

CHAPTER 1

"Ok-ay-ay," Tasha sang cheerfully from the kitchen, her new heeled sandals clacking on the tile and echoing throughout the entire condominium. "Last chance."

Jeff squinted at his screen, half his mind on emails, the other half lazily considering Tasha's offer. But sand, heat, and sitting around were not his thing, ever.

"Uh..." he said, feeling a little bad. He lifted his eyes briefly over the edge of his laptop and then looked back at his inbox. "It's really..."

His voice trailed off, his mind suddenly derailed. Quickly, he looked back up at his wife, who was leaning against the kitchen island playfully, twirling her oversized sunglasses in one hand.

"...*hot*," he finished, mouth hanging open a little. "That's... new... a hot, I mean... it's too hot. Outside."

Tasha had been shopping, and he remembered now that she had told him all about it. One of her purchases was a new swimsuit, which he hadn't paid much attention to. Not that Natasha wasn't something to behold in a swimsuit - or out of one - it was just that she usually bought something... uninteresting.

But the suit she was wearing was *hot*. Hotter than outside, anyway. Hot enough to make him think about going to the beach with her and

spending all day with sweat rolling down his ass crack and sand grinding up his balls, if it meant he could sit there and stare at her.

There wasn't anything particularly skimpy about the suit. It was a one-piece black suit with no bells or whistles. But Tasha usually went for boy-short bottoms coupled with a top that looked like a sports-bra. This suit rode up high on her hips, exposing half her ass and a wide swath of skin in the crease of her thighs, and the neckline plunged almost to her navel. The two strips of fabric that covered her breasts left their contours visible and only covered an inch or so on either side of her nipples, with a thin fabric that betrayed the shape of them: two perky pieces of chewy candy melting into large pools of caramel aureole that the suit only just hid from view.

Tasha was forty-two this year, in two months, and she'd had two kids. Her large breasts were gorgeous, and always had been, but over the years they'd transformed, and so she wasn't so keen on showing them off anymore. Which was silly - they were beautiful, leaning a little to a teardrop shape, sure, but still her best feature. Bottom-heavy, they curved up defiantly at the rounded bottom of their shape, pointing her nipples slightly upward. Jeff thought they actually looked better than ever - more interesting, more real.

But Tasha had stopped flaunting them long ago.

His eyes scanned the suit, and he felt his cock thicken a little - another unusual situation during this, his forty-seventh year of life and fifteenth year of marriage. Especially at ten in the morning.

He lingered on the creases where her leg joined her hip, at the scant black material that covered her thatch of dark black hair - ordinarily. But, anticipating a lot of beach time on this, their beach vacation, she had gone in for a wax, which she hadn't done in ages. All that remained of her hair was a wispy landing strip.

"That's, uh... a very hot suit, Mrs. Russet," he blubbered.

She gave her sunglasses another quick swing, once around, grinning at him with a challenging look. "Is it?" she asked coyly. And waited. Jeff raised one eyebrow in what she called his "madman" face, which made her roll her eyes and turn around, picking up a large beach bag. "Okay, then," she said.

"I just don't like the heat!" he called out, in mock protest, admiring the full shape of her ass, which was also barely covered by the suit. It was no thong, but it left plenty of the rounded volume of her buttocks exposed.

"Can't *take* the heat," she called back, holding a hand up and waving goodbye. She said something else, probably something witty, but it was drowned out by the obnoxious squeal of the door hinges.

Jeff grimaced, not just at the inexplicable state of the door - the rest of the condo was stunning, pristine, well-maintained - but also at his own potential stupidity. Here he was, on vacation in a gorgeous condo in Ibiza, with a hot wife trotting out to the beach in a hot swimsuit, and he was going to spend the day... looking for WD-40 and checking emails?

Sometimes he was a major disappointment to himself.

The extended vacation they were on, in Ibiza of all places, was a concession to Tasha that he had been corralled into by a series of either fortuitous or unfortunate events, depending on who you asked. Tasha loved the sun, and long, lazy days at the beach doing not much else besides sleeping. She also loved water sports, and swimming, and she was a decent surfer - which was embarrassing to him because, while he beat Tasha by at least a smidge in almost any other sport, he could barely get *on* a surfboard, and she demolished him in the water at almost everything else.

Not that it was all competition, but he was a guy. Getting his ass handed to him by a girl was, well, embarrassing. Sometimes slightly

erotic, truth be told, but mostly embarrassing.

And the sand, and the salt, and the heat... not his cup of tea. But Tasha had suffered through her fair share of home improvement staycations and family visit summers, and hunting trips and camping, so when the stars aligned for this trip, and their good friends had offered to rent them the condo at an incredible, dirt-cheap price, what could he do?

Happy wife, happy life, so they say.

Tasha was a freelance science writer, and so she had minimal work right now by design. He, on the other hand, had been roped into teaching an online course over the summer, which wasn't hard to do - he just needed to swat a few emails away, grade some plagiarized essays, and be online for student questions two hours a week. And it paid for their airfare.

The kids were in Germany, staying with his parents, who had lived there for the past ten years. They were at a German language camp, which was something they'd been meaning to do as soon as they were old enough, taking advantage of the free lodging with the grandparents.

So it all came together quite nicely: the kids had a great educational opportunity, they had some time alone, and Tasha was getting her beach fix.

Ibiza, though.

What a headache.

They had been there for two weeks, but it had only taken about two days for them to conclude that they were too old for this place. Sure, Cara and Steve's condo was in a quieter part of the island, where the rentals were dominated by Europeans more their own age, but the onslaught of twenty-something party animals was in full swing and never far away. Even with the windows closed - a mistake they would never make again because of the heat - the thumping beats of techno music (or whatever these kids were calling this crap these days) were never entirely shut out.

They seeped through the walls as a low-level vibration, almost menacing, punctuated by the shrill screams of drunk young women and breaking glass. At five in the morning, it was in full swing.

And at ten at night.

It was quietest between ten am and maybe seven at night, but "quietest" was a questionable superlative.

Tasha had given up trying to have a relaxing vacation and had decided to embrace the noise, and he had purchased earplugs and weed from the last batch of "neighbors" who had occupied the condo adjoining theirs - a group of scruffy Dutch thirty-somethings who seemed straight out of the seventies except for their predilection for MDMA. The girls in that group had strewn themselves about like cut flowers, wilting on the armchairs and loungers, eyes as big as saucers. Their skin was always covered in a sheen of faintly sexual-looking sweat, and if you walked too close to them, they reached out slender, tanned arms and stroked you wherever their hands landed first, mewling incoherently about how nice you felt.

Again, not all bad, but a little too weird - and youthful - for Jeff's tastes.

A loud crash next door interrupted his thoughts. He heard the low rumble of male voices, scattered laughter, accented English, and then a flurry of French which he believed was something about someone stinking like a pig.

New neighbors.

The condo next door, like almost everything here, was an Airbnb, and the occupants had come in all shapes and sizes. A rotund, dark, hairy couple with Slavic accents and a terrible command of English had sat on the porch for five days, drinking vodka from shot glasses and smoking cigarettes while they played chess. They had been unable to communicate

with Jeff and Natasha, other than to cheerfully yell, "Yeff and Natashka, have vodka!" on a few occasions, when they had been on the porch at the same time. The man had a huge belly and wore a navy blue Speedo and nothing else but gold chains for his entire stay, and the woman had a shock of communist-era reddish-purple hair that matched her lipstick, a floral swimsuit that looked like it had been purchased at the same iron curtain outlet as her hair dye, and a cigarette worked between her lips. Always. They were a caricature of themselves, but other than the cigarette smoke and a massive pickle jar of butts they left on the table, they had been nice enough.

A thin, mousy couple from Boston with matching sunglasses had quietly and mously occupied the place after them, and then a gang of American girls who had constant fights had screamed through two days and nights, until one of them ended up in the hospital and they all had to go home. Tasha had obtained the story from the unusually tall ringleader, Chrissie, who slurred her words and held a sloshing pink cosmo in a mason jar in one hand while she explained that Kat had fallen backwards over a balcony railing at a club and been fine, until she woke up on the beach eight hours later in excruciating pain. "Turns out," Chrissie slurred, in her southern millennial sing-song voice, "she had a spinal fracture, but she didn't notice it." She sipped her cosmo and blinked thoughtfully. "Lucky."

Not even Tasha sought clarification, exactly, on what Chrissie found so lucky about that, but they assumed it referred to the fact that Kat was not paralyzed after dancing the night away on an L2/3 fracture she couldn't feel because she was so hopped up on a combination of drugs that was unknown to everyone, including her.

A blissful three days ensued, during which the condo was unoccupied.

And now, they had new neighbors. By the sound of it, all guys. Young. Loud. Possibly French?

Jeff cast an eye toward the door to the patio, which was open, but decided against closing it. A nice breeze billowed the sheer white curtains, and he wanted a decent temperature in here. Air flow was crucial, or the whole place heated up like a bakery.

Unfortunately, the patios of the two condos were designed like a yin and yang, curving out and into each other with slatted wood between them, giving the appearance of, but not any actual, privacy. This was why they knew all of the visitors, except for the mousy couple: it was unavoidable.

"Jesus Christ you fucking stink!" A deep, American voice hollered. A loud thump was heard against the wall, followed by a clang and then laughter. Glass shattered, someone said fuck, and Jeff closed his computer slowly, along with his eyes.

Please, dear God, don't let these guys be here for too long, he thought. And then he shuffled into the back rooms, to the shadiest one that stayed cool until five pm.

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An hour later, the boys next door seemed to have settled, and Jeff was done with his work and bored by the internet. Music came from next door, low enough to be unrecognizable, and it wasn't techno-crap, so he ventured into the kitchen and got out a beer while he listened.

There were no voices, and the water had finally stopped running in the shower room, so he assumed they were probably sleeping after an all-nighter of some kind. It was now noon, so he could safely bet that they would be asleep. Sleeping through the day seemed to be the preferred

activity for people their age around here.

He slid his beer along the counter and picked up his Kindle, heading out to the porch to see if he could spot Natasha on the beach and maybe wave at her to come up and join him. Tasha liked the sun, but she usually got out of it from twelve to two, because she didn't want to have - in her words - "cougar chest." She was far from that, but her skin was darker and patchier than when she was younger. Not in any way that you would notice outright, and Jeff thought she looked better now, in her forties, than in her twenties.

But she did not want to chance it.

He moved a chair with his foot, scraping it over the tiled floor and scanned the beach from the tapered end of their yang-shape, where the view of the beach was best. Out there, where the fat part of the adjoining porch swelled wide, there was no dividing wall at all, so it was risqué if you didn't feel like... talking.

The noise of the chair caused a sandy-brown head to pop up from the other side of a lounge chair facing toward the beach, and away from Jeff and Tasha's balcony. Two youthful eyes peered over the top of the chair, scrutinized Jeff, and then a hand levitated with a beer in it and a voice said, "Salut."

Unsure if this was a Frenchman greeting him or a terrible version of a Spanish toast, Jeff lifted his beer and said nothing, then started squinting at the beach. He found Tasha almost instantly, stretched out on a beach towel, sunglasses on. The beach was about a block away, and she was out in the middle of the large strip of sand, but he could still see the shine of her dark hair, lightened to a chestnut shade by the sun, and the magnificent curves of her breasts, suspended as they were in the strips of the new, hot swimsuit.

Some guys walking by on the beach did a double-take as they walked

past her, and Jeff felt a tingle in his cock. He admired the view for a moment and then sat down, his back to the neighbors, to read his Kindle. He tried not to stew about Natasha and whether she had applied enough sunscreen, and whether or not he should go fetch her.

Half an hour or so passed by, and he got caught up in a very dorky book about cathedral construction. He heard the new neighbors filtering in and out of the condo, walking onto the porch, asking about their plans for the evening, talking some guy talk about some girls on the ferry. A faint odor of marijuana filtered into the air - probably hash rolled into the French kid's cigarette, because it wasn't overpowering. Things were pleasant enough. These guys, he concluded, might not be so bad.

"Oi-yeh," he heard one of them say, the French kid again. "Look at this one."

There was a slight shuffling of chairs, a low whistle, and then quiet. In the corner of his eye, he saw one of them lean over the balcony, looking down, and Jeff turned to watch just as he spoke.

"Hey, hey, *señorita*, I like your swimming costume."

There was a pause, a slap from one of the other guys that reverberated on the tiles, and then a cold knife of jealousy and arousal plunged into Jeff's torso.

"That's *señora* to you, young man."

This was Tasha's sultry voice, sweet and clear, with the breathiest flutter at the end. Tasha had an incredibly sexy voice, and everyone failed to describe it. The breathy, noduled quality that chased after it at the end of each declaration was not nasal, but something ethereal and vaguely sexual, and it defied description. She could offer you a baby wipe to clean vomit off your face and it sounded faintly thrilling.

This comment made one of them whistle, all of them laugh heartily, and it was all taken in good fun, which was how Tasha meant it. They

jostled at each other.

"Dude, dude, she's coming *in* here."

"She's fucking *hot*."

"Too old," one of them said dryly, to which the French voice promptly responded, "Maybe she teaches you something about using your little prick, *connard*," and they all began slapping each other with closed fists again until someone knocked over a beer bottle and yelled "douchebag."

The French guy had something to say about this in French, and Jeff amusedly turned to get a look at the neighbors. The sandy hair of the French voice was still low in the lounge, but the other three were standing up. Shirtless, tanned, all with the slim, flab-less physiques of youth. They glanced at him and gave him the kind of non-hostile, non-friendly nod that young bucks give to older guys they haven't sized up yet, so Jeff wasn't sure which way it would all tip.

The squeaky door creaked loudly and Tasha called out. "Guess our new neighbors are here." She kicked off her sandals and thumped her bag down, then opened the fridge.

The boys next door stopped speaking and moving, their eyebrows going up. A puff of smoke curled up from the lounge housing the French boy. Their eyes were wide with a mixture of disbelief, embarrassment, and amusement.

"Oh, shit," one of them laughed, covering his mouth. He was a fit, tanned guy with a rakish mop of black curly hair and a tattoo around his bicep.

A very tall guy, with a professional-looking blond haircut, looked at Jeff. "Hey, sorry man," he said.

Jeff opted for waving this apology away with his hand. These kids were not much older than his students in the community college courses

he taught, and it was a tried-and-true tactic to seem as unbothered as possible while giving off a certain air of sternness. It was an art that came naturally to him.

Anyway, he wasn't particularly bothered by these guys checking out his wife. This was an unsettling reality he had been grappling with for a long time: he was very turned on by it, in fact. So much so that he wasn't going to stand up just yet.

Tasha strode out to the patio with two beers in her hands and a bottle of water tucked under her arm. A skimpy, see-through swimsuit "coverup" was draped loosely about her shoulders, calling more attention to the suit beneath it than covering anything up. Her hair, which hovered between her shoulders and chin in choppy, trendy chunks, was sexy with big, messy beach waves, and her skin shone with the faint sweat of a morning baking in the sun, her skin glowing with the captured warmth. She did, by any measurement, look hot as fuck.

She set the beers down, and the guys next door alternated between looking busy doing something else and gaping openly at her, which only resulted in them all looking like mild idiots. A specific kind of mild idiots, though: young men in the presence of an incredibly hot, and ostensibly unattainable female.

The tall blond, who seemed the most mature by a number of vectors, and seemed to herald from a Midwestern background on a farm, pushed aside a chair to approach the low wall. "Hey... uh... ma'am," he began. "These guys are just... we're sorry. Didn't realize that you were, uh..."

Jeff watched his wife with keen interest. She was already smiling when he began speaking, and her mouth broke open in an alluring grin when he said "ma'am." She settled herself into a chair, facing the group of guys, as he finished up his apology.

But the **way** that she did it... she moved slowly, sexily, crossing her

legs and letting her bare foot dangle playfully. She rolled her shoulders, pushing out her chest a little, causing her full breasts to press out against the confinement of the suit. The black material stretched and parted enticingly, pulling to the outside of her breasts, and for a moment every man within eyeline of this spectacle seemed to be holding their breath for the same thing: that the suit would stretch too far, and something would reveal itself. A sliver of aureole, a glimpse of a nipple.

But nothing appeared but the contours of her breasts, and her broad smile.

"Old?" she offered blondie with a grin.

This made Frenchie sit up in his chair and turn around to face her over the back of the chair.

"Uh... no," Blondie said, with a deft chuckle. "Er... married, I guess. And, uh... like, a neighbor."

Tasha leaned forward to take her beer off the table, and none of the guys made any concerted effort to hide their gazes, which wandered lovingly to Tasha's chest before snapping up theatrically and then darting to Jeff to see if he'd noticed.

Tasha moved her eyes quickly to Jeff, who was trying to maintain his composure, though probably not for the reasons she assumed. "I can forgive you if Jeff can," she said, with a mysterious twist of her mouth.

This had the effect on Jeff of making his heart squirm - it beat forcefully, sleazily, in his chest, and each quickened pulse sent an electrifying ripple through his core and straight to his cock. What was he *supposed* to say to that, he wondered, and felt captured in a cold, disarming unit of time with no end.

"Where you guys from?" Tasha asked next, in a cheerful tone that diffused the tension - at least for Jeff.

"Chicago."

"Texas."

"Jersey."

"I am French."

They all offered this information at the same time, except for the luxuriating Frenchman, who delivered his origins after everyone else, holding his cigarette aloft as proof.

Jeff studied Tasha's face. Something strange was crawling over it, lighting up her eyes, giving her even more of a glow than usual. Was she... *flirting* with these guys? She arched her eyebrows alluringly, a commentary on how quickly and enthusiastically they had offered the information.

"You guys... friends or something? From school?"

"Me and Dan are," Blondie offered quickly.

"Nope, I don't even know this fag," said the kid who professed to be from Jersey, pushing the French guy roughly and making him hiss something insulting in French.

"We met on the ferry," Frenchie said calmly, taking a puff off his cigarette and staring at Tasha over the lounge with a predatory and welcoming stare.

"And what brings you to Ibiza?" Tasha said, smiling. It was a rhetorical question, which they all laughed at, except Frenchie.

"The women," he assured her.

Tasha liked this. A little more than she *should*. She laughed - a tinkly, inviting laugh, that ended with her going "ahhhh," comically, and shaking her head. "No seriously, though, you planning on clubbing, or whatever you kids call it these days?" She smiled. "Or just relaxing on the beach?"

Her eyes, Jeff noticed, were moving over their bare chests, never lingering too long, but not exactly hiding what she was doing.

His cock throbbed.

"Why, did you want to come with us?"

This from Frenchie again. Blondie shot him a look, and "Dan" grinned sheepishly before looking at the floor. Jersey's mouth twisted into an amused but hopeful smile.

Tasha took a long sip of beer while looking over her bottle, and for a searing moment she had everyone's rapt attention.

She shrugged as she set the bottle down. "I think we're a little too old for that scene, guys," she told them, with a grin. If she had been trying to, that grin could not have been any more inspiring of hope. It was a teaser, an open door, a flirtatious half-rejection that Jeff knew from experience had likely only whetted their appetites and sparked their imagination.

Because, sitting there in her hot swimsuit, with her new trendy haircut in messy waves, her skin shining with sweat, Tasha looked like she would be more than welcome in any club, anywhere in the world.

The guys laughed it off, and the conversation between them sort of dribbled away. Tasha looked over at Jeff as the guys started talking amongst themselves. "You want to go to grab something at that place down the street? Or just eat the leftovers?"

Jeff cleared his throat. "I'm not very hungry," he said, picking up the beer Tasha had brought him.

"Yeah," Tasha agreed mysteriously leaning back on her chair and dropping her sunglasses onto her nose. "Me either."

With her sunglasses on, Jeff couldn't see through the glare of the reflected sun what her eyes were doing, whether they were closed, or open - and if they were open, where they were wandering. He shifted in his seat and pretended to focus on his book.

The guys exchanged some banter and filtered in and out of the condo, making plans, insulting each other, and pondering where to buy MDMA.

"Well," the French guy said, standing up and putting out his third cigarette. He stretched his arms over his head, his sinewy, youthful frame elongating. He winked at Tasha. "I am Rémy. And you are?"

"Jeff," Jeff said sullenly, turning to look at him. He was met by an impish grin, a kind of glimmer in Rémy's eyes, that set Jeff's heart racing again. It was like Rémy could see right into Jeff's thoughts - the images that gathered there as a messy storm of tangled limbs and slippery skin, sloppy sputters and ecstatic moans.

"I'm Natasha," Tasha said.

And fuck if that Rémy guy didn't cross over to the low wall, lean forward, and take Tasha's hand in his. He seemingly summoned her to offer it to him through mind control, before bringing it to his lips, bowing low to kiss the back of it.

He looked into her eyes as he did this, grinned again, and then stood up. "Very pleasant to meet you, Natasha," he said. "I hope we see you again."

He turned and strolled into the condo.

Tasha looked over at Jeff, making a silly face. "Oh-la-la," she said, squirming in her seat.

She was joking. Jeff could see that she was; it was obvious, and she was so lighthearted about it that there was no reason to take it with any seriousness. At all.

Jeff managed a laugh. Tasha leaned back in her chair and probably closed her eyes, giving it, by his estimation, no more thought at all.

He stared at his book, seeing no words, his mind filled with disturbing and erotic thoughts that he could not push away.

The guys next door disappeared after several loud bangs of the door and a lot of loud discussion about food. Their voices disappeared down the hallway, swelled again as they walked out of the building, and trailed away down toward the street that ran along the beach.

Tasha remained motionless, her mouth in a faint smile that both was and wasn't common to her when she dozed off.

"Well, *that* was interesting," Jeff said, setting down his book.

Tasha smiled. Again, mysteriously.

"Looks like you have a fan club," Jeff continued.

Why. Why, oh why? Why couldn't he *stop* himself? But he wanted Tasha to talk to him, he wanted to have a conversation about all the hot young guys next door who obviously had a crush on his wife and thought she was hot.

He waited. Tasha was still smiling, and the curve of her mouth was as arousing to him at this moment as the shape of her breasts, or smooth skin between her thigh and her suit. He wanted to tinker with that smile, disturb it somehow, as much as he wanted to fondle her breasts, flicking a nipple with his tongue. She was infuriating him with her silence, because in his mind it held some kind of power, or knowledge of it.

This gave him a kind of intensely erotic fear.

"I'm pretty sure those guys would be 'fans' of anything that moved," she said, at last. She rolled her head slightly, so if her eyes were open, she'd be looking at him. Sarcastically.

Then she stretched. A long, sanguine, feline stretch that made the appealing lines of muscle on her thighs stand out, and her swimsuit loose at her chest, another unfulfilled promise of offering a peek at the full glory of her rack.

Jeff, however, was still discontented. As frequently happened with him, he was turned inside-out by the prospect of his wife flirting with

other men. Or possibly even more. Was it wholly inappropriate? Absolutely, and it was an especially egregious thought to be having because of four hunky men who were all definitely in their twenties, and maybe only barely so.

"They were falling all over themselves as soon as you showed up," he ventured.

Tasha made a dismissive noise, a cross between a click and a hiss. She stood up, leaving her wrap slung over the back of her chair. "Hmm," she murmured, tipping her head to one side.

The flutter of his heart attacked again, and his cock throbbed back to full-throttled life.

"Hmm," he echoed.

What was that supposed to mean, "hmm?"

"I think I'm going to take advantage of the quiet," she declared, leaning over the table to kiss him on the cheek, "and take a nap."

Jeff's mouth was left slack as Tasha turned flirtatiously and sauntered away. It *seemed* like an invitation - an invitation at a strange hour, an unusual invitation, and an invitation that had him sweating at his temples, the back of his neck, and on his balls. A breeze picked up and gave him a cold, disorienting caress.

Tasha looked over at him as she stalked away into the hallway leading to the bedrooms.

He placed both of his hands on the table.

Invitation it was, then.

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The sex that afternoon wasn't *particularly* different than the kind of sex they'd been having on vacation. There was no way for Jeff to put his

finger on what it was that left him with a disturbed and erotic hangover when it was over. They hadn't done anything very different: he had lay down next to Tasha, who was on her side as always, beneath a light sheet, naked. He had kissed her neck, moved his hands over her body, encountered sand, inhaled her sunscreen and brackish beach perfume. They had been married for a long time: there were no surprises here. Tasha had rolled over and lain her body out for him beautifully, sleepily, and then, aroused, had opened her eyes and wrapped her legs around him when he entered her.

Nothing new, nothing different.

Except that she purred unusually, and her eyes seemed focused on something that wasn't really there. Her pussy welled up with more juices than usual, seemingly a function of the distance of her thoughts.

Or perhaps that was his imagination.

But whatever it was, it lingered with him, as he turned in the shower. A mixture of fear and arousal had his dick hard again, and the four young men next door would not leave his thoughts.

Nor would the image of the mysterious smile on Tasha's lips, or the idea that perhaps the wet hotness of her pussy had been enhanced by whatever she had been imagining while she fucked her husband.

The idea that maybe it was something like his own fantasies.

He jerked off in the shower, stunned as he panted, staring down at his cock, still in his hand, and the spurts of cum that spilled onto the tiles of the shower.

There was something that hadn't happened in almost a decade.

He stood under the shower-head marveling at it for so long that Tasha called out to see if he was okay.

CHAPTER 2

The guys didn't return at all that evening, or even in the early morning. Jeff lay in the semi-darkness of the early hours - the sun came up around five here, and the heat was oppressive. It boxed him in, there in the sleepless morning, with his dark thoughts.

He rolled over and spooned Tasha, working his hand under her silky nightshirt, palms sticking slightly to her damp skin.

She groaned and rolled onto her stomach, squirming away. "Too early," she complained. She pulled a pillow over her head, and Jeff paused, thinking of moving forward anyway. But Tasha got cranky if he woke her up - especially for sex - and so he sat up, pausing for a few minutes to make sure his blood pressure wouldn't wreak havoc on him by getting up too suddenly. When Tasha remained beneath her pillow, he rose to go sit on the porch with a coffee.

This was - prior to the guys' arrival - his favorite part of the day. Now it seemed bleak and dull. And unnerving. He listened for sounds from their condo, heard nothing, and sipped his coffee loudly.

In the light of day, everything he had been thinking about in the dark seemed so much less menacing. In the darkest hours, he had lain there imagining Tasha and her mysterious smile, picturing her tongue trailing down their bare chests, her lips closing around their cocks - always rock-

hard, always at the ready.

That seemed insane now. Tasha was a forty-two-year-old woman, happily married to a pervert she didn't have pegged for a pervert, and with two children who were much closer in age to the cohort next door than Tasha was to the guys. She was hardly a kinky woman - especially not anymore.

But this thought worked a little sliver of doubt back into his brightly-lit morning thoughts: why had the sex last night been so good? Tasha had been wet, welcoming, and not entirely herself.

He could already hear her lecturing him about the all-important difference between correlation and causation.

He sipped his coffee. Tasha was stirring in the other room, getting ready to go on a swim.

A pang of longing blossomed in his chest, but it faded quickly.

There was, after all, nothing strange about Tasha saying she was too sleepy for sex, and then getting up ten minutes later to engage in some other form of exercise.

Nothing strange about it at all.

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Tasha floated on her back far out in the water, ears beneath the surface, the immense silence of the ocean swallowing her up. The water in the bay near their condo was never choppy, and she liked to get a good, brisk swim on every morning. She was used to Minnesota waters, barely bearable even in August, and it was bliss to swim in what felt like a cooled bathtub even at seven am.

Hardly anyone was out at this time of day. A few stragglers, drunk and high off their faces, sometimes dragged themselves along the beach,

looking for their accommodations. Occasionally they went into the water and she worried she'd have to save one from drowning. Some older people, with sun-hardened dark skin and the sort of concentrated sameness of features that gave her the impression they were truly original natives of Ibiza, walked along the beach, but they usually looked like they had a job to get to. Sometimes men headed out in fishing boats and stared openly at her as they motored by.

Earlier during their stay, Jeff had insisted on grumpily accompanying her, saying it wasn't safe to swim alone, but they had both gotten annoyed by that ritual and she had eventually convinced him that she could be trusted to swim alone by promising to swim along the shoreline in water she could stand up in.

Which she often didn't do, but she and Jeff both knew she was an extremely capable swimmer who had grown up surfing in the dangerous and frigid West Coast waters. She didn't know what kind of event it would take to cause a riptide in this placid bay, but deemed it stupidly unlikely, and there were no other hazards, so she sort of fudged on the distance from shore.

She swam in using a sidestroke and watching the disappearing sunrise bleeding from tender pinks to the white, blinding daylight. She was thrilled to be here, thrilled with this vacation. She loved the water - and not the swampy-smelling, ice-cold, boring lake water she had to settle for on summer trips to a cottage, but the vast, salty, mass of the ocean. Even here, she could feel what she liked about it: treading water, it swept her up in a movement that felt like it was part of the great, massive beast that was the ocean.

Also, it was fun. More fun than she'd had in a long time.

In thinking about fun, her thoughts drifted quickly from the white glare of the sun on the water to the youthful energy that surrounded her.

To the newest batch of next-door neighbors, their lean, youthful bodies, their unhampered lives, the vibrant maleness that coursed through their bodies.

Jesus, she thought, flipping onto her stomach and swimming in on a breast stroke with determination, trying to excise them from her thoughts.

She walked in to the shore on her fingertips, staying in the water until the last minute. She'd been out too long yesterday and her skin felt a little tender, so she was wearing a rash guard just in case. If there was one thing that annoyed her about getting older it was that her skin was just beginning to fight with her about her habit of sunbathing. It didn't look bad, she knew, but it was starting to look darker than she wanted, and she believed it was becoming a little mottled. Though she knew there was truth to what Jeff said - that she had herself under a microscope and only she could see that.

She sat up on her knees and caught her breath. She'd been swimming harder than she'd realized. She pulled on the zipper of her rash guard - a hot little number she'd been surprised to find (there wasn't great surfing here) at the same store as her sexy black suit.

She flushed a little with the memory of the effect the suit had had on those young guys.

She was just rising out of the water when she noticed them. They were walking down the street in a group, and if it hadn't been for the extremely tall blond guy, she wouldn't have even thought it was them. But she recognized the dark curly hair of his friend Dan, and then, walking behind with a wispy blond girl and a cigarette lazily traveling from his waist to his mouth, the lean figure and strangely appealing sandy head of the French guy.

Rémy.

A shudder traveled through her as she felt the ghost of his lips - warm

and dry - and remembered the mischievous look he had given her as the sensation traveled through her, down her arm, straight to her core.

God, Tash. What the hell?

They had evidently been out all night, and collected a few girls while they were there. Which was... totally normal and fine and not any of her business. Of course they had. Of course they *would*. Of course she shouldn't have any thoughts about it one way or the other: these were very, very young men she had met for five minutes who happened to be next door to her and *her husband's* vacation rental.

She shot a look of envy at the lanky, shapely legs of a tall, dark-haired girl and then began to diligently search for her towel and sandals. She had come to shore quite a distance away from where she had thought she was.

She found them, and turned around to face the ocean, deliberately ignoring them as they neared the street that led to their condo. She dried her hair and tried to push them out of her mind, and laughed to herself when she stepped back from the situation and saw it for what it was.

I mean, seriously, she thought. Did you just actually feel *jealousy*?

So ridiculous.

On so many levels.

She stepped into one sandal and then the other, because she was so distracted thinking about Rémy and trying not to think about Rémy, that she wasn't thinking straight. She sighed, and stepped out of them, then bent over to pick them up.

"Oh hey, look, it's Natasha."

She whipped around, startled. It was Rémy's thickly French voice, and he was strolling arrogantly toward her, hands in pockets, looking a little haggard with a thin swath of stubble on his jaw and sleepy eyes. The girl walking with him - a tiny, almost starved-looking blond whose hair

seemed dirty - was bombed off her face, her pupils so large her eyes looked like an alien's.

Rémy was paying no attention to her. His mouth curled into a grin as he walked toward Tasha.

She plumped the bottom of her hair with the towel, and felt like an old woman as she did it, for no particular reason. It just seemed like she could see herself: forty-two, wearing a rash guard in the early morning after going on a healthy swim, and gently fluffing her hair.

It seemed matronly.

But when she spoke, she found herself being anything but. Her voice was carefree and lighthearted, and there was no hiding - even from herself - the dangerously flirtatious quality to it.

"Good night, I see," she said, smiling. She looked briefly at the bombed girl, who smiled broadly and weirdly like everyone on MDMA did. "Hee...yeh..." she slurred.

Rémy, vexingly, sexily, paid the girl no mind at all. His eyes traveled up and down Natasha's body as he unfolded a cigarette box and began casually rolling some hash into a cigarette with the ease that almost every French guy she had ever met seemed to have for such a complicated task.

She watched his fingers, thought a few more dirty thoughts about the talent they portended, and smiled warmly. Inside, she was cringing at herself. Her heart beat rapidly, more out of embarrassment for her innermost thoughts.

"You go out for a swim by yourself?" Rémy said, scowling at the water and putting the cigarette to his lips.

Tasha felt strange in her own body as she slung the towel over her neck and hung on to the ends of it. A guy like Rémy - there was a time - would have disarmed her completely. When she was younger. He wasn't the best-looking of the four, by a long shot, but he was the most attractive,

because he was the coolest cat in the house.

"Dangerous," he commented, delivering another sly grin and sneaky stare that sent chills through Tasha.

God. What the *hell?*

The others, who had paused when Rémy broke off from the group and milled about, were now walking down to them. "Rémy, man, you have the key - oh, hey! It's Natasha."

"Sexy-neighbor-Natasha," the kid who had identified himself as "from Jersey" sang cheerfully. He had two girls on each arm and they both scowled a little, but because they were clearly high, and stupidly youthful, their scowls dissipated quickly.

Tasha cursed herself that this gave her the thrill that it did. There were five girls with these guys, all of them bombed and attractive with the kind of youthful freshness that was many, many years in her rear-view mirror. But all four of the guys were looking at *her*.

Natasha.

Sexy-neighbor-Natasha.

Their eyes, intermittently, traveled to the cleft between her breasts, to the half-unzipped rash guard, and she felt a bizarre pang each time she registered their gaze.

Madness, she thought, even as a warmth spread through her body that was... what? Vaguely familiar, like an adolescent pang of lust. And yet it was not that, either, because she wasn't an adolescent, and it wasn't attached to any silly, fanciful strings of hope for finding a good man and marrying him - she had that, already. This was a rogue sensation, totally physical and unattached to reality. Definitely unfamiliar in that sense.

She gave her head a shake and laughed at herself, deciding to just enjoy the fun of flirting with these guys while it lasted. They'd be back in their condo, screwing these girls, and she'd go to lunch with her husband

of fifteen years.

Who she loved.

"Wow, I'm glad I didn't go out with you guys last night," Tasha teased, hardly believing herself.

Dan had plopped himself down on the beach and was fishing for something in his pocket. The girls had migrated together in a group to giggle idiotically, the way all young, blitzed girls in groups seemed to do.

"You should have come with us," Rémy said, squinting through the smoke of his cigarette. "It was, what you say..." he looked over his shoulder at the Jersey boy, "off the chain?"

Jersey laughed at this and plopped down in the sand as well, leaning back on an elbow and grinning arrogantly. "Yeah, Natasha. Off the chain."

"I'm Kelly," one of the girls said, abruptly, walking toward Natasha and touching her arm with her weird, black eyes wide.

Natasha let her stroke her arm. She was blitzed, so there wasn't any point not letting her do it.

"Yeah," she commented, swinging her sandals in a neat circle. "*That's* why I'm glad." She stepped between them, aware that she was employing a far more sexy walk than she normally did. She could feel them turning to watch her leave, and the strange thrill it gave her gave her a chilled, out-of-control feeling.

"Where you going?" one of them called. Not Rémy, by the accent.

Tasha held up her hand and waved without comment.

"Hope to see you again soon, neighbor Natasha," Rémy called out.

She kept walking. A smile was on her face and she felt buoyant.

Just a *little bit* of harmless fun, she thought.

Jeff was up and on the porch with his coffee when she entered the condo. He was facing the beach, looking out at it with a blank stare and an air of serious thought. The door screeched as she opened it, and he didn't respond to it.

He seemed deeply lost in his thoughts.

She kicked her shoes off, and the clatter of them hitting the tiled floor snapped him out of his reverie.

"Hey," she called, walking out to the porch. "Somebody's lost in deep thoughts."

His coffee cup - a clear teacup with a metal basket to suspend it, the only thing available in the rental that was remotely acceptable for coffee - was suspended in the air, halfway between being set down and sipped. Her eyes went to it, because it was hanging there in the air at an absurd height, and he set it down. "Huh? Yeah... oh, no, just... sleepy."

"Heat again?" she asked, plopping in a chair opposite him. "How many cups of coffee have you *had*?"

"I see you ran into the neighbors," he said, leaving the question unanswered.

Tasha looked over her shoulder, toward the beach, briefly. "Huh? Yeah, the guys?" She sounded silly, talking too fast. Why? She was calling attention to an interaction that didn't need to have attention called to it. *She* might feel guilty about her thoughts, but Jeff didn't know what those were. And nothing had actually taken place except exactly that - she had run into the neighbors.

"They were out all night," she continued, wishing she would stop talking and making things somehow weird. "They picked up like five girls. So... get ready."

Jeff studied her for a moment. A little too long, if she'd been asked, and then smiled wanly. "Ah," he said. "Youth."

Tasha felt a flush spread over her right cheek, and she looked down at the table. The commentary seemed loaded, though she couldn't say why.

She stood up abruptly. "Yeah, youth," she said. "They're all high as kites. *I* need a pick-me-up of the adult kind. Is there any coffee left?"

"I'll... make you some," Jeff said, after considering whether or not he had any realistic options for keeping the conversation headed in the direction he wanted it to go - something he wasn't entirely sure of himself. He just wanted... what?

For Tasha to talk a *little bit more* about the new neighbors.

Or something.

But she was looking for a coffee "mug" and already moving on. And that, of course, was that.

It wasn't as if Jeff was unaccustomed to living out his fantasies in his own mind, without Tasha even knowing they existed. He grabbed the French press, and emptied the grounds. "One terrible coffee, coming right up."

This was their routine: Tasha went swimming, he had coffee, and then she returned to the beach while he worked. The guys next door were just a distraction, and it was fun, but in the end, this was who they were now: people who took vacations under duress, in places like Ibiza, and then settled into a pace that was not much that different than when they were at home.

And that was fine, he thought, as he carefully made coffee.

At least they had a psychological adventure, and maybe he wasn't up for the real thing.

Tasha, who was facing away from the other condo and looking at something on her left foot, seemed fine with it.

It was all... fine.

CHAPTER 3

The alarm came to her through the sludgy, overheated doze she was having on the beach, which was maybe one of her favorite things about lying around in the sun. She was a restless sleeper, and terrible at things like meditation or relaxation of most kinds, but sleeping in the hot sun always put her into a pleasant, trance-like state that was no sleep, but very restful.

She had changed into her sexy black suit, in spite of the sun, and opted instead for covering herself thoroughly in sunscreen that she promised herself to re-apply every hour. She hadn't done that, but every time the idea came to her, the heat and the pleasant sleepiness tugged more insistently at her than the desire to avoid the dreaded "cougar chest."

It was a smoke alarm, beeping insistently, and it went on for many minutes as a background noise in her mind. But then the European wailing of sirens, far in the distance, grew slowly more audible, until an air horn blared nearby and shattered her sleep.

She sat up at once, shaken from her dreamy state. Turning to the street near their condo, she saw that her intuitions about the sounds were correct: flashing lights, a puff of smoke, firefighters, the constant beeping of the same alarm. People were gathering on the street that ran parallel to the beach, looking down the street toward where their condo building was.

She grabbed her shoes and beach bag, leaving her towel, and ran clumsily up the beach. Scanning the scene as she ran in a panic, she could see it was not a real, huge emergency, whatever it was: The firefighters were strolling around, no hose lines were out, and the smoke was thin and gray, drifting away in a disconnected cloud above the building.

She spotted Jeff first, and was relieved to see him. He was leaning against a low garden wall, arms folded across his chest, feet crossed at the ankle. Being cool and casual. That was Jeff to a "t." It's one of the things she liked best about him. He was an extremely calm person in almost any situation.

She approached, striding quickly, because she was not, herself, such a calm person. Even though she could see everything was fine, the mere presence of emergency services gave her the jitters.

The neighbor guys were filtering out of the building, looking extremely sleepy more than anything. Rémy was bare-chested, fishing in his shorts for something, a cigarette between his lips. He jerked his head in greeting at Jeff, who lifted a hand in response. Rémy turned and looked up at the building while lighting his cigarette.

"What happened?" Natasha said, when she was about fifteen feet from Jeff, still hurrying toward him as if there were some need to get there quickly.

Jeff shrugged. "Small fire, I guess."

"Not us?" Natasha asked with dread.

"Not *us*," Rémy contributed, spinning around to face them.

Tasha dropped her sandals and stood on one foot to swipe the debris that had stuck to her bare feet off her soles. She hadn't put her sandals on or even noticed the painfully hot sidewalk or detritus she'd stepped through. Such a mistake in Ibiza, she thought. Literally anything could be on the sidewalk here.

She stepped into one sandal and tried to stand in it to do the same with her other foot. But the heel was high, and she started to tip over.

Which would have been fine. It wasn't like she wasn't going to just fall, on her face.

But Rémy rushed over - casually rushing, of course, but rushing nonetheless - to catch her by the elbow before she could even totter.

This caused her to grasp his forearm as she teetered, because it was there. She felt the coiled strength beneath his skin and it made her dizzy.

"Hero." The Jersey kid walked by and punched Rémy hard on the shoulder. "Watch yourself with this one, ladies."

"Uh, thanks," Tasha said, stepping into her shoe. She let go of Rémy and quickly looked over at Jeff, whose expression she was unable to read.

The tall blond approached. "They're saying it was the downstairs condo in the corner, electrical something or other," he said, seriously. "Hey, Natasha." And then, quickly, earnestly, he turned to Jeff. "Hey, man."

"Eh, bien. Putain," Rémy muttered, stretching his arms over his head.

"We won't be able to get back in for a couple of hours," blondie continued.

Rémy hissed.

Natasha looked at Jeff and gave him a playful smile. "Looks like you'll have to do some sunbathing, babe."

Jeff shook his head and pushed off the wall. He looked at the blond kid. "How did you hear all that?" he asked. "You speak Spanish?"

"Nah, Dan does."

They all looked over at Dan, who was in a very animated conversation with a firefighter in Spanish.

"Looks authentic," Tasha said. Then she turned back to Jeff.

"Beach?"

Jeff smiled and offered her his arm, an unusually playful gesture for him. "Not for me. If you'll excuse me, gentlemen, I'm going to take my wife to the cantina."

Tasha linked her arm in his, but hesitated. "I don't... I can't wear my suit," she protested.

"No one objects," Rémy said, pouncing with his one-liner as if he had been waiting all day for her to deliver her own line.

He was smiling salaciously. Natasha feigned an expression of mock scandal, but there were so many layers to her feigning that she didn't, in the end, know what she was trying to project.

"Dan!" the blond guy screamed, turning around. "Ask that guy if Natasha can run up and get something to wear."

Tasha had her mouth open for a second, to protest something, but she wasn't sure what. There was an unwholesome inappropriateness taking place here, that much she was sure of. What she *wasn't* sure of was exactly what that was, or why it was unwholesome, or why she felt... not just thrilled, but empowered, and alluring, and kind of high, that these random, temporary, much-too-young, definitely out-of-bounds neighbor boys were falling (sort of) all over her.

She looked at Jeff to check in on his reaction, and was surprised by what she saw there. She'd have expected a little bit of ruffled feathers, or annoyance, or... just, general male gruffness about it all. But he had a different look on his face.

Dan trotted over. "He says he can grab something for you," he told Tasha, smiling.

"Uh... okay..."

"That's not *all* he says," Rémy added, with a grin.

Dan shot him a look.

"What?" Tasha said, again surprised by her own flirtatiousness. It was really over-the-top. "What else did he say?"

Dan looked at his shoes.

Rémy began. "He says it's a mistake to cover up such nice -"

Dan cleared his throat. "If you have the key and you tell him where it is he can grab it for you," he said quickly, then glare-smiled at Rémy.

Natasha looked at Jeff, who had the strange smile on his face still. He fished out the key.

"Uh... there's a red like, long shirt-thing, on the bed in the bedroom on the... this corner," she said, waving at the far corner of the condo.

"Got it," Dan said, running off like a loyal retriever.

She was still holding onto Jeff's arm. Not knowing what urge overcame her, she leaned her head on his shoulder and squeezed his bicep. But at the same time that she did this, she smiled at Rémy.

It was a brazen, weird, crazy thing to do. It felt really wrong, on the one hand, and discomfiting - what did it even *mean*? But the feeling of power, the same one she had felt walking away from the group at the beach, warbled pleasantly in her chest.

The feel of her body against Jeff's arm, his solid bicep, his familiar frame, felt suddenly more erotic than it had in ages. And yet at the same time, the exchange with Rémy, which was completely loaded with innuendo and sexual overtones, thrilled her from another direction.

Rémy smoked. Dan came back to chat with the blond kid. Jersey sat grumpily on a patch of grass, strewn back on his elbow.

"Hey, where'd all your girlfriends go?" she asked, remembering them suddenly.

Rémy did a really good impression of looking surprised, jumping and jerking the cigarette from his mouth. "*Putain!*" he exclaimed. "The girls, we forget them, we leave them in the fire!"

He was already laughing by the end of his sentence. Tasha rolled her eyes.

"They were quite boring, these girls," Rémy confided, a sudden intensity in his eyes. It burned right into Tasha's brain, simmered, and then poured through her right to her pussy. Her chest felt uncomfortably tight. "Me, I prefer older women."

Shocked, flattered, and totally speechless, Tasha stared at him with her mouth open for a beat longer than she would have liked to. She began turning her head to look at Jeff, and read his reaction, because this was a *bit* over the top.

But Jeff was grinning. "Me, too," he told Rémy.

And they actually exchanged what seemed to be a moment of appreciation between them.

Tasha had no idea what to make of any of this, or what to say, and she was on the verge of feeling extremely awkward, when Dan came jogging back, a red ball of fabric in his hand. "Here you go," he told Tasha, a little breathlessly. Like he had gone into a raging fire himself to get it.

"Thank *you*," Tasha said, taking the dress, which was a loose, fashionable shirt-dress she'd bought in Germany after getting her hair cut.

"*What* a hero," the Jersey kid said from behind them sarcastically.

Tasha pulled her dress over her head, aware that everyone was watching her do it.

"Okay," she said cheerfully, looking at Jeff. "Let's go."

She would rather, truth be told, continue standing around with the group of guys, and feeling these weird, high-inducing feelings. She wouldn't have even minded showing off a little for the firefighter, who had checked her out when Dan was explaining what she wanted.

But that was all a little too much. And she was dying for a beer. And

she had the vague sense that things might take a dark turn, and Jeff was weirding her out a little with his reactions to all of this... slight scandal.

His face looked blank.

"You promised me a trip to the cantina," she reminded him, pulling him gently with her toward the beach street.

Jeff followed, making his "smirk of duty," a face he used, jokingly, whenever Tasha said something in a bossy tone.

And then, in a scandalous turn of events, he sent ice water running through Tasha's veins by turning around as they departed. "You guys should join us," he called back. "Renata's, just around the corner."

Tasha pulled herself close to him as they walked away, grinning, shocked. "**What?**" she giggled, as they turned the corner.

Jeff shrugged. "Just being neighborly," he said. "Anyway, don't act like you're **disappointed**."

Tasha pulled away from him. "**What?**" she protested. A little too fervently.

But she could see from Jeff's face that she was reading him all wrong: he hadn't said that because he was actually displeased. The expression on his face wasn't one of jealousy or annoyance. It was, like her own, an expression of playful fun.

"I'm just saying," Jeff said emphatically, spreading his hands out. "You don't seem to be **hating** all these young guys hitting on you."

"Oh, my God," Tasha said, rolling her eyes. But she didn't really have a huge objection to that statement, and she couldn't put up much of a forceful denial.

And anyway it seemed like... Jeff was almost... into it.

Was that possible?

She looked over at him. He was smiling, looking straight ahead.

"What's gotten into you?" she asked.

He shrugged again. "Mediterranean air, maybe. You know, when in Rome..."

"When in *Rome*?" she said incredulously. "Is there something going on in Ibiza I'm not aware of?"

"There's a lot going on in Ibiza, darling. I'm sure you're missing most of it but aware that it is happening."

She slapped him playfully. "That's not what I meant."

"No?"

"I meant... what are you talking about, like some swinger culture or something?"

He smiled. "Sure. Didn't you know that? It's a requirement for staying on the island."

His tone was jokey, he had stopped to throw open the small gate to the patio at Renata's, which they easily could have stepped over. "After you, my lady."

*

They took up seats at a large table, chosen by Jeff. Tasha raised her eyebrows: it wasn't like Jeff to invite people to join them, but it was even less like Jeff to actually expect them to take him up on the invitation. He saw her raised eyebrows and shrugged.

Tasha sat down, a little dumbstruck. Were they playing some kind of game? Was it all a game? How far would either of them take it? She didn't really know if it was some kind of game of chicken, or just vacation playfulness, or if she was reading everything wrong. She should probably be projecting more offense, she decided. Maybe Jeff was just testing her, trying to feel out her loyalty to him after all these years.

"Pitcher of sangria?" he suggested cheerfully.

Tasha gave him a look. "That's... coming out swinging," she said.

It was a strange choice of words, a strange expression that she never used. She hadn't done it intentionally, and it felt immediately awkward that she had said it. Did she have swinging on her mind, for real? Was it in her subconscious, bubbling up and out of her mouth without her permission?

Or was she, as usual, overthinking things?

She had a tendency to do that.

"I mean... I didn't mean..." she rushed to say, and then laughed at herself.

Jeff was looking at her with his odd, impish look. Like this was more than a game, more than a slip of the tongue. But surely it *wasn't*.

Surely she didn't want it to actually be?

They ordered the sangria and settled in, staring out over the water. They talked about the fire, musing about what had caused it, exchanging observations about the water, the weather. But Tasha felt like something else was simmering below all this talk the entire time, that neither one of them was really invested in the small-talk they were exchanging, or thinking about it at all.

"Oh hey," Jeff said, suddenly, interrupting Tasha as she talked about the fisherman she had seen passing her this morning, with minimum interest. He raised his hand, looking at the door.

Tasha turned around to see all four of the neighbors headed their way. "You guys came," she said, unable to hide a note of excitement from her voice.

Excitement, she thought, but strangely, she heard other things in her voice. Allure, flirtation. Things she didn't feel like she was consciously adding to her voice, that infused themselves into her words and even her gestures. She felt almost like she was watching herself be controlled by

another person as she pulled out a chair next to her, and patted the seat.

What, she thought, in the back of her mind where she felt like she was out of the driver's seat, *the fuck was that?*

She was looking at Rémy when she did this, and she supposed that's who she envisioned sitting next to her. But the Jersey guy pushed past Rémy and plopped into the chair. The others arranged themselves around the table, large by European restaurant standards but a bit of a squeeze for six people, five of whom were good-sized men.

Still feeling like she was out of control of her own body, she leaned on her arm and gave her hair a little flip, smiling at the Jersey kid. He was the kind to sit with his legs spread wide, arms draped over the back of his chair, always a little bit in everyone's face in word and gesture. "Any news about the fire?" she asked him.

"I don't speak Spanish, ma'am," he said. Grinning.

It was an entirely different kind of flirtatiousness, from an entirely different kind of man, and it sent a little thrill through Tasha. It was much different than the flutter that went through her body when Rémy flirted with her in his very French way.

"Ma'am," she scoffed, rolling her eyes, and grinning.

But there was actually something about that, the deferential way he said it, with a nugget of truth buried under his swagger, that burned warmly between her legs. Someone calling her "ma'am" usually grated on her nerves, because she liked to think she didn't quite qualify as a "ma'am" yet. Her joke about being a "*señora*" had been a deliberate confrontation with herself, an attempt to make herself accept that it was simply a fact. As a friend had pointed out once, if she was run over by a car and they wrote it up in the paper, she would be a "*señora*" not a "*señorita*."

But this use of "ma'am" had a sexy undercurrent. Her mind went immediately to a kind of shadowy, sexual, montage that involved this

Jersey kid - whose name she did even know - tipping his hat to her right after she told him to do something, like fix her sink.

Again, Tasha forced herself to think, *totally inappropriate*.

And silly.

And just... *what?*

She looked at Jeff, smiling, trying to convey a "can-you-believe-these-kids?" look.

But that wasn't the look on Jeff's face.

At all.

It looked like - and this made no sense whatsoever - encouragement.

"Remind me what your name is," Tasha said.

"He never gave it," Rémy said dryly, with a sly grin, looking at Jersey from across the table with something competitive burning in his eyes. "He has no manners." Tasha looked from one to the other. She knew it was crazy, but she felt like these two were sparring over her a little.

"*I* am Ethan," Jersey declared. "And that French fucker is -"

"She knows my name," Rémy said, his eyes twinkling as he switched his gaze from Ethan to Tasha. He licked a cigarette paper, sealing up one he had rolled without Tasha even noticing.

Ethan moved his finger without lifting his hand, from pointing to Rémy to pointing at Dan, who was sitting next to him. "That's Dan, as you know," he said, and then lifted his left hand to punch the blond guy viciously in the shoulder. "And this is the Doc."

Tasha leaned over to look at "The Doc," who was shaking his head. "I'm Kris," he said.

"He's a doctor," Rémy explained, inspecting his cigarette.

"I'm in med school," Kris explained.

The waiter, a slender Spaniard who seeped a consistent air of disdain for his vocation and all who asked him to perform it, set the sangria on the

table with a sneer. Then he said something in rapid Spanish, which Dan responded to with what seemed like aggressive cheerfulness.

"I ordered more sangria," he told them, after the waiter left.

There was a moment of silence, and Rémy put his cigarette in his shirt pocket before pouring drinks into the two glasses the waiter had dropped off and serving them to Tasha and Jeff.

"So you two are American, yes?" he asked.

"Yeah, why?" Tasha said, bringing the drink to her lips. She was still doing it, she thought, with almost a feeling of desperation. She was holding her drink flirtatiously, she was talking to this guy like they were at a bar together, and her husband was nowhere in sight.

Almost reflexively, she moved her foot under the table to find Jeff's leg, and when she did, she looked at him. They exchanged a look that was loaded with all kinds of things - fun, excitement, some feeling of being on the same team in a competition, camaraderie, complicity... but it was the kind of atmosphere she'd never felt between them. It was disorienting.

"Mmm," Rémy commented, looking back and forth between them. He leaned back in his chair. "Are you what the Americans call this, these 'swingers?'"

This was a shockingly brazen question. Dan and Kris, at their respective sides of the end of the table, froze in shock. Ethan chuckled, giving Rémy a look of admiration. It seemed to be over-the-top even for him, and Ethan struck Tasha as the kind of guy who was often accused of being too "direct."

Now, if anyone had asked Tasha how she would respond to that question three days earlier, she would have probably been subsumed by the giggles, and disbelief. Just *thinking* about being asked the question. She certainly would not have expected herself to respond as she did.

Coyly.

She leaned back in her own chair, resting an elbow on the back of it, bringing her hand to her mouth, and biting gently into her bent pointer finger at the knuckle. Smiling, without saying anything. She looked at Rémy as she did this, and then at Jeff.

It was in Jeff's expression that she found the most thrill, and that surprised her.

This was all a game, anyway, she reminded herself. She was playing a game, Jeff was playing a game, and maybe it was going a little far, but it wasn't going to go... all the way. To something... actually real.

Ethan tipped his head and stared at her. "No. Way," he said.

Tasha picked up her glass and held it in front of her lips. "I didn't *answer* the question," she said. Then she looked at Jeff pointedly.

This was all taking place as if under anesthesia of some kind: she knew she was the one doing this, but it didn't feel like her. She wasn't even thinking, just acting. "I don't know, honey. Is that what we are? 'Swingers?'"

Jeff's mouth twitched a little. This was having a definite effect on him, and it didn't seem to be entirely bad. Tasha felt wild, like she was on a ride that just kept accelerating and accelerating, and it was getting up to the sort of dangerous speed where she needed to make a decision, to bail, before it was too late, or to hang on.

"Please, please, tell me you guys are... what's the..." Ethan held his hand up, snapping his fingers loudly in the air over the table. "What's that *called?*" he asked, really looking like he was straining for something. He looked up at Rémy, his eyes squinting.

Rémy shrugged. "You asking me?" he scoffed, in an over-the-top French accent. "But I poorly speak the English."

Dan and Kris were attentive, disbelieving. Ethan was still squinting into thin air, his fingers snapping less frequently.

He pointed suddenly at Jeff. "Cuckold!" he shouted. He stabbed his finger at Jeff. "Yeah, that."

Rémy appeared dissatisfied with this word and unconvinced about its application.

"This is for a man, the wife cheats on him, yes?" He looked at Tasha, who felt her mouth going wide, falling open, in a helpless smile.

What the fuck was happening here?

Rémy turned to look at Jeff as if sizing him up. "That's not it," he said.

"No this is guys who like, like, who like... watching their wives with other guys," Ethan protested.

The waiter returned, looking even more annoyed than on his previous trip. He set the glasses down and glared at each of them individually, conveying his annoyance at having to make a separate trip for the sangria, before spinning and marching off to retrieve it.

"Please, please, please, please," Ethan pleaded, holding his hands together. "*Please* tell me you want me to boink your wife."

Rémy laughed. "And what if Natasha does not want you to... *qu'est ce que c'est?* 'Boink?' You sound like these farm animals, *putain*." Rémy grinned at her. "I, on the other hand, am a French gentleman. If your husband wants to watch me make love to you in a sophisticated manner, then you should come to me. Rémy."

"Lord, here we go," Ethan groaned.

"Rémy," Dan hissed, shaking his head. He looked at Natasha. "Sorry," he mouthed.

"All I am saying, is if you want to have a dirty American with no skills do something that sounds like a pig fucking, you go to Ethan. If you like more sophistication, you go to a French man."

The waiter set the sangria down with suspicious eyes and Dan

thanked him, mumbling, staring at the end of the table where this conversation was taking place.

Even though Tasha was, actually, scandalized, she was leaning calmly on her elbow and projecting a cool, collected version of herself that even she did not really believe in. She looked at Jeff, who seemed to be enjoying himself. There was something very erotic in this pause, this not knowing.

"Well?" Dan said, after Kris cleared his throat and poured all the drinks. "What... is it? Is that *true*?"

Tasha was as surprised as anyone to feel herself smile, push her empty sangria glass toward Rémy, who was pouring again, and say:

"Would you *like* it to be true?"

She gave Jeff another look, feeling a stab of fear - she had gone too far. But he looked... intrigued.

She sounded like Mrs. Robinson.

And worse than that, she didn't *care*.

Ethan slammed his hand on the table. "Yes!" he shouted. "*I* want it to be true. Me! I do."

Tasha moved a finger around the rim of her sangria glass. Well, good work, she thought. She didn't really know how to get out of this one. It was fun, and all, but in the end - it was just a game. And in her experience, it wasn't the best idea to take a game like this too far. Young guys tended to get pissy about it, and then almost violent.

"I, too, would like this to be true, Natasha," Rémy said earnestly.

Tasha laughed noncommittally, her voice trailing off in an expression of disbelief that sounded like, ehhhh, as she sipped her sangria and looked out at the water.

Dan leaned his head over, blinking. "So...?"

Tasha looked at Jeff, and her heart plunged to some strange place it

had never traveled before. It felt molten, and an energy she was wholly unaccustomed to was pouring through her veins. "Well, honey?" she asked him.

"Hotwife," Jeff said, after a simmering pause.

Tasha was utterly confused.

Jeff turned to Rémy. "The word is *hotwife*."

Rémy narrowed his eyes. "Hot wife?" he asked.

Ethan snapped his fingers and leaned back in his seat, rocking it. "That's it!" he said.

"You are a hot wife?" Rémy asked, making everyone laugh.

"*Hotwife*, douchebag," Ethan said. "Not: hot *wife*."

"You know you are really arrogant for someone who does not speak any language but English swinesprachen," Rémy told him, his smile challenging.

Ethan grinned. "I have a huge cock, though."

Rémy shrugged, bringing his sangria to his lips. "This is... *inutil, imbecil*, if you don't know what to do with it." He sipped his sangria.

Ethan lifted his hands to wave him away. "Never had a complaint," he said confidently.

"Why don't we ask a lady?" Rémy suggested. "Natasha?"

"Hmm?" Tasha said, entirely disarmed. Jeff was not giving off a signal of any particular kind, the vocabulary being used here was over her head, and she had a feeling they were really, really wading out too deep.

But she also felt no inclination to stop any of it. If anything, she wanted to see where it went.

Which was so... *wrong*.

She finished her sangria.

"Well?" Rémy said. "What is more important in a lover -"

"Lover," Ethan scoffed. "Okay, Romeo."

" - a big, dumb cock that a big, dumb cock like Ethan doesn't know how to use? Or skill?"

The sangria - she'd had two glasses now, because she was thirsty, and she hadn't eaten yet today - had gone to her head completely by now, enhanced by the buzz she was getting from having two guys bicker over her like this, right in front of her husband. She set the glass down and nudged it toward the center of the table for a refill. Dan, open-mouthed, stood up halfway to add more, his eyes wide.

"Thanks," she said, her voice sexier than she meant for it to be. She looked at Ethan as she spoke, dragging her drink back to her.

"They both have their charms," she heard herself say.

This made Rémy grin and take his cigarette out of his pocket. Dan's eyes shot to Kris's face, and he mouthed "Oh my God," at him.

Ethan let out a low whistle.

Kris leaned past Ethan and looked at Natasha. "Are you guys *serious?*" he said, both aghast and with a hint of excitement.

Tasha glanced at Jeff, confirmed that he was not at all disturbed by this, and then smiled. "I'm just answering Rémy's question," she chirped, her voice dripping innocence.

Ethan let out another low whistle. There was a tense moment, and Tasha felt, very suddenly, like things had spun out of control. Where could this go from here? It wasn't like there was any way to keep teasing, because she felt pretty certain that Ethan, at least, was dead serious about it.

She scanned his body: the tattoos peeking out from under his t-shirt, which pressed hard against his biceps, bulging with the muscle - and all the promises therein - of youth. If this were a real proposition, she asked herself, would she sleep with this guy? He was only like ten years older than her son for fuck's sake.

A carnal, twisted feeling was her only reply to herself: she felt her pussy throb, her mind flash a series of very sexy pictures before her eyes.

And then there was Rémy, whose masculinity emanated from the way he carried himself more than anything. She imagined he *did* have some skills, and her mind offered her some thoughts on what they might be.

"You know that the only way to figure something like this out, is to test it," Ethan declared. He shot a look at Kris, who elbowed him hard in the ribs. "What? You're the one who's always saying that shit, doc."

Heat was working its way up the back of Tasha's neck and it spilled over into her cheeks, which she was worried were aflame.

She was relieved when Jeff cleared his throat and reached across the table to take her hand. "Guys, guys, guys," he said. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves, here."

Dan's eyes went wide and he brought the sangria to his lips and chugged it. Rémy smiled.

Ethan tipped back in his chair and grinned. "Gotcha," he said. "You gotta talk about it. They gotta talk," he told the rest of the group. Then he let himself fall forward and leaned on his elbows. "Natasha, I humbly submit my request to be part of this important scientific experiment. And if you want to see the goods," he sniggered, "before making your decision, then I can happily give you a look-inside."

Rémy was amused by this, rolling himself another cigarette. "You are such a useless pig, *putain*." He licked his wrapper and sealed up the cigarette before leaning on his chair and turning to Natasha. "I also humbly submit my resume for your perusal, Natasha."

Dan was pouring himself another sangria. "I mean... if this is a real thing..." he said. He smiled at Natasha, who raised her eyebrows.

He shrugged. "I'm always for the long shots."

They all looked at Kris, who calmly poured himself a sangria.

"I am just here to party," he told them. This had a momentary chilling effect on the whole conversation, but he lifted his glass. "However, as a doctor, I think my understanding of anatomy is better than the rest of these dickheads'."

This made Natasha laugh.

"Okay, then," she said, glancing at Jeff. The heat that transmitted between them was molten, and it poured right through her. Her left eye twitched in a half-deliberate wink. "We'll... take this all into consideration." She played with her half-empty glass, tipping it side-to-side. "Meanwhile... another round?"

Ethan slammed his glass on the table and got up, snapping his fingers.

"Do not say garçon, you stupid beast," Rémy warned him, tucking a cigarette behind his ear.

Ethan shot him a look.

"Garçon!" he yelled, the grin of a self-assured jock on his way onto the field.

CHAPTER 4

They didn't say much on the way home, holding hands, strolling in the hot afternoon breeze. Tasha felt like she was on top of the world, high on life, reborn again. And hungry, sexually. Very, very hungry, in a way she hadn't been for a long time.

Jeff fumbled with the keys, a little drunk, while Tasha sniffed the air. "God," she said. "Still smells like smoke."

Jeff pushed open the squeaky door, which groaned even more miserably than in the morning. "Have to get some WD-40," he commented, as Tasha stepped into the condo and kicked her shoes away from her feet while pulling the red cover-up over her head.

"Hmm," Tasha said, turning around, her hands on the straps of her swimsuit. She truly felt high on her own *power*, at that moment. When Jeff looked at her, his mouth hanging open, she knew she had his complete attention, his mind flitting about with the movement of his eyes - from her fingers, which played with the straps, to her legs, to her breasts, then around again.

"So," she purred, pulling her thumbs down the straps so that the suit pulled away from her skin, drawing Jeff's eyes to her body as if he had never seen what was under there before. "Are you actually thinking of letting me participate in this totally legit scientific experiment?" She

pulled her suit down, and brought her hands to her breasts, playing with them.

She sensed the energy from Jeff, even if rationally, it didn't make any sense. He *was* thinking of it. Her eyes dropped to his crotch, where his burgeoning erection was fully visible, the shape of his dick outlined hard against his cargo shorts. A nice change, she thought, from the hit-or-miss humdrum of their usual sex life, which wasn't *bad*, really. Just middle-aged: a mixture of wild desires that never coincided anymore, disappointments more frequent than not.

She ran her thumbs over her nipples, already hardened into plump nubs and enjoyed the reaction from his cock, which rustled like a small animal in his shorts. Why *didn't* they do things like this more often? Why didn't she? Normally she was just too... tired? Bored? Just didn't feel like making the effort.

And yet now, with this preposterous conversation fresh in her mind, she felt... powerful, and desirable, and she wanted to milk it. It was *fun*.

"I, eh... fully support science," he mumbled, having difficulty forming the words.

"Fully support it, huh?" she said, shimmying out of her suit. "So, you wouldn't have a problem with...?" She raised her eyebrows.

Jeff's mouth fell open. He wanted to finish the sentence, she could see, but he wasn't going to.

She stepped out of her suit, and walked naked toward the patio door. Just to scare him a little, just to see what he would do. When she started out that way, it was purely a joke, but by the time she had crossed the living room to the open window, the breeze blowing the curtain inward, she actually thought she might go through with it. Step onto the patio, totally naked, sit down in a chair.

It was absurd. Reckless. But she really felt like she could do it.

"Who do you think would win?" she mused, deciding against her plan at the last minute - but only because it didn't seem like the gang was back yet. She fell gracefully onto the couch, lying on her stomach, kicking her heels up behind her. She rested her head on a pillow and looked back at Jeff.

He was attempting to get out of his clothes as he walked toward her, but his fingers were going everywhere, like he didn't know where to start. He unbuttoned a button on his shirt, then went to his shorts, then gave up and tore at his shirt again. He didn't try to answer the question, just collapsed on the edge of the couch and watched his own hands with wonderment as he ran them over Tasha's smooth bottom. He was still fighting with his clothes, impatient to get them off. Tasha laughed, and pushed up onto her hands and knees, pushing her ass back toward him and arching her back.

It was all pretty shameless, pretty sophomoric porn-grade stuff, but she didn't feel silly doing it like she usually did. "My money is on Rémy, of course," she said, enjoying the dumbstruck way her husband was staring at her. "But... Ethan has a lot of swagger."

Jeff was naked now, kicking off his shorts with childish fury. He seized her hips and pulled himself to her ass, diving right in, his tongue lapping at her slit, swimming in her juices, sliding in her excitement, and then all the way to her taint and up to her asshole, flicking nervously there, where they only went years ago when they were very drunk.

He darted into her ass, briefly, and instead of being discomfited like she usually was, she opened her mouth and smiled back at him, gasping. She had some curiosity - idle, fleeting curiosity - about assplay, and even anal sex. But it wasn't something she felt like bringing up, and she suspected she'd just be disappointed in it. If they were going to do it, they should have done it years ago, she'd always figured. Anyway, she

harbored a belief that if he tried it and liked it, but she didn't, it would be a whole thing for the rest of their marriage. Who needed that?

"You like swagger, huh?" he murmured, and she had to think for a moment about what he was referring to.

Swagger. She *did* like it. Not for a relationship: guys like Ethan were huge jerks who would be utterly useless in life. But as a fantasy? As a one-night stand? As something to lure? Yes. She liked *that*.

But these thoughts didn't make very many rounds in her head, because Jeff was moving his tongue rhythmically on her clit, and the fuel of these naughty thoughts was catching fire.

"Oh," she mewled. "Oh my, *God*, Jeff..."

As she neared her climax, he slowed his pulsing, making her drop to the excruciating craving, gaping need that precedes an orgasm by only seconds. His tongue meandered in her lips, darted into her pussy, teasing her.

And then he was gone. She howled and turned back to look at him, as he rose up on his knees, cock in hand, lining himself up with her gushing slit. She moved her hips, wanting him inside her, feeling a need with an intensity that she had thought died decades ago.

"Would you be a bad little slut for Ethan?" Jeff asked, but he didn't wait for her answer. He slammed his cock inside of her and leaned over to grab a handful of her hair. He pulled her head back, forcing her to arch her back, making her lose her orientation completely: where she was, who she was with, what she wanted. "Is this how you want Ethan to fuck you?"

She bucked against his hips, but he pulled on her hair and held her steady as she mewled and ground against him. "Baby, please," she howled.

And then Jeff, her husband of almost twenty years, fucked her hard. Three powerful thrusts was all it took to send her flying over the cliff of

her building orgasm, wailing incomprehensibly, stars scattered across the field of her vision, while Jeff let go of her hair, grabbed her hips, and pounded her. His cock was hard and his possessiveness was complete, like they hadn't been for years and years.

She collapsed on her chest and let him fuck her until he came, her mind now wandering to a fantasy that almost made her ripe again: that she was not being fucked by Jeff, but instead, by Ethan, and his supposedly huge cock.

When Jeff's seed burst, hot and sticky inside of her, she was almost worked up to another orgasm. In other times, after so many years together, she would have abandoned the attempt to come again (or even the first time; sometimes it just wasn't worth the hassle if she could just take care of it in the shower herself later).

But she was gripped by an intense desire, and so she pushed up onto her knees violently, and forced Jeff onto his knees, with her sitting on his lap. His cock pulsed inside of her, twitching out its final spasms of cum. She put her hands on his thighs and gripped them harshly, her fingernails digging into his flesh. "I'm so close," she panted, bouncing on his cock. "Just..." her voice trailed off as Jeff brought his hand around to her pussy, his fingers lost in her stretched, engorged, sloppy-wet flesh for a moment. But he found her clit, and rubbed in time with her bouncing. The wet slaps of their skin and the plunging of his cock in her cunt echoed loudly in the living room. They were drowned out, when she came, by her loud, high-pitched scream, which cut off midway, into a silent, open-mouthed, non-holler, her limbs shaking uncontrollably.

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"Jeff," Tasha said, her hands still wandering all over his body,

slipping in their shared sweat, the cum that was splashed over their thighs. They were in the bedroom now, because they had migrated there after trying to regain their composure, and ended up in a long lovemaking session that kept going on and on, as if they had just met and this was their first time. It was exhilarating.

But a common theme, as they whispered to each other, aroused each other with their dirty talk, was this idea - which now seemed semi-serious - that Tasha was going to, really going to, sleep with the next-door neighbors.

"Is this... like, is this for real? Or are we just playing around?"

Jeff pushed himself up on his elbow and played with her hair. "Tash," he said, "It's... whatever you want. Okay? Honestly."

Tasha brought a thumb to her teeth and bit her nail, squinting. "Uh..." she said. "I mean, I'm serious here," she said. "We sort of started something with those guys, and we're going to have to, you know... make a decision. One way or the other."

"Mm-hmm," he said, trailing a finger down her body, dipping his head to bite gently on her left nipple.

She swatted at his head playfully. "Jeff, I'm serious here," she said, laughing. "I really am," she repeated, more seriously.

He looked up at her. "Tasha, baby, this is... whatever you want. Seriously."

"I mean it," she protested.

"So do I."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want what you want," he said, propping a pillow up behind his head and settling on it, so he could pull her close to him. "But if you're asking... which way I hope you decide?"

"God, Jeff, honestly," she groaned. "Yes, yes, that's what I'm asking."

He kissed her temple. When he spoke, his cock twitched to life under the covers, adding credence to his words. "I'm into it, Tash. That's the honest truth. I'm hoping you'll... I don't know. Have fun. It's..." he sucked in his breath. "It's been... a fantasy of mine. For a long time. I just never really thought, you know, you would be into it, or that an opportunity would come up where like, it was even possible... so... yeah, you know? I'm into it. But it's your call, baby, in the end."

Tasha was silent.

"For a *long* time?" she said, quietly, after a while.

It sounded like danger to him, like she was about to freak out. He cursed himself: he had said the wrong thing, and now it was going to turn into a whole thing.

"Tash," he said. "It's a... like, a sexual fantasy only. Do you know what I mean? A purely... sexual thing, like, I find it hot. I don't want you to have some relationship with these guys. Or any guy. I just... it's a kink, I guess."

She turned on her side and looked up at him. "Why didn't you ever *say* anything?" she asked.

He held his hands out, palms open. "Uh... I think because I was afraid that you would say, 'what the *fuck*, Jeff?'" he suggested.

Her eyes went wide, and for a moment it looked like she would get defensive.

Then she laughed, and plopped her head down on the mattress next to him, lying face-up. "Well, yeah, Jeff. What the fuck?" she laughed. She chewed on her lip while Jeff watched her face, enjoying the glow of her face, the rekindled sexual energy in her body that had been missing for such a long time. Her eyes shifted to meet his, and she grinned devilishly. "I'm not *actually* going to sleep with a bunch of different guys on my trip to Ibiza, am I?" she asked. "That would just be..."

"Hot," Jeff said, his heart suddenly cold with an arousing fear. Jealousy was a weird drug, doing weird things to him. He had an erection just thinking about Tasha even *thinking* about doing this.

She propped herself up on her elbow and looked at him impishly, dragging a finger down his chest. "Hot, huh?" she murmured, her lips plump and wet.

"So hot," he said mindlessly, fully intoxicated and unable to think straight. He sounded like an idiot.

But his cock was, incredibly, hard again. He rolled over and melted into Tasha's body, marveling that after this entire afternoon, and all the booze, he was going back for - of all things - thirds.

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"They're back," Tasha whispered, opening her eyes. They had fallen asleep after bringing huge jugs of water and a weird juice they hadn't wanted to drink before into the bedroom, chugging them, and then *destroying* all the food in the condo, with the hunger that can only come from having sex for hours on end.

There was no need to explain who "they" were, or even that they were back: they were loudly stomping into their condo, crashing into things with the after-party glow of young males who had just had a very good time.

Tasha heard the high-pitched squeal of a younger girl, and then several feminine voices. She felt a drop in her stomach. "They brought home some girls," she said, rolling her eyes.

She was giving up, but only for a brief second. Jeff kissed her. "Listen to me, Tash," he said. "Those guys will drop whatever they're doing if you just give the word," he said. "Even some girl they picked up

in a bar."

"I *doubt* that," she countered, rolling her eyes again.

"I don't," he said. Then he leaned toward her conspiratorially. "You know what? Go. See for yourself. Go out on the porch and have a glass of wine in something skimpy. I'll bet you..." he fumbled around on the nightstand with his hand behind him, and pulled up a wad of euros, their denomination unreadable in the dim light. "Whatever this is, that at least one of those guys will head out there, ditch the hussies, and chat you up. Actually, at least two. Rémy, and that ... Ethan guy."

She rolled on her stomach and pretended to count the money. "Huh. And so... if I win, all this is mine?" she joked.

"All of it," he said solemnly.

"And if I lose?"

He propped his jaw on his hand. "I, uh... have to be honest," he said, grinning. "I don't understand which side of the bet that is."

She snorted in appreciation of the joke and rolled over, holding the money, fanning herself. "Well," she said, "I'm feeling pretty hot, anyway. So I'm going to take a shower... and then sit outside. Where it's cool." She looked at Jeff, and then laughed. "I can't believe we are even *talking* about this," she said. She wondered, again, if this was all just a game that she wasn't meant to take seriously, or as far as Jeff was *saying* she could take it. Had permission to take it.

Jeff could see her features crumpling a little bit, and he leaned over to kiss her again. "Tash," he said. "There's *nothing* you can do wrong, okay? If you just want to flirt, that's okay. If you just want to... I don't know, kiss or make out, you know, whatever. That's the point of the whole thing. It's your show."

She sat up and set the money on the side table next to her. "I just..." she gave an exasperated sigh. He knew her so well. Jeff had known

exactly where her thoughts had gone, and answered all of her questions, before she even asked them. He pushed up to kiss her knee when she pulled it up to her chin. "Just go feel it out, okay? It's your porch, your vacation. It's hot as balls in here. You want to go sit on the porch, right? So go do that. And then see what happens. Take it from there."

She laughed. "And if nothing happens?"

Jeff grinned. "Yeah, okay. Then nothing happens." He chuckled and flopped on his back.

She nudged him playfully. "You seem pretty sure of yourself," she said.

"I'm sure that my wife is one of the hottest women I've ever met in person. And I'm pretty old, but being young left an impression on me I'll never forget. And so, yeah, I'm pretty sure about what will happen. Those guys are going to go out there and start salivating all over you." He sat up, like he had heard a noise. "Wait a minute... are *you* actually worried about *that*?"

"About...?" she asked.

"That those guys will blow you off?"

She shrugged. She wasn't sure if that was what she was worried about. There was a part of her that thought it would be for the best. This was, after all, an insane idea. But there was another part of her that *wanted* it. Not so much the specific men involved, just the... *win*. Just to prove that she still had it.

Well... that and... she really did want to answer, scientifically, the question put forth by Ethan.

Jeff was flat on the mattress again, rolling his head side to side in minute increments with a smile on his lips and his eyes closed. "Trust me," he said. "I don't know what else will happen. But those guys are not about to blow you off."

It was worth investigating.

She played with the bills on the nightstand, picking them up and letting them fall, bill by bill. "Okay," she said, nervously. "For science."

The tap water, she kept forgetting, was only partially desalinated. It was undrinkable, and she accidentally used it to brush her teeth. The air was hot that she barely opened the tap for the hot water, and still was comfortable in the lukewarm result. She soaped herself up and washed off the sticky fluids that remained, still damp, from her lovemaking with Jeff.

Now *that* had been something. Even if they got nothing else from this experiment, it had at least invigorated their stale sex life. And even if she didn't know Jeff's true thoughts - and she couldn't - she could trust his solid erection. Whatever he might keep locked inside emotionally, his body couldn't lie: the idea of doing this turned him on. Like nothing had in a long time.

She debated with herself about washing her hair, but finally decided to do it. She didn't want to look "inauthentic," like she was staging the whole thing. There was something about luring those guys, and teasing them, keeping them on their toes, that appealed to her almost more than the actual thought of having sex with them.

Which she wasn't going to *actually* do, right?

She got out, toweled off with a still-damp towel that somehow, like almost everything, had sand on it. Tiny flecks clung to her skin. She glared at them, and then remembered the authenticity factor: she didn't want to look like a desperate Mrs. Robinson flinging herself at these guys. So she had sand on her skin. They were at the beach.

She walked into one of the other bedrooms in the condo, which she had turned into a makeshift closet for herself. Her clothes were scattered on the bed, some hanging in the actual wardrobe, and others strewn haphazardly in the drawers. She surveyed her wardrobe, thinking carefully

about her choices.

She hadn't put this much thought into her clothes - and making them alluring, sexually provocative - since she was in her twenties. She shuffled through some choices, feeling uneasy and displaced.

What would she be wearing, she wondered to herself, if she really had just woken up from the heat, and wanted to cool off on the porch?

This made her laugh. Knowing herself as well as she did, it would probably be some leggings with a hole in them and whatever shirt she grabbed first.

But what if she wasn't Tash, forty-two-year old mother of two? What if she was *Natasha, sexy neighbor Natasha?* The older, sexy woman next door? Mrs. Robinson?

She marched to a drawer and pulled out a pair of silky red pajama bottoms. She carted them with her on almost every trip - vacation, visiting family, business - and never, ever actually wore them. They had been a present from Jeff, almost ten years ago, and she intended to wear them all the time, but never did. In truth, they were sort of uncomfortable. They didn't work with underwear, and by themselves they sort of floated around, caressing her inner thighs and bunching up into her ass-crack.

But they did look *hot* on her.

She dug into the drawer and couldn't find the matching camisole that went with them. There was a cream-colored one that she used under blouses. She held it up. It was a little loose, and not intended as pajamas. But together, the combo would look like... sexy pajamas.

That was the kind of thing that sexy neighbor Natasha would wear to bed. With no underwear, and no bra. Totally.

She slipped them on and lamented that there was no full-length mirror in this place. She padded in to the bedroom she shared with Jeff. "Psst," she said, and he lifted his arm from over his eyes. She posed in the

door frame, hand on one hip. "What do you think of this?" she whispered.

Jeff sat up, blinking away the hall light. He said nothing, just gawked.

"Too much?" Tasha asked, doubt entering her mind again.

"No, God, Tasha, no," Jeff said. "That's... hot. It's... you look hot," he said. Then he squinted. "Are those the pajamas I gave you for Valentine's Day?"

She fingered the silky fabric and grinned at him. "Why, yes," she said. Then she scrunched up her nose. "I never wear them," she added. "Because they bunch up in bed."

Jeff stared at her for a moment. "Well, you're not... going to bed," he said. "God, those look good."

Tasha looked down at her camisole. It was pretty skimpy, sliding over her ample bosom, revealing the slight droop of her breasts that plagued her every time she thought of it. Her nipples had been stroked to hard pebbles by the silky fabric. "This top is a little -"

"Tash, it's perfect. You look perfect. Seriously. Seriously hot. Trust me," Jeff said.

Tasha leaned on the door frame, facing one side, and kicked up a heel. "Seriously?"

"Seriously," he croaked. "In fact... maybe you just need to come back to bed..." he threw the covers open.

This ignited something in Tasha. The desire to tease Jeff. It would be so easy to go back to bed, and they would probably have sex again, but this was... more appealing at the moment. And it was what he said he wanted.

She pushed away from the frame and smiled alluringly. "Too hot," she said. "I'm going out to the porch. Maybe I'll find some ice," she added. "And rub it all over my chest like this."

She mimed rubbing an ice cube over her skin, imagining the cold of a cube with such clarity that she actually felt a shiver travel through her.

"Hey," she said, suddenly. "What are you going to do?"

Jeff smiled. "Go back to bed," he chirped cheerfully. "Sleep through the whole thing."

"Mmm," Tasha said. She liked the way she felt as she stood in the doorway, looking hot, commanding Jeff's attention so utterly that she didn't have even the slightest doubt that he would definitely not be sleeping, or trying to sleep, while she went out to the porch. She drank in his salacious gaze, and then turned, feeling his eyes on her bottom, which she hoped looked as good as it had years ago, when she had last actually worn these pajamas.

High on this feeling of power, she sauntered into the kitchen, and began the difficult task of removing "ice cubes" from a plastic tray that she was sure was designed for holding eggs, but which they had repurposed for ice. She left them in a glass and took a beer with her, gave herself a quick once-over in the small mirror that was part of a wall decoration, and strode out to the porch.

The party vibe was still going strong next door, with bass-heavy music thumping through the walls, splintered occasionally by the sound of female laughter or the low tones of one of the guys' voices. Haphazard patches of lights bled into the dark outside their condo, reminding Tasha of younger times. Times when she and her girlfriends would come home with some guys, turn on lights whenever they were needed to see something, and then leave them on, no mood or ambiance attempted, no set-up, just the thrill of being young, in the presence of male energy, high from dancing and sometimes other things, and the promise of some sexual adventure hanging in the air.

The ocean breeze billowed the sheer curtain toward her, and it grazed

her skin as she passed through it. Outside, the music was muted, and their party sounded far away. The ocean crashed tamely onto the beach as background noise.

She set the glass down on the table with a crack. This seemed suddenly very silly. She lifted the beer bottle to her lips and took a long draw. Wow. Having a beer at three am.

Well, when in Rome.

The scent of cigarette smoke reached her nostrils, and with it the realization that Rémy was nearby, sending an electric current down the back of her right arm, straight to her core, where it twisted inside of her, cool and familiar: longing, lust, excitement. There was also a twist of wrongness, but instead of it making her feel bad, it felt... delicious.

She sat down, pretending not to have detected him, and stretched her legs out to the chair opposite her. She took care to stretch out as alluringly as possible, and was pleasantly surprised to find that the action came naturally to her - it was, to be cliched, like riding a bike. Even if she hadn't done anything like this for a long time, hadn't tried to attract another male and hadn't really made any effort to be "alluring" to Jeff, in a long, long time, it came back to her like it was yesterday. She knew how to cross her legs so that the line of her muscle was visible, how to push out her chest a little so that her breasts fell into pleasant curves. She reached up to pull her fingers through her wet hair, and only then remembered her new haircut. Her hair was damp, but drying. She ran her fingers through the uneven, beachy waves that were forming, and only then did she look over at the guys' porch... casually.

Rémy was seated on a chair facing her, staring at her unabashedly, smoking a cigarette. His stare was so intense, so filled with undisguised lust, that he really did startle her, so when she jumped and said, "Oh!" it seemed to her that it would seem authentic. "Rémy," she panted, clutching

her heart. Was this too theatrical? Probably. But she didn't care.

"Natasha," he purred.

Rémy's voice, his slightly-foreign vowels, curled around her body like fingers, sending a wave of gooseflesh running down her back like a small animal, igniting an ache between her legs. She felt her nipples, already a little hard, solidify even more, tightening into little balls of desire, wanting to be between the teeth of the sandy-haired Frenchman.

Oh, God, she thought.

"It's hot," she said, and then regretted it. She sounded like she was answering a question he hadn't asked. She willed herself to shut up, and not keep adding more information, like some lovestruck college girl.

I thought I'd come out for some air.

Don't say that, she seethed at herself.

Rémy, for his part, just smiled.

Her eyes went to the ice. ***Too much,*** she warned herself. Although she ***was*** feeling hot enough to want an ice cube on her chest, dripping ice water between her breasts. It was just that the heat was coming from inside, not out.

Rémy stood up, picking up his ashtray and lighter, and started to move over to the low wall between them. Tasha's stomach tightened, and her breath caught in her throat. What the hell was she going to do if he actually sat down and started putting the moves on her? He seemed like the kind of guy to waste no time. Was she... actually going to do this?

She had an urge to look behind her, into the condo, and see if Jeff was in there, hiding in the shadows. But she resisted, and the half-seconds ticked by, in slow-motion, while her chest tightened and Rémy approached.

"Fucker!" Ethan yelled loudly as he stepped onto the porch. "You told me you were out of -" Ethan stopped dead in his tracks as he took in

the scene: Rémy moving over to the wall, then Natasha on the other side of it. "Well, damn," he said. "If it isn't Natasha." He strode over to Rémy, who was sitting down, and put his head in a mock head-lock, rubbing his knuckles on Rémy's head. "I need a cigarette, you fag," he said.

Rémy had a cigarette in his mouth, and he looked at Natasha calmly as Ethan rubbed his head furiously and then released him. Then he calmly removed the cigarette from his mouth, two fingers pinched together at the tip, and blew smoke out with one eye closed and a scowl. "Do you see, Natasha? This is what you get when you have an American pig in your bed." He elbowed Ethan sharply and then reached into the pocket of his shirt - a rave-y, very European chic green shirt that made his eyes look like emeralds glinting from behind his scowling brow.

Ethan backed off, his body coiled with youthful, playful, masculine, brutish energy. He laughed, looking at Natasha, and winked. "Damn straight," he told her, holding his hands out in a come-and-get-it gesture.

Two girls tumbled out onto the porch, giggling, silly drunk or silly high, or both. Their eyes went to the guys, and then to Natasha, sizing the whole scene up with the quick, mean capacity of young girls who are still out there in the world, searching for mates. Natasha saw herself assessed by them, almost immediately, as a threat. It had the strange effect of bolstering her confidence when the one with long, silky brown hair and a pretty face narrowed her eyes and set her game face on.

"Hey, guys," she cooed. "What'cha doin' out here all by yourselves?"

A forever war of sneaky, underhanded snipes churns in the social hierarchy among women of all ages. Tasha recognized this move as one such foray, saw the intentions of this young girl on her face. Tasha had been assessed as a potential threat to her status, and now she was going to show Tasha who was top dog. She was young, with long, flowing hair, and *she* was going to snap Rémy and Ethan's heads around instantly.

Except... that wasn't what happened. There was a long beat - not eternally long, not even more than two seconds, but a whole lifetime in girl-battle time - in which Rémy and Ethan did *not* turn around. Rémy blew smoke in an annoyed stream without taking his eyes off Natasha, and Ethan grinned, winked again, and lingered for a moment on Tasha's legs.

The girls couldn't see all this, but they *knew* it. Tasha felt the irritation ripple through them, it gave off a seismic disturbance. Tasha smiled to herself and gave her hair a little toss - a little fuck-you-back at the brown-haired girl - as she lifted her beer. Ethan turned around - vigorously, the way he did everything. "Laaaadies," he crowed.

Rémy, still looking at Natasha, made a face of disagreement, lifting his eyebrows and pursing his lips. Tasha could not actually believe herself as she bit into her lower lip and smiled. A brief gesture, but one that Rémy read loudly and clearly, exactly the way she meant it.

Sexually.

There was a certain, delectable power that came with not really caring about drawing these guys to her. She could see that it was working, she could see what she possessed. Sure, these girls were younger, but that was what made them ordinary: picking up dumb, hot chicks in Ibiza was no trick, and these guys were all attractive, so it was even less of one for them.

But she, Natasha, an older, married woman, was something else. She was a challenge, something they had never done before.

As soon as this realization came to her, it started going to her head, exactly the way they always say that power does.

Ethan hooked a chair with his foot and plopped into it. "Come on, you little French bitch, give me one of your special cigarettes," he said to Rémy.

The girls came spilling onto the porch, laughing, tossing their hair,

making desperate attempts to draw the attention back to them. "*Special* cigarettes?" the blond, a wispy, almost anorexic waif with smeared mascara under her eyes crowded, in a sing-song Valley girl accent.

Rémy was still looking at Natasha. He had, in his clever French way, rolled a cigarette in the middle of all of this, and he held it up and wet the wrapper, using a skilled flick of his tongue, clearly designed to send a message to Natasha. "*All* of my cigarettes," he said calmly, without taking his eyes off Natasha, "are very special."

Had this message been delivered by anyone but Rémy, Natasha probably would have rolled her eyes and laughed her ass off. But, perhaps making him even more appealing, Rémy had a manner that gave gravitas to ham-fisted lines like that one.

A manner that went straight through her like booze, and then throbbed between her legs.

Rémy flipped the cigarette up vertically, still focused on Natasha, who was bravely looking back with a sexy smile at him, one that she could feel on her face but scarcely believe. Ethan snatched it out of his hand and sniffed it. "I have something special for you, too, Natasha," he said, turning to her. "But it's a *cigar*."

Rémy put another cigarette in between his lips and leaned back to fire up, grinning, as the hapless girls seized Ethan's special cigarette and began being very loud and full of motion, trying to pry the guys' attention away from Natasha.

She watched the scene for a moment, and then, acting on an impulse that was only partially conscious, she unfolded her legs, stood up, and sexily stalked over to the low wall. Then she leaned on it on her elbows, aware that her camisole would dip low, that her breasts would hang and almost press themselves out of the shirt, but not quite: the creamy silk would graze her nipples and *almost* offer Rémy a full view. The red shorts

would ride up high on her thighs. She bent one knee so that her hips twisted provocatively. Rémy blew smoke out of the side of his mouth in disbelief after holding his breath a moment. Ethan was holding the brown-haired girl by the waist, but he was watching Tasha, too.

She reached for Rémy's cigarette, without asking, and drew his hand from his lips and toward her without saying a word. She looked at the cigarette, and now that it was so close to her lips, she could smell that it was more hash than tobacco.

She had never been a smoker, but she'd had her fair share of drags, especially when she was in Europe, where it somehow didn't seem like smoking.

Anyway, that wasn't why she was doing this. She brought the cigarette to her lips and took a long drag, drawing on a skill she had taught herself out of boredom on a ferry ride to Ibiza almost twenty years before. She let the smoke cool in her mouth and drift upward, until she sucked it, skillfully, into her nose.

Then she handed the cigarette back to Rémy. "Thanks," she said, smiling. "That *is* a very special cigarette." She stood up, planning to walk out on a winner of a line, leaving them hanging on for more, giving herself a few moments to figure out what the fuck she was doing, but Rémy reached out and snatched her arm, closing his fingers gently around her wrist after his lightning-quick move. "Oh, but you can stay, can't you Natasha? Just a little bit longer? Have a... beer? With us."

He moved his hand as he spoke, until her own was suspended in his, like out of the pages of some Victorian novel. He brought it to his lips, and gently kissed the back of her hand.

It seemed so natural, so impossible to avoid, as Tasha lifted her hips and swung onto the wall, planting her legs on the other side - on *their* side. She stayed seated on the dividing wall, but Rémy seemed to have no

intention beyond getting her that far. He held up a finger. "I return with your beer," he told her.

The girls were glaring daggers at Natasha, who gave her hair another shake and smiled at them. "Hello," she said cheerfully. "I'm Natasha."

The girls looked snarly, but they gamely waved. "Chrissy," the brown-haired one said.

"Avery," the other offered coolly.

They smiled, but their eyes betrayed their annoyance, born entirely of the undeniable fact that Natasha was more interesting to Ethan and Rémy than they were.

"You here with your kids?" Chrissie asked, in a saccharine and venomous tone that only a twenty-something could muster. Ethan's eyes shifted to Tasha. He was obviously titillated by the potential cat fight, interested in what Natasha would do.

Natasha tilted her chin a little and smiled, wondering at the same time where this persona came from. Girls like Chrissie and Avery usually intimidated her a little, if only because they had a weapon that she could not possibly hope to deploy: youth.

But now, she felt like youth was actually a useless tool in whatever it was - *whatever it was* - that was happening here. "Nope," she said casually, pleased that this made Ethan grin, pleased that she was projecting her own self-assurance. She was fucking mopping the floor with these two girls. And it felt... awesome. In a dirty, wrong, adolescent way.

Rémy appeared with two beers, opened, one with a paper napkin wrapped around it. Dan poked his head out of the door behind him and his eyes went wide. "It is, it's Natasha," she heard him say, as he popped back in.

Rémy handed her the beer with the napkin, which was already damp

from the condensation. She appraised it, smiling. "Classy," she said, of the napkin, clinking her bottle against Rémy's. "*Salut.*"

And then, not fully able to believe herself, she lifted the beer to her lips, leaned one hand on the wall to steady herself, and lifted her right leg to cross it over her left.

Knowing full well that she was basically pulling a Sharon Stone. Doing it slowly, so she could see for herself whether Rémy and Ethan's eyes were drawn to the brief peek at her pussy.

They were.

*

Jeff was breathing so hard in the darkness of the condo, leaning against the wall in the corridor, that he was unsure if he was really as out-of-sight as he wanted to be. Surely they could hear him panting over here, probably even hear the loud thumping of his heart inside his ribcage.

He watched his wife as she climbed onto the wall, drawn there by Rémy's hand and his lips on the back of it. When she crossed her legs and offered the guys a peek at what was between them, his chest felt like a large man began stepping on it, slowly, adding more weight until he would be crushed. His cock must have been where all the blood headed, because it throbbed, fully erect, with such intensity that it almost hurt.

He couldn't hear what they were talking about, just the low rumble of their voices. Tasha was really laying it on thick, and even though he had asked her to do it, and he *wanted* her to do it, there was something terrifying about the way she was doing it. So well. So easily. Tossing her hair, laughing, leaning close to Rémy to tell him something that made him smile. They started sharing a cigarette, and he could smell that it was a

little more than a cigarette.

She was out there a long time. Another beer was brought to her, she uncrossed her legs and then crossed them again, making Dan, who had brought her the beer, go stiff with surprise (and probably something else). How long was she there, just laughing and talking? It seemed like hours and only seconds, and Jeff's pulse was racing, his blood thick, his heart kicking him in the chest.

When Natasha lifted her leg and placed it into Rémy's waiting hands, and the Frenchman started kneading her pretty foot, massaging it near his chest, Jeff had a moment of feeling like he might pass out. Was he awake? Was this really happening?

Natasha switched feet, and Rémy massaged her foot, passing the cigarette between them. His mouth was open, and he felt like a beast, breathing heavily and spying on a scene that shouldn't have been erotic to him, but which had him tied in knots. He squeezed his eyes for a moment when a droplet of sweat rolled into them, wishing silently that Tasha might take it just a little bit further... hoping fervently that she would not. Praying that she would. His chest was bloated with a liquid-cold pain as he watched, transfixed.

The music got louder, and the guys implored Tasha to come over. She leaned her head back, pushing her breasts out, the shape of her hard nipples visible even from where Jeff was standing in the dark. The curtain billowed inward, blocking Jeff's view, as he heard Tasha say, in a sultry voice, "Not tonight."

The curtain moved; a glimpse of the scene transmitted to Jeff's cornea, and burned into his brain for all time: Tasha's foot had wandered to Rémy's crotch. He squinted, and the curtain billowed with a fresh breeze, cutting him off from seeing if she was moving her foot, if she had curled her toes around the shape of his cock the way she used to do with

him, so long ago.

"Tomorrow," he heard Tasha say, like a promise.

And then her legs were swinging over the wall, long and bare, only a narrow strip of red blocking her slit from full view. A groan of disappointment from the guys, someone called her name.

But Tasha was entering the condo, smiling. She had a secretive smile on her face, and for a moment she did not seem to know that Jeff was there, in the shadows.

She seemed, in fact, to be so lost in the thoughts that had made that smile surface on her lips, that she wasn't even thinking of Jeff.

When he stepped into the rectangles of light pouring in from outside, she even jumped a little.

He had no idea what he looked like. Strange, maddened, probably. It wasn't his best look; he didn't feel in control of the expression on his face, or the venom and arousal that coursed through his blood.

Tasha stepped toward him and drew a finger down his chest, playful and in command. "Well?" she said, huskily.

Jeff was disarmed completely. The woman he had suggested this all to - Tasha, his wife - seemed to have been replaced by someone else. Someone bolder, someone he didn't know very well. He hadn't expected that, truly he hadn't - maybe he hadn't even been bold enough to imagine it, or fantasize about it. This woman - Natasha - was a little frightening.

Her hand moved to his cock, and she smiled when she found it, but her smile was the kind of satisfied grin that comes from finding exactly what you expected, and wanted, and knowing exactly what you are going to do with it.

"Did you... just... put your foot on that guy's dick?" he huffed. It wasn't elegant, and he sounded like a predatory creep, but he couldn't stop himself or think of anything else to say.

Tasha moved closer to him, closing her fingers around his cock through his boxers. "I think," she purred, "that Rémy's cigarette had something in it."

"Oh... yeah...?" Jeff murmured, his voice trailing off, so that he barely finished the word "yeah." Tasha was sliding down to the floor, her eyes burning into his, a queer grin on her face as she got on her knees. Her fingers curled around the elastic of his boxers and pulled, freeing his cock, which she didn't reach for with her fingers.

Her eyes were on his dick, and her tongue flicked out, swiping all-too-briefly at the crown. Her breath was warm and moist on his cock, rolling over the bulb and seeping along his shaft. As she spoke, waves of this heat caressed him, and his dick bounced in the air, out of his control. "I think Rémy has a little bit of a foot fetish," she said, smiling, looking at his cock.

"Did you...?" he breathed, barely able to expel the air to form the words. His chest was tight, his balls screaming. He felt like he might come if Tasha just touched him.

Her eyes snapped up to meet his, and she paused there, grinning, before opening her mouth and taking him in. Whatever he had asked, whatever he was waiting for her to say, disappeared as her hot, wet mouth closed over his crown, and her tongue sneakily lapped at the ridge of his crown.

Her hand at last grasped his shaft and squeezed, and she held him still while she took a breath, gliding her tongue over his hole, dipping into the seeping precum and tucking it back between her lips to taste it.

Jeff shuddered. Tasha squeezed his cock and ran her tongue along her own upper lip, still looking at him. Then her eyes slid away to her left, her head following, turning slowly, looking out at the porch. She was grinning when she pivoted back to him, and moved his dick over her lower lip.

"These guys are really competitive," she said, grinning. Her tongue flicked at his cock. "They're *really* determined to have a contest..." Tasha closed her mouth around his cock and moved her closed lips slowly down Jeff's shaft, the heated moisture and quivering, slippery movements of her tongue engulfing him to mid-shaft. He groaned, mostly because he felt like he was going to come if she went any further, just like that. It was something Tasha might not be expecting because he hadn't fired off like that in what seemed like decades. "Tasha," he whispered.

She released him, tantalizingly, slowly, and moved his cock over her lips again. "They want a 'real woman' to judge their skills, I guess," she said.

A pause, while Jeff's mind went careening through the universe of porn and filthy sex, all of it that he had ever seen or imagined. "And... uh... you said... what did you... say... to that..?" he stammered.

Tasha's tongue turned a neat, tiny circle around his seeping hole, and she smiled. "I *implied*," she murmured, "that I was up to the task." Her eyes fluttered. "But of course, only if *you* are."

"Tasha, are you serious?" he groaned.

Tasha said nothing, just stared up at him with her scorching eyes, and opened her mouth to take his cock inside slowly, all the way to the base. She started to suck him off, moving her head rhythmically, putting more effort into it than she had, as far as he remembered, ever done in all their marriage.

"Tash, Tash...a..." he mumbled, his stomach tightening and his balls boiling with cum. Tasha did not relent, she only kept going, sucking hard, seemingly trying to suck the essence from his shaft. "I'm going to... I..." he seized her hair and tried to pull her gently away from him, but Tasha resisted, and it was too late anyway, his seed was erupting, squirting at the back of her throat.

"Oh, God, oh, fuck," he groaned, and then groaned again as another squirt burst into her mouth, still clamped around his dick.

Tasha moved slowly off his shaft, her tongue circling, moving through the slippery mixture of his semen and her saliva, pulling every last drop with her until she released him with a wet pop.

The woman who rose on her knees, his dick in her hand again, and looked at him with a sultry grin, was not the same Tasha he had arrived in Ibiza with. This was an empowered creature, the knowledge of her prowess glinting in her eyes.

She swiped a glob of cum from her lower lip with her free left finger and squeezed his cock, making him shudder again.

He wanted to ask her what had gotten into her, but he sat there with his mouth open instead. He didn't need that question answered: in his chest he could feel that he already knew. It was a cold, thrilling, terrifying realization: Tasha had just come into her sexual powers, become completely aware of them, fully grasped the understanding of the fact that she could make him - and almost any man - do exactly what she wanted.

And more importantly, more dangerously - she wanted to exercise that power.

"I guess your answer is yes?" she said, in a surly, sexy tone.

He nodded, somewhat befuddled. These interactions were outside of their usual relationship: Tasha never took charge like this. Sure, she play-acted sometimes, but she always did it in a light-hearted, non-committed way, giggling and half-mocking it.

She tipped her head back and to the side, her hair falling alluringly, messily over one cheek. She seemed to be weighing the honesty of his answer.

And then, having weighed it, with Jeff still under her spell, she reached forward and pushed him roughly backward, then to the side. She

climbed onto the couch, pushing his body to the side so that he was lying down. She was almost aggressive as she climbed onto his chest. She had shimmied out of her shorts, and they fell from her ankles as she straddled him over his chest.

She peeled her camisole off and tossed it on the floor. Jeff was frozen, lost in this dance that they hadn't ever danced before.

Tasha put her knees on his shoulders, first the left, then the right, and her weight crushed him into the hard cushions. Her pussy, smooth and pale, glistening in the flowering pink slit that seemed to erupt from her outer lips as if something had burst, gave off the sweet tangy scent of her sex. She was several inches from his mouth, and he was trapped by her full body weight, able only to lift his forearms and feel for her legs with his hands. He could only caress the backs of her thighs.

Looking down at him, her eyes burning with her newfound superiority, she very slowly, very teasingly, lowered her pussy onto his face. He reached for her as she came to him, his tongue stretching to lap at the dripping juices that oozed from her cunt. She settled onto his face, the hot, fleshy mess of her pussy spreading over his mouth and chin.

He moved his tongue against the weight of her, seeking out her clit, lost in the heavy, face-crushing mass of her pussy. She rocked her hips against him, until her clit was worked against him the way she wanted. She seized his head and pulled his hair, almost glaring as she looked down at him. "Show me how enthusiastic you are," she ordered him.

He went to work, obediently and gratefully, his mind again spinning off into a place of no thought at all. Incredibly, he could feel his just-emptied cock pulsing back to life. His jaw ached as he worked his tongue against Tasha's clit, her juices pouring into his mouth, her scent enveloping him, the roots of his hair screaming in pain as she ground herself against him.

She mewled, and then moaned, and then tossed her head back. Her tits hovered and bounced in the crescent of his vision not blocked by the scant landing strip leading to her slit, the rise of her mound, the smooth curve of her slightly rounded belly. "Oh, yeah," she moaned. Her thighs trembled and squeezed his head, and he couldn't breathe for the final minute that she rocked against his face and smothered him with her cunt. He closed his eyes, lost in her pussy, and concentrated on the pulsing of his tongue against her swollen clit, swallowing her juices, lost.

"Yes, yes, oh fuck, yes, that's right, good boy, just like that!" Tasha screamed, and he felt her clit quiver violently as juices squeezed from her like a crushed fruit, pouring down his chin and his cheeks. His eyes flew open just in time for him to see that her head was turned toward the patio.

And that she was looking at something - someone - an unflinching smile on her lips.

CHAPTER 5

He woke up to a bright sun and an impossible heat that had caused him to soak the sheets. Tasha wasn't in bed. He squinted at the fuzzy red letters on the alarm clock - a quaint object from another era - but it read 05:36, which couldn't be right. He sat up, almost panting from the strenuous dream he had been having: pure sex, enough to give him a hard-on, and all of it starring *Natasha*, the woman who had replaced his wife.

"Tash?" he called out.

Panic plunged through him. He was disoriented for a moment, and nightmarish scenarios poured into his half-sleeping brain: Tasha was over there now, riding them relentlessly, and she was never coming back.

"Tasha?" he called out, moving swiftly into the living room, scanning the kitchen. Empty. Tasha was *not* there.

What now? He looked at the door, imagined himself going through it, banging on the neighbors' door, kicking it down, seeing the orgy before his eyes, Natasha laughing mirthlessly at him as she bounced on Ethan's pelvis.

He saw it, but he wasn't going to do that.

It was ten am. His heart was pounding. He was maybe too old for this kind of cardiac exertion.

His eyes fell on Tasha's handwriting, scrawled on a scrap of a useless

map she had torn to pieces for being useless.

At beach sleepyhead

xoxoxo T

His head spun. For a moment, he was overcome by the very real idea that it had all been a dream. That would make the most sense, really. The whole sequence had been a dream.

This was both disappointing and somewhat a relief. The uncomfortable sensation in his gut shifted, and his nerves calmed. Even if he had spearheaded all of this - at least, he felt like he had - there was an element of it that left him unsettled and horribly, psychically, unmoored.

He started the laborious process of making coffee, which Tasha had not done. He made himself a cup and took it out to the porch.

But on his way out, his heart stopped - actually stopped - as the curtain billowed inward along with a blast of hot, humid air.

An empty beer bottle was standing upright on the wall, where Tasha had left it. The whole early morning scene reconstituted itself before his eyes, flashing in a montage of foot massages and blowjobs and caresses, all made real by the undeniable evidence that it had all happened. For real.

He was already walking to the porch, and so he put one foot in front of the other, making himself retain his composure. The patio next door was empty, the door open, lights still on, music faintly murmuring from somewhere inside.

He stared at his coffee unhappily. Fuck. What the hell was he doing?

He stood up and scanned the beach, but only a narrow slice of it was visible, and Tasha was probably swimming - deeper in the water than she had promised she wouldn't go. He retreated to the porch and sat in the silence, his gut twisting.

He wasn't sure how much time passed by, but eventually he heard some rustling from the condo next door, and when he turned around, Rémy was in the doorway, shirtless, a loose pair of shorts clinging to his lean frame as he stretched by hanging on to the sliding door frame and leaned out, enviably young and flexible. He yawned loudly and looked over at Jeff. "Bonjour, Monsieur," he said, in an amicable tone. He let go of the frame and skipped out, fishing a cigarette from his shorts. "And where is the lovely Natasha?"

Jeff lifted his coffee "cup" and pointed with it in the general direction of the beach. "Swimming, my guess," he said.

He couldn't tell if Rémy was sizing up the situation, but it appeared not. And why would he be? The guy was French. This kind of thing probably happened to him all the time.

Rémy plopped in a chair and groaned a little, lighting his cigarette. He looked at Jeff's coffee and jerked his head at it, pointing his cigarette at the same time. "Monsieur Jeff," he said, half-mockingly. "This coffee, it's any good?"

"Not really," Jeff said.

Rémy scowled, squinting into the sun. "The Spanish are really shit," he declared, and appeared ready to leave it at that. He finished his cigarette - more quickly than Jeff would have thought possible, and flicked it neatly over the edge. He stood up, stretched again. "I need some coffee," he told Jeff. And then, grinning, he added, "I have a big night tonight."

Jeff had no idea what to say to that: somewhere in his foggy memory of last evening he had a recollection of Tasha mentioning a club, but it was hazy, making its way through the syrupy, sexy clutter of his mind.

"You coming, too? To this club with us?" Rémy asked, oozing his indifference to the answer. But he kept his eyes on Jeff, so Jeff felt compelled to say something.

"We'll see," he said, affecting his own indifference, feeling arousal unfurl his dick against his thigh.

Rémy smiled, an almost disbelieving smile, and lifted a hand in a gesture of farewell as he turned and plodded back into his condo.

*

Natasha did not come back for hours. Jeff tried to work: he logged on, he stared at the screen, he managed to begin a letter he needed to send out to his students and write two test questions. But mostly he stared, his mind full of the lingering scent of sex that permeated the entire condo, his eyes blinded by the froth of visual memories of the night before that paraded through his field of vision.

Finally, he trudged down to the beach and scanned it: no Natasha.

Another knife of jealousy plunged through him, and his blood boiled. He trudged back to the condo, enjoying and hating the feeling, and paced. Tasha hadn't wanted to bother with her phone here, so he had no way of contacting her. This hadn't mattered before the guys next door arrived: they never altered their day or their plans.

She returned at five or so, her red cover-up on, but unbuttoned to her sternum. Shopping bags hung from both of her arms. The door groaned loudly and she kicked it closed to hurry it along. "Hi," she cooed, sexily, and dropped all but two of the bags to walk over to him.

Even Tasha's walk was different, he noted, with a mixture of arousal and fear. She *stalked* over to him, smiling. "*I* went shopping," she said, letting one bag swing on her extended thumb, moving before his eyes.

"Shopping," he repeated. He wasn't able to come up with anything else.

"I got *you*," she said, pulling something out her bag, letting the other

fall to the floor as well. She shook out a blue shirt, very trendy, shining with threads of an oil-stain colored material and held it up. "A cool shirt. And I got me..."

She bent over and pulled something out the bag, and held it up. It was an incomprehensible tangle of straps and see-through black mesh, black shiny material and more straps, until she sorted it out and held it against her body. "A hot dress."

"A hot... dress..." Jeff said. He reached for the flimsy fabric - which there was very little of - and fingered it.

Tasha laughed and smacked him gently and playfully with the empty paper bag. "Do you have a head injury or something?" she laughed.

"Head injury..." he said.

"Stop just repeating everything I say," she told him.

"What... is, uh... this for?" he asked.

He knew the answer. At least he thought he did; he hoped he did. But he wanted her to say it, wanted to hear from her own lips that his fantasy was becoming a reality.

A reality, and a light nightmare. Or maybe not a nightmare, but a perversion of what he had expected, if it could be said he was really expecting anything like this at all. He just had never pegged Tasha for being so... assertive.

She was usually still indecisive about her dinner choice, hours after she'd eaten it.

Tasha - this new, wild woman, Natasha - rolled her eyes. "Do you want to see it or not?"

Jeff hesitated. But his mind was not very strong at this point, and so the hesitation was minor and brief. He leaned back on the couch and spread his arms out. "I do, actually," he said. "I am very curious about how it... works."

Tasha smiled.

And then, instead of stalking into the bedroom as Tasha would have, *Natasha* held the dress in one hand, and unbuttoned her red cover up. In a series of complex moves that were above Jeff's stripping pay grade, she removed her cover-up, and her suit, all while switching the few scraps of her "dress" from hand to hand.

Naked, she smiled down at him, her eyes registering the erection tenting his shorts. Then she slipped the dress over her head, and wriggled, her breasts swaying delightfully, until the material expanded to cover her from... well, upper thigh, to some of her torso.

"Oh," he said, as she straightened her straps out, until she was framed in a tight, flimsy gauze of black that dipped low between her breasts like her swimsuit, with the elaborate straps behind her and no longer visible from the front.

He *had been* about to say, "That's your mosque outfit," but the joke died in the back of his dry throat, and he just emitted a sticky cackle and stared at her with his mouth hanging open.

Natasha tipped her chin and looked down at him. On her face was an expression that thrilled him, and also terrified him: a smug expression of self-assuredness. Tasha - his wife of almost two decades - would never have looked like this. But Natasha, sexy-neighbor-next-door, the older woman these young bucks were going to try and lure into bed, knew her powers, and she knew exactly how immense and all-encompassing they were.

His heart felt cold and beat erratically.

"I got new shoes, too," she said.

And without issuing an apology for spending the money, as Tasha would have, repeatedly, until it became annoying, *this* woman turned on her heel and trounced contentedly into the bathroom.

From behind the closed door, she called out:

"Try your shirt on. There's still time to take it back if it doesn't fit."

Jeff held up the bundle of fabric in his hand. "Sure," he said.

But he was just saying a word that meant nothing to him, holding an object that he understood even less.

The shower turned on.

CHAPTER 6

"So how do you usually do this, man?" Ethan shouted over the wind that was tunneling through the open windows of the ratty taxi they had piled into. The driver, like all taxi drivers in Europe, seemed unhindered by the laws of physics or a fear of death, and they were careening over the winding roads between towns in the barren inner-island area.

Jeff's eyes, and mind, were on the vehicle in front of them, also driving dangerously, into which Natasha had climbed with Rémy and Dan. Kris was seated in the front seat of this vehicle, trying to chat with the cabbie in Spanish, which he was mutilating badly in a Speedy Gonzalez-esque accent.

Jeff was holding on to the oh-shit handle, squinting uncomfortably. He was wildly, insanely uncomfortable. His only coherent thoughts were imaginings, picturing Rémy's smooth voice close to his wife's ear, his hands moving up her thigh and seeking out her bare pussy beneath the scrap of fabric she was calling a dress.

The image of Tasha, standing in the living room, flashing her bare slit for him seconds before they walked out the door and to the neighbors' place, fogged up his vision like the cold does to glasses when you step outside.

"This?" he said, vaguely.

"Yeah man," Ethan shouted, his voice consumed by the wind and the motor. "**This**. You know, your wife. Do you guys like, set it up so you're hiding in a closet or some shit? Or what?"

Jeff squinted. He wasn't about to tell this guy that this was a new game to them, or that he still wasn't convinced it was really happening. How, indeed? But Jeff was a smooth-talking guy. "We just kinda roll with it, man," he said.

Assuredly.

Ethan grinned back at him. "Man, this is fucking craaaaaazy!" he hollered. "But respect, dude, seriously." He shook his head. "I heard about this shit," he began, and turned his head toward the window, still talking, and Jeff didn't hear what he said.

They were careening - quite literally - down the roads and to the side of the island where Jeff knew all the clubs were, but he was turned around and didn't recognize anything. He wondered what he looked like, this old dude, closing in on fifty, clinging to the handle in a run-down taxi in Ibiza, taking his wife to a club with some twenty-something hornballs he was hoping would fuck her in front of him.

He laughed under his breath.

Ethan looked at him quizzically.

"Life is weird," he said, but low enough that Ethan didn't hear.

He didn't really care. Ethan smacked Kris on the shoulder and leaned forward to say something in his ear, which made Kris cast an eye to the back seat in disbelief.

Life **was** weird, Jeff thought, as his own eyes settled on the car in front of them, and his mind on the fantasy of what was happening in that cab ahead of them. It was too far ahead of them on the road to be able to make out what was happening; he could barely make out their heads, barely see if there were as many upright as he should expect.

Or was Tasha, aka Natasha, bent over in someone's lap?

The rest of the ride was like that. Long, twisting, nauseating, a montage of images and thoughts that were strung together into nonsense thoughts, with "sex" their only theme.

*

When their cab arrived at the club, Tasha was standing with an arm on Dan's, bent at the waist, doing something with her shoe - a new, very high, spiky heel with straps that mimicked the straps of her dress.

The three of them were laughing and joking, and if Jeff hadn't been seeking his wife with such intensity, he might have just seen another grouping of very young people. Tasha fit right in, with her short, glitzy dress - multicolored sparkles were somehow woven into the black, visible only under bright light - her hair spilling carelessly over her face, her heels, her entourage of young men.

He felt obscenely out of place as they exited their own cab and strolled up to their "friends." He was, not just very technically but very easily, old enough to be the father of any of these men. Tasha lifted her head as they approached, laughing, still hanging on Dan's arm, and still fiddling with something on her shoe. Her lipstick, bright orange-red, gave her a strange allure: she didn't really look younger, or even like she was trying to. She looked like a very hot woman, somewhere in that late thirties-early forties age range, who was simply cool enough to be in a crowd like this.

Dan gave Jeff a wary look as he approached, appearing to be sizing up Jeff's reaction to his wife clinging to his forearm for support.

"Okay," Tasha said, to all of them and no one in particular. "I think it's fixed, disaster avoided. Hey, honey."

Jeff approached her to give her a kiss, but she held up her finger in front of her lips.

"Wait," she said. "I just want to get into the place with my lipstick intact."

She smiled again, linking her arm in Jeff's - without letting go of Dan. "After that," she murmured, close to Jeff's ear, "anything goes."

She didn't elaborate on this. Jeff was left to wonder how serious she was about that statement, what it meant, how to interpret it, while the group moved forward, melting into a very disorganized, bulging line of very young people, most of whom were under the influence of some substance or another.

It was a pretty long wait, but the line itself was like a bar or a club, with everyone in an impossibly high mood and mingling with each other. At one point, Jeff managed to get Tasha to himself, pulling her close and apart from the gang, who had broken into several clusters to talk to other people in line.

"So?" he asked her, nuzzling her ear. "How was the ride?"

Tasha grinned, looking off in another direction. Her hair picked up in the wind and tickled his neck. He had a nice view of the slope of her breasts, the plunge of her neckline, the tanned and oiled skin that glowed with the kiss of the afternoon sun, her dress barely clinging to it.

She leaned a little bit closer to him, but gave no reply, except to move her hand over the front of his pants, grazing his cock. When she discovered that it was twitching to life, she smiled again. "It was... pretty tight in the back," she told him. His cock throbbed. Tasha grinned.

How to explain to Tasha that he needed a little bit more than that? He didn't want to be groveling for details, but if there was something else that took place, he wanted to hear about it. Had her hand wandered over Dan's thigh? Was he really supposed to believe that Rémy had sat with his hands

primly in his lap the whole way there?

As if Rémy, who was in an animated discussion in French with a very tall black man, could read his mind, he looked over at Jeff and Tasha, mid-sentence. He smiled. It was the smile of a man who knew something Jeff didn't. Jeff dropped his eyes to take in Tasha's face, saw the curl of her mouth, the shift of her jaw. His cock twitched against her back.

Tasha leaned back on him a little and turned her head up toward him, grinning. "You want to know if Rémy was putting the moves on me," she said. Her eyelashes blinked slowly, and her mouth moved a little, forming an indecipherable expression. She waited, and Jeff wondered if she knew what she was doing - carving his guts out with a surgical precision - before saying, in a low voice. "Yes. Of course he was. But I told him I'm married."

Jeff's hand had moved down her body, over her firm ass, his fingers along the hem of her very short dress. He brushed the soft skin of the back of her thigh, his gut twisting. "And? Did that deter him?" he breathed into her ear.

Tasha's lips pursed for another excruciating pause. "Of course not," she said, at last. "But I told him, no messing up my makeup. Until we get inside." She looked up at him and blinked prettily, showing off her perfectly applied mascara and bright blood-orange lips. "There's plenty you can do, though, without messing up your makeup," she added.

The line moved forward in its haphazard way at that moment, shuffling its inhabitants into new groups. Tasha had Jeff's hand for a moment as she was absorbed forward, into a fold with Rémy, Ethan, and the black gentleman that Rémy had been speaking to in French.

"Ah, it's Natasha," Rémy said, as a few other people drunkenly squeezed together and severed his connection to Tasha. "This is our sexy neighbor Natasha," Rémy declared. And then he said something in French

that made the black guy's eyes widen momentarily, before he reached for Tasha's hand and brought it to his lips.

Two girls were between Jeff, Dan and Kris, and the cluster with his wife. They turned to look behind them and began talking to, and flirting with, Dan and Kris. They may have been speaking to Jeff, but he really wouldn't have known: his eyes were trained on Tasha, who had placed a hand on Rémy's shoulder and leaned toward his ear to say something to him. On the black man, who was eating his wife alive with his eyes, a lurid grin on his big lips. And on Ethan, who was unabashedly checking out Tasha's ass.

And then another montage: flashing lights, a dim interior, the absurd, flock-like movement of hundreds of people, music so loud it hammered the brain to a pulp.

The theme? Sex.

*

They bought drinks and toured the entire, sprawling club, before settling in to a table with a booth and a view of a huge dancefloor.

Kris leaned in toward Jeff, sliding the pills across the small, sticky, and completely un-hygenic table. "Yeah, so look, I'm not supposed to say this, as a doctor," he shouted at Jeff over the music, "but this isn't going to do anything *bad* to her. It's the same stuff we used a couple nights ago. Totally good." He looked at Jeff, who must have still looked uncertain. "I'll keep an eye on her man. I'm a doctor. They've got..." he waved his hand generally in the direction of the stage. "Medics and shit. It's... not *perfectly* safe. But it's perfectly safe, you know?" He opened his hand, holding out the two small pills.

Jeff looked down at them.

This conversation had begun out of absolutely nowhere. He looked at Tasha for explanation, but she was in an animated conversation with Rémy and the black man from the line, who seemed to have latched on to the group as a permanent member. No one seemed to find this weird.

Kris yelled, "Take one, dude, it'll help you relax. You'll be flying high in like thirty minutes."

Jeff shook his head. Kris shrugged, and then, before Jeff could even think, he popped them both into his mouth and washed them down with his drink. "You babysit, then," Kris told him.

Jeff felt like he was in a movie, and the camera was zooming out, giving the whole scene a weird effect, of being displaced or in an out-of-body experience. The noise seemed to dull to something coming from another room, and get louder all at the same time. Rémy, Ethan, Dan, Tasha, and the "Algerian" were seated, in a row, like a panel, watching them from the booth where they were clustered. Their arms, and probably, beneath the table, their legs, were crossed over each other's, already looking like the tangled flesh of an orgy that was just getting started. Everyone's skin was damp and shiny.

Rémy watched Kris, took a long drink of Jeff's expression, and then turned to Tasha, smiling. Jeff's stomach twisted, but he was paralyzed, unable to stop what happened next. He was made of concrete as Tasha shrugged, opened her mouth, stuck out her tongue, and let Rémy drop a small orange tablet onto it.

The guys all cheered for this, though the sound couldn't cut through the loud music. Tasha took a drink of the bottle that Ethan offered her, and sipped it while they all watched. Then they followed suit, and Jeff sat there, staring, feeling like he was outside of his life looking in through a window.

Rémy put an arm over the back of the booth, stretching it out behind

Tasha. Glancing at Jeff, he put his lips close to Tasha's ear, moving his fingers over the smooth, damp skin of her shoulder. And then, while Jeff stared, still paralyzed, his lips brushed against Tasha's ear, moving, murmuring something to her.

And Tasha, whose black eyelashes had been resting nearly on her cheek as she looked down, grinning, lifted them, and looked right at Jeff. Her lips parted when Rémy's teeth secured a tiny sliver of her soft earlobe, and bit gently into it.

Kris clapped a hand on Jeff's shoulder. "About half an hour man," he screamed. Then he leaned over the table. "Let's go dance!" he shouted.

Ethan was looking at Jeff, a smug grin on his face. Rémy scooted out, drawing Tasha along with him, and Ethan kept staring. He leaned over toward Jeff, crooking his finger to beckon Jeff closer.

"Don't worry, man," he said. "I'll make sure you get to see a *real* man fuck your wife tonight."

And then, after his characteristic slamming of his palms on the table and a whoop that could not be heard, he pushed Dan out the other side, and they all headed out to the dance floor. Jeff turned in his seat, watching them disappear into the massive, massive crowd.

He felt pretty funny himself, and wondered briefly if he hadn't accidentally ingested something. He didn't want to dance, but he did want to keep an eye on his wife. The group was being absorbed into the mass of people - only Kris's unusual height and blond hair made it possible for him to even see where they went.

He heaved himself from the stool and moved in that direction.

*

There was probably some kind of drug in something he had ingested,

he concluded, some time later. He was standing in the middle of the huge dance floor, holding a bottle of water, adrift among ludicrously young and bouncing people, none of whom seemed to have any idea he was there.

How long had he been there? He had no idea. He had been staring, for some time, at the wall behind the main DJ, where lights played out in frantic bubbles and squares. Every now and then, a few circles of lights would turn into a pixelated distortion, in time with the music, and he could not for the life of him decide if he was seeing a hallucination, or if it was just a lighting effect.

He was still deciding, which leaned him in favor of drugs, when he was able to think that far.

Tasha and the guys were nowhere to be seen. He also wasn't sure how long that had been the status quo. He felt fine about it, in one way: a deep sense of pleasant relaxation had taken over his body.

His *mind* was still tormented by the questions that plagued him: where was Tasha now? Had she gone home with someone? Was the black man still hitting on her? Was she fucking someone in the bathroom? Was she ever coming back? And by "back," he was thinking of both the dance floor, and his marriage to her.

He had been able to follow them - and specifically Tasha - for quite a while. How long he had managed to keep her in his sights was anybody's guess. The club had become a spiraling, fractalizing time warp. It was too loud, too disjointed, too full of high people to think straight, sober or not. And Jeff definitely wasn't 100% sober, he'd definitely purchased and consumed alcoholic beverages. He just didn't know if he had been slipped something else on top of that, or if the effects he was feeling were just psychological, brought on by the presence of so many spaced-out people in one place.

They had made their way to this same, main, dance floor first, where

Tasha had declined their invitations to start dancing. She, Rémy, the black man, and Dan had clustered together against a wall and observed the mass of people in front of them.

But that hadn't lasted long. Soon Tasha had pushed past Jeff, who had been standing there awkwardly wishing he had something to do. She was absorbed into the crowd, pulling Rémy behind her by the hand.

From there, it was just a montage of scenes, frozen in the strobe lights, a blur of images that he replayed in his mind even while watching more unfold. Tasha with her head thrown back, laughing, one arm slung over Rémy's shoulder. Tasha with her back to Rémy, his hands wandering up her skirt somewhere beneath the sea of gyrating human flesh. Tasha with her mouth close to the ear of the mystery black man, Tasha grinding against Dan. Dan and Kris exchanging something over her head, both men smiling broadly, conspiring. Conspiring about Tasha? Probably.

More following through the bouncing crowds, very young faces on very young girls looking up at him strangely. A woman kissing him on the cheek as he passed, and yelling in his ear in a foreign language he could not identify, then placing an opened bottle in his hand and walking away with a sultry glance back at him. Turning to find Tasha, and her escorts, gone, swallowed up by the faceless, teeming masses.

Finding her again, sandwiched between Ethan and Rémy, arms in the air, smile bright and brilliant. Tasha dancing while they all took a break, leaning against a railing and chugging water. Ethan commenting, with a sly grin, that Jeff looked "fucked." Kris taking his pulse.

Tasha disappearing, then reappearing. Tasha dancing alone, dancing with Kris, Tasha with her arms on the shoulders of a total stranger. Ethan's pinky finger moving along Tasha's thigh while they took a break together.

And then... Tasha gone again, and Jeff standing in the center of the enormous floor, too lazy to dance, lost but somehow not entirely

distraught. He scanned the floor for Tasha again, and then, finally, decided he was best off by a railing or a wall.

He stood for a while, surveying the crowd, attempting to look relaxed. Another unit of time that he could not have guessed for all the money in the world - it could have been a minute, or an hour, or a day - passed by.

And then, just as whatever high he had acquired threatened to dissolve, fading to panic, he saw Tasha's distinctive new haircut, her broad smile, an arm, and then her face again, as she made her way through the crowd toward him.

He was relieved suddenly, even if he hadn't quite been distressed before that moment. But this was his *wife*, he thought suddenly. He had lost her in a club, with strange men, and no way to contact her.

He felt wildly out of control, and a desire to rein it all in - to go home now, before anything truly dangerous happened - wrapped around his insides and squeezed.

Only a sliver of the orange-red lipstick remained on Tasha's mouth, clinging in a crescent shape to the left of the bow of her upper lip. They were bare, as if she had removed the makeup before bed. They were puffy with the leftover swell of a kiss, or something even more. A small swipe of gray-black bled from her lower eyelashes and onto her lid, looking more like a purposefully placed shadow than the smearing of her makeup. Her hair was damp at her neck, causing her unevenly cut chestnut waves to bunch into strange, haphazard chunks. The overall effect was to make her look like a grungy model, maybe slightly past her prime. Her eyes were vacant and bright all at once, the MDMA playing its confusing mixture of effects out on her face. Her skin shone with sweat, and her cheeks were flushed.

When she saw Jeff, as she was emerging from the crowd, she didn't

seem to recognize him for moment. A scared, deer-like look flitted across her face, and then it rolled away in a wave of drug-induced bliss. She glided through the crowd toward him.

He was so focused on Tasha, so relieved to have found her, and so turned on by seeing the evidence of her having - at the very least - kissed someone, that he didn't see Rémy trailing along contentedly behind her.

"Where have you been?" she shouted, her voice playful. Her eyes were consumed by her pupils. She put her hand out to touch his arm, a strange expression taking over her face. "Your skin feels so... nice," she said, distractedly.

She looked up at him, her eyes curious. Then she laughed. "Don't look so worried!" she screamed. "I'm not that fucked-up." She grinned and shrugged. "It was a joke!"

Jeff wasn't looking horrified - or whatever Tasha thought he looked like - because of her weird behavior, or her "joke." It was because Rémy was working his fingers into her hair, moving his hand up her neck and into the damp waves, like he had possession of her somehow. Jeff shifted his disbelieving look to Rémy, who looked back at him smugly. He smiled, and then gripped Tasha's hair to turn her face toward him, swallowing her lips in his.

Jeff stared at Tasha's jaw, at the way it worked against Rémy's mouth. She wasn't just being kissed by this guy: she was actively, aggressively, kissing him back. Something hot plunged through his core, and he combated the nausea it caused and the disarray of his own mind. *This is what you wanted, you idiot*, he told himself, as heat scorched his forearms, the back of his neck, his groin. Jealousy poured into his bloodstream, hardening his cock, punching a hole through his chest. And yet he didn't want to stop any of it, he didn't want to look away. He didn't want to believe it, and yet he didn't want it to be a dream.

After what seemed like an eternity, Rémy released Tasha from his probing, athletic kiss. Tasha looked over at Jeff, and smiled wanly. She tipped toward him a little, her forehead knocking into his. "This is fun," she said, her lips just inches from Jeff's. Her fingers went into his hair and scraped his scalp in a disturbingly pleasant caress.

Jeff could smell the foreign taste of Rémy on her - part nicotine, part his faint, musky cologne, part his breath itself, his spit in her mouth. The effect was intoxicating, and it traveled right to his already painfully throbbing cock. Tasha was gone, just like that, moving sideways, propelled by Rémy. "She needs to sit down," Rémy shouted. But then he stopped, and slung an arm over Jeff's shoulder. "That fucking Algerian is making the moves on your woman, Jeff," he shouted. Then he smiled. "Don't worry, I'll make sure that Natasha knows where to go for a good time, *oui*?"

And then he held up his fingers and wiggled them, before moving away with Natasha being pushed forward in front of him.

Jeff followed them, stunned, pushing through the thickening soup of strung-out clubbers: girls who looked too young to drive, guys who looked like they belonged in a frat house, sleek Europeans of all ages who were less undignified but had eyes larger, brighter, duller, or more vacant than normal eyes, proof of a veritable smörgåsbord of chemicals having been dispensed en masse.

Tasha and Rémy moved effortlessly through the crowd, so they were far enough ahead of him that he almost lost them. A warren of smaller rooms broke off from the main dance floor, and his heart almost stopped when he entered one and saw no trace of them. He had lost her again. Panic started to worm into his veins.

But then he saw them: they were seated in a cozy booth, the table in front of them littered with unclaimed drink containers, most of them

empty water bottles. An empty chair was set out in front of them, across the table, almost as if the scene had been staged just for him. He pushed his way to the table and sat, somewhat uneasily, in the chair, facing his wife and Rémy.

Rémy had one hand behind Tasha's shoulders, another, beneath the table, clearly moving along her thigh where Jeff couldn't see it. His gut warbled, cold and then hot, and then a twisted, liquid feeling overcame him for a moment and he thought he might vomit. His eyes went to Rémy's mouth, so close to Tasha's ear, his mind imagining the words that he was saying to make Tasha's mouth turn up in a smile that carried traces of surprise, or shock, or scandal. They barely seemed to notice he was there, until Tasha's eyes moved to the side and met his. Playful. Delivering a surgical slice of jealousy right to his core, a boiling bath of lust to his balls, a surge of blood to his taut, almost painful cock.

Tasha grinned, and turned her full visual attention to Jeff, while Rémy kept talking in her ear.

And then, loudly, so Jeff could hear, she announced: "I don't know!" She laughed, put a hand on Rémy's cheek and leaned to whisper something in his ear, before turning to Jeff and leaning across the table. "Rémy wants to suck on my toes!" she yelled at Jeff. Then she turned to Rémy. "My feet are so *dirty*," she objected.

But this only made Rémy grin. And so the matter was settled, without input from Jeff. Tasha shifted in her booth, removing her shoes, and then leaned back on her elbows, spinning slightly, to lift her foot so that Rémy could catch it in his hand.

He stared openly as Rémy massaged Tasha's foot, the veins in his wiry fingers straining against his skin as he pushed his thumbs into the meat of her small, shapely foot. And then he lifted it to his lips, blew on her toes with pursed lips, and maneuvered his tongue around her toes, one

by one.

Tasha laughed at first, throwing her head back and sliding on the booth until she was against the rounded back of it. But her ticklishness faded quickly, when Rémy enclosed her toe in his mouth. She stared at Rémy, her smile fading to an open-mouthed expression that women only have when they are having sex.

Rémy slid his hand down Tasha's thigh. The way they were sitting, with Tasha's legs up high like that, Rémy almost certainly had a clear view of Tasha's hiked-up skirt, of her pussy, unencumbered by panties. Jeff himself could see the full length of her inner thigh, almost to the center of her legs, from where he was.

The music was just as loud, but a slower-moving, sexier beat, in the room they were in. Rémy sucked on Tasha's big toe and a visible shudder traveled through her. His hand disappeared between her legs, and her eyes went wide, but did not move from his face.

And Jeff sat there, paralyzed and breathless, as Rémy's forearm tensed and rippled, while he fingered his wife's pussy and sucked on her toe. Sweat gathered at Tasha's brow, her lips parted, and her vacant stare became even more glazed and withdrawn inside of herself, as the seconds - and maybe minutes - ticked by, Rémy hard at work the whole time with his eyes on Tasha's face.

Her mouth fell open suddenly, and her eyes closed. Her foot seemed to jerk and spring to life in Rémy's mouth, forcing him to pull it out and hold it in his hand, while Tasha's body shuddered in an orgasm that made her legs quiver and her chest heave with great gasps of air.

Rémy did not immediately pull his fingers from her pussy, but instead fingered her a little more, until she pulled her legs together and put a hand out to stop him. He observed his handiwork for a moment, smiled smugly, and then set Tasha's foot gently down, back to a proper position

beneath the table, as Tasha sat up, disoriented and glowing.

Rémy looked across the table at Jeff, grinning, and then brought his palm to his face and inhaled the scent of Tasha's cum. A cold shudder traveled down Jeff's spine: he could almost smell it himself, the sweet ripeness of it, the undertones of an acrid ranginess that made Tasha's scent unique. And here was Rémy, his hand slathered in it, enjoying it against his face.

He brought his other hand around Tasha's shoulder and pulled her close to him, said something in her ear, and made her grin wanly. Her eyes fluttered and she looked at Jeff, who smiled back, though he couldn't be sure how he looked. He was too stunned, too dizzy with his own arousal, to put much effort into it.

Rémy moved quickly, like a cat, to lean over the table. "I just tell Natasha," he yelled loudly, "this is why I will win our little bet."

"I'll go get us some drinks," Jeff shouted back, causing Tasha to frown and look to Rémy for a repeat of what he said, while Jeff shakily slid his chair back and stumbled away to the bar.

He felt detached from his body as he moved through the crowd and pushed himself through the people gathered there to order drinks. His mind was replaying what he had just seen, over and over again, so when the bartender dropped a wad of damp bills in his hand, and he surveyed the drinks in front of him: glasses with whiskey and no ice, three bottles of coke - he had no recollection of the transaction.

Multicolored lights in dark shades played over youthful faces, strobes catching them in unexpected, and sometimes frightening, expressions. Everyone seemed to be looking right at him, and yet he was invisible, detached from this world, as he floated through the shifting, noisy crowd and back to the table.

Where Rémy was sitting, smugly, with his arm slung around his

wife's shoulders. Tasha was still flushed, still vacant-eyed, and smiling. And Ethan had taken the chair, turned it backwards, and had draped his arms over the back. They weren't talking.

Jeff set the drinks on the table and surveyed the scene: there wasn't much room in the booth, the way they were sitting, and there was no other seat anywhere close-by. Ethan looked up at him and grinned. Jeff wasn't sure if this was some kind of challenge or not, if Ethan wanted to see if he had the mettle to ask for his seat, or was just grinning because he could see what had transpired here.

But before that could get out of hand, Dan and Kris, with several girls vaguely in tow with them, walked by. Dan seized Ethan's shoulders and massaged them violently, in one of those typical displays of boyish camaraderie.

But his eyes traveled all over the scene before him, a hint of disbelief, and of competition, sparking behind his pupils.

He laughed uneasily, and gave it all one last survey. The girls were out of it and didn't seem to notice what they were getting into - or breaking up - as they piled into the booth at Kris's suggestion.

Tasha scooted to allow them in, smiling warmly as they yelled vague introductions at each other.

He found a chair stranded at another table, and pulled it over.

And then, in another strange twist of fate, the evening proceeded anew, but like any evening at a bar when everyone has become much too intoxicated. A lot of yelling, side conversations between Tasha and Rémy with their heads together, and then Tasha and Kris, who seemed to be having an ordinary discussion.

Jeff stared at his wife, and everyone seemed to have forgotten he was even there - including her. Who was this woman?

Only once did she look over at him, meeting his eyes while she

played with a straw in a drink that had mostly been consumed. But the single look was mesmerizing, scorching the air between them. She was still there, his wife, playing a game. He could see it in her eyes. It turned his guts inside-out, and he felt faint and re-invigorated all at once. Her lips moved, exaggeratedly, so much so that he would not have been able to read them if not for the way the tip of her tongue touched her teeth to make a ridiculous "L."

I love you.

*

"Okay!" Kris declared, after a while. He rubbed his hands together. "Are we going out there again?"

This was met with mixed reviews by all, except Ethan, who seemed to have taken something that was making him hyper. They all exchanged looks. One of the girls let out a drunken, slurry, "Hell yeahah..." and giggled, lifting an empty glass with such a limp hand that it tipped, and would have poured all over the table if anything had been in it.

"Natasha?" Rémy asked, stroking her hair. She was leaning on his shoulder, touching the rim of her glass.

Tasha blinked dreamily and brought a hand to her mouth, covering a yawn. "Boys," she declared. "You go have fun if you want to, but I... have to conserve my energy for something else." She let this sit with them for a moment, waiting until the meaning of "something else" had time to work its way through their minds and for them to recognize that she was serious. She wriggled out of the booth, pulling her shoes up from under the table and setting them on the floor before stepping into them with surprising grace.

"I'm headed home," she told everyone, with a seductive smile.

And then, as they all stared at her disbelievingly, including Jeff, she got up, and glided away, into the crowd.

The guys shifted their eyes to Jeff, who shrugged casually and stood up as well. What could he do? his shrug said. Tasha wants what Tasha wants.

Except, he thought, trying to keep his wife's shiny, dark hair in his line of sight as they wove through the club for what he hoped was the exit (he was lost, and he couldn't see how Tasha wasn't), Tasha *wasn't like this*. Tasha didn't act like this, whatever *this* was.

He caught up to her just before they reached the exit. The earliest birds, the ones that precede dawn, were beginning to chatter, and unbelievably, a line was still snaking toward the entrance as though it was 10pm. He jogged to catch up to her as she walked confidently down the sidewalk toward a line of taxis.

He took her elbow and she slowed, looking up at him with a mischievous grin. "Don't worry," she said. "They'll be right out."

It wasn't what he was going to say, and it wasn't what he was worried about, or even thinking about. But, as if on cue, when Tasha tossed a careless glance behind them, he heard a male voice say, "Natasha!" loudly.

And there they all were. A couple of girls were clinging to Kris, who seemed to neither know how to or be able to commit to shaking them off. Rémy was in the rear, lighting a cigarette, and Dan was squinting like it was noon and he had no sunglasses. Ethan, however, was striding towards them, his gait long and purposeful, his smile assured.

Tasha gave her head a shake - a remnant gesture of so many years with shoulder-length hair, and the wind picked it up and blew it sexily to the side while she grinned lasciviously at Ethan. "Oh," she said, in a sultry voice. "You coming, too?" She leaned a little to look past him, and then stood up straight again. Her hand, damp with sweat, hot to the touch, was

on Jeff's forearm. "And those guys?"

"Don't care," Ethan said, trotting up to a taxi and popping his head in to ask if he was free. A few people were loosely waiting in a cab line-up and groaned at him, some obscenities were muttered.

"Hey," he said, opening his arms wide in a defiant, bring-it-on gesture. "I gotta go home and try to bang this hot chick," he bellowed. "So fuck off." Then he opened the back door, grinned at Tasha, and gestured that she should climb in.

"I gotta bang some chick too," somebody shouted, and Ethan, unflummoxed, tilted his chin in the direction of the voice. "Yeah, but you're cocksucker, so you can fucking wait," he yelled, his New Jersey accent evidently threatening enough to shut the whole thing down.

Jeff was already walking around the cab, keeping his head down, hoping this wasn't going to disintegrate into a fight. He dropped into the cab next to Tasha, who was scooting over for Ethan. They closed the doors, their sweat and various perfumes mingling in the compartment until someone - probably the driver - rolled down the windows.

But the passenger-side door opened up front, and Rémy popped his head in. His eyes went from passenger to passenger, stopping icily and competitively at Ethan. Then he rolled himself neatly into the car, cigarette and all, and spoke what sounded like very fluent, very street-savvy Spanish to the driver, who laughed, looked behind him, became serious for a moment, and then laughed again, pulling away from the curb.

*

"So," Ethan said, putting a hand on Tasha's thigh and turning toward her. Jeff watched his fingers as they moved carelessly over her knee. "It's a twenty-minute drive," he suggested.

Tasha leaned back on the seat and rolled her head toward Jeff, letting out a dismissive laugh. "And?" she retorted.

Undeterred, Ethan moved his hand up her leg, while Tasha watched him, an almost disinterested expression on her face.

"A lot can happen in twenty minutes," Ethan suggested.

Rémy was looking back at them. He pointed his cigarette at Ethan. "A lot can happen if you know what you're doing, *putain*. But all you have is your big cock we hear so much about."

Tasha gave Rémy an appreciative grin, and then chewed on her lower lip. It was a very deliberate, un-Tasha-like gesture, one she clearly had calibrated for maximum sex appeal, not authenticity of her personality. Her hand drifted down to Ethan's leg. "Ah, yes. This big cock we keep hearing so much about," she said. Her hand traveled up Ethan's leg, over the khaki shorts, to the place where his - admittedly above-average - bulge was pulsing to life beneath the fabric. Tasha trailed her manicured nails over the shape, her fingers clawed like a rake.

She raised her eyebrows and made a face. Not bad, it said.

Ethan took this as encouragement, and started to unbutton his shorts.

Tasha put a hand on his fingers. "Take it easy, cowboy," she said, which made Rémy snort with derision from the front.

"*Les américains*," he said, to no one in particular, and then to the cab driver. "Cowboys. *Siempre bang-bang, con el pito*."

This made the driver nod sagely and grin. Rémy kept smoking. Ethan muttered "fuck you, ponce," under his breath, and leaned over Tasha to look at Jeff. "What does Jeffrey think?"

Tasha was looking at him with glittery, challenging eyes.

Another stab of ice-cold jealousy, that turned to a slimy liquid and then a boiling mess in his groin.

"It's Natasha's show," he told Ethan. "Looks like you gotta wait it

out."

This caused Tasha to make a noise, that if pressed to describe it, Jeff would have called an eye-roll made vocal. She rolled her head lazily from side to side, smiling, and when it stopped, she was looking, more or less, at Ethan.

Her fingers unfolded from her hand and landed on his chest, playing with the buttons.

"*You* have to wait," she said, in a sultry voice.

Ethan, smart-ass tough guy from New Jersey that he was, was momentarily knocked off-balance by this. His face, unimaginably, melted into a brief disbelieving confusion.

Rémy suffered from no such confusion, perhaps because his mother tongue had given a name to *double-entendre*. He leaned forward in his seat with his cigarette in front of his face and puff of smoke trapped in his cheeks, his mouth pursed in the shape of the first syllable of some expletive that remained unsaid, looking at the driver.

But Ethan recovered, and grinned. "Oh, yeah?" he said, regaining his swagger.

Tasha rolled her head toward Jeff, still grinning. She was still very high, he could see: it hadn't been so obvious when she got up to leave.

Her hand dropped to Ethan's while she grinned at Jeff, and she guided it between her legs.

He took over from there, and she released his wrist and dropped her own hand onto his thigh. Ethan grinned at Jeff as he turned toward Tasha, and his hand moved beneath her wispy dress, into the dark fork between her legs.

Jeff stared at Tasha's face as Ethan nuzzled her ear, kissed her neck, and began to finger her. The wind and the motor were loud, and Jeff's ears still ringing from the club, but he could still hear the crackling of her

sticky pussy in troughs of quiet.

Tasha's features softened, and her belly stiffened. Her mouth fell open a little, and her already glazed eyes seemed to darken to pure vacancy, even though she was looking right at Jeff. She squirmed, her hot body moving against Jeff's, muscles twitching when some momentary intensity of pleasure gripped her, skin growing damp with that very specific, very hot sweat that comes with the fever of sexual stimulation. She put a hand up to Jeff's chest, her fingers balled, and grasped between her knuckles a snippet of his shirt.

Rémy smoked, looked back, grinned, and then amicably started a conversation with the driver. His eyes wandered occasionally to the back, his mouth in an amused smile.

Tasha's hand floated up to the side of Jeff's head as she mewled and turned her head toward him, sliding down on the seat a little, her legs trembling. She pulled his ear to her mouth.

"I'm going to come," she whispered.

Click, click, went Ethan's fingers in her pussy. A quick glance at him confirmed that he was staring, mesmerized, at Tasha's face.

Jeff pulled her chin toward him and kissed her, swallowing her scream as she came. Ethan plunged into her pussy, and she gripped his hand, crossing her legs, and bit Jeff's lip hard enough to draw blood.

Her body melted after a while, and Jeff released her at the same time that she dropped her hand to her lap. She rolled her head to Ethan, who was tugging his own hand from between her crossed legs.

"How'd you like that, Natasha?" Ethan asked, confidently.

And then, looking at Jeff:

"I got more where that came from."

Tasha's head rolled listlessly as she grinned, inside her own head, staring out the windshield for a moment.

Then her hand went lazily up to Ethan's jaw, and she stroked it, making him smile. On his face was the pleased look of a dog being told he is a good boy.

Jeff shuddered.

Tasha sighed, bit her lip, and then released it.

"It's a good start," she said, breathily, to no one in particular.

CHAPTER 7

"Hey, man," Ethan said, pulling on Jeff's shoulder after they got out of the taxi at the end of the narrow street that led to their condo. He appeared a little contrite, and somewhat unsteady. "Look, I just want to make sure that, uh... I don't want to step over any lines, you know. And get my ass kicked."

Jeff plunged his hands deep in his pockets and leaned back, regarding Ethan with what he hoped was a calm expression. Was this guy for real? It was laughable that Ethan - who was young and very fit, though not especially large - would have even a tempered fear of Jeff "kicking his ass."

"It's Tasha's show," Jeff repeated, after a second or two of consideration.

And it was Tasha's show. Tasha, who had cast a wild look back at the two of them, before linking her arm in Rémy's and allowing the Frenchman to escort her toward the condo building.

"Hey," the cabbie yelled through the open window. "You gotta pay."

Jeff fished some cash out of his pocket and stuffed it through the window, cognizant that it was way too much. The cabbie gave him a look.

"Sorry about..." Jeff began, and then waved in the direction of the back of the car.

The cabbie shrugged, with an expression that screamed that he saw that kind of thing all the time, but he was already stuffing the full amount into his shirt pocket and clearly was going to depart without further discussion.

Ethan was already walking toward the condo, and Rémy and Tasha were almost at the entrance.

Jeff followed, his stomach coiling into a tight knot. His mind had settled on the image of Tasha looking back at him as she got out of the car. On her face was an expression devoid of anything but exhilaration and mischief. It was unsettling: not because he didn't want Tasha to be doing any of this, he really, truly did. But because she was... well, not herself. There was none of the hesitation that he would have expected from Tasha.

And the woman that was letting a man finger her in a cab? That woman not only didn't exist in their lives *now*; she had never existed. Tasha was not the kind to make a first move, not the kind to sit on a man's face and grind her hips on his mouth, not the kind of woman that this... Natasha was. So even if this was all some variation on a fantasy he'd harbored, secretly, in the dark hours of the night, he hadn't envisioned *this* version of Tasha.

Ethan did a little spin as he went up the steps, grinning back at Jeff.

He followed, uneasy.

Here I go, he thought.

Into the utterly unknown.

*

The door to the guys' condo was open, and Rémy was behind a counter that had been set up in typical Airbnb fashion, for maximal photogenic appeal, with utility an afterthought. The cabinets were bright

blue, the counter narrow, and the glasses not particularly useful for making proper drinks. Rémy had a lit cigarette between his lips and a grin on his face as he opened and closed cupboards and held bottles up to read the labels. Tasha was perched on a stool, her shins against the top of it, so that she could lean on the counter and examine one of the labels that Rémy was trying to decipher. She had kicked her shoes off, and her bare feet twisted alluringly as she spoke to Rémy.

Her dress rode up to just below her ass, and Ethan plopped into an overstuffed sofa to admire the view. Shiny streaks of her pussy juices were still visible on her thigh, still not dry after the events in the cab.

"It's whiskey," Tasha laughed, to Rémy, and then cast a glance over her shoulder at Ethan. She smiled. "Want a drink?"

Ethan was mesmerized by the scene before him, which Jeff could see as well, now that he had rounded the bar and was in the living room, wondering where to place himself, wondering how all of this would play out. The hem of Tasha's dress was just above the rounded dip of her ass, and in the shadowy triangle between her legs, slivers of the pink of her pussy and the plump, pale shape of her bare outer lips moved like a fleshy kaleidoscope beneath the shimmering fabric.

"Uh," Ethan said, lifting his fingers nonchalantly. "Yeah, okay." He looked over at Jeff and raised his eyebrows, an expression more hopeful than anything else.

Jeff pushed some very worn and somewhat revolting clothing off a rickety-looking wicker chair before lowering himself into it as gently as possible.

Tasha giggled, and then, without asking, reached for the cigarette between Rémy's lips and placed it in her own mouth, taking a long drag and blowing the smoke expertly out of her mouth to be sucked up by her nostrils.

"Caution," Rémy said, taking it back from her with a smile. "It's a special cigarette."

He continued to make drinks while Tasha curled herself up on the stool, ending the show of her pussy for both Ethan and Jeff. The view was still nice, though, and they continued to watch her. Jeff, because she seemed like another woman, and Ethan for... obvious reasons.

"So," Rémy said, after putting the finishing touches on a martini - no garnish - and handing it over to Tasha, who accepted it with a feline purr and brought it to her lips. "How will you rate this Captain America? His performance in the cab?"

Jeff's skin became clammy very suddenly. The sensation was most akin to stage fright, except that he wasn't feeling it for himself, but for Tasha. Because Tasha, the woman he had believed himself to be married to, would have been scandalized into laughter and blushes by such a question.

She sipped her drink calmly, and looked at Rémy over the edge of the glass. Not a trace of jitters, not a blush of even the lightest shade of modesty, unmoored her from her collected self. "This is good," she murmured, her eyes on the drink. "I didn't think men under the age of thirty knew how to make a cocktail."

Rémy gave a cocktail mixer a hard shake and smiled triumphantly. "Not all of us are pigs with no... what is the word? Class?"

Ethan tipped his head back and laughed at the ceiling. "Yeah? Make me a fucking real drink, *puto*," he bellowed. He lifted his head and looked at Jeff. "You believe this guy?"

Rémy laughed and poured another martini into a coffee mug, which he set on the bar next to Tasha, who laughed at it, truly delighted. She twisted to get her legs out from under her and took the mug over to Ethan, who accepted it with an eyeroll. "It was a high-pressure situation," he told

Tasha. "No room to maneuver."

Tasha had her own martini in one hand, and she sipped it. "So I can expect some improvement?" She smiled down at him. "More resources?" she offered helpfully, which made Ethan smile as he brought the mug to his lips.

Jeff felt like he had been punched in the gut. Heartburn swelled into his esophagus, and for a moment he was positive he would puke. But it receded, and he was left with only the pain in his groin.

Another clatter of the martini shaker. "Jeff?" Rémy said, calmly.

Jeff nodded, unable to speak. He was settling into the idea of remaining in the chair he was in, perhaps forever, because it was settling over him, in all of its exhilarating and terrifying reality, that Tasha really was running this show, and there was nothing he could do about that. Even if he wanted to. Which he *didn't*, he reminded himself. But the scene had the feel of latent nightmarish terror about it, like it could take a precipitous turn at any moment, and that unease was making his skin crawl.

Tasha picked up the drink and brought it over to him. She met his eyes and hers glittered. "Here you go, baby," she told him. When he took it, she clinked her glass against his gently and lifted hers to her lips for a sip, before swinging her hips and turning around to survey the room. Like they were at any other house party, and she was sizing up the house.

"You better put that fucking cigarette out before Kris gets back," Ethan told Rémy. He was holding his mug by the handle like it was, in fact, a cup of coffee.

Rémy muttered something in French, which sounded like a string of curses, and continued to make his drink with the cigarette bouncing between his lips.

Tasha sat on the stool, normally this time, facing the room. "Where did those guys go?" she asked, crossing one leg over the other, slowly and

deliberately, so that Ethan and Jeff could get a fleeting, tantalizing look at her pussy. She leaned her elbows on the bar and swirled what was left of her martini in the glass.

There was a moment of silence. No one knew. No one cared. Jeff had begun to contract his throat to clear it and offer a possibility, but he stopped himself. Who did care? Not him.

Rémy finished making his drink and tasted it, holding the glass by the rim to look out at the room, eyebrows raised.

Jeff was certain that a moment of awkwardness was about to stretch out and deepen, and he racked his brains for an escape. Somehow he felt responsible for the scene playing out here, even as he felt detached from it entirely.

But Tasha didn't let it last long. She extended her bare, slender arm to set the glass, now empty, on the bar, and slid off the stool. Taking a few steps forward, there was no telling where she was headed. But she banked right and plopped herself into Jeff's lap.

He recovered quickly from the temporary panic that the wicker chair might collapse, and encircled Tasha's waist as she slung an arm over his shoulder. Her bottom was resting on his crotch, and she rolled her hips over his erection, smiling to herself. "Well?" she said, looking at Ethan. She tipped her head to rest it on Jeff's head, her fingernail grazing his shoulder, then his neck. He could smell her pussy, that it was overflowing with excitement, a new wave of fresh juices on the heels of the cum that had surely dried to her skin by now. His eyes begged him to close, to shut the scene out, to lose himself in Tasha's fingernails playing in his hair.

But he stared at Ethan instead, as the younger man looked disbelievingly at Tasha for a moment.

"She wants to see this big cock you talk so much about," Rémy declared, bringing his martini to his lips. Jeff glanced at the French man,

who seemed uncannily comfortable watching this unreal scene play out in front of him. Perhaps it wasn't his first rodeo. Jeff envied his calmness and vowed to remain calm himself.

Even if his wife, Tasha, was being a huge, vampy, *slut*.

Ethan, a man of obvious swagger, had clearly never been in a situation like this before, and he assessed them all with wary eyes for a moment. But Tasha brought her hand to her mouth, her elbow crooking around the top of Jeff's head, and placed her pointer finger between her lips. She sucked on her finger and released it with a wet pop.

"All right," Ethan said, leaning back to unbutton his shorts, then hopping athletically from the plush couch - propelled by his abs alone - to standing. He reached behind his back to pull his shirt off, and used his free hand to unzip the shorts.

The shorts caught on the bulge of his cock, and he tugged twice to free himself, releasing a lengthy, uncircumcised, slab of dark pink meat. Tasha purred encouragingly, her eyes on the immense shaft. "That *is* really something," she affirmed.

Tasha's weight rolled away from Jeff's lap and walked over to the naked man by the couch. This froze all of them as they were: Ethan, arms to the side, lust kindling in his stare; Rémy, drink half-way to his mouth and cigarette in his fingers, burning toward his skin. Jeff, empty-handed, cock aching, grateful to be seated.

Tasha stopped in front of Ethan and looked him up and down, before putting a palm to his chest and sweeping it over a tattoo, his nipple, and then over his abdomen, making his muscles spasm, in a slow caress. She reached for his cock suddenly, wrapping her fist around his shaft. A faint grunt left Ethan's vocal tract, and his hand twitched. Jeff stared as his wife's fingertips swept over his taut, hairy balls.

She put her lips close to his, and he was stunned for a moment,

looking like he might back up. His arms extended away from Tasha's body and he glanced nervously over her shoulder, almost like he wanted to demonstrate to Jeff that he wasn't touching his wife.

"So do you?" Tasha purred, her mouth very close to Ethan's. "Know how to use it?" she clarified.

Ethan recovered, his hands seizing Tasha by the waist, and he kissed her violently as an answer. For a second or two, there was only the sound of their sloppy kissing, Ethan's hand wandering over Tasha's ass, finding the hem of her dress, fingers sweeping upward to dip into the wet crevices of her ass and pussy.

The sound of the lock twisting reached no one's ears, and even when Dan's voice said loudly, "Hol-eee fuck," the scene continued as if nothing had happened. It was only because Tasha, at her leisure, pulled her lips away from Ethan and turned toward the door, that any of them looked over at the door. Dan was standing in the doorway, his hand on the handle, and Kris was behind him, gaping.

Tasha's hand was still wrapped around Ethan's cock, and she moved it slowly, stroking his shaft, as she smiled benignly at Dan.

"Uh..." he said.

"Oh my God," a female voice said, as a girl with brown hair pushed Dan's hand down and peeked into the room. "Oh my *God*."

Jeff's eyes darted to Tasha, the same proxy performance jitters from earlier filling his veins. He expected Tasha to react, to let go of Ethan's cock and do something - anything - to cover the whole situation up.

Instead, she let her head tip back slightly, her mouth open mirthfully, and croaked a haughty laugh. Then she set her eyes on Ethan's and grinned. "Hey, guys," she said. Her thumb swept over the one eye of Ethan's dick, sliding in his precum, making his shaft flex visibly.

Dan and Kris awkwardly ushered their companions through the door,

making a hard right toward the bedrooms. "Uh, sorry," Dan mumbled, his head turning as he went, so that he could take in as much of what was happening even as he disappeared into the adjacent corridor. A door closed, and music came on.

Tasha gave Ethan a shove, unfazed, as if they had never been there at all. He fell, surprised, back onto the couch, staring at Tasha. She climbed onto the couch, one knee at a time, up high on her knees with her legs parted wide for Ethan's substantial thighs.

His hands went to work, running up and down Tasha's body, like he wasn't quite sure what to do with it. Tasha moved them to her hips, then below her dress, and guided him to pull the fabric up, until he keyed in on what she wanted and she lifted her arms so that he could roll it up her body. She took over when it reached her shoulders, pulling her arms through and tossing the skimpy slip of fabric to the side.

Ethan stared at Tasha's breasts, dumbfounded. She rolled her hips forward, her pussy grazing his chest. The soft swell of her abdomen was pressed into his face, and he strained to look upward as his hands seized her ass and his fingers began to seek out the soft, penetrable places between her legs.

Ethan tried to push Tasha down, make her pussy sink onto his shaft, but Tasha's thighs were locked at the hip, and she didn't budge. Instead, she slipped a hand down between their bodies, and grabbed his cock. Then she eased herself back, sticking her ass out a little, leaning on his shoulder with her hand. "Not so fast," she told him. "You have to show me that you know how to use it, remember?"

She guided the crown of his dick between her legs, still high up on her knees, and moved the fat bulb into the folds of her flesh. Her pussy juices crackled stickily as she began to rub his dick through her slit, holding it firmly, stroking her clit with Ethan's cock. Jeff's stare could not

be ripped from the shape of her hand around Ethan's dick, her wedding ring glittering in the light.

Ethan's will seemed to visibly wilt, but it must have turned into fluid that stiffened his dick, which now pulsed monstrosly in Tasha's hand. "Hmmm," Tasha murmured, and a sexy moan followed.

Jeff stared as Tasha used Ethan's cock to masturbate herself, while Ethan's hands moved down to her thighs and his eyes dropped to watch, with disbelief, as she maneuvered his cock between her legs. He was panting, his eyes wild, his muscles tense as he strained to control himself. Between Tasha's spread thighs, Jeff stared at the fat cock that she was playing with, so close to her wet pussy.

Rémy moved slowly around the counter and stood, relaxed, his martini in his hand, watching. He looked down at Jeff after a few moments. "Your wife," he said, "She likes this... double penetration?" He said this with such a thick French accent it sounded French, and yet no one misunderstood.

Tasha was mewling, grinding her hips, close to coming. She looked over her shoulder at Rémy, her mouth open in pleasure, and smiled. Then Jeff stared as she released Ethan's cock, and dipped her fingers into her pussy juices, before drawing her hand up to her ass. Her fingers played lightly with her own asshole, while they stared, mesmerized. Ethan had found the ability to move, and grasped his cock in order to continue rubbing Tasha's clit.

Jeff ceased breathing when Tasha, still grinning, still grinding her hips over Ethan's cock, dipped one finger into her own ass and started fucking herself with it. *That*, definitively, was *not* his wife. But he was frozen in place, glued to the chair, condemned to watch everything until the end. A stain of precum was spreading across his lap.

Rémy handed his drink to Jeff, who managed to take it just before he

released the glass. Some of the martini splashed, cold and arousing, on his pants, seeping through the material to deliver an icy kiss to his cock.

Rémy got down on his knees behind Tasha, pulling his shirt off as he lowered himself to the floor. Ethan didn't even seem to notice until Rémy put his hand on Tasha's ass. He leaned to the side with a look of mild alarm. "Don't fucking touch my dick, you fag," he snarled, but it was half-hearted, and his eyes went back to Tasha's tits, just in time for her to lean forward and stuff them into his face.

Rémy slipped her finger from her ass and began to eat her ass out, spreading her butt open so that he could dive in, sucking loudly and wetly.

"Oh, yeah, oh my God," Tasha moaned. She had both hands free now, and she grasped Ethan's head to her chest and smothered him into her breasts. Ethan continued to hold his dick steady for her as she slid her slit over the crown, moaning her way to an orgasm that announced itself with a squeal and a crackling, wet spurt.

Ethan moved his hands to her shoulders, trying to push her down on his cock, but Rémy had her hips and Tasha didn't budge. Her hand flew back to Rémy's head and she twisted to look down at him, his hair firmly in her grip. "Not yet, loverboy," she told him. Then she turned to Ethan. "And not yet for you, either."

"Natasha, baby," Ethan groaned. "I'm gonna come."

But Tasha was already moving off the couch, pushing Rémy with her ass, to back up on the floor behind her. She rested her arms on Ethan's thighs and gripped his cock in her hand, stroking it slowly, lovingly, while she looked up at him. Then she turned to look at Rémy, who was flummoxed. "You were doing a good job," she told him, smiling.

Rémy went back to work, getting on his hands and knees to eat Tasha's ass out, his tongue diving in, sloshing in her dripping pussy, while Tasha turned her attention to Ethan's cock. She squeezed hard and made

him groan, flicking her tongue at the bulbous head. She licked his shaft, swirled her pink tongue around the ridge of the crown, lapped up his precum. Ethan screwed his face up in concentration, obviously trying to hold back his orgasm for a full blow job. But he did not seize Tasha's hair, or try to push her onto his dick - everyone in the room could see that this was, indeed, Natasha's show.

Even Jeff, who had never seen his wife act like this or imagined that she could, knew that.

"So tell me, Ethan," Tasha purred, rubbing his cock over her lips. "If I suck your cock dry right now, are you going to be able to get it up again for me?"

Ethan's face was a disastrously twisted, painful sight. He breathed heavily, staring at her, for several moments, before he managed to croak, "Yes, ma'am."

Jesus.

Jeff was sure he was just going to *come*, no further stimulation required.

Tasha gave Ethan a smile. "I wouldn't want to be disappointed," she said, and then took him into her mouth. Her lips stretched to accommodate him, and slid all the way down his shaft. No sooner had she begun to bob her head in his lap, with his fingers loosely on her head, than Ethan's head snapped back, slamming into the wall so hard it sounded like it cracked. He groaned, and his other fist balled up on the couch, grasping at nothing, as he spewed his cum into Tasha's throat. Tasha continued to work her mouth on his dick, drinking it up. And Rémy steadily lapped at her pussy and her ass, as gaping, spurting sounds emanated from between her legs.

Tasha released Ethan and gripped his dick at the base, then turned and looked back at Rémy with approval, her hand starting to lazily move up and down Ethan's still-hard shaft. Jeff had a pang of nostalgia for his

youth, but it faded quickly as his own cock reminded him, with a painful throb, that it was re-living the vigor of his youth at that moment.

"Jesus," Ethan murmured, his fingers in Tasha's hair. "Fuck, that's hot." His eyes went to Rémy as he ate Tasha's ass with abandon.

Tasha abruptly pushed herself forward, rising up on her knees, dropping Ethan's cock like a hot potato. It flopped to the side with a sticky slap. Rémy fell back on his heels and watched Tasha throw herself on the couch. She looked at Rémy as she reclined against the corner where the armrest met the back, lifting a leg onto the couch and bending her knee, spreading her legs open. She beckoned Rémy with a finger. "And what about you?" she asked him, grinning. "If I suck your cock now, will you still have something left?"

Rémy was standing up, unbuttoning his loose shorts. They fell to the floor and he stepped out of them, revealing his very hard, and also substantial, cock. "Mais oui, madame," he told her, approaching Tasha with his dick in his hand.

Tasha grinned and pushed herself up to sitting, reaching for Rémy's dick. She cast an eye toward Ethan, as if to say that she was equally impressed, before her eyes focused on the cock in front of her as she stroked it with her hand.

Ethan stared as Tasha started sucking Rémy's cock. Jeff couldn't see exactly what was happening from that angle, but he could hear it, and catch a glimpse of Tasha's face when she pulled back to the tip - her eyes were on Rémy's face, glittering with her newfound mischief. But then, after a few slides up and down his dick, her eyes shifted, and she looked directly at Jeff.

His stomach seized up, making him want to keel over, but he just stared at his wife, into her eyes, as she bobbed on the cock of a man who had been, until three days ago, a total stranger.

Ethan looked at Jeff, his mouth open in disbelief, but pretty soon his attention was on Tasha as she sucked Rémy off. Tasha did this for a while, ignoring him, but after a bit she suspended her blow job, Rémy's cock in her hand, and smiled over at Ethan. "I've always wanted to do two at the same time," she told him.

Ethan took no time to jump up and stand in front of Tasha, next to Rémy. Jeff had a bad view, but he couldn't move, and he could see through the space between their bodies when his wife, open-mouthed, changed from one cock to the other.

She did this a few times, sucking all the way to the base of each cock in two long, slutty moves, before turning her attention to the other. But she settled back on Rémy's cock and held Ethan in her hand, sucking Rémy to completion.

When he came, Tasha held his dick in her hand and released his shaft, turning her head up and letting him spew his cum all over her open mouth, smiling as it splashed into her mouth, across her cheeks, down her chin. Her eyes fluttered up to Ethan. "Feed it to me," she said sweetly.

"Jesus," Ethan said, but he happily complied, sweeping the cum up with his fingers and feeding it to Tasha, who made a big, filthy show of licking and sucking the cum from his fingers while Rémy played with her hair and Tasha stroked both of their dicks, one in each hand.

All cleaned up, she tilted her head to look at Jeff between their two bodies, her hands still moving on their cocks.

"Hey Dan," Tasha said, shattering the moment for Jeff, who had not noticed *at all* that Dan had left the bedroom corridor and was standing, open-mouthed, staring at the living room scene. His foot was still in mid-air, probably as he had been attempting to get to the kitchen. "Is there a free bedroom?" Tasha asked, like she was asking where the restroom was.

Dan looked over at Jeff, his mouth still hanging open, and then turned

his whole body to point wordlessly into the corridor.

Tasha stood up, still holding both guys' dicks. She released them, and walked, tall and model-like, toward the corridor. She stopped to bend over and kiss Jeff. The taste of cum lingered on her lips, and she smelled like pussy and semen, and sweet sweat. She continued into the corridor, stopping only to put a hand on Dan's chest. "Want to join us?" she asked.

Rémy and Ethan were turning around, naked and dumbfounded, exchanging a look of disbelief. Ethan grinned at Dan and shrugged as he watched Tasha disappear into the corridor. "Uh..." he said again. "Fuck." Ethan led the charge, following Tasha after smacking Rémy violently on the back. Rémy kicked his shorts up to catch them and fish a cigarette and lighter out of the pocket, then smoothly took his glass from Jeff's hand as he passed, cigarette already in his mouth. He raised his eyebrows to Dan, who remained, frozen in disbelief, staring into the hallway. His head slowly turned to Jeff, who looked up at him and shrugged.

When in Rome, son, he thought, and pushed himself out of the wicker chair with less difficulty than he might have imagined. His cock was painfully hard, and he felt like he might keel over for a moment as the reality of what was happening swept him up in a wave of nausea.

But he strode confidently into the dim hallway anyway.

When in Rome, indeed.

*

By the time he reached the bedroom - he paused for a moment in the corridor, his hand on the wall, to gather himself, before opening the closed door they had disappeared behind - Tasha was already sprawled on the bed. Her legs were open, her back against the wall (there was no headboard), and she had a fistful of Rémy's hair in her left hand and was

watching him as he licked her pussy and she watched him. There was a faint smile on her lips, appraisal in her eyes.

They took turns, as Tasha shifted her head to watch each of them. "That's nice," she commented to Rémy, when he sat up and let Ethan take over. She drew her finger down his cheek.

"You like this, yes?" Rémy asked, throwing some shade at Ethan. Ethan glowered at him, but only for a moment. His attention went back to Tasha's wet pussy, spread out in front of them like a buffet.

"Good technique," Tasha commented to Rémy, smiling.

"Mmm," she purred to Ethan, as he started in on her. "That's good, too."

Jeff found himself staring at Tasha's face more than at the attention being paid to her pussy. She had a hand in each man's hair, and the composure of a conductor or a director, her fingers moving in their hair absent-mindedly while she watched them work.

But at last, she settled on Rémy to complete her orgasm, clutching him to her pussy and rolling her eyes in the back of her head with her mouth open, her abdomen rolling violently until she came, her mouth open in a silent scream. But after she came, she lay, mewling, her hand still holding Rémy in place while she smiled at Ethan and reached out to stroke his cock.

Rémy finished her off, but was only allowed to sit up on his knees once Tasha released him. Rémy gave Ethan a triumphant look, wiping his mouth delicately, as though seated at a fancy dinner table. "This is how you do this," he told Ethan.

"Yeah?" Ethan said, in a challenging voice.

Tasha, who had slid down the wall a little, pushed herself up on her elbows and nudged Ethan with her foot, working her way over his thigh, to his cock. She curled her toes around his nut sack and grinned. "Don't

fight, boys." She put a hand on Rémy's chest and played with his sparse chest hair. "I could really use another drink, Rémy. But maybe water." She turned her attention to Ethan. "And you, my dear boy..." She moved her foot up his chest, to his face.

Ethan seemed temporarily disoriented, because he didn't seem like the kind of guy to bed women who smashed their feet into his face. Jeff was equally perplexed, because this wasn't something his wife had ever done - or showed even the slightest interest in doing.

But young men, Jeff saw almost immediately, learned fast, and didn't think much about what *kind* of kink they were indulging. He laughed a little awkwardly, but his hand went to her foot, and he held it so that he could lick her toes, and then suck on them, while Tasha grinned at him approvingly.

Rémy looked over at Jeff, his eyebrows raised in what seemed like an expression of being impressed, as he left for Tasha's drink. Ethan continued to suck on Tasha's foot, his hands moving up and down her leg, reaching further toward her pussy with each pass.

Rémy returned and held the water aloft for Tasha, who lazily looked over at him and reached out a hand to take it. Ethan paused what he was doing with her foot and she shifted her gaze to him. "Don't stop," she ordered.

She sipped her water and watched Ethan, before handing the glass back to Rémy. Both guys' dicks were flopping with spasms of lust, hard as Jeff's cock felt to him, shiny with precum.

Rémy looked over at Jeff, almost like he needed guidance. But Jeff had none to really give: "Natasha" was in his wife's body, but he didn't know what she wanted next, either. He shrugged - as much as his semi-paralyzed body allowed him to. "Looks like she's not done with you yet," he advised.

This made Rémy smile. He set the water down on the edge of the nightstand, where it precariously teetered before falling to the floor with a hollow crash. No one cared.

"Okay," Tasha said, after a bit, moving a hand to Rémy's head without looking at him. "Let's see if your cock is all it's cracked up to be." She was speaking to Ethan, whose hand went limp and dropped her foot. His cock spasmed between his legs.

Tasha slid her foot down his body and then off to the side, around his hip, as he moved in toward her. As he brought his dick closer to her pussy, Jeff didn't know where to look: it now seemed huge, the crown distended and wet with precum, almost too big to fit.

But Tasha, who had rolled back, off her elbows and onto a misshapen lump of pillows, was distracting Jeff again. She turned her head toward Rémy and trailed a finger down his chest, smiling. "Don't go anywhere," she told him. "I have a job for you - oh!" She cut herself off with a moan, as Ethan slowly entered her. The air seemed to disappear from the room and Jeff's brow sprung a leak of hot, nervous sweat. His eyes could not have been torn from the sight of Ethan's cock disappearing into Tasha's slit for anything.

He was so focused on Ethan's cock sawing in and out of her that it came as almost a surprise when he zoomed out mentally and looked at the whole scene: Tasha had lifted her left leg for Rémy, who was now peppering kisses up and down her calf, licking her from the back of her knee to her toes, sucking on them, while Ethan fucked her. Tasha rolled her head from side to side and moaned, one hand to the side, stroking Rémy's cock, the other strewn above her head, against the wall.

"You like that, baby?" Ethan growled. He muttered something else, but it was unintelligible.

Tasha lifted her hand to play her fingers over his face languidly. She

purred, the sound blending away into a pleased laugh. "Do you know what I'd like?" she asked him.

This made both of them pause, temporarily taken aback, pausing in their movements, like a glitch, before continuing. But their attention could not have been made any more intense, their desire to hear what Tasha wanted almost seemed to take on physical form in the room with them. Ethan continued fucking her, waiting, and Rémy looked back at Jeff again, eyes wide. Like he couldn't believe this was a real woman.

You and me both, Jeff thought to himself, his guts boiling.

Tasha let this tension play out, smiling. She was clearly enjoying herself. Jeff willed her to look over at him, but she seemed to have forgotten he was there at all. She was drunk on her own power, and it showed, but that was almost the sexiest thing happening in this scene. At least to Jeff.

Tasha reached up for Rémy's head and pulled him close to her face, licking his earlobe, smiling. She whispered something in his ear, and Ethan heard it - whatever it was, it caused a ripple.

"C'est bien, madame," Rémy said, clearly meaning to be funny, but coming across as solemn.

And then, very suddenly they were all in motion, with Ethan rolling over Tasha toward the center of the bed, and Tasha rolling on top of him. His dick sprang from her pussy in the maneuver, but he reached for it and guided it back to her dripping cunt. She sank onto him, riding him cowgirl style. For a moment she rocked slowly on his cock, staring down at him, playing with the sweat on his chest.

Rémy repositioned himself behind her, on his knees. As Tasha rode Ethan, slowly grinding her pussy on his dick, Rémy kissed her shoulders, and her neck, his fingers moving up and down her spine. Tasha moaned a mirthful laugh.

Then she leaned forward and rested herself on Ethan, settling on her forearms, which she crossed over his chest. Her ass was up in the air, moving slowly as she continued to ride Ethan's cock. She stared at him like she was examining jewelry in a low case, grinning not at a man she was fucking in front of her husband, but a diamond tiara she was about to receive as a gift.

Rémy pushed back and knelt, bending over, to start eating her ass again, seizing her buttocks to do it. Ethan looked temporarily alarmed, and groaned, because Tasha had stopped moving, but Tasha swept her fingers over his mouth and said something in a voice so low Jeff couldn't hear it.

And then, Rémy rose and scooted forward. Tasha turned to look back at him, lifting a hand to one hip, her fingers spread over her ass cheek. It was only then, finally, that she cast a glance in Jeff's direction and met his eyes. She was grinning, but her smile turned to an open-mouthed expression of surprise when she looked back at Rémy.

What seemed like an eternity, but was likely only a few seconds, passed, as Rémy seemed to deliberate about whether or not Tasha had really asked him for what she had - evidently - asked him for. Ethan was simply staring at Tasha's swinging breasts, on his face a look of concentration that Jeff knew well - the "don't-come-yet" variety.

Tasha gyrated her bottom, and mewled. "Come on, Rémy, I want it," she complained.

There was a sticky sound, with undertones of breaking fibers, like the splitting of some small fruit, and Rémy's cock bent slightly, bowing under the pressure of Tasha's tight, and as of yet, virgin hole, before his cock began to glide smoothly into her ass.

Tasha's face, however, was the only place Jeff could look: somehow this was even more sexual than the penetration he could see decently from where he was. Her mouth was open, her eyes wide, her face surprised. But

more stunning than all of that was the tendency of the shape of her mouth to look like a smile: she was shocked, but she liked it.

She was up on her forearms still, but they slid in the sweat on Ethan's chest, and she let herself melt onto him, until her cheek was against his shoulder, her eyes staring vacantly in front of her, her lips curved in that same, shocked, smile.

Rémy started to fuck her, and Ethan groaned, his own mouth open, as his muscles tensed. This began as a slow, sensual fuck, but it quickly turned fast-paced, and then athletic, and then into near-manhandling, as the three of them worked up to their individual orgasms. Shiny, sweat-coated limbs were tangled and slippery, Tasha's pussy and ass squelched in uneven rhythms, and then Rémy began fucking her hard, his thighs slapping into her.

"Jesus!" Ethan yelled suddenly, his face going a wild red, veins protruding from his temples. He tried to arch his back beneath the two bodies writhing on top of him, but couldn't buck as he wanted to. Tasha began howling next. "Yeah, yes, baby, that's it," she panted, as her pupils dilated and her eyes went even wider, her mouth open in a disbelieving scream.

Rémy was the last to come, slapping into Tasha's ass, the loose pile of slippery flesh that was her and Ethan, both depleted and floppy, as they rolled beneath his thrusts, exhausted by their own pleasure. At last, he thrust hard and deep, and groaned something in French, before driving his hips forward and his cock in even deeper, and blowing his seed into Tasha's ass.

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Jeff was still gripped so tightly by his own disbelief, and his arousal,

and his jealous pain, that he could hardly breathe, when they finally fell apart, like a sloppy taco. Rémy rolled to one side, taking Tasha with him, his hand on her breast, fondling her like she was a long-time girlfriend whose body he knew very well. They made no effort to separate; his cock was still inside of her. Ethan was face-up on the bed, and brought a hand to his forehead, staring at the ceiling and panting. He lay like that for a few minutes before pushing up to his elbows and looking over at Rémy and Tasha.

The pair were still locked together - Rémy's dick still in Tasha's ass, still moaning and licking and kissing her. He cupped her right breast and rolled her nipple in his fingers, while he licked her neck up to her earlobe, smiling. Ethan fell back down with a sigh, then sat back up, looking around. When he spotted the water on the floor, he groaned.

He looked over at Jeff, who could see he was about to ask for water. Jeff was already moving his head in a slow "no," not even looking at Ethan anymore. Ethan heaved himself from the bed and left, but to Jeff it was more like he was simply there one minute and then gone: such was the trance Jeff was in as he watched Rémy fondle his wife in post-coital - and probably pre-coital - embraces and cuddles.

He was surprised to find himself standing, his fingers fumbling with his clothing. The next thing he knew he was also naked, walking unevenly toward the bed.

He could have been invisible: neither one of them acknowledged that he was there as he loomed over the bed, staring at them. They had no reaction as his weight dropped onto the bed, one knee at a time. He stretched his legs out and lay down next to Tasha, who was on her side, Rémy's dick still in her ass.

Only then did her eyes flutter open and meet his gaze. Rémy gave him a casual glance but went back to work on Tasha's neck and earlobe,

sometimes her mouth, licking and sucking at her as his hips moved slowly, working up to yet another good time.

Jeff stared at this for a while, not daring to disturb it, not sure if he should touch his wife while she had another man's cock inside of her. But his fingers wandered eventually, down her sternum, to her mound. He slipped his left hand into the sloshing wet, sticky and slippery mess of her engorged pussy. There was so much cum - Ethan's and her own - and her flesh was so swollen, that it felt foreign searching for her clit, like he had never touched her before or known her body intimately.

A cold shudder traveled along the back of his shoulders and through his core as he had a chilling thought - a micro-nightmare, a simple errant idea in a storm of mixed emotions: this really wasn't Tasha's same body anymore, at all.

Rémy began to fuck her, and so Jeff went to work, finding her clit at last. It was hard and seemed outrageously large, and Tasha's body quivered when he stroked it. He sank two fingers into the mush of her pussy, and ran his thumb over her clit. Her body rocked with the motion of Rémy fucking her, and only as her eyes seemed to darken and get wet, her face contorted by another incoming orgasm, did he lean forward and find her open mouth with his.

The kiss was foreign, as well, and yet familiar. Wetter, more open, and out of his control, because Tasha's body moved with the motion of another man's attention. Inside her pussy, he felt the pressure and the movement of Rémy's cock on his knuckles. He curled his fingers inward, and Tasha gasped. Her pussy clenched around him, spurting, and she yelled loudly, then bit into his lip. Her fingernails dug deeply and painfully into his shoulder.

Her body was rubbing against him, but that was all it took for his cock to explode, uselessly spewing his cum all over her thighs. Tasha

shuddered, and Rémy gained momentum. He pushed her onto her stomach, draped partially over Jeff, as he fucked her ass hard until he came. Tasha's body was limp, her mewls subdued, the shape of a smile wet on Jeff's pecs, as her body slid around on top of his until Rémy came again.

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They lay, all three of them exhausted, on the bed - Rémy still inside of Tasha and spooning her used body, for some time. After a while, it appeared that Tasha and Rémy were asleep. Jeff put his fingers on Tasha's lips and kissed her, and she opened her mouth to purr something incomprehensible at him.

He pushed himself up and out of the sodden bed, found his shorts - not his boxers - but didn't care. He put them on with some difficulty - he was exhausted, drunk, maybe still high, and shaking from the exertion of being out all night and participating in what was pretty much an orgy.

He stumbled out of the room, unsure what to do, but needing desperately to pee. He found the bathroom - in exactly the state you would expect from four bachelors on a wild vacation in Ibiza. He ignored the questionable grime and scattered toiletries and razors, toothbrushes and substances, and peed into the yellow-colored water, then opted not to flush and walked out into the corridor.

There were quite a few voices in the living room. He pushed gently on the door of the bedroom where they had sex, and started: Rémy was leaving the room, naked, and smiled at him before trotting to the bathroom.

He peeked inside. Tasha was sitting up on the edge of the bed, pushing her hair from her face. She smiled at him and yawned. "Mmm,"

she said. "What time is it?"

Jeff shrugged. Tasha looked around. "Can you go grab my dress?" she asked, sleepily. Then she smiled, and leaned back on the bed on one elbow. She waved her free arm dismissively and grinned. "I forgot to bring it with me. Sounds like the party's back on out there."

Jeff stared at her for a moment, uncomprehending.

He knew that they had made an agreement, together, that she should just follow her instincts and see where everything took them. And he knew that he had watched it all, his cock erect, without intervening, thereby adding his tacit approval to his implicit okay.

But somehow, he had still expected... something else. Something else from Tasha, who seemed like an entirely different person. It was one thing that she had seemed so different while she was fucking, and yet another that she now seemed so... blasé.

He stepped into the room and closed the door behind him, looking back as he did, like he was on a secret mission. "You okay?" he whispered.

He looked around for his shirt, more as a pretext than anything else.

"Mmmm," Tasha murmured, holding out her hand to him. "Are *you* okay?"

She grasped his hand when he reached out to her, and pulled him toward her. She put her lips on his stomach and brushed them over his abdomen, just above the rumpled waistline of his shorts. Her eyes snapped up to meet his, a mischievous smile on her lips.

He nodded numbly.

She moved her lips over his abdomen, dry and warm. She spoke as she did, her eyes still on his. "You're not... jealous, are you?"

He put a hand to her hair. "Well... yeah, but it's... you know. What I wanted."

He was stammering, his cock coming back to life and beginning to use up all of his energy, all of his blood.

"Mmm," Tasha murmured again, the meaning undecipherable. He felt the shape of her mouth as she smiled, and then parted her lips to flick her tongue at his burning skin. His cock jumped to life, grating on the rough interior of his shorts. "So you liked it?"

"Tasha," he breathed. He didn't know if she was getting going again. Or what he would do if she was.

Tasha abruptly leaned back on her elbow again, her tits bouncing a little. "Go get my dress for me," she said. "I need to pee."

He almost objected, remembering the state of the bathroom. But she would need her dress either way, so he decided to go out and collect it.

When he entered the living room, Ethan was perched on a chair and drinking a beer. Dan and Kris were doing something with a phone and the speakers, while the two girls were dancing. He was surprised that the girls didn't pay him any mind.

"There he is," Ethan said, raising his beer bottle toward Jeff, who had sighted Tasha's skirt and was bending over to pick it up. "Cheers, man."

Dan had stopped what he was doing with the phone to stare at Jeff. Then he grinned, and went back to what he was doing.

"Natasha sleeping?" Ethan asked, as Jeff walked back toward the corridor.

Jeff held up a hand as he walked away, shrugging his shoulders, a non-committal answer for an answer he didn't feel like giving. He wasn't sure where this would all go from here, and "Natasha" kept him, and everyone else, on their toes.

Tasha was sitting, cross-legged, leaning on both elbows, still at the edge of the bed. The morning light was curling around the edges of the cheap blinds in the window, and so he could see her body - the reddened

nipples, her skin shiny in patches and matte in other places, cum dried to her thighs and other places he might not even know about.

She stood up when he entered and yawned. She held her hands up without speaking, and so he slipped the dress over them and then, when she turned, he zipped the small zipper at the back. "I have to pee," she repeated, yawning.

"Yeah," Jeff said. "I, uh... wouldn't go in that bathroom if I were you."

She turned around slowly, blinking slowly at him, as if she hadn't understood. Then she shook her head quickly, like she'd had a terrible thought, and grimaced. "God no," she said. "I'm going to our place," she said.

Rémy appeared at the door at that moment, still naked.

Tasha smiled at him, and reached out her hand to flutter her fingers over his cock as she pressed against him to squeeze by. She kissed him, and smiled.

"Are you leaving me, Natasha?" Rémy asked, lifting a hand to trace the collar of her low-slung dress.

Tasha put a finger on his nose, swiping it. It was a condescending gesture, playful and cute, but done dismissively. "I am an old woman, Rémy darling. I'm going to bed."

Rémy seized her hips and tried to maneuver her back into the room, kissing her. "We have a bed right here," he told her.

Tasha lifted an arm to slide away from his grasp and out of the door. "Yeah, yeah," she said. And then she walked out, leaving Rémy to turn toward Jeff, who was standing with his shirt in his hand, dumbfounded. Rémy shrugged. "I have to attempt," he said, with a boyish smile. Then he threw himself on the bed face-first, with a groan.

Jeff followed his wife out into the living room.

"Natasha," Ethan was already complaining. "You can stay a little longer, can't you?" He raised his eyebrows and looked at the two, clueless, dancing girls in the middle of the living room floor. He rolled a hopeful shoulder toward them and arched his eyes hopefully.

Tasha glanced backwards at the girls and rolled her eyes. "Not my bag," she told him, smiling. "Dan, Kris," she said, without looking at them, holding up her shoes, which she had somehow collected. "Catch you later."

She leaned over on the wicker chair to kiss Ethan on the lips. It was a long, lingering kiss, and Dan and Kris stared openly at it, then shifted their eyes disbelievingly to Jeff. He shrugged. What else could he do?

And then Tasha - or rather, Natasha - strolled toward the door and exited. Jeff followed her.

As the door closed, he heard Ethan, in a loud, disbelieving voice.

"You guys... missed a fucking *epic* -"

But his words were muffled by the door, and that was the last thing Jeff heard.

*

Tasha tossed her shoes lazily by the door with a loud clunk and slinked toward the bathroom, pulling her now-rumpled dress over her head as she did. Jeff stared at her as she did so, the hinges on the door groaning loudly.

The image of Tasha walking to the bathroom, he realized, would be burned in his mind forever. It bled into the mental album he had curated that evening, seeping into each still frame he had captured from the club, from the guys' apartment. Tasha, her glitzy-black dress shimmering a little in the early morning light, her hair wild and beautiful, the new cut

suddenly salient and foreign and emblematic of the change in her. Stalking sexily, one foot in front of the other, like she was on a catwalk. A spring in her step, a swing in her hips, some kind of force clearly taking root inside of her. She was a changed and different person, a woman who could boss two young men around in the bedroom, and then waltz into the bathroom without looking back at her husband.

She seemed, in a word, *unencumbered*.

A girl's laugh tittered from the living room next door, and music resumed, the bass line the only audible thing. Jeff's ears were ringing from the club, and it was only in this moment that he noticed it - a kind of loud deafness. It was emblematic as well: of how far out of his normal life he had just been, how misplaced he had felt.

The shower was on when he crept into the bathroom. Tasha was standing under the shower-head, letting the brackish water pour all over her glorious body, eyes closed, a contented smile on her face.

He shimmied out of his clothes, and Tasha's eyes opened slowly. When she saw him, she smiled, sleepily, as if this was any ordinary morning, any ordinary day.

"Do you have room in there for me?" he asked. The question was a natural one, the kind of question he always ventured to ask when Tasha was in the shower and he happened to be in the bathroom, too. He said it without thinking about it, the way couples say "I love you," at the end of a phone call. The question itself was a reflex, a habit.

But as soon as it left his lips, he felt the profound importance of it in this moment. Or more importantly, the profound importance of Tasha's answer. A chasm of terror opened up inside of him, and he teetered at the edge of it. Like the earth had opened up beneath his feet, and he was now waiting for Tasha to tell him if he would fall.

Because it wasn't really so much about the shower, or whether or not

Tasha, after all the wild sex she'd just had, was still up for sex with him (though he was, with her). In his mind, in that terrifying pause between his question and Tasha's answer, the question was far more existential than that.

He didn't really know this woman in the shower. He had played his part in conjuring her, and believed that it was what he wanted, and there was no doubt that the titillation of his sexual fantasy had not disappointed at all.

But he hadn't - even at this ripe old age, he realized miserably - thought ahead any further than an adolescent male would.

Because now, there was a different woman in his shower.

And he really didn't know if she had room "in there" for him.

Tasha's eyes still bore traces of her high and intoxication, and so they looked dark in the bathroom - she hadn't turned on the light. Water coursed down her skin and she put one hand up to smooth her hair back. Her mascara was long gone, only a smudge of smoky black remained in the corner of one eye, almost like she had placed it there.

His heart was careening through the void of the universe as he waited, his breath caught in his chest, feeling like an icy lump.

She smiled. The smile was not revealing, it was still a mystery. Behind it was the newfound power that Tasha clearly felt - and which, to be fair, she possessed, and wielded magnificently. The only question lingering in the humid, thickening air was whether Tasha's power would still accommodate her husband Jeff.

She turned slowly, and his heart plummeted to his feet. For a terrifying moment he thought this might be her answer: nothing. Nothing but a smile, and an unknowable one.

But she kept turning, her hands up at her chest in the same way she always took showers - for too long, and very pointlessly, if anyone had

ever asked Jeff even a week ago. He dropped his eyes to her ass, a flashback of Rémy's cock sawing in and out of it washing over his field of vision. But she kept turning, back to face him, smiling now with a more familiar smile.

"There's room," she said, her voice gravelly with lack of sleep, and probably, he sensed, at least one cigarette with the very caricatured Frenchman. She held up a finger and grinned. "But please don't forget that sex in the shower has never worked out for us."

He was already stepping in to the tiny compartment, his hands seeking the curves of her body.

And then, seized by energy from some unknown source, he grinned devilishly.

"Maybe not for Jeff and Tasha," he said, and delighted in how her eyes widened in surprise. "But what about Natasha?"

She turned sexily, looking over her shoulder, her bottom bumping against his thigh, his erect cock. Her eyes dropped to look at it, then back up. She smiled mysteriously.

"Natasha is different."

EPILOGUE

She woke up very late, around twelve, and demolished almost all the non-alcoholic beverages in the house, drinking them from the bottle with the fridge open to cool herself off. Jeff was still out cold. She surveyed the water situation and decided that she needed to pop down to the small store at the corner by the beach for more drinks, because if Jeff was even half as thirsty as she was, they wouldn't have enough.

She put on her loose red cover-up and nothing else, which would have been scandalous to her even three days earlier. But she liked the feel of it; walking almost naked in the heat, the ocean breezes snaking up her legs and between her thighs, nothing but thin fabric hiding the outline of her nipples.

She knew she should have felt terrible: she drank too much, she smoked a few cigarettes, she had taken a few pills, and then there was the soreness between her legs. An unfamiliar discomfort, a reminder of what she had done.

But she felt fine. If anything, she felt invigorated, like the clock had been set back decades on her life in many ways - and yet, she also felt much the same.

Last night had been reckless and wild, but she had a deep sense of calm about it. She bought five liters of juice and water, and strolled along

with a lollipop she had snagged at the last minute, feeling weightless.

When she got back to the condo building, she could hear a commotion from the boys' condo. She hesitated, but only momentarily: maybe a younger woman would have been unable to face the guys she had an orgy with last night, or felt awkward, but Tasha was pleased to discover that she simply didn't care. It was all exactly what it was: a fling, a good time, a purely physical escape. And that liberated her from everything else.

Long ago, before she had met Jeff, she had always tried to make something of one-night stands, even if she had gone into them recognizing them for what they were. But there was nothing else she needed or wanted from these guys.

They were piling out of the open door when she walked up the steps. Dan saw her first, as he tossed a backpack out into the hallway and held the door open.

"Uh, Natasha," he said, almost sheepishly.

She smiled, holding up her grocery bag, and popped the lollipop out of her mouth. "Needed water," she explained.

"I think, uh... Rémy is looking for you," Dan stammered.

She smiled as she walked past him, fishing her key out of a large pocket on her right hip. She sneaked a peek into the condo, where the disorder of young travelers leaving in a hurry reigned. She smiled at Dan. "I'll be on the porch," she told him.

She didn't hurry. A lot of thumping and cussing could be heard next door, reminding her of her own travels when she was younger - her own time in Ibiza, as a matter of fact, when she and her friend Marie had woken up half an hour before their flight was supposed to leave because they had stayed up all night. A memory of the foggy-headedness, the tiredness, the dizzy still-drunkenness, of such mornings, wove her into a

temporary fog.

She was glad those days were behind her, to be honest.

She made a coffee and strolled out to the patio, sitting down on a chair and crossing her legs with her ankles on another in front of her. It was the kind of casual coolness she would have given anything to exude in her younger days, and it felt satisfying that it was real.

Rémy popped his head out of the patio, and then disappeared, before returning again with a cigarette - a pre-rolled one, which he lit. "Natasha," he said.

"You aren't leaving on my account, I hope," she said, taking a sip of her coffee.

Rémy inhaled and squinted at the sun. "We leave because this idiot, Ethan, makes a mistake on the reservation." He sat down on the low wall and swung his legs over, then helped himself into the chair where Natasha was resting her feet. He began to massage them. "But if Madame Natasha wants Rémy to stay..." he said, in a seductive voice that seemed exactly half-joking.

Tasha smiled and let him massage her feet.

Ethan came out next, and glowered a little at them before raising his eyebrows hopefully. "Oh hey, Natasha," he said.

"Hey yourself," Tasha said. "Where are you headed?"

"Amsterdam," Rémy answered for him, grinning. He turned his head to glance at Ethan, who sat on the wall, but did not come over. "Natasha says I can stay and be her pool boy."

Ethan laughed, but a momentary look of concern flitted across his face.

"Hmm," Tasha said. "I don't have a pool."

"Guys," Kris said, popping his head out. He scanned the scene, lifted a hand to Natasha, and looked mildly disturbed for a moment. "We, uh,

have to be out of here like, twenty minutes ago. Hi, Natasha."

Rémy arched his eyebrows and extricated himself from the chair, gently setting Tasha's feet on it.

"Well," he said. "Then, we go."

Ethan looked at Tasha. "Can we, uh, leave you our phone number or email or something?"

Rémy muttered something in French and hopped over the wall, slapping Ethan as he went.

Tasha smiled and shook her head. "I don't need a pen pal," she told him, with a kooky smile.

Ethan liked this, and he mimed tipping his hat to her. "Okay then...uh, bye."

They filed into the condo.

Rémy turned as he went into the house. "Goodbye, sexy neighbor Natasha. I will never forget you."

"Yeah, yeah," Tasha said, bringing the coffee cup to her lips.

"She's trying to forget you already," Ethan said, shoving him into the condo. "Later, Natasha."

She shook her head to herself, pleased with how it all worked out, and sipped the coffee.

Ethan popped his head back out. "Hey Natasha," he called. "Who won? Your experiment?"

Tasha gave her head a shake, enjoying the way her new haircut moved her hair around. She knew what she looked like, in that moment, and it was gloriously fun.

For a moment, her mind faltered: what could she say to that?

Rémy peeked over Ethan's shoulder and grinned, like he was encouraging a vote for himself.

The answer came to her just then, and she lifted the coffee "mug"

with two hands, her fingers delicately on the basket and the fine glass. She blew on it, smiling. Leaving them hanging for just a moment, enjoying the final moment of teasing, fun suspense.

"Oh, boys," she said, with a grin. "Jeff did."

END