

Neighborhood Encounter: Chapter Six [Insider]

Well, I might have bitten off a bit more than I can chew doing Neighbourhood Encounters in tandem with Toxic Attraction, thus the date of this post. I'm pushing hard and should have the Alpha version of Toxic up here tomorrow (it is a pretty action-packed chapter...) alongside the finished version of Double Cross.

October has been a bit of shit month on my side of things but lets look forward to November. My goal is to get on Patreon on more often outside of me just posting and interact more with you all.

Anyways, lets get to the Alpha of Neighborhood Encounters. It is chock full of grammar and other mistakes, though I have been using a new editing program that caught some things on the fly so hopefully its not too bad to read.

Anyways, lets get to it:

I was going to add a bit of the chapter here as a teaser, but I think the first paragraph is already inappropriate lol.

Clara shut the bathroom door harder than she meant to. She locked it and stood there for a second with her back against the wood, shorts glued to her inner thighs and the wet patch of Burt's cum cooling against her skin.

The shower took forever to heat. She yanked the shorts down and kicked them under the sink so she wouldn't have to look at them. She didn't have any panties on. Those were still on Burt's bedroom floor, wadded and ruined. She stepped into the shower before the water was all the way warm and hissed through her teeth. It ran down her stomach first. Then lower.

She grabbed the bar of soap with both hands and worked up a lather. She spread her feet on the slick tile and brought the soap between her legs.

His cum was still there. Thick. A lot of it. It had started to dry at the edges of her pussy lips and along her clit, a sticky film that pulled when she touched it. She grimaced and pressed the soap harder, rubbing in tight circles, trying to scour it off like it was grease from one of the engines Burt worked on.

The first pass didn't get it. The second one made her suck in a breath. She was just her being thorough because the alternative was leaving any of him on her. She kept going. The water turned hotter and steam climbed over the glass. Her platinum hair darkened and stuck to her shoulder blades.

She could still feel the shape of him.

Not inside. They hadn't done that. She clung to that distinction hard. She hadn't allowed that. It was just grinding, dry humping like teenagers do, except things had went further than she intended.

His shaft had been a thick, hot ridge between her lips, dragging over her clit again and again until her brain shut off and her hips took over. Then the angle had changed and the head of him had sat right at her entrance, just the tip, just enough that her whole body had locked up.

She had pulled off. She had. She remembered that part clearly. What she remembered after that was worse.

The way she'd grabbed the head of his cock and held it against herself. The way she'd used him. The way she'd come staring down at that smug, ugly face while he told her to open her eyes. The way his cock had jumped and then painted her, its disgusting hot ropes hitting her clit and her lips and the insides of her thighs, more than she thought a man could put out. She'd rubbed it in for a second before her mind caught up. A second was enough. It was already in the folds of her pussy, he'd already marked her.

Clara's hand slowed on the soap and then sped up again, angry at herself for the slowdown. She rinsed and soaped a second time, fingers sliding through the slickness that wasn't only soap anymore. Her clit was swollen. It had been swollen since she walked out Burt's bedroom door. Every pass of her fingers sent a tight little pulse up into her belly.

"Stop," she whispered into the shower.

She braced her forearm on the wall and kept cleaning herself. The motion was the same one she'd used on him, the same short grind, and her body recognized it. Heat gathered low inside of her. Her nipples tightened in the water's caress. She bit the inside of her cheek and tasted blood and kept her eyes open so she wouldn't see his bedroom ceiling, the stained popcorn texture, the American flag boxers kicked to the foot of the bed. His ugly, bloated, face greedily looking up at her.

His house had smelled like old beer and motor oil and something fried days ago. His beard had scratched her face raw. His tongue had tasted like salt. None of that should have gotten her off. Adam's mouth was clean. Adam's muscled body was the one she loved. Adam finished too fast sometimes and was careful with her and asked if she was close, and she had still come harder on a redneck's cock than she had in months.

The shame flushed her cheeks and some distant voice inside of her whispered that she liked it. Her shame intensified and only fueled what was building inside of her. s

The water ran off her pussy and swirl toward the drain, milky for a second, then clear. She wasn't convinced it was all gone. She used her fingers this time without soap, spreading herself under the spray of watery, trying to flush every crease. Her middle finger slipped and rubbed her clit by accident and her knees almost buckled.

Clara made a sound she hated. It was small but thankfully caught in her throat.

She finished the job clinically after that. Outer lips. Inner. Clit hood. The seam of her ass where a line of him had run when she sat up. She washed her hands twice. Washed her stomach where her own fingers had transferred it. Then washed her face and basked in the hot water, hoping it could scold away anything she had missed.

When she shut the water off the bathroom was a box of steam. She stood dripping on the mat, breathing like she'd run the trail behind the house. Her reflection in the mirror was a smear of blonde and pink. She wiped a circle with her palm.

Her piercing blue eyes look back at her, framed above her high cheekbones. The face that made grant committees listen even when they didn't understand the science. She looked wrecked. Flushed. Her pupils were too big. There was a faint red arc along her jaw from his beard.

She pressed a towel between her legs and held it there. The pressure made her flinch. She dried off anyway, rough on purpose, like she could sand the last hour off her skin.

Adam was on the bed when she opened the adjoining door.

He'd been waiting. She could tell by the way he sat, elbows on his knees, his phone face-down on the nightstand like he'd given up pretending to scroll. His face did that split thing it had been doing since the bet started. Worry in his eyes but something hotter underneath, poorly hidden. He was already hard. She saw the line of it in his jeans and looked away.

She went to the window first.

The blinds facing Burt's house were open a few inches. She yanked them shut hard enough that the slats clacked. Then she checked the side window too, even though it only looked at trees. Only when both were closed did she pull open a drawer and take out the oldest pair of pajama pants she owned and a faded Berkley shirt.

"Clara." Adam said slowly.

She didn't turn.

"Are you okay?" he asked again.

"I'm fine," she said as she got dressed for bed. The words came out flat. She stepped into the pants and tied the drawstring tight. The shirt dropped over her head and hid her breasts, hid the flush still sitting on her chest.

"That's not what I'm asking," Adam said. He stood up. She heard the mattress creak without turning around. "You've been gone almost two hours. You walked in and went straight to the shower. You won't even look at me."

"I said I'm fine." Clara pretended hoping he would just drop it. She wanted to escape to sleep and not have to think about what had happened. What had almost happened.

"What happened?" Adam asked, his voice closer now.

She pulled her wet hair out of the collar and started combing it with her fingers, facing the closet. "I don't want to talk about it."

Silence emanated from behind her. Then his voice. "Did you have sex with him?"

Clara's hands stilled in her hair. The question hung between them. No. She could have said no but she'd already taken too long to respond. It would have been technically true. No penetration. But she had come on his cock. He had come on her, sprayed his illicit seed all over her. She had left her panties on his floor and walked home with his load drying between her legs.

None of that fit in a yes or a no. She was still trying to contextualize it herself. She opened another drawer like she needed socks and just stared dumbly at them.

"Clara."

"I don't want to talk about it, Adam," She finally managed to whisper.

"That's not fair. I sat here the whole time, trying to see... I didn't know if you were..." He stopped himself. She could hear the struggle in his voice but then he pushed anyway. "If he did something you didn't agree to. If you're hurt. I need to know."

She turned then, because the concern in that last part was real and it made her angry in a way she couldn't exactly figure out.

"I'm not hurt," she said. "We didn't have sex. That's what you wanted to hear, right?"

His eyes flicked down her body even in the ugly clothes, then back up. He looked ashamed of the glance when he noticed she locked it..

"That's not all I wanted to hear," Adam said, "Tell me what happened."

"That's all your getting tonight." She sucked in a breath, "I need time."

He took a step closer. She held up a hand.

"Don't. I need quiet. I need my brain to catch up. If you keep asking I'm going to say something I can't take back." Clara's mouth suddenly felt too dry.

"Like what?" Adam made to take a step forward but put his foot back down.

"Like maybe this was a mistake. Like maybe I shouldn't have indulged this fucked up fantasy of yours." She laughed once, but didn't feel any humor in it "Do you know how insane what is going on sounds? If people back home knew...with him...god what I'm doing... And I still..."

She cut herself off. Adam waited. He was good at waiting. Like he thought she was about to tell him what he wanted to hear but also dreaded hearing.

She didn't. She crossed to her side of the bed and pulled the covers back. The sheets were clean, unlike Burts. Who knows when the last time Burt's had been washed. . She slid in and reached for the lamp.

"You're going to sleep?" he said. "That's it?"

"That's it." Clara said forcing her eyes closed and trying to calm her erratic breathing.

"Clara, you're shaking." Adam said, a hint of nervousness in his voice.

She hadn't noticed. Her hands were, a little, under the blanket. She tucked them against her stomach, which still felt warm, which still remembered the weight of a bigger body pressed against her. "I'm cold from the shower."

"The fan's on in there...it's hot in there Clara," Adam half whispered.

She didn't answer, just kept her eyes closed and tried to will the night to end. Clara could feel him standing there for a few more seconds and even swore she heard him swallow.

Eventually the mattress dipped on his side. Adam didn't reach for her. She was grateful and a little disappointed.

She squeezed her thighs together under the blanket. The towel-dry skin there was still too sensitive. A dull throb answered her.

Adam's breathing hadn't evened out. He was awake, staring at the ceiling, she was sure, inventing versions of the night in his head. Some of those versions were probably worse than the truth. Some were probably kinder.

Clara turned onto her side, back to him, and pressed her face into the pillow.

She could still smell Burt's sweat and the dankness of his house. She'd tried to scrub that smell off of her in the shower. That should have helped.

It didn't.

Adam sat in the home office with the lights off. The monitor was the only thing going. Through the window the street sat still, two driveways, two different lives. Their Tesla in one. Burt's raised truck and the carcasses of other trucks in the other.

Nine days.

Clara still hadn't told him what happened in that house.

She worked late. She took calls in the car. She stayed at the university annex until the parking lot emptied. When she came home she kissed him on the mouth like nothing was wrong and asked about dinner and went to bed. If he brought it up she shut it down the same way every time.

He could still hear the last fight. Kitchen. Two nights after. He'd followed her from the sink to the fridge like a dog.

"I just want to know what he did," Adam had said using the most diplomatic voice he could muster.

"I told you I don't want to talk about it." Clara didn't turn to face him but she'd gone rigid.

"I'm your husband..." Adam had started trying to find the rest of the thought as he spoke.

But he'd taken too long. She'd looked at him then, really looked, and the tiredness in her face had turned sharp. "That doesn't make me your property, Adam. Respect the decision. I said no. That's the end of it. I need time."

He'd stood there with a dish towel in his hand feeling both scolded and hard, which was its own kind of sickness. She'd gone upstairs. He'd stayed in the kitchen until the ice maker dumped a load of cubes and scared him.

Since then, nothing. He had tried to reconstruct the night from scraps. The way she'd come up the driveway with her hoodie off. The sweat on her. The shower running too long. The beard scratch on her jaw the next morning that she covered with concealer and pretended wasn't there. He had put his mouth on that scratch one night while she was half asleep and she'd gone rigid, then rolled away.

He still got hard thinking about it. That was the part he couldn't tell her. The not-knowing made things worse. His imagination was running wild. Some of them were her on her knees in that filthy kitchen. Some of them were worse. He hated the pictures his mind created but he used them anyway, in the office when she wasn't home like a teenager.

An email landed while he was staring at Burt's garage door. It was from the Michigan Department of Energy. His heart sped up when he saw the subjectline.

He opened it. It was an offer letter. The salary would take the pressure off Clara's grant timeline. He was to start date in two weeks. It came with great benefits. There was a paragraph of boilerplate text about serving the people of the state.

He should have felt better than he did. The job was beneath him and he knew it. He'd said as much to the panel. He was going to accept it anyway. They needed the money.

He sat back and looked out the window again.

Burt was in the garage. The hood was up on the old Chevy. The big man had on overalls but no shirt, that slab of sun-damaged chest and belly pushing against the material. There was a beer on the fender.

Adam watched him for a full minute. Then he stood up.

He told himself he was going to ask one question and come home. He told himself he wasn't going over there because the not-knowing had started eating away at his stomach. He headed downstairs and out the door, wiping his palms on his jeans on the way across the grass.

The smell hit first. Oil and hot metal. Burt didn't look up when Adam's shadow fell across the engine. "Need somethin', son?"

Adam hated that word and being talked to like a child. "I want to know what happened with Clara."

Burt's hands kept moving in the engine bay but then he paused. He turned his head just enough that Adam saw the smile under the older man's handlebar mustache. "You mean to tell me you don't know?"

He said it like it was the funniest thing he'd heard all week.

"She's keepin' secrets from her own husband. Well, I'll be damned." Burt shook his head, still hunched over the motor. "Ain't that somethin'. Now hand me that there crescent wrench."

Adam looked at the scatter of tools on the dirty towel. He could identify sockets and a hammer. But everything else he should have known and didn't, "I don't... which one is that?"

Burt straightened up slow and wiped his hands on the bib of the overalls, leaving two black streaks. Up close he was bigger than Adam remembered. Taller by an inch or two.

"That's alright," Burt said. Not kind. Just stating a fact. He ran a greasy palm along the valve cover like he was petting an animal. "Women like Clara, they're a lot like a good ol' American engine. Just gotta have the right tool to get 'em fired up and purrin' proper. Get 'em runnin' right, and hell, you can put that pedal clear to the floor." He cut his eyes toward Adam. "You followin' me, son?"

Adam scoffed. It came out weaker than he wanted. "My wife wouldn't take kindly to being compared to a machine."

Burt chuckled. "Shoot, there's a whole lot worse things I could compare her to. But I'm a gentleman first and foremost. And a gentleman don't go kissin' and tellin'." Burt gave a little shrug, that sly grin sitting beneath his mustache. "If Clara don't wanna talk about it, ol' Burt's gonna respect her wishes. Even if me and you are friends and all, son."

Friends. Adam felt his face do something he couldn't control. The word sat in the air between them with that knowing little twinkle in Burt's eye, the same look he'd had the night he watched by the hot tub.

Burt turned back to the engine, still talking, like Adam was a neighbor who'd come over for a beer. "Bet it's eatin' you up somethin' fierce, ain't it? Not knowin'. Gotta hand it to ya, son. That wife

of yours, she's somethin' else. Now, I ain't gonna pretend I understand why you'd let a woman like that run loose." He flashed Adam a crooked grin. "But I sure as hell do appreciate ya doin' it."

Adam didn't answer. He chewed the inside of his cheek till he tasted blood. Burt, meanwhile, just kept right on jawin'.

"I seen that look in your eye the other night by the hot tub. And I seen it before that, when you was watchin' through the window." Burt paused. "Reckon if we play our cards right, we can all come out ahead. You hear me, son?" His grin widened beneath that handlebar mustache. "Clara most of all."

"Whatever happens or doesn't happen is up to Clara and me," Adam said. His voice sounded like it belonged to someone standing farther away. "Whatever you did upset her. She won't talk about it."

Burt laughed through his nose. "Hell, I ain't done nothin', son. She's just got herself all twisted up over them liberal ideas she's got rattlin' around in her head. Sounds real nice till you get down to livin' 'em. Then they don't make a lick o' sense."

"What are you talking about?" Adam already regretted asking. He could feel the sermon coming. The same one Burt had been giving since the day they moved in.

Burt stopped working. He looked at Adam over the hood, with both hands on the metal, grease in the creases of his knuckles.

"Here's what I'm gettin' at, she can call herself whatever she damn well pleases. Can fight for whatever cause she wants, too. But all that foolishness they're fillin' folks' heads with out west? That don't change what a woman is."

He rubbed his thumb against the grease on his palm. "You take a woman built like Clara, put her in the right situation, give her somebody who knows how to handle her, and let her do what comes natural..." Burt's grin crept back beneath his mustache. "Well, nature's gonna take its course. Ain't enough women's rights marches or campaign signs in this whole damn country gonna change a lick of biology. You understand what I'm tellin' ya, son?"

"Jesus, Burt. Just say what are you saying." Adam knew what he was getting at, but part of him still wanted to hear it.

Burt's mouth pulled to one side.

"Clara wants herself a real man, one built to hold her down and give her what she's achin' for. Ain't no two ways about it. She's got that want gnawin' at her, and that's why she's gone so quiet. Fightin' it, see? Don't wanna admit what she wants, even to herself." Burt wiped his greasy hands on a rag, never takin' his eyes off Adam. "But you don't fret none, boy. I've broke in a few stubborn mares in my time. Just takes the right hand on the reins. I'll have her ridin' easy 'fore long."

Adam's pulse was in his throat and he felt something stir below his belt. This piece of shit was really talking about Clara like this. About a woman as sophisticated as her. If it wasn't for Adam's own fucked up fantasy this would never have ever happened. It made him want to put his fist through the windshield of the Chevy.

A rust-bucket truck came in too fast. Its brakes screaming as gravel popped under bald tires. The door opened with a groan. A younger thinnier piece of shit version of Burt dropped out of it.

Adam had seen him at a distance. Up close, he was worse. The guy wore a Ford hat stained at the brim with a white t-shirt that had gone yellow at the pits. Jeans that had never met a washing machine. The man's gaze went to Adam and seemed to measure him.

"Casper," Burt said, jerkin' his chin toward Adam. "This here's Adam. Lives right next door to me."

Casper stuck out a hand. Adam shook it because he didn't know what else to do. The palm was wet. Adam let go as soon as he could and fought the urge to wipe his hand on his jeans in front of them.

"Ahh," Casper drawled, a grin spreadin' wide across his face, showing off too many teeth. "So you're the lucky fella married to that fine-lookin' piece been struttin' her stuff 'round here."

"Excuse me?" Adam swallowed, not ready for this. He had expected it from Burt but to just be confronted like this from a stranger was like a cold bucket of water had been dunked on him.

"Hey, now, don't go gettin' sore at me," Casper said, holdin' up his hands with a crooked grin. "Didn't mean nothin' by it. But you gotta admit, son, they don't make 'em like that 'round these parts. Not by a long shot."

Burt jerked his chin toward the house. "Quit yer jawin' and go fetch us some beers. There's a case sittin' on the kitchen floor, 'less you done drank the whole damn thing already."

Casper lingered half a second longer, eyes still on Adam, then ambled toward the door like he owned the place.

Adam found his voice. "I should get back."

"Suit yerself," Burt said, already leanin' back over the engine. "Offer ain't changed none. You want answers, you go ask yer wife. I done told you where I stand, and I ain't fixin' to say it twice."

Adam walked back across the grass. His legs felt wrong. Behind him he heard the screen door slap and Casper laugh at something, the sound carrying easy in the late afternoon.

Once back in the office he sat down hard. The DOE offer was still open on the screen.

He looked out the window at Burt's garage. Two shapes moving in it now, both holding beers.

The whole street felt like it was in on a joke but Adam wasn't in on it. He still didn't know what Burt had done to her. He knew what Burt said he was going to do.

He thought about telling Clara. Coming home from work, standing in the kitchen, saying I went over there. I asked. He already knew how that conversation ended. She would call it a betrayal of the boundary she'd set. She'd be missed he even talked to Burt. Talked to Burt about something personal in their marriage like that. She would be right. He had gone anyway.

He sat there with his hand on the mouse and didn't move it, listening to a truck radio start up next door, some country station, a man singing about a woman who wouldn't come home. It didn't fit but he couldn't help but think of Clara.

Clara hit send on the internal posting and sat back in the cheap university chair until it creaked.

The posting was for a graduate research assistant. Basalt sourcing and impurity review. Term appointment tied to the first tranche of the grant. Nancy had called that morning with the number

she'd be getting. Not the whole pot, but enough for now. She had to be careful. She could afford one hire. While not ideal, she'd find a student who already had a Michigan email address and didn't have to relocate across the country like her.

She had wanted a wider pool. LinkedIn. The California labs. People who already spoke her language. What she got was an HR template and a circulation list that stopped at the edge of campus. She would take it. IT was a win.

Her phone buzzed and she opened the message from Adam.

A: Got the DOE job. Start in three weeks.

She wanted to be glad. She was glad, in the part of her that ran the household math. The single-income had been getting thin. A state paycheck meant she could stop doing grant theater every other week. It also meant he was setting down roots here with her.

She typed congratulations and deleted it. Typed proud of you and deleted that too. The cursor blinked. She locked the phone and flipped it face-down.

The problem wasn't the job. The problem was she still hadn't told him what she'd done with Burt.

She had cum on their neighbor's cock. She had straddled a man she loathed, held the head of him against her clit, and shaken apart while he watched her. Then he had come on her. Hot, thick, creamy cum. So much of it. And impossible amount.. She had felt it hit and, for one stupid second, rubbed it in.

Clara pressed her knees together under the desk. The motion was automatic and immediately a mistake. It conjured her memory. Heat that had no business being in a grant office at 3:40 in the afternoon.

She hated him. Hated everything about him. She hated the politics that came out of his mouth. She hated that he was the opposite of Adam, the opposite of the person she had decided to be.

She also hated that her body didn't care about any of that.

The memory came in pieces when she let it. She had been trying not to let it. Work was supposed to be the place Burt couldn't follow her. He followed anyway.

His shaft against her, thick enough that her fingers hadn't met around it. The wet sound once she was on him, her own slick turning the grind filthy. His hands on her ass, pulling her forward so her clit dragged the whole length of him. The way he'd told her to open her eyes. The way she had. That face. Ugly. Pleased. The orgasm that had torn through her so hard she'd made a noise she didn't recognize. The first pulse of him against her, then the rest of it painting her lips and her clit and running down toward the bed.

She had walked home with it cooling between her thighs.

Clara's hand was on her own thigh under the desk. She took it off, ashamed and grabbed at the pen in front of her, gripping it tightly.

He disgusted her. She was disgust at herself for answering him. A low, traitorous throb that made her shift in the chair and then stop shifting because the chair would squeak and someone in the hall would hear a grown woman fidgeting..

How had she gotten here.?

He hadn't forced her.

That was the part that made the shame worse, not better. He hadn't welched. No sex, he had kept the letter of it while walking her right up to the edge and letting her step. She could still hear him. *<i>I honor my deals. I don't take kindly to folks thinkin' I'm gonna welch.</i>*

One visit left.

Then the deal would be done. The mice were already gone. She could walk over, keep her clothes on, keep her mouth shut, keep her hips to herself, and end it. She was a woman who closed funding rounds. She could close this.

Maybe.

She exhaled and ran both hands through her hair. Platinum strands stuck to her fingers. She had worn it down today because she had a meeting and the meeting had gone well and she had wanted to look like the version of herself that stood in front of people and talked about how to fix climate change. That version did not grind on a man who thought women's rights were a joke.

Going back on the deal had crossed her mind every morning of the nine days. She could tell Adam they were done. She could tell Burt the same. She could live with mice if they came back. She could hire the other exterminator once the DOE paycheck landed.

And then Burt would have the high ground.

If she backed out now he would smile that lazy smile and tell himself the California girl couldn't finish what she started. He would be wrong about climate and wrong about progress and wrong about what a woman was for, and he would still get to be right about her word.

She could not give him that.

Her phone buzzed, another text from Adam.

A: We should celebrate. I can pick up food.

She stared at the text until the screen dimmed. She quickly typed a response.

C: Sounds good. Thai?

Clara closed the laptop. In the hallway a cart rattled and a student laughed. She stood, smoothed her slacks over her hips, and felt the seam of them press where she was still, traitorously, wet.

On the way out she stopped in the women's room and ran cold water over her wrists. The mirror showed the same face she took to grant meetings. High cheekbones. Blue eyes. She did not look like someone who had come with a neighbor's cum on her fingers.

She gulped, looking at herself and set off to make one quick stop before Adam arrived to pick her up.

Adam was already at the curb when she came out of the annex. The Tesla idled quietly. Clara had the Oreos in a plastic grocery bag because the campus shop only sold the family size and she hadn't wanted to show up empty-handed.

She opened the door and the smile came easy. He looked tired in a way that had nothing to do with the drive.

"Congrats present," she said, dropping the bag in his lap. "Your disgusting cookies."

He laughed, the light creeping back into his eyes. "They're not disgusting."

"They have like nineteen ingredients that aren't food." Clara shot back.

"That's the point." Adam chuckled and started to open the pack. He leaned over the console and kissed her. Oreo dust already on his fingers from opening the pack one-handed. When she pulled back he was still smiling, but it thinned as he pulled into traffic.

"It's not what I wanted," he said after a block. "The job. You know that."

"I know." She said, trying not to sigh.

"I used to hire people for roles like that." Adam said slowly.

"And you took it anyway." She watched the side of his face. "I'm proud of you. I know what you parked to come here."

"I wouldn't change it." Adam smiled back at her.

She believed him. That was the worst and best thing about him. He believed in her and would have moved with or without the grant.

"All of this is temporary," she said, tipping her chin at the shitty strip mall they passed. "Until the company takes off. Okay?"

He nodded. His hand found her knee and stayed there.

She let two more lights go by. "I should have told you what happened."

He say anything.

"I needed time," she said. "I wasn't trying to punish you. I just... I couldn't get it right in my head."

"It's okay." Adam said coolly. She loved him for that. He had respected what she needed, as a woman and didn't press. God, she was so lucky. There wasn't any man like him.

"I didn't have sex with him." She said it fast, then shuddered, a full-body thing she couldn't stop. "God. Even saying it. No. We didn't. I wouldn't. He's..." She searched for a word that encapsulated just how vile she found Burt. "He's gross, Adam. The house is gross. I was cleaning his bedroom. He came in during some game and sat on the bed I'd just made."

Adam's hand had gone still on her knee.

"He wanted to make out. Neck like teenagers or whatever, After everything else it seemed small, which is a stupid reason, I know. I let him. Then it didn't stay that."

She watched the trees instead of him. Now that she was speaking, she couldn't stop.

"He got my shorts off. Panties too. I was on top of him. I could feel all of him against me. I started moving and then I couldn't make myself stop. I was grinding on his cock. I held the head of it against my clit so I would come, and I did. Hard." Clara was breathing fast as she spoke. "I had to look at him when I did it because he told me to open my eyes."

Her face was hot. She kept going because stopping would be worse. “He shifted under me and the head of him pressed against my entrance. Just the tip. I felt it start to go in and I pulled off. I did Adam. I swear. Then he said he was going to come and he aimed it. All over me. My pussy. It was a lot. That’s why I went straight to the shower. I still had it on me when I walked in the door.”

The turn signal clicked. She hadn’t noticed they were close to home.

“I feel like I failed you. I feel like I failed the company, letting someone like that get that far. I thought I was better at staying in my own head. I’m sorry.”

Adam pulled into their driveway and sat there with the car in park. Then he reached across and pulled her into him, awkward over the console, her seatbelt still on until she stabbed the release. His mouth was in her hair.

“Thank you for telling me,” he whispered and kissed the side of her head. “I still love you. I’ve got you. You’re not a failure.” He let out a breath against her scalp. “You wouldn’t even be in this if I hadn’t... you know what I get off on. I put you next to him. That’s on me too.”

She held the back of his shirt. The Oreos had slid into the footwell.

When they got out, Burt and Casper were in the other driveway. Burt had a beer and Casper had his hat off, fanning himself, staring at Lara without any attempt to hide it. Adam lifted a hand. Neither of them waved back. Clara didn’t look at them and concentrated on not looking until she was inside.

In the kitchen, she washed her hands. Adam was the first to break the silence, “Maybe we don’t do the last one.”

“No.” Clara blurted.

“Clara...”

“I’m not letting him back me off a deal. Do you know what happens if a man like that decides I welched? He talks. To other men. The same men I need to sit down with if this basalt thing is going to leave the lab. Farmers. His people. You break a handshake in that world and you’re done. It’s poison. I won’t. And I can’t let him win.”

Adam levelled his gaze at her. “You don’t have to prove anything to him.”

“I’m not proving it to him. I’m finishing it. On my schedule. I’m not ready to walk over there tonight. I won’t let him pick the night either. When I go, I go. Then I want a long break from him. A fence. Whatever you wanted to build. I don’t care.”

“Do you want to go through with it?” he asked.

“No. I’ll control it this time. Then I’m done.” Clara said feeling the heat hit her cheeks.

“Then we should just get it over with,” he said. “Pick a night and we end it.”

She stood there with a towel in her hands, trying to clean herself “Okay.”

They looked at each other, neither moving towards the bundle of Thai food on the counter. She didn’t know who reached out first but suddenly his mouth was on hers and the towel hit the floor. She pulled his shirt up and he got her blouse half undone and gave up and yanked it over her head. His belt buckle was cold against her stomach. She was already wet. She had been wet in the car

and had hoped he wouldn't notice. He noticed now, fingers sliding into her slacks, a sound in his throat when he found her. "Jesus, Clara."

"Don't," she didn't know what she was telling him not to do. Not to mention it or not to think about what might have caused it or not to relive the past events of recent emroy. He backed her into the edge of the counter. She got his jeans open and wrapped her hand around his dick and he hissed. The need seemed to burn each of them. She shoved her pants down. He lifted her enough to get them off one ankle. Then he was inside her, a single push that made her grab the counter with both hands, "mhmmfuck."

He fucked her right there on the counter with their windows open. Her ass hit a drawer handle and she knew it'd bruise. She didn't care. The wet sound of them fucking filled the kitchen. The Thai food completely forgotten. Adam was already sweating at his hairline. Her thighs were slick against his hips. His mouth was on her neck, kissing and licking and then on her mouth again. He tasted like oreos.. She could feel every inch of him. It was familiar and exactly what she wanted but a small part of her wondered... she pushed that away and dug her nails into his shoulder.

"What are you thinking about?" he said against her cheek.

"You," she said between kissing him and gasping for air. He thrust harder. "Clara."

"You." she said again.

He wanted something else. He'd let this fantasy take control again. She could feel him wanting it in the way he held her hip against the counter. She kept her eyes on the ceiling fixture and said his name when she moaned, "Adam.."

It was fucked.s He knew it was fucked and he fucked her through it anyway. Both of them thinking about Burt and trying not to think about him at the same time. At least she was trying not too.

Her pace changed and she squeezed her pussy around his cock.

"Look at me," he said. She knew he wanted to see the lie behind her eyes. To see what she was thinking about, confirmation it was just what he was thinking too.

She didn't. She came with her eyes closed, a raw sound gasping out of her mouth as she tried to block any erroneous thoughts out.. Her pussy clenched around him in pulses that wrecked whatever control he had left. He emptied into her with an angry groan.

They stayed there, stuck together, breathing into each other's shoulders. His cum started to slip out of her down her thigh. The only sounds besides their labored breathing was the fridge humming nearby.

After a minute the heat went out of it and Clara remembered where she was. Her hand moved on his back, slower now. He couldn't look at her yet. He pulled out and a small moan escaped her lips. He grabbed the towel off the floor and she took it from him without speaking, holding it between her legs.

Outside, someone laughed in Burt's driveway. The pale younger one, probably. Adam fastened his jeans and Clara picked her blouse up off the floor. They shared a quick awkward smile before Adam kissed her then opened the Thai food.

The water was cooler than Clara wanted but she had set the heater lower on purpose. Heat made her stay in her head. Cold gave her something to push against. Just like the uphill battle of starting a company and fighting climate change. This was who she was.

She wasn't trying to be sexy in her modest black one-piece. She pushed off the wall and settled into a breaststroke, chin up, pull, glide, kick. The same kind of rhythm she used on the trail when she didn't want to think, just wanted to zone out and push.

Inside the house, the office light was on. Adam was at his desk drafting a counter offer to the DOE job offer. Flexibility and remote days. She had kissed the top of his head on the way out and left him to it. He had to try even knowing what working for the government was like.

She finished a lap and tried to push the thoughts out of her head. The grant. A graduate student. Someone else in the lab so she could stop doing every assay herself.

Another lap, Adam's mouth on hers in the kitchen. The urgent way he's slide in her.

She finished another lap and put her face in the water on the glide and blew out. When she came up the sky was going that cheap midwestern pink before black crept out and claimed it.

Her shoulders burned. Good. It felt good. A reminder she was pushing herself. She kept going until the burn moved into her lungs, then she caught her side with both hands and hung there, breathing through her nose, platinum blonde hair plastered to her cheek.

"Swimmin' all by yer lonesome? How 'bout I come keep ya company?" Burt's voice said from behind her.

Clara didn't turn at first. She pulled herself closer to the wall so the concrete hid most of her. The suit suddenly felt thinner than it was. "I'm fine, Burt. Please get off my property."

He came into the edge of her vision anyway. She didn't look but could make out his typical silhouette. Overalls, with no shirt and a beer in one hand. His eyes on the waterline where her breasts met the suit. She tucked in tighter against the wall.

He hooked a thumb over his shoulder at his house. "Just wonderin' when you're fixin' to wander back over for that last session," Burt drawled. "Got me some candlesticks and such needin' a good polishin'. Figured you was gettin' right handy at that sorta work. Be a shame to let them skills go to waste, wouldn't it?"

"Go to hell, Burt," the heat in her voice surprised her but she kept her face firm.

"Mhmm," he grinned beneath his mustache. "There she is. I do like me a woman with some fire in her." He chuckled. "You gonna stand there and tell me you didn't enjoy yerself last time? 'Cause I seem to recall you holdin' on pretty tight and..."

"Go home, Burt. Get off my property." Clara's breathing was coming faster now. Her mind working to confirm whether it was anger or arousal and she pushed that thought deeper.

He didn't budge an inch. "Now, don't go gettin' all high and mighty on me." His grin thinned. "You ain't fixin' to welch on a deal, are ya?"

"No. Now leave. Please," the last word at a venom to it she hadn't expected either. Like he was challenging who she was at a fundamental level here.

Burt raised both hands, beer and all, and backed off a step.

“Easy now, girl. No need to get yer dander up.” His grin lingered on his face. “Adam, though...he seemed right twisted up earlier. You didn’t go tellin’ the boy what we been gettin’ up to? Aw, that’s a shame. Reckon he’d be mighty interested in hearin’ all about it.”

He tipped his chin toward the office window. “Say, he up there right now? Keepin’ an eye on us?”

Clara didn’t so much as glance toward the window.

“Good night, Burt,” she said it through her teeth, pushed off the wall, and started the next lap before he could answer. Breaststroke again, harder than she should have. She felt him on the edge of the pool the whole way. When she touched the far end and turned, the concrete patio was empty.

How did a man like that get under her skin? She could blow up the deal tonight. Walk inside, tell Adam it was over and let Burt tell every farmer in the county that the California girl didn’t keep her word.

She floated on her back for a count of ten and hated how her breasts looked even in the modest suit, how the wet black cloth made a shape he had already had his hands on. Then she rolled and swam again, anger in the kick and shame in her the glide.

Burt had the motorbike up on the stand before the sun cleared the trees. Carb was gummed again. He liked the early quiet for that kind of work. His coffee had already gone cold on the toolbox.

Gravel popped on the driveway behind him. Burt didn’t turn. His left hand stayed on the wrench but his right hand eased the drawer out until his fingers found the pistol’s worn grip. He waited for a second step then he looked over his shoulder.

Clara was there in her sexy little running outfit. The tight black kind she wore that Casper had talked about far too much. Light sweat ran over on her chest and throat. Breasts still working from the run. Platinum hair in a tail that had come half loose. She stood on the cracked concrete like she’d had to talk herself down the whole driveway. He wanted to pull her into his garage and fuck the ever loving shit out of her.

The way she looked at him made his cock come to life. That look. Her chin up, eyes hard. Like a woman facing down something that bites.

Burt smiled and let go of the pistol. “Mornin’.”

“Tonight,” she said flatly.

He took his time wiping his hands on a rag that was already filthy. “Come again, darlin’?” He dragged out every syllable and watched her jaw tighten.

“I’m coming by tonight after work. For the last visit.” She said visit like it hurt to get the word out. “Then the deal’s done.”

“Yep.” Burt nodded once, slowly and deliberate. “That’ll do it. All paid up. Square.”

He tipped his chin toward the dark house behind him. “So, what’s it gonna be tonight, darlin’? You fixin’ to come clean out my basement, or you got somethin’ else in mind?”

Color crept onto her face. Anger. And something else Burt knew all too well. He stared at him like she was about to cuss him out. He waited for it. He wanted it. Wanted to see the fire, it'd make it so much sweeter when he broke her.

She didn't give it to him.

She turned on her heel marched down the broken driveway, picking her way around the pothole, not one step onto the overgrown lawn with the car frames and the rusted mower. She marched all the way to her own front door and didn't look back once.

Burt leaned on the bike and watched her ass in those shorts until her door shut.

Clara had the sweatshirt zipped to her throat and didn't have any make up on. Her hair was in a bun that pulled at her scalp. She wanted to look like a woman running an errand. The mirror in the entryway still betrayed her, showing her attractive face and curvy body that was hard to hide. So sometimes she wished she'd been born more plain, so that her message and work could speak for itself without the distraction of her beauty. But she liked the way it looked and liked the doors it could open for her.

Adam stood by the coat hooks and didn't speak. Dread and an arousal he was trying to hide were behind his eyes.

"How did we get here?" he asked.

"I don't know." She checked the zipper again. "It's done after tonight though."

He nodded. She kissed him, then opened the door. He stayed on the stoop. She felt him there without turning around as she marched towards Burt's house. She held her arms around herself, the night air feeling starting to get cold. Weeds stuck out at her from the property line then then she was over Burt's broken driveway she stepped around the pothole and looked in disgust at the car frames on the lawn sitting in rust older than she was.

She went to the door and pressed the bell. Nothing. She sighed, remembering it didn't work and knocked.

Fat plodding feet came from the other side of the door. It eventually opened and Burt stood there in boxers and a camo t-shirt that didn't cover the belly or the hair on his chest.

His eyes went down her and back up, slow, hungry, unimpressed by the sweatshirt.

"Well, well." Burt leaned against the doorjamb, eyeing her with that familiar, crooked grin. "Wear whatever you please, darlin'. Ain't like a little cloth's gonna hide what the good Lord blessed ya with."

He lifted a hand past her shoulder and waved. She knew without looking that Adam was still on their stoop. She didn't turn to check if he waved back.

Burt held the door.

To get in she had to turn sideways and brush past him. Her shoulder touched his chest and her hip glanced his thigh. The smell went up her nose whether she wanted it or not, oil and sweat and the musky smell of his house. The mental image of him sliding against her and the way she'd held him

there so she could cum jumped into her memory. The heat of his cum hitting her after she pulled off.

She shoved it down and kept walking into the dark living room. Behind her the door shut. The latch clicked.

"You showed up," he said in his gruff uneducated voice. .

"Let's just get this over with," Clara sighed looking around the room for things to clean.

"Sure," Burt was wearing the flag boxers again, maybe the same pair like last time, she didn't look long enough to know. "You want a beer, or you want to get to work?"

"I want this over," Clara said, crossing her arms and doing her best to stare daggers into the older man

"I bet you do," Burt mused. He moved around her toward the kitchen. She stayed where she was, hands at her sides so they wouldn't do anything stupid. She rolled her eyes at a pile of beer cans on the floor, she'd already bagged them all last time yet this fat fuck was still littering his house with trash. What a waste of her time.

From the kitchen burt called, "'C'mon, then, darlin'. Last time 'round. Let's see what's we going get up to, shall we?"

Adam stayed on the porch until the door over there shut.

Burt had looked at him first and wave. Then Clara had gone in and just disappeared into the hillbilly house. Adam went inside and closed their door with more care than it needed. His dick was already hard. He hated that it was. Anger courses through him along with jealousy. He wished the walls next door would turn transparent so he could see what was going on.

It was still fresh in his mind what had happened last time. She'd delayed telling him and now it was all he could think about. If she told him earlier maybe it wouldn't be so ingrained in his head and he could have gotten over it.

Grinding. Her hand on Burt. The tip at her entrance. Cum on her when she walked home.

He took the stairs two at a time.

He went to the office window first. Burt's place sat there the way it always did, peeling paint, junk on the lawn, the garage dark. No movement. There was a faint light coming from somewhere inside but it did nothing to let him see what was going on.

HE stood there for longer than he should have before going to the bedroom. He sat on the edge of their bed. He watched Burt's upstairs window waiting to see if that light came on. Adam would know she'd gone into it if it stayed dark, he wouldn't know anything, which was worse.

Minutes crept by and he could feel his pulse in his dick, stupid and steady.

He thought about going over there. Knocking and maybe making it a scene. The upstairs window at Burt's stayed black.

Adam didn't move. He watched the dark glass and tried not to invent the sounds on the other side of it, but his mind invented them anyway.

Clara hadn't moved even after Burt had called her. She wasn't his dog or property. She wouldn't just answer to his beck and call. She had a smirk of her own when he sauntered back into the living room.

"Welp, sweatshirt weather, huh?" Burt said, eyeing her up and down with a disappointed little grunt. "That's a damn shame."

She rolled her eyes and didn't answer.

He padded ahead of her in the boxers and the camo shirt, bare feet slapping the boards. He headed into the dining room. The table had a cloth thrown over it that didn't match anything else in the house. On top of the cloth were guns. Pistols laid out in a row. A rifle. A shotgun with the action open. Next to them were Rags, a little bottle of oil and brushes.

Clara stopped in the doorway.

"C'mon, have yerself a seat," Burt said, jerkin' his chin toward a chair. "You can give ol' Burt a hand finishin' up here."

"I'm not touching those," she said flatly.

"Sure ya are. Last visit, remember? I get to decide what needs doin'. That was the deal, darlin'. You shook on it."

She sat because standing there looking at them was worse. The chair put her close enough to see the oil already dark on a rag. Metal smell on top of the house musty smell. She had never been this close to a gun. Not in California. Not at a range. Not even in a locked case behind glass. Her hands stayed in her lap.

Burt dropped into the chair beside her, close enough that his knee pressed against hers beneath the table. He left it there. Then he picked up a pistol like it was no different from any other tool cluttering his workbench.

"This here's a simple one. You pull this back, slide comes open. See?" He demonstrated, showing her the empty chamber. She flinched anyway. Burt gave a short snort. "Ain't loaded, darlin'. I ain't stupid."

He held out a cleaning brush.

"Now, you take this here brush and run it down the barrel. Nice and easy. Get it in there good and deep. Ain't no point doin' a job halfway."

He held the brush out. She took it because the other option was listening to him talk more about this stupid deal and trying to get a rise out of her. Plenty of people could handle guns. If someone with a grade six education like Burt could, so could she. She didn't have to like it.

The barrel was a dark hole. She pushed the brush in. Metal on metal, a dry scrape. Burt watched her hands, then her mouth, then her hands again.

"That's it, darlin'. Don't go bein' shy with it now. Ain't gonna clean that barrel proper if you're afraid to get in there and work it."

"Do you have to narrate?" She said not looking up at him.

“Just bein’ helpful, darlin’.”

She ran the brush again. Her fingers were careful. The gun was heavier than it looked in movies. Ugly-beautiful in the way tools were. She hated that her brain reached for that.

“Now the oil,” Burt said. He unscrewed the bottle and held it. “Go on. Oil it up nice. Don’t be stingy. A dry barrel’s a sorry thing.”

She put oil on the rag. The sharp smell hit her nose. She wiped where he pointed. His knee pressed warmer against hers under the table.

“Grip’s mighty important, too,” Burt said. “You go holdin’ a thing too loose, it’s liable to get away from ya. Gotta keep a firm hold. Know what I mean?”

He reached over and clamped his greasy, hot hand over hers on the grip. Clara jerked away almost immediately. Burt let out a low chuckle, like her reaction was just another little joke to him.

“I can do it,” she said.

“Reckon you can,” Burt grinned beneath his mustache. “I seen you work, darlin’. Ain’t likely to forget it, neither.”

She scoffed and kept her eyes on the cloth. He started on the rifle himself, humming something with no tune. Every so often he’d glance over to check her progress and let the glance drop to the zipper of the sweatshirt near the clean line of her throat.

“You ever shot one?” he asked.

“No.”

“Didn’t reckon you would,” Burt gave a dismissive snort. “Folks from where you’re from, they see a gun and think it’s liable to jump up and bite ’em. But it’s just a tool, darlin’. Same as a wrench, same as anythin’ else. You learn how to handle it, learn how to make it do what you want, and there ain’t nothin’ to be scared of.”

“That’s a stretch even for you,” Clara focused on cleaning the gun in front of her.

Burt chuckled and went back to the rifle.

She finished the pistol the way he’d shown her and he had her do a second one. Her shoulders were tight. Her nerves sat in her stomach/ she was in this man’s dining room after dark, her husband next door, oil on her fingers, Burt half-dressed, the memory of the last visit still ticking in her mind like a time bomb waiting to explode.

They worked in silence for awhile. When the last rag was gray he started putting them back together. Clicks. Slides. He was fast at it. He set one assembled pistol on the cloth in front of her, pointed at the wall, not at anyone.

“Go on. Pick it up. It ain’t gonna load itself,” Burt gestured to the gun.

“I don’t want to,” Clara crossed her arms.

“Hold it, that’s all. You cleaned it. You oughta know the weight of your work. It ain’t loaded or nothin’”

She wiped her hands on her sweatshirt, and with a resigned sigh picked it up with both hands. It was heavier than the last time she'd had it in pieces. The grip filled her palm. She kept her finger off the trigger because that much about guns she at least understood.

Burt watched her face.

"There she is," he said. "Ain't that somethin'? Reckon we could head out back one mornin', set us up some cans on that ol' stump. I'll show ya how to hit what you're aimin' at, instead of just hopin' for the best."

"No thank you." She set the pistol down carefully, the way she'd set down a piece of glassware.

"Suit yerself." He started gathering the rifles. "That's enough for now. You can get on up. Wipe that oil off them fingers 'fore ya go touchin' anything."

She stood. Her knee had a warm print where his had been. Through the front window the dark of her own yard peered back at her. She saw her own porch and was disappointed she couldn't see Adam there waiting for her safe return.

Burt wiped his greasy hands on his camo shirt and gave her a knowing look beneath that bushy mustache.

"Last visit ain't over just 'cause we cleared the table, darlin'. You know how this works."

She zipped the sweatshirt higher, which did nothing. "What now?"

He smiled under the mustache, unhurried, and tipped his head toward the hall. Thankfully that hall didn't lead upstairs to the bedroom. It went to the kitchen.

When they reached the kitchen, it looked like the fridge had exploded out covering the room. All the hard work shed down cleaning it, completely overwhelmed by mess. A raw chicken in a stained pan, skin pale and pimpled. An onion gone soft on a cutting board next to a can of cream of mushroom. Frozen vegetables sweating through the bag said in a colander near a anise net yellowed recipe card propped against the sugar. Tight old handwriting scrawled across it, proclaiming it was chicken casserole.

Burt opened the fridge, cracked a beer, and scratched his belly under the camo shirt.

"You're cookin'," he said. "That there's Mama's. Ain't had it right since she passed. Needs a woman's touch."

Clara looked at the chicken and then at him, "I don't eat chicken, I'm vegan."

"Didn't ask ya to eat it. Asked ya to make it." Burt took a long pull of his beer, then wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "You can read a recipe card. You cleaned my guns well enough. Reckon you can throw a meal together, too."

"That's a disgusting thing to say. A woman's touch, your so fucking misogynist."

"Just tellin' it like it is." Burt was already heading for the door. "Game's on. Don't go burnin' supper."

The sound of the TV came on from the other room. Noises of a crowd and announcers talking. She guessed it was one of Burt's beloved Michigan state games.

She stood in his kitchen in the zipped sweatshirt and did not touch the chicken for a full minute. She cooked things that didn't used to have a face. She had opinions about supply chains and she was about to put her hands in a bird for a man who thought climate change was just some cheap propgranda for dumb guillable women like her.

She washed her hands anyway. She knew how to cook with chicken. She'd done it before when she still lived with her parents before she'd decided to become a vegan. She hated how much she was already compomsing her values but she told herself she wasn't eating it, that the chicken had already been slaughtered anyways.

She read over the receipe card and wit ha sigh dumped some noodles into a dented pot. She pulled the chicken off the bone with a fork so she wouldn't have to use her fingers more than she had to. Skin still on; the card didn't say to take it off. She washed her hands excessively trying to get the chicken and somonlla offer her fingers. The soup came out of the can in a beige slab. She broke it up and tfrozen vegetables hit the mix still icy.

The smell started a few minutes after it went in the oven. It filled the kitchen and then the hall. It smelled good. That was the part she resented most. Her stomach moved. She crushed the crackers in the bag with her fist and dotted butter on top because the card said to.

She didn't go into the living room with Burt. She leaned on the far counter where the doorway cut him off at the shoulder and drank tap water from a coffee mug because she wasn't opening his fridge for anything that might have touched meat. She waited in the kitchen alone like it was her penance and was annoyed that Burt didn't even lift a finger to help her or check on her, content to watch the game like her being in the kitchen was jsut a given because she was born with a vagina.

The timer went off like a smoke alarm msapping her out of mental prision.

"Get them tray tables!" Burt hollered from the living room. "Bring 'em in here. Ain't nobody eatin' at no fancy table tonight."

Clara wondered whether burt though the table they cleaned the guns on was fancy or not. She found the tray tables in the gap beside the fridge.

She set one in front of him. He didn't evne look at her. Hie yes on the screen, beer on his thigh. She felt liek a ghost, a spector. She wondered if that was how housewives inthe fifties felt, unseen and unaprpreciated. Jsut expected to serve.

She gritted her teeth and went back to the kitchen and filed a plate with food from the oven. Just one. The casserole had set. Brown on the cracker crust. She put it in front of him with a fork and begingly sat down next to him with her mug of water.

He shoveled the food into his mouth. It waas disgusting to watch. She looked away as Burt hungrily watched a replay. He finally cocked an eye at her, "You ain't hungry?"

"I don't eat animals." she said flatly and cringed at how she said it. It sounded like a teenage girl going through a rebellious stage with her parents.

He snorted, looked at her mug then looked at the casserole. "Suit yerself. More for me." He took another bite, chewed a moment, then shook his head. "Mama used more pepper."

"You're welcome," Clara said, annoyed.

He almost laughed and went back to the game.

She sat there and watched Michigan state lose the ball and tried not to breathe through her nose. The smell was too good. Her mouth knew it. She drank the metallic tap water and let the cable-box clock count the visit down, his knee not quite touching hers.

The cable box was one of those fat beige bricks from before anybody streamed anything. Above it a deer head with a cobweb in one ear. Nearby a bait-shop calendar stuck on March from a year she doesn't was this one.

Burt ate sloppily. Gravy stuck to his mustache. Fork scraping the plate like it was the last meal he was ever going to eat.

The casserole smelled like butter. Her nose kept telling her how good it would taste. She could still remember the taste of chicken..

"Damn," Burt mumbled around a mouthful. "That's good. Real good, darlin'." He jabbed his fork toward what was left on his plate. "Mama always used more salt, though. Card says one thing, but she never did pay much mind to that. Always had a way of doin' things her own way."

Clara had measured the salt exactly as the chickenscratch writing at said.

He finished the last of it, wiped the plate with a finger, and held the empty dish out toward her without taking his eyes off the screen. Not asking.

She rolled her eyes. Heat went up her neck, she could barely contain the anger she felt in that moment. She let out a calm cooling breath, deciding to channel this feeling into hammering even harder on his company.

Cook his mothers food, sit thru football, now haul the plate. Whole 1950s good wife routine, back during the real glory days of America. Demeaning as hell. She snatched the plate in a huff and carried it into the kitchen.

There was no dishwasher. She actually groaned.

The glass casserole sat in the sink already, crud baked into the corners so hard it looked glazed. The water that took forever to get hot. She started scraping. The dinner plate came clean enough. The casserole dish did not. She dug at one corner until her wrist hurt and the sponge started to rip.

The casserole dish would not give.

Clara put her weight into the sponge and scraped the same brown corner she had already scraped. Fat had cooked into the glass. Hot water running over her wrists until they looked boiled. She changed hands and kept going.

Sweat ran downunder her sweatshirt, down her back. The kitchen still held the heat from the oven and the smelt too good from the cassrole and she was standing there in the middle of it.

She dug at the rim hard enough that the sponge folded and a flake of crud finally came off. It wasn't enough. The corner was still brown. She could be here until tafter the game fuckign ended.

"Come on," she muttered at the dish. The sponge tore.

Clara made a sound that was almost a laugh and threw the scrubber in the sink. The water jumped. She stepped back, hands dripping, overheated and jsut fucking done. The sweatshirt was a mistake. She yanked the zipper down a few inches but the kitchen was still too hot.

She marched into the living room.

Burt hadn't moved. He glanced at her wet hands and then slowly at the open zipper where his gaze lingered for a bit before it went back to the screen.

"I'm not finishing that," she said, leaving no room for debate.

"Dish ain't done, darlin'."

"Don't call me that. And don't sit there and tell me what's done." She heard her own voice go sharp and let it. "I cooked your food. I sat through this stupid game. I am not spending the rest of the night at your sink because you think that's what a woman is for."

"You walked over here on your own," he said, not looking away from the screen. "Your last visit, this is what I wanted you to do for me."

"I did it. The casserole is eaten. You want that pan soaked overnight, soak it. I'm not your wife. I'm not your mother. I'm not staying here so you can watch football and get off on making me do this."

"You done yellin'?" he said, non plussed.

"I'm done playing house." She wiped her hands on the sweatshirt. "I'm not doing another hour of this 1950s crap while you sit there on your fat ass and watch football."

He looked at her then, his eyes finally breaking from the screen, looking her body up and down. She knew that look. "Alright," he said. "Then what are you doin' instead."

His eyes went down the unzipped sweatshirt and back up, slow enough that she felt it.

"You ain't done yet, darlin'. Clock don't run out just 'cause you got yourself mad at a pan." Burt settled deeper into his chair, taking another swig of beer. "So, what else you got in mind? Or you fixin' to give ol' Burt a repeat of last time?"

"No."

"No," He tasted the word with a smirk. "You came on me. I was there. You held onto my cock and you shook. Then I painted that pretty pussy of yours. You gonna stand in my livin' room and tell me that didn't do nothin' for you."

"I'm not talking about that."

"Sure you are. You're face is red as all hell."

She was, she could feel the heat on her face.. Heat in her face that she wanted to blame on the kitchen. "That is because the kitchen is hot from the oven."

"Go on, darlin'. Admit ya liked it." Burt leaned back, that crooked grin spreadin' beneath his handlebar mustache. "Ain't no use pretendin' otherwise."

"I did what I had to do and I left," Clara spat.

"That ain't what I asked."

The game kept going behind him. She could walk out. The door was right there. She stayed planted because leaving in the middle of his sentence felt like losing a different argument.

"I don't like you," she said. "I don't like this house. I don't like your politics or your food or the way you talk to me. What happened in that room doesn't change any of that."

"Didn't ask if you liked me. Asked if you liked my cock pressed hard against you."

She looked at the deer head instead of him. "It was a mistake. I didn't stop soon enough."

"You pulled off the tip and then you came anyway. That's some mistake."

"I'm not doing this with you."

"You're already doin' it. You're just lyin' while you do." He took a sip, unhurried. "Say it was nothin'. Say you didn't get wet. Say you ain't thought about it since. I'll call you a liar to your face."

Clara's hands were still damp. She wiped them on her hips and felt how tight she was standing there.

"You can call me whatever the fuck you want Burt." Her voice went sharp. "I really don't give a shit what some small-brained redneck thinks about me."

Burt smiled under his dirty mustache, "There she is. Liberal girl gets all riled up soon as a man tells her the truth. You can hate how I vote. Hate how I talk. Hell, you can hate my guts for all I care." He leaned forward in his chair. "Don't change what you did in that bedroom, though, does it, darlin'?"

"I'm done with this shit," Clara said turning away from him.

"Oh, I see how it is." Burt let out a dry chuckle, shaking his head. "You don't wanna be a woman in my kitchen, but you're mighty fine being one in my bed, ain't ya?" His grin spread beneath that handlebar mustache. "You were plenty woman when you had my cock, darlin'. Funny how that works, ain't it?"

She took a step toward the door. "I'm leaving."

"Go on then. You welchin'," Burt said.

Clara stopped.

She didn't turn around at first. The word sat in here somtach and she balled her fists at her sides.

"I cooked your food," she said.

"You didn't finish the visit. You shook on four. This is the last one. You walk out now, you welched. I'll say it how it is. Deal's a deal."

She turned back. He was still in the chair. Still had that same smug look on his face. The same confidence face millions of dumb americans wore when they were dead wrong no an issue.

Anger moved through her chest and down into her hands. She wanted to throw the tray table at him. "I hate you," she said.

Burt nodded, slow. He tipped his head and looked her over from the chair. "Part of ya's still thinkin' about last time we was here. What went on up in my bedroom." He took a slow pull of his beer, never taking his eyes off her. "Reckon that's what's got ya so riled up, ain't it, darlin'?"

The words landed in her stomach. Clara crossed her arms without meaning to. The sweatshirt felt too thin suddenly, even zipped partway. "Stop."

“The way you shook on me, girl. I gotta tell you. Never seen nothin’ like that.”

She closed her eyes, trying to feign indifference. But now she could see Burt’s bedroom whether she wanted to or not. The thick heat of him against her. The way her hips had kept moving. She shifted her weight to the other foot and hated that he could see it. “Stop talking about it. It was a mistake.”

Burt chuckled to himself. The sound sat in his chest and came out pleased.

“Alright then.” Burt gave the empty can a little shake, listenin’ to it rattle. “Do ol’ Burt a kindness, would ya? Grab me a cold one outta the fridge.”

The politeness threw her. It wasn’t quite a please but it was still nicer than he’d normally asked. At least there wasn’t any bullshit about needing a woman’s touch..

Clara rolled her eyes and blew out a breath. Going for the beer felt like losing. Standing there while he talked about her coming on him felt worse.

She went to the kitchen.

The fridge light was a dirty yellow and cans of beer sat in a row on the bottom shelf. She stood in the open door longer than she needed and let the cold hit her face. Her pulse was up. Her arms still wanted to be crossed. She thought about walking past him and out the front door but didn’t want to lose to this fucking hick.

She took a can.

He watched her the entire way back to the couch. She shoved the beer into his chest harder than the can needed.

Burt’s hand came up and caught her wrist.

The grip was warm and strong. He didn’t let go. Clara’s first move was to pull. He held. She froze instead of making it a fight, and that freeze made her more uncomfortable than the hold. He looked up at her from the chair with hunger in his eyes.

Burt yanked her down by the wrist.

Clara’s hip hit his thigh and then she was in his lap, her back against the camo shirt.. Up close he smelled the garage outside.

“Get yerself comfortable,” Burt said, settling back in his chair. “Watch the rest of the game with me. Then you can head on home, and we’ll be square.”

“Get off,,,” She twisted. “I am not sitting here.”

His arm hooked around her waist. His grip was steel. She shoved at it and only moved herself against him. The smell of him thickened when her face passed near his throat. Musk. Heat. She turned her head away and still had it in her nose.

“Let go of me.”

“Easy now, darlin’. Ain’t nobody askin’ ya to do nothin’.”

She threw her weight forward. His other hand caught her across the middle and hauled her back. The motion put her fully on him. She felt his belly, her own breath punching out. "You don't get to pull me down like I'm a child."

"Ain't treatin' ya like a child. Treatin' ya like a woman who don't know when to hush up and sit still and watch the game."

She tried again. Twisting her elbow and shoulder but his grip was ironclad. Her feet searched for the floor and didn't find it. She swore and tried the other side, twisting her hips. He tightened and the fight only pressed her closer.

"Burt." His name came out ugly. "I will scream."

"That's what yer husband wants, darlin'," Burt said. "Wants to hear ya screamin' for ol' Burt."

She went still for half a second at that, then fought again, twisting in the circle of his arm. Her sweatshirt rode up. Every move rubbed her against his lap whether she meant it to or not.

Then she felt him.

He was Hard and thick. A solid line under his american flag boxers, seated right against her ass.

Clara stopped moving, freezing in place.

Her own breathing had gone labored without her permission. She was sitting in his odor and his heat and feeling his cock press against her.

Burt chuckled against her hair. "Third quarter's already done," he murmured near her ear. "Ain't no point leavin' now, darlin'. Just stay a little longer. Get yerself comfortable."

She opened her mouth. Nothing useful came out. Clara locked her eyes on the TV.

Michigan State lined up for a pass. Burt's hands left her waist and settled on her hips. He held her there. His breath hit the back of her neck.

He rolled his hips.

The first press of his cock dragged up against her ass through her sweatpants. It felt impossibly thick. She pulled in a breath and kept her eyes on the screen.

He did it again. Slower this time. His hands guided her into it, a short pull back, a push forward, so the length of him rubbed where he wanted. She did not help him but her mind raced, conflicted as she tried to figure out what was happening.

No one talked.

The timer on the screen dropped further. A whistle from a ref and the play broke. He used the pause to grind up harder, seating himself against her, and her mouth went dry. She swallowed and tasted nothing but his smell.

Memories of the last time came back to her. Burt's Bed. Her holding him to herself. The shake. The mess he left on her. She told herself this was not that. She was dressed. She was going to take the control back in a second.

His fingers tightened on her hips and drew her through another slow drag. The head of him caught, then slid. Heat built between her legs. Her breathing went rapid and shallow. She could hear it over the crowd on the TV.

Part of her wanted the door. Part of her wanted to stop fighting the motion and let the next minute happen, same as the bedroom, and hate herself after.

She tried to take the rhythm away from him. She planted her feet and stilled her hips. Burt waited half a beat and then rolled up under her anyway, using his hands to rock her when she wouldn't rock herself. The press of that big cock made her eyelids want to drop. She kept them on the clock.

Third down. Incomplete. She didn't understand American football, why were they stopping so much between plays?

She was wet now. Her hands had nothing to do. They hovered, then gripped the arms of the chair on either side of him.

He ground her down onto him in a short, mean circle. A sound almost got out of her. She locked her jaw and watched the large men huddle and told herself she was going to stand up on the next whistle.

Burt's hand left her hip long enough to fist the hair at the base of her neck. He yanked her back.

Clara's spine met his chest. Platinum hair fell out of the bun and around her face. His other hand stayed on her hip and kept her seated on him. The grind did not stop. He pulled her down the length of his cock and held her there.

Hot breath brushed her ear. "Damn, you feel good," Burt whispered. "Don't go actin' like last time ain't crossed yer mind. What we did. What we near 'bout did."

"Shut up," was all she managed to say through gritted teeth. She didn't dare say anything else and have her voice betray her.

"You had ol' Burt right there, darlin'. You know how easy it woulda been to give in and take what was on offer." His voice dropped to a low murmur. "Quit fightin' it so hard. Let ol' Burt give ya what you need."

He tugged her hair when he said need, not hard enough to really hurt, hard enough to tip her head so his mouth stayed at her ear. His hips rolled. The thick ridge of him dragged against her ass and the seam of her pants. She bit her lip.

To her horror her body answered him. A small grind back. She felt it happen and could not call it an accident fast enough.

Burt felt it too. "There she is."

"I'm not doing that," she whispered.

"You just did, darlin'." His hand tightened on her hip, guiding her through another slow stroke. "Been thinkin' about my bed, ain't ya? How you came apart on me. How you walked outta here wearin' the memory of ol' Burt all over ya." His voice dropped to a rough whisper. "Don't stand there and tell me that ain't been rattlin' around in that pretty little head of yours."

Clara's mouth was dry. She watched the TV without seeing it. The hair-pull kept her from leaning away. Every breath pushed her tits against the sweatshirt and her ass back onto him.

"You're really full of yourself," she said, trying to jab at him.

"I got ya sittin' right here on my lap." Burt rolled his hips up slow, and hers answered with a little movement of their own before she could stop it. "Reckon that means ol' Burt's earned himself a little somethin', don't it?"

"I'll never fuck a backwards hillbilly like you."

Burt chuckled against her neck, the low rumble carrying through her. "Never's a mighty big word for a woman sittin' here grindin' on ol' Burt's cock, darlin'."

"I'm not..."

He yanked her hair and pulled her hip at the same time. The motion seated her harder against him. She felt the head of him shove up, blunt, and a sound slipped out before she could swallow it, "Ahmmmm."

"You feel that, don't ya?" Burt murmured. "That's what ya near 'bout took last time. What you keep tellin' me you don't want." His voice dropped to a smug whisper. "Funny thing is, darlin', your body's tellin' ol' Burt a whole different story."

She bit her lip again. The grind had a rhythm now. His. Hers leaking into it. Heat between her legs, wet enough that she could feel herself in her clothes. She wanted the control she had promised herself in the kitchen

She stayed on him. "You talk like I need you, I don't. I have a husband. I have a life. You are a problem I am finishing."

"Then finish what ya started, darlin'." Burt's mouth brushed her ear. "Sit still if ya want, or keep on movin'. Ain't gonna change what ol' Burt thinks that body of yours is after."

"It's after the door."

"Door's been there the whole time, darlin'."

She hated darlin'. She hated that the next grind made her eyelids flutter. She hated the picture he put in her head: last time, the tip at her entrance, the second she could have dropped her weight and taken him. How good it could have felt. How good he was sure it would feel if she let 'ol' Burt' do it.

"I'm not having sex with you," she said.

"Didn't say ya wanted it. Said ya needed it." Burt kept his hand firm on her hip, guiding her movements with that same smug confidence. "Yer husband knows it, too. That's why he let ya come over here. Why he wants to hear ya makin' them pretty little noises for ol' Burt."

"Don't talk about Adam."

"I'll talk about whatever gets yer motor runnin'."

Clara's hands tightened on the chair arms. Her breathing was a mess. Her own hair in her mouth. His fist in the rest of it. She tried to freeze her hips and only lasted until he pulled her through the next stroke, and then she was grinding back again, small, shameful, angry. "You're a pig."

Clara knew pigs like Burt. And knew how to manipulate them to get what she wanted. Clara let go of the chair.

She put her hands over his. The one on her hip was thick and hot. She covered it with her own. She peeled the other out of her hair and dragged it down to her chest, over the sweatshirt, onto her breast. She held it there.

She leaned back harder against him. Her head came even with his. His breath hit her cheek, beer and casserole and something sour underneath.

She started grinding on him for real.

Not the little slip from before. A deliberate roll of her ass along the fat line of his cock, slow at the bottom, a squeeze at the top. She felt him throb through her sweatpants and kept going.

"You're the one who's desperate," she whispered.

Burt's hand flexed on her tit.

"First time in your life you've had a real woman in this house. Not some girl from the trailer park. Not somebody who the shit you say is some backwood wisdom." She worked her hips in a tight circle and felt his cock drag the full length of her. "A woman with a job. A spine. Values.."

He groaned into her ear. The sound went through her. Satisfaction first. Then heat.

"Keep talkin'," he said, rough.

"You sit in your small little world, angry at the tv because that was the only power you have. Now you've got me on your lap and you can't stand how much you want it." She pulled his hand harder against her breast. Her nipple was already tight under the sweatshirt. "Say I'm wrong."

"You ain't wrong about the want." Burt's hips pressed up to meet her movement.

She proved it with her ass, expertly. The same control she used in bed with Adam when she wanted to finish on her terms. She rode the ridge of him until the head caught under her, then slid off it and did it again. Burt's breath broke. "Fuck."

"There," she said. "That's you. Not me."

"You are soakin' those pants, girl."

"And you're shaking."

He was. A tremor in the belly against her back. His cock felt huge under her, a thick hot bar she was using on purpose. The smell of him was foul this close and she stayed in it anyway, mouth near his, grinding.

"You think a woman like me doesn't know when a man is starving," she whispered. "You've been staring through our windows since we moved in. You planted yourself in our yard. You made a deal so you could get this. Don't tell me I'm the one who needed it."

Burt's laugh came out wrecked.

"I needed a taste. I ain't shy about that. You needed to come on a real cock and nows you did. Now you're back, workin' it like you missed it."

"I'm finishing a visit." She dropped her weight and dragged herself along him, filthy and slow. "That's different. I'll be gone soon"

"Don't feel different from where I'm sittin'."

His hand on her hip tried to take the rhythm back. She covered it and made him follow her pace. The other hand she kept mashed to her chest. He squeezed. She let him. The groan he gave her for that was the control she wanted over him..

It made her wetter. It made her angry that it did. It made her happy in a sharp, mean way, like winning a meeting she should not have had to take.

“You don’t get to break me,” she said. “That’s the fantasy you’ve been jerking off to. Some California girl on her knees in your kitchen. Look at me. I’m using you.”

“Go on, use ol’ Burt then.” His mouth brushed her ear. “Just don’t go pretendin’ I can’t feel how bad ya wanna give in. You’re grindin’ on me like you remember every last bit.”

“I’ll never take it.”

“You almost did.”

She punished that with a harder stroke, ass grinding down until he cursed. His cock jumped against her. She kept him trapped under her and her tempo, whispering into the stink of his breath.

“This is what a real woman does.” Clara said, getitng a little lost in the improumtu lapdance.

Burt’s head fell back against the chair. Another groan, raw, right in her ear. Clara’s eyes almost closed. Satisfaction. Arousal. She ground on him like she meant to ruin his fourth quarter, platinum hair in his face, his thick hands under hers, his cock a desperate ridge she would not let inside.

The grind got away from her.

Clara heard herself make a noise and kept moving anyway. His cock was a thick ridge under her sweatpants and she used it like it belonged to her, rolling her ass down the length of him until his groan broke against her neck. Her hands slipped on his.

Burt’s hips shoved up to meet her. She let them.

“That’s it,” he muttered.

She should have stopped him talking. She didn’t. She chased the next drag of him against her and felt her control thin out. This was supposed to be her tempo. Her decision. It still felt like winning until it didn’t, until her body started hunting the same thing she had found on his bed.

She froze on a downstroke, breathing hard.

If she stayed on his lap she was going to cum on him again. Last time led to his cum on her. She shoved his hands off and stood.

Her legs were unsteady. Burt looked up at her from the chair, boxers tented, a dark spot starting where the head of him pushed the cloth. He didn’t grab her. He waited.

Clara slowly dropped to her knees. The carpet was rough. She was eye-level with him. The bulge sat right in front of her face, thick and obvious, the boxers stretched ugly around it. She could see the shape. She could smell him stronger down here, musk and skin and the day’s heat trapped beanth his boxers.

Her mouth watered. She swallowed and told herself it was nothing. A reflex. She put her hands on his knees to keep from swaying in.

This was control. If she did this, sex stayed off the table. If she got him off with her mouth he couldn't angle her onto the bed. He couldn't get the tip of him where it had been last time. He couldn't talk her into sitting down on it. This ended the visit. This was the cheaper door. Right?

She stared at the tent. It twitched when she breathed on it. Her tongue sat thick in her mouth. The rationalization ran again.

Burt's hand came down and rested in her hair without pulling.

"There she is," he said, quiet.

Clara looked at the tent and then up at him through her lashes.

"Just until the end of the game," she whispered.

Burt's mouth opened. She didn't let him say anything. She hooked her fingers in the waistband and dragged the sweatpants down. His cock sprang out heavy and thick, slapping up toward his belly, bigger if from this angle. Thick heavy veins ran up it. A wet bead already at the head.

She stared at it.

"Look at ya," Burt drawled. "Down on yer knees in ol' Burt's livin' room. All that big talk, all that carryin' on, and look where it's got ya?."

Clara wrapped her hand around him. Her fingers didn't meet. The skin was hot and a little damp.. She leaned in and let her breath hit the head on purpose.

Then she licked it.

Salt. Bitter musk. The smell of him filled her nose sweat and groin and a day of working in his garage. She took the head into her mouth and sealed her lips around it, slow, like she had all the time in the world.. Her tongue worked the underside. Burt's groan came out of him ugly and deep. "Jesus."

She pulled off just enough to speak against the wet head, "Until the game ends. That's all you get."

She went back down.

This was the punishment. A controlled, filthy pace that made him wait. She stroked what she couldn't fit and sucked what she could, cheeks hollowing, spit making it glossy. His cock twitched on her tongue. The weight of it stretched her jaw. She looked up at him while she did it because she wanted him to see who was in control.

Burt's head dropped against the chair. His belly jumped. One meaty hand hovered near her bun and didn't grab it, not yet. His thighs were tense under her palms, matted with coarse hair. "That's it. Suck it. You wanted control, girl, you got a mouthful of it."

She ignored the words and gave him another slow stroke of her tongue along the thick vein. Then she took him deeper. Not all the way. Enough that her eyes watered and she had to breathe through her nose, his musk thick in every inhale. She pulled back, spit-string connecting her lower lip to the head, and used her hand in a tight twist on the slick shaft.

The TV crowd roared at something she didn't see. She timed her next descent to it, sinking down, sucking hard on the way up. Burt swore. His cock leaked on her tongue, bitter, and she swallowed because stopping to spit would look like losing.

“End of the game,” she said again, voice wrecked around him. “Then I’m done with you, for good.”

“You keep talkin’ like that while you slobber on it.” His laugh broke into a groan when she took the head back in and fluttered her tongue. “Punish me then. I’ll take it.”

She did. Slow. Mean. A long wet slide, then a pause with him resting on her tongue while she breathed, then another slide. Her knees hurt on the carpet. Her jaw ached. She was wet in her pants and she used that anger to suck him harder, hand pumping the thick base, the wet sound of it filling the room under the commentators.

Burt’s hips tried to push. She pinned one thigh and made him stay. Control. His cock shining with her spit. His face slack and hungry. Her platinum hair fallen around her mouth while she worked him.

The blowjob got sloppy fast.

Clara meant to keep it mean and slow. Then her jaw loosened and she took him deeper than she planned. His cock packed her mouth, hot and thick, the head shoving toward her throat. Spit ran down the shaft onto her fist. She pulled off to breathe and a shining string stretched from her lip to him. She licked it up and went back down.

Burt groaned. “There it is. All that mouth...”

She came off him with a wet sound. “Shut up.”

“Make me.”

She shut him up the only way that still felt like winning. She sank, sucked hard on the way up, tongue working the thick vein. .

“You taste like a garage,” she said against the wet head.

Burt laughed, wrecked. “You keep slobberin’ on it like you missed it.”

Clara’s hand tightened around the base. Her fingers still didn’t meet. She stroked what she couldn’t swallow and took the rest. The wet click of her mouth filled the space under the commentators behind her. Her knees burned on the carpet. Her jaw ached. Between her legs she was soaked, a shameful pulse answering every bob of her head.

She hated him. Everything about him. Everything about this place, this fucking state. He. The word darlin’. She sucked him anyway.

Burt’s thigh jumped under her. “Look at you,” he muttered. “California girl with a throat full of hillbilly cock.”

She pulled off, chin shining, and glared up.

She took him again to shut him up, deeper this time. Her throat warned her. She stayed a beat too long and came up coughing, spit on her chin, a thread of it on her sweatshirt. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and immediately wrapped her lips around the head again.

“You can hate me the whole time,” Burt said, breath ragged. “Your body’s still achin for ol’burt.”

“My body isn’t any of your business.”

“It’s rockin’.”

It was. Small, traitorous movements of her hips while she knelt, chasing pressure that wasn't there. She froze them and punished him with a harder suck. He cursed. Pre-come hit her tongue, bitter, and she swallowed.

Another whistle behind her from the TV. .

Clara stayed on him. Down until her lips stretched around the thick middle of his cock, up until the head sat on her tongue, a twist of her fist on the wet base. Spit made everything loud. The sound embarrassed her. but she didn't stop.

Burt's hand finally settled in her hair. He didn't shove. He just held, like he was reminding her where she was.

"Don't," she said, pulling off.

"Ain't makin' you. You're already down there."

She sucked it and felt him twitch. His belly jumped. A bead of sweat ran down the camo into the hair below it.

The game behind her hit another break. Commercial music. She took him deeper and held, breathing through her nose, his musk thick enough to make her dizzy. When she came up her eyes were wet,

"You get off on this," she said.

"I get off on you hatin' it and cravin' it anyway."

"That's not what's happening."

Burt's thumb brushed her temple, almost gentle, which made her want to bite him.

"Keep lyin'. Feels good on my cock."

She bit the inside of her own cheek instead and sucked him in a long, mean stroke. His groan broke. The hand in her hair tightened and then remembered itself. Clara's pussy clenched around nothing. She shifted on her knees and the seam of her pants dragged. That small friction was a problem. She froze her hips and worked him with her mouth only.

Her jaw was shaking. She switched to licking for a few breaths, broad wet passes from base to head, then took him again before he could comment on the pause.

Clara set her hand at the base of his cock and took him in a long slide. Her lips sealed. Her tongue pressed flat underneath. She pulled up slow and the head popped free, wet and flushed, and Burt's belly jumped.

She went back down before he could talk.

Spit ran over her knuckles.

"Fuck."

She looked up at him with her mouth full and didn't stop. Hair stuck to her chin. Eyes wet. She sank until her throat warned her, held, and came up breathing through her nose, his musk thick in every inhale.

His hips tried to push. She pinned his thigh and made him stay, then took him again, deeper, spit pouring down the shaft. She worked her tongue on the underside on the way up and felt him throb.

“Clara...”

Clara got lost in what she was doing..

She pumped her fist up the slick shaft and followed it with her mouth, then did it again, faster. Spit made the stroke loud. Burt’s cock jumped in her hand. She felt that and went after it, lips sealed around the head, tongue working the slit until more of that bitter leak hit her tongue.

She pulled off to breathe and her mouth went lower instead of stopping.

She licked under the head, then down the thick vein, then over the heavy weight of his balls. The skin there was hotter, softer, musky enough that she had to breathe through her mouth. She sucked one into her mouth, gentle, and Burt’s whole thigh jerked. “Christ.”

She let it go wet and licked the other, then dragged her tongue back up the shaft in one long stripe. Her hand never stopped pumping. Up. Down. The head flushed darker every time her fist met it.

She looked up.

Burt’s face was slack and ugly above the camo, mustache wet at the corner, eyes half shut, gut rising and falling over the waistband she’d dragged down. Sweat in the gray hair at his chest. This was the man. The same kind of man who sat in county meetings and laughed at her slides, who would never sign a field over to a company like hers, who thought that climate change was a story city people told.

Her peers argued with men like him and lost.

She had his cock in her fist.

The thought hit and her stomach went hot. She sank onto him again and sucked harder, cheeks hollowed, taking him until her eyes watered. Power. Stupid and physical. She bent him with her mouth and he groaned like he had no say in it.

“That’s...fuck, girl.”

She pumped him while she sucked, fist tight, mouth wet, the two rhythms knocking together. Her own hips rocked on nothing. She was soaked. The seam of her pants dragged every time she shifted on her knees and she didn’t freeze it this time. She let the small grind happen and took him deeper.

His smell was all over her face now. She licked his balls again, sloppy, then came back to the head and swallowed him down, pumping the base in short hard strokes that made his belly jump.

Clara felt it low and hot between her legs. She was dripping. Every shift on the carpet dragged the soaked seam of her pants and made it worse. A moan slipped out around his cock before she could stop it, “Mhmmmm.”

Burt’s hand tightened on the back of her head.

The pressure pushed her down another inch. His cock filled her mouth, thick and hot, the head nudging the back of her throat. She moaned again, the sound muffled and wet, and her fist kept pumping the base because stopping felt impossible.

“Yeah,” Burt said, rough. “That’s it.”

She tried to pull back. His hand stayed firm. Not a shove. A hold. She stayed on him and her body answered the hold with another moan, hips rocking, the grind in her pants stupid and involuntary. She hated that she liked the hand.

Burt’s hips came up off the couch.

His cock drove into her mouth on the rise. She gagged once, spit flooding, and he didn’t let her off. The next thrust was slower. She took it. Her lips stretched around him. Her tongue pressed the underside. The wet sound of it got louder than the TV.

She pumped her fist in time with the rise of his hips. Up when he sank back. Down when he pushed. Her whole body got into it. Shoulders. Throat. The roll of her hips against nothing. Another moan vibrated around his cock and she felt him throb for it.

“Goddamn,” he muttered. “You feel that.”

She did. Heat in her pussy. The ache in her jaw. His hand heavy on her skull, keeping her in place. She sucked harder on the way he pulled back and the suction dragged a grunt out of him.

Behind her something changed on the TV. A different voice. She didn’t look. She didn’t care what the clock said.

Burt rose again and she met him, mouth open, taking the thick drive of him until her eyes watered. Spit ran down her chin onto her wrist. She kept pumping. The skin of his cock was slick and hot under her fist, veins standing, the head leaking bitter on her tongue every time she swallowed around him.

Her moan came out broken this time. She was sucking him with her mouth and her hand and the restless rock of her hips, and when she tried once more to ease off, his hand stayed, and her body liked that too.

Burt stopped letting her set the tempo.

His hand fisted in her hair and he thrust up off the couch, driving his cock into her mouth. Clara gagged.. He pulled back and did it again, shorter, harder, the head knocking the back of her throat. The blowjob went sloppy in one stroke. Wet sounds drowned out the TV. Her fist lost the next pump and just held on while he used her mouth.

She should have shoved him off. She moaned instead, Mhmhmhhhmmmm.”

The sound came out broken around him. Her hips ground down against her own heel, chasing pressure, psweatpants soaked through. Every thrust shoved her and she rocked with it, whole body in the motion, knees sliding on the carpet.

“Take it,” Burt said, breath already wrecked.

He fucked her mouth in short, heavy drives. His gut jumped. Sweat shone on his throat. The hand in her hair tightened until her scalp stung and she didn’t pull away. She opened wider. Spit ran down her chin.

Her pussy clenched, desperate to clench around something. She ground harder, shameless now, the seam of her pants dragging her clit every time his hips rose. A moan vibrated around his cock and he answered it with a deeper thrust that made her eyes water.

Burt's breathing went heavy. Ragged. His fingers locked in her hair. He thrust up off the couch with no patience left, cock thick and hot, slamming into the wet heat of her mouth, balls drawing tight against her fist.

She felt it. The jump in him. The way his thigh shook. The edge, right there.

Clara's eyes flicked up. His face was gone, mouth open, ugly and close. He drove in again and held, shaking, one thrust from blowing. She stayed on him. Lips sealed around his thick shaft. Spit pouring down her wrist. She knew what was about to happen and she didn't pull off. She sucked, and waited, and felt him throb against her tongue.

Burt's hand locked on the back of her head and held her there. He had control. The backwood hillbilly was in control of her.

"You didn't get no supper," Burt panted. "Be a damn poor host if I let ya leave hungry." A rough chuckle rumbled through his chest. "C'mon, darlin'. Open up. Fresh from the source, all natural. Somethin' a hundred percent organic."

Clara moaned around him. She was already gone. Her lips stayed sealed around the thick shaft and her fist kept pumping the slick base, spit and pre-cum making every stroke loud.

His cock thrummed.

She felt the veins jump under her tongue, pulsing once against the roof of her mouth. Burt's fingers tightened in her hair. His hips rose off the couch and he blew.

The first rope hit the back of her throat, hot and thick and bitter. She swallowed on instinct and the swallow pulled a groan out of him. The next shot followed heavier, flooding her mouth, sticky and warm, the taste of him sudden and rank. She moaned through it. The sound vibrated around his cock and he cursed and kept coming. "Fuck. Swallow it."

She did. Her throat worked. Another rope painted her tongue, then another, illicit and gross, too much for one swallow. She pumped him harder, milking the base, and he jerked up into her mouth and fed her more. Her eyes watered. Spit and cum mixed at the corner of her lips. She swallowed again and still it came, pulse after pulse, his balls drawn tight against her wrist.

A spill broke past her lips.

It ran down the shaft in a white line, over her pumping fist, hot on her knuckles, dripping onto his balls. She didn't pull off. She sucked him through it, tongue pressed flat, taking what she could and letting the rest leak. Another weak shot hit her tongue. She swallowed that too and moaned, the moan broken and wet, her hips still grinding.

Burt shook under her hand. His breath sawed. The hand in her hair held her on him while the last of it pulsed out, thick and slow, coating her tongue. She kept her mouth on him. Chin shining. Fist slick. The TV muttered behind her and she didn't hear it. She sucked, and swallowed, and felt him throb against her tongue while the rest of his cum ran down her wrist.

Burt's hand went slack in her hair.

Clara pulled off and dragged in a deep, shuddering breath. Cum and spit strung from her lip to the head of his cock and broke. She kept pumping him anyway, fist slick, the shaft still thick and hot in her hand, twitching through the last of it.

She looked up.

Burt was grinning. A Shit eating grin.. Gut rising and falling under the camo like he'd won something. Her mind clicked into place. She'd lost control. It dawned on her Where she was. On her knees. His cum on her tongue. Her hand still working him in his living room.

She was panting. So turned on it scared her. For a second she thought about climbing up. Putting a knee on either side of him. Sitting down on the cock in her fist and finishing what last time had almost been. She felt how wet she was and hated it.

Burt chuckled and tipped his chin at the TV behind her. "Game's been done for awhile, darlin'."

Clara looked over her shoulder. Her hand stayed on him. The screen wasn't the game. A panel of men in headsets, laughing, talking over clips. The clock in the corner was gone.

She scowled.

She pulled her hand off his cock. Forced herself up. Her knees didn't want to hold. Cum dripped off her fingers and off her chin, a warm string hitting the carpet. She wiped her hand on the arm of his couch, hard, and looked at him with her mouth still a mess. "I'm leaving."

Burt chuckled from the couch.

"You sure about that, darlin'? You look mighty worked up to me. Why don't ya come on over, take a seat, and let ol' Burt take care of ya for a change?"

She turned away from him.

Her legs were unsteady. She made them work. Through the living room, past the tray table, past the smell of the casserole she had cooked and not eaten. Cum still on her chin. She didn't wipe it until she was in the hall, and then she used the sleeve of the sweatshirt and hated the smear it left.

The front door was right there. She got her hand on it.

"Tell Adam ol' Burt says thanks!" Burt hollered after her. "Let him know how much I enjoyed ya suckin' me off. And hey, ask him if swallowin' all tthat cumt means you ain't vegan no more!"

The words hit her in the back like a knife.. She felt them land and kept going, because answering would mean staying longer and losing control to him again.

She shoved the door open and went out into the dark. The air was cold on her wet mouth. She cut across his lawn because the driveway was the long way, weeds grabbing her ankles, a rusted fender she had to step around, junk she couldn't see until her shin found it. She didn't look back at the dilapating house behind her.

Her house sat across the property line with the porch light on. She marched toward it, jaw tight, the taste of him still in her mouth, and did not slow down.

She needed to find Adam. She needed him more than she ever needed anything in her hwole life. `