

Wendy could hear the words Jon was saying, but she couldn't focus on what they actually meant. He'd mentioned Jenny and Trevor, and he was smiling so it couldn't have been bad. But her mind couldn't settle enough for her to be able to make sense of any of it.

She was so tired.

Not just physically, though the day had been long, the drive back from Cincinnati draining. She was mentally drained. Between the theatrics when meeting with the Corsetti Brothers mixed with what happened on the car ride home, she just didn't have the energy to focus.

Then there was her purse that hung on a hook just by her knees. She must have glanced at it fifteen times already, terrified that Jon would see the small CVS bag she buried in the bottom of it. She'd made Michael stop on the way home. She couldn't believe she'd been so reckless as to let him...

"Wendy?"

"Sorry." She blinked. "Just still thinking about the Skyline account." Jon studied her and her fingers instantly went to her ring. She was waiting for him to say he could smell the sex. She was able to clean up the best she could in the bathroom but it wasn't enough.

"The curry puffs are fine," she'd finally said, when she realized what he asked. "We can split them. I'm starving."

"So," Jon reached across the small table holding her hands. "How was the meeting?"

Wendy tensed and jerked her hands away causing yet another suspicious look to appear on Jon's face.

"Sorry, your hands were cold." She smiled weakly and took his hands again.

"It was good, actually." She allowed her shoulders to sag as the waiter took their order. "The Corsetti brothers were assholes, I could see why they got along so well with Trevor." When Jon didn't smile, she continued. "They tried to belittle me. Treated me more like an assistant than someone leading their project."

"I'm sorry, babe. That's terrible." He squeezed her hand. "They say at least 60 percent of men who act like that do it because they had a bad relationship with their mother."

Wendy laughed, relaxing a little and taking a sip of her water. "That sounds right, actually. It wasn't until Michael threatened to shut the whole thing down that —"

"Michael... defended you?" His brow pinched together like the concept was completely foreign to him.

"Well, yeah." She shifted in her seat and immediately regretted it. The soreness between her legs flared, a reminder of what happened not even an hour ago. Of Michael's body pressed against hers. Of how full she'd felt.

She pressed her thighs together, hyperaware of the dampness there. She'd done her best to clean up in the CVS bathroom. But she could feel it, the residue of what she'd let Michael do, slowly seeping out despite her attempts to contain it.

She couldn't let Jon notice. She needed to get home. To shower. To take the stupid Plan B sitting in the bottom her purse. How could she have been so stupid? She needed a new plan. She knew Michael would never go back to condoms now. She would need to persuade him some other way, to –

"Did you hear me?"

"Shit. Sorry, what?"

"It's fine." Jon's tone was sharp and it caused the hair on the back of Wendy's neck to stand up.

"I don't know why you're getting an attitude, Jon. I said I was tired. I've been traveling all day. I haven't eaten, and now you're giving me the third degree."

"Third degree? I just asked how your meeting went and what caused Michael to suddenly stand up for someone."

"It wasn't sudden." Her hands closed into fists. "We've been working together for months. It's not like..." She realized she was yelling. Jon's eyes were wide, people were staring.

"Fuck," she whispered, grabbing her water and finishing it. "I'm sorry. Let's start over." She chewed on her bottom lip as she looked across the table at her husband who barely recognized her. "How was your day?"

"Fine." He fidgeted with his napkin. "Like I said before. I started working with Jenny. She's good." He shook his head. "She had this crazy idea that the vibe of a company is more important than the numbers. She said you'd taught her that, but don't worry, I set her straight."

"Let me guess. You told her I couldn't possibly know what I was talking about because you've been doing this longer?"

Jon's tongue slid across the front of his teeth. "Forget it." He was growing frustrated. "How was traffic on the way back? Pretty bad, I guess?"

"What?"

"The traffic. You texted that you fell asleep, so I figured – "

"The traffic was fine, Jon." Her voice came out harder than she'd intended. "I fell asleep because I was exhausted. It was a long day."

"I know. I wasn't – " He rubbed his temples. "I was just asking."

Tears stung the sides of Wendy's eyes. She was barely holding it together and taking it out on Jon. It wasn't fair, but she couldn't shake the feeling that he knew something. That he was trying to bait her into a trap she couldn't get out of.

She looked away, throat tight. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm just – "

"Tired. Yeah. You keep saying that."

"Because it's true."

The curry puffs arrived. They both reached for one at the same time, hands colliding over the plate. Jon pulled back like just touching her hand was toxic. Maybe he was right.

Wendy took a bite, hoping it would ease the anxiety twisting in her stomach. She didn't even taste it. She just chewed and swallowed and worried about the stupid box that sat at the bottom of her purse like a bomb.

They sat in awkward silence for a while. Both of them pretending to like the puffs they couldn't taste. Wendy continued to study Jon. He looked agitated. Like there was something weighing on him he wanted to get off his chest and she was sure it was her affair.

The main courses arrived without either of them speaking another word. Wendy's curry looked amazing. The rich aroma of the herbs and spices made her mouth water. This was better than any comfort food. Tonight, however, it might as well have been cardboard.

He reached across the table, trying again at another attempt of forced intimacy. His touch was calming. Wendy closed her eyes, pushing the tears back as he squeezed her fingers. She loved him so much it hurt. She just wished he was different. More assertive. More supportive. More... Michael.

She gasped, pushing her chair back with so much force she nearly knocked it over. "Sorry," she exclaimed to the room. "Bathroom." She gave Jon a weak smile, then reached under the table to grab her purse and rushed away.

The bathroom was blessedly empty. Wendy locked herself in a stall and pressed her forehead against the cool metal door. She pulled the CVS bag from the bottom of her purse, the generic Plan B box heavy with bad decisions.

She unrolled a wad of toilet paper and pressed it against the inside of her thighs, letting it soak up Michael's mess. Tears stained her cheeks. *Michael's mess. Fuck.*

She dropped the wad unceremoniously into the toilet and grabbed another. There was so much.

Satisfied that she was clean enough for now, she unlocked the stall door and walked slowly to the sink. She avoided looking in the mirror, not wanting to see the accusatory eyes of the person staring back at her. Instead, she cupped her hands under the tap, popped the pill into her mouth, and swallowed. When she was done, she tossed the entire CVS bag into the trash and exited the restroom.

When Wendy returned to the table, Jon was staring at his water glass, jaw tight. Something had shifted in his energy.

She slid back into the booth across from him. "Everything okay?"

"I—" He set down his glass and held her gaze. "How do you know if someone's lying to you?"

Her blood went cold. "What?"

"I just..." he looked away and Wendy braced for the inevitable. "You're better at the whole reading people thing and well. On the way here I saw Marcus at a restaurant... With Ava."

The room went dark and for a second Wendy thought she was going to pass out. After everything, she and Marcus were still meeting. Why? She knew they weren't actually having an affair, so what other reason, other than Wendy did they have to meet?

"They were..." Jon rubbed his face. "It looked intense. Like they were arguing. Or, I don't know. But they were definitely together."

Were they planning to take her down? Did they still have some type of leverage she didn't know about? She needed to tell Michael. She needed a plan.

"Well." Her voice sounded distant, like it was coming from someone else. "I guess we never know who some people really are until their true colors emerge."

Jon nodded but didn't reach for the check. His fingers drummed the table as he stared past her. "It's just... Marcus and I told each other everything. For years, other than you, he was the person I trusted the most in the building. "He helped me through all of the

Olivia stuff. Told me how to be a good husband. And the whole time he..." He trailed off.

"People are complicated Jon. They do things for all sorts of crazy reasons." Her leg shook under the table. "Maybe he and Sandra were having issues at home. Maybe in some messed up way he thought what he was doing wasn't wrong."

"Wasn't wrong? He was having an affair. There's no way to justify that." He rested his forehead against the heel of his hand. "Ava never said anything you two were so close."

The color in Wendy's face drained. Of course he would see it that way. Everything was so black and white in his world. "We weren't that close. I mean, we talked a lot but that's really it."

He tilted his head. "You two were practically attached at the hip."

"I said we weren't that close, Jon. I didn't know anything. Now can we just drop it, please?"

"Oh... um sure. Sorry, I was just..."

"I'm sorry." She reached for his hand. "You're right. We were close. Some people..." Her stomach twisted, she was going to be sick. "are just really good at hiding who they really are."

Her leg was shaking so hard it was vibrating the table, and for a split second she heard the words exactly the way Jon might hear them someday.

"Yeah, I guess." Jon flagged down the server and asked for the check. "I just. I didn't want to believe it, you know. Marcus and Ava." He shook his head. "I can't believe I didn't see it sooner."

The server returned with their check and thanked Jon for their business. "Ready?" he asked, already standing.

Wendy just nodded, not trusting the sound of her own voice.

Jon pulled into the driveway and killed the engine. The silence stretched. Neither of them was sure of what to say to the other. He wanted to reach across the console, take Wendy's hand, bridge whatever distance had opened between them at dinner. But she was already opening her door, grabbing her purse.

Inside, he caught her at the kitchen entrance, pulled her into a hug before she could slip away.

"I missed you today," he said into her hair. "Felt like you were gone forever."

Her body went rigid against his. For a second, maybe less, she softened. Then she was pulling back.

"I need to shower." Her smile was tight, and she avoided making eye contact. "Long day. I probably smell like the car."

"You smell fine —"

"Jon." She was already moving toward the bedroom. "I really need to get clean. I'll be quick."

He watched her disappear down the hallway, heard the bedroom door close. He stood in the kitchen for a minute, keys still in hand wondering if dinner had been a mistake. He'd been so sure a nice dinner would help. Show her he was trying. Show her he wasn't the jealous husband Dr. Carson warned him about becoming.

Are you jealous of your wife's success?

Jon took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. Maybe he was. Maybe that's all this was. Wendy succeeding wildly while he sat in the same position he'd held for three years. Her name on everyone's lips these days. Her campaign was breaking records. Meanwhile, Jon was just the numbers guy.

He pulled the Thai food containers from the bag, stacked them in the fridge. Wendy's curry barely touched. His pad thai half-eaten. Forty dollars of food they'd both been too tense to enjoy. The shower started from down the hall, breaking the silence.

Jon closed the fridge and headed for the bedroom, already working through what he'd say. *We need to talk about dinner. About why you're so defensive. About Marcus and Ava and —*

Wendy's clothes were tossed haphazardly by the hamper near the bathroom door. He shook his head, she was too tired to even spend the extra five seconds to put her clothes in the basket. Jon bent to pick them up then paused.

He saw her skirt, her blouse, even her bra. Her panties, however, were nowhere to be seen. He gave a confused look, then went over the articles of clothing in his hand again to ensure he didn't overlook them. He didn't.

He stood up, looked around the bedroom. Maybe she'd tossed them somewhere? Maybe they actually made it into the basket?

The hamper was right there. He lifted the lid, started sorting through. Yesterday's clothes. The day before. Nothing from today. His hands were shaking slightly as he set the lid back down.

Facts, Jon. Focus on the facts.

Fact: Wendy went to Cincinnati with Michael this morning.

Fact: She was gone for way longer than she should have been.

Fact: Her underwear is missing.

Trevor's voice wormed its way into his head. *Those two have been practically attached at the hip lately. But I guess that's the price it takes to become Director, right?*

There was another explanation. One he wasn't thinking of. He blinked back tears, his hands shaking as he recalled Jenny's words. *I notice she and Michael spend a lot of time together. Is that normal?*

He stumbled back to the bed, his breathing so rapid he thought he was hyperventilating. The facts were clear, they all pointed to the same thing. There was no way Dr. Carson, or anyone could deny them.

Marcus and Ava hid their affair from everyone, Jon included for God knows how long. His own mentor, and Wendy's best friend. If they could hide that, then surely...

Stop. Facts only.

Fact: Her underwear was missing. Her underwear was MISSING! What other possible explanation could there be?

The shower shut off.

Jon's heart rate kicked up. He leapt to his feet still holding his discarded clothes. He wasn't sure if he should put them back, or put them in the hamper or —

The bathroom door opened. Wendy emerged in a towel, hair dripping, and stopped when she saw him sitting there with her clothes in his lap.

"What are you doing?"

"I was just —" He held up the pile. "Putting these in the hamper for you."

Her eyes narrowed slightly. "Okay?"

"Where are your underwear?" The question came out more direct than he'd intended. He was shaking, unable to hold the question in a second longer.

Wendy's hand went to her towel, clutching it tighter. "Excuse me?"

"Your underwear. From today." He gestured at the pile. "It's not here."

"Jon, are you seriously going through my laundry?"

"I wasn't going through it. I was putting it away and I noticed —"

"Noticed what? That I'm missing underwear?" She crossed to the dresser, started pulling out pajamas with sharp, angry movements. "What exactly are you implying?"

"I'm not implying anything. I'm asking a question."

"It sounds like an accusation."

"It's not. I'm just — " He tried to find the right words. "I'm trying to understand."

Wendy turned to face him, pajama pants clutched in her fist. "Understand what? That I didn't wear underwear today? I didn't want a panty line with that skirt. Is that okay with you, or do you need to approve my underwear choices now too?"

Jon's mouth fell open. She didn't want a panty line. That explanation... made sense. It was plausible. She'd been dressing differently lately. Shorter dresses, plunging necklines. Was going commando really that far of a leap?

"I wasn't — " He shook his head. "I'm sorry. You're right. It's none of my business."

Wendy's expression softened. She started toward the bed, swinging her hips with each step. "Why were you looking for them?"

Jon blinked. "What?"

The towel shifted lower on her chest, then fell off her body completely. Jon's eyes went wide, as Wendy marched toward him completely nude.

"My panties." She was close now, standing between his knees where he sat on the bed. "Why were you looking for them?"

"I wasn't looking for them. I told you, I was just — "

"Were you going to take them to bed?" Her hand found his shoulder, slid down his arm. "Maybe get a good scent of me while I was busy in the shower?"

Heat flooded Jon's face. "Wendy, that's not — "

"It's okay if you were." Her fingers traced down to his wrist, then moved to his chest. "I just didn't know you were that kind of man. You should have said something before."

Jon was dizzy. This wasn't how Wendy talked. She was fun and enjoyed talking while having sex, but this was something else.

"Really, I was only — " Jon's body responded immediately to her touch, her smell.

"What other secrets have you been keeping from me? What other dirty things do you do when I'm not around?" Her hand slid lower, working his belt.

"Wendy, what are you — "

"Shh." His belt pulled free. The sound of it echoing through the house. "Is this what you think about when you have my panties?" Her manicured nails slid across the front of his pants, her other hand already working to lower them.

Jon's mouth went dry. He should stop this. Should pull back and ask what the hell was happening. But her hands were on him now, tugging his pants down, and his body had stopped listening to his brain entirely.

"No —"

"No?" Her hand wrapped around his exposed shaft. Her grip tighter than normal.

"I... I no. I just meant —"

"What? What did you mean, Jon?" She pushed him back onto the bed, followed him down, her hand never stopping its movement.

He wasn't sure what he meant anymore. Everything was happening too fast. His wife was acting like a completely different person, and his body was... He was so turned on it hurt.

"Did you mean you don't smell my underwear?" Her fingers dipped to his testicles, massaging and squeezing the loose flesh as Jon let out a needy sigh. "Do you wrap them around your cock instead? Is that what it is? You like the way my silk feels around you?"

Jon's face was red, his eyes squeezed shut as he tried to force back the orgasm he knew was inevitable.

"Is my grip too tight, baby? Are you used to something softer?"

Before he could respond Wendy lowered her head, taking his entire shaft into her mouth.

He was going to cum. Any second now. It was a foregone conclusion. The wrongness of it, the aggression, the way she was looking at him. And her mouth... she never used her mouth. Hated the way it tasted, the way it felt. But, as her cheeks caved in around him and her tongue slipped out to press against his sac, he let his hands curl in her hair, the sensation taking over.

"Wendy, I'm going to..." His hips lifted off the bed. He expected her to pull off, to let him finish in her hand. Instead she seemed to redouble her efforts, taking him all the way to the root, moaning gently around his flesh.

He came with a roar, his vision blurring as she sucked him through it, her throat working with each pulse of his body. She didn't pull off of him until he was shaking, his manhood completely flaccid and slipping from her lips.

"Mmm, that was fun," she giggled, wiping her chin with the back of her hand.

Jon just lay there, pants around his thighs, staring at the ceiling and trying to catch his breath.

"Jesus. What was that?"

"That was me thanking my husband for a thoughtful dinner after a long day's work." She disappeared into the bathroom. "You seemed to enjoy yourself," she called over her shoulder.

Jon didn't know how to respond. He did seem to enjoy himself, but he had no idea what the hell just happened. He pulled up his pants, his mind racing to make sense of it as he got under the covers.

Something was wrong. This was more than just a wife who wanted to say thank you. This was a completely different person. Dr. Carson had said she was finally getting comfortable with her sexuality and he should support it. But there was more than that, he just didn't know what. He couldn't point to a single definitive piece of evidence. But the woman who just did... whatever that was. That wasn't the woman he married.

By Friday, the crisis had passed. Wendy made it a point to leave when Jon left, to be home when he was home. He was a little more tense than normal throughout the week, but the conversation about her panties never came back up.

She'd also made it a point to avoid Michael, allowing her shared office with Jon to feel more like a home. They even stayed out of each other's way when mentoring Jenny, something she appreciated more than anything else.

Neither of them mentioned that night in the bedroom. They didn't need to. She caught Jon watching her differently now. Appreciation? Fear? He didn't know what to make of it. Neither did she, if she was being honest. But it had worked. He'd stopped asking questions.

They stood on opposite sides of the conference room as Brian ran through the usual list of items. Wendy was preparing to head back to her desk when Brian surprised them with one more announcement. "Before everyone gets back to work, I have an announcement."

Wendy's pulse kicked up. Brian was finally going to announce the new director. Michael had promised her a month, it had taken twice that, but Wendy didn't mind. In that time not only did she continue to do great things with Fireball, she'd also gotten the Skyline account and finally gotten the Corsetti brothers to listen to her ideas.

"As you all know, we've been without a Marketing Director since Marcus's departure. While we've interviewed several candidates, I'm happy to say our selection is one of our own."

Wendy's gaze found Jon's and gave him a warm smile that he didn't return. She tried to read his expression. He looked more hurt than angry, but Wendy ignored the sense of dread in the pit of her stomach.

"After careful consideration, I'm pleased to announce that Wendy Taylor will be stepping into that role, effective immediately."

The applause started and Wendy closed her eyes letting the validation wash over her. The sound swelled through the conference room and Wendy beamed with pride. There were even a few whistles from the back, and someone calling out "well deserved!"

She'd earned this. All of the late nights on the Fireball campaign. The trip to New Orleans and the way she got Jack to bend to her will. The way she outmaneuvered Trevor. She exposed his fraud, won over the Corsetti brothers despite their bullshit. This was her answer to everyone who'd ever looked at her chest before her brain.

"Congratulations, Wendy!" Steve was shaking her hand, his smile couldn't be wider. "Every projection we make seems to be not high enough." He was beaming from ear to ear the way any CFO would watching revenue climb.

"Thank you, Steve." They were on a first name basis now. "I couldn't have done it without the team." A lie every important person of power tells.

As he walked away she scanned the room.

Trevor stood near the back. He was tense. His jaw so tight she could see the muscle jump. His arms were crossed, like he was physically stopping himself from doing or saying something that would get him in trouble. He was pissed. Good. He'd tried to proposition her, tried to use her like every other man who thought blonde and beautiful meant easy. She'd destroyed him instead. A satisfied smile formed on her lips. He'd gotten what he deserved, she wouldn't feel sorry for that.

Brian caught her eye and nodded. A sign of approval and respect. Over the last few months she'd become his number one employee. She'd gone from fly-on-the-wall to him stopping by several times a day to tell her all the great things he'd heard about her. He understood her worth, knew her value.

Then there was Jenny. She practically bounced in her seat, applauding like Wendy had just won an Oscar. "You deserve it," she mouthed, from across the room. The junior associate had been watching her all week, taking notes, asking questions.

Wendy liked Jenny's company more than she thought she would. Sure, she still tried to position herself into Michael's orbit whenever she got the chance, but Wendy was able to play defense when needed.

Michael stood against the far wall, apart from the group. He wasn't clapping, that was never his style. But his smile was enough. It caused Wendy to shuffle her feet, her heart rate spiking for just a moment. He wasn't just her protector. He was the man who believed in her, who trusted her to make her own decisions to stand on her own two feet. Her partner.

She found Jon last.

He was clapping now, and smiling. But she knew Jon well enough to know it was forced. His clap seemed slower than everyone else's, less enthusiastic. He was saying something to the person next to him, probably that he thought her taking the position was a bad idea. He glanced at Michael, whispered something else, then looked back at her.

What was that? Was he saying that Wendy only got here because Michael liked her? That it wasn't fair because he and Michael always butted heads? He was already preparing whatever stats he needed to argue with her tonight as he explained why she wasn't ready for this.

She spun her ring as she watched him. The four quick rotations easing the tension in her shoulders for a fraction of a second. Jon wasn't happy for her. Her mind kept drifting to a few nights ago. The panic when she'd realized Michael had taken her underwear from the car. Jon spiraling into one of his paranoid theories, asking questions she couldn't answer.

She'd had to act fast.

So she did what she had to do. Went on the offensive. Turned his questions into something sexual, something he'd be too embarrassed to pursue. It worked. He stopped asking. Fell asleep confused and satisfied. She'd protected them both from a conversation that would have destroyed everything.

She was the one protecting him, he was just too blind to see it. She laid awake that night, nearly in tears as Jon slept soundly next to her. They weren't tears of guilt, but of exhaustion. The weight of protecting Jon, of handling Michael's recklessness. Jon would never be able to carry that kind of responsibility.

Colleagues began to file out. Each one stopping in front of Wendy to shake her hand and congratulate her. She wore her best smile, whispering thank yous and promising to do right by them. But her mind was elsewhere. Still thinking about that night with Jon, about the damage control that came after.

She'd found Michael the next morning, furious that he put her in such an awkward position. He just leaned back in his chair, an amused smile on his face as she struggled to keep her voice down and not break out into tears. He dismissed her concerns with the same cockiness he always had, calmly telling her that she'd handled it, just like she always did.

She'd left without resolution. Told herself she was setting boundaries. But nothing changed. Sure, she'd been more careful. She'd avoided being alone with Michael for longer than she needed. When she did go to see him, she'd stand at the door, ensuring it stayed open.

Mentoring Jenny helped. She created a buffer when needed that Wendy could disguise as helping the younger associate. Michael couldn't corner her when Jenny was there asking questions about account strategy. But she wouldn't be able to hold up the charade forever.

Yesterday Michael had brushed past her in the hallway, hand grazing her lower back. Her whole body had flushed. She'd had to duck into the bathroom to collect herself, pressing her thighs together against the sudden ache. Her body had started to crave him in ways she still didn't want to admit.

Michael knew. She could see it in how he watched her across rooms. The way he wouldn't push her for a longer meeting, but would always find a way to touch her without it seeming unprofessional.

"Director Taylor." His voice came from behind her and her breath caught. "Has a nice ring to it."

She turned. Michael stood with his hands in his pockets, casually looking over her in a way that made her throat dry. Others were still gathered around, sharing stories of Wendy's most recent successes.

"We should celebrate," he said. "Lunch. Today. We need to discuss our new strategy." It wasn't a question. It was a VP talking to his new director. Brian stood less than ten feet away, and yet her body was already answering. The warmth spreading through her core. Pulse kicking up just from standing this close.

She knew she should say no. That things with Jon were still tense and she hadn't really dealt with nearly getting caught. "I can spare an hour," she said, smiling politely as Trevor pushed out the conference room door.

"I know just the place," he said, nodding a farewell to the final outliers in the room as he held the door open for her. Wendy stood there feeling the heat still pulsing through her, hating how easily he'd dismantled her resolve, dreading and anticipating what came next.

They walked past the director's office, her new office, and she stood a little taller. After lunch she'd start moving in. She'd tell Jon that this wouldn't change anything, they would figure out how to make it work.

She really hoped it was true.

Wendy followed Michael through the office lobby, doing her best to look natural. Her heels seemed to grow louder with each step she took as she made her way down the hall. Jon had retreated to the office, almost immediately after Michael mentioned lunch. She tried to focus on what that meant, but she was too distracted by colleagues calling out congratulations and asking to get celebratory drinks next week. All the while, Michael's hand rested at the small of her back. It was just light enough to look professional, yet firm enough to make her knees weak.

The parking garage felt warmer than the office, or maybe that was just her body's reaction to finally getting the promotion she deserved. Fluorescent lights buzzed overhead as they walked toward Michael's Mercedes. He opened her door for her, a chivalrous thing that made her pause to ensure she wasn't walking into some sort of trap.

When she was satisfied, she slid into the passenger seat. The cool leather brushed against her thighs, immediately making her second-guess the short cream-colored dress she'd worn.

Michael walked around to his side of the car, slamming the door shut and starting the engine with the push of a button. His hand immediately found her exposed knee, even before his seatbelt was engaged.

"Somebody's going to see." Her eyes darted to the rearview mirror, scanning for colleagues heading to their own cars.

"The windows are tinted." He backed out slowly, his touch already growing bolder as he realized she wasn't going to fight him on it. "Besides, you've been avoiding me all week. Figured I'd better make contact while I could."

Guilt pricked at her chest. "I wasn't avoiding you. I was just —"

"Placating your husband?" He tugged on her leg, parting them, his long fingers already resting on the inside of her thigh before they were even out of the garage.

"I wasn't placating anyone. He's my husband." Her hand came to rest on his, but not to move it away. "Besides, you can't really blame him for being suspicious. It's your fault I —"

His fingers brushed against the thin fabric of her panties making her breath catch. "Jon's always suspicious." He pulled into the street, cutting off another driver who blared their horn in frustration. "It's what insecure men do. They see threats everywhere because they know, deep down, that they're not enough."

Wendy opened her mouth to defend her husband, then closed it. What would she even say? That Jon trusted her? He didn't. That Jon supported her success? He'd literally tried to talk her out of pursuing the director role.

"He's just... cautious," she finally managed.

"He's weak." Michael's knuckles dragged across the front of her panties, more deliberate this time and Wendy's nails dug into his wrist. "But you already know that."

Wendy ignored his comment. There really wasn't any use in arguing, was there? Instead, she watched other cars pass by. Her mind drifted back to the show she'd practically given the truck driver the last time she was in Michael's car, causing her to open her legs a little wider.

"You know what being a director means?" Michael's tone shifted, became almost professorial, making her squirm in her seat. "It means making tough calls. Decisions that affect people's lives."

"I know what my job entails, thank you."

"You're going to have to fire people eventually." His fingers found the bottom button of her dress, just above her knee. He popped it open, never taking his eyes off the road. "Reorganize teams. Cut dead weight."

The open button created a small gap in the fabric. Michael's hand slid through it, giving him better access to her exposed thigh.

"Michael, what are you doing?" She raised an eyebrow, unsure of what he was planning while he drove.

He ignored the question, sliding his fingers across her panties again. "You have some... dead weight on your team. People who seem to have serious performance issues." He pressed the front of her panties between her folds.

"My..." Wendy's eyes fluttered shut, then snapped back open. "department is fine."

A second button popped free, and Wendy sucked in her bottom lip. "Employees with performance anxiety can really cripple a team."

The white of her panties was now completely exposed between her thighs. Wendy knew she should put an end to it. It was the middle of the day and they were driving

down busy downtown streets. But then his entire palm pressed against her, causing her to arch against his touch in a way she hadn't planned.

"E... everyone has room for growth."

Michael chuckled. "Some more than others. Wouldn't you agree?" The third button popped and Michael's fingers hooked under the elastic of her underwear. She was already soaked, and a small whimper escaped her lips as her knuckles grazed her bare skin. "Take Jon, for example."

"You... fuck, Michael." Her train of thought got derailed as his fingers dipped lower exploring her folds. "You can't expect me to fire my own husband."

"Fire him?" Michael's laugh roared through the closed space of the SUV. "No. Where would the fun in that be?" He slid across her clit, making her gasp as he worked in slow, tight circles. "I'm just saying his performance has been lacking recently. Wouldn't you agree?"

Another button. The dress was gaping now, falling away from her legs almost to her hips. If anyone happened to look in the front of the window they would see everything.

"His performance is —" Wendy couldn't finish. Michael's finger pressed inside her, just one but enough to make her head fall back against the headrest. "Fine. It's... fuck. It's fine."

"Just fine?" Another finger joined the first, stretching her like only he could. His thumb found her clit, applying steady pressure while his fingers pushed deeper. "I would say you deserve more than fine. Wouldn't you?"

They turned onto another street. Wendy tried to focus on the people walking by, but her eyes were half-lidded, her hips already moving to meet Michael's touch despite his words.

"My relationship with Jon doesn't —"

Michael's fingers curled inside her, making her hips come completely off the seat.

"Ohhh fuck." Her hand gripped the door handle. She was already seeing stars. Her hips rolled creating more friction on her clit from Michael's thumb. Two more buttons popped open, without her even realizing it.

The dress fell completely open, hanging off her shoulders like a robe. Only her bra and panties provided any coverage now to anyone who happened to look inside the window of the SUV.

"Ohh, God. Don't stop." She was lost in it now. One hand gripping Michael's wrist, as he worked her into a frenzy, the other desperately anchoring her to the seat. "I'm so close. Ahh..."

The orgasm was building with terrifying speed, her body coiled tight like a spring. Michael's thumb pressed down on her clit, the sensation sending shock waves through her body as she briefly blinked her eyes open. It was only then that she realized they were driving past High Street. The location where most of the restaurants downtown were.

"Michael – " She was panting now, her hips moving against his hand. "Where... Ohhh fuck. You just passed the street."

"We're not going to lunch."

"Where are we going?" The question came out strangled.

"You know where." His fingers thrust deeper, making her toes curl in her heels. "Tell me where you think we're going."

"To..." Her thighs started to shake. She was so close, right on the edge. "To have sex."

Michael's hand withdrew.

Wendy's eyes flew open, a whimper of protest dying on her lips. He brought his fingers to his mouth, sucking them clean while keeping one hand on the wheel.

"No." He looked over at her. Her skin was blotchy, her chest rising and falling rapidly as she tried to focus her gaze on him. "I'm going to fuck you."

He turned off the street to a neighborhood she didn't recognize. She saw a homeless man pushing a shopping cart, another on the corner begging for a handout. Her face burned. Not just from what happened, but because they'd traveled here without her even realizing it.

The motel materialized ahead. It was a long, low building that had seen better decades. The siding was a faded blue, paint peeling in long strips to reveal weathered wood beneath. Half the letters on the "va a cy" sign were burned out. In the back, visible through a chain-link fence, was what might have once been a pool but now looked more like a swamp, the water green and stagnant.

Wendy looked around the surrounding area. Clearly they were at the wrong place, there was no way Michael would bring someone like her to a place like this. But then he turned in, gravel crunching under the tires. Cigarette butts littered the asphalt.

The place was disgusting, and yet the thought of Michael bringing her to a seedy motel like this made her nipples stiffen against the fabric of her dress. The wrongness of it.

That's what made her squeeze her thighs together. Not the anticipation of Michael's touch, though that was there too, but the sheer audacity of what she was about to do. A woman like her, in a place like this. It was filthy.

"I'll... I'll wait in the car," Wendy said. "You get the room."

Michael killed the engine and reached into his pants pocket, pulling out a white key card. "Room 118." His eyes lit up like Christmas morning. "Already taken care of."

Wendy's stomach dropped. "You already —"

"Before Brian even made the announcement." He turned to look at her fully.

"How did you —" She was afraid to finish the sentence. "How did you know I would come?"

Michael leaned across the console, his face inches from hers. "Because I'm not Jon, Wendy. You always cum for me." His hand cupped her through her panties again, pressing hard enough to make her gasp. "Because my dick's bigger."

"Now, come on." He pulled away. "I only have it for a few more hours."

Jon would never bring her to a place like this, but then he also wouldn't make assumptions about what she wanted or try to surprise her in any way. He'd taken her to the same restaurant for their anniversary three years in a row because Wendy said how much she liked the food there. He never tried to push her boundaries, to make her grow as a person. He certainly wouldn't do anything this reckless. She felt her slickness grow between her thighs as Michael walked to her side of the car.

She hadn't known this thrill existed in her because Jon had never given her the chance to find it. He was stagnant, and he'd anchored her to himself. How could she have discovered this about herself when he'd never given her the chance to be anything but predictable?

Michael opened her door and reached out his hand.

She took it, climbing out of the SUV and getting a better look at the motel room door with its peeling paint and tarnished brass numbers. She looked at the dress hanging open on her body, barely covering anything, then heard the car door slam shut.

The walk from car to door couldn't have been more than twenty feet, but it felt endless. Her dress hung loose, flapping with each step. The concrete was cracked beneath her heels, weeds pushing through in determined clumps. An air conditioning unit dripped somewhere, the sound echoing off the building's facade.

Michael slid the key card through the reader. The lock clicked. The door swung open and Wendy stepped inside.

The room was worse than she'd imagined. The carpet was a brown that might have once been beige, dotted with cigarette burns that formed constellations of negligence. The floral bedspread was faded to near-colorlessness, pills of fabric catching the light from the single lamp. That water stain on the ceiling spread from the corner in branching tributaries.

Then there was the smell. Old smoke layered over industrial cleaner, with an underlying mustiness that spoke of black mold and poor ventilation.

"Romantic," Wendy said, trying to kill the silence.

"You're not here for romance." Michael's hands were on her immediately, pulling her against him. "You're here because you need this. Because you've gone all week hoping your pathetic husband could make you cum, when he couldn't."

His mouth found hers before she could respond. The kiss was bruising, demanding, and Wendy responded with the same hunger.

Her hands found his tie, loosened it while he effortlessly pushed away what was left of her dress. The fabric slipped off her shoulders, pooled at her feet on the cigarette-burned carpet.

Michael's jacket followed. His tie. She fumbled with his belt while he unhooked her bra, let it fall away. His mouth moved to her neck, her collarbone, her breast. It was all happening so fast. Like they were long lost lovers, rediscovering each other for the first time.

"Michael—" She couldn't form complete thoughts, could only feel his hands on her skin, his teeth scraping her nipple. "Oh God." Her hands went to the back of his thinning hair, ignoring the moisture already forming there.

He backed her toward the bed, his fingers sliding into her panties. They slid down her legs and she stepped out of them, kicked off her heels. Then she was sitting, scooting back on the faded bedspread while he stripped off the rest of his clothes.

"God, your body is incredible." The mattress sank as he climbed between her legs. He reached between her legs, his fingers sliding over the slickness on her thighs. "And so fucking desperate for this."

She couldn't deny it. Her hips were already moving, chasing his hand, needing more. He gave her what she wanted, shoving two fingers deep inside her waiting cunt.

"Ohhh fuck, Michael." She reached out, grasping his cock and stroking him. Her pussy twitched just from the thought of how much it would stretch her. "I'm already so close."

Michael adjusted his weight, inching closer to the blonde spread naked below him. He removed his fingers, which were dripping with her arousal, and instinctively Wendy pulled his cock toward her folds.

"Mmm fuck. That feels so good." She was panting now. The heat radiating from her combining with his own as he rolled the fat head across her clit.

"Do... do you have a condom?" She bit her lip, her hips lifting off the bed to feel more of his magnificent hardness against her.

"No." Michael looked down at her, smirking. He was completely still, allowing her to get completely swept up in the moment.

"We shouldn't—" But even as she said it, she was grinding against it, gasping as she worked just the tip between her folds.

"Do you want to stop?" Michael's hands were already on her waist. He knew the answer even before Wendy.

"I..." She pulled back, just slightly, then brought her hips forward again. Another fraction of an inch pressing inside her. She could already feel it start to stretch her and it was so much better than his fingers. "N... no, but this is the last—"

"Of course." He didn't wait for her to finish before pushing his hips forward and impaling her completely in one smooth thrust.

Stars pricked her vision, before erupting into a blinding white light as Wendy's orgasm tore through her without warning. Her pussy clamped around him so tight he groaned. A cry ripped from her throat as her back arched off the bed.

"Fuck." Michael's voice was strained. "That was easy. I bet Jon never got you off that fast."

"That's. Ohhh, mmhmm, fuck." Michael rocked back into her, not allowing her to finish her thought. The haze of pleasure continuing to wash over her, as her legs wrapped around his large back.

"I'm going to make you cum again." His gut pressed against her, as he slammed forward. "Make you forget all about that pathetic husband." His grunts grew louder as Wendy's nails dug into the dirty bedspread. "You want that, don't you? You want to cum all over my dick again."

"Yesss." Wendy was immobilized by his weight. She could feel her body pushing down into the mattress. "Uhh, you're so fucking big."

The moment her first orgasm subsided she could already feel the beginnings of another. She didn't understand how it was possible. How someone like Michael could be so...

He pulled out of her, the sudden emptiness making her sigh. "Get on your knees." His hands were already on her hips flipping her over, his powerful cock jutting menacingly between his legs.

She scrambled into position, still dizzy from the building pleasure. Then he was behind her, hands spreading across her ass, pulling her hips up higher.

"Now this is a view I could get used to." He palmed her ass, enjoying the way her large chest swayed and pressed into the mattress.

Wendy looked over her shoulder biting her lip. "I didn't think you were the type who liked to watch." Her left hand slid between her legs, two fingers pushing between her folds then out across her clit. "But if you're looking for a show..." She pushed her hips backward knocking Michael slightly off balance as another bolt of lightning shot through her core and she spread her lips with her fingers.

Michael's hands went to her ass, and he started playing with her ass cheeks, grabbing them roughly and grinding his fingertips into them. "You can't blame a man for admiring perfection." He gave her cheek a slap, and to Wendy's horror, she moaned pushing her fingers back into her pussy.

The validation laced through her veins as she rolled her hips. "Fuck me, Michael. Fuck. I need to feel you again." She couldn't believe she was talking about this, but she was past caring. Michael was the only person who truly valued her, who put her in a position to succeed. She was done compartmentalizing. She wanted the rush of Michael's approval, of feeling empowered, and yes, the stretch that only he could give her.

"Well, since you asked so nicely." He held his cock in his hand and pushed the head against Wendy's wet opening and ran it up and down the slit.

She didn't wait for him, she rocked her hips back taking his full, bare length inside her with a satisfied moan.

"Uhhhh yes." Her body rocked back and forth as Michael powerfully fucked her. His fat cock stretched her even wider than before, hitting all the sensitive places only he could.

Michael's hand left her ass and ran up her naked back until he roughly gripped the back of her neck. He held her in place as he fucked her. She'd never been fucked so aggressively before, and her pussy quivered against the assault, her arms giving way

completely until her face was buried in the dirty comforter of the bed, the smell of stale cigarettes assaulting her senses.

"Fuck," Wendy moaned into the comforter, "Fuck Michael. God. You feel so good."

"You feel that?" Michael's voice was strained now, his rhythm becoming erratic. "You feel how deep I am?"

"Yesss." Her head lolled from side to side. "You're so deep. So fucking deep."

"Deeper than your pathetic husband?"

"Yes. Ohhhh. So... so much deeper."

His hands mauled her ass, spreading her cheeks wide and watching his cock sink into her. He pressed his thumb against her back entrance and Wendy's entire body tensed.

"Has anyone ever – "

"No." Wendy's hand shot back, grabbing his wrist and pushing it away before he could finish the question. "No."

"Too bad." He wrapped his arm around her waist, his fingers finding her clit as he refocused his efforts. "I want to feel you cum again, Wendy. I want you to cum so fucking loud the entire building hears you."

"Oh fuck." Wendy pushed down on her knees and rocked her ass back as Michael's cock pounded into her. Slamming again and again against her sensitive G-Spot. "You... fuck. You need to pull out." Her words slurred as she tried to focus on the argument she was about to have. "You can't – "

"Fine," he grunted. "I'll pull out. Now cum for me, Wendy."

Wendy blinked, her chest tightening. She expected pushback, some level of fight. Was he so satisfied with the performance she was giving him he knew better than to push back? Had she done that good of a job at setting boundaries?

The orgasm hit like a freight train, completely derailing her thought process.

"Ohhhh. Oh fuck," Wendy whined, "Don't... don't stop. Holy..."

"That's it. Such a good fucking director." Michael grabbed a fistful of her hair, craning her head up. "Cum all over my cock." His body dripped with sweat, his own release just seconds away.

"Oh... Oh god." The orgasm continued to wreck her. Her pussy tightening around the plunging cock like a vise. Every muscle in her tightened as her eyes rolled to the back of her head.

"Jesus," Michael grunted, as his balls slapped against the back of her leg for a final time. "You're so... fucking.. tight."

With a final grunt, Michael reluctantly pulled his dick completely out of Wendy, her body crashing onto the bed. He spun her onto her back effortlessly, his free hand stroking his pulsing shaft as he roared.

Wendy was boneless. If it wasn't for the sudden emptiness she felt, she wouldn't have even known Michael was done. She only vaguely registered his hands on her hips, the sun hitting her face through the gaps in the shades, even the warmth of his cum as rope after rope painted her stomach and chest.

It wasn't until she heard the soft click of Michael's camera phone that she was able to open her eyes. Michael stood at the foot of the bed, phone in hand, pointing down at her. At her flushed face, her tangled hair, her chest covered in his cum.

"Delete that." She sat up fast enough to make her head spin, one hand instinctively covering her breasts. "What the fuck, Michael, delete it right now."

"Relax." He lowered the phone, that infuriating smile playing at his lips. "Your face isn't even in it."

"I don't care." Her voice was hoarse. "We can't have pictures like that circling around. Your stunt with my panties was bad enough. Delete it."

"No." He slipped the phone back into his pocket. "It's for my personal collection."

"Michael – "

"You made me pull out. At least let me have this." He grabbed his boxer briefs from the cigarette-burned carpet and stepped into them. "I can barely even tell it's you." He sat down on the bed next to her. "Besides, it seems like you handled my little stunt with the panties perfectly."

"That isn't the point." She was already losing steam, too exhausted to argue.

"How did you do it, anyway?"

"Do what?"

"Handle Jon after he figured out your panties were missing. I imagine it's not just something a husband would forget."

"Does it matter?"

Michael just waited. He was good at that. Good at silences that made you want to fill them.

"I... think I discovered something new about him," she finally said. "A side I hadn't seen before."

"Oh? Now this I've got to hear."

She chewed her lip, debating how much to share. She knew Michael didn't like Jon, and he would certainly try to use what she said against him. But she'd already said too much. She had to give him something. Besides, she couldn't protect Jon from everything, that's what he tried to do to her and it obviously didn't work.

"He was spiraling. Going through my clothes, asking questions. So I turned it around on him. Asked if he had some kind of underwear fetish, if that's why he was so interested in what I was wearing."

Michael barked out a laugh. "Holy shit, and it worked?"

Wendy couldn't help but smile. Was that pride on Michael's face? Had her ability to think so quickly on her feet impressed him? "Well... it probably helped that just before he was about to cum, I took him in my mouth."

She glanced between Michael's legs, was he getting hard again? Was she already working him into another frenzy?

"Promise me no one else will see it, Michael."

"I already told you I—"

"Promise me!"

"Fine, fine. I promise."

She knew this was a bad idea, but he had a point. She could control Jon if she needed to. And she'd won the more important battle. Made him pull out even when she wasn't sure if he would. This was just... a souvenir. A private thing that no one else, especially Jon, would ever see.

"Fine. But let me see it. To... make sure my face really isn't in it." She quickly added.

Michael gave her a knowing look then pulled out his phone and held the screen out to her.

The image was unlike anything she expected and it made her breath catch. Her body from her chin to her thighs was on display. Her skin was flushed. Her pussy red and swollen. Her mouth went dry, but she couldn't tear her eyes away. Her chest was streaked with thick white cum that stretched clear up her throat. It was the most obscene most... erotic thing she'd ever seen.

"See," Michael whispered, suddenly too close for comfort. "The woman in the photo looks like a fucking goddess."

She shoved his hand away, no longer interested in looking at it. She'd seen enough to know her face wasn't in it. He was telling the truth.

"I'm going to get cleaned up." She stood and moved toward the bathroom before pausing and walking back toward the bed. "And I'm taking these with me." She picked up her underwear.

The bathroom door creaked shut as she leaned against it. The mirror above the sink was streaked but she allowed herself a moment to look into it.

The woman staring back was a stranger. Hair matted on one side, tangled on the other. Lipstick smeared across her cheek. Neck blotchy and red. And her chest... She looked down at the mess he'd made. Touched it with one finger, felt the tackiness of it.

A fucking goddess

Michael's words replayed in her head as she smiled at the woman in the mirror. Power surged through her. She had no reason to be ashamed, he was right, she looked good. She was a force of nature. She had Michael wrapped so tightly around her finger that he didn't even question her when she told him to pull out. She was the one in control, the one calling the shots.

She emerged from the shower ten minutes later, and crossed the small room grabbing the rest of her clothes. She took a quick inventory ensuring nothing was missing while Michael scrolled through his phone looking like a bored businessman.

"Jack Peterson texted." He didn't bother looking up. "Said he'll be in town in a few weeks. Expects you to show him around town... in that gold dress."

A smile tugged at her lips. "Of course he does."

Michael finally looked up, caught her expression. "I'm proud of you Wendy. You're going to make a damn fine director. Now, let's get out of here before people start to ask questions."

"Lead the way."

The conference room was still buzzing with congratulations when they slipped away. People were shaking Wendy's hand, making plans for celebratory drinks, checking their phones for lunch reservations. The entire time Michael was standing next to her, beaming. They knew it wasn't because he was proud of her. It was because he knew it served to only pull Wendy deeper into his web.

The hallway was quiet. A few people had made it back to their desks after wishing Wendy the best, but they were too busy making lunch plans to notice anything out of the ordinary. Not that walking down the hallway was out of the ordinary, but had someone seen them duck into the empty director's office there would have been questions.

They paused as they rounded the corner, their heart racing as a maintenance worker walked out of the office. Had they been just a couple seconds early no doubt their cover would have been blown. Instead, the worker didn't even look in their direction, just walked the other way proud of the perfectly mounted nameplate that now hung on the wall. **WENDY TAYLOR, DIRECTOR OF CLIENT SERVICES**.

A nervous laugh nearly escaped their throat, as they ducked inside the empty office, locking the door. It was spotless inside, if Wendy had any idea she was actually getting the promotion today they couldn't tell. The space was nearly empty. An old bookshelf sat in the corner, its shelves filled with books no one had ever read. A potted plant sat by the door directly across from the large bay windows that thankfully had the shades drawn.

They tossed their bag onto the chair pulling out the first camera. They didn't need to rush. Between the announcement and then lunch they had at least an hour before the halls would start to fill up again, but the quicker they got it done the better they would feel.

Scanning the room, they moved to the bookshelf and found a spot on the top shelf that swept over the desk perfectly. Setting the camera up was the easy part, finding a way to make it blend in and still keep the angle they wanted was a bit more challenging, but after about ten minutes they figured it out.

The phone buzzed in their pocket as they grabbed the second camera. They didn't need to look at the caller id to know who it was.

"Tell me you've finally gotten it done?"

"Almost," they replied, grabbing the second camera and walking toward the plant. "I have the first camera done. Shouldn't take too long to get the others."

"No one saw you go in?"

"No, they were too distracted playing nice. I can't believe they don't see through it." They spun the plant, trying to find an angle that would work and wouldn't fall out. "Part of me didn't think she'd actually get it." The camera slid into place.

"Of course she got it. She's even more conniving than he is."

"I thought you two were friends?"

A laugh crackled through the phone. It was cold, void of any actual humor. "So did I. Then the bitch blew up my entire life. I caught her fucking him red handed, gave her an out and instead..." There was a pause as Ava pushed away the memory. "Payback's going to be a bitch."

On the opposite wall of the bookshelf was the only wall art in the room. An abstract photo of bright watercolors that could have either been a cheetah or a woman depending on the angle that you looked at it. They moved to it, mounting the third and final camera.

"Last one is online. Try to log in and make sure you see them."

Clicking drifted through the phone and they knew Ava was home at her computer. "Crystal clear."

"Good. Now I'm packing up before someone sees me in here."

"You did good work. Lisa would be proud."

"Don't talk about her like you knew her."

"You're right." There was a pause. They expected Ava to just hang up, that was her usual move. "This will work. Once we expose Wendy, we will have all the leverage we need to go after Michael."

"How much longer until – "

"Knowing them?" Ava's laugh was bitter. "She'll probably be fucking him in there all weekend long."

"Jesus. It almost sounds like you want revenge more than I do."

"Justice." Ava corrected. "Not revenge. Justice."

"Sometimes they're the same thing. Just... let me know what you want me to do next. Just make sure it can't trace back to me."

"It won't."

The call ended. They took one last look around the office. At the desk. The chair. She didn't deserve any of it.

Ava's apartment was barely furnished. A cheap IKEA table. A folding chair that hurt her back after an hour. A mattress on the floor in the other room because she'd sold the bed frame when she couldn't make rent. This was her life now.

She sat at the table, laptop open, staring at the video feeds. This would work. This would have to work. It may not fix what was already broken, but it would at least restore some sliver of dignity.

When she minimized the feed tears stung the back of her eyes. She hadn't changed her wallpaper yet. It was her and David's wedding day. They were both smiling, his arm around her waist probably joking about how she had no business wearing white. It really was the happiest day of her life.

Ava touched the screen, traced the outline of David's face. She was devastated when he said he didn't believe her. That companies don't just fire people with circumstantial evidence. She tried to explain, to tell him about Michael's manipulation, but he told her she sounded crazy, obsessed.

She pulled back up the camera feed. She couldn't look at it anymore.

While she waited for Wendy to return to the office her eyes drifted to the stack of papers on the table beside her laptop. Divorce papers. David had already signed them weeks ago, sent them back through his lawyer because he couldn't even face her to end their marriage.

Her line was still blank. She hadn't signed them yet, though she wasn't sure why. Maybe because signing them made it final. Made it real. Maybe she was holding on to some sliver of hope that once she proved it all David would take her back.

Wendy had made her choices. Had chosen ambition over friendship. Even after all the warning Ava had given her. She still chose Michael over all of it.

Now she'd face what those choices actually cost.

Ava knew, on some level, that this was revenge. Knew that it was personal and justice and vengeance were blurring together in ways that would probably damn her. She just didn't care. Wendy had stolen everything from her and one way or the other she would get what she deserved.

Movement on the center feed made Ava sit up straighter in her chair, her heart rate spiking.

Wendy walked into the office alone. Ava cursed her luck, hoping by some miracle Michael would follow her in there and take her right on the desk. Instead, Wendy just looked around the empty office, an unmistakable smile on her face.

She moved around the desk, running her fingers over the edge as she opened the blinds and let the afternoon sun pour in. It was only then that Ava could see how wrinkled her dress looked, how multiple strands of hair seemed out of place. She shook her head in disgust.

Wendy sat down in the seat, sinking into it like she owned it. She pushed back from the desk slightly, then spun with a satisfied smirk that made Ava want to launch her laptop across the room.

"Director Taylor," she whispered, too quiet for the cameras to catch, but Ava could read her lips. Ava's hands tightened on the edge of the table.

She knew she needed to be patient. This was just the beginning. Wendy would come here with Michael eventually. She would fuck him in that leather chair, on that mahogany desk, against those floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the city. And when she did, she would give Ava everything she needed to destroy her.

She'd lose everything, just like Ava had lost everything.

Justice.

Ava watched Wendy spin in the director's chair one more time, the smile never fading from her face.

"Enjoy it while it lasts," Ava whispered to the screen. "I'm going to take it all away from you."