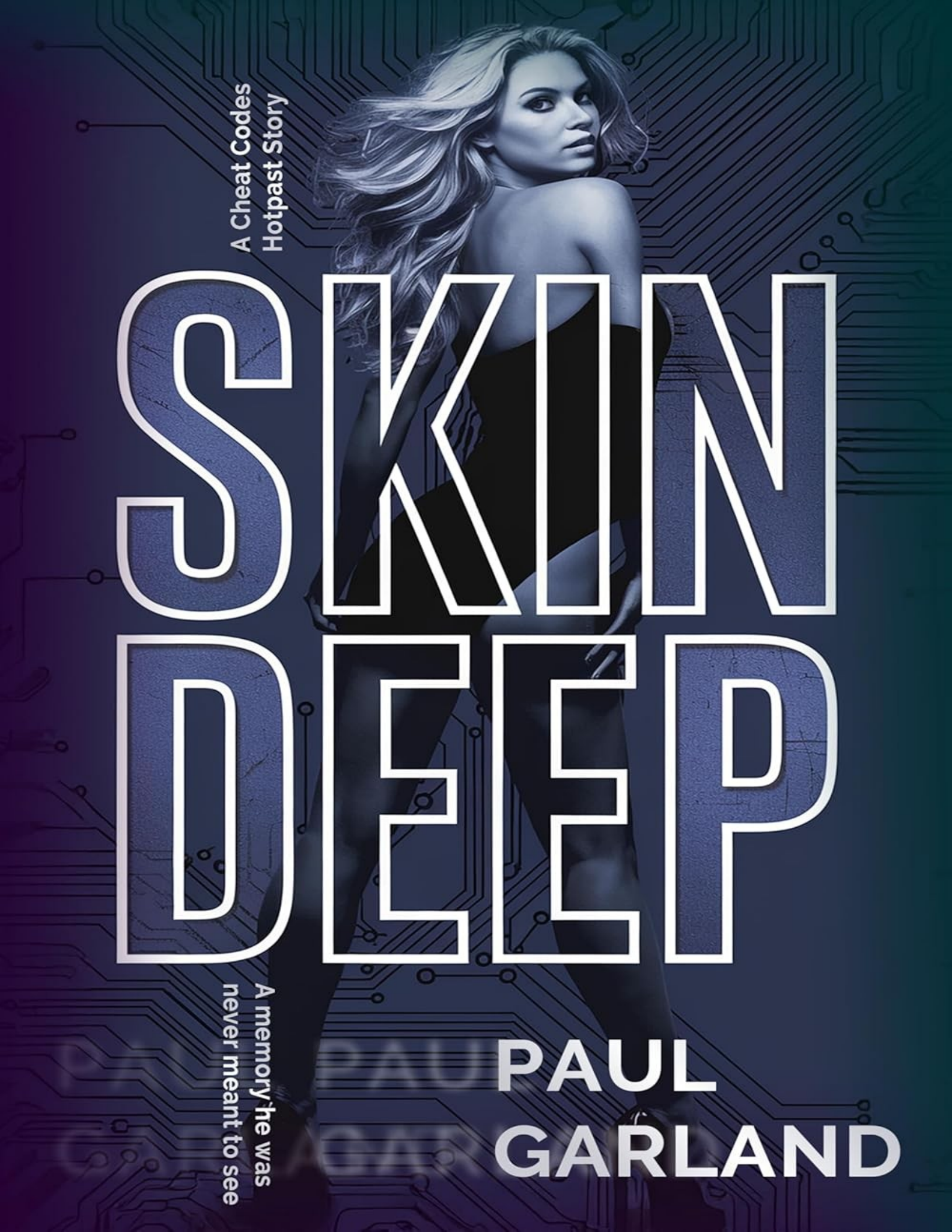


A Cheat Codes
Hotpast Story

A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is shown from the waist up, wearing a black, strapless, form-fitting dress. She is looking back over her right shoulder towards the camera. The background is a dark blue and purple gradient with a white circuit board pattern. The title 'SKIN DEEP' is written in large, white, outlined, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

SKIN DEEP

A memory he was
never meant to see

PAUL
GARLAND

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Foreword

Writing in the Cheat Codes universe has been one of the most satisfying things I've ever done as an author.

From the very first book, I knew I wanted a world where cutting-edge neurotech and VR weren't just background flavour, but the engine that drives desire, temptation, memory, and identity.

Hard Core and Safe Word let me dig into the darker, more speculative side of that—what happens when you can edit memories, sell experiences, rewrite who you are.

At the same time, I've always been obsessed with hotwife and cuckold dynamics: jealousy and trust tangled together, love and betrayal sitting side by side, the thrill of watching someone you adore step over a line... and then trying to live with what that does to you. Building stories where those emotional landmines sit on top of bleeding-edge tech has been a ridiculous amount of fun.

This book is me leaning fully into both halves of that obsession. It's set in the same universe as Cheat Codes, Hard Core, Safe Word and The Formula, but it's also a very intimate story about one couple—about what happens when porn stops being abstract and becomes

personal, when fantasy collides with the person you share a bed with.

If you've followed the series this far, thank you. You've let me push deeper into this world, into its tech and its kinks, and that's a gift I don't take lightly. I hope this book gives you everything you came for: the heat, the angst, the messed-up feelings, the fucked-up choices—and, underneath all of it, a love story that feels earned.

Thanks for buying the book, for reading, and for trusting me with your time and your imagination.

I hope you enjoy it.

Paul

Elysium's Skin Deep: The Future of Experience Sharing?

Published in TechToday – August 14, 2032

By Rachel Henshaw, Senior Technology Correspondent In just eight years, Elysium Technologies has transformed from a bold startup into a multi-billion-dollar powerhouse, re-shaping how society interacts with memories and experiences.

At the heart of their meteoric rise is Skin Deep, an advanced neuro-implant that allows users to record, relive, and purchase the experiences of others.

Once a luxury novelty for the ultra-rich, Skin Deep has expanded its reach, offering high-end subscription plans that include everything from extreme sports simulations to celebrity encounters. With the simple application of a NeuroLink Crown, users can experience the

thrill of skydiving, the rush of a championship fight, or the intimacy of a passionate romance—all without ever leaving their homes.

“Experience without consequence,” boasts the company’s official tagline. And investors seem to agree—the company’s stock price has nearly tripled in the last 24 months.

However, concerns about ethical implications linger. Critics argue that Elysium blurs the lines between experience and reality, while regulators continue to debate whether the sale of intimate or dangerous memories should be more strictly regulated.

For now, the demand for Skin Deep shows no signs of slowing down. The question remains—how far is too far when living beyond your limits?

Chapter One

I sank into the couch, the familiar creak of leather welcoming me home after another long day at the engineering firm. At 38, I felt like a man reborn. I was thinner in the face, thinner all over, actually, though my chest carried heavy scars from the surgery.

But I was alive, and hungry for life in ways I hadn't been in years. The heart condition had come out of nowhere a year ago, a genetic time bomb that nearly flatlined me on the kitchen floor.

Joanna had been my rock, scrambling for every dollar when our insurance fell short. Then her uncle passed suddenly, leaving her an inheritance that felt like an act of God at the time, perfect timing, covering the surgery. It also paid for the Hard Core Chip and NeuroLink Crown for my virtual rehab, and we still had some left over. She used that for her long-wanted boob job, once we were comfortable that my procedure had been successful. It was a kind of celebration for what we'd been through, a treat for both of us. You never wish death on anyone, but her uncle's inheritance had saved us. She'd called it our good fortune. I'd called it a miracle and had been grateful ever since.

Now she stood in the kitchen doorway, a sight to behold in yoga pants that hugged her hips and a loose tank top that strained just right over her new 36DDs. The breast augmentation had been something she'd wanted for a while, not that there was anything wrong with her B-cups before that. The operation was obviously a lot simpler than mine, but it went as smoothly as we could have hoped for, and within just a couple of weeks, I got to play with them, once they'd settled down from the inflammation.

"Something fun for us now that you're back," she'd said. We'd fucked like teenagers that night, my hands rediscovering her body, fuller

and heavier tits, enjoying the way they stood high on her chest and how they bounced when we made love. Our sex had reignited since then, though it was slow at first, me building stamina after my heart issues, but she was patient with me.

I was still getting fitter and healthier, but it was still frustrating that with my new lease of life, my libido had roared past my ability to fuck like I wanted. I wanted dirtier, to last longer.

Rougher. More spontaneous. I'd get there in time. Joanna seemed happy to wait.

"Dinner's pasta primavera," my wife said, wiping her hands on a towel. Her honey-blonde hair fell in waves past her shoulders, framing a face that still made my pulse kick, full lips, hazel eyes that sparkled when she teased me. "Do you want a glass of wine, or are we being healthy and having juice?"

I grinned, patting the cushion beside me. "Come here first."

She laughed, sauntering over with that sway I loved, dropping onto my lap and looping her arms around my neck. Her breasts pressed soft and heavy against my chest, nipples faintly visible through the thin fabric. I cupped one, thumb circling lazily, feeling her breath catch.

"Greg," she murmured, but she arched into my touch, grinding down just enough to feel my growing hardness. "Food first.

I'm starving."

"Aww, I was hoping for a quickie on the sofa." I kissed her neck, nipping the skin below her ear, the spot that always made her squirm. "I love you, Jo. More and more every damn day."

She softened, cupping my face. "I love you too, my miracle man. Now let's eat before it gets cold."

Dinner was filled with easy chatter, her day at the marketing agency, my latest project deadlines, plans for a gentle weekend hike to continue my rehab. Our marriage was affectionate, comfortable, sometimes too much so, but I knew there were plenty of people who would envy what we had. Then, as we cleared the plates away together, Joanna glanced at her watch. "It's girls'

night at Sarah's tonight. Book club, wine, the usual. I'll be home by eleven as usual. You didn't forget, did you?"

I shook my head, though it was a lie. I couldn't remember her telling me. "Yes, no worries. Drive safe. I'll be fine for a few hours. I might watch the football."

She kissed me deep, making my dick ache with need, then grabbed her purse and heels and spritzed herself with a floral-smelling perfume. Then the door clicked shut, and it was just me and the house.

Instead of watching TV, I headed upstairs, into my small office, and locked the door. This space had been my sanctuary since returning home from the hospital. The NeuroLink Crown sat on its charging stand, our specialist 'rehab model' a sleek matte black with neural filaments that unfolded like glowing blue spider legs, straight out of those old Elysium demos before the technology went mainstream.

Joanna had insisted on it post-surgery. "I know it's expensive, but you suffered some vascular brain trauma during the cardiac arrest. These things are great for cognitive rehab, babe. The programs keep those pathways sharp and help grow new brain cells. And then you can use it for the physical rehab, too. They link to the treadmill, and you can imagine you're running or jogging around any city in the world."

I watched a few videos on it, attended the sales meeting and was sold. It took a chunk of her uncle's money, but it was totally worth it. I'd used it first for meditation apps, then mental agility games and

physical coordination sharpeners, then the walking simulators. It was an impressive bit of kit. The headset fitted snugly over your head and connected via the glowing neural filaments to a small cranial implant and into the synapses of your brain. It wasn't just a visual stimulus that the Elysium technology gave you. No, the headset overrode all five senses. Once activated, you could see, hear, smell, taste and even feel everything the program fed to you.

When in the walking simulator, you weren't suddenly just in a simulated environment to your eyes, you hear the noises of wherever you were, you could smell and taste the fresh air. You could feel the warmth of the sun or the bite of the wind on your skin, the earth beneath your feet. NeuroLink Crowns took you to another world. It was incredibly vivid and real. I could spend hours in the headset, and had, at first. A function of the headset called 'Skin Deep' was another escape from the reality of my damaged body. This allowed you to connect directly to the memory core of your brain, record memories, and relive the memories of other people. For people with physical impairments, re-learning physical movements by simply importing memories was a godsend. But it had more use cases than purely medical.

Online, there were repositories of hundreds of thousands of memories, sold by other users. The first one I bought was a professional rock climber free-soloing El Capitan, the 3000-foot high rock face in Yosemite. No GoPro camera was needed here. I got to feel the chalk on his hands, the sweat on his brow, hear the squawks of the birds circling below me as I neared the top, all through the original climber's senses, directly from his memory.

It was unbelievable.

I became an astronaut, spacewalking on the outside of the ISS.

I became a ski jumper, soaring through the air in Canada. I did it all.

And then, one day, I jacked my headset into my PC and used it to access the internet, a simple enough procedure, allowing you to download third-party apps and more onto the tech. And that's when I stumbled upon a site called 'Deep Dive.' At first, I thought it was an underwater scuba thing, but as soon as I clicked through the age verification checks, I realised what it was.

Porn.

Lots and lots and lots of porn.

Real memories of people having sex.

And not just sex, but every kind of sex you wanted. Straight one-on-one, guys with their wives, wives with their husbands, with their lovers. Threesomes, foursomes, sex in extreme places.

Risk-takers, voyeurs, exhibitionists. People in cars, in elevators, everywhere and anywhere, these people were fucking and then selling the memories.

I'd told Joanna about the legit stuff, the sports experiences, the adrenaline junkie memories you could vicariously enjoy. She'd explained the dangers of that, of losing yourself in it, and I'd listened and taken it on board. It was addictive—and expensive—so I'd been sensible, resisted the temptation to try everything I could lay my hand on.

But Deep Dive? A treasure trove of underground Skin Deep experience? I couldn't help myself.

Elysium, the makers of this tech, tried to hide this dirty secret, but as soon as I researched it, I found out it was the worst-kept secret in the world. The only thing that held it back from being even more prevalent in the public consciousness was the price.

Hard Core chips and NeuroLink Crowns didn't come cheap, they were out of the reach of most people's finances. And then the porn stuff was expensive too. Some of them were more than a week's wages for the average citizen. The legit stuff was curated, faces blurred, voices changed. But the darker forums that I soon found had raw bootlegs, full faces, no scrub, pure filth peddled by hackers who'd cracked the DRM.

So, this was what I did when Joanna was out. My body wasn't quite up to the hot, sweaty, rough, committed sex that I wanted just yet. But I didn't need it to be, when I could enjoy that virtually through Skin Deep and Deep Dive.

I stripped down to my boxers, fitted the Crown, and synced it to my PC rig. The filaments hummed against my scalp, a faint prickle as the world dissolved into HUD menus. My dealer, a guy I'd met on the forums, SynapseJack, anonymous handle only, had pinged me earlier. Apparently, there was some massive buzz around a leaked Skin Deep recording.

Dude, you have to check this out. You've heard of Krissy Saffron, right? The rock chick? Well, get your dick out and prepare to be mind-blown.

The file below was titled and subtitled: Krissy Saffron VIP Afterparty Raw.

Full and uncensored. The superstar rock hottie gets wrecked by Rick Hazzard and his crew. Revenge leaked for the divorce? Who cares? You don't want to miss this.

Krissy fucking Saffron. She was hot as fuck, with big tits, red hair, and the attitude to go with it. The tabloids were still chew-ing on her divorce from Rick, but this? Wow.

I pinged a message back, asking how much, and an automated reply hit my inbox almost immediately.

Who doesn't want to fuck Krissy? Now you can. Yours for 200 creds. Expensive but worth it. Oh, there's a bonus 'real wives' pack thrown in, too.

200 creds. Ouch. That was a lot. A monthly grocery shop, right there.

But it was Krissy Saffron. SynapseJack was right. Who hadn't fantasised about her, wondering what her tits were like, her pussy? The noises she made when she got fucked?

I transferred the creds, the files downloading in seconds. I selected the flagship file first, the VIP Aftershow Party featuring Krissy fucking Saffron, my heart thudding with excitement. I felt the familiar fuzziness creep in at the edges of my vision, in my fingertips, the slightly acrid smell in my nostrils and the distant white noise in my ears as the NeuroLink Crown took over my senses.

I pulled my dick out of my shorts, stiff already in anticipation, the heat of it pleasant in my hand.

Here we go.

Chapter Two

The immersion slammed me in. Skin Deep stuff wasn't flat video, it was a full sensory override, and this was Elysium's neural mapping at its sleaziest.

The palm trees told me before the text overlay ever did that this was from her Miami concert. The humid Florida poolside air was thick with chlorine, weed smoke, and sweat. A bassline thumped into my ears from a massive party sound system, speakers stacked on top of each other on a marble patio nearby.

I looked down. My borrowed body felt and looked tall and muscled as I strode past the velvet rope into what I could only de-cribe as VIP chaos. Strobe lights pulsed, making the assembled crowd move almost like robots. A bottle of Champagne popped nearby, and my eyes locked onto a group of hot female models in bikinis that laughed throatily, gathered around a guy in black shades and a gold chain that was probably worth more than my house.

Then I saw Krissy. Her flame-red hair was wild, catching in the hot breeze, her red lipstick smeared, still wearing her end-of-concert costume, a black rock T-shirt ripped at the seams with a red bra beneath, and a tiny plaid miniskirt that grazed her stocking tops. She was standing with her husband, the Playboy mil-lionaire, Rick Hazzard, and when the two of them saw me, they nodded, recognising whoever's memories I was replaying.

"You got a drink?" Krissy purred, and my head nodded. "Then let's fucking go."

My temporary body followed them through the huge double doors of whoever's home this was and into a plush room with leather sofas and a massive holo-screen showing footage of Krissy onstage. At the far end of the room, ceiling-to-floor glass doors opened onto a

private outdoor lounge and an infinity pool hanging over the Miami skyline.

A scary-looking bald-headed doorman nodded us through, then closed the door behind us.

Rick didn't waste time. He pulled Krissy against him, hands sliding up under her ripped T-shirt, yanking it over her head in one smooth motion. The red bra followed seconds later, tossed carelessly onto the marble floor. Her tits spilled free—full, heavy, pale with pink nipples already hard from the night air. She gasped as Rick's mouth found one, sucking roughly while his hands worked the miniskirt down her hips, then tugged down the tight black safety shorts beneath. I gazed at her, enjoying the sight of her famous body, uncovered for the first time, just stocking tops and her bare, waxed pussy above them.

"Fuck, you're already wet," Rick growled, fingers sliding between her thighs and into her soft folds.

Krissy laughed, breathless. "I've been wet since dancing with that hot fucking dancer during the encore. Now get those jeans off before I change my mind about this."

"Are you watching?" Rick asked me, whoever I was, then stripped fast, kicking off his purple designer shoes and peeling away the rest of his fancy clothes until he stood naked, his long, thick cock already hard.

Why do some guys have it all? I thought to myself. Rich, famous, able to have his pick of whoever he wanted, whenever he wanted to fuck them. And he had a big cock. Typical.

My head nodded, and Krissy dropped to her knees on the cushioned lounger, taking him into her mouth, oh, so slowly, moaning around his shaft like she was savouring every inch. My borrowed body just stood there, and I could feel my hearts pounding, both my real life

one back home and the one in this memory. Similarly, both cocks were straining against my pants as I watched the rockstar work her husband's shaft.

Then Rick pulled her up, spinning her around and bending her over the edge of the lounge. I enjoyed the sight of her smooth pussy lips from behind for a moment, then he slammed into her, no hesitation, no finesse, and Krissy's scream echoed across the pool, half pleasure, half shock.

"Yes! That's it. It's your pussy, Rick. Fuck your rockstar wife's pussy," she gasped, pushing back to meet every brutal thrust. Her tits swung beneath her, red hair whipping as Rick gripped her hips hard, his finger digging into the tight flesh.

"So many men around the world want this tight little hole,"

Rich purred, glancing at me. "But it's mine, I own it. I get to fuck it whenever I like. Krissy Saffron is my little slut."

"Yes, I'm a little slut," she giggled, then groaned as he rammed into her powerfully. "Your little slut."

I could barely feel my real hand stroking my cock back in the office; most of my senses were locked ever-tighter into this borrowed body, the humid air, the slap of skin on skin, Krissy's moans rising higher.

Rick pulled out suddenly, flipping her onto her back on the lounge. She spread her legs wide, pussy glistening and swollen, and he drove back in missionary, kissing her deep while he fucked her with a steady, punishing rhythm. Her nails raked down his back, legs wrapping around his waist.

"Get over here," Krissy panted, eyes finding me. "Clothes off.

Now. Before he changes his mind."

My hands moved without thought, yanking off my shirt, fumbling with my belt. Within seconds, I was naked, cock jutting out hard and aching when I looked down. This new cock wasn't as big as Rick's but still an inch or so bigger than mine. Krissy reached for it, her fingers wrapping around my shaft, pulling me closer until I was standing right beside them.

"Sit," she ordered, pushing Rick off her. He moved to the side, stroking himself as Krissy slid off the lounge and positioned herself between my legs.

"We're really doing this, huh?" I heard myself say.

"I guess we are." Hazzard grinned at me. "A deal is a deal. The tour's been a success. She said she'd let you fuck her if you got her a world tour, and here we are. Krissy is a woman of her word, as much as it pisses me off to let you have her."

"You've always wanted to see me get fucked, don't lie." Krissy purred to her husband, then her mouth closed around my cock, hot and wet, tongue swirling around the head. I groaned as she took me deep, hands tangling in her famous red hair, feeling her throat constrict as she gagged slightly, then came up for air before going back down for more.

"Fuck her mouth," Rick said from beside me, voice thick with arousal. "She likes it rough."

I gripped her hair tighter, thrusting my hips forward, driving into her mouth, watching her eyes water as she took it all, moaning like she loved every second. Drool ran down her chin, smearing her lipstick further.

"Enough," Rick said after a few minutes of watching her give me incredible head. "Get on with it now. Fuck her. Let's see how this feels."

Krissy pulled off my cock with a wet pop, climbing onto the lounge and getting on all fours, ass high in the air. She looked to her husband first. "Before the main event, you mean?"

"I'll be the one to decide if that happens," he replied, nodding at me. "Go on then. Fuck her."

"Yes," she murmured sexily, looking back at me over her shoulder. "Do it. Make me scream."

I couldn't believe I was witnessing this, living this, getting to have sex with Krissy fucking Saffron. I'd already seen her naked, felt how good her blowjobs were, and now I was going to get to feel what it was like to fuck her.

I positioned myself on the lounge, gripping her hips, and pushed the head of my cock inside. She was tight, hot, perfect.

She moaned long and low as I filled her completely, then I started moving, slow at first, then faster, harder, feeling her pussy grip me with every thrust. Rick sat nearby, stroking himself as he watched, occasionally reaching out to slap Krissy's ass or pinch her nipples as I got into a rhythm.

"Yeah," Rick smiled. "I'm digging this."

"Me too," my voice replied, slightly breathless.

I kept fucking Krissy, feeling my balls tightening, getting close to the edge, though I wasn't sure whether it was the body I was inhabiting or the real one back in my office. Rick got up, fetched a cigar from his coat pocket and lit it, puffing out a ring of blue smoke into the Florida air.

"Kenny," he called out, the doorman's head poking through the door, his expression somehow not flinching when he saw the three of us, despite the fact that I was fucking Rick's wife.

“Yes, boss,” the big man replied in a rumbling low voice.

“What’s up?”

“The men that my wife picked out,” Hazzard replied, sending another puff of smoke towards me, the sweet tobacco aroma hitting the back of my throat as I breathed it in. “The dancer and the others. Send them in.”

The big man nodded, and the door closed again behind him.

The men Krissy picked out? Was this going to be a gangbang?

Then the door reopened behind us, and three more guys walked in, all younger, all well-built, good-looking like fashion models. Krissy glanced back, grinning wickedly even as I pounded into her harder, feeling myself getting closer by the second.

“The more the merrier,” she gasped. “I want all of you.”

“Just remember you signed the NDA,” Rick growled as the three men gathered in close, yanking off their clothes as if their lives depended on it.

One of the newcomers moved to her mouth, feeding her his average cock. Another positioned himself beside me, waiting for his turn. The third stripped and stroked himself, watching hungrily. He was Asian-looking, but his cock was huge, easily the biggest in the room.

I felt the guy in the memory cum, the feeling of his orgasm ripping through his body, and I watched him pull out, the first rope of cum flying over Krissy’s perfect ass. I could also feel my real cock throbbing, balls tight, ready to explode, and so I fought for control of my arms and yanked the Crown off quickly.

The office snapped back into focus, my other hand slick around my cock, right on the edge. I forced myself to stop, breathing hard,

letting the sensation fade slightly. Two hundred creds were too much to blow in one sitting. The small HUD in the corner of the screen indicated that there was still another hour left in the experience. I needed to save the rest, milk this experience over days, maybe weeks.

Besides, I still had the bonus slutty wife pack to explore.

I placed the Crown back over my head. It had reset to the main menu, as it always did when you took it off, and I pulled up the HUD to scan the titles again.

Married MILF Begs for BBC Hotel Raw, Behind Her Husband's Back.

Suburban Wife Gangbanged at Spa, Her Husband In The Hotel Room, Thinking She's Having A Massage.

Cheating Housewife Takes Two Bulls, Bareback, While Her Husband Is At Work.

I picked the first wife file at random, Married MILF Begs for BBC Hotel Raw, the glowing filaments locking back in against my skull.

Miami had gone, and my office disappeared again, too. Now I was in a sleek hotel suite, one of the Cerulean range, judging by the signature citrus scent, minimalist décor and the room service menu with the bold blue logo. The king-sized bed was ruffled, sheets twisted like someone had already been rolling around on them. Beyond the tall glass-and-chrome balcony doors, the New York City skyline glittered, the Empire State Building lit up in the distance.

A blonde woman in a red dress stood with her back to me, pouring Champagne into two crystal flutes on the nightstand. She laughed low, a sound that tickled something in my memory, then turned slowly.

She wore a mask, one of those elegant Venetian-style things you see at masquerade parties or swingers' clubs, black lace covering her eyes and the bridge of her nose, secured with a silk ribbon tied at the back of her head. Her blonde hair fell in waves past her shoulders, lips painted deep crimson, smiling wickedly.

"Finally," she purred, stepping toward me with a crystal flute extended. "I was starting to think you weren't coming."

The voice. Something about it made my pulse spike, but I couldn't place it; my mind was fuzzy, too deeply immersed. The man whose body I was inhabiting must know her well. She handed me the glass, fingers brushing mine deliberately, then turned and walked toward the bed, hips swaying. The red dress clung to every curve, showing off an ass I felt I should recognise.

She set her own glass down and reached behind her back, slowly unzipping the dress. It slid down her body like water, pooling at her feet. She wasn't wearing a bra. Her tits were modest but perky, her pale skin glowing in the soft hotel lighting, and there, just beneath her left breast, a small mole.

My stomach dropped.

No.

It couldn't be.

She turned slightly, stepping out of the dress, revealing she wore nothing underneath except black lace-top stockings with a suspender belt. And there on her inner thigh, the childhood scar from when she'd fallen off her bike at twelve and needed stitches. She'd shown it to me on our third date, a hot summer day, the red mark visible below the leg of her shorts. She'd laughed about how clumsy she'd been as a kid.

Joanna.

I tried to pull the Crown off, but my hands wouldn't obey. The experience held me locked in, my borrowed body moving forward as she crooked a finger at me.

"Come here," she said, her voice unmistakable now. That slight rasp when she was turned on, the way she drew out the word here like a promise. "My husband's finally getting healthy, but he's still in no position to fuck me properly. So, I want you to use this married pussy until I can't walk."

She dropped to her knees on the plush carpet, hands reaching for my belt—the bull's belt—and freed a thick black cock that definitely wasn't mine. She stroked it slowly, her skin pale against the dark shaft, looking up through the mask with those hazel eyes I'd stared into a thousand times.

"Fuck," she whispered, licking her lips. "You're even bigger than you said."

Her tongue flicked the tip, teasing, then she took me into her mouth, as warm, wet, and perfect as Krissy's had been. Joanna moaned around the shaft like she was savouring it, lipstick already smearing as she pushed deeper, gagging slightly before pulling back with a wet gasp.

"I want you to fuck my face first," she breathed, spit glistening on her lips. "Make me choke on it. It's been years since I enjoyed a cock this big."

The bull's hands—my hands in this body—gripped her blonde hair, and I thrust forward, watching her eyes water as she took it all, throat constricting. She didn't pull away. Instead, she moaned louder, one hand sliding between her thighs, fingering herself as I used her mouth. Streaks of mascara trailed from beneath the edges of the black lace mask.

I fucked her mouth, enjoying the gluck, gluck sound I'd never heard her make before. When I finally pulled out, she gasped for air, lipstick smeared across her face, drool running down her chin onto those smaller, pre-operation tits.

"Get on the bed. Now," the bull growled in a voice that wasn't mine. "I'm going to fuck your fucking brains out."

Joanna stood, laughing breathlessly, and bent over the edge of the mattress, her round ass high, her legs spread. Her lightly-haired pussy glistened in the low light, her lips pink and already wet. Her wedding ring caught the light as she reached back and spread herself open with both hands, showing her tight entrance.

The pussy that was married to me.

"Come on," she moaned. "Get your money's worth. Make me orgasm."

Your money's worth. The words hit like a punch to the gut.

The bull positioned himself behind her and slammed in bare, no condom, and Joanna's scream filled the suite. Her ass rippled with the impact, tits wobbling beneath her as he pounded into her without mercy. It was me pounding her without mercy, yet it wasn't.

"Yes! Oh fuck yes!" she cried, pushing back to meet every brutal thrust. "Harder! Wreck my married pussy!"

"Oh, I'm gonna wreck you, alright," I heard myself—the bull—say, voice thick with lust. "There's more money where this came from. I've got friends who'll gladly pay for married ass as good as this."

"Then bring them," Joanna gasped, her voice breaking. "I'll fuck them all if the price is right."

The bull pulled out suddenly, flipping her onto her back. She spread her legs wide, mask still in place, blonde hair fanned across the white sheets like a halo. He drove back in missionary, and she wrapped her legs around his waist, nails raking down his back.

"Make me cum," she begged. "Please, I need it. I haven't cum properly for so damn long."

The bull obliged, one hand sliding between her body and his to rub her clit in rough circles while he fucked her deep and steady. Within seconds, she was screaming, back arching off the bed, pussy clenching around him as she came hard.

It felt so fucking good.

But he didn't stop. He kept pounding through her orgasm, then pulled out and rolled her over again, positioning her on her hands and knees. This time when he entered her, it was slower, deliberate, letting her feel every inch.

"You like big cocks?" he asked, slapping her ass hard enough to leave a red handprint.

"Yes," Joanna moaned, voice muffled against the sheets. "I love it. I love being used by a real dick."

Another slap. Another thrust. She came again, sobbing with pleasure, her body trembling.

"Good. Because I got lots of friends with cocks like this."

"If they've got a dick like yours and money like yours, they can have me," my wife panted, her voice muffled as he shoved her face down into the pillow, fucking her roughly to shut her up.

Finally, the bull groaned, gripping her hips tight, and I felt the rush as he emptied himself inside her, cum flooding her married pussy

while she moaned and pushed back for every last drop. It felt so familiar, the same hole I'd cum inside hundreds of times before, and yet different. The way she'd responded to his cock was totally different to how she did with mine.

When he pulled out, his cock wilting, spent, Joanna collapsed onto the bed, breathing hard, cum leaking out of her, down her thighs and onto the expensive white linen sheets. She turned her head, smiling beneath the lace of the mask.

"Did you enjoy that?" she whispered. "Same time next week, bring a paying friend, maybe?"

I came, my real-life cock erupting cum all over my hand, and I yanked the Crown off.

The office snapped back, the harsh LED lighting, the hum of my computer, my own ragged breathing. My hand was still wrapped around my cock, cum splattered across my stomach and thighs. I felt dirty. Ashamed of myself for being turned on like that.

I stumbled to the bathroom, my shorts still halfway down my thighs, and retched into the sink, gripping the porcelain until my knuckles went white, emptying my stomach.

Joanna. The love of my life. My wife. My miracle worker. My Joanna. The woman who'd saved my life with her uncle's inheritance.

Had her uncle even died? She'd been whoring herself out. For me. For the surgery. For the money.

And I'd just watched it.

Chapter Three

I stared at the engineering code on my screen, the same function I'd been pretending to debug for the last hour. The cursor blinked mockingly at me. My coffee had gone cold.

I'd gone to bed straight after being sick last night, stumbling into our bedroom and collapsing fully clothed on top of the covers. Joanna must have come home later and slipped in beside me without waking me. I'd felt her there in the half-conscious moments before my alarm went off, her body warm, familiar, her breathing soft and steady. Normal. Like nothing had changed.

But everything had changed.

My sleep had been fractured, filled with disturbing dreams I couldn't quite remember. I recalled flashes of blonde hair and a red dress, that lacy mask and a Cerulean hotel room, merging dreams with reality. I think I'd dreamt that I was the stranger she'd fucked. I'd woken feeling like I hadn't slept at all, my head pounding and stomach still uneasy.

This morning, Joanna had been her usual self, singing to some old Harry Styles song while she made coffee, asking if I wanted the spare bagel she hadn't eaten. I'd responded on autopilot, keeping my answer to a short, "I'm not hungry," keeping my eyes anywhere but on her face.

"Are you okay?" she'd asked at one point, tilting her head with that concerned look that usually melted me.

"Yeah. I'm just tired. I had a couple of drinks while you were out, and they went straight to my head."

The lie had come easily. Too easily.

She'd accepted it without question, squeezing my hand before grabbing her purse. "Well, don't work too hard today. Love you."

"Love you too."

Then she kissed me on the cheek before heading to her marketing agency.

I knew I should confront her. She'd cheated on me. I'd spent all night thinking about it, but then a possibility had slipped into my mind. It might be me trying to cope, looking for hope, but what if the Skin Deep experience was an AI deepfake? They were everywhere, videos of people with faces overlaid onto theirs, even their bodies were modified to look like the real person.

But why would any deepfake Joanna? She wasn't anyone famous or worth blackmailing. No, it was probably real. Almost certainly real. But I had to be sure.

But how did I do that? I could confront her, show her. But how could I do that? I couldn't. Not without confessing I'd been using the Crown we'd spent a significant amount of money on to watch illegal black market Skin Deep porn. I couldn't, without admitting that the device meant for my cognitive rehab had become nothing more than a gateway to the sleaziest corners of Elysium's leaked archives.

How could I admit that I'd watched her—my wife, my miracle—on her knees in a Cerulean hotel suite, masked and eager, begging a stranger to wreck her married pussy for money? That I'd seen her bent over a bed, wedding ring glinting as a bull bred her bare while she moaned like a whore?

And worse—so much worse—I couldn't tell her that despite the betrayal, despite the lies, despite everything... I was insanely, shamefully aroused by what I'd seen.

My phone buzzed. A text from Joanna:

Thinking about you. Dinner at home tonight? I'll cook your favourite.

I typed back:

Sounds good. We can eat and talk.

Then set the phone face down on my desk, my hands shaking.

Another text came through:

Talk about what?

The image of her wouldn't leave me. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw her: blonde hair all messed up, the look of lust in her hazel eyes, her tits swaying as she took that thick black cock from behind. I could still hear the sounds she'd made. Desperate, filthy, dirty talk I'd never heard her say in years.

"Get your money's worth. Make me orgasm."

The words looped in my brain like a virus.

She'd done it for me. To save my life. The surgery had been astronomically expensive even with insurance, and we'd been drowning in debt. She must have seen it as the only way out.

Even understanding why she'd done it, I should have been furious. I should have felt sick with betrayal. But when I'd locked my office bathroom during lunch and jerked off thinking about it, I'd cum harder than I had in months.

What the fuck was wrong with me?

I texted her back, realising I couldn't leave her hanging like that.

Nothing. You know, just talk like we do.

I'd figure this out, one way or another, but texting wasn't the way to do it.

By mid-afternoon, I'd made my decision. I couldn't confront Joanna, not yet, not without more information. But I could dig deeper. I could find out the truth.

I opened the encrypted chat app on my phone and messaged SynapseJack, the guy who'd sold me the Skin Deep pack.

Hey. That file you sent, Married MILF Begs for BBC Hotel Raw.

It was so damn hot. I need to know more about it. Who's the actress? When was it filmed? Are there more?

The reply came within minutes.

Actress? Lol. These aren't pros, man. These are real people.

Real sex tapes leaked from Elysium's archive. Someone on the inside dumped a batch of amateur married wife sessions the other day. That one's been popular. I think I sold it 50+ times easily.

Fifty. Fifty strangers had lived that memory. Fifty men had experienced fucking my wife from another man's perspective.

My heart ached, but my cock stirred. I typed out a new message, needing confirmation.

So these things aren't AI? Deepfakes? Are they real people? Are there more with the same wife?

My hands were shaking again. I took a drink of my cold coffee, waiting for the reply.

AI? Nah. These are real memories sold by people with Hard Core Chips, along with the interface for doing it. As for others with her in it, let me check the metadata.

My heart sank. It really was her, if I could trust his word, at least. I sat staring at the phone, waiting for an update, then nearly jumped out of my skin when it buzzed just a few minutes later.

Yeah, looks like her in these other sessions. They all have the same donor ID. Looks like 4-5 sessions total. Different dates, looks like different guys, but could all be her. Without sitting and watching them all, it's hard to tell. Want the set? 500 creds.

500 creds was a ridiculous amount of money.

I didn't hesitate.

Send them all.

My pulse was pounding in my ears. I couldn't believe this was actually happening.

Done. Check your headset inbox in 10. Enjoy, perv.

Joanna texted again around four.

I might be a little late, stuck at work, but I'll be home around 6.

I'm making your favourite, chicken parmesan. Then we can eat and talk, lol.

I had two hours.

I told my boss I wasn't feeling well — not really a lie — and headed home, my pulse still hammering in my ears the entire way. The SynapseJack files were waiting when I fired up my rig and slid the Crown over my head.

There were six videos total. I'd already seen the first, which was disappointing at first, but five more sat there, waiting.

I scanned the titles:

•Married Blonde Takes DP in Penthouse Suite •Hot MILF Fucked By Young 9" Stud

•Blonde Slut Bukkake Night

•Wife Gangbang, 4 Bulls Breed Her Raw

•Post-Upgrade Hotwife, New Tits, Same Whore That last one made my blood run cold. Post-Upgrade. If that one featured Joanna, it must have been filmed after her boob job.

After the surgery, when our money was supposedly secured.

After everything was paid off.

She'd gone back. Why? Was it just for the money, or was it for the thrill?

My mind was running away with me. First, I had to make sure these were all of Joanna. Synapse Jack had said he couldn't be sure.

I clicked on "Married Blonde Takes DP in Penthouse Suite," secured the Crown, hit the "activate" icon, and dropped in.

Another Cerulean hotel suite materialised around me. This one was bigger, more expensive-looking, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Central Park, and a massive king bed dominating the centre of the room. Soft music played from speakers that I couldn't see.

I was standing by the bed, and on the other side was a naked black guy. Something about him, not just his thick cock, intimidating even half-soft, told me that he was the guy I'd watched fuck her last night.

I looked down, my body was white, muscular, middle-aged, maybe, with a tribal tattoo sleeve. My cock, long and veiny, was already rock-hard, curving upwards, a drop of pre-cum glistening from the tip.

"I've been looking forward to this all week," the black guy said, his familiar voice confirming my suspicions about him being the guy I'd fucked her through in the last file.

"Me too."

My head turned to the bed, and there, between the two of us, was Joanna.

She wore the same black lace mask, but this time she was already completely naked except for sheer stockings and heels.

The small mole under her left breast was there, and the scar on her thigh. Her blonde hair was pinned up, showing off the curve of her neck. Her tits, smallish and pert, pre-surgery, bounced slightly as she moved, her cherry-pink nipples hard.

"And thank you," she purred, voice unmistakable as she turned to look straight at me, a feeling so unnerving that I felt like backing away. "Thank you for... investing in my husband's recovery. I promise you'll get everything you paid for."

The white guy — me — stepped forward, and Joanna swivelled gracefully onto her knees. I watched as my wife leaned forward and took the man's impressive cock, perhaps seven inches long, into her mouth, moaning around his shaft.

"She's good at sucking cock," the black man said, walking around the bed to stand alongside me. "Isn't she?"

"Fuck, yeah," I replied, another man's voice sounding alien in my mouth as Joanna's tongue wrapped around the head of the cock,

making me shiver in pleasure. "You can tell she's sucked a lot of dick."

"Not as many as you might think," my wife replied, pulling away and using her spittle to wank me off, then she turned and took hold of the black man's shaft, stroking him to get him hard.

"I'm married. This is fairly new for me. You're only my second and third to enjoy my services."

"Well, you must be a fast learner," the black guy groaned as Joanna leaned in and took his cock into her mouth next. Her hand felt incredible moving up and down my length.

I watched Joanna suck him until he was fully erect, his dark shaft glistening in the dark light, then she pulled off with a wet pop, grinning up at him. "I've had plenty of practice on my husband's dick in the past. He loves a blow job, but his dick doesn't compare to either of you."

The words punched through me. She'd never said anything like that to me. She'd never even hinted I wasn't enough. But here, masked and anonymous, she was someone else entirely.

Joanna alternated between the two of us, and I didn't know which was more exciting, having her suck my cock while wanking off the black man, or the other way around.

"Okay, let's fuck," the white bull—me—commanded, after a little while. "That's what I paid for, this sweet married pussy that Alfonso here sold me on."

"Oh, you'll get what you paid for," Joanna giggled as she turned onto all fours on the mattress, her beautiful, curvy ass high in the air, her shaved pussy already glistening slightly. "Because of my husband's condition, he can't really fuck at the moment. So I'm horny as hell."

“Well, it sounds like we’re helping each other out,” I replied as I moved behind her, gripping her hips, while Alfonso, if that was his real name, positioned himself in front of her face.

I watched as the man I was inhabiting put the circumcised head of his dick against her, then pushed inside. He wasn’t using a condom, it was just his bare cock sinking into her wet, married heat. I savoured the oh-so-familiar feeling, and watched as she took the black man into her mouth again while I fucked her, moaning around the shaft, the sound muffled and obscene.

Her new lover didn’t waste any time. I got into a rhythm, pounding her from behind while she deepthroated the black bull, spit and precum dripping down her chin onto the expensive sheets. Her tits swayed with every thrust, her ass rippling each time I slammed home.

“Fuck, yes,” she cried out. “Give me that big fucking cock.

Fuck me hard.”

Hearing her talk dirty like that with two complete strangers made my stomach twist, but I also couldn’t deny that it turned me on. I felt my balls, my real balls, tightening, my release close, but I wasn’t going to stop this time.

“There’s just something about fucking married pussy, right?”

the black stranger said after a long while of the two men spitroasting her. “Something really hot.”

“Fucking a pussy that belongs to someone else, you mean?” I replied, even as my heart hurt back in my real body. They were talking about a pussy that belonged to me.

“Yeah,” the other stranger replied, pulling his cock out of her mouth and wanking himself slowly. “Let me get some.”

We repositioned on the bed. Joanna rolled on her back now, spreading her legs wide, showing her puffy, pink slit to us, reaching down and touching herself while waiting for us to get in position.

I watched as Alfonso positioned the head of his black cock between her folds, which she spread for him with two fingers to give us all a good view as it disappeared into her, stretching her out. Then she sucked me eagerly, eyes half-lidded behind the mask, the hand staying between her legs, rubbing her clit.

Alfonso pounded her hard, driving her into the bed, making her cum within minutes, the sound of her wail echoing around the hotel room, her thighs quivering violently.

"I want you both," she gasped as the orgasm subsided, pulling off my cock. "Both of you. At the same time. One in my pussy, one in my ass."

What the fuck? No. This wasn't Joanna. She would never do this.

The black man's eyes met mine, exchanging a look, then a nod, and he pulled out and lay down on the bed. Joanna moved to make room, then straddled him, facing towards him, cowgirl, grabbing and sinking his thick cock back inside her with a long, ecstatic moan.

Then I positioned myself behind her, my hard, wet cock pressing against her ass as if it had a mind of its own.

"Gentle," she whispered, and for the first time, she sounded nervous.

I looked down, seeing the head of my new dick pushing against the small pink flower of her asshole. I felt her tense up as it slid in slowly, then relax as she adjusted. When I was halfway in, I felt Alfonso move, pushing deeper in and felt his cock against mine, through the thin wall between her two holes. I pushed deeper, and she let out a broken sob.

“Oh fuck. Oh God. I feel so full.”

We started moving, carefully at first, then faster, harder, finding a rhythm that had her screaming within minutes. Her tits bounced wildly on her chest, her blonde hair coming loose from its pins, mascara running as tears leaked from behind the mask.

“Yes! Use me! Fuck me! I’m just—I’m just a whore for you!”

“Fuck, she’s so fucking good,” Alfonso murmured, and I agreed.

“Her ass is tight,” I said, voice strained. “If there’s one thing even better than married pussy, it’s married ass.”

We fucked her until she had another back-arching, thigh-shuddering orgasm, and then I felt the black bull tense beneath her, groaning as he came, flooding her pussy. I could feel it, his cock pulsing as it pressed against mine, and that pushed me over the edge. I grabbed her hips and buried myself deep into her guts, making her exhale a grunt of mixed pleasure and pain, and then I emptied myself into her ass, feeling her whole body shudder as she came between us again, her ass and pussy clenching around both cocks.

When we finally pulled out, Joanna collapsed onto the bed, breathing hard, cum leaking from both her ravaged holes.

“That was fucking amazing,” she whispered, “I feel totally used. Best sex I’ve ever had.”

“Yeah?” Alfonso asked, grinning at her from where he was lying next to her on the bed.

“How many other friends you got with big dicks?” Joanna asked, slowly regaining her breath. “That know how to fuck and are willing to look after me financially?”

“Plenty,” I heard myself say.

I yanked the Crown off, gasping.

My hand was wrapped around my cock, pumping myself fast, and cum shot from the tip, splattering across my stomach. The sensation of suddenly being yanked from that memory back into the real world so abruptly made my head spin, nausea rising in my gut. Still, I wanted to feel myself cum, to enjoy my own orgasm and not the one of some guy recording this last year or whenever it was.

Once my cock had finished twitching in my hand, my white seed running down my hand, I sat there, trying to process what I'd just experienced. The office was silent except for my ragged breathing.

Joanna had let two men, total strangers, use both her holes at once. She'd been the one to ask for it. She'd practically begged for it. And afterwards, she'd asked about doing it again.

My phone buzzed. Another text from her.

I'll be home in 20. Got everything for dinner. Can't wait to see you.

My stomach turned. If only she knew what I'd just seen, what I'd just felt.

I cleaned up quickly, wiping the cum from my belly and hand, shoved the Crown back on its stand, and went downstairs, my mind still spinning. How many of the other memories were of my wife? All of them? What other depraved things had she done in the name of raising money for my surgery and her new tit job?

When Joanna came through the door twenty minutes later, smiling and carrying grocery bags, I kissed her like everything was normal.

But inside, my mind screamed. I quietened it. I had a plan, but I needed to know everything. I had to go through the other files, see exactly what she'd done and try to figure out when and with whom.

Tomorrow, I'd message SynapseJack again. I needed to find out how this worked and whether she even knew that these memories of sex with her had been sold. I needed to know who the guys were that had fucked her. As angry and betrayed as I felt that she'd done these sordid things behind my back, I was starting to recognise that if she hadn't signed up for this, if she hadn't given her permission for these sessions to be made publicly available, then there was someone else I needed to be mad at, too.

But for tonight, I'd sit across from her at dinner and pretend I didn't know my wife had been a whore.

Even as the threesome I'd just experienced looped endlessly behind my eyes.

Chapter Four

I didn't sleep well.

Every time I closed my eyes, it was there again: the hotel room, the crumpled sheets, Joanna on her hands and knees between two strange men, begging them not to stop. I must have woken half a dozen times, half-hard and half-sick, my heart thudding in my chest like it was trying to punch its way out.

At some point toward dawn, exhaustion finally pinned me down. When my alarm went off, it felt as if no time had passed at all.

The day didn't improve much from there.

By late morning, I was on my third coffee, and my inbox was a blur. The open-plan office floor outside my door hummed with the usual low-level chatter, keyboards, phones, someone's tinny music leaking from their headphones. But I barely heard any of it. Every cell in my brain kept drifting back in that memory, replaying it. Joanna arching her back, moaning with lust, saying things to strangers she'd never said to me.

I was so caught up in the unwanted reverie that I didn't notice someone standing in my doorway until they cleared their throat.

"Mr Lockwood?"

I jolted, almost spilling my coffee over the keyboard. When I looked up, my brain, for a second, failed to connect the face to where I was. White shirt, sleeves rolled to the forearms. Dark hair, clipped short at the sides, a little long on top. Square jaw, a few days' stubble. Dusky skin and intense pale green eyes behind thick black-framed glasses.

"Doctor Kowalski," I managed. "I—uh. Hi."

He smiled, a quick flicker that softened his features.

"Daniel, please," he said. His Polish accent was subtle, more a cadence than a sound now that I'd been hearing it for months.

"May I come in for a moment?"

I glanced past him, into the office space outside. A couple of my colleagues were moving between desks, but no one seemed to be paying us any particular attention.

"Sure," I said. "Of course. Is everything okay?"

He stepped inside and closed the door behind him, not fully, but enough that the office noise dropped. He took in my desk with a quick sweep, two monitors, a mug, the framed photo of Joanna and me in the garden the summer before everything went wrong, then looked back at me.

"I was at St. Thomas's this morning," he said. "A meeting ran shorter than expected. I remembered you work close by." He shrugged one shoulder. "Your follow-up appointment isn't until the end of the month, but I thought... why not check in and see how you are doing in your work environment?"

I gave a weak laugh.

"My work environment is spreadsheets and passive-aggressive emails," I said. "But... yeah. I feel okay. Better than okay, actually. You said the last scan looked good."

"It did," he agreed. "But scans are one thing. Stress is another." His gaze flicked to the open-plan beyond my door. "Do you have somewhere more private we can talk? HR will think I am very diligent, yes?"

"Uh, there's a small meeting room next door." My mouth had gone dry. "I can grab it for ten minutes."

"Good." He pushed his glasses up his nose with his thumb. "It might take more than ten minutes, but I'll be as brief as I can."

I booked the room on the system, my fingers moving on autopilot. We walked there together, him carrying a slim tablet tucked under one arm. As we passed my colleagues, someone called, "Everything all right, Greg?"

"Just a routine check-up," I said, forcing a smile. "He's making sure you lot aren't killing me with the workload."

That got a laugh. The door to the meeting room closed behind us with a soft click.

Inside, it was the usual corporate non-space, small table, four chairs, a screen on the wall, the faint tang of dry-wipe marker and whiteboard cleaner in the air, and no windows to ventilate it. Daniel pulled a chair out and gestured for me to sit. He sat opposite, placing the tablet down between us.

"So," he said, folding his hands. "Tell me, how are you feeling?"

Any chest pain? Palpitations? Shortness of breath?"

"No." I swallowed. It felt like a lie, even though it wasn't.

"Physically, I feel... strong. I can walk without getting winded now, even uphill. My sleep has been... okay, I guess. Work is a bit of a grind, but that's nothing new."

He nodded slowly, studying me in that careful way of his, like he was looking past my face into whatever lay underneath.

"And at home?" he asked. "Things with Joanna?"

My stomach tightened.

"Fine," I said too quickly. "Good. Busy. You know. Adjusting."

He hummed, non-committal, then tapped the tablet awake. A soft glow lit his face. He swiped, flicked, then turned it slightly so I could see the screen without fully reading it.

"Do you recall," he said, "that as part of your rehabilitation, we integrated your NeuroLink Crown usage with your cardiac telemetry?"

I stared at the tablet as if it might bite me. Vague memories surfaced: the consent forms, the explanation about using immersive experiences to aid neuroplasticity, about tracking stress responses in real time.

"Yeah," I said slowly. "You said you'd be able to see if I was overdoing it. With... exposure to stuff that might spike my heart rate."

"Exactly." He rotated the tablet back to himself, but not before I saw a graph: a jagged red line climbing and dipping over a time axis. "We log certain metrics. Heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol levels, certain neural markers. We also log categories of content.

Not specifics." He lifted a hand as if to forestall my objection.

"But whether it is registered, verified content, or... something else."

"Something else," I repeated. My nerves were suddenly on edge.

He looked up at me over the top of his glasses.

"In the last forty-eight hours," he said, "your Crown sessions have generated several alerts. High arousal, high stress, and interaction with... seemingly unregistered, unverified, scrubbed files."

The room seemed to constrict around me. My chair squeaked as I shifted.

“I—” I started, then stopped. “You’re spying on me? Isn’t that... illegal?”

“Mr Lockwood, you signed a contract. You gave access, and I have a duty of care to ensure you’re staying within the prescribed treatment. It’s for your own safety,” he said. “That is why there are alerts.” He exhaled, a quiet sound. “Now, normally, when I see these flags, they belong to young men who are simply trying to access banned media. Extreme violence, certain kinds of... exploitation. We have a standard script. We remind them of the law, of the risks. We suggest healthier coping mechanisms. I let their registered carer know, in this case, that would be Joanna.”

“So what’s different this time?” I asked, though I already knew. Fuck. Had he told Joanna already?

He was silent for a moment. Then he tapped the tablet again.

“This time,” he said, “the system linked the metrics to a donor series code I recognised. That I’ve seen before, not the name,” he added quickly. “Just the pattern, the type of content. I was concerned it might indicate you were being coerced into something, or that someone was using the Crown to harm you. As your physician, I have an obligation to you, a duty of care. So I pulled a partial visual.”

My throat closed. I couldn’t breathe.

“You... saw,” I croaked. It wasn’t quite a question. “You... watched.”

"I watched enough to know that it wasn't a memory of your own," he said quietly. "I saw that it was from the selling donor, as expected. And that the memory contained Joanna."

Heat rushed to my face—shame, anger, a strange dizzy relief that there was no point pretending any more.

"I didn't watch either of the entire scenes," he continued. "I thought she looked familiar, under the mask. And then, I don't know how, I just recognised her. Once I realised what I was looking at, who she was, I stopped. I should not have opened it at all."

For that, I apologise. Professionally, it is—" He searched for the word. "It is messy. Personally, it is... uncomfortable. For both of us."

I let out a harsh breath that might have been a laugh.

"Uncomfortable," I echoed. "That's one word for it."

He leaned forward slightly, forearms on the table.

"Greg," he said. "I am not here to judge you for watching it."

You're a human being, a man. Neither am I judging Joanna. I am here because your metrics suggest you are under significant...

psychological overload. Your arousal response is not the issue.

The stress response is. Whatever you are doing with the Crown is hitting you very hard. I need to know if you are safe. If Joanna is safe. If someone is exploiting you."

"Exploiting—" I shook my head. "No. No, it's not like that."

It's... complicated."

"It usually is," he said. "Tell me."

For a moment, I considered lying. I could tell him I'd stumbled onto some random black-market feed, an AI deep fake program that I played with, overlaying my wife's face, and it freaked me out, end of story. I could say sorry and tell him I'd already deleted everything, that it wouldn't happen again.

But I pictured going home tonight, sitting opposite Joanna at the table, watching her smile and ask how my day was, all while I was a million miles away, lost in my memory of her being fucked to orgasm by two strangers. The idea of carrying this secret alone for any longer made my chest hurt more than any scar tissue.

So I told him.

Not every filthy detail, but enough. He knew she'd cheated, that was evident, but he needed to know why. I told him about Joanna's promise in the hospital, that she'd "find a way" to pay for my surgery and how the money had arrived like a gift from the universe with the passing of her uncle. About me, post-op and bored and grateful and curious, letting myself get tempted into watching porn via the headset, about how I'd watched the leaked files of rockstar Krissy Saffron and her Playboy husband.

About the bonus files. About the MILF with the black guy, in a Cerulean Hotel.

"Even though she was wearing a mask, I recognised her. It was Joanna. I'd know her body anywhere, even if I didn't recognise her face."

Kowalski listened in silence. When I trailed off, he nodded slowly.

"The mask didn't cover enough of her face," he agreed. "I recognised her. And she doesn't know you have seen this?"

"No," I replied. "She... she has no idea. As far as she knows, I'm using the Crown as directed, for guided rehab sessions and the

occasional relaxation or meditation trip to someone else's beach or whatever." I swallowed. "I don't even know how much she knows about... whatever she agreed to. Whether she was just having sex to make money, or if she knew the memories were going to be sold."

His eyes softened.

"You're angry," he said. "At her, at them, at yourself, for enjoying it, right? Your arousal levels were peaked out. Not the usual reaction of a man who's just found out his wife's been un-faithful."

"Yes." The word came out raw. "I'm angry she did it, even though I know why. I'm angry that she's never told me. I'm angry that I get off on it even though it makes me feel like shit. And I'm angry that some bastard is selling her like... like she's content."

"Some bastard," he repeated. "This is SynapseJack?"

I blinked.

"You know that name?"

He shook his head.

"His name was in the sender record of the files," he said. "So, I looked him up on a few forums I monitor from time to time. And found him mentioned by a previous patient. A broker who acquires and distributes unverified sessions. It's a pseudonym, of course. He could be one person, could be more. In any case..." He tapped the tablet with one knuckle. "These files you accessed, they were flagged as high-risk because they bypass the usual verification chain. There is no way for the system to know whether the donor consented, never mind the others in the memory. That is why they are not supposed to be accessible through a rehabilitative Crown at all."

"But they are," I said. "I found them. I paid for them."

"Yes," he said. "Where there's money to be made, hackers will find a way to jailbreak systems, even ones as complex as Skin Deep. You're not the first of my patients to do this, Greg, and you likely won't be the last. But you may be the first whose wife is at the centre of the content."

The idea that there were others, other men sitting in other small, darkened rooms, wanking off while watching people fuck made something in me relax a little. I wasn't disgusting. I was normal and just unlucky that Joanna had somehow gotten involved in all of this.

"I'm going to find them," I said. "The men who slept with her.

SynapseJack. Whoever. Track them down, somehow. Make them... give me answers."

"And then what?" he asked, not unkindly. "Beat them up? Sue them? Expose your wife in the process?" The doctor spread his hands. "You don't know who SynapseJack really is. These markets... this money, there are criminals, people who don't like their income stream threatened."

"So what?" I snapped. "I just... sit here and say thank you for turning my wife into a fucking porn show?"

"No," Kowalski said calmly. "You don't say thank you. But you also do not go to war without knowing who you're up against.

And not without knowing what weapons you have."

He turned the tablet back towards himself again, scrolling.

"You mentioned a donor ID in the file?" I asked. "SynapseJack said the same. Is it a code? Something we can use? You seem to know a lot about this stuff."

"Yeah. I know a little." Daniel rubbed at his temples. "Donor IDs are part of the Skin Deep metadata," he said. "They can be manipulated. Changed. Spoofed. If you are a clever enough coder, you can make a series look like it belongs to someone else entirely. So chasing that trail will get you nowhere useful."

My brief flare of hope fluttered, then died.

"Right," I muttered. "So that's that."

"Not entirely," he said. "There is another identifier. One that is much harder to erase."

I looked up.

"What do you mean?"

"When the Crown records a session," he said, slipping into lecture mode, "it doesn't only save what you see and feel, but all your sensory inputs. It also binds the recording to the specific donor's Hard Core chip implant. A unique hardware signature, a serial number, if you like. In theory, this allows Elysium to verify that a memory was captured by a legitimate chip, not a foreign-made imitation device."

"In theory," I repeated. "But you're saying that signature is still in there. Even in these black-market files."

"In heavily obfuscated form, yes," he said. "The normal metadata can be scrubbed, but the signature code is encrypted, hidden in the recording data itself, like a watermark. It's very difficult to extract without the right tools."

"Do you have the right tools?" I asked, hope creeping back in despite myself.

He hesitated, then shook his head.

"I have some diagnostic utilities," he said. "Enough to tell me whether a file came from a rehab Crown like yours. Not enough to reverse-engineer the donor's chip ID. That is by design. Elysium doesn't want doctors poking too deeply into their commercial pipeline."

"So that's it," I said. "Why are you just getting my hopes up, then telling me it's another dead end?"

"It's not a dead end," he said. "That's why." He rubbed his jaw, considering. "I know someone who used to work for Elysium. A software engineer. She left under... difficult circum-stances, but understands the Crown architecture and Skin Deep's backend better than anyone I have ever met."

Something in the way he looked away for a moment told me there were stories there he wasn't sharing.

"If she's willing," he went on, "she might be able to extract the information we need."

"And you think she'd help?" I asked.

Kowalski shrugged.

"I don't know," he said. "She has her own reasons to dislike Elysium. That might work in your favour. Or it might make her want nothing to do with anything Skin Deep-related ever again.

But I can ask."

The idea of some unknown woman somewhere in hiding, peering through layers of code to tell me who had betrayed me with my wife, and possibly sold these files without her say-so, sent a strange chill through me.

"You'd do that?" I said. "Is it... Risky for you? If so, introduce me, and I'll ask her directly. Hell, I'll even pay her."

"You are my patient, Greg. As for Joanna, she may not be my patient, but she is... involved. I'm not unsympathetic, Greg. I know what it's like to feel like your life is in the hands of people who see you as data points. As exploitable." Without further explanation, he tapped the tablet once more, locked it, then slid it into his bag. "I also know what happens to marriages when secrets like this aren't dealt with."

He gave me a pointed look over his glasses, his light green eyes meeting mine until I looked down, staring at the scar visible at the open V of my shirt. A pale, jagged reminder of just how close I'd come to not having a marriage to ruin.

"I know I need to tell her. And I will, I just don't know how to,"

I said quietly. "I don't even know where to start. She thinks I'm fine."

"You start at the beginning. Then you take it one step at a time," he said. "First, we confirm that these are real memories and not some hyper-realistic fake. I'll get my friend, Phoenix, to check their validity and ask if she can trace the donor through the ID or the chip's signature." He stood, smoothing his shirt. "In the meantime, I must ask you, formally, to stop accessing unregistered content on your rehab Crown. If another alert comes through, I will be obliged to escalate it. My professional career could be on the line here, along with your marriage. I'm duty-bound to report it to Elysium if it continues. They have their own... compliance team."

"Right," I grimaced. "Understood."

"Until then, try not to drown in this, Greg," the doctor said, his expression softening. He took off his glasses, wiping them with a

soft cloth from his pocket. "Whatever Joanna did, I think she did it in the belief she was saving your life. That is something to consider."

My throat tightened.

"Thank you," I said. "For... not going straight to her. Or the clinic, or Elysium."

"You're welcome." He picked up his bag. At the door, he paused. "And Greg?"

"Yeah?"

"You're not a bad man because you were aroused by what you saw," he said. "You are a man whose wife did something extreme for him. That will tangle anyone up inside." A faint smile ghosted across his face. "We will try to untangle it before it strangles you, yes? And, also, I will admit to the fact that Joanna is a beautiful woman. What I saw... had a similar effect on me, until I stopped watching."

I huffed out a broken laugh.

"Yeah," I said. "Maybe you should have watched it all. And the other files. You say I can't watch then? I haven't watched them yet. How am I to verify that they have Joanna in too?"

"Hmm." Daniel fiddled with his tie. "I cannot allow you to access those files on a registered rehab Crown, connected to the clinic. I'm sure you understand that, for the reasons I mentioned.

But if the device wasn't connected, if the files were downloaded to secondary storage such as an external drive, and then viewed with the device offline... I can't police your every move, Greg."

He smiled, and then left me there, in the little windowless room, feeling embarrassed, humiliated, aroused and yet much less burdened, and hopeful, all at the same time.

Chapter Five

The rest of the day was a blur.

I went back to my desk. Answered calls and emails, did some tweaks to a CAD design I'd been working on for months, then sat through a meeting where I nodded in all the right places and took notes I couldn't remember writing.

On the commute home, as the magno-train shot silently through the vacuum tunnels, fluorescent lights stuttering overhead, I stared at my reflection in the window. I still wasn't used to the new me. I was thinner, paler, a faint hollow shadow under my cheekbones. But I was alive, courtesy of Joanna and Dr Kowalski. And funded by a tech company and a sub-strata of criminals that treated human experiences like currency.

I thought about the doctor, about the tired set of his shoulders when he'd talked about data points and marriages. About the fact that someone like him, a relative stranger that I barely knew outside of consultations and test results, now carried a piece of my marriage's darkest secret in his head.

Weirdly, that didn't make me feel more exposed. It made me feel... less alone. Like the darkness that had been growing inside my chest had finally been taken out, and someone else was helping to examine the damage.

But despite feeling some level of comfort in that, and in my suspicion that Daniel knew of heartbreak, that he recognised something in me, by the time I reached our front door, I still felt wrung out.

And yet, somehow steadier.

Joanna's car wasn't in the drive yet. I let myself in, the familiar creak of the hallway floorboard greeting me. The house smelled faintly of fabric softener and the citrus cleaner she liked.

A mug sat in the sink from the morning, my abandoned cereal bowl beside it.

Everything seemed so normal, so mundane. As if I were in a parallel universe where my wife had never crawled across a hotel bed toward a stranger's cock, where I hadn't nearly died of a coronary, where she hadn't been spitroasted by two men to pay our bills.

I changed into a T-shirt and joggers, then wandered into the living room and dropped onto the sofa, but I couldn't settle. I got up and wandered to my office and stared at the Crown on its stand in the corner, halo glinting faintly in the fading light. The base pulsed a slow, reassuring blue.

Linked to the internet, I reminded myself. Constantly monitored, even more so now that Daniel was aware.

Behave yourself, Greg.

On impulse, I crossed the room, picked it up, and held it in both hands, my eyes drifting over the smooth plastic surface. I turned it over, running my thumb over the Elysium logo, the serial number, the little sticker from the clinic that marked it as part of my rehab programme. I wondered how I could disconnect it, operate it offline, as Daniel had suggested.

But I didn't try. I didn't put it on.

Instead, I set it back in its cradle and walked away, deciding to make dinner instead. My stomach growled at the thought. I hadn't even noticed until now that I'd not eaten all day.

The front door opened just as I was pulling ingredients from the fridge. Joanna's voice floated through the hallway, bright and tired.

"Greg? I'm home."

"In here," I called.

She appeared in the doorway, kicking off her shoes, blonde hair scraped up into a messy knot.

"Hey, you," she said, and smiled. It was the kind of smile that still, even now, made me smile too. "You're cooking? Did I die in traffic and wake up in heaven?"

"It's only a frozen lasagne and vegetables," I said. "Don't get too excited. It won't compare to that delicious Chicken Parmesan you made last night."

She came over and kissed me, her lips warm and soft on mine. I tasted coffee and the faint sweetness of the mints she liked to chew during the day. When she pulled back, she studied my face for a moment.

"You look better today," she said. "You've got more colour in your cheeks, and you seem more... I don't know. The last couple of days you've been... somewhere else. I was starting to worry."

Her fingers brushed my cheek affectionately. "Is everything okay at work?"

"Yeah," I said, grateful that she'd asked a question I didn't have to answer with a lie. "Busy, but manageable. Doctor Kowalski dropped by, actually. Apparently, he was at St. Thomas's and decided to do a spot inspection."

Her eyebrows shot up.

"He visited you at work? I didn't think you'd got an appointment until the end of the month."

"Yeah, he dropped in as he was passing. Wanted to make sure I wasn't letting them work me to death." I tried for a wry grin.

"Apparently, my stats look good. My body and heart are behaving. He seemed happy. Just told me to stay chilled out when I can and keep using the Crown as prescribed."

Relief flickered across Joanna's features, subtle but unmistakable. Her hazel eyes shone in the dim light of the kitchen's LEDs, temporarily making me remember how they'd looked through the holes in the mask. I shook off the thought before it could go any further.

"That's good," she said. "I mean, I knew you were doing well, but... hearing it from him is reassuring."

"Yeah," I said softly. "It is."

She stepped closer, sliding her arms around my waist, resting her head against my chest, against the scar.

"Thank you," she murmured.

"For what?"

"For not dying," she said into my shirt. I felt her tremble slightly. Was she okay? "For doing your rehab exercises, for looking after yourself. For going back to work. For putting up with me fussing over you. For everything."

I laughed, the sound catching slightly.

"You paid enough for the privilege," I said before I could stop myself.

She stiffened, just for a second, then relaxed again.

"It was worth it," she said simply. "Every penny."

Guilt flashed hot through my nerves. I felt my hands twitch and tightened my arms around her, so she wouldn't notice.

"I love you," she murmured, looking up at me, those hazel eyes that I couldn't forget seeing filled with insatiable lust, gazing into mine.

"Yeah," I said. "I know. I love you too."

We cooked together, falling into the familiarity we'd always had, back before hospitals and debt and Crown interfaces. She chopped onions while I stirred sauce. She told me about a difficult customer at work who'd demanded to see the manager, and who security had promptly kicked out onto the street. I told her about the never-ending saga of the broken printer at work.

All the while, a second conversation ran in my head.

She has no idea. She has no idea I've seen her, on her back, legs spread, taking two men like she couldn't get enough cock. She has no idea my doctor has seen her too, even if only in fragments. She has no idea someone out there is profiting off every time a stranger decides to step into the skin of the man fucking her.

And yet... she laughed at my bad jokes. She bumped her hip against mine at the stove. Stole a slice of pepper and popped it into my mouth.

We were a normal, married couple. Except we weren't. But this love between us, this rapport, was precious. How could I ever give this up, even though she'd cheated on me numerous times?

After dinner, we drifted to the sofa. She curled up with her legs over my lap, scrolling through something on her phone, then tossed it aside and let her head fall back against the cushion.

"I've missed this," she said. "Tonight, we feel like... I don't know. Just... us. Ever since the operation, at times, it's felt like we were in different worlds. You in pain, or sleeping, recovering, me counting tablets and bills. And now we're both back at work, we don't get as much quality time as we'd like."

"Yeah," I said. "I feel the same. This is nice."

She turned her head to look at me, eyes darker in the low light.

"You really do seem better tonight," she said. "Whatever the doctor said, it worked."

There was a question in there, unspoken: What else happened? Why are you different?

"I think it helped," I said carefully. "Talking to someone who..."

understands. Who's seen this... kind of thing before. Who doesn't think I'm crazy for... how I feel."

Her gaze searched my face. She pushed a lock of blonde hair behind her ear.

"How do you feel?" she asked softly. "What do you feel that makes you think you're crazy?"

"I can't explain," I said, cursing inwardly that I'd said too much. "But Daniel made me feel better."

"Daniel. You're on first-name terms, now?" She didn't push for any more information. Instead, she slid her hand up my thigh, fingertips tracing the seam of my joggers.

"We had a good talk," I replied. "Doctor to patient."

"Well... that's good," she said. "Because I've been climbing the walls with you being all distant and aloof lately."

"Aloof?" I snorted. "Who the hell uses the word aloof?"

"Well, whatever word you want to use, it means less sex, and that is not acceptable," she said lightly. Her hand moved higher.

"You can consider this doctor's orders, right? Short, gentle bursts of cardio are good for you."

I swallowed. The idea of sex, of sliding into her, knowing what I knew now, sent a wave of heat straight to my groin.

"I think I'd have remembered if he'd prescribed sex as cardio," I said, voice a little hoarse.

"Perhaps your memory is going along with everything else."

She giggled, then pushed herself up and swung a leg over, straddling my lap. The weight of her ass settled over my thighs. "Shirt off."

"Yes, nurse," I said, trying for levity. My hands shook only a little as I tugged my T-shirt over my head.

Joanna traced the scar on my chest with one finger, following its pale curve and the harsh, jagged edge down one side.

"I love this stupid line," she said. "It means you're still here."

Her words hit somewhere deep. For a second, my eyes stung, swimming with tears that caught me by surprise.

Oh, Joanna. Why did you have to cheat on me?

But I didn't say that outloud.

"Come here," I said instead, and pulled her down into a kiss.

She still tasted of coffee and mint, on top of the lasagne we'd just enjoyed. Her hands slid over my shoulders, into my hair.

When her tongue brushed mine, I groaned, my cock hardening against the seam of her jeans.

She broke the kiss long enough to wriggle out of them, shim-mying them down her thighs and kicking them aside. Her knick-ers were already damp when I slid a hand down between her thighs, cupping the shape of her pussy from below. She gasped, hips twitching into my hand.

"Someone's horny," I murmured.

"You've been moody for days," she said, breath already shorter. She grabbed at the shape of my erection, visible through the cotton of my joggers. "Let me have this."

I shifted, nudging my joggers down, freeing my hard cock.

When she reached between us and wrapped her fingers around it, a vivid split-screen flickered in my mind.

Her hand now, familiar, warm, holding my shaft.

Her hands then, braced on a stranger's thighs as she lowered herself onto his cock, another man waiting to fuck her other hole from behind.

I bit back a groan.

"Hey," she said softly. "It seems I'm not the only horny one."

"I can't help it," I said. "You're taking advantage of a sick man."

"Oh, shut up," she giggled softly into my ear, then she pulled her panties to one side, exposing her shaved slit to me for a moment, before lifting her hips and guiding me inside her wet pussy. For a

moment, the reality of it hit me with almost physical force, the feel of her, hot and slick, the tightness giving way as she sank down.

It felt different, not in any measurable way, but in the story my brain was telling about it. This was no longer a pussy that had only ever known my dick. This was a pussy that had been enjoyed by God-only-knows how many other men, stretched out by them, made to cum around them, filled by them. A place where other cocks had pulsed and shot their cum inside.

But for now, it was mine. Mine again. All mine.

A shameful thrill shot through me at the thought.

Joanna lifted up, then sank down slowly until her thighs met mine, a soft sound escaping her.

“God,” she breathed. “I will never get tired of this cock.”

That was a lie, I was sure of it, knowing that she’d had others, bigger and better than mine. But I didn’t voice my concerns. Not yet.

“Good,” I said roughly. My hands settled on her hips, thumbs pressing into the soft flesh there. “You feel so good, Joanna. I’ll never tire of you, either. Now, ride me.”

She did. Slow at first, rocking gently, letting us both adjust, getting the angle just right. She stopped to kick off her panties and bra, getting totally naked, before settling back onto my cock.

Her full, perfect breasts rose and fell with each breath as she fucked me, the swell of them more pronounced now since the surgery. I watched the way they bounced in front of my face, remembering how they’d looked in that hotel room from the other men’s perspective, smaller and less pert, swaying more than bouncing as she’d fucked them. How her nipples tightened with excitement for them, just as they were doing for me now.

It should have made me sick. Instead, it made me harder.

She found an angle that rubbed her clit against my pubic bone, grinding against me, little gasps falling from her lips. I moved my hands to her shoulders, pulling her down against me, meeting her with upward thrusts, then I let my hands slide down to cup her breasts, thumbs brushing her stiff, reddish nipples.

She moaned low in her throat, head tipping back.

"Fuck, Greg," she whispered. "Yes. Just like that."

I gritted my teeth, fighting the urge to ask the questions that burned in my mind.

Why are you saying my name like that? I heard how dirty you talked to those men. Were you thinking of me when they fucked you to orgasm after orgasm after orgasm?

Instead, I focused on the feel of her, the wetness of her, the heat, the slick sound as she slid up and down. I let the images in my head blur together. Joanna in the here and now, fucking my cock, Joanna there, taking two cocks at the same time. Joanna everywhere, always horny, always beautiful. Even when she was being a slut for money.

Her movements sped up, hips jerking a little as she chased her climax.

"Oh, I'm close," she gasped. "So fucking close..."

"Come on, then," I said, voice rough. "Cum for me."

She did. Her hand snaked between us, finding her clit, teasing it until her whole body tensed, then shuddered, a broken cry spilling from her lips as she clamped down around me. The sudden

tightness dragged a groan from my chest. I thrust up into her, hands on her shoulders, dragging her onto me, keeping her there.

"Fu-u-u-uck, Jo," I almost choked, my throat was so tight, as I spilled inside her. The orgasm crashed through me, hot and blinding, tangled with images of her full of other men as my cock throbbed and pulsed stream after stream of hot white cum into her pussy.

Then, for a moment, everything else dropped away. My vision went blurry and dark, tiny white stars floating around the edges.

Shit. Was I okay?

When my vision cleared and clarity returned, Joanna was folded against me, face pressed into my neck, breathing hard. I wrapped my arms around her, holding her close, feeling the fast thud of her heart against my chest.

"Wow," she murmured after a minute. "I should nag you about your mood more often."

"You can nag me any time you like," I said, still a little breathless. I didn't tell her that I'd almost fainted, that I feared I'd pushed myself a little too hard, too fast. "I like the nagging."

She chuckled, then yawned, the sound small and soft. "I like the sex."

"Me too. Do you need a shower?" I suggested. "Before you fall asleep on me."

"Too tired," she muttered. "Five minutes. Then I'll move."

She didn't. Within two minutes, her breaths had evened out, her weight heavier against me as sleep pulled her under.

I got up, pulling my T-shirt back over my head and tugging up my shorts and joggers. I found a woollen throw and tossed it over her, letting her sleep on the sofa for a while. She mumbled something unintelligible and sighed contentedly, pulling the blanket under her chin.

It felt different, being inside her, knowing that other cocks had been inside her too, knowing what she'd done. And knowing she still had no idea that I'd seen it all.

Somewhere in the city, a kind doctor who cared about his patient was composing a cautious message to a woman who knew how to peel back the lies of SynapseJack and the seller of the memories. On my NeuroLink Crown, a series of files waited, ready for me to watch them, but I couldn't.

For the first time since I'd stumbled into my first memory and watched her with the black man in that NYC hotel room, the constant scream in my head dropped to just a low, insistent hum.

I wasn't alone in this anymore. I knew what the plan was. And I knew that Joanna loved me.

And that, as terrifying as the rest of it was, made it almost bearable.

Chapter Six

The alley stank of old rain, rotting takeout and stale piss.

I shifted my weight from one foot to the other, hands jammed into the pockets of my jacket, trying not to look like exactly what I was—a guy alone, out of place, waiting for something in a part of town where nothing good ever waited. The city hummed a few blocks over, neon bleeding into low clouds, but here the light barely reached. A single flickering streetlamp at the alley mouth threw long, jittery shadows over overflowing dumpsters and damp brick.

Dr Kowalski had picked the spot. “Off-grid as it gets,” he’d said. “No municipal cameras, no corporate sensors. If she’s going to meet you, it’ll be somewhere like this.”

If.

A van rolled slowly past the alley entrance, headlights sweep-ing over me for a moment, then sliding away. My heart kicked, then settled when it kept going.

I checked my watch. Late. The kind of late where your mind starts inventing outcomes—muggings, cops, Elysium security dropping from the rooftops. I kept seeing Joanna’s face when she’d kissed me goodbye that morning, telling me to be careful in the “big scary city” like I was going to a conference, not to meet a ghost.

A soft scrape of a shoe on grit behind me made every muscle lock.

“Hands where I can see them,” a woman’s voice said. Calm.

Young. Zero tremor.

I lifted my hands slowly, turning my head.

She stepped out of the deeper shadow near the dumpsters, hood up, hands in the pockets of a battered dark jacket. Slim, compact, posture loose but coiled. The hood cast most of her face in shadow, but what I could see matched Kowalski's warning: sharp cheekbones, pretty-looking but also somehow tough-looking, full lips on a mouth set in a flat line. A few strands of coloured-red hair had escaped, catching the weak light.

"Gregory Hart," she said. Not a question.

"Yeah," I managed. "You're—"

"Not someone you get to name," she cut in. "Kowalski calls me Phoenix. That's good enough for you."

Phoenix. Right. The ghost in Kowalski's stories. The one who'd walked out of Elysium with a brain full of stolen IP and a kill order on her head.

She stepped closer, stopping just outside arm's reach. Her eyes flicked over me, quick, assessing, the stance of my feet, position of my hands, the bulk of my jacket. The kind of look that knew how to check for weapons and other tells.

"Turn around," she said.

"The doctor already cleared me," I started. "He knows me. He must have told you why I'm here, that you can trust me."

"I trust no one. Now. Turn. Around."

I did as I was told. Cold air licked at my neck as I heard her move closer. Something small and metallic pressed between my shoulder blades, not the weight of a gun barrel, more like the flat face of a handheld device.

There was a faint, rising hum, like a mosquito caught in a jar, then a vibration I felt more in my teeth than on my skin.

“Hold still,” she murmured.

Lines of light—pale blue, almost invisible—fanned out on the wall in front of me for a heartbeat, trapping my silhouette in the centre, seeming to scan from the back of my skull down to my lower spine, then they snapped off, throwing the alleyway back into darkness.

“Again,” she said. “Face me.”

I turned back. I saw the device in her hand now: a matte-black slab the size of an old phone, edges rubberised, tiny vents along the sides still glowing faintly. A cluster of icons pulsed on its surface, no text, just abstract glyphs.

She swept it up from my chest to my forehead. The hum came back, higher this time, followed by a sharp static nip across my scalp.

I flinched.

“Relax,” she said. “If there was anything to worry about, you’d already be unconscious.”

Comforting.

After a few seconds, the device chirped, a single, descending tone.

Her shoulders loosened a fraction. “You’re clean. No trackers, no standard-issue cranial bugs, no external telemetry.”

She tapped the side of the slab, and a different pattern of light bloomed, shining straight at my face. I shielded my eyes with one hand while it pulsed, then narrowed into a fine point like a laser sight.

"There it is," she said, almost to herself, looking at the screen on the device. "Hard Core version 1.3, subcranial, midline, Elysium signature."

She clicked the scanner off and slid it back into her pocket.

"So," she said. "You're who you say you are, and you really do have one of their toys in your head."

"Toy," I echoed, dry. "That's one word for it."

"Not one I'd use," she said. "But it means you're not wasting my time. Come on."

She jerked her chin toward the alley mouth and started walking without waiting to see if I'd follow.

I did.

At the end of the alley, around the corner where the streetlamp didn't quite reach, a van sat half up on the curb, an old delivery model, dull grey, generic enough to blend into any city.

The windows were tinted dark. No logos. No identifiable marks I could see at all.

Phoenix hit a key fob in her pocket. The rear doors unlocked with a soft clack.

"Inside," she said.

Every cautionary instinct screamed that this was exactly how people disappeared. But then, a year ago, I'd signed paperwork that let a corporation put experimental hardware in my skull. My risk assessment skills were already suspect.

I climbed in.

The van's interior was nothing like the outside. It was a cramped tech cave, all hard angles and soft blue light. Someone had ripped out the factory fittings and rebuilt the space from floor to ceiling.

On one side was a narrow bench seat bolted along the wall, facing a bank of screens mounted on articulated arms. Some showed looping data streams, code, waveforms, system maps.

Others were dark, unused. Above them, cables and fibre bundles ran in neat rows, tag-labelled in tiny handwriting. A couple of ruggedised racks hummed quietly in the corner, fans whispering.

On the other side was a fold-out work surface littered with tools, microsoldering iron, tweezers, neural interface probes with spider-like filaments. A portable med scanner sat in its cradle, next to a compact centrifuge and a shrink-wrapped kit labelled in Sharpie: EMERGENCY CRANIAL.

The air smelled faintly of electronic ozone, coffee, and anti-septic.

"Sit," Phoenix said, nodding at the bench.

I did, my knees almost brushing the opposite wall. She climbed in after me, swung the doors shut, and locked them. The noise of the city outside dulled instantly, replaced by the hum of the van's equipment.

She pushed back her hood but didn't remove the jacket. Up close, I got a better look at her, late twenties, maybe, eyes an indeterminate dark colour that had seen too much, a small silver hoop in one ear. Her hair was dyed red and shaved on one side to reveal a faintly glowing chrome interface of some sort, embedded into her temple.

She dropped into the swivelling chair in front of the main console and woke it with a tap. A stylised phoenix logo flashed briefly on a black background, then dissolved into a dashboard of system monitors.

"So," she said, glancing back at me. "Let's make sure Kowalski didn't leave anything out."

Her fingers flew over the keys, bringing up a blank neural map on the central screen.

"Start from the top," she said. "Why did you let Elysium drill into your head, and what makes you think I'm going to help you fix it?"

The van's hum, the faint buzz of electronics, the city muted behind steel and insulation, it all pressed in on me. I hesitated, wondering how much to tell her. Phoenix watched me with that sharp, unreadable gaze for a long second, then blew out a breath and leaned back in her chair.

"Relax," she said. "You look like you're waiting for a firing squad, not a consultation."

"Right now, it's hard to tell the difference," I muttered.

One corner of her mouth quirked. "Daniel didn't tell me you were funny. Just that you're good at your job but bad with impulse control."

"He told you a lot, huh?"

She pushed her hood all the way back and, without ceremony, shrugged out of her jacket. Underneath, she wore a loose, washed-thin tank top and tight black shorts. Her skin was a warm, dusky brown, and down her right arm, from shoulder to wrist, ran a pattern that at first looked like an intricate tattoo, lines and nodes like a stylised circuit board. Only when she shifted did I notice tiny status LEDs pulsing under a couple of the "nodes."

"I got the full tragic dump," she said, tossing the jacket onto a hook. "You almost died, miracle surgery, grateful wife, convenient inheritance, then you discover she paid the bill by starring in

wife-whore Skin Deep sessions. And now you're neck-deep in Deep Dive like a teenager with his first VPN."

She reached back, tugged her hair up into a messy knot, and a bead of sweat rolled down her neck. She wiped it away with the back of her hand.

"Shit, it's hot in here," she said, fanning herself briefly. "These servers don't care about comfort."

Without another word, she peeled the tank up and off, leaving herself in just the shorts and a thinner, loose, cropped vest top that clung to nothing and revealed everything. She didn't have a bra on beneath it. Her breasts were full but high, nipples clearly outlined against the fabric, one pierced with a small ring that poked through.

I forced my eyes back to her face. She caught the flicker and didn't bother pretending she hadn't.

"See?" she said lightly. "Now we're both a little uncomfortable. This is what we call balance."

"I'm... fine," I lied.

"Sure you are," she said. "Anyway. Before you freak out about my fashion choices and my tits, yes, I watched your files."

My heart stuttered. "You what?"

She swung back to the console, fingers dancing over the keys.

One of the screens bloomed with a grid of thumbnails, a hotel room familiar from the files, other blurred faces, the metadata columns I'd only half understood.

"I had to know what I was dealing with," she said. "I traced the hashes Daniel sent, pulled my own copies from Deep Dive and a

couple of their feeder sites. Then, I checked the payloads for anything spicy, trackers, callbacks, watermarking. And, well..." She glanced over her shoulder with a quick, wicked smile. "I got some free porn out of it. Hope you don't mind me borrowing your wife for an evening. From what he said, I imagined you'd be cool with it."

Heat flooded my face. "So, he really did tell you everything."

She arched an eyebrow. "That you got hard watching her?"

Yeah. Daniel's not great with boundaries. But hey, I get it. It's pervy as hell, but you're not special. Half the guys I've yanked off Deep Dive are jerking it to something that looks a lot like their own mess. Cuckold shit is very on-trend."

I opened my mouth, closed it again. Denying it felt pointless.

"She, my wife, Joanna... was masked," I said instead. "I'm trying to work this all out, but I think she must have known there was a recording."

"Maybe she did, maybe she didn't," Phoenix said. "It's hard to tell if someone has a chip. He might have told her, might have been part of the deal, who knows. But when they do this with the knowledge it's going to be sold, they sell it as 'anonymous, private, curated experiences for discerning clients.' You put on a pretty mask, sign a stack of contracts written at a postgraduate reading level, tell yourself the lawyers wouldn't let anything bad happen, and go to town."

She tapped a key and pulled up a magnified view of one of Joanna's sessions. The image froze on my wife, blonde, masked, on her knees, mouth open, tongue out, a big white cock inches from her face.

I swallowed hard.

“Look,” Phoenix said, tone flattening a little. “The patterns are consistent. She’s got a mask. She doesn’t use her name. There are no external identifiers, it’s recorded in hotel rooms. From her perspective? This was probably pitched as secure. Private. ‘Your husband will never know.’”

“And the contracts?” I asked. “Wouldn’t they spell out distribution?”

“They’d bury it,” she said. “Clause seventeen, page six.

‘Non-exclusive licence to distribute anonymised derivatives’ in legalese so obscure it makes your eyes bleed. She probably thought she was signing off on some shrink-wrapped couples therapy product. Not some asshole flipping the raw feed on Deep Dive for beer money.”

She flicked to another screen, full of raw metadata, strings of characters, Elysium headers I recognised from marketing slicks.

“Which brings us to what you want,” she said. “Daniel said you’re not just here for kink validation. You want to know who’s actually pushing these.”

“Yeah.” My voice came out rough. I cleared my throat. “I want to know who’s distributing them. Who recorded them. He said you might be able to work it out from the donor ID and the Hard Core signature code.”

“Ah, now we’re speaking my language.” She brought up another window, this one a neural map I couldn’t parse, overlaid with streams of hex. “Every Hard Core chip has a signature, like a MAC address for meat. Hardware ID, manufacturer batch, and a couple of cryptographic salts. Elysium uses it to lock experiences to approved devices. Deep Dive is stripping the high-level IDs, spoofing the donor fields, but the low-level signature...” She pointed at a block of code. “That’s harder to fake.”

“So can you...?” I trailed off, not sure how to finish the sentence.

“Can I tell you who your wife was fucking?” she supplied. “No.

Not by name, not instantly. The donor ID on your wife’s series points to some poor bastard in Belgium who’s never set foot in a Cerulean Hotel. That’s a smokescreen. But the signature code, the one baked into the neural stream, that’s real. Give me a little time, I can cross-reference it with some old infrastructure maps, maybe a few friends in low places. Narrow it down to a person, or at least a terminal.”

“So you can find him,” I said. “The guy whose head this came out of.”

“With luck, yeah.” She leaned back, letting the chair spin half a turn, the thin fabric of her top shifting across her breasts. They were a nice size, perky and firm-looking. “Whether that’ll make you feel better is another question.”

“Did you—” I hesitated, then plunged on. “Did you see all the files? Because I’ve only seen two. Daniel has forbidden me from watching the rest.”

Phoenix studied me for a moment, then shook her head.

“I didn’t watch all of them, Greg,” she said. “No. Just enough to know what I was dealing with. If you’re still stuck on whether Joanna knew they’d go public, I don’t think she did. I’ve seen women who know they’re making porn for the open market.

They wink at the camera. They plug their handles, ask for tips.

They treat it like a channel. Your wife?” She shrugged. “She acts like she’s in a fantasy she thinks no one important will ever see.

The mask stays on. She never uses her name, never mentions a city, never says anything you couldn't explain away as roleplay if someone confronted her. My money? She signed something she didn't really read and believed what she needed to believe."

Some of the tension in my chest loosened, just a fraction.

"Daniel also said you nearly blew an artery watching those files," she added, casual as anything. "Are you missing watching them? It's good jerk-off material, I have to confess."

"You're really asking me that?" I groaned.

"Relax," she said, lips quirking. "I told you. It's pervy, but understandable. Some guys would mortgage their house for a chance to watch their wife get wrecked like that. You just got it by accident."

"I would like to see the other files," I said before I could stop myself.

"Mmhmm." She didn't look remotely apologetic. "Me too. Out of professional curiosity, of course. Although, yeah, she's hot.

Takes it like she means it. Your loss if you never knew that side of her until now."

Jealousy pricked, irrational and stupid. "Are you... into girls?"

"Girls, guys, whatever fits," she said breezily. "I've got a girlfriend at the moment, V. She's very... fun. But I never retired my appreciation for cock."

She let that hang there. My body, hopelessly traitorous, responded, my cock stiffening in my pants.

"How's your heart, by the way?" she asked, as if we were talking about the weather. "Daniel's good at what he does. Elysium waved a

very shiny offer at him, you know. He said no. He likes actual medicine. And he has morals to go with his good brain.

You don't see that a lot."

"He saved my life," I said quietly. "Which I'm grateful for, of course. But it also justifies what Joanna did, and I kind of hate that."

"People do weird shit when death gets a vote," Phoenix said.

"You married someone who chose to pay your bill with her body.

That's one kind of devotion. You could look at it that way." Her gaze flicked down at my groin, at the bulge there, then back up.

"And now here you are, in my van, dick getting hard while we talk about it."

I shifted on the bench, acutely aware of how tight my jeans had become.

"It's not—"

"Don't," she said gently. "Don't pretend you're not turned on. I watched those files. I watched you watching them, in the logs.

You looped the DP twice. I'm not going to judge, so chill. You're not here for moral cleansing."

"I'm in here because I want a name," I shot back. "I want an address. I want to know who talked her into fucking random guys in a hotel room and sold the memories."

"And you'll get something," she said. "The signature's real, donor ID's garbage. Give me a day or two, I can tell you where the stream originated. Maybe the person who rented the room.

I'll send you a nice neat package: name, last known address...

and warnings in bold.”

She leaned forward again, resting her elbows on her knees.

The neckline of her top gaped, offering a down-view of pierced nipple and warm skin.

“In the meantime,” she went on, voice dropping half an octave, “you might want to think about what you do when you have that name. Because once you ring that bell, you can’t unring it. And from where I’m sitting, you’ve already got enough ghosts in your head.”

Silence stretched. The hum of the servers, the faint tick of cooling metal, my own pulse loud in my ears.

“You know,” she added after a moment, a wicked glint in her eye, “there is a much simpler way to blow off some of this... pressure.”

I blinked. “What?”

“You’re knotted up, she’s not here, I’m horny, and it’s been a while since I had anything that wasn’t plastic or battery-powered,” Phoenix said matter-of-factly. “We could fuck. No strings.

You get a little revenge, I get a warm body instead of V’s fingers for a change, everyone goes home loser.”

I stared at her. “You’re joking.”

She smiled, slowly and definitely not joking. “Do I look like I’m joking?”

Her eyes dropped deliberately to the bulge at my crotch, then slid back up.

“You like watching your wife get fucked,” she said. “There’s a part of you, whether you admit it or not, that gets off on that. Letting someone else have her. Letting someone else have you?”

That's just symmetry."

My mouth was dry. "You said you have a girlfriend."

"She knows I have a past," Phoenix said with a shrug. "And she knows I don't fuck clients if I think they're going to fall in love after. You?" Her gaze sharpened. "You're already too tangled up in someone else. I'm not worried."

She let the quiet stretch, giving me time to picture it, her ass in my hands, the excitement of a new pussy around my cock, the silver ring in her nipple rolling against my tongue. Something hot and ugly in me wanted to say yes. To take, for once, instead of just watching. To even a ledger that would never really balance.

I closed my eyes briefly, then opened them.

"No," I said, voice hoarse. "I... appreciate the offer. Really. But no. That's not... this isn't how I fix anything."

"You're adorable," she said softly, like she was humouring a kid. "You think there's a fix."

She pushed her chair back and stood, stretching lazily. The thin top rode up, flashing a strip of flat stomach and another edge of those circuit-tattoo lines, disappearing into the waistband of her shorts.

"Stand up," she said.

I stayed where I was. "Why?"

"Because you're about to give yourself a hernia pretending that lump in your jeans isn't there," she said. "And because I don't take payment in promises. I prefer something a bit more tangible."

"Payment?" I echoed.

She stepped closer, until her bare knees brushed mine. Up this close, I could see the faint sheen of sweat on her collarbone, smell coffee and solder and something warm and clean underneath.

"I'm going to dig up a name for you," she said. "All the details I can. I'm going to poke places that get people disappeared. I'm doing that because Daniel guilted me and because I have a personal grudge against the assholes you've stumbled into." Her fingers toyed with the hem of my shirt. "Do you want to say thank you, or do you want to pretend this is all some noble quest and you're not sitting here leaking pre-cum while we talk about your wife's pussy getting destroyed?"

"I shouldn't," I said. Even to my own ears, it sounded weak.

"Shouldn't is for people who didn't nearly die last year," she said. "You're on borrowed time, Greg. Maybe stop acting like you get points for suffering."

Her hand slid up, rested lightly on my chest, feeling the thud of my heart through the fabric. The other hand drifted down, traced the outline of my erection through my jeans.

I grabbed her wrist. Not hard. Just enough to say I'd noticed.

She looked down at my hand, then up at my face. "This is the part where you either push me away," she said quietly, "or you admit that for the next twenty minutes, you don't actually care about being the good guy."

I should have pushed. Walked. Done anything but what I did, which was... nothing. I didn't let go. I didn't pull her closer. I just sat there, heart racing, fingers slackening slowly around her wrist.

She took that as the answer it was.

"Thought so," she murmured.

She eased her hand free of my grip, popped the button of my jeans, and dragged the zipper down. Cool air hit hot skin; I sucked in a breath. She gripped my shaft through my boxers, grinned at me, then slid her fingers under the waistband, eyes never leaving mine.

"This is me," she said, voice low, half-teasing, half-serious.

"Using you, if that makes you feel better. You don't owe me anything after this. You don't owe her anything, either. She already took what she wanted."

When her hand wrapped around me properly, my protest died in my throat.

What followed blurred, the way she sank to her knees between mine, the brush of her scarlet hair against my thighs, the shock of wet heat as her mouth closed around me. The van seemed to shrink to the size of her lips, her tongue, the soft grunt she gave when I hit the back of her throat. I heard my own breathing as if it belonged to someone else, shaky and harsh.

"Jesus, Phoenix," I managed.

She pulled back just enough to smirk. "You can call me Nadia if you want a real name to moan when you cum," she said, and then her mouth was on me again, and my brain shorted out.

At some point, her shorts ended up on the floor; at some point, my hands were on her hips, skin under my palms instead of fabric. Her thighs were warm and firm, the circuit tattoos continuing down her leg in intricate patterns that seemed to pulse faintly under my fingertips as I traced them curiously.

She straddled me on the narrow bench, thighs bracketing mine, that loose grey top riding up to expose the flat plane of her stomach and the underswell of her breasts. The pierced nipple caught the blue light from the monitors, a silver ring glinting through the thin fabric.

"You're overthinking," she murmured, rolling her hips forward, grinding against my hard cock. "Stop it."

I groaned, hands tightening on her waist and looked down to see her pussy, shaved smooth, just a tight cleft, how wet it was against me. She leaned in, breath hot against my ear.

"Think about it however you need to," she breathed, reaching between us to guide me. "Revenge. Closure. Paying your tab."

Doesn't matter. Just don't waste it."

Her fingers wrapped around my cock, positioning me, and then she sank down slowly, taking me inside her with a low, satisfied sound that vibrated through both of us. Tight. Wet. Perfect.

"Fuck," I gasped, head falling back against the van wall.

"That's the idea," she said, voice thick with pleasure. She started moving, slow at first, rolling her hips in a way that made stars burst behind my eyes, then faster, finding a rhythm that had the bench creaking beneath us. Her pussy felt so fucking good.

My hands came up, pushing the thin vest, exposing the dark circles of her nipples, cupping her tits, enjoying the firmness of them against my palms.

"You like watching your wife get fucked," she panted, rising and falling on me, breasts bouncing in my hands. "So watch this."

Watch me use you. Watch me take what I want."

Her hands braced on my shoulders, nails digging in through my shirt. The metallic implant at her temple caught the light as she threw her head back, riding me harder now, chasing her own pleasure without apology.

I gripped her hips, guiding her, pulling her down onto me, pushing up so we met hard, my cock pushing deeper. Then I reached up with one hand to cup her breast again, thumb brushing over that pierced nipple. She gasped, clenched around me.

“Yes. Like that. Pinch it, harder.”

I gave it to her, fingers pinching the pierced nipple, my hips thrusting up to meet her downward strokes. The van filled with the slap of skin, her moans, my ragged breathing. She leaned forward, kissed me hard and messy, tongue demanding, taking what she needed.

“Come on,” she whispered against my mouth. “Give it to me. I want to feel you lose it.”

There was a moment, a single, sharp heartbeat, where I could have stopped it. Where I could have said no and meant it.

I didn't.

Instead, I stood, lifting her with me, then turned her around, bending her over the seat. She pushed back against me, her ass perfectly smooth and round, and I thrust my cock into her wet hole, and buried myself as deep as I could go, then held her shoulders and fucked her as hard as I could. Minutes later, sweat dripping from my brow, I came with a groan that seemed to tear out of my chest. She followed seconds later, shuddering around me, a raw, unfiltered sound escaping her lips as she rode out her own climax, thrusting back to me as I filled her up.

For a few seconds, we just stayed like that, me locked inside her, both of us breathing hard, sweat cooling in the recycled air.

Then she slid forward, moving off me with a soft, wet sound, reached for a box of tissues on the console, and cleaned up with the same matter-of-fact efficiency she'd applied to everything else.

"See?" she said lightly, tugging her top back down over her tits. "I told you. Everyone goes home looser and more relaxed."

Guilt was already stirring inside me, thick and sour. She saw it, of course.

"Don't start feeling bad, or suddenly confessing shit to me,"

she said, almost gentle now. "I don't want to hear it. Save that for your wife. Or your priest. I'm just the mechanic. I fix what I can, even if it means breaking a few eggs along the way. Now, thanks for the fuck, but off you go. I'll send you the name when I've got it."

She bent to snatch up her shorts, then glanced back over her shoulder.

"Although, saying that, if you ever want to thank me after I get you the info," she added, lips quirking, "I'd be game for another go at this."

I dressed in silence, fingers clumsy on my fly, the air in the van suddenly too thick. Phoenix... Nadia, whatever name she decided was real tonight, had already turned back to the console, bare feet braced on the floor, eyes on the scrolling code like nothing significant had happened between us.

"Let's get working on this," she said, businesslike now. She tapped a command, setting some search routine in motion. Thin bars flickered across one of the monitors, percentages ticking slowly upward.

I tugged my shirt straight, suddenly aware of how small the space was, processing what we'd just done.

"Why are you still here? I told you, I'll be in touch when I have something," she said. "Name, location, whatever I can scrape together without getting my face back on Elysium's naughty list."

She finally swivelled to face me again, the teasing gone from her eyes, replaced by something harder.

“Go home,” she said. “Act normal, don’t buy any new experiences. If you want to watch the other files, disconnect the base unit from the net. And don’t talk to anyone about this except Daniel. You definitely don’t start trying to hack Deep Dive yourself because you think you owe your wife some vigilante justice.”

She reached past me, slapped the van’s door release. Cold air seeped in around the seals, bringing with it the distant, ordinary noises of the street outside, traffic, distant voices, a siren somewhere far off. The world, still turning, ignorant of what had just happened in this small van, unbothered that my wife had fucked other guys without my knowledge.

“You’ll see me again,” she promised. “Just try not to get killed before I text you.”

I climbed down, boots hitting the damp pavement, legs un-steady. The alley seemed even darker now, the streetlamp at its mouth a pale, far-off circle.

As I stepped back, she leaned out just far enough that I could see the curve of her shoulder, the glint of metal at her temple under the edge of her hair, the faint outline of that pierced nipple against the thin grey top.

“And Greg?” she called.

I turned. “Yeah?”

“Bring condoms next time,” she said, mouth curving, “You don’t know where I’ve been.”

The doors thumped shut, cutting off the slice of light, muffling the buzz of the servers. I stood there for a moment in the dark, her

warnings and her offer both ringing in my ears.

Then I shoved my hands into my pockets and walked back toward the street, trying to remember how to breathe like a man who still deserved the life he was going home to.

Chapter Seven

My phone buzzed during a meeting I wasn't paying attention to anyway. I glanced down, expecting Joanna or some work spam, and felt my pulse spike when I saw the notification: encrypted message, unknown number.

I excused myself, walked to the bathroom, locked myself in a stall, and opened it.

Your bull: Jared Muir. Businessman, Jersey. Contracts with Elysium but doesn't appear to be a vetted Skin Deep donor. Everything I've read about him says he's professional, a good guy. So something doesn't make sense. However, his signature matches all five of your wife's files. He's the one who recorded them. What you do with that is your problem now. —N

Attached: an address in Hoboken, a LinkedIn profile screenshot, and a final note.

Just don't get yourself killed. And you're welcome for the other night.

I sat there staring at the screen, heart hammering.

Jared Muir.

I opened the LinkedIn screenshot. Mid-30s, sharp jawline, expensive suit, confident smile. The kind of guy who looked good in hotel lighting and knew exactly how to make a woman feel like the centre of the universe for an hour. His profile said he worked in finance consulting, was a frequent traveller, based in New Jersey.

Professional. That's what Nadia had called him. Professional at what? Selling people's intimate moments?

He'd fucked my wife, multiple times. Paid her for it, they made money from it in return, probably way more than it cost him. And during those sessions, Joanna had begged him to wreck her, to breed her, to use her married pussy however he wanted.

I felt sick.

I also felt insanely, shamefully hard.

I flushed the toilet for cover, washed my hands, and walked out like a man who hadn't just been handed the name of the stranger who'd been inside his wife multiple times, and shared her with his friends.

I made it through the rest of the day on autopilot, mumbling through emails, dodging questions from coworkers. By four, I couldn't take it anymore. I told my boss I wasn't feeling well—not strictly a lie—and headed home.

Joanna was still at work. The apartment was quiet, empty, safe.

I went straight to the office, locked the door, and pulled up my rig.

I'd researched how to take the Crown fully offline after the...

session in the van with Phoenix. How to link it to my PC, disable the telemetry, scrub the handshake logs, ghost the network adapter so Elysium's servers couldn't see what I was viewing. It took a few commands I barely understood, but I followed the instructions exactly.

The Crown's status light shifted from pale blue to amber. Offline. Invisible. No one would know what I was watching now, including Kowalski.

I fitted it on, the glowing filaments prickling against my scalp, and opened the folder I'd been avoiding since the doctor told me I had to.

The five files stared at me. I let my eyes drift over them again
•Married Blonde Takes DP in Penthouse Suite •Hot MILF Fucked By
Young 9" Stud

- Blonde Slut Bukkake Night

- Wife Gangbang, 4 Bulls Breed Her Raw

- Post-Upgrade Hotwife, New Tits, Same Whore Which one to watch?
I decided not to overthink it and chose one at random.

Wife Gangbang – 4 Bulls Breed Her Raw.

My hands were shaking as I hit play.

The immersion slammed in almost immediately, and once I'd got my bearings, I looked around me, steadying myself as I always had to.

I was standing in a hotel penthouse suite, a different one again but possibly another Cerulean, judging by the minimalist design and the floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Man-hattan skyline at night. The bed was massive, king-sized, with crisp white sheets already ruffled as if someone had been test-ing them out.

And there, in the middle of the bed, kneeling with her thighs spread and her hands resting on her knees, was Joanna.

Her blonde hair cascaded loosely around her shoulders, and the black lace mask once more covering her eyes and nose.

There was no prologue to this one, she was already completely naked except for a set of black sheer stockings with lace tops that hugged her thighs. Her tits—still their original size in this one, pre-surgery—rose and fell with her breathing, nipples hard and dark against her pale skin.

She looked up at me—at Jared, the body I was borrowing—and bit her lip.

“I’ll ask one last time. Are you sure about this?” Jared’s voice rumbled through my chest, deep and confident. Not mine. “It’s not too late to back out.”

Joanna nodded, then hesitated. “I need it,” she said, voice quiet but steady, and I didn’t know whether she meant the money or the sex. “So yeah. Bring them in. Let them do me.”

I walked to the door and opened it. Three other men stepped into view from another room attached to the suite. All of them naked, all of them already hard. One was white, muscular, tattooed across his chest. One was black, tall and broad-shouldered, cock thick and intimidating even half-soft. The third was lean, younger, sandy-haired, grinning like he’d won the lottery.

Jared—my hands, my body in this moment—stepped forward and cupped her face gently.

“Once we start, we’re not holding back,” he said. “Remember, you can stop at any time. Just say the word. You know the word?”

“Doughnut. Yes.” She nodded again, eyes wide behind the mask. “I know. I want this. Let’s go before I get any more nervous.”

He kissed her then, slow and deep, his hand sliding down to grip her breast, thumb circling her nipple. My wife’s nipple. She moaned into his mouth, arching into his touch.

The other three moved closer, and I looked around, watching them surround us on the bed. Within moments, hands were everywhere, the black guy stroking her thighs, the young guy feeling her ass, her older guy groping her tits. Joanna gasped, hazel eyes fluttering closed, her body shivering with anticipation, responding to the attention like she’d been starving for it.

The older tattooed one pulled her head toward his cock. He was pretty big, at least an inch bigger than me, thick and veiny and she opened her mouth without hesitation, sucking him deep while Jared's hands guided her hips back, positioning her on all fours.

I felt myself—Jared—press against her from behind and looked down one more time at the hard cock that was mine for the session. No condom. Just bare cock sliding into my wife's shaved, wet, eager heat.

She moaned around the tattooed guy's shaft, the sound muffled and obscene.

"Fuck, she's tight," Jared muttered, fingers digging into the soft flesh of her hips as he drove into her slowly at first, then with more confidence. Each push made her body jolt forward on her hands and knees, breasts swaying beneath her, mask slipping a fraction down her nose. "I hope you don't mind me breaking her in for you," he added over his shoulder to the others, voice edged with a dark kind of humour. "Let me get her nice and loose and then she's all yours."

Joanna let out a broken laugh that dissolved into a gasp as I bottomed out inside her. It felt so weird to feel my cock going that deep. "Oh God... oh fuck..."

The black bull moved around to her side, close enough to us that I could smell his cologne—something sharp and expensive.

He stroked his long, circumcised cock lazily, dark eyes roaming over her body. "My turn next," he said, low and amused. "I wanna get me some of that married pussy."

Jared set a rhythm, my hips snapping forward, the sound of my balls slamming against her pussy echoing off the high ceiling and glass. Joanna's fingers curled against the sheets, nails digging in, back arching as she pushed back to meet me.

"That's it," the black bull murmured as he watched us. "Take it. Take my cock for your sick husband."

She moaned, the sound raw and needy. "Harder. Please. Don't be gentle."

The tattooed man at the head of the bed stepped closer, hand wrapping around the base of his cock as he guided it toward her mouth. He was shaved, the tattoos on his body coming all the way down to his groin. Joanna opened up willingly, lips closing over him, cheeks hollowing as she sucked him in. My thrusts from behind jolted her with each movement so the shaft in her mouth slid deeper, making her gag around him.

"Good girl," the tattooed man groaned, one hand landing on the back of her head, matching my tempo. "Just like that. Take it down your throat."

We got into a groove: me slamming her full of Jared's cock from behind, the man at her mouth feeding her his length, both men watching her reactions, adjusting. The black bull shifted position, first by her shoulder, then kneeling in front of her so he could stroke himself right next to the action, occasionally brushing his fingers along her cheek, smearing spit and precum across her flushed skin. Finally, the younger man watched from a few feet away, slowly jerking his cock, getting himself ready.

Then they swapped.

The tattooed man in her mouth pulled out with a wet pop, dragging his cock across her lips and mask, and stepped aside, letting the black guy take his place. I slowed, then stopped, slipping out, feeling the air cool against my wet cock as I stepped back to let one of the others slide into the heat I'd left behind. The young bull immediately took my place, and I watched intently as he pushed the purple head of his impressive cock against her pussy lips, then shoved in roughly.

Joanna took it all as the three men used her. The young guy ploughed her pussy mercilessly, grabbing her hair and pulling it back, driving into her deep. Then the black bull took her, shoving his huge black dick inside her pussy while she sucked the younger guy. They took turns in using her, the slightly different sizes stretching her, different angles slamming into her from behind. She adjusted like she'd been made for this, moans vibrating around whoever she was sucking, hips rolling to meet whoever was inside her at any given moment.

"Harder," she gasped when one of them eased up, voice muffled. "Don't stop. Use me. You're going to make me cum."

"That's what we're doing," someone laughed, fingers tangling in her hair. "If you want to cum, you gotta earn it, sweetheart."

She only moaned in answer, the sound dissolving into another suck, another wet gag as she pushed herself forward to take the tattooed bull who was now in her mouth, even deeper.

Then they stepped it up.

The tattooed man lay down on the bed, pulling Joanna on top of him. She sank onto his girthy cock with a shuddering gasp, riding him slowly while the black bull positioned himself behind her, pressing against her ass.

"Wait," she whispered, voice shaking. "I'm not ready—"

"Relax," the black bull murmured, one hand stroking her back. "We'll go slow."

He pushed into her second hole carefully, inch by inch, and Joanna's whole body tensed, then melted. When he was fully seated, both of them inside her, one in the pussy, one in the ass, she let out a broken sob.

“Oh God. Oh fuck. So full.”

They started moving together, finding a rhythm, and she screamed, raw, unfiltered pleasure mixed with pain and over-whelm.

The younger man moved to her mouth, feeding her his cock while the other two fucked her from below and behind. She gagged, spit dripping down her chin, mascara streaking as tears leaked from behind the mask.

Meanwhile, Jared—me—stroked himself, watching, either waiting his turn or just enjoying the show.

“What a good little whore,” the tattooed one grunted, slapping her ass as the three of them fucked all her holes. “Does your husband know you’re here?”

“He’s—fuck—he’s sick,” Joanna gasped between thrusts around the young cock in her mouth. “He needs me. This is for him.”

“Then let’s make it worth it,” the black bull said, slamming deeper.

They used her for what felt like forever—switching positions, filling every hole, covering her in sweat, and spitting on her ass and pussy as lube. Jared finally took his next turn, fucking her ass hard while she begged me to breed her, to fill her up, to make her forget everything.

One by one, they finished.

Jared was first. I felt everything, his cock tensing deep inside her ass, pumping stream after stream of cum inside her. That was when Joanna came too, her back arching, squeezing both cocks out of her with the pressure. The young sandy-haired bull’s cum splashed across her tits as she collapsed onto the bed on her back, cum dripping from her asshole, breathing hard, body trembling. The black man put his cock in her mouth, and I watched as his shaft pulsed,

and as she took it, swallowing it before giggling up at him. Finally, the tattooed guy moved, sliding between his thighs and lowering his weight on her. Joanna's hands and legs wrapped around him, and we all watched as his ass pumped up and down, the pair of them rutting like animals until he grunted, cursed, and then buried himself inside her, shooting his load into her pussy.

Once he'd finished giving her his load, he got up and Jared—my POV—knelt beside her, brushing blonde hair from her face.

"Are you okay?" he asked softly.

She nodded, smiling weakly behind the mask. "Yeah. I'm okay." The other men were stepping away, cleaning themselves up, getting ready to leave. They'd come just for the sex, just for the opportunity to fuck the crap out of my wife.

"I'd love to do this again sometime," the tattooed bull asked, already pulling on his jeans.

Joanna laughed, breathless and broken. "Maybe. That was the best sex I've ever had. My pussy feels so well-fucked."

Jared looked down, and I yanked the Crown off, gasping.

Joanna's pussy and asshole had both been gaping slightly, raw, swollen, dripping with other men's cum. I couldn't look at it.

The office around me snapped back into focus, the harsh overhead light, the soft whirr of my computer, my own ragged breathing. My hand was wrapped around my painfully stiff cock, boxers soaked with pre-cum, right on the edge of cumming. I jerked off, unable to help myself, until I came, blobs of thick, sticky cum dribbling down my hand.

But I didn't care. I sat there in my own mess for a long moment, staring at nothing, trying to process what I'd just experienced.

Four men. Four. She'd let them use her together, at the same time, in every way possible. And she'd begged for it. Told them to fill her up, stretch her, breed her. Then claimed she was doing it for me.

The guilt that I'd enjoyed it hit me first, a pang of shame, almost nauseating. Then the rage that these four guys had treated my beloved wife like a worthless slut. Then, again, remaining underneath it all, that sick, twisted arousal that wouldn't let go and wanted to watch it again.

I shook myself, trying to push the thought from my mind, but the name haunted me.

Jared Muir.

I pulled up his LinkedIn again, staring at his face. He looked respectable, polished, confident. A wealthy businessman. The kind of man who could charm a woman into anything and make her feel grateful for it.

He'd been inside my wife. He'd made her scream. He'd shared her with a network of different well-hung, good-looking strangers. Then he'd sold the memories of it all.

And now I knew exactly where to find him. I cleaned up, changed my shirt, and a little later, Joanna still not home, I sat at my desk with my phone in my hand.

Nadia's parting words echoed in my head: Don't get yourself killed.

But I didn't want to kill him. I didn't even want to hurt him, not yet, anyway.

I just wanted to look Jared Muir in the eye and hear him confess to what he'd done. All of it. I wanted—no, I needed—to know every detail from every time he's fucked my Joanna.

Maybe he'd fucked her at other times, occasions he hadn't recorded and sold, occasions I couldn't watch through his eyes.

I wanted the truth. Every piece of it. Then I wanted him to say sorry.

And I was going to get it.

Chapter Eight

I'm not a man who does spontaneous confrontations.

I prefer code to conflict, quiet logic over raised voices. But that was before I watched my wife get annihilated by four men in a hotel suite from inside another man's head.

Now I sat in my car outside a glass-and-steel office block in Jersey, fingers drumming on the steering wheel, watching the re-volving doors as if they were a portal to another life. Somehow, after the night with Phoenix, I'd managed to go home and pretend everything was normal with Joanna. We'd even made love that night, despite me having already emptied my balls once, inside the red-haired hacker.

Then, last night, I'd somehow kept that same brave face on things. Joanna had arrived home shortly after I'd finished watching her gangbang, within a couple of minutes of me putting my cum-soaked boxers and splattered shirt in the washing machine. We'd eaten, talked, cuddled on the sofa while watching TV.

The only thing that helped me keep my face straight was the knowledge that I knew who he was now. I knew who the man was that had fucked my wife, and I knew where I could find him.

The thought of confronting him, despite me not being someone who sought out confrontation often, gave me some sort of inner strength.

The receptionist had given me Jared Muir's schedule with a smile when I'd said I was there about a 'significant contract opportunity' and flashed his LinkedIn profile on my phone, followed by an Elysium logo that I'd downloaded from the web and mocked up into an ID. There was money in it, I'd promised, and apparently, money

opened doors because she said he'd see me immediately after the meeting he'd got booked until three. It was now five past.

He stepped out at three-ten.

In person, he looked exactly like his profile photo and nothing like it at the same time. The camera had caught the angles just right, his dark hair styled just enough to emphasise his strong jawline, and showed off his expensive suit. But reality added small other details, the way he checked his watch automatically, the easy way his shoulders moved that said he was comfortable in his own body, while also betraying some grey at his temples, the slight frown lines at his brow from a life of thinking in numbers, the way his tie wasn't quite square. He wasn't quite as perfect as he appeared to be from looking purely online.

The strange thing was that I knew how that body felt from the inside. I almost knew what it was like to be Jared Muir. An odd feeling.

For a second, I just watched him, heat flushing my face, nausea rising, and my heart hammering in my chest. Then I got out of the car. Fuck it, I thought to myself as I walked towards him.

"Jared," I called out.

He turned, polite reflex already in place, the one you use for potential clients or strangers in the wrong parking lot. "Yes? Can I help—"

Whatever he was going to say died when he saw my expression. I saw the moment recognition clicked, a flicker of something. Did he know who I was? His eyes sharpened, and his posture changed, his back straightening, preparing for whatever was to come.

"I need to talk to you," I said. "Privately."

He glanced back at the building, then at me. We were close enough now that I could see the quality of the suit fabric, the fine gold watch on his wrist. Oh, this guy had money, confidence, I bet he had it all. A life untouched by the kind of shit I'd fallen into.

"Is this about work?" he asked carefully. "Do I know you?"

"In a way," I said. "I know you. Jared Muir. You have some big contracts tied to Elysium, right?"

His jaw tightened. "Who are you?"

"Greg Hart."

The name meant nothing to him, which hurt more than it should have. He'd never even Googled me? Did he even know who Joanna truly was? Or had she given him a fake name? I pushed on.

"You recorded a series of experiences with a married blonde, most of them in Cerulean Hotel bedrooms and suites. A woman called Joanna. She wore a black mask. I think it was over a spell of a few months, about a year ago." My voice shook, but I held his gaze. "I've watched them. All of them. I know what you did. I know who she is."

Colour drained from his face. "Christ," he breathed. "How did you—"

"I have the files," I cut in. "Every second of all of them. I have the donor signature from the Hard Core chip in your head and the donor IDs. As I mentioned, I also know you have active contracts with Elysium worth a lot of money. Contracts that I suspect would vanish if they realised you were selling these memories illegally. If they discovered that you're in bed with an illegal leak-er tied to Deep Dive."

He swallowed. Hard.

“Walk with me,” he said quietly.

We went to a coffee shop two blocks away and took a table in the back, away from the windows. He bought a coffee he didn't drink. I didn't bother ordering.

For a few moments, we sat there in silence, the murmur of other conversations a distant buzz.

“What do you want?” Those sharp eyes, eyes I'd seen out of, bored into my face, seemingly free of guilt but filled with something else, regret at being caught. “Or should I say, how much do you want? I presume this is some sort of blackmail?”

“I don't want your money,” I replied, my pulse pounding in my temple. I wanted to punch him, kick him, drag him into the street and hammer him to a bloody pulp. But I didn't. I wanted to know everything. Every single thing.

“Then what do you want? Who the fuck are you?”

“I told you. I'm Greg Hart, Joanna's husband. Joanna's sick husband, although I'm no longer sick. The operation worked.

Now I'm fighting fit.”

“Shit.” Jared's face paled visibly in the LED lighting of the coffee shop. “What? How?”

“It doesn't matter, does it? I saw them, found them on Deep Dive.” My fists bunched by my sides. Jared saw the motion, his jaw tensing. He took his coffee, probably preparing to throw it in my face if I advanced on him. “Who the fuck do you think you are, daring to fuck my wife when you knew she was married.

And how dare you share her with other guys, then sell the fucking memories.”

Jared just stared at me, fear but also confusion in his eyes.

“First of all, I’m sorry,” he said finally. “For whatever you saw. For how you found out. I never wanted—”

“You better be fucking sorry. But I’m not only here for an apology,” I said. “Not yet. I’m here because I want the truth. All of it. You tell me everything, or I send those files to every Elysium exec whose email I can find. I know enough to make it hurt.”

He flinched as if I’d struck him. His knuckles turned white around the coffee cup.

“You don’t want that,” he said. “You think you do, but you don’t. If Elysium looks at those files, they don’t come after me.

They go after her. They scrub witnesses. They erase problems.

Your wife becomes a rounding error in their risk register.”

The casual use of ‘your wife’ felt like a slap in the face.

I don’t believe that,” I said. “I have friends inside Elysium.

How do you think I cracked the encryption and found your details? I can make things really bad for you, Jared Muir. All you have to do is explain. Every single detail.”

He stared at me a second longer, assessing me. His eyes scanned the coffee shop, probably planning an escape route. But then he ran a hand over his face, the polished mask cracking.

“Look,” he said. “You clearly did your homework, so I’m not going to insult you with a fairy tale. Yes, I recorded those sessions. Yes, I sold the experiences. But I swear to you, I didn’t leak them to Deep Dive. That part, I didn’t know about. It was never part of the plan. And for that, I am very, very sorry. Truly, I am.”

"Apology not accepted. Not yet. Start at the beginning," I said.

"How did you meet Joanna?"

He stared into his untouched coffee for a moment, then back at me.

"We crossed paths through work," he said. "She did marketing for one of my clients. We'd been in the same room a few times, presentations, conferences, that kind of thing. Joanna is smart, funny, and pretty. She's also married. And off-limits, obviously. I didn't think much beyond that."

My hands clenched again. I slid them under the table, trying to resist the urge to leap over it and smash the guy's face in.

"About a year and a half ago," he went on, "she asked me for a drink after a meeting. Just the two of us. We went to the bar at the Cerulean near the office. Joanna was... nervous, upset. Then she told me her husband was sick. Really sick. Heart issues. You were on death row, basically. Then she went on to say that your insurance was screwed. She needed money. Fast. She'd heard rumours I did... someone told her in the office that I'd done some...

extracurricular work with Skin Deep."

He looked at me like he expected me to know this already, then realised I didn't.

"I'm a vetted donor," he said. "I was one of Elysium's beta-testers and part of their early 'trusted experiences' program.

They run you through every test they've got, install a Hard Core chip, and then you sell them slices of your life. First-person memories. At first, it was travel experiences, but then they wanted to test the darker side of the market. They scrubbed my donor ID and moved me to a separate, underground program. The money was good. I couldn't say no. I went through it with my lawyers first.

The legal stuff is all very clean, it's all consensual, regulated, anonymised for premium clients. I quickly became one of their top earners."

"And you thought, what?" I asked. "Why not add my coworkers to the catalogue?"

His jaw flexed. "She asked me," he said. "She brought it up.

She said she knew what Skin Deep was, that she'd read the articles. She wanted to know if they took couples. If I could get her in. She was... desperate, Greg. I've seen that look too many times.

People will do things you can't imagine when the alternative is losing someone, when devastating debt or even death is part of the conversation."

I thought of Joanna sitting by my hospital bed, eyes red, hand crushing mine. Desperate. Yeah. I could imagine. It still didn't make it okay.

"I told her what it meant," he continued. "That it would be recorded. That I'd be the donor of record, but she'd be in the frame, and even though she was wearing a mask, someone might still potentially recognise her. I explained the process, that I'd sell the experiences to a private buyer, one client, high-end, very discreet. That she'd have to sign contracts. I told her the expected fees, and she said yes. On the spot."

"She knew you were going to sell them," I said, wanting confirmation.

"Yes," he replied, his voice seeming genuine, his body language relaxing somewhat. "She knew I was going to sell the memories. The part she didn't know, and the part I didn't know, until now, was that the buyer would turn out to be an unscrupulous, greedy idiot who couldn't keep his files on his own server."

My stomach twisted. "You're saying that your buyer leaked them?"

"Or got hacked," Jared said. "Either way, that's how they ended up where you found them. He's the only person I ever shipped the memory to. I wiped it from my storage. I don't even have those files anymore. Greg, I have more to lose than anyone if my clients start dumping my secrets on the black market. I don't touch Deep Dive or any of those other cesspool sites.

They're way too dangerous for a man like me, with a reputation to uphold."

He seemed to be genuine. His voice was steady, his body language open. There was even something that resembled empathy in his eyes. I believed him. I hated that I believed him.

"How many times?" I asked. "How many times did my wife sell herself to you?"

"I only made five or six recordings," he said. "I can't remember exactly. It sounds like you've seen all of them, but I'll try to remember them for you. Ummm... the first one was at Cerulean Midtown, just me and her, if I recall. I think she wore a red dress.

Then the DP in the penthouse. Then the gangbang. Then a softer one—still dirty—where she just wanted to wank and suck a load of guys and have them all cum on her." His mouth tightened slightly at the memories. "Then the last one was after her surgery. She told me she'd paid off most of the medical debt, but she'd overspent and got a boobjob done too. She needed some more money to pay that off, but also, I guess she wanted to show off the new work."

He looked up at me, something in his expression... Was it envy?
"You're a lucky man, Greg. Joanna is incredible in bed.

Great body. Those new tits..." Then he saw my eyes tighten and added hastily, "She's a lovely person too. I promise you, she did this

for the right reasons. That's not to say she didn't enjoy it, as you've probably realised. She's enjoyed it... a lot."

I swallowed hard. "She... enjoyed it, you say?"

He nodded slowly. "More than most that I've... done this with.

At first, it was purely transactional. She was focused on the earnings. Once she'd done it the first time and saw the money go into her bank, once she knew the money was good and safe... she loosened. It was all Joanne, I promise you, Greg. It was she who started suggesting things. She wanted to go further each time.

The double-penetration was her idea. The gangbang was her idea. I told her it was going too far, possibly, that she might not be able to look you in the eye after doing something like that, but she insisted. When the guys turned up and got naked, she didn't hesitate. She... she even got off on the fact that she knew someone would live it later. She asked me questions, asked me what it would be like. I have a NeuroLink crown, so I gave her a demo. It wasn't a full experience because she doesn't have a Hard Core chip, so it was just the VR hook-up, but she got the idea. And it turned her on."

"It turned her on that someone else would get to fuck her, vicariously, through your body," I said, disbelieving every word.

"No way. What if she knew it was going to end up on the black market, that someone like me could end up seeing it, through Deep Dive? There's no way she—"

"No, not you," he said quickly. "I told you she had no idea, just like I didn't, that the buyer would do this to her. To me, and you."

Jared looked at me, his eyes softening further. "She talked about you a lot, you know. We met up for coffee between the sex. She told me all about you and said you were brilliant. Kind. She confessed that, at times, she hated herself a little for what she was doing, but hated

the idea of losing you more. She enjoyed the sex, you must have seen that for yourself, but if you think she's living without regret, then you're wrong."

The words landed like blows and balm all at once.

"Finally, she told me she was done after the last session," he said. "That you were stable now, financially and that she had what she needed. She felt... guilty, regretful, not about the sex, any of it. She loved being fucked in ways that most women will never know. But she regrets lying to you. And so we went our separate ways. She told me to delete her number. I did. And we haven't spoken since. I promise you, Greg. It's all in the past now."

Silence settled between us. The clink of cups, the hiss of the espresso machine, the murmur of strangers' conversations, all of it felt miles away. The only thing that existed was Jared Muir, the man who'd cuckolded me.

"I hope you paid her a lot," I said eventually. "Because she's worth it."

"Yes," he said. "She is. I'm not cheap, and I don't expect anyone I work with to be either. She walked away with more than enough to cover your surgery shortfall, plus everything you needed for your recovery and the... enhancements. You can be angry with me. You can be angry about how she did it. I won't argue. But don't ever think she didn't pay a price too, for the risks she took."

"And you," I said. "You made how much selling those memories?"

He looked away. "Plenty."

Something in me snapped. I stood up, the chair scraping loudly against the floor. Jared rose automatically, hands up in a placating gesture, the coffee forgotten.

“Greg—” He reached for the cup. Too late.

I hit him.

My fist connected with his jaw with a satisfying, sickening crack. Pain lanced up my arm. He staggered back, slammed into the wall, knocked a framed print askew, and slid down to sit hard on the floor.

The coffee shop went silent for a heartbeat, then a murmur started. Someone stood. The barista called out, “Everything okay back there?”

“We’re fine,” Jared said quickly, one hand pressed to his jaw, the other held palm-out. “I just slipped. Clumsy me.”

People settled back down, the moment of drama dissolving into embarrassed chuckles.

He looked up at me, eyes watering, lip bleeding slightly. “I deserved that,” he said quietly. “Probably more.”

My knuckles throbbed. I shook out my hand, more to dispel the impulse to hit him again than anything else, and sat down heavily.

“I’m sorry,” Jared said again, still on the floor. “I’ll say it one more time. We never meant for you to find out. I never meant for those files to leak. If I could take it back...”

“You can’t,” I said. “So you’re going to do the next best thing.”

He raised an eyebrow, still wincing. “What’s that?”

“You’re going to tell me who you sold them to,” I said. “This private collector. Every detail you have. And then you’re going to pay me back.”

“I just told you,” he said. “It was one guy. He’s a private person. Old money. Loves the married-wife fantasy. I send him encrypted

streams, he pays premium rates, files stay on his end.

That's the deal. Or was." He rubbed his jaw. "He broke it. I'll deal with that."

"How?" I asked.

He gave a humourless little laugh. "Not by punching him in a coffee shop, if that's what you're asking. But I have leverage.

Clients like him have more to lose than I do if their habits go public. I can make him very, very sorry he sold your wife's sessions onto a resale server."

"And me?" I said. "What do I get?"

He wiped his lip again, then reached into his jacket, pulled out his phone, and tapped a few times. "Gregory Hart," he murmured to himself, then smiled. "Got you." A second later, my own phone buzzed. I pulled it out, wondering what tricks he was going to pull next.

Transfer received: 75,000 creds.

My breath caught.

"I can't... I don't want your money," I said.

"It's not my money," he said. "Not anymore. Call it restitution.

Or blood money. Or whatever makes it easier to look at. You can throw it away if it makes you feel pure. Or you can invest it, pay off debts, take your wife somewhere nice. Up to you. But you can't say I walked away without trying to balance the ledger."

The number sat there on my screen, stupidly large. Seventy-five thousand. Enough to wipe out the very last dregs of the medical

debt, pay off the mortgage or pad our savings, maybe actually enjoy the second chance I'd been given without watching every bill.

I hated that I wanted it. I hated that taking it felt like admitting something about myself I hadn't wanted to see.

I put the phone back in my pocket.

"I'll find the client," Jared said. "I'll make sure the files stop moving. They're already everywhere they're going to be, but I can at least put some pressure on the source. And I'll email your wife."

My head snapped up. "Don't."

"She deserves to hear it from me," he said. "That I broke her trust, too. That you know. That I'm sorry."

"If you tell her I came to you—"

"I won't," he said. "I'll tell her I found out about the leak and that I owed her an apology, which is true. The part about you will come from you. Or it won't. That's your mess to manage."

He climbed back into his chair slowly, a reddening lump on his jaw already starting to swell.

"You know, for what it's worth," he said, "she never stopped talking about you. 'My husband this, my husband that.' You were... there, for her. A reason. A shield. An excuse. I don't know.

But you weren't absent from her thoughts. Not ever."

I didn't know what to do with that. Whether it made any of this better or worse.

"Why are you telling me that?" I asked.

"Because I've seen women who cheat just to cheat," he said.

“Who step out because they’re bored and they like the thrill. That wasn’t your Joanna.”

We sat in silence for a while.

“Seventy-five thousand,” I said finally. “That’s what my marriage is worth to you?”

He gave a small, tired smile. “That’s what my conscience is worth to me. You’ll decide what your marriage is worth on your own.”

He stood, wincing slightly. “Go home,” he said. “Talk to her. Or don’t. But don’t let this be the only thing that defines you.”

He walked away, back toward his shiny life. I went in the other direction, toward my car, my throbbing hand, and a phone in my pocket with seventy-five thousand creds and a future I had no idea how to navigate.

Chapter Nine

I knew something was wrong the second I opened the front door.

The apartment was quiet, too quiet. There was no sound, no music, no TV, no clatter from the kitchen. Just the low hum of the AC and my own heartbeat in my ears as my pulse picked up.

“Jo?” I called, kicking off my shoes. “Are you home?”

“In here,” she replied.

Her voice came from my office.

My stomach dropped.

I walked down the hallway, trying to keep my pace normal.

The door was open. The lights were on. And Joanna was sitting in my chair.

She'd spun it half toward the door. One bare foot was planted on the floor, the other tucked under her. My NeuroLink Crown lay on the desk beside her, its filaments spread like a metal spider. On the monitor behind her, the video player was open, paused at a frame I recognised instantly. A Cerulean hotel room, a familiar blonde in a red dress on her knees, lips parted around the head of a cock that wasn't mine.

For a second, none of us moved.

Her eyes flicked from my face to my hand, still swollen from punching Jared, to the screen, then back.

“Well,” she said softly. “That answers one question.”

My mouth felt dry. "Which one?"

"Whether you knew," she said. Her voice wobbled, just a little.

"Whether you'd seen any of this. I guess... you have."

She clicked the mouse. The video shrank to a thumbnail, the image of her frozen mid-suck compressing into a taunting square at the bottom of the screen.

The desktop behind it was a crime scene. Deep Dive's logo in a browser tab. A downloads folder with filenames that suddenly looked like accusations: Married MILF Begs for BBC, Wife Gangbang – 4 Bulls, Post-Upgrade Premium.

She didn't have to say anything. I was caught.

"You went through my stuff," I said, grasping at indignation because it was easier than everything else.

Her eyes flashed. "A friend of mine messaged me," she snapped. "He told me the files leaked. That some rich asshole had dumped them onto the black market. And that I should be careful because they might show up anywhere. I panicked. And then I remembered my husband has a Crown and has been acting like his head is somewhere else for weeks." She gestured at the screen. "So yeah, Greg, I went through your stuff. I'm sorry I didn't ask permission to check whether you'd watched me get fucked by strangers."

The anger bled out of me as fast as it had flared. I sagged against the doorframe, a pain in my stomach like someone had knocked the wind from me.

"I was going to tell you that I'd found out," I said softly.

"Today. But I wanted it to be on my terms. I wanted to do it my way."

She nodded, chin tight. "When I went crazy, my friend said he's gotten into a fight about it already. It was you, wasn't it? You somehow found him."

"Yes," I admitted. "Doctor Kowalski helped me. He knows. The NeuroLink Crown reported to him that I'd been watching...

unauthorised stuff."

"Of course it did," she muttered, looking away. "Has Daniel seen... the files, too?"

I didn't know what to say. Silence stretched between us for a beat. The Crown sat there on the desk, accusing. The paused thumbnail glowed in the corner of the screen.

"Yes. He's seen some of them."

"How much did you watch?" she asked. "Have you watched them all? Or just one?"

"I've watched enough," I sighed. "The threesome. The gangbang. You and Jared, the first one."

She let out a breath that was half-laugh, half-sob. Her gaze flicked to the monitor again, then back to me. "You really went for the full package, huh? Not just one file. All five. Plus whatever else that little cesspit had to offer."

"It started as something else," I said. "I bought an underground Krissy Saffron afterparty file. It came with a bonus... a wife pack." I shrugged, feeling pathetic. "I was curious as to what might be in it."

"Curious," she repeated, bitterness creeping in. "You were horny, Greg. Horny to see what it would feel like to fuck your favourite rockstar. And then you got a two-for-one when it turned out your wife was in the bargain bin bonus extras."

"That's not fair," I said quietly. "And you're not a... bargain bin bonus."

She stood up suddenly, the chair rolling back a few inches.

Her face was flushed, eyes bright with a cocktail of anger and something else I couldn't name yet.

"Aren't I?" she said, something in her voice that I rarely heard, a restrained anger. "And you're right. No, it's not fair.

None of this is fucking fair."

She took a step closer, arms folded across her chest like she was holding herself together.

"So you watched Krissy Saffron, then you just happened to stumble upon a file with me?"

"Yes, I found the first file by accident," I said. "I swear. I admit I bought the Krissy thing, okay? I watched that, then opened one of the extra files and... it was... you."

Her jaw worked. "And you kept watching."

"I couldn't not," I said. "I was... shocked. Sick. I thought I'd misheard your voice, that you just looked like someone else.

Then you turned around, and I saw the scar on your thigh, the mole under your breast. There was no pretending after that."

Her eyes softened briefly at the mention of those details, then hardened again. "So you went back for seconds. And then you emailed him and bought the others."

"500 creds," I confessed, because if I was going to do this, I was doing it honestly. "And it was... worth every cent."

"500 creds? What the fuck? That's so much money!" But then something like relief flickered across her face. "But wait... What do you mean, it was worth every cent?"

I swallowed. Could I admit to enjoying it? No. Not yet. "A low price to pay to find out the truth. And then punch the guy out who did this to me."

"You've met Jared. You know he's not a bad man. You didn't need to get into a fight with him. In his message to me, he said he was sorry," she said slowly, her voice trembling. Her gaze dropped to my hand. I followed it. The skin over my knuckles was split and bruised, purpling nicely. "That he only ever sold the files to one private client, that he didn't mean for them to leak, that he's trying to put pressure on the buyer."

"He sold the memories in the first place," I muttered. "The responsibility to make sure they were kept private lies with him.

He shouldn't have sold them to someone he couldn't trust."

She took another step toward me, closing the distance. We were an arm's length apart now.

"So," she said. "Fine. You punched him. How the hell did you even find him anyway?"

I let out a long breath.

"I found the first file," I said. "I watched it. I got obsessed. I couldn't stop thinking about what I'd seen. About you." I gestured toward the desk. "I went back to the site. Bought the rest. Then... I contacted someone who could trace the donor signature. She gave me Jared's name."

"She?" Joanna's eyebrows went up.

"Doesn't matter," I said, too fast.

Her lips curved, humourless. "So my husband, devastated by betrayal, goes to another woman for help and... what?"

"She's a hacker," I said. "But more like a ghost now, living out of some sort of mobile data centre inside a van. She used to work for Elysium, now she's trying to take them down. She was the only one who could pull the ID from the files without getting us all killed. It was Doctor Kowalski who put me in touch with her."

"And that's all that happened?" Joanna asked. "She just very kindly did you a favour out of the goodness of her heart?"

Heat crept up my neck. "It's... complicated."

"Oh, for fuck's sake," she said, pinching the bridge of her nose. "Greg."

"She made a pass," I blurted. "I was strung out and angry, and I didn't stop her as hard as I should have. It was a mistake. A stupid, selfish, one-off mistake."

She stared at me, jaw tight. For a second, I thought she was going to slap me. Instead, she laughed, a short, sharp sound that bordered on hysterical. I realised, too late, that I'd just told her that to get my own back. To hurt her, like she'd hurt me.

"So let me get this straight," she said. "I sell recordings of myself having sex to pay for your surgery and some upgrades, because I am terrified I'm going to lose you. I keep it secret because I can't bear you seeing me that way. It leaks. You find it. You watch it over and over again while resenting me for doing it."

"Then you track down some underground hacker through your surgeon, fuck her in a van, and then punch my former... colleague... in the face."

"When you say it like that..." I began.

"How else is there to say it?" she demanded.

"I did it because I was losing my mind," I said. "Because I needed answers. Because I needed to know I wasn't crazy. Because everyone around me was lying or keeping things from me 'for my own good.' Because maybe I wanted to get even. And yes, because I'm weak and I wanted to feel wanted by someone who wasn't looking at me like I was broken."

Her expression flickered at that last part. Some of the fury drained away, leaving something rawer. She pushed her blonde hair out of her eyes and gazed at me for a moment before letting her eyes drop to the floor.

"I never thought you were broken," she said quietly.

"You hid everything from me," I said. "You told me there was an inheritance, Jo. You let me think your uncle died at the perfect time and dropped a bag of cash from heaven. You never once mentioned that you were meeting Jared in hotel rooms and letting him and his friends fuck you until you couldn't walk."

"Do you have to say it like that? So fucking crudely?" she re-torted, anger flaring in those hazel eyes again. "I know what I did. I'm not going to stand here and tell you it was noble. Or kind.

Or fair. But at the time, it felt like the only way. We were drowning, Greg. The insurance company didn't care if you lived or died. I heard a rumour about a guy with more money than sense, heard there was a way that would get us what we needed without owing them our souls. I saw only one path, Greg. So, I took it."

"You could have told me," I said.

"Would you have said yes?" she snapped.

I opened my mouth. Closed it.

"You would have said no," she said to me. "You would have refused. You would have insisted on finding another way, a slower way, a more... moral way. And maybe we would have lost you while we waited."

She looked away, blinking hard, tears welling up.

"Or maybe I'd have been fine," I countered.

Joanne took a long moment, then grabbed my hand and squeezed it gently. "I was there when they wheeled you into theatre," she said. "When the surgeon told me there were complications. That your heart was a mess, that without the additional procedure insurance wouldn't cover, your odds dropped by twenty percent. They said your chances were... minimal. Do you understand what that felt like? Sitting there alone, watching the balance in our account and the numbers on the consent form and realising that I could fix it if I just... stopped being the good girl for once?"

She laughed bitterly.

"So I did it," she said. "I put on the mask. I signed the contracts without even reading them. I told myself it was anonymous, that no one besides me and the men involved would ever know. That I was just... an actress in someone else's fantasy."

"And then you did it again," I pointed out, but didn't pull my hand from hers. "And again. And again."

"Because I discovered I liked it." She looked back at me, defiant through the shimmer in her eyes. "There," she said. "That's the part I was scared to admit. I liked it. I liked being wanted. I liked being used. I liked the way they looked at me. And I hated myself for that, because you were at home recovering and I was in a hotel suite, doing... what I had to do. And enjoying it."

I swallowed, throat tight. Somewhere outside, a dog was bark-ing. Traffic passed by, the usual hum of noise from the street leaking in through the window.

"Did you ever... feel anything for him?" I asked. "For Jared?"

"No," she said, without hesitation. "He was always... a partner in crime. A colleague. A friend, perhaps. But he was more of a means to an end. I appreciated him. I was attracted to him. But love? No. That's not what that was. I wouldn't even say I was...

fond of him. I just used him for what we needed. And for what I wanted."

"And the others?" I asked.

"Don't be silly." She shook her head. "The other men were all just props. Toys. Extras. Whatever you want to label them."

We stood there, breathing the same air, all the lies finally out between us like debris after a storm.

"So, yes. I enjoyed it." Joanna said, finally releasing my hand, walking to the window to look outside into the darkening world for a moment. Then she looked over her shoulder at me. "I don't understand why you watched more of the recordings. Surely after seeing one, you'd have come to me. Confronted me. Divorced me. Why would you watch them all? Why would you keep it to yourself and go to all this trouble for the truth? Unless...

you got off on it."

This was it. This was the moment it all ended. She'd be sick with me, revulsed by me. Confused, disappointed that I wasn't the possessive husband that punched her lover, not really. Betrayed by the fact that I enjoyed every second of watching her get fucked.

“Yes,” I said. “I got off on it. But, before you judge me, let me explain. It did make me sick. But it also made me hard. It made me cum, and I hated that I did. I felt angry, jealous and betrayed.

But I also came harder than I have in years. Every time. And then I despised myself for that, too.”

A breath shivered out of her. She walked over, coming closer again to where I was standing by the NeuroLink Crown. We were inches apart now.

“Then I guess we’re both fucked up,” she said. “You and I both. But at least now we’re fucked up out loud. We’re honest fuck-ups.”

My hand lifted almost of its own accord, fingers brushing a strand of hair back from her face. She didn’t flinch. Her breath, heavy and slow, caught in her throat, and she closed her eyes.

“I don’t know what to do with this,” I admitted. “Any of it. I’m angry. I’m grateful. I’m turned on. I feel betrayed, but I also know you saved my life. It’s so confusing. Why did it turn me on to see you do those things? Why did it get me so aroused, fucking you through someone else’s eyes? Feeling what he felt? Then seeing those other men do things to you while he watched?”

Her eyes opened and searched mine, some of the fight draining out of her.

“It really turned you on?” she whispered. “Be truthful.”

“Yes,” I confessed, feeling my cheeks burning aflame.

“I see,” she nodded. “Tell me. What do you want? Right now.

In this moment. Not tomorrow. Not in some fantasy where none of this happened. Right now, Greg. What do you want from me?”

The answer was there before I even thought it.

"You," I said. "I want you. All of you. The part that sat by my hospital bed, holding my hand. The part that put on a mask and let strangers fuck her in hotel suites. The part that will do anything for me. The part that loves me. The part that wants big cocks. I want all of it."

Her pupils blew wide. "And the part that liked it?" she asked.

"The part that still does, if I'm being honest?"

I swallowed. "Especially that part."

A shaky laugh escaped her. "You realise what you're saying, right? You realise where that leads?"

"I don't know where it leads," I replied. "But I know where we are, and I know I'm done pretending I don't know all of this stuff."

"I'm done hiding my feelings, and I think you probably feel the same."

She stepped into me then, closing the last of the distance, pressing her body against mine. I could feel the rapid beat of her heart, her body heat through her clothes. Her hands slid up my chest, around my neck.

"Say it," she murmured. "Say you want your loving wife. Say you want the whore in those videos. Say it's the same person."

"I want my wife," I said, voice rough. "And I want the whore in those videos. And I know they're the same person."

She exhaled like I'd knocked the wind out of her, then crashed her mouth onto mine.

The kiss was a collision of teeth, tongues, years of unspoken things compressed into a single moment. I grabbed her hips, pulling her closer, feeling the way her body fit against mine. She made a hungry sound, fingers tangling in my hair, tugging.

We stumbled backwards into the room, bumping into the desk. The Crown rattled, nearly sliding off. Joanna broke the kiss long enough to snatch it up and drop it safely onto the chair, then turned back to me, eyes blazing.

“Take me to bed,” she said. “Now. And then, if you still want to yell at me after, we can do that. But right now I need you inside me more than I need to be right.”

I didn’t argue.

I scooped her up, surprising both of us, and carried her down the hall. She laughed, breathless, slightly hysterical, but real, arms tight around my neck.

In the bedroom, our clothes went everywhere. Her top over the chair. My shirt somewhere near the door. Jeans, leggings, socks in a trail to the bed.

For a moment, I just stopped and looked at her.

She wasn’t wearing a mask now. There was no hotel mood lighting. There was just Joanna, my wife, naked on our bed, breasts fuller than they were in the videos, the scar on her thigh, the mole under her breast, hazel eyes wide and vulnerable, and so damn beautiful it hurt.

“Tell me what you saw,” she whispered as I climbed over her.

“Tell me what you liked.”

I lowered myself slowly, pressing my length against her slick heat, not pushing in yet.

"I saw you on your knees," I said, lips brushing her ear. "Taking his big, hard cock down your throat like it was nothing. I saw you beg four men to fill you up because you needed the money and because it made you feel alive. I saw men cum in your pussy, fuck you and cum in your ass. I saw you swallow cum and enjoy every single moment as they filled all three of your holes at once. I saw you cum so hard you probably forgot your own name."

She shuddered, fingers digging into my shoulders.

"And it turned you on?" she asked.

"Every depraved minute of it," I said, and slid my cock into her shaved pussy in one slow, steady thrust.

She gasped, back arching, legs wrapping around my waist.

"Fuck," she breathed. "Greg..."

I started fucking her, finding a rhythm that made her breathe heavily on every stroke. Her nails raked down my back, heels digging into my lower back, urging me deeper.

"Talk to me like you did in the video," I murmured into her neck. "Talk dirty."

Her cheeks flushed, but her eyes were dark and hungry.

"I want to be fucked," she whispered. "I want you to fuck me, use my pussy. Fill it up with your cum.."

I groaned, thrusting harder. "Again."

"I was a whore," she said louder, hips meeting mine. "I let them fuck me. I let them do whatever they wanted. I swallowed their cum, let

them cum on my tits. I let them cum inside me. My pussy and my ass. And I fucking enjoyed it. I loved how their big cocks stretched me out. I needed you to live, Greg, but I also did it because it turned me on."

Hearing it from her lips, in our bed, with my cock inside her, did something to me. The jealousy, the rage, the gratitude, the arousal, it all tangled into something that felt like falling and landing at the same time.

"Did you like having two cocks inside your pussy and ass at the same time?" I asked, through gritted teeth, feeling sweat drip down my back as I ploughed into it as hard as I could.

"Yes," she moaned, "Fuck, yes. I loved how it completely filled me up. I felt like a complete slut... and I loved it."

"And how many cocks have you had now?" I asked. "Since marrying me?"

"Six," she whimpered. "Jared's. The three others at the gangbang, and his two friends. But during the cum party... Did you watch that one? I let about ten of them cum on me. I didn't let any except Jared fuck me, but I sucked them all, wanked them all. I let them feel me, play with my pussy, make me orgasm. I did whatever they wanted except fuck, until they covered me in it. It was in my hair, all over my face, my tits, my body."

She came first, crying out my name, pussy clamping down around me so hard I almost came too. But I kept moving, slower now, riding out her orgasm until I couldn't hold back anymore.

"I'm going to—" I managed.

"Do it," she panted. "Please. I want to feel you. I want you to remember how it feels to cum with your dick, and not just Jared's."

I buried myself as deep as I could and came with a raw, broken sound, pulse after pulse, emptying everything into her.

For a while, we just lay there, tangled, sweat cooling, our breathing slowly syncing back up.

Eventually, she shifted, pressing her forehead against mine.

"We're a mess," she whispered.

"Yeah," I said. "But at least now we're the same mess."

She gave a tiny, exhausted laugh.

"So," she said. "What do we do now?"

I had no idea. But as I held her, feeling her warmth, her heartbeat, the rise and fall of her chest, a thought took shape that didn't feel completely insane.

"Now," I said slowly, "I guess we keep talking. We discuss what you liked. About what I liked. About what we can't change and what we might... choose. For our future."

She pulled back enough to look at me, eyes searching, and for the first time since I'd opened that cursed file, I saw something in them that wasn't fear or guilt.

Hope.

"Okay," she said. "We talk. Tomorrow."

She kissed me once more, softer this time, then settled against my chest.

"Tonight," she murmured, already drifting, "Can we just...

pretend, for one last night, that everything is fine?"

“Joanna,” I whispered into her hair. “Everything is fine. Or it will be, once we’ve dealt with all of this.”

I held her until we both slipped under, the ghosts of hotel rooms and masked wives hovering at the edges of my mind, quieter now that the woman I loved was finally exactly where I wanted her.

In my arms.

Without a mask.

Chapter Ten

Joanna straddled my hips, warm and soft against me, my cock wilting inside her after filling her with cum. I looked up at her, long, blonde hair falling around my face like a curtain. The afternoon light filtered through the blinds, striping the room in golden light.

“Do you think it’ll sell?” she asked, grinding slowly, teasing more than riding, someone keeping me inside her, mouth curled in a lazy, wicked smile.

I ran my hands up her thighs, over the curve of her hips, thumbs pressing into familiar dimples. “Oh, without any doubt,”

I said. “I believe you’ve got a certain set of fans that have been waiting for a new release from you, ever since the time you debuted your new tits.”

She laughed quietly and leaned down to kiss me, soft at first, then deeper. When she pulled back, she was still hovering just above my mouth, hazel eyes searching.

“Are you okay?” she asked. “Really okay?”

There was a time, not so long ago, when that question would’ve sent me into a spiral. When “okay” felt like a lie, I had to keep telling myself to get through the day. Now, with her pussy on me, the faint ache in my muscles from the night before, and the memory of her moans still echoing in my skull like a favourite song, it felt... almost easy.

“Yeah,” I said. “I really am.”

She studied me like she was trying to catch the lie and didn’t find it. Whatever she saw there must have satisfied her because she smiled

and settled more fully on my lap, making my spent cock twitch inside her.

“Mmm,” she murmured. “Good. Because I am too.”

She rolled her hips once, slow and deliberate, then stilled, clearly choosing torture over instant satisfaction at getting me hard a second time as my cock started to grow inside her. I let out a low sound in my throat, and she grinned.

“Later,” she said, climbing off me and padding naked toward the bathroom, giving me a view of her perfect ass. “I desperately need a shower. I feel like I’ve lived in sweat and lube for twenty-four hours.”

“And whose fault is that?” I called after her.

“Yours,” she said over her shoulder. “You’re the one who invited your doctor to fuck your wife.”

She disappeared into the steam, humming.

I lay there for a minute, staring at the ceiling, replaying last night in my head.

Daniel had been nervous when he arrived, which was weird-ly comforting. We’d had him over for dinner, like normal people.

Wine, pasta, conversation about the Elysium scandal that had been all over the feeds for weeks.

“I can’t say I’m upset about it,” he’d said, swirling his glass.

“The CEO in cuffs, half the board under investigation. It turns out when you start selling memory wipes to people with skeletons in their closets, eventually someone notices the trail of bones.”

Elysium hadn’t actually fallen, not completely. The core tech was too valuable, the infrastructure too ingrained. But the top layer had been

scraped off. The CEO and some of the investors who'd pushed Hard Core past any ethical line were awaiting trial, perp-walked in front of cameras like common criminals. A new CEO had stepped in: Rachel someone or other, red-haired and smooth as glass in interviews, promising "a new era of ethical memory technology."

I'd watched one of those interviews with Joanna pressed against my side, the irony not lost on either of us. Elysium "ethical" was still Elysium. But at least the ones who'd tried to erase people like Phoenix weren't steering the ship anymore.

Deep Dive had gone quiet, too. SynapseJack's handle had stopped responding. When I'd asked Nadia about him, she'd sent a single line:

Taken care of. Don't ask how. You're happier not knowing.

I believed her.

Then we'd propositioned Daniel. He was leaning against our kitchen island, looking less like a surgeon and more like a man who'd been invited into something he never expected to be offered.

"You want me to fuck Joanna?" he'd asked, eyes flicking between us. "When I told you I enjoyed watching the recording, I wasn't hinting at —."

"I know you weren't," Joanna had said, reaching for his hand.

"I just want to fuck you. You've already gotten to fuck me through Jared's eyes. I want to know what it's like to fuck you.

Fair's fair."

"Wow. Okay," he'd laughed in disbelief at his good luck. "I guess I can't argue with that."

Joanna had flushed, pupils dilating in a way I'd learned to read. The idea of my doctor seeing her like that, getting fucked, taking strangers like a pro, turned her on. It turned me on, too, so when it came to deciding who we wanted to fuck first, who we wanted to make a recording with, Daniel was a no-brainer.

So I'd said it. I'd told him what we wanted to do.

"We'll give you a percentage of whatever the recording fetch-es on the market," I'd told Daniel, "You can wear a mask to protect your identity, just like Jo."

The upgraded implant capable of extracting memories had cost me a chunk of Jared's seventy-five thousand. A Hard Core-adjacent chip, installed by a back-alley specialist Nadia vouched for, tuned specifically for recording. It sat under my skull now, humming quietly, the memory of last night already tucked away in encrypted storage, waiting to be processed.

I hadn't told Joanna about the creds; we were still paying off the "last" of the medical debt as far as she knew. But when I explained the donor upgrade, I'd used words like "options" and "control," and "might as well profit if we're going to do this."

She'd frowned, then nodded slowly.

"As long as it's private," she'd said. "No more... accidents."

"Private only," I'd promised. "We pick the buyers. Or we don't sell at all. We're in control now, not Jared Muir."

Last night, in our bed, with Daniel's mouth on one breast and mine on the other, those finer points had felt very far away, long forgotten. He'd been exactly what Joanna had needed, bigger than me, thick and long, the kind of cock every man would be happy to have. She'd been worried he wouldn't match up to Jared and his

friends, but when she slid his boxer shorts down, she'd giggled happily.

"Jesus," she'd breathed, glancing at me. "That's a nice cock."

I'd felt the same sense of trepidation that he might be a disappointment, but looking at the thick cock in her hand, already hard and pulsing with excitement, I felt a sense of relief.

"Happy?" I'd asked, unable to keep the edge out of my voice.

She'd shaken her head quickly. "Not just happy. I'm fucking turned on," she'd said. "There's a difference."

Watching him roll her onto her back and push her thighs apart, then slide into her, watching her eyes roll back, and her mouth fall open, had been... incredible. As real as the Deep Dive recordings had been, they still didn't match up to seeing it in real life. Seeing my gorgeous wife take the cock of another man inside her married pussy, right in front of me.

Jealousy had flared, hot and sharp. But so had pride. This beautiful woman that Daniel was getting to fuck, hard and steady now, was mine. And I'd made this happen. I'd chosen this.

Later, when she'd looked at me, riding his cock, fucking him for a second time, sweat gleaming on her enhanced tits, she'd moaned, "Is this what you wanted?", and the only honest answer had been yes.

Afterwards, when Daniel had gone home, having cum inside her pussy twice, thanking us for a fantastic night, looking thoroughly debauched and slightly dazed, I'd held Joanna in our bed and felt... strangely at peace. We weren't fixed. But we'd stopped lying to ourselves about what we wanted. Things weren't perfect.

But perhaps they never were. Perhaps they never would be. But things were good. And I'd take good any day of the week.

Back in the present, the shower cut off, snapping me out of my reverie. Joanna came back into the bedroom, a towel around her, skin damp and clean. She dropped the towel, crawled onto the bed naked, and stretched out beside me, propping her head on her hand.

"So," she said. "Have you watched it yet?"

"Watched what?" I asked, tracing circles on her hip with my finger, my cock stirring again.

"Our debut," she said. "The memory of last night. Daniel fucking me while you watched, from your point of view."

I'd spent the morning in my office, running the raw capture through a tool Nadia had slipped me in an encrypted package. It cleaned up the stream, blurred out Joanna's mole and scar, and scrubbed any extraneous telemetry. The donor ID attached was a shell identity Nadia had helped me generate, someone who existed in Elysium's system on paper but not in real life.

"It looks..." I smiled. "Hot as hell. You're going to make us a fortune."

She snorted. "You're incorrigible."

"You married me," I said. "You knew what you were getting into."

"Did I?" she asked, eyebrows arched. "Because I don't remember 'secretly into watching me get railed by other men and then selling the tapes' being in the vows."

"'In sickness and in health' covers a lot of ground," I said.

She swatted my chest lightly, then her expression sobered.

"You really think it'll make money?" she asked. "For... us, this time? Not Jared."

"He said he made good money from it. There's always a market for authenticity," I said dryly. "Especially when it's filthy."

I pushed up on one elbow, looking down at her.

"I'm not going to push you," I said. "If you decide you don't want me to sell it, I'll keep it locked. Just ours. But the buyers I've been vetting are private, respectable, very well-behaved. One client. Big paycheck. No DeepDive. No leaks."

"And you'd be okay with that?" she asked. "Knowing someone out there is... living that night the way you did with my old files?"

Knowing that someone is experiencing what it's like to watch me get fucked?"

I thought about it.

"I've been okay with worse," I said. "At least this time we wrote the script together."

She was quiet for a moment, then nodded.

"Okay," she said. "One buyer. Top money. We give Daniel 10% as promised, and the rest goes toward making our lives better.

Maybe a vacation, a bigger house. Deal?"

"Deal," I said.

My phone buzzed on the nightstand. I reached for it.

An encrypted notification from an address I recognised as one of Nadia's many ghosts popped up.

Client happy with the sampler. If you decide to go ahead with the sale, I can have the funds transferred immediately. You'll be officially in the business, donor boy. Try not to let your fame go to your head.
— N

Below that, another message.

Also, V says hi. We moved into a place with actual walls that don't shake every time a subway goes by. Perks of extorting rich perverts. Elysium's got bigger problems than me now, so we're nesting. Domestic as fuck. Don't tell anyone.

P.S. Next time you're in the city, come by. And bring condoms.

V's generous, she still says I'm allowed the occasional dick as long as it's attached to someone who isn't a total idiot.

I huffed out a laugh.

"What?" Joanna asked.

"Na— Phoenix," I replied. "She and V finally got a real place.

Apparently, extortion pays well."

"Good for them," Joanna said, with genuine warmth in her voice. She'd met Nadia once, when the hacker had called by to check in, but in a cautious, distant way, like someone you didn't want to get on the wrong side of but were glad existed if her gadgets were pointed at your enemies instead of you.

"She, uh... invited me over," I added, showing her the message.

Joanna's lips twitched. "Considering what I did last night, I can't stop you. Do you want to fuck her again?"

"It was... fun, last time," I admitted. "You could come too.

Watch, if you like."

"Let me think about it." She rolled onto her back, staring at the ceiling for a moment. For a second, I thought I'd gone too far.

Hurt her feelings. Then she turned her head to look at me.

"Do you... more than like her?"

"No," I said, without hesitation. "She helped me. We had sex.

It was good. Then she kicked me out. Then she's helped us again."

She considered that, then nodded.

"Okay," she said. "Then I'm not going to freak out about it. I like knowing she's out there, doing what she's doing, fighting against the scum of the world like SynapseJack. If she wants you sometimes, and you want her sometimes, and we're honest about it..." She shrugged. "There are worse things."

"You're sure?" I asked.

"I'm sure I don't want to go back to pretending we're normal people with normal desires," she said. "I'd rather know. Even when it stings."

I reached out and laced my fingers with hers.

"You know you can have that too," I said. "If you ever want...

someone who isn't me."

She smiled faintly. "I had someone who isn't you last night,"

she giggled. "He fucked me into the mattress twice last night, made me orgasm so many times I lost count, and then went home so I could cuddle my husband. I'm good for now."

I couldn't argue with that.

She rolled back toward me, sliding her leg over mine, her body pressed along my side.

"So," she murmured, hand drifting down my stomach. "Tell Phoenix to sell the memory. Let's get this money earned. Then...

do you think we should prepare our wealthy new fan a sequel?"

I caught her wandering hand, brought it to my mouth, kissed her knuckles.

"I think," I said, "We should give him something we actually want to do, not just what we think will sell."

"Oh?" she asked. "And what do you want to do, Mister Content Creator?"

I rolled her onto her back, getting between her thighs, feeling her freshly-showered but still wet pussy open up and welcome me inside her.

"Right now?" I said. "I want to fuck my wife. No cameras. No sold memories. No audience. Just us."

Her expression softened, something tender threading through the lust in her hazel eyes.

"Sounds perfect," she whispered.

As I slid into her, slow and unhurried, all of the outside world, the news on the TV still talking about the Elysium scandal, the tech, the

money, the ghosts of hotel rooms and leaked files, faded to a distant memory.

She'd saved my life with her body once, in ways I was still piecing together. Now she was saving our marriage with the one thing we'd both been too scared to offer before, the unfiltered truth, with all its mess and conflicts and contradictions.

Skin Deep had given us hell. Maybe, just maybe, it had handed us a way out of it, too.

Whatever we did from here, on record or off, shared or secret, it was going to be fun.

Afterword

Thank you for coming all the way to the end of this book with me.

This one was a particular pleasure to write. It's the fifth full story in the Cheat Codes universe—after the original 3-book arc and the first spin-off, *The Formula*—and by now the world feels like a place I can just walk back into, slip on like a Crown, and see where the characters want to take me.

Mixing immersive tech, neural implants, and corporate fuck-ery with hotwife/cuckold erotica has always been my sweet spot.

This book let me lean into that even harder: memories as currency, porn as lived experience, and a marriage trying to survive when fantasy stops being theoretical.

It was especially fun getting to spend time with Nadia again.

If you didn't clock it: Daniel Kowalski shares her surname because he's her brother. I love playing with little Easter eggs like that—names, throwaway references, side characters popping up in unexpected places. Revisiting Krissy Saffron, even briefly, was another one of those nods back to where this all started.

If you've read the earlier books, I hope those connections made the world feel richer. If this is somehow your first dip into this universe, there are plenty of threads you can follow back.

I'm already thinking about what else I can do in this sand-box—there are more stories to tell, more tech to twist, more relationships to ruin and maybe mend again.

Whether those books happen will depend partly on demand, so if you enjoyed this one, it genuinely helps to let me know: reviews, messages, recommendations to like-minded degenerates all make a difference.

Thank you again for reading, for trusting me with your time, and for letting me blend my love of sci-fi brain toys with my lust for messy, honest, filthy relationships.

I hope we get to do this again.

Paul

February, 2026

About the Author

Paul Garland is an author of erotic novels and short stories, guaranteed to keep you turning the lust-filled pages until the early hours

of the night. He lives with his wife and two children in a small house in the suburbs of Sheffield, England along with a lazy green budgerigar, an African Grey parrot that curses and a tubby tabby cat which would love to eat either. (Preferably the vulgar-tongued parrot.)

He has been writing since the turn of the millennium but only turned to the erotica genre in 2018 with his Cerulean Erotica Presents series and No Angels series of books which rapidly gained him a following. In 2020, he began 'The Cuckold Collection,' a brand new collection of cuckold-themed books and two new series of shorter stories: The No Angels Stories, The Sexy Season Stories and The Cerulean Archives. 2022 began two series, Holiday Hotwives and A Size Queen Story and 2023 introduced a new series, Improper Investigations and the return to the Cerulean Archives with I Found A Box Of Photos Of My Wife... And Her Ex. 2024 saw the My Wife series and the I Know Who You Did Last Summer series reach huge success. 2025 introduced us to his best selling Trad Wife series, the follow up Modern Husband, and his sci-fi erotica series, Cheat Codes.

2026 brings the return of the Detective Hotwife, a new super-hero hotwife erotica and the climax of the Holiday Hotwives books, along with his highly anticipated and biggest series to date, The Hotwife Diaries.

My Website: <http://www.paulgarland.net> All my links in one place:
<https://allmylinks.com/eroticapaul>