent ham on display. I didn't need a translation to know he'd said I was delicious, and that Narlinea's murmur was an agreement. That my being, the whole existence I've had for decades now is just an energy pump for him.

I was a grad student once, I marveled.

But they were sucking so much energy out of me that I had none for myself; I could only lay there and heave for breath. The pain was seeping from my nipples into my lungs, severely reducing my ability to exhale.

With the haughtiness presumptuousness of a cat, Narlinea reached out and raked her nails along my sternum. Laid claim to my body, as her plaything. Her nails scratched at my body, marking it as her own. They could wander wherever their owner--my owner--willed them. The cuffs kept me fast, while her nails dug in slow. Dug away at the nerve endings while my body was unable to heed the ancient impetus to flee.

Narlinea invited him to partake of my pain.

He closed his eyes, drew in a deep breath, and inhaled. And he grew healthier before my eyes.

This can't be real, I thought.



The pain that bit into my nipples and the stiffness that made my bent limbs ache compelled me to flee, but I was too weak to even thrash around aimlessly anymore. I squeezed my eyes shut and rested my head against the table.

Move. Move. Move.

I tried to tell my body that I couldn't, but it wouldn't listen.

Fight or flight. The impulse that makes evolution possible. It doesn't heed pleading or conscious rationalization. It only demands; it's aim is to keep the organism alive at all costs.

In a frenzy, I filled my head with theoretical biology to distract myself from the pain.

It can't be turned off; organisms that obey its instinctual promptings live, while organisms that can't or won't obey it fall prey to predators who butcher them and prevent them from passing their genes on. There's no evolutionary impetus to being able to disable it consciously, just as there is no evolutionary impetus to the ability to disable breathing or a beating heart. A cancer-stricken person cannot decide to stop living by force of will, even as the cancer is consuming them. Bodies aren't meant to be turned off; they're meant to live at all costs...despite their flaws.

Suddenly, I became aware that Narlinea and Venarius's conversation had changed tone completely. It's become melancholy and forlorn, like two revolutionaries waiting for the government to round them up and execute them.

That war Narlinea mentioned. The one between the "old kind" and the "new kind". She said the old kind wanted to pass on their defective, unwanted DNA.

We are all slaves to our bodies, even if those bodies are broken.



My body was a nexus of pains: piercing pains stabbing into my nipples; sharp, round pains cutting into my wrists and ankles; throbbing pains flaming my joints. These pains were like cosmic forces, as heavy and implacable as gravity or electromagnetism; my pitiful, weak body was where they all collided with each other. My weak flesh was torn apart by the conflicting forces.

I imagined I was floating in a calm, soothing ocean instead. Its healing waters massaged my scalp, caressed my skin, and annointed my rupturing nipples like ointment. I floated, relaxed, on the water.

As my thought drifted, I came to the great contradiction:

If organisms were compelled to flee from pain, why does masochism exist? Is it mere human hubris, to feel like consciousness is the master of a punished body? Is it to feel the thrill of life in the jungle after a sheltered, comfortable life surrounded by a market economy? Is it an attempt to escape the confusion of modern life by surrendering oneself to a godlike individual who offers a clear-cut system of rewards and punishments?

All of them, I guessed, to one extent or another. As the whip manufacturers said when advertising their variety, different strokes for different folks.

Venarius asked, "Well, are you going to introduce us?"

They spoke English now. Probably for my benefit, since I was the center of attention.

"This is my Famula," Narlinea replied. "Claudia."



"Tempermental," Venarius observed.

"Oh, yes."

My burning breasts were thrust in front of me; as much as I wanted to hide them away, they were painfully exposed and bare for the world to see. I could not stop her from reaching out with one slender finger and rubbing the squashed, swollen nipple. The chunk of aerola sticking out of the clamp's angry jaws mashed against its sides. Her persistent back and forth strokes made the clamp feel like a hacksaw going to work on my nipple.

I clenched my handcuffed fists, but I could not raise them and fend her off.

Venarius abruptly stood up. From his demeanor, he seemed like a man who pondered long and hard on his next course of action, then committed to it 110%.

"I must shower," he stated.

The reassuring pitter-patter of falling water came from my bathroom, and nothing else. No singing, no clatter of shampoo bottles, no squeak of wet feet on wet tile. He was either very quiet, or he just stood there as water cascaded over him.

Narlinea finished clearing the table very quickly. It was only glasses of water and a bowl of salt, after all. Then she came back for me; she sat at the table where my head was aimed and ran her long fingers through what was left of my hair. As the fiery pain burnt my breasts to cinders, her touch soothed my scalp.

Allogrooming, I thought. It's e-evolutionarily programmed to r-release neurotransmitters that promote prosocial b-behavior. This predator is tricking my body into loving her, but I.... I won't be.... f-fooled!

I gritted my teeth to keep from screaming.



Venarius emerged from the steamy bathroom. Sheets of mist poured out of the doorway behind him, blurring the edges of his well-defined frame. He remained completely naked. Droplets ran down the swelling bulges of his pecs and licked the creases of his hard-cut abs. When he stopped in the middle of the room, his fists were clenched and his shoulders were squared. He stood upright and proud, like some well-endowed hart on a rocky ridge.

More scars are etched into the flesh that stretched across his steely skeleton.

His body isn't muscular because he's some prettyboy jogger on a trendy diet; it is muscular because of his way of life. Like a steelworker or soldier, his muscle was hard-earned through hard work. It rippled under his frame; it stretched and contracted with the potential to explode at once into extreme violence.

Wet lips pressed against the crown of my head.

"Mmmm," Narlinea cooed. "Such lust I feel pouring off you, Claudia. As thick as sweat. You reek of desire."

I swallowed heavily. *Get out of my head, you bitch!*

Her cold hands cupped my breasts, dug into the vulnerable, unprotected curves, and squeezed. Her nose and chin remained pressed against my scalp. Her breath toyed with my hair follicles and sent shivers up my spine. She ran her thumbs over the red nubs sticking out of the clamps and grazed the most extreme edges of my femininity. Her touch was insufferable in how gentle it was. The pain was already there, so she didn't need to press hard. She stroked my nipples and edged me towards a painful climax.

"Venarius and I belong together," she whispered with a silken sadism. "He is not yours. He will never be yours. But..."

She squeezed my nipples, clamps and all, and twisted them. My breasts burst into flames so hot I had to scream.

"I shall let you watch."



PART VIII

As they fucked each other on my living room couch, I watched with envy as their hairless, toned bodies slammed together. Like Barbie and Ken, their two impossible plasticine physiques grinded together in a sensual rhythm.

I wondered what playset this was, and why I'd never gotten one.

The weary ache of clamps gnawing my nipples had throbbled deep into my body, pulsating through my tremulous frame like a second heartbeat that overlapped the first in half the time.

Beat, beat, throb. Beat, beat, throb.

The pain mingled with the sexual heat that'd indled in my belly. Mixed and ran together in sweaty rivulets that danced across my skin and teased my erogenous zones like playful imps. Flicking my aerolae, kissing my lips, pooling in my belly button. I burned inside a puddle of my own sweat. It elevated me from a simple girl in heat into a supergiant star on the verge of going supernova. The sexual ache made every shaky breath that escaped my agape lips into a gale-force wind.

Venarius made no noise. Narlinea breathed softly, yet steadily. The rain that pattered on the windows drowned both of them out.

His hands were impetuous. They grabbed whatever piece of flesh they desire. He was a lord among men and he knew it. When he took firm hold of the large round tits protruding from Narlinea's chest, she yielded to him with a toss of her hair and a squeak of delight.

When she tossed her hair, her half-lidded eyes came to rest on me. She smiled, though Venarius's technique immediately turned it into a cross-eyed squeal of pleasure.



Venarius spent himself, he relaxed on the couch.

The snake woman uncoiled herself from his lap and sauntered over to me, her shapely body swaying sinuously. Her steel snakebites bite into my nipples, bite through the skin and tissue to deliver her venom into my body. I long for when my breasts weren't just bags of pain stitched onto my chest; once, I loved them and cherished them as much as my lovers did. Now I just wanted them to be torn off and cast aside. Like a religious zealot, she made me hate my own body and its pleasures.

I wanted to hate her, to fight her, to reject her...

Accept her, the poison inside me said. Accept her, and everything will be so much easier.

I tightened my fists, but can't pull them free of the cuffs. The effort made the sweat run down my arms and legs. It pooled in the gaps where the cuffs met my skin and anointed my chest, belly, and back. As pain gnawed away at my body, my skin wept tender, salty tears.

Narlinea stood in front of me and gazed at me. The compact, corded muscles flowed down her nude body to her hard belly and tucked themselves between her thighs. Lines of force were etched into her porcelain physique. With her pale skin and firm musculature, she redefined 'statuesque'.

She brushed my clamped tit with her knuckle.

"Ahh!" I squealed.

My mouth fell open. My shuddering body sucked in lungfuls of air as it racked back and forth. I don't have the strength to keep my head up anymore. My chin lolled between my clavicles, forcing me to stare wide-eyed at my bruised breasts and the steel fingers tweaking the steel clamp.



I'd watched my breasts grow from the flat ground of my chest into fully-bloomed flowers of womanhood. Now I wanted them to shrivel up and fall off.

"Did you enjoy watching?" she asked.

Her other hand traced my navel rim. Traced the spot where life first flowed into my nascent body. When I didn't answer, her finger slipped inside me. Slipped right between my toned abs and pushed into the soft flesh of my belly. She was poison; she was death. Her nail dug into the sealed-up hole like a needle, injecting her poison into me. I flexed my hips and sucked my stomach up into my hollowed-out ribcage to deny her, but with my limbs locked I couldn't do much. She was free to violate me at her leisure.

Forget my tits; I wanted to chop my head off so I wouldn't have to feel the hard, cold intruding finger penetrating me.

She rocked her finger back and forth, slicing away at my resolve like a razor.

"Yes, mistress," I gasped. "You were glorious, mistress."

She pulled her finger out of my navel and held it up; droplets of blood swelled on its tip. She pushed it into my mouth, penetrating another of my orifices by force. My feminine body is just a collection of holes for others to shove their body parts into, and though my inner feminist protests at that, it's not very effective. I can't move my arms to cover my mouth or my breasts. I can't move my legs to cross them in front of my vagina. I'm anchored to the frame and can't run or twist my body out of her reach. I can't do anything but let her cold fingers fill my mouth and force my jaws open.

Her skin tastes like marble. My own blood, though, tastes like copper.

Is that all I'm worth? A pretty penny?



With my head forcefully shoved upwards, I see Venarius watching me from the couch. A faint glimmer of a smile cracked his flinty face.

He's tasting my pain, I thought.

I wanted to shake my head, but I didn't have the energy to struggle anymore. I couldn't do anything but let my frail female frame be poked and pierced, let it be the epicenter of a thousand penetrations, let it be twisted and torn according to everybody's whims but my own.

Narlinea hooked her fingers around my jaw and pulled me head downward. My jaw sockets cracked loudly in my ears. Pain flared brightly along my neck and cheeks. Strands of drool dripped onto my burning breasts, but did nothing to extinguish the flames of pain smoldering in them. She pulled my head forward until my face as an inch from hers. Then she puckered her lips and planted a cold kiss on the tip of my nose.

"Thank you, mistress," I blurted out thoughtlessly. "Thank you."

She let me go; my extended limbs snapped my body back into place like they were rubbed bands. My head drooped again. I stared down my body, all six feet of it. Skin molecules and nerves endings stitched together, streaked with sweat and shaking from adrenaline. Evolution had given it to me, and the world had taken it away. All the systems that constituted my vessel, sweat glands and endocrine systems and muscle tissues, worked in concert to keep it alive. My brain, the nerve center, had systems of its own as well. System both physical and psychological, designed to keep me going regardless of my conscious intent.

My body was blurting things out to lessen the pain. My conscious resistance to Narlinea mattered little.



Both of her hands closed around the steel traps that trapped my precious nipples, those nubile nubs that could set my body aflutter at the slightest brush. The teeth dug in tighter as she moved them around, sending pain rippling through me.

They she ripped them off.

It was like hot poker had been shoved into my areolae and twisted like drills. My tender breasts, now freed of the weight, jiggled up and down. My fingers dug into my palms like teeth. They wanted to scoop my breasts up, caress them gently, massage the pain away. But that bitch just let gravity push and pull them. Didn't even care that I was still attached to them.

It's my fault, I thought. I should have answered her quicker.

I moaned, "God..."

"-dess."

"Y-Yes, mistress."

Narlinea slapped me hard across the cheek. Her palm rammed the soft pad of my cheek and twisted my head to the side so hard my neck cracked. The hard sting made my flushed cheeks itch and drew tears out of my eyes.

Don't fight her, I thought. Don't.

Inside the frame, I slumped over and let the cuffs carry my weight.



PART IX

For the rest of the day, Narlinea busied herself in the bedroom with her tools. Venarius watched the news intently while he made grim-sounding phone calls.

I, meanwhile, crouched unmoving beside the couch. My feet were tucked under my ass and falling asleep, but despite the ever-present itch that made them feel like numb flesh wedges, I dared not move. Not only because Narlinea ordered me to stay still, but because my battered body, still aflush and aflame from the morning's brutality, was slowly knitting itself back together. I didn't want to move and pull the threads apart or, worse, incur her wrath and make her tear my body apart again.

Don't think, I thought. Don't move. Just heal.

I had zoned out when, before I knew it, I realized the sun was setting and painting the white clouds in pink and orange.

Nighttime, already?

Behind me, moving as silent as a cat, she purred, "Claudia."

In surprise, my fingernails dug into my thighs so hard they drew blood. My back seized up and straightened out, forcing my head to pop up like gazelle peering over the tall grass to watch for lions.

Then, her gentle tender hand ran through my hair and laid on my crown.

It hurts so much, I thought. Don't resist.

Forcing myself to sound eager, I asked, "Yes, mistress?"

"Come."



She dug her fingers into my short hair and 'helped' me to my feet. I gasped rapidly as hair follicles ripped free of my scalp. My head pounded like a drum, both from fear of the unknown and the burning that encircled my skull. She guided me into the bedroom, where a newly-built black box rested on the floor. It was about four feet long and just tall enough to slip under my bed, which had its metal sidings removed.

"What...?" I asked.

"It is bedtime, Claudia," she said.

My jaw dropped open. "You can't be--"

Her hand shot out and grabbed me by the chin so hard I rocked back on my heels. Only her iron grip kept me from falling backwards. Her thumb and forefinger pressed into my cheeks and between my chins, preventing me from speaking. But it was OK; I didn't have much left to say anyway.

"Inside."

Swallowing my tears, I stepped backwards over the box's sides and stood inside it. She stepped forward and angled her arm downward, forcing me onto my knees again. The bitch gave me a playful slap on the cheek, silently praising me for my obedience and warning me to stay put. She cuffed my wrists to my ankles and laid me down inside the box. I didn't have the strength to resist, either physically or verbally. My scalp pressed against the top and my bent knees pressed against the bottom. The box was just wide enough for me, but it forced my hands to press into my hips.



"Please," I whispered.

She laid her finger across my lips.

"You would like to please me?" she said. "Rest assured, you shall. Good night, Claudia."

She closed the lid and severed the shining light, sealing my bound body inside the coffin-like box. My nose pressed against the top; she'd measured the dimensions to my exact specifications. That crafty cunt. All I could see was darkness. No light shone through the edges. A hard click made the wood vibrate slightly; she'd padlocked the box. I clenched my hands and flexed my folded legs, but all it did was make the tight cuffs dug into my skin. I thrashed back and forth and bucked my hips to try and hump the lid open, but still nothing. I could get no leverage, and even if I could I doubted I could break the thick black wood.

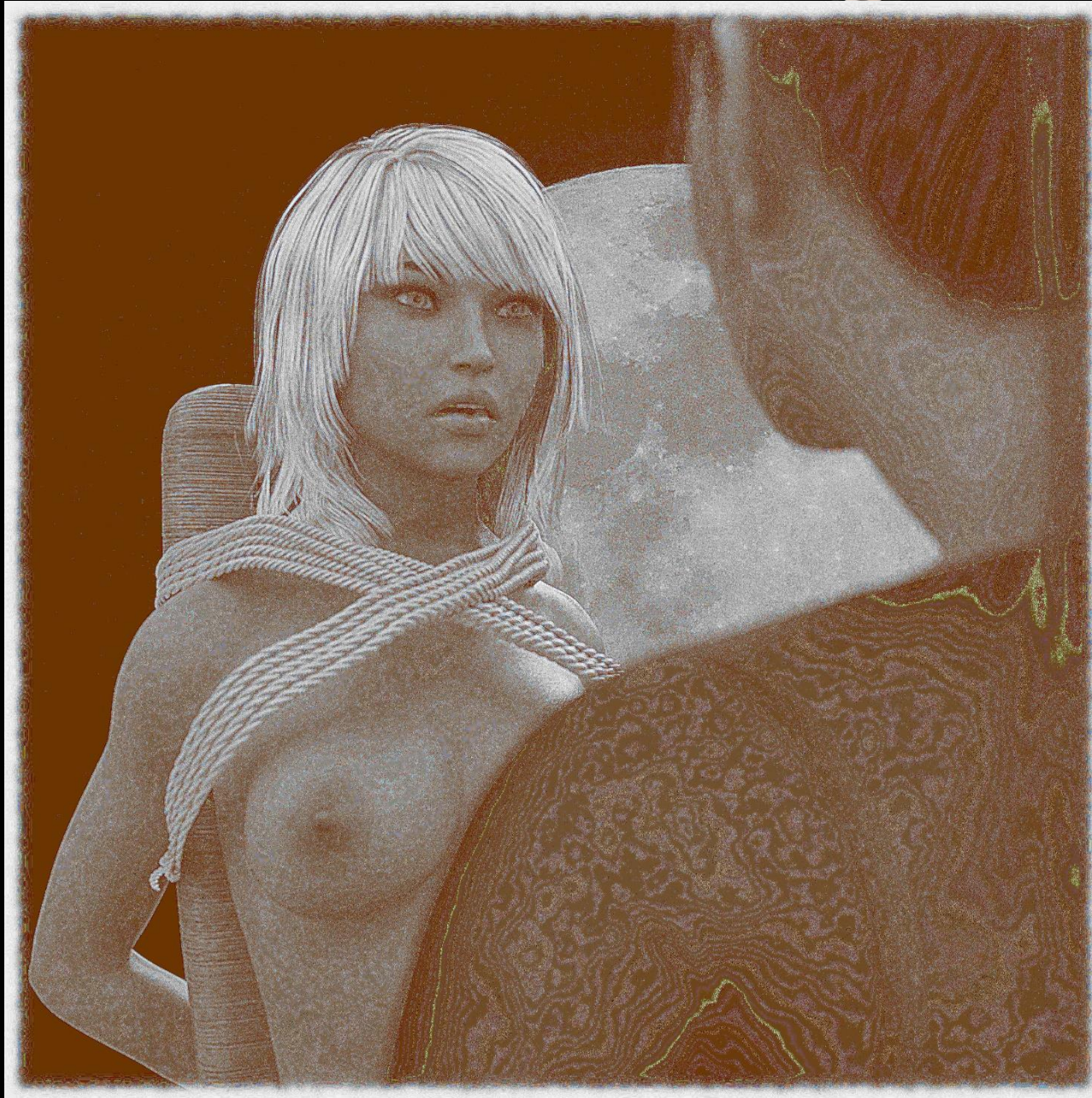
The box shuddered; Narlinea was pushing it under the bed. Tucking me away out of sight.

Resting my head on the box's bottom, I breathed heavily and thought about what to do next.

Above me, the bed springs squeaked as Narlinea and Venarius climbed onto it. It continued to squeak in a constant, steady rhythm as they did the deed.

And here I was, two feet below them. Were they... were they feasting on my suffering?

It's not real, I thought, as if it were a mantra against the darkness. I need to... to get away...



Visions started to appear to me, filling in the blank spots in my consciousness normally occupied by my vision. I saw myself with long hair, like I was peering through time to before Narlinea entered my life.

"Why?" I asked myself. "Why do you want to be free so badly?"

"B-B-Because I'm a free woman," I whispered.

"You hate it, though."

"It's... it's not..."

"You hate being human, because being human means you can't just act on instinct. You have to make decisions, and take responsibility when you make the wrong one. Isn't it better this way? Isn't it better, being in the hands of an attentive domme who gives you clear orders and offers reward and punishment to motivate you?"

"It's not my... choice..."

"You were born to be a plaything, Claudia. You crave it."

I thrashed against the sides of the box, but it was clumsy and half-hearted and after I was drained of resistance, I sobbed and sagged against my prison.

As my sorrow drifted upward, the squeaking bed springs intensified.



PART X



The next few days passed in a blur. Mostly, I tried to not think about anything except obeying Narlinea. To my surprise, it wasn't that different from waiting on tables: accept an order, rush to fulfill it, wait for the next one. I juggled keeping the house clean, bringing Narlinea her tap water and salt, and keeping my body available so that she could feed on my suffering. Venarius had left on business, so she was free to attend to me 24/7.

"I'm yours, mistress," I blurted out as she tweaked my nipple absently, like a barmaid turning a tap. "Use me as you wish."

I was getting good at saying things that made her smile.

At night, locked inside my box, my past self-visited me and told me how much easier life was now. And somewhere along the way, the lies I told myself to get along and the truth mixed and ran together. I didn't know what was real anymore. Nor did I especially care. My body had been trained how to avoid the worst pains, and it was firmly in control of my brain now.



PART XI



In the living room, the Demonae surrounded me. Their pale white skin clashed with their dark black clothes. The only thing about them that seemed alive were their eyes; those watched me eagerly.

My mistress came behind me, her breasts pushing into my back, and slid her arms around my robed body. My mistress, my owner. She nuzzled my cheek and kissed my ear as she slid the robes off. They dropped to the floor, exposing my nudity to the assembled ancient ones. Hungrily, they feasted on skin nicked and scarred by Narlinea to draw out the primordial lust swelling inside my body, the lust that could satiate their appetites. She ran her hands down my body--her body, that is--and caressed my belly. Source of the spark that ignited a woman's passion.

"My body is yours, mistress," I whispered breathlessly. "Feast on it."

She dug her nails into my belly and left long, ragged scratch marks across the toned skin. My fists clenched, but I didn't dare interfere. It wasn't my place to deny her.

The Demonae circling me breathed deeply, like my pain was a beautiful aroma. They smiled and shifted in their seats, as if their loins were burning with delight.

Take all you need, I thought. Take it from me.



Narlinea's fingers closed around my nipples and twisted them. I gasped and jerked forward, but her embrace was like a cage. She pulled me back against her chest, close enough to lick my cheek.

"Does it hurt?" she asked.

"My body is yours," I sighed. "Take what you desire from it."

"Such an obedient little pet," she said.

As she drew the pain from my body and shared it with the crowd, I was in awe of the power and poise she'd ensnared me with.

My Mistress. My Owner. My Demonia.

to be continued ...