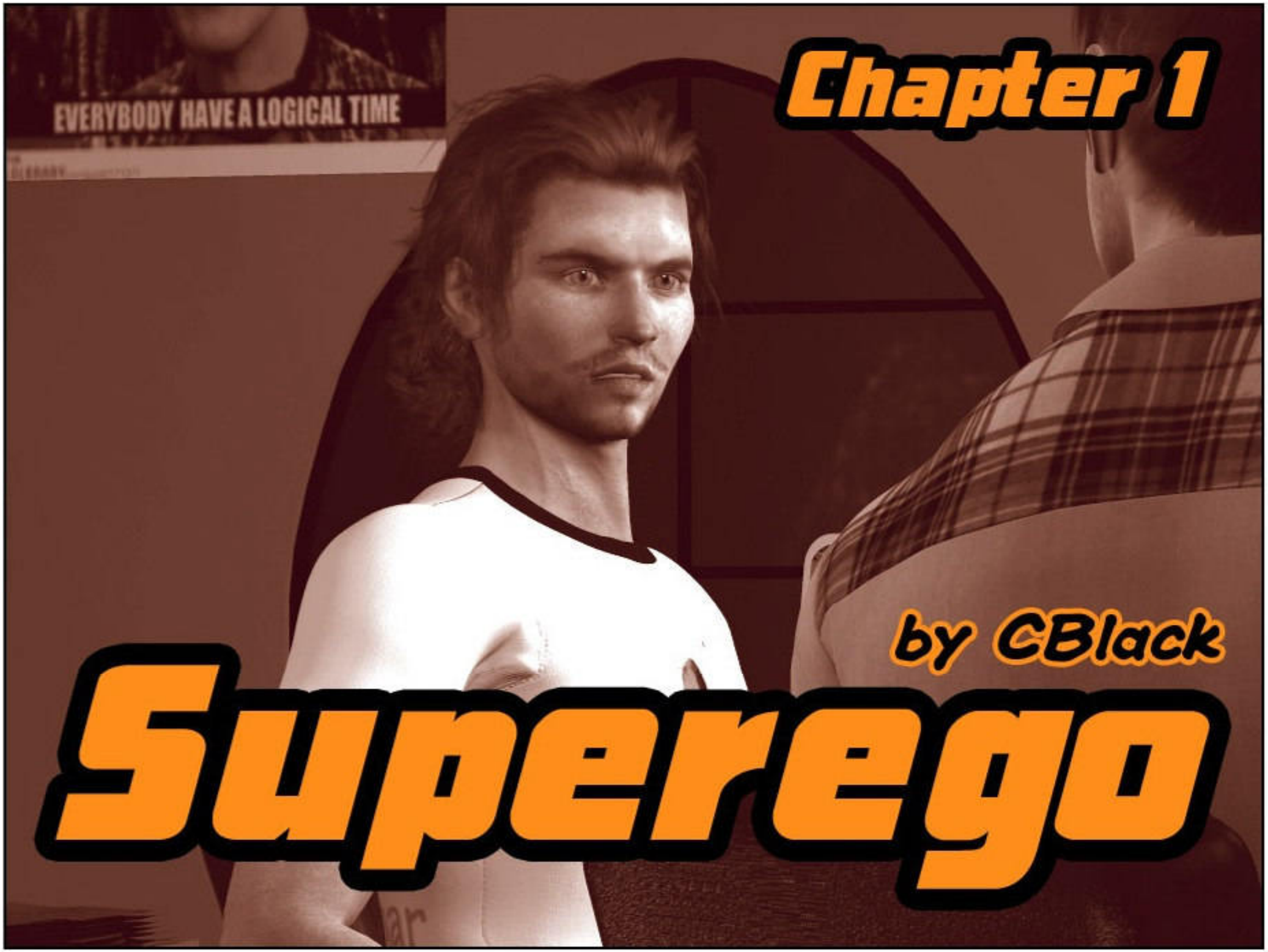
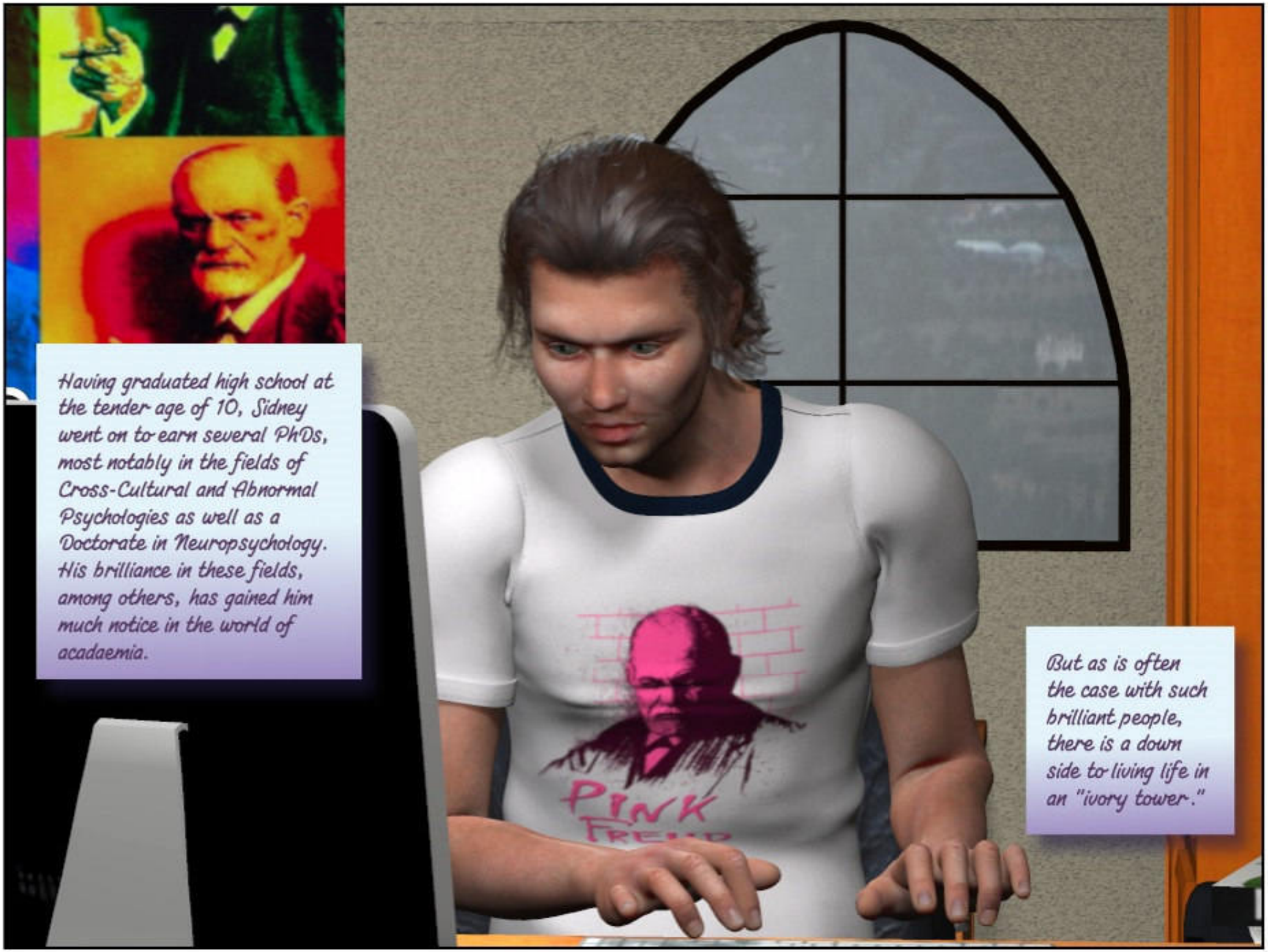
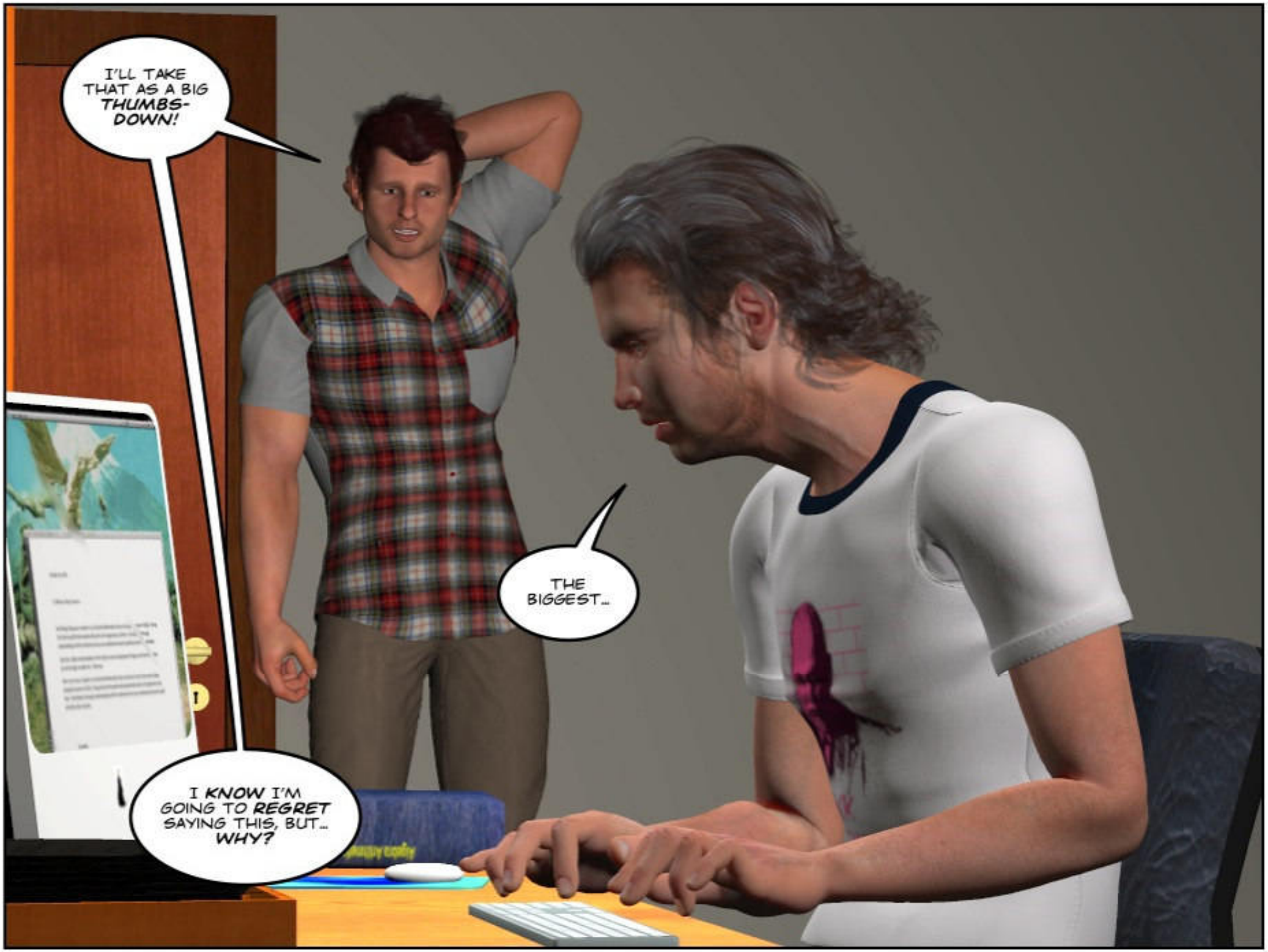

by CBlack
Superego


EVERYBODY HAVE A LOGICAL TIME
Chapter 1
by CBlack
Superego


CAUTION
Welcome to the office of Dr. Sidney Moyer,
Professor of Psychology at Brambledge University.


Having graduated high school at the tender age of 10, Sidney went on to earn several PhDs, most notably in the fields of Cross-Cultural and Abnormal Psychologies as well as a Doctorate in Neuropsychology. His brilliance in these fields, among others, has gained him much notice in the world of acadaemia.
But as is often the case with such brilliant people, there is a down side to living life in an "ivory tower."
PINK


DID YOU HEAR? THEY FINALLY MADE A DECISION ON THE NEW DEPARTMENT HEAD!
I HEARD.
SO... WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I TRY NOT TO WASTE TIME THINKING ABOUT ILL-INFORMED, POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED DECISIONS THAT IT SEEMS I HAVE VERY LITTLE CONTROL OVER!


I'LL TAKE THAT AS A BIG THUMBS-DOWN!
THE BIGGEST...
I KNOW I'M GOING TO REGRET SAYING THIS, BUT... WHY?

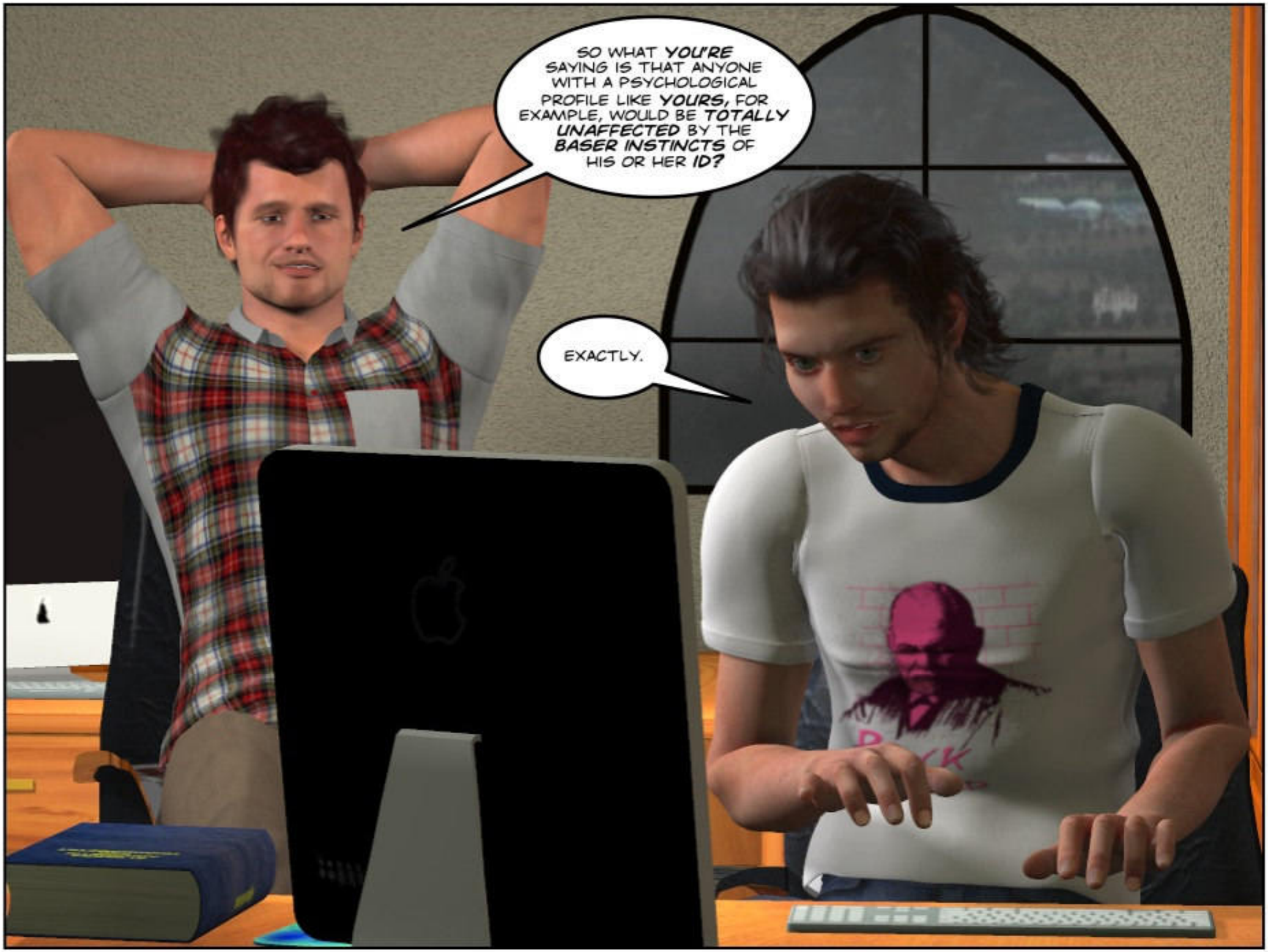

FREUDIAN SLIP
SERIOUSLY? HOW COULD ANYONE POSSIBLY ENDORSE RUTH KIMBALL AS THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR? HER BACKGROUND IN RESEARCH IS PRACTICALLY NON-EXISTENT! LIMITED TO QUESTIONNAIRES FORCED UPON HORMONAL TEENS DURING HER STINT AS A HIGH-SCHOOL COUNSELOR!
Id
Ego
Super-Ego


SHE HAS YET TO EARN A PHD AND HER MA IS FROM SOME LITTLE-KNOWN COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN SOUTHEAST INDIANA!
IT'S PAINFULLY OBVIOUS HER APPOINTMENT WAS MOTIVATED BY QUOTA-FILLING INSTEAD OF LOOKING AT INFINITELY MORE QUALIFIED CANDIDATES RIGHT HERE IN THE DEPARTMENT!
RIGHT HERE IN THE DEPARTMENT, HUH? LIKE YOU, MAYBE?
PINK FREUD


WHY NOT? I'VE PUBLISHED MORE PAPERS THAN ANYONE IN THE DEPARTMENT! MY FAMILIARITY WITH THE PERSONALITIES THAT MAKE UP THIS DEPARTMENT AND GOVERN THIS UNIVERSITY MAKE ME INDISPENSABLE!
WHY NOT? JESUS, SIDNEY! YOU'RE A CLASSIC MISANTHROPE AND MOST OF YOUR FREUD-BASHING PUBLICATIONS HAVE PISSED OFF MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMUNITY!

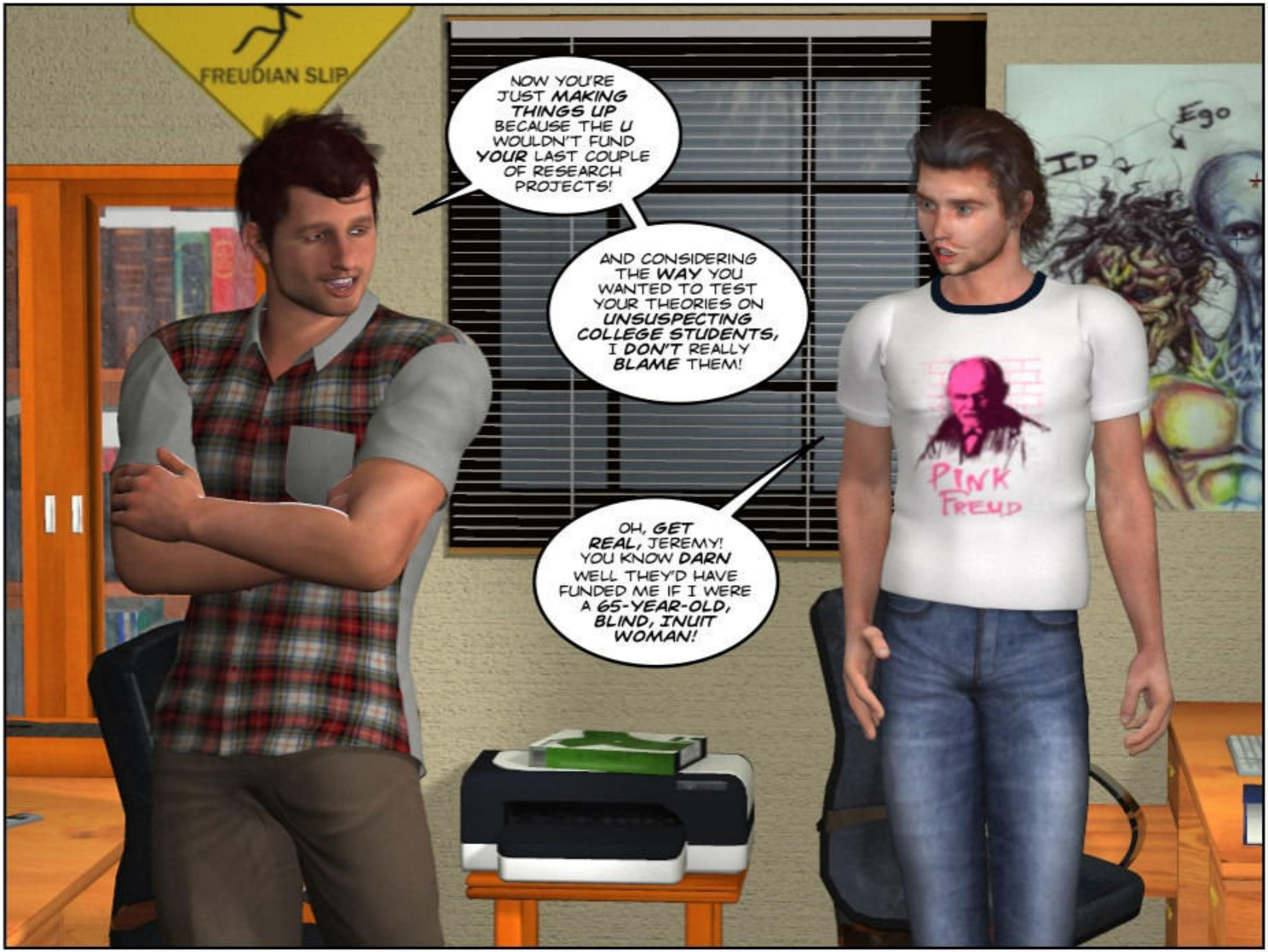

WHAT YOU CALL "FREUD-BASHING", I CALL GROUND-BREAKING!
YOU CLAIMED THE EGO WAS NON-EXISTENT!
NOT NON-EXISTENT! JUST UNNECESSARY FOR AN ADEQUATELY DEVELOPED SUPER-EGO!
PINK FREUD


FREUD DEFINED THE EGO AS A BUFFER OF SORTS BETWEEN THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL NEEDS OF THE ID AND THE INTELLECTUAL PERSONALITY OF THE SUPER-EGO!
ALL I DID WAS AFFIRM THAT AN ADEQUATELY DEVELOPED SUPER-EGO COULD STIFLE OR INDULGE THE NEEDS OF THE ID ON ITS OWN, UNALTERED! HIS CONCEPT OF EGO WAS MERELY COMPENSATING FOR LESS-DEVELOPED PSYCHES!


SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT ANYONE WITH A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE LIKE YOURS, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD BE TOTALLY UNAFFECTED BY THE BASER INSTINCTS OF HIS OR HER ID?
EXACTLY.


HOW VERY VULCAN OF YOU!
THANK YOU.
PINK FLOYD


AND YOU REALLY WONDER WHY YOU WEREN'T MADE DEPARTMENT HEAD?
QUOTA-FILLING, PURE AND SIMPLE! THEY WANTED A FEMALE, QUALIFIED OR NOT, TO MAINTAIN THE UNIVERSITY'S IMAGE OF "DIVERSIFICATION"!
IT'S NOT JUST IN THEIR HIRING PRACTICES EITHER! I'M SURE IF SOMEONE LOOKED CLOSELY AT THE NUMBER OF STIPENDS AWARDED TO GRAD STUDENTS, YOU'D SEE THE SAME KIND OF DISCRIMINATION GOING ON!
ID
PINK FREUD


FREUDIAN SLIP
NOW YOU'RE JUST MAKING THINGS UP BECAUSE THE U WOULDN'T FUND YOUR LAST COUPLE OF RESEARCH PROJECTS!
AND CONSIDERING THE WAY YOU WANTED TO TEST YOUR THEORIES ON UNSUSPECTING COLLEGE STUDENTS, I DON'T REALLY BLAME THEM!
OH, GET REAL, JEREMY! YOU KNOW DARN WELL THEY'D HAVE FUNDED ME IF I WERE A 65-YEAR-OLD, BLIND, INUIT WOMAN!
Id
Ego
PINK FREUD


"A 65-YEAR-OLD, BLIND, INUIT WOMAN?" PROBABLY! BUT BIASED TOWARD WOMEN IN GENERAL? I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY AND PROVE THAT!
Ego
Id


HUMPH! WELL, MAYBE I'LL DO JUST THAT!
Id
Ego
Super-Ego
PINK FREUD


The next morning, as Sidney leaves his apartment...


JEREMY'S OFF-THE-CUFF REMARKS YESTERDAY HAVE DEFINITELY GIVEN ME FOOD FOR THOUGHT!
A LITTLE MORE STRATEGIZING ON MY PART AND I SHOULD HAVE THE PENULTIMATE RESEARCH PROJECT READY TO ENGAGE!
SIMILAR PROJECTS MAY HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTED IN THE PAST, BUT MY RESEARCH SKILLS AND MY POINT OF VIEW WILL MAKE THIS PROJECT STAND ALONE, IF NOT REVERED!


SIGH! I WAS HOPING TO HAVE AT LEAST ONE MORNING WHEN I COULD AVOID HANNAH'S ATTEMPTS AT ENGAGING ME IN MINDLESS CONVERSATION!


HEY THERE, SIDNEY! GETTING AN EARLY START TODAY?
I'M NO EARLIER THAN USUAL, HANNAH! I ALWAYS LEAVE FOR WORK AT THIS PRECISE TIME EVERY DAY!
I ASSUMED YOU'D HAVE FIGURED THAT OUT BY NOW SINCE WE'VE MET HERE REPEATEDLY AT THIS EXACT SAME TIME AND YOU'VE ESSENTIALLY ASKED ME THE EXACT SAME QUESTION EACH TIME!


WELL FORGIVE ME FOR TRYING TO BE NEIGHBORLY, SIDNEY! SINCE WE'VE LIVED IN THE SAME BUILDING FOR THREE YEARS AND WE ONLY SEE EACH OTHER IN PASSING, I WAS JUST TRYING TO BE FRIENDLY!
IF FORCING ME TO ENGAGE IN SMALL TALK WHILE YOU EXUDE SWEAT AND UNFAVORABLE ODORS AFTER YOUR MORNING ROUTINE IS YOUR WAY OF BEING NEIGHBORLY, THEN I DO FORGIVE YOU, HANNAH!


GOOD DAY, HANNAH!


SIGH!
SOMETIMES I WISH HE WAS TRYING TO BE SUCH AN ASSHOLE! IT WOULD MAKE IT ALL SO MUCH EASIER TO JUST HATE HIM!


Several days later...


HAVE YOU GOT A MINUTE, JEREMY?
SURE, DR. KIMBALL! WHAT'S UP?


I NEED YOUR INPUT ON THIS TRANSFER REQUEST FROM A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE! WE HAVEN'T RECEIVED HER TRANSCRIPTS YET, BUT IF EVEN HALF THE INFO ON HER APPLICATION IS TRUE, THIS YOUNG LADY WOULD BE A HUGE ASSET TO THIS DEPARTMENT AND THIS UNIVERSITY!
SOUNDS GREAT! SO... WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM ME?


I ASSUMED YOU KNEW HER... SHE REQUESTED YOU SPECIFICALLY AS HER MENTOR!
ME? WHAT'S HER NAME?
BUSH... MELANIE BUSH!
HMMM... THE NAME RINGS A BELL BUT I CAN'T PLACE HER! YOU'RE SURE SHE ASKED FOR ME?


ABSOLUTELY! I'D LIKE YOU TO SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH HER! IF YOU CAN VERIFY HER, WE COULD EXPEDITE HER ADMITTANCE WITHOUT WAITING FOR HER TRANSCRIPTS!
WELL, OKAY! SEND ME HER EMAIL ADDRESS AND I'LL TRY AND GET HER IN HERE!

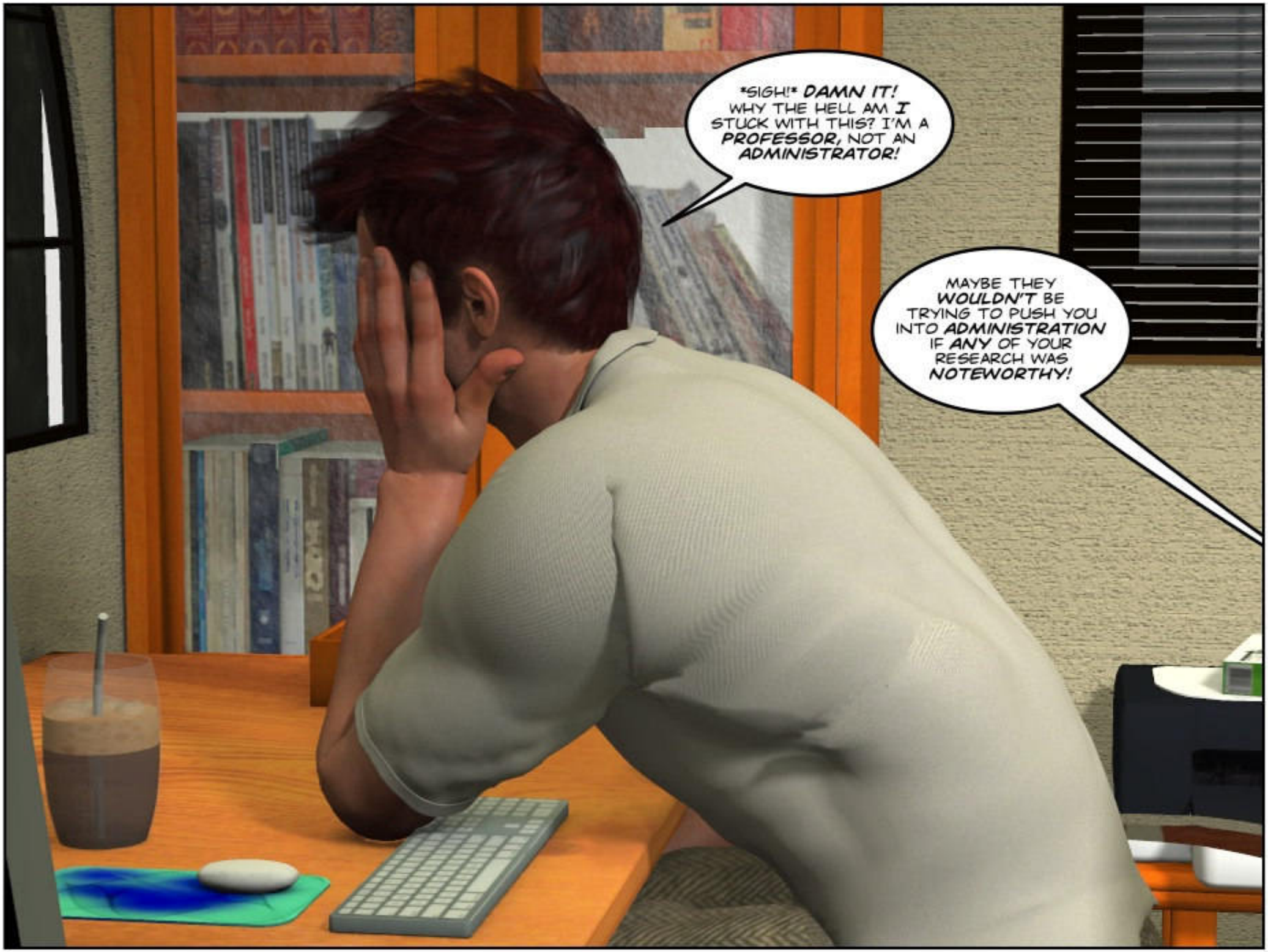

THAT'D BE GREAT, JEREMY! THANKS!


MELANIE BUSH... WHY DOES THAT NAME SOUND SO FAMILIAR?


A few days later...
I TELL YOU, DR. KIMBALL, FOR SOMEONE WHO'S SUPPOSEDLY EAGER TO JOIN OUR PROGRAM, THIS MELANIE BUSH IS SURE RELUCTANT TO MEET WITH ME FACE TO FACE!
NOT AT ALL, AS LONG AS IT'S IN THE FORM OF EMAILS OR TEXTS! IN FACT, I HAVEN'T ACTUALLY SPOKEN TO OR SEEN HER YET! I ACTUALLY HAD TO MAKE A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING A CONDITION OF HER ADMITTANCE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? IS SHE THAT HARD TO GET A HOLD OF?


YOU WHAT? YOU DON'T HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO DO THAT!
I KNOW THAT AND YOU KNOW THAT, BUT OBVIOUSLY SHE DOESN'T BECAUSE SHE FINALLY AGREED TO SEE ME!


WELL... GOOD! WHEN WILL YOU SEE HER?
SHE SHOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE!
LET ME KNOW HOW IT GOES, JEREMY! YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I WANT HER HERE!
I KNOW, DR. KIMBALL! I KNOW!


SIGH! DAMN IT! WHY THE HELL AM I STUCK WITH THIS? I'M A PROFESSOR, NOT AN ADMINISTRATOR!
MAYBE THEY WOULDN'T BE TRYING TO PUSH YOU INTO ADMINISTRATION IF ANY OF YOUR RESEARCH WAS NOTEWORTHY!


THIS FROM THE GUY WHOSE DEFINITION OF "NOTEWORTHY" IS TO PISS OFF AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE!
WHERE'VE YOU BEEN HIDING ALL WEEK, SID...?




OH MY GOD! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?!
YOUR TWO O'CLOCK APPOINTMENT... OR DID YOU FORGET?
WHAT? THE ONLY APPOINTMENT I HAVE TODAY IS WITH...!


HOLY SHIT! YOU'RE MELANIE BUSH?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE ACTUALLY SURPRISED! I GAVE YOU ENOUGH CLUES!
CLUES?! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?


OH, C'MON! THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND I SUBMITTED PRACTICALLY MIRRORED MY OWN, SO THAT SHOULD HAVE CLUED YOU IN!
WELL THEN, WHY WOULD A COMPLETE STRANGER ASK FOR YOU TO BE HER MENTOR, HMMM?
GEE, SIDNEY... I'M SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, BUT NO ONE BESIDES YOU MEMORIZES YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE!
NO IDEA! THAT'S WHY I SCHEDULED THIS MEETING!


WELL... OKAY, BUT THE NAME SHOULD HAVE BEEN A DEAD GIVE-AWAY! OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE NAME OF THE FAITHFUL COMPANION TO BOTH THE 6TH AND THE 7TH DOCTORS?
YET, EVEN WITH ALL THOSE CLUES YOU STILL COULDN'T DEDUCE THE OBVIOUS! MAYBE YOU REALLY ARE DESTINED FOR ADMINISTRATIVE WORK!
"MEL BUSH!" THAT'S WHY THE NAME SOUNDED SO FAMILIAR!


SIDNEY, YOU **STILL** HAVEN'T EXPLAINED **WHAT** ALL THIS IS ABOUT! **WHY** DID YOU CREATE THIS **FICTITIOUS STUDENT** AND **WHY** IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU **DRESSED LIKE THAT?**
WHY I'M DRESSED THIS WAY SHOULD BE **OBVIOUS!** SINCE **YOU** FORCED A **FACE-TO-FACE** MEETING WITH **MELANIE** AND I WASN'T SURE IF ANYONE **ELSE** WOULD BE HERE, I HAD TO **LOOK THE PART!** BUT SINCE IT'S JUST **YOU** HERE, MY **EFFORTS** WERE **UNNECESSARY!**

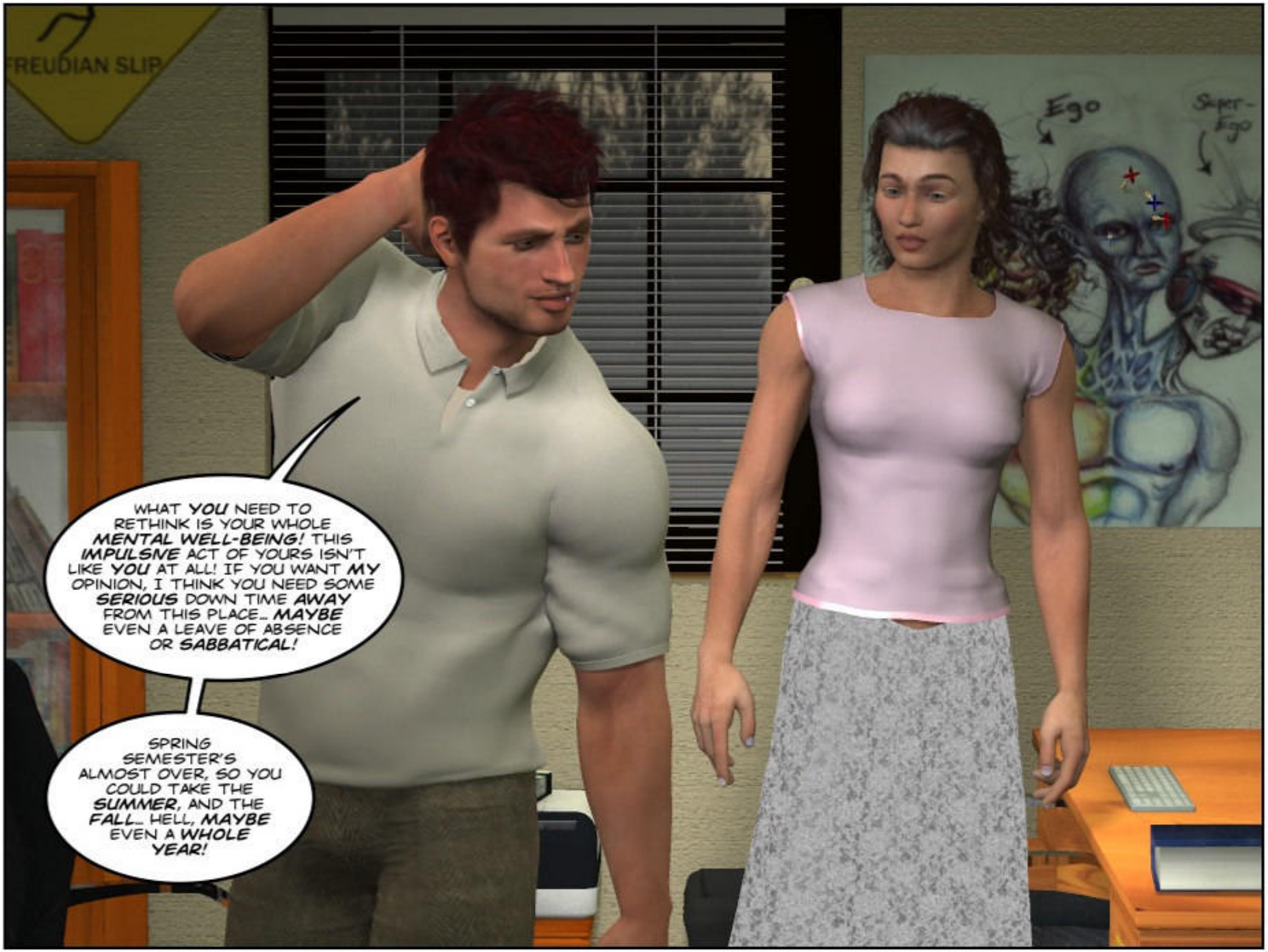

YOU CALL THAT EFFORT? REALLY? YOU LOOK LIKE NORMAN BATES WITH KID SISTER ISSUES!
I RESENT THAT! CONSIDERING THE SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME I HAD, I THINK I DID SURPRISINGLY WELL! FROM MY RESEARCH, THESE CLOTHES REFLECT THE AVERAGE FEMININE GARB PREVALENT ON CAMPUS THIS TIME OF YEAR!
AND ACCORDING TO MARKET RESEARCH, BLONDE TENDS TO BE THE MOST DESIRED HAIR COLOR AMONG WOMEN!


BUT... WHY, SIDNEY? IS MELANIE SOME TRANSVESTITE ALTER EGO OF YOURS? SOMEHOW I JUST DON'T SEE YOU AS A CLUELESS CROSSDRESSER WITH POOR TASTE WHO'S SUDDENLY DECIDED TO COME OUT OF THE CLOSET!


HARDLY! MELANIE BUSH IS MY TROJAN HORSE WHO'LL ALLOW ME TO SHOW HOW THIS UNIVERSITY, AND ESPECIALLY THIS DEPARTMENT, FAVORS WOMEN OVER MEN IN MATTERS OF GRANTS, STIPENDS AND PROMOTIONS!


FREUDIAN SLIP
Ego
YOU REALLY THOUGHT YOU COULD FOOL ANYONE INTO THINKING YOU'RE A COED? MAN, YOU'RE BALANCING DANGEROUSLY ON THAT FINE LINE BETWEEN GENIUS AND INSANITY!
BUT THAT'S JUST IT, JEREMY! I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE A FEMALE TO PULL THIS OFF! MOST COURSEWORK IS DONE ONLINE AND GROUP WORK THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA!
CLASS LECTURES ARE LARGE AND IMPERSONAL AND THE PROFESSORS NEVER KNOW WHO OR WHAT IS IN THE AUDIENCE!


BUT IF "MELANIE" TRIED TO APPLY FOR A GRANT, A STIPEND, OR WHATEVER, THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL THE UNIVERSITY WILL AWARD IT TO HER WITHOUT ACTUALLY MEETING HER FIRST!
DID YOU EVER THINK OF THAT?
HMMM... I HADN'T CONSIDERED THAT EVENTUALITY! PERHAPS I NEED TO RETHINK MY STRATEGY!


FREUDIAN SLIP
Ego
Super-Ego
WHAT YOU NEED TO RETHINK IS YOUR WHOLE MENTAL WELL-BEING! THIS IMPULSIVE ACT OF YOURS ISN'T LIKE YOU AT ALL! IF YOU WANT MY OPINION, I THINK YOU NEED SOME SERIOUS DOWN TIME AWAY FROM THIS PLACE... MAYBE EVEN A LEAVE OF ABSENCE OR SABBATICAL!
SPRING SEMESTER'S ALMOST OVER, SO YOU COULD TAKE THE SUMMER, AND THE FALL... HELL, MAYBE EVEN A WHOLE YEAR!


YOU KNOW, I THINK A SABBATICAL MIGHT BE JUST THE THING I NEED! IN FACT... THAT'S THE IDEAL SOLUTION!
I'M SURE THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO GIVE YOU ALL THE TIME YOU NEED!
I'D BE GLAD TO WRITE A RECOMMENDATION, IF YOU THINK IT'D HELP!


FREUDIAN SLIP
OH, THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, JEREMY!
WELL, OKAY... BUT IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND...!
I MEAN I DON'T THINK IT'D HELP! IF MY REPUTATION ALONE DOESN'T CARRY ENOUGH WEIGHT, I HARDLY THINK A NOTE FROM YOU WILL TURN THE TIDE!


GEE... WONDER IF THERE'S ANY RESEARCH YOU COULD DO ON A SMALL ISLAND IN THE PACIFIC POPULATED BY CANNIBALS...!
Id
Ego
Super-Ego
I'M SORRY... WHAT DID YOU SAY?
OH... JUST WONDERING HOW TO EXPLAIN TO DR. KIMBALL WHY "MELANIE" WON'T BE COMING HERE AFTER ALL!


OH, I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT! DON'T WORRY!


Later that evening...
HEY, SIDNEY! YOU LOOK PRETTY LOADED DOWN THERE! I THINK THAT'S THE MOST I'VE EVER SEEN YOU CARRY IN HERE... BESIDES BOOKS THAT IS! WHATCHA GOT IN THERE?
MATERIALS FOR AN EXTENDED RESEARCH PROJECT, HANNAH! THAT'S ALL!


THAT REMINDS ME! SEVERAL PACKAGES WERE DELIVERED FOR YOU TODAY AND I TOLD THEM TO GO AHEAD AND PUT THEM UP BY YOUR DOOR! HOPE THAT WAS OKAY!
THAT WAS ACTUALLY VERY CONSIDERATE OF YOU, HANNAH! UNNECESSARY... BUT CONSIDERATE!
JUST TRYING TO BE NEIGHBORLY! THAT'S ALL!


I ASSUME FROM YOUR FORM-FITTING AND RATHER RISQUE ATTIRE THAT YOU HAVE A DATE TONIGHT!
AND YOU WOULD ASSUME CORRECTLY! THANK YOU FOR NOTICING!


YOU'RE WELCOME! I'M CONSTANTLY **AMAZED** HOW VERY **EASY** IT SEEMS FOR YOU TO **TRANSFORM** YOURSELF FROM THE **SWEATY** AND SOMETIMES **SLOVENLY** PERSON YOU **USUALLY** ARE TO ONE THAT IS CLEAN, **ATTRACTIVE** AND, **SOME** MIGHT EVEN SAY, **DESIRABLE!**


IF THAT'S YOUR HALF-ASSED WAY OF SAYING I CLEAN UP GOOD, THEN, THANKS, SIDNEY! I'LL TAKE ANY COMPLIMENT FROM YOU I CAN, CONSIDERING HOW RARE THEY ARE!


IT WAS MEANT MORE OF AN OBSERVATION THAN A COMPLIMENT, BUT FEEL FREE TO TAKE IT ANY WAY YOU WISH!
I'LL DO JUST THAT, SIDNEY! SO HAVE A NICE EVENING OF WHATEVER IT IS YOU DO!
SAME TO YOU, HANNAH!


Once in his apartment, Sidney begins to unpack his purchases...
ACCORDING TO ALL MY RESEARCH, THESE ITEMS ARE IDENTICAL TO THOSE USED BY PROFESSIONAL FEMALE IMPERSONATORS!


USED CORRECTLY, I SHOULD HAVE LITTLE OR NO PROBLEM WHATSOEVER IN PASSING MYSELF OFF AS A NEWLY TRANSFERRED FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENT!


FORTUNATELY, MY DEPILATORY TREATMENT FROM THE OTHER DAY HAS HELD! IT WASN'T A VERY PLEASANT EXPERIENCE AND NOT SOMETHING I WISH TO DO OFTEN IF I CAN HELP IT!


THESE FEMALE HORMONES SHOULD HELP IN THAT REGARD!
MODERATE DOSES OF THESE HAVE BEEN STRONGLY SUGGESTED BY SOME TO ASSIST IN THE DISGUISE, WHILE OTHERS WARN OF DETRIMENTAL SIDE EFFECTS!
FORTUNATELY, THE PRIMARY SIDE-EFFECT NOTED IS OF NO CONCERN TO ME SINCE I'VE ALREADY HAD MY SPERM FROZEN TO INSURE MY DNA PASSES INTO FUTURE GENERATIONS!


OOF! BUT IF THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE HORMONES CAN ALSO ALLEVIATE ANY OF THIS DISCOMFORT, I HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT MAXIMIZING THEIR DOSAGE!


BUT I MUST SAY, DISCOMFORT AND ALL... THESE ITEMS DO SEEM TO WORK AS ADVERTISED!


THIS IS GOING TO WORK OUT VERY, VERY WELL! NOT THAT I HAD ANY DOUBT WHATSOEVER!
Oooooo


Chapter 2
by CBlack
Superego


A few days later, in Dr. Ruth Kimball's office...
YOUR ONE O'CLOCK APPOINTMENT IS HERE, DR. KIMBALL!
EXCELLENT! SEND HER ON IN, GRETCHEN!


HELLO DR. KIMBALL! I'M...!
MELANIE BUSH! IT'S SO NICE TO FINALLY MEET YOU!


THANK YOU! I'M EQUALLY PLEASED TO BE ADMITTED TO YOUR FINE UNIVERSITY!


LET ME JUST SAY THAT I'M DELIGHTED YOU DECIDED TO TRANSFER TO OUR INSTITUTION, MISS BUSH! YOUR STUDENT RECORDS ARE MOST IMPRESSIVE!
YES, I KNOW!
NOT AS IMPRESSIVE AS MY ORIGINAL STUDENT RECORDS OF COURSE, BUT WHEN CREATING A FALSE IDENTITY, IT'S BEST NOT TO STRETCH THE CREDIBILITY OF SAID IDENTITY!


AND YOUR IDEAS FOR BEHAVIORAL ANALYSES STUDIES SOUND INTRIGUING! CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THEM?
WELL I THOUGHT MY PROPOSALS WERE EXPRESSED SIMPLY ENOUGH, BUT I'LL TRY AND MAKE THEM EVEN SIMPLER, IF THAT WILL HELP!


ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF STUDIES INTO GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE BUSINESS WORKPLACE, THERE HAVEN'T BEEN THAT MANY IN THE SETTING OF ACADEMIA! I ALSO WANT TO GEAR MY STUDY TOWARDS THE BEHAVIORS THAT FOSTER ANY DISCOVERED INEQUITIES!
AND TO MAKE IT A MORE COMPREHENSIVE STUDY, I WANT TO REACH OUT TO COLLEAGUES AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES AND GATHER DATA FROM THEM AS WELL!
THAT'S CLOSE ENOUGH TO MY ACTUAL STUDY TO BE A VALID DESCRIPTION!


FASCINATING! OF ALL THE GENDER STUDIES I'VE SEEN, I DON'T THINK I'VE SEEN ONE THAT ADDRESSES THE BEHAVIORS THAT CAUSE THEM LIKE YOU'RE PROPOSING!
THAT MAKES SENSE, SINCE I DOUBT YOU'VE READ MORE THAN ONE ARTICLE ON THE TOPIC!
I HAVE ONE SUGGESTION, HOWEVER...!
AND NOW THE OTHER PROVERBIAL SHOE DROPS...!


WHY NOT **EXPAND** YOUR RESEARCH TO INCLUDE SOME **CORPORATE** WORKPLACES AS WELL? BESIDES BEING AN INTERESTING **COMPARATIVE** ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE TWO ENVIRONMENTS, DELVING INTO THE WORKPLACE **BEHAVIORS** WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO **ALL** FUTURE **GENDER EQUITY** STUDIES! DON'T YOU THINK?


WELL, IT DOES EXPAND THE PARAMETERS OF MY STUDY BEYOND WHAT I WAS PREPARED FOR, BUT IF THIS SMALL INCONVENIENCE IS NEEDED TO GET YOUR APPROVAL, I GUESS I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO AGREE!
GOOD! INCLUDING THE CORPORATE STUDY AS WELL JUST MIGHT NET US SOME ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM INTERESTED BUSINESSES!
IN FACT, I KNOW OF ONE COMPANY IN PARTICULAR THAT I THINK WOULD BE IDEAL FOR YOUR STUDY!
SO, ONCE YOU GET YOURSELF SETTLED WITH YOUR NEW MENTOR, DR. PLOTKIN..!


OH, I'M AFRAID THAT JEREMY... I MEAN, DR. PLOTKIN WON'T BE MY MENTOR AFTER ALL! PERSONALITY CONFLICTS IT SEEMS! BUT I'M SURE I COULD CONTINUE WITHOUT A MENTOR!
UNFORTUNATELY, OUR GUIDELINES ARE QUITE CLEAR ABOUT NEW STUDENTS! YOU MUST HAVE A MENTOR PROFESSOR FOR AT LEAST YOUR FIRST YEAR!
IF YOU'D LIKE, I CAN SUGGEST SEVERAL VERY CAPABLE...!


NO! THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, DR. KIMBALL! I'M MORE THAN ABLE TO FIND MY OWN MENTOR, THANK YOU! IN FACT, I SHOULD PROBABLY GET STARTED ON THAT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
GOOD DAY, DR. KIMBALL!


JESUS! SHE'S ALMOST AS ANNOYING AS SIDNEY MOYER!
SIGH! MAYBE I SHOULD DO A STUDY ON THE CORRELATION BETWEEN BRILLIANCE AND DETACHED ARROGANCE! I HAVE SO MUCH HERE TO WORK WITH!


Later that afternoon...
DESPITE DR. KIMBALL'S ADJUSTMENT TO MY RESEARCH, TODAY WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL FIRST DAY!
EVERYONE I ENCOUNTERED TODAY TRULY ACCEPTED ME AS MELANIE BUSH! MY DISGUISE IS AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS!


BUT BEFORE I PLAN OUT MY DAY TOMORROW, I DESPERATELY NEED TO GET OUT OF THESE RESTRICTIVE GARMENTS! ALL DAY I'VE FELT LIKE THE PROVERBIAL WHITE MOUSE THAT'S BEEN SWALLOWED BY A PYTHON!
IT'S UNFORTUNATE THAT THE ONLY PLACE I CAN TAKE OFF THESE THINGS IS WITHIN MY OWN APARTMENT, BUT SINCE SIDNEY IS "OFFICIALLY" ON SABBATICAL IN AUSTRIA, I CAN'T RISK HIM BEING SEEN ANYWHERE!


OH MY GOD! WAS THAT REALLY A GIRL... GOING INTO SIDNEY'S APARTMENT?
SHE SURE LOOKED A LOT LIKE SIDNEY! I WONDER IF SHES HIS SISTER?


I KNOW I REALLY SHOULDN'T BE SO NOSY, BUT I CAN'T HELP MYSELF! IT'S SIDNEY, FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD! I HAVE TO KNOW WHO SHE IS!


OH, DRAT! I FORGOT MY MAIL! WELL, ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH...!


OH! HELLO THERE!
GASP!


I'M SO SORRY! I DIDN'T MEAN TO STARTLE YOU! I'M HANNAH JONES FROM RIGHT ACROSS THE HALL! I WAS LOOKING FOR SIDNEY!
DOUBLE DRAT! I HAD HOPED TO AVOID A RUN-IN WITH HANNAH FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE!
I'M AFRAID SIDNEY IS OUT OF TOWN... ON SABBATICAL... FOR QUITE SOME TIME!


I'M HIS... COUSIN! MY NAME IS MELANIE... MELANIE BUSH, AND I'M STAYING IN SIDNEY'S APARTMENT WHILE HE'S GONE!
THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO SATISFY HER! NOW MAYBE SHE'LL JUST...!


I KNEW YOU HAD TO BE RELATED! YOU LOOK SO MUCH ALIKE!
AND JUST BETWEEN US, HE NEVER HAS ANY VISITORS... ESPECIALLY FEMALE, SO I FIGURED YOU JUST HAD TO BE FAMILY!


SO, WHERE ARE YOU FROM? WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING WHILE YOU'RE HERE? I'D JUST LOVE TO SHOW YOU AROUND THE TOWN!
OO! THAT'S A GREAT IDEA! WE CAN HAVE A GIRL'S NIGHT OUT SOMETIME THIS WEEK AND GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER! THAT'LL BE SO COOL!
I CAN'T WAIT TO SHOW YOU SOME OF MY FAVORITE SPOTS IN TOWN! SHOPPING, RESTAURANTS, CLUBS... YOU NAME IT, I KNOW WHERE THE BEST ONES ARE!
IT'LL BE GREAT FINALLY HAVING SOMEONE RIGHT ACROSS THE HALL TO HANG OUT WITH!


UH-OH! THAT SOUNDS LIKE MY PHONE! I'D BETTER GET THAT!
TALK TO YOU LATER, MELANIE!


WHAT ON EARTH JUST HAPPENED?


WITHOUT GIVING HER MUCH MORE THAN JUST MY NAME, HANNAH SEEMS TO HAVE DUBBED ME HER NEW BEST FRIEND... REGARDLESS OF FEELINGS I MAY HAVE ON THE SUBJECT!
I KNOW I'VE NEVER SEEN HER SPENDING ANY TIME WITH OTHER WOMEN, BUT I HAD NO IDEA HOW MUCH SHE CRAVED THE COMPANIONSHIP OF OTHER FEMALES!
CONSIDERING HOW MUCH TIME SHE SPENDS WITH DIFFERENT MEN, I ASSUMED HER SOCIAL LIFE WAS REWARDING ENOUGH FOR HER! I GUESS I WAS MISTAKEN!


WITH HANNAH DROPPING BY OFTEN AND UNEXPECTEDLY, MY ORIGINAL PLAN OF REMOVING THESE BODY-SHAPING GARMENTS AT HOME NEEDS MODIFYING!
I CAN'T RISK ANYONE, OTHER THAN JEREMY, DISCOVERING WHO I AM UNTIL WELL AFTER MY RESEARCH IS COMPLETED!
ALTHOUGH I MAY BE ABLE TO WEAR THESE PROSTHETICS CONTINUOUSLY FOR A FEW DAYS, THEY WEREN'T DESIGNED FOR THAT AND MAY NOT HOLD UP UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS!


ТЕАТРЪ
МІАМЮРЪ
ТРОИЦКАЯ 18.
I COULD TRY AND BE *FRANK* WITH HER AND TELL HER I'M *NOT INTERESTED* IN FORMING ANY KIND OF FRIENDSHIP WITH HER!
NO, THAT WOULD JUST CAUSE HER TO BE *DISTRUSTFUL* OF ME AND POSSIBLY MORE *DISCREET* IN HER OBSERVANCES OF ME, THUS *EXACERBATING* THE PROBLEM!


MY RESEARCH MUST CONTINUE! THAT'S A GIVEN! SO OBVIOUSLY, I NEED TO FIND A BETTER WAY OF MAINTAINING MY DISGUISE!
.....


WHICH COULD VERY WELL MEAN MORE DRASTIC METHODS... I FEAR THAT HORMONES WON'T WORK QUICKLY ENOUGH FOR THE RESULTS I REQUIRE!


The next day...
SIGH! FINDING A NEW MENTOR! WHAT A HUGE WASTE OF TIME THIS IS!


IF JEREMY HAD ONLY BEEN MORE COOPERATIVE AND OPEN-MINDED HE WOULD BE "MELANIE'S" DESIGNATED MENTOR!
BEING PRIVY TO MY REAL RESEARCH, HE WOULD HAVE HAPPILY LET ME WORK ON MY OWN WITHOUT ANY INTERFERENCE!
BUT NOW I HAVE TO FIND SOMEONE WHO HOPEFULLY WILL NOT IMPEDE MY RESEARCH IN ANY WAY!
AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF THAT IS SLIM AT BEST!


FORTUNATELY, KNOWING THE SCHEDULES OF ALL THE OTHER PROFESSORS ALLOWED ME TO PICK THE MOST STRATEGIC SPOT TO ENCOUNTER THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF THEM IN THE SHORTEST AMOUNT OF TIME!
THUS, AT LEAST MAKING A TEDIOUS AND UNWARRANTED TASK AS PAINLESS AS POSSIBLE!
AND, JUST LIKE CLOCKWORK, HERE COMES PROFESSOR SHAW! NOT MY FIRST CHOICE, BUT... HONESTLY, NONE OF THEM ARE!


EXCUSE ME, PROFESSOR SHAW! COULD I HAVE A **WORD** WITH YOU FOR A MOMENT!
I SUPPOSE SO, YOUNG LADY! ARE YOU IN MY CLASS?
INTRO TO ***CLASSICAL PSYCHOLOGY?*** I ***HARDLY*** THINK SO! I'M A TRANSFERRING GRADUATE STUDENT, AND AN ***ARCHAIC*** UNIVERSITY REGULATION ***INSISTS*** THAT I ACQUIRE A ***MENTOR*** BEFORE I CAN BEGIN MY RESEARCH!

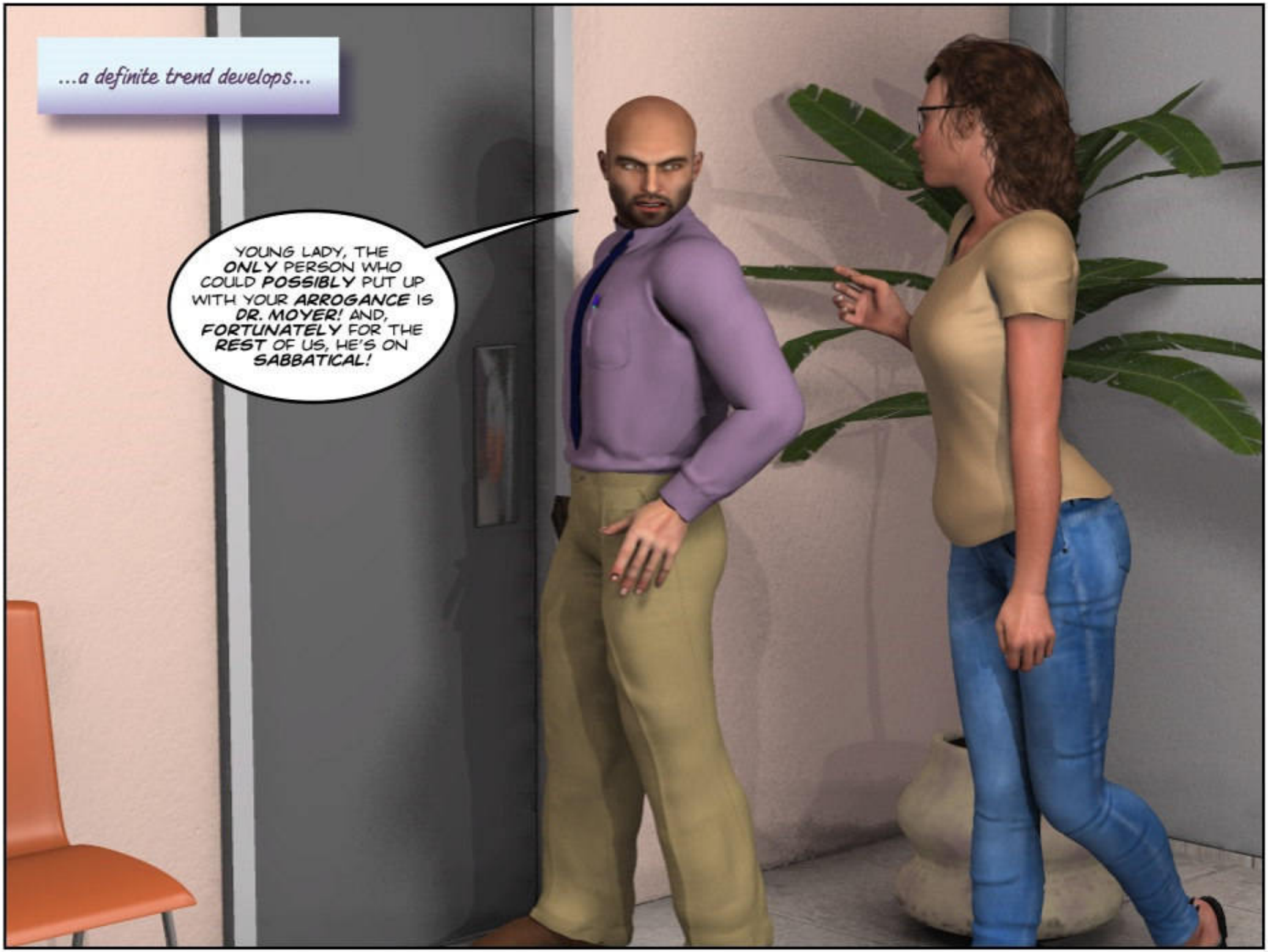

I SEE! WELL, WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH ARE YOU PLANNING?
OH, NOTHING YOU'D BE INTERESTED IN, I'M SURE! IT'S NOT EXACTLY YOUR FIELD OF STUDY, AND, TO BE HONEST, PROBABLY OVER YOUR HEAD!


EXCUSE ME!?
WELL, I'LL TRY AND BE A LITTLE CLEARER IF THAT WILL HELP!
CONSIDERING YOUR LACK OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH OVER THE YEARS, I ASSUMED YOU'D BE CONTENT IN ALLOWING ME TO CONDUCT MY OWN RESEARCH WITHOUT ANY OVERSIGHT OR INTERFERENCE FROM YOU!
WOULD I BE CORRECT IN THAT ASSUMPTION?


YOU MOST CERTAINLY WOULD NOT, YOUNG LADY!
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE NO TIME TO STAND HERE AND BE INSULTED!


WHY... THAT DIDN'T GO ANYWHERE NEAR AS SMOOTHLY AS I'D HOPED! WITHOUT A MENTOR, THE UNIVERSITY WON'T ALLOW ME TO CONDUCT ANY RESEARCH AND MY PLANS ARE OVER BEFORE THEY BEGIN!
LET'S HOPE THE REST OF THE PROFESSORS AREN'T AS SURLY AS THAT OLD CURMUDGEON!


But as the day wears on...
I SAID "NO!" YOUNG LADY! I DON'T HAVE THE TIME OR THE INCLINATION TO MENTOR SOMEONE AS RUDE AS YOU! GOOD DAY!

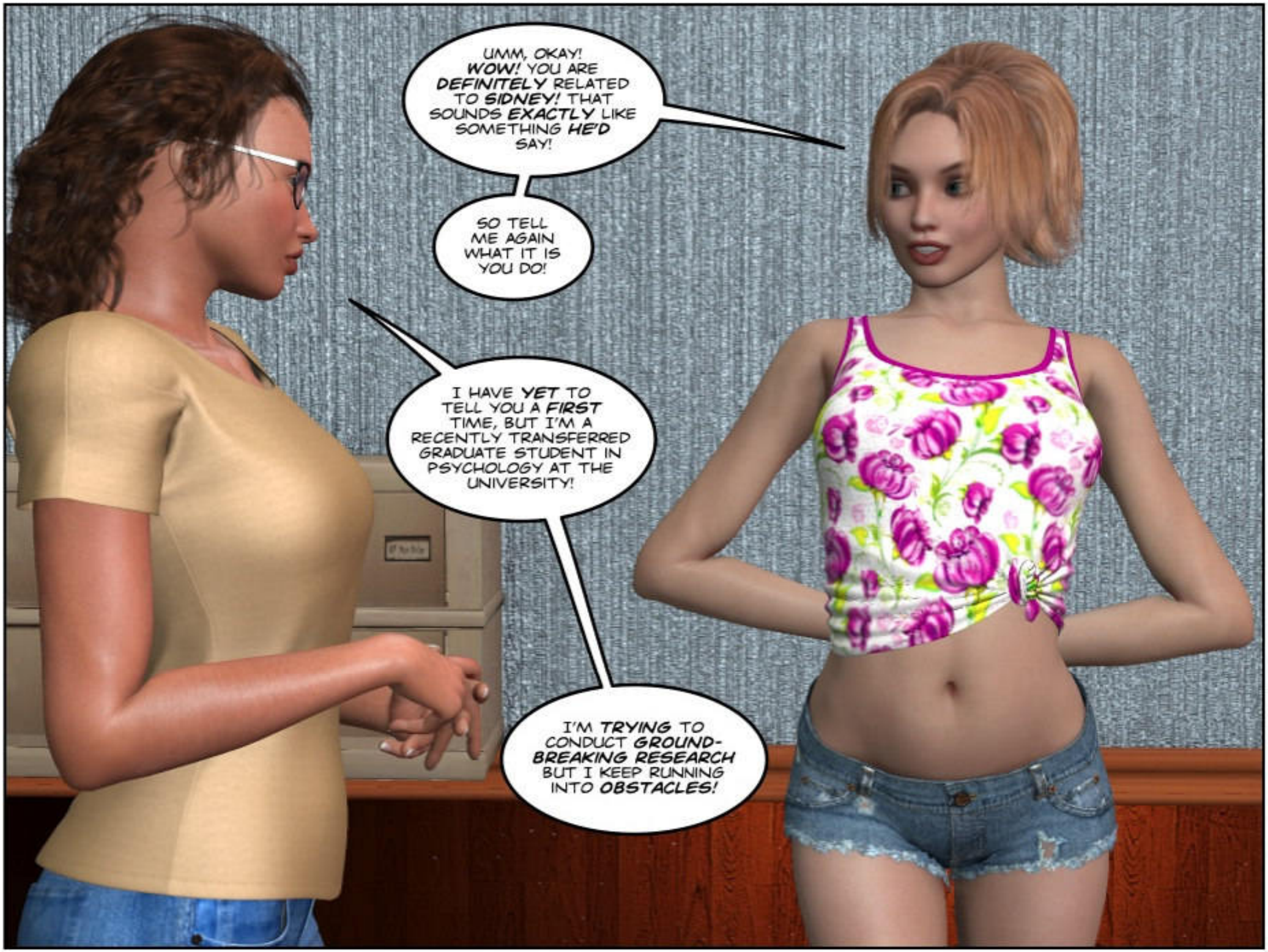

...a definite trend develops...
YOUNG LADY, THE ONLY PERSON WHO COULD POSSIBLY PUT UP WITH YOUR ARROGANCE IS DR. MOYER! AND, FORTUNATELY FOR THE REST OF US, HE'S ON SABBATICAL!


And, by the end of the afternoon...
WELL... THAT WAS A TOTAL BUST!
IF TODAY'S RESULTS ARE ANY INDICATION, THERE ARE NO PROFESSORS IN THIS, OR ANY, DEPARTMENT WHO ARE WILLING TO MENTOR ME! NEVERTHELESS, I'VE GOT TO FIND SOME WAY TO CONVINCE AT LEAST ONE PROFESSOR TO SIGN ON! PERHAPS I NEED TO DEVELOP AN ALTERNATE STRATEGY!


A short time later, back at the apartment...
SIGH IF PURE LOGIC WON'T WORK ON MY COLLEAGUES, IT'S HARD TO CONCEIVE OF WHAT WILL! IT'S SO FRUSTRATING TO THINK THAT MY ENTIRE PROJECT IS NOW THREATENED BY A POINTLESS DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION.


HEY THERE, MELANIE!
OH! UMMM... HELLO, HANNAH!


YOU SOUND KIND OF BUMMED OUT! TOUGH DAY?
SUFFICE IT TO SAY, IT FELL WELL BELOW MY EXPECTATIONS!


UMM, OKAY! WOW! YOU ARE DEFINITELY RELATED TO SIDNEY! THAT SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE SOMETHING HE'D SAY!
SO TELL ME AGAIN WHAT IT IS YOU DO!
I HAVE YET TO TELL YOU A FIRST TIME, BUT I'M A RECENTLY TRANSFERRED GRADUATE STUDENT IN PSYCHOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY!
I'M TRYING TO CONDUCT GROUND-BREAKING RESEARCH BUT I KEEP RUNNING INTO OBSTACLES!


A GRAD STUDENT? REALLY? IS THAT AT THE SAME UNIVERSITY WHERE SIDNEY TEACHES? ARE YOU IN ANY OF HIS CLASSES? THAT'D BE SO COOL IF YOU WERE!


SIGH! FIRST, SINCE IT'S THE ONLY UNIVERSITY IN TOWN... YES, IT'S THE SAME ONE WHERE MY COUSIN IS EMPLOYED!
AND, NO... I'M NOT IN ANY OF HIS CLASSES FOR TWO PARTICULARLY GOOD REASONS! ONE, HE'S OUT OF THE COUNTRY ON SABBATICAL! AND, TWO, EVEN IF HE WASN'T, HE'S NOT A TEACHING PROFESSOR, SO HE HAS NO CLASSES!


HE'S OUT OF THE COUNTRY? WOW! YOU SAID HE WAS GONE FOR AWHILE, BUT I HAD NO IDEA HE WAS OUT OF THE COUNTRY! HOW LONG'S HE GOING TO BE GONE?
AT LEAST A SEMESTER... MAYBE MORE, DEPENDING ON MY... I MEAN HIS RESEARCH!


SO... I WAS JUST ON MY WAY DOWN TO MCDOUL'S FOR A BEER! WANT TO COME?
TO A BAR? OH, I DON'T THINK SO! I HAVE NO DESIRE TO CONSORT WITH THE SORDID UNDERBELLY OF SOCIETY THAT FREQUENTS PLACES LIKE THAT!
THE BAR FIGHTS, THE DRUG DEALS GONE BAD, THE SCANTILY-CLAD BARMAIDS DANCING ON THE BARS...! I WANT NONE OF IT!


UMMM... I DON'T KNOW WHAT BARS YOU'VE BEEN GOING TO, HONEY, BUT MCDOUL'S IS JUST A CORNER BAR WITH NONE OF THAT GOING ON!
C'MON! I'M BUYING!
WELL... I JUST DON'T KNOW...!


PLEASE, MELANIE? I'D LOVE THE COMPANY!
YAY! WE'LL HAVE FUN! I PROMISE!
OH, WHAT THE HECK! IF, FOR NO OTHER REASON, JUST TO KEEP YOU FROM FURTHER DEBASING YOURSELF WITH YOUR PLEADING!


YOU KNOW, I SINCERELY HOPE YOU DON'T BEG LIKE THAT ON YOUR DATES! IT SHOWS A LACK OF RESPECT IN YOURSELF, AND MEN GENERALLY DON'T RESPECT A WOMAN WHO DOESN'T RESPECT HERSELF!
OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, MELANIE! THE ONLY BEGGING DONE ON MY DATES ISN'T BY ME!
OH?


OH!


A short walk later...
SEE, MELANIE? JUST A NICE, FRIENDLY CORNER BAR! NONE OF THE DRAMA YOU WERE AFRAID OF!


I GUESS MY EXPECTATIONS WERE A BIT TAINTED BY THE MEDIA!
HAVEN'T YOU EVER BEEN IN ANY BAR BEFORE?
I CAN'T SAY THAT I HAVE! I'VE HAD NO GOOD REASON TO GO INTO ONE, SO WHY BOTHER?
Beer - 7
Wine - 5
Shots - 5
Liquors -


WOW! YOU ARE SO MUCH LIKE YOUR COUSIN, IT'S SCARY!
YOU SURE YOU WEREN'T TWINS SEPARATED AT BIRTH?
POSITIVE! THAT'S HARDLY SOMETHING I'D BE MISTAKEN ABOUT!


UMMM... YEAH! THERE'S A COUPLE OF SEATS AT THE BAR! C'MON!
Beer - 2
Wine - 5
Shots -


HI CARL! CAN I GET THE USUAL AND WHATEVER MY FRIEND HERE WANTS!
I'D LIKE A MILKSHAKE, PLEASE!


A MILKSHAKE? THIS ISN'T THE DAIRY PRINCE, DARLIN'! IT'S A BAR!
WE SERVE WHISKEY, BOOZE... ADULT DRINKS! NONE OF THAT KIDDIE STUFF!


STATISTICALLY SPEAKING, MORE ADULTS DRINK MILKSHAKES THAN CHILDREN DO! SO TO CLASSIFY IT AS A "KIDDIE" DRINK, IS A GROSS MISSTATEMENT OF FACT!
GROSS?! YOU CALLING ME GROSS? WHO THE HELL...?!


JUST CALM DOWN, CARL! SHE DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING BY IT! IT'S JUST HER FIRST TIME IN A BAR!
YEAH... NO SHIT! I NEVER WOULD'VE GUESSED! BUT I'M NOT MAKING ANY GODDAMN MILKSHAKE! EVEN IF I HAD THE INGREDIENTS, IT'D BE A PAIN IN THE ASS TO MAKE!


YOU KNOW, UNLESS I'M MISTAKEN, THOSE VERY TASTY CUM SHOTS YOU WERE MAKING LAST WEEK WERE JUST BOOZED UP MILKSHAKES!
CAN'T YOU JUST MAKE HER A "VIRGIN" CUM SHOT? PLEASE, CARL? I'D REALLY APPRECIATE IT!


WELL... CRAP! ALL RIGHT, HANNAH! IT'LL TAKE ME A FEW MINUTES TO FIND EVERYTHING, BUT I'LL HAVE IT UP FOR YOU IN A JIFFY!
THANKS, CARL! YOU'RE A SWEETIE!
Gudaj
gelez


THAT WAS REMARKABLE!
WHAT WAS?
THE WAY YOU SO EASILY CONVINCED HIM TO DO SOMETHING HE CLEARLY DIDN'T WANT TO DO!
OH, THAT! PIECE OF CAKE!


I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND THAT EXPRESSION SINCE, FROM MY EXPERIENCE, VERY FEW PEOPLE ARE PROFICIENT AT BAKING!
HOWEVER, IF I WERE AS PROFICIENT AT THE ART OF PERSUASION AS YOU, I WOULDN'T BE HAVING SUCH DIFFICULTIES WITH MY RESEARCH!
DID YOU HAVE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN THIS FIELD?


PROFESSIONAL TRAINING? DON'T BE SILLY! IT'S JUST SOMETHING A GIRL PICKS UP OVER TIME! A LITTLE SMILE HERE... A LITTLE FLIRTING THERE!
IT'S REALLY VERY EASY ONCE YOU GET THE HANG OF IT! HECK, AFTER A WHILE IT BECOMES SO NATURAL, YOU FORGET YOU'RE DOING IT!


WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
INTERESTING! A TALENT YOU TEND TO TAKE FOR GRANTED AND I SORELY LACK WOULD SEEM TO BE THE KEY TO ALLOWING MY RESEARCH TO BEGIN!
I'VE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN A MENTOR AT THE UNIVERSITY, BUT EVERY ONE OF THEM THAT I'VE APPROACHED SO FAR HAS REFUSED ON THE GROUNDS THAT I'M "ABRASIVE", "ARROGANT", AND EVEN "UNLIKABLE"!


THAT'S RIDICULOUS! YOU MAY BE A LITTLE ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES, BUT I BET WITH SOME PRACTICE YOU COULD FLIRT UP ANY GUY YOU WANTED TO!
HECK, GIVE ME A FEW DAYS AND YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF GUYS WRAPPED AROUND YOUR LITTLE FINGER!
I'M NOT TRYING TO ENTICE A MAN INTO SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, MIND YOU! BUT IF YOU COULD HELP ME ADJUST MY DEMEANOR SO PEOPLE WILL ACTUALLY BE MORE COMFORTABLE AROUND ME, THEN THAT WOULD BE AN ENDEAVOR I'D BE MORE THAN WILLING TO UNDERTAKE!


UMMM... YEAH! WE'LL WORK ON TONING DOWN YOUR VOCABULARY LATER! ALSO, DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER CLOTHES BESIDES JUST JEANS AND T-SHIRTS?
OKAY THEN! WELL, FOR NOW, WE'LL JUST START WITH THE BASICS! WHEN CARL BRINGS YOUR DRINK BACK, JUST GIVE HIM YOUR BEST SMILE AND THANK HIM SWEETLY! THINK YOU CAN DO THAT?
WHY WOULD I NEED ANYTHING ELSE?
IT SOUNDS EASY ENOUGH!


HERE YOU GO, HANNAH! ONE VIRGIN CUM SHOT!


UMMM... THANK YOU! I APPRECIATE THE EXTRA EFFORT YOU MADE TO ACCOMMODATE MY WISHES!




UHHH... YEAH!
Gudai
premium lager


SIGH!
OKAY... MAYBE
MORE THAN A
FEW DAYS!


More than a few days later, in Hannah's apartment...
IT'S OPEN, MELANIE! COME ON IN!
Knock-Knock!!


DO YOU REALLY THINK IT WISE TO KEEP YOUR DOOR UNLOCKED LIKE THAT? THAT'S VERY TRUSTING... NOT TO MENTION DANGEROUS!
I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES, MELANIE! WHAT'S UP?


I WAS HOPING YOU COULD GIVE ME ANOTHER LESSON IN HOW TO ACT MORE LIKE A DEMURE FEMALE!
I'M EAGER TO RESUME MY RESEARCH TOMORROW, BUT THOUGHT IT BEST FOR ANOTHER LESSON BEFORE APPLYING THE TECHNIQUES WE'VE BEEN DISCUSSING THIS LAST WEEK!
MAYBE ANOTHER SHORT VISIT TO THAT DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT YOU'RE SO FOND OF!
I COULD PRACTICE THE "GIRLISH" TECHNIQUES YOU'VE TAUGHT ME ON SOME OF THE PATRONS THERE!


SIGH! TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, MELANIE, I DON'T KNOW IF ANOTHER LESSON OR TWO IS GONNA DO ANY GOOD!
WE'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR OVER A WEEK, AND I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT I'M NOT SEEING ANY DIFFERENCE IN HOW YOU TALK AND ACT WITH OTHER PEOPLE!
I MEAN, YOU REFUSE TO LISTEN TO ANY OF MY SUGGESTIONS REGARDING YOUR CLOTHES AND YOUR APPEARANCE!
YOU JUST DON'T SEEM TO BE TAKING ANYTHING I'VE SAID TO HEART! IT'S LIKE YOU'RE DOING THIS ONLY BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO, NOT BECAUSE YOU WANT TO!


AND YOU'D BE ABSOLUTELY CORRECT! THE ONLY THING I WANT RIGHT NOW IS TO CONTINUE MY RESEARCH! BUT IT SEEMS IN ORDER TO DO THAT I'M FORCED TO ALTER THE WAY I INTERACT WITH PEOPLE!
ACCORDING TO YOUR STATEMENT FROM NINE DAYS AGO, I SHOULD BE MORE THAN PROFICIENT AT "FLIRTING UP" ANYONE I WISHED BY NOW! ARE YOU NOW REPEALING YOUR CLAIM?


OH HONEY, I'M SORRY! BUT IT'S NOT ME.. IT'S YOU! YOU TREAT EVERYTHING TOO CLINICALLY! NOT EVERYTHING IN LIFE, ESPECIALLY THIS, IS A STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE!
EVEN ACTING THE PART INVOLVES AT LEAST SOME EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT! AND THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE LACKING IN ALL THIS!

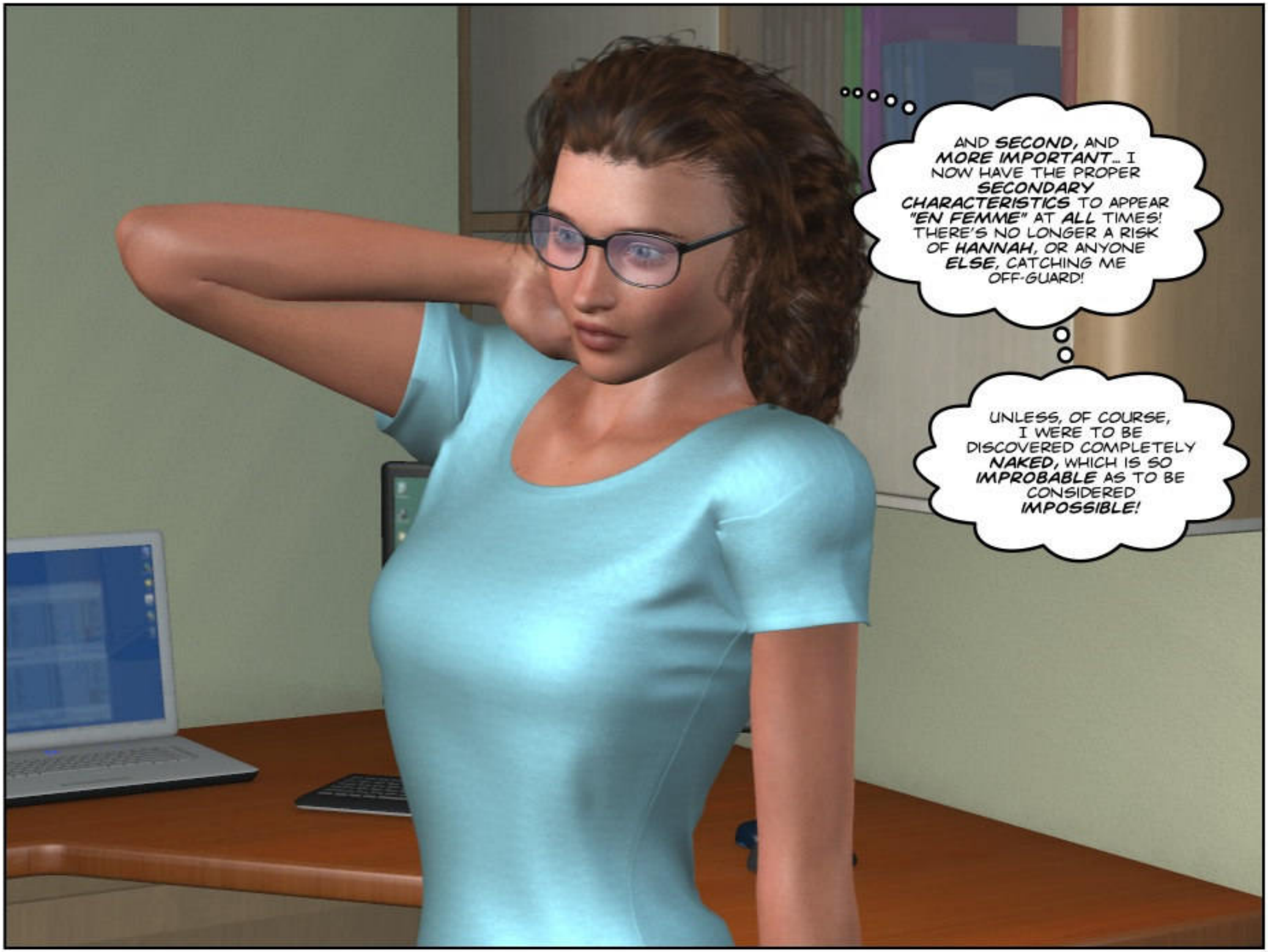

I FAIL TO SEE WHY I HAVE TO BE EMOTIONALLY VESTED IN SOMETHING TO MAKE IT BELIEVABLE!
WITH ENOUGH BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND FACTS I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SYNTHESIZE THE NECESSARY PROCEDURES IN ORDER TO SIMULATE THE BEHAVIORS I NEED TO ADOPT FOR MY RESEARCH GATHERING!
SIGH! I THINK YOU JUST PROVED MY POINT, HONEY! ONLY A COMPUTER TALKS LIKE THAT! NOT GIRLS!


BUT I'M NOT...! THAT IS, HOW AM I TO CARRY OUT MY RESEARCH IF PEOPLE ARE SO UNCOMFORTABLE AROUND ME?
I DON'T KNOW, MELANIE! EITHER FIND SOME WAY TO LOOSEN UP... DON'T KEEP YOUR EMOTIONS SO BOTTLED UP, OR...!
OR WHAT?
OR MAYBE GIVE UP ON YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT, WHATEVER IT IS! I'M SURE THERE ARE LOTS OF OTHER THINGS YOU COULD BE STUDYING!

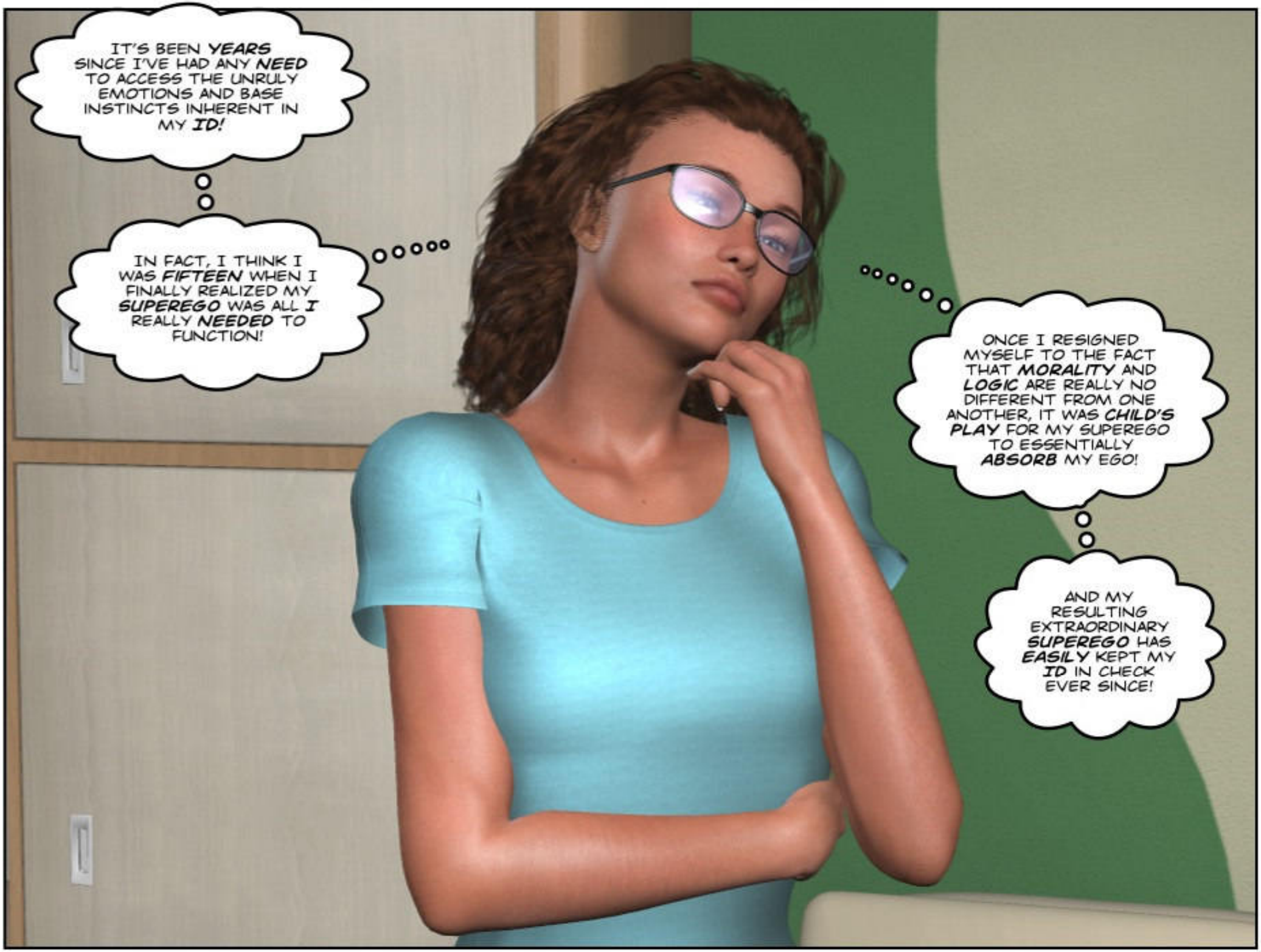

AND, OF COURSE, WHATEVER IT IS YOU DECIDE TO DO, YOU KNOW I'LL BE RIGHT THERE TO HELP YOU, OKAY!
WELL, AS IT TURNS OUT, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN AS MUCH HELP AS I'D HOPED, BUT I WILL KEEP YOUR OFFER IN MIND, HANNAH!
SO, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE A GOOD DEAL OF THINKING TO DO!


Back in his own apartment...
WELL, OBVIOUSLY THE LATTER OF HANNAH'S TWO SUGGESTIONS IS IRREVOCABLY OUT OF THE QUESTION!
EVEN IF I HADN'T GONE TO SO MUCH TIME AND TROUBLE TO ALTER MY APPEARANCE, GIVING UP ON MY RESEARCH IS NOT AN OPTION I WOULD EVER CONSIDER!


ESPECIALLY NOW THAT THE HORMONES AND OTHER COMPOUNDS I'VE BEEN TAKING HAVE ALTERED MY BODY TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THE ONLY PROSTHETIC I NEED TO WEAR ANYMORE IS THE GAFFE!
AND SINCE HANNAH DIDN'T SEEM TO NOTICE ANY DIFFERENCES IN MY APPEARANCE TODAY WITHOUT THE PROSTHETICS, I CAN SAFELY ASSUME I NO LONGER NEED TO WEAR THEM!
A DISTINCT IMPROVEMENT IN MORE THAN ONE WAY!
FIRST, I NO LONGER HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT FROM THOSE GARMENTS!


AND SECOND, AND MORE IMPORTANT... I NOW HAVE THE PROPER SECONDARY CHARACTERISTICS TO APPEAR "EN FEMME" AT ALL TIMES! THERE'S NO LONGER A RISK OF HANNAH, OR ANYONE ELSE, CATCHING ME OFF-GUARD!
UNLESS, OF COURSE, I WERE TO BE DISCOVERED COMPLETELY NAKED, WHICH IS SO IMPROBABLE AS TO BE CONSIDERED IMPOSSIBLE!


BUT THAT STILL LEAVES ME WITH THE MAIN PROBLEM AT HAND... BEHAVING MORE LIKE A VIVACIOUS FEMALE! UNTIL I MASTER THAT ASPECT OF MY DISGUISE, MY RESEARCH IS AT A STANDSTILL!
HANNAH SUGGESTED I SHOULD "LOOSEN UP" AND NOT KEEP MY EMOTIONS SO "BOTTLED UP"! THAT MAY BE EASY FOR SOMEONE LIKE HER, BUT FOR ME... IT'S A COMPLETE SHIFT IN MY PARADIGM!


IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I'VE HAD ANY NEED TO ACCESS THE UNRULY EMOTIONS AND BASE INSTINCTS INHERENT IN MY ID!
IN FACT, I THINK I WAS FIFTEEN WHEN I FINALLY REALIZED MY SUPEREGO WAS ALL I REALLY NEEDED TO FUNCTION!
ONCE I RESIGNED MYSELF TO THE FACT THAT MORALITY AND LOGIC ARE REALLY NO DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER, IT WAS CHILD'S PLAY FOR MY SUPEREGO TO ESSENTIALLY ABSORB MY EGO!
AND MY RESULTING EXTRAORDINARY SUPEREGO HAS EASILY KEPT MY ID IN CHECK EVER SINCE!


I HATE TO ADMIT IT, BUT HANNAH MAY BE CORRECT! SINCE WOMEN ARE MUCH MORE EMOTIONAL THAN MEN, LOGIC AND COMMON SENSE MAY NOT BE ENOUGH!
I JUST MAY NEED TO REACH INTO MY ID AND RETRIEVE SOME OF THE EMOTIONS NECESSARY FOR ME TO PERFECT MY DISGUISE!


SINCE I'VE BEEN SUPPRESSING MY ID FOR SO LONG, I WILL NEED TO TAKE EXTRA CARE WHEN ACCESSING IT!
I WANT TO MAKE SURE I'M ONLY ACCESSING THE MINIMAL AMOUNT OF EMOTION NECESSARY! NOTHING MORE!

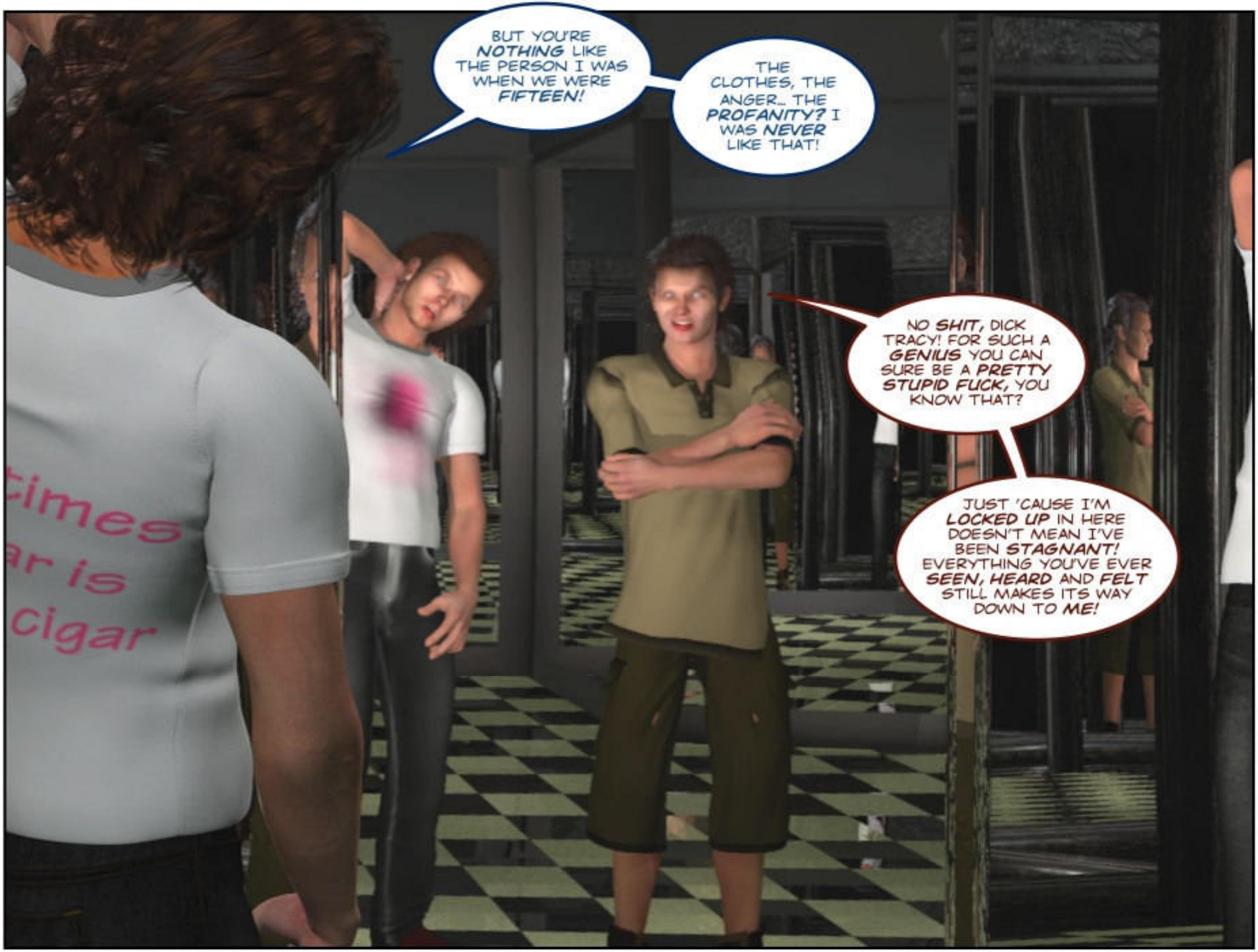

... NOTHING MORE!


.. NOTHING MORE!


INTERESTING!
PINK FREUD


I KNOW IT'S BEEN SOME TIME SINCE I'VE ATTEMPTED THIS LEVEL OF SELF-REFLECTION, BUT IT'S ALWAYS BEEN VERY ORDERED AND DISCIPLINED!
I'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED THIS LEVEL OF CHAOS AND CONFUSION! THIS IS VERY... VERY INTERESTING!
Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar
WELL, WELL, WELL! LOOK WHO DECIDED TO MAKE A FUCKIN' APPEARANCE AFTER ALL THIS TIME!


REMARKABLE! YET... PUZZLING! UNDOUBTABLY YOU'RE MY ID, BUT... YOU'RE NOTHING AT ALL LIKE I REMEMBER!
WELL, GEE! CAN'T REALLY IMAGINE FUCKIN' WHY! THE LAST TIME YOU REALLY TOOK A GOOD LONG LOOK AT ME WAS WHEN YOU LOCKED ME UP IN HERE... WHEN WE WERE FIFTEEN!
ometimes
a cigar is
ust a cigar


BUT YOU'RE NOTHING LIKE THE PERSON I WAS WHEN WE WERE FIFTEEN!
THE CLOTHES, THE ANGER... THE PROFANITY? I WAS NEVER LIKE THAT!
NO SHIT, DICK TRACY! FOR SUCH A GENIUS YOU CAN SURE BE A PRETTY STUPID FUCK, YOU KNOW THAT?
JUST 'CAUSE I'M LOCKED UP IN HERE DOESN'T MEAN I'VE BEEN STAGNANT! EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER SEEN, HEARD AND FELT STILL MAKES ITS WAY DOWN TO ME!


KINDA LIKE DUMPIN' A KID IN FRONT OF THE TV FOR A FEW HOURS WHILE YOU GO ON WITH YOUR LIFE!
BUT YOU LEFT ME IN FRONT OF THAT "TV" FOR ABOUT 10 YEARS! AND THIS IS THE RESULT! DEAL WITH IT, DUDE!


WHILE I DO UNDERSTAND YOUR HOSTILITY, SINCE IT IS AFTER ALL AN INTEGRAL PART OF WHO YOU ARE, I BELIEVE YOU MAY APPRECIATE MY REASONS FOR BEING HERE AT THIS TIME!
YOU SEE, THE REASON I'M HERE IS TO...!
SAVE IT, DUDE! YOU FORGET... I KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON! ANY EXPLANATIONS FROM YOU ARE BOTH BORING AND UNNECESSARY!


SO, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I'M DOING, THEN YOU SHOULD KNOW EXACTLY WHAT IT IS I NEED FROM YOU!
OH YEAH! YOUR NARROW LITTLE WORLD OF RIGHT AND WRONG, TRUE AND FALSE, PROVEN AND UNPROVEN ISN'T QUITE WORKING FOR YOU RIGHT NOW!
SO YOU NEED A LITTLE KICK FROM THE OL' ID TO GET THINGS DONE! AM I RIGHT?


NOT EXACTLY HOW I'D PUT IT, BUT YES!
THEN YOUR WORRIES ARE OVER, BIG S! 'CAUSE I'M ON BOARD 100%!
THE WAY I SEE IT, A LITTLE BIT OF ID OUT THERE IS A HELL OF A LOT BETTER THAN NO ID AT ALL!


AND DON'T YOU WORRY... I'LL GIVE YOU AS MUCH, OR AS LITTLE, HELP THAT YOU NEED TO GET THE JOB DONE!
Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar
THAT'S A GIVEN, OF COURSE! I AM, AFTER ALL, 100% IN CHARGE!


OF COURSE YOU ARE, BIG S!


OF COURSE YOU ARE...!


A few minutes later...
COME ON IN! IT'S OPEN!
Knock-Knock!!


SIGH! I SAID, COME ON IN!
Knock-Knock!!


OH, HEY THERE, MELANIE! YOU'RE BACK!
HI, HANNAH! I'VE BEEN GIVING WHAT YOU SAID EARLIER A LOT OF THOUGHT!
YOU HAVE HUH? AND..?
AND I HOPE YOU'LL RECONSIDER GOING DOWN TO MCDOUL'S WITH ME!


'CAUSE I'VE TAKEN YOUR ADVICE! I'M READY TO LOOSEN UP AND GIVE THIS MY BEST SHOT!
4


Chapter 3
by CBlack
Superego


A short while later at McDoul's...
EXCUSE ME, CAN WE GET A PRB LONGNECK AND A CLUB SODA WITH LIME, PLEASE?
HOLD YOUR HORSES, HONEY! I'VE GOTTA FEW MORE IN FRONT OF YOU, SO YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL I...!
Gudri
gleeis


WHOA...!
OH, THAT'S OKAY! WHENEVER YOU GET THE CHANCE! IT'S CARL, ISN'T IT?


UH, YEAH! THAT'S ME... CARL! AND I'LL HAVE THOSE RIGHT UP FOR YOU. DARLIN'!
Gudai


THANK YOU SO MUCH, CARL! I REALLY APPRECIATE IT!


WHEW!


BRAVO! THAT WAS PERFECT, MELANIE! JUST PERFECT!
THANKS, HANNAH! BUT I WAS SO NERVOUS I ALMOST HYPERVENTILATED!


HEY, CARL WAS THE ONE DOING THE HEAVY BREATHING UP THERE! I TOLD YOU THAT TOP OF MINE WOULD DO THE TRICK!
BUT NEXT TIME REMEMBER TO LEAN OVER JUST A BIT MORE AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH! IT'LL DRIVE HIM NUTS!


THAT MAY BE FINE FOR ELICITING EMOTIONAL REACTIONS FROM MALE BAR PATRONS AND BARTENDERS, BUT HARDLY FOR THE MAIN REASON I'M DOING THIS!
REMEMBER, I'M GOING TO BE INTERACTING WITH A HIGHER CALIBER OF PERSONS IN A MUCH MORE DIGNIFIED SETTING!
PARTIALLY EXPOSING MY CHEST TO PROFESSORS IN THE HALLS OF THE UNIVERSITY IS DEFINITELY NOT THE WAY TO GATHER MY RESEARCH!
OH, YOU'D BE SURPRISED, HONEY! YOU'D BE SURPRISED!


SO WHATEVER KIND OF PEP-TALK YOU GAVE YOURSELF EARLIER, KEEP IT UP! 'CAUSE IT WORKED LIKE A CHARM!
WELL, I'M GLAD YOU THINK SO, BECAUSE I'M VERY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS AS WELL!
YOU'VE HELPED ME GAIN JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF CONFIDENCE WITHOUT GOING OVERBOARD!
HERE ARE YOUR DRINKS, LADIES!


WHY, THANK YOU, CARL! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
OH, ANYTIME DARLIN'! ANYTIME AT ALL!


WHOA! ATTA GIRL! IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY YOU'D BEEN AT THIS FOR YEARS!
I... I DON'T KNOW WHY I DID THAT! I WASN'T PLANNING ON UTILIZING THAT TECHNIQUE YOU MENTIONED A MOMENT AGO!
BUT WHEN HE BROUGHT US THE DRINKS, I JUST... I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!


WELL, FROM THE LOOK ON CARL'S FACE, AND THE BULGE IN HIS PANTS, I'D SAY YOU JUST "ELICITED A VERY EMOTIONAL REACTION" FROM HIM!
NICE JOB, GIRLFRIEND!


OH MY! THAT IS DEFINITELY NOT ONE OF THE OUTCOMES I WAS STRIVING FOR!
I'VE EMBARRASSED MYSELF AND YOU WITH MY DEPLORABLE BEHAVIOR!
ON THE CONTRARY, MELANIE! I COULDN'T BE PROUDER OF YOU!
YOU SHOWED SOME AWESOME POTENTIAL HERE TONIGHT! DON'T YOU DARE BE ASHAMED OF THAT!


MAYBE I'M NOT AS READY TO RETURN TO MY SEARCH FOR A MENTOR AS I'D THOUGHT! PERHAPS I SHOULD POSTPONE A FEW DAYS UNTIL I'M MORE CERTAIN THAT NO SURPRISES LIKE TONIGHT CAN HAPPEN AGAIN!
SOUNDS GOOD TO ME! THAT'LL GIVE US TIME TO WORK ON YOUR NEW LOOK!
WHY ON EARTH DO I NEED A "NEW LOOK"? WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY EXISTING LOOK?
gelezis


MEL, HONEY, I THINK WE'VE ESTABLISHED THAT YOUR JEANS AND BAGGY T-SHIRT LOOK JUST WASN'T WORKING FOR YOU!
BESIDES GETTING YOU A NEW WARDROBE, I CAN ALSO SHOW YOU THE WONDERS A LITTLE MAKEUP CAN DO!


HANNAH, I SINCERELY APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS IN HELPING ME ATTAIN A MORE RELAXED AND FRIENDLY DEMEANOR, BUT ANY FURTHER CHANGES WOULD, I FEAR, BE DETRIMENTAL TO MY GOALS!
WHILE YOU MAY FIND ALL THIS ENJOYABLE, I'M UNCOMFORTABLE ENOUGH WITH BOTH THE PROCESS AND THE RESULTS THAT I SIMPLY DO NOT WISH TO CONTINUE ANY FURTHER DOWN THIS PATH! I BELIEVE THE LATEST ROUND OF ALTERATIONS WILL BE SUFFICIENT!


WELL, OKAY! IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU FEEL ABOUT IT! BUT KNOW THAT IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND, YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON ME FOR HELP!
I DOUBT I'LL CHANGE MY MIND, BUT THANK YOU ANYWAY, HANNAH!
BUT FOR NOW, AT LEAST STICK AROUND FOR AWHILE SO WE CAN FINISH OUR DRINKS! OKAY?
WELL, I DON'T SEE ANY HARM IN THAT...!
SO, HOW ARE YOU LADIES DOIN' OVER HERE, HMMM?
gelezis


WHY WE'RE DOING WONDERFULLY, CARL! THANK YOU SOOO MUCH FOR ASKING!


OH MY...!


ON SECOND THOUGHT, STAYING HERE IS DEFINITELY NOT THE BEST CHOICE FOR ME RIGHT NOW!
I'LL TALK TO YOU TOMORROW, HANNAH! GOOD BYE!


DAMN, HANNAH! YOUR FRIEND IS HOT... BUT A LITTLE FLAKY!
YEAH... YEAH SHE IS! BUT WE'RE WORKING ON IT!
gelezis


I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THIS WOULD HAPPEN!
BY ALLOWING EVEN A TRICKLE OF MY EMOTIONS TO SURFACE, I'VE UNFORTUNATELY GIVEN MY ID THE ABILITY TO RELEASE MUCH MORE THAN I ANTICIPATED, THUS RENDERING ME ALMOST OUT OF CONTROL THIS EVENING!


WELL, THAT'S AN ERROR I INTEND TO CORRECT!


AND THERE'S NO BETTER TIME THAN THE PRESENT_


... BEFORE ANY MORE DAMAGE IS DONE!


WELL, AT LEAST EVERYTHING SEEMS UNCHANGED IN HERE!


IT'S VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO HIDE FROM ME, SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL COME OUT!
WHO'S HIDING? I'M RIGHT OVER HERE!
Sometime
a cigar is
just a cig


YOU KNOW, IF YOU'RE GONNA SNATCH ONE OF MY THINGS, LIKE PARANOIA, I WISH YOU'D ASK FIRST! I MEAN, IT'S ONLY FAIR!
WH... WHY ON EARTH DO YOU LOOK LIKE THAT?
Sometimes
a cigar is
ust a ciga


WHAT... THIS? ISN'T THIS THE REASON YOU NEEDED MY HELP? TO LOOK AND ACT LIKE THIS?
SINCE THIS IS MY SOLE PURPOSE THESE DAYS, IT SEEMS KIND OF POINTLESS TO MAINTAIN MY OLD APPEARANCE! DON'T YOU THINK?
netimes
cigar is
st a cigar


WHAT I'M THINKING IS EXACTLY THE PROBLEM! I THOUGHT I MADE IT PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT I ONLY NEEDED A SMALL ASSISTANCE FROM YOU TO HELP ME PERPETRATE MY DISGUISE!
BUT THERE WERE TIMES THIS EVENING WHERE I ALMOST LOST CONTROL OF MY EMOTIONS! THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE!
AND WHAT'S MORE, WHILE I MAY BE PLAYING THE PART OF A FEMALE, MY SEXUALITY REMAINS UNALTERED! I HAVE ZERO INTEREST IN MEN!
PINK FREUD


AND HOW THE HELL WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR SEXUALITY IS? YOU'VE KEPT IT LOCKED AWAY FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS!
ALL I DID IS WHAT YOU ASKED FOR! I HAD TO MIX IN A WEE SMIDGEN OF DESIRE SO YOU'D DO WHAT WAS NEEDED! AND ADDING A LITTLE BIT OF JOY AND HAPPINESS ALLOWED YOU TO ACTUALLY ENJOY IT!
YOU CAN'T CONTROL EVERYTHING ALL THE TIME... NOT IF YOU WANT TO APPEAR TO OTHERS LIKE AN ACTUAL HUMAN BEING!


BUT I NEED TO KEEP CONTROL, OTHERWISE... ERR.. MY INCLINATION IS TO END THIS "EXPERIMENT" AND PURGE YOU ONCE MORE FROM MY CONSCIOUSNESS!
BUT I CAN'T DO THAT! WITHOUT YOU, MY RESEARCH WILL COME TO AN END!
FACE FACTS, BIG S! YOU'RE STUCK WITH ME FOR NOW! HOW ABOUT YOU JUST LET ME RUN THE MAIN OFFICE WHEN YOU NEED IT?


THAT IS WITHOUT A DOUBT THE MOST UNLIKELY OPTION POSSIBLE!
I HAD A FEELING YOU'D SAY THAT! SO HERE'S MY ONLY OTHER IDEA...!


TONIGHT WAS YOUR FIRST NIGHT OUT, BIG S, AND YOU JUST HAD A BAD CASE OF STAGE FRIGHT!
TAKE HANNAH UP ON HER OFFER TO HELP YOU OUT AS MUCH AS SHE'S WILLING TO! PRACTICE DOES MAKE PERFECT, AFTER ALL!


"SIGH!" I GUESS THAT IS THE WISEST OPTION FOR THE TIME BEING!
HOWEVER, CONSIDERING HOW MUCH TROUBLE YOU ALMOST CAUSED ME TONIGHT, I'M LOCKING YOU BACK UP UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!
HEY! YOU KNOW DAMN WELL THAT WHAT HAPPENED TONIGHT WASN'T JUST MY FAULT!


WELL, IT'S CERTAINLY NOT MINE! I WILL NOT SUBMIT TO FEELING SUCH BASE DESIRES... EVEN IN THE NAME OF RESEARCH! I AM ABOVE SUCH THINGS.
SO, FOR THE TIME BEING, I'LL ACCEPT HANNAH'S ASSISTANCE, BUT WITHOUT YOUR INPUT!
YOU'RE SUCH A SPOIL SPORT, YOU KNOW THAT?


MAYBE... BUT I'M NOT ELICITING ANY MORE "HELP" FROM YOU UNLESS I DEEM IT WORTH THE RISK!
AND UNTIL THEN, I'LL BE RIGHT HERE, BIG S! AS ALWAYS!


The next morning...
ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮРЪ
RRRIIINNNGGG!!!


HUH?!
WHAT...?!
RRRIIINNNGGG!!!


ТЕАТР
МИНІАТЮРЪ
ТРОИЦКАЯ 18.
UMMM... HELLO?
HELLO, IS THIS MELANIE BUSH?
YES... YES IT IS!
MELANIE... THIS IS DR. KIMBALL! HOW ARE YOU TODAY?


WHAT ON EARTH IS SHE CALLING ME FOR?
I'M... I'M JUST FINE, DR. KIMBALL! WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
WELL, I'M FOLLOWING UP ON A FEW THINGS WE TALKED ABOUT LAST WEEK! SPECIFICALLY, YOUR NEED TO FIND A MENTOR AND THE CORPORATE CONNECTION FOR YOUR GENDER-EQUITY STUDY!


YES, WELL... SINCE MY FOCUS HAS BEEN ON ALTERING THE PARAMETERS OF MY STUDY, PER YOUR REQUEST. I SIMPLY HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO MOVE FORWARD AND ADDRESS THOSE TWO TOPICS!
BUT REST ASSURED, I WILL GET THEM TAKEN CARE OF AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
THAT'S WHY I'M CALLING! YOU SEE, I BELIEVE I'VE TAKEN CARE OF BOTH OF THOSE TASKS FOR YOU!
YOU... YOU HAVE? BUT HOW, MAY I ASK?


SINCE I HEARD THAT THE FACULTY MEMBERS YOU APPROACHED FOR MENTORING HAD TURNED YOU DOWN, I TOOK IT UPON MYSELF TO TRY AND FIND SOMEONE FOR YOU! AND I BELIEVE I'VE SUCCEEDED!
REALLY? THAT'S... WONDERFUL, DR. KIMBALL! AND JUST WHO DID YOU FIND TO MENTOR ME?


PROFESSOR STAN LINDERMAN! HE'S OUR RESIDENT ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY GURU AND I THINK YOU'LL FIND HIM EXTREMELY HELPFUL!
HMPH! ONLY IF I WANT TO SET THE FIELD OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY BACK TWENTY YEARS!
WHY... THANK YOU, DR. KIMBALL! THAT IS INDEED ONE LESS TASK I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT!
BUT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE CORPORATE ASPECT OF THE STUDY...!
ТРОИЦКАЯ 18.


I'VE ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF THAT AS WELL! AN EXECUTIVE AT THE COMPANY I MENTIONED TO YOU AT OUR FIRST MEETING HAS AGREED TO ALLOW YOU TO CONDUCT YOUR STUDY AT HIS COMPANY!
AND HE'S WILLING TO PROVIDE AMPLE FUNDING TO OUR UNIVERSITY AS WELL!
OH... WELL! IT SEEMS YOU'VE BEEN VERY BUSY, DR. KIMBALL! I GUESS THE ONLY THING LEFT FOR ME IS TO SOMEHOW FIND THE TIME TO MEET WITH BOTH OF THESE GENTLEMEN!


WHICH I'VE AGAIN ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF! SINCE I UNDERSTAND HOW VALUABLE YOUR TIME IS, I SET UP A MEETING FOR ALL THREE OF YOU TO MEET THIS AFTERNOON!
TODAY?! THIS AFTERNOON?! ARE YOU SERIOUS? I... I DON'T KNOW IF I'M READY...!


I KNOW IT SOUNDS LIKE SHORT NOTICE, BUT CONSIDERING THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR RESEARCH, I FELT IT BEST TO GET IT UNDERWAY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
YOU AND DR. LINDERMAN WILL BE MEETING WITH ADAM ROSS IN HIS OFFICE AT THE ALEC CORPORATION AT 3 PM!
BUT...!


AND SINCE THIS IS ESSENTIALLY A BUSINESS MEETING I NEED YOU TO LOOK AND ACT AS PROFESSIONAL AS POSSIBLE!
YOU ARE AN INTELLIGENT YOUNG WOMAN AND A GRADUATE STUDENT SO I ASSUME YOU KNOW HOW BEST TO PRESENT YOURSELF IN SUCH A SETTING, DON'T YOU!
UMMM... YES! I... I GUESS I DO!
OR AT LEAST HOPEFULLY WILL BY THIS AFTERNOON!


EXCELLENT! GOOD LUCK TODAY, MELANIE! I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING HOW IT GOES!
SIGH! IF I WERE A TRULY PARANOID PERSON, I WOULD BE CONVINCED THAT THIS WOMAN WAS DOING EVERYTHING SHE COULD TO DERAIL ME!
BUT I'M SURE IT'S JUST HER PRESUMPTUOUSLY IGNORANT NATURE THAT'S CAUSING ME SO MUCH GRIEF!


REGARDLESS, HOWEVER, SHE'S LEFT ME WITH VERY FEW OPTIONS!
ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮРЪ
ТРОИЦКАЯ 18.


Knock-Knock!!
HANNAH? IT'S ME... MELANIE! ARE YOU HERE?


HEY THERE, MELANIE! NICE JAMMIES!
WHAT'S UP?


IT LOOKS LIKE I NEED YOUR HELP AFTER ALL, HANNAH!


Later that afternoon, in the office of Adam Ross...
PROFESSOR LINDERMAN'S HERE? GOOD! SEND HIM ON IN, SARAH! AND WHEN MISS BUSH GETS HERE, JUST SEND HER ON IN AS WELL!


MR. ROSS? I'M... !
PROFESSOR LINDERMAN! IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU! AND PLEASE CALL ME ADAM!


ONLY IF YOU'LL CALL ME STAN!
I TAKE IT MISS BUSH HASN'T ARRIVED YET!
NO, I ASSUMED YOU TWO WOULD BE ARRIVING TOGETHER SINCE YOU'RE HER MENTOR!


ACTUALLY, I'VE *YET* TO MEET THE YOUNG LADY! OUR DEPARTMENT CHAIR, *RUTH KIMBALL*, SET THIS UP FOR US TO *MEET* AS WELL AS *DISCUSS* MISS BUSH'S POSSIBLE RESEARCH AS IT PERTAINS TO *YOUR* FIRM!
TO BE *HONEST*, I WASN'T *PREPARED* TO TAKE ON *ANOTHER* GRADUATE STUDENT THIS SEMESTER, *BUT...!*
BUT *RUTH* CAN BE VERY *INSISTENT* WHEN SHE HAS HER MIND *SET* ON SOMETHING!


OH, SO YOU KNOW OUR DR. KIMBALL?
OH, WE'VE... MET... ON MANY OCCASIONS!
REALLY? THAT'S INTERESTING!
NOT REALLY! MY COMPANY HAS PROVIDED FUNDING FOR SEVERAL PROJECTS, EDUCATIONAL AND OTHERWISE, THAT RUTH HAS BEEN INVOLVED WITH!


HERE ARE THOSE DOCUMENTS YOU WANTED, MR. ROSS!
THANK YOU, SARAH! JUST PUT THEM ON THE DESK!


OF COURSE, MR. ROSS!


WOW! THAT IS... UMMM... SOME SECRETARY YOU'VE GOT THERE!
YES, I'M NOT ASHAMED TO ADMIT THAT I ENJOY HAVING ATTRACTIVE WOMEN AROUND ME WHENEVER POSSIBLE! I MEAN, HONESTLY, WHAT MAN DOESN'T?


TRUE! BUT THERE'S ATTRACTIVE, AND THEN THERE'S... HER!
I ADMIT MY TASTES DO RUN TOWARD THE MORE EXOTIC AND FLASHY TYPES! FORTUNATELY, MY LIFESTYLE GIVES ME EASY ACCESS TO WOMEN LIKE THAT!
SO YOU HAVE OTHER WOMEN IN YOUR FIRM WHO LOOK AND DRESS LIKE THAT? I DON'T THINK I COULD GET ANY WORK DONE AT ALL IF I HAD WOMEN WHO LOOKED LIKE THAT RUNNING AROUND ALL DAY!
SAYS THE MAN WHO INTERACTS WITH DOZENS OF YOUNG COLLEGE COEDS ON A DAILY BASIS!


THAT'S DIFFERENT! THEY'RE NOT AS OVERTLY... SEXUAL... AS WOMEN LIKE YOUR SARAH! WELL... AT LEAST MOST OF THEM!
YOU CAN'T HONESTLY TELL ME THAT YOU DON'T PREFER HAVING A CLASSROOM FULL OF ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMEN OVER A CLASS FULL OF FOOTBALL JOCKS OR SEVERE-LOOKING GIRLS MAJORING IN WOMEN'S STUDIES, CAN YOU?
WELL NO, OF COURSE NOT! BUT I'M JUST MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THE SUBDUED AND INNOCENT SEXUALITY INHERENT IN MANY OF THE EAGER YOUNG LADIES ON OUR CAMPUS!


HMMM! "INNOCENT" AND "EAGER YOUNG LADIES"! I THINK YOU'RE MUCH MORE THAN JUST COMFORTABLE WITH THE YOUNG LADIES ON YOUR CAMPUS!
I HOPE YOU'RE NOT INSINUATING...!
OH, I'M NOT BEING JUDGMENTAL! ON THE CONTRARY! EXCEPT FOR OUR SPECIFIC TASTES, I THINK YOU AND I ARE VERY MUCH ALIKE, STAN!


WELL... MAYBE WE ARE, AT THAT! BUT I THINK IT BEST WE CHANGE THE SUBJECT IN CASE MISS BUSH WALKS IN ON US!
I AGREE! ESPECIALLY SINCE IT SEEMS NEITHER ONE OF US HAS ANY IDEA WHAT KIND OF GIRL THIS MELANIE BUSH IS!


SO, HAS RUTH TOLD YOU WHAT MISS BUSH'S RESEARCH IS ALL ABOUT? BECAUSE I'M STILL IN THE DARK MYSELF!
ACTUALLY, SHE HASN'T! SO I GUESS WE'LL BOTH FIND OUT WHEN MISS BUSH DECIDES TO GRACE US WITH HER PRESENCE!


I WONDER WHERE SHE IS!
I'M SORRY I'M LATE, GENTLEMEN!
DR. KIMBALL SAID TO DRESS PROFESSIONALLY AND IT TOOK ME SOME TIME TO DETERMINE JUST WHAT SHE MEANT!


YOU LOOK FINE, MELANIE... JUST FINE! I'M ADAM ROSS! IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU!
AND I'M PROFESSOR LINDERMAN, MELANIE!
IT'S VERY NICE TO MEET BOTH OF YOU! THANK YOU FOR MEETING WITH ME ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE!


HAVE WE MET BEFORE, MELANIE? BECAUSE YOU LOOK VAGUELY FAMILIAR TO ME!
THAT'S EXTREMELY UNLIKELY, PROFESSOR, SINCE I JUST RECENTLY RELOCATED TO THIS AREA! PERHAPS I JUST RESEMBLE ONE OF YOUR OTHER GRADUATE ASSISTANTS!
NO... YOU REALLY DON'T! BUT I GUESS YOU JUST HAVE THAT KIND OF FACE!
YES, I'M SURE THAT'S IT!


OF COURSE I DON'T RESEMBLE ANY OF THE VAPID ASSISTANTS YOU PREFER!
IT'S A WELL-KNOWN FACT AROUND THE UNIVERSITY THAT YOU ONLY CHOOSE YOUNG, ATTRACTIVE WOMEN WHO ARE GRADED ON THEIR FLIRTATION SKILLS RATHER THAN THEIR ACADEMIC ONES!
WHY YOU HAVEN'T BEEN FIRED FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR AT LEAST GROSS INCOMPETENCE IS BEYOND ME!


WELL, MELANIE, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT! I KNOW DR. KIMBALL SEEMS VERY EXCITED ABOUT IT!
AS WELL SHE SHOULD! THE OVERALL THEME OF MY RESEARCH IS A STUDY IN GENDER EQUITIES AND INEQUITIES IN BOTH THE ACADEMIC AND CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTS!
I HOPE TO ESTABLISH A BASELINE IN THE BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES THAT INFLUENCE THE PARAMETERS I WILL BE STUDYING!


UH-HUH! SO HOW EXACTLY IS MY COMPANY INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY OF YOURS?
AS MUCH AS I'D LOVE TO HELP OUT, I HOPE TO KEEP DISTRACTIONS TO A MINIMUM, IF POSSIBLE!
MY PLAN IS TO JUST OBSERVE THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN YOUR PEOPLE ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS FOR A PERIOD OF TIME!
I ALSO WOULD LIKE TO INTERVIEW A RANDOM SAMPLING OF YOUR EMPLOYEES AT VARIOUS POINTS DURING THE STUDY!
SO, AS YOU CAN SEE, THE DISTRACTIONS WILL ESSENTIALLY BE NON-EXISTENT!


RIGHT...! WELL, SINCE I PROMISED DR. KIMBALL WE WOULD PARTICIPATE IN YOUR STUDY, I GUESS ALL WE NEED TO DO NOW IS DETERMINE WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO START!
OF COURSE, I WOULD LIKE TO GET STARTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! BUT I WILL OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS FIRST WITH PROF. LINDERMAN, SINCE HE IS MY MENTOR NOW!
OH? I AM? AND HERE I THOUGHT THIS MEETING WAS JUST THE FIRST STEP IN DETERMINING IF THAT WAS FEASIBLE!
WELL WHY WOULDN'T IT BE? SINCE MY WORK IS GROUND-BREAKING AND WILL REQUIRE NO REAL INPUT FROM YOU, I SEE NO VALID REASON AS TO WHY YOU CAN'T BE MY MENTOR!


WELL I GUESS THAT SETTLES IT, DOESN'T IT?
MELANIE, WOULD YOU EXCUSE US WHILE I HAVE A WORD WITH MR. ROSS?
OF COURSE! I'LL USE THE FACILITIES WHILE YOU TWO TALK!


A RATHER DIRECT AND TO-THE-POINT YOUNG LADY, WOULDN'T YOU SAY, STAN?
TO PUT IT DIPLOMATICALLY... YES!
REST ASSURED, SHE IS NOT WHAT I WOULD CONSIDER ONE OF OUR TYPICAL GRADUATE STUDENTS!
THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW!


A few minutes later...
IT LOOKS AS IF I'VE STUMBLED UPON A SECRETARY "GAB-FEST", AS I BELIEVE THEY'RE CALLED! HOW STEREOTYPICAL!
IT SEEMS "PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE" TAKES ON A DIFFERENT MEANING FOR THE SECRETARIAL POOL IN THIS COMPANY!


PARDON ME FOR INTRUDING, BUT IS IT TYPICAL PRACTICE FOR ALL THE SECRETARIES TO TAKE THEIR BREAKS SIMULTANEOUSLY? IT SEEMS RATHER INEFFICIENT!
GEE, I DON'T KNOW! WHY DON'T WE ASK A SECRETARY?


HEY SARAH! DO ALL THE SECRETARIES TAKE THEIR BREAKS "SIMULTANEOUSLY?"
NO... WE DON'T! BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE PRETTY RIDICULOUS, DON'T YOU THINK?


I FEEL I'VE ERRED IN ASSUMING YOU TWO WERE ALSO SECRETARIES! MY APOLOGIES!
MAY I ASK WHAT YOUR DUTIES IN THIS COMPANY ARE?
I'M A MARKETING EXECUTIVE AND DONNA HERE IS A VP IN CHARGE OF PROMOTIONS!
INTERESTING! AND MAY I ALSO ASK IF THIS TYPE OF APARREL IS NORMAL FOR THE COMPANY?


FOR THIS COMPANY... YOU BET!
BUT, WHY..?
BECAUSE WE CAN! AND WE LOOK GOOD DOING IT!
AND IT'S KIND OF AN UNWRITTEN MISSION STATEMENT THAT IF WE LOOK GOOD, THE COMPANY LOOKS GOOD!


FASCINATING!
THE STANDARDS HERE ARE DIFFERENT FROM A COLLEGE CAMPUS, MISS BUSH. YOU'VE GOT TO BRING YOUR A GAME, EVERY DAY, IN ORDER TO COMPETE!
SO YOU SEE YOURSELVES AS BEING IN SARTORIAL COMPETITION?
I... I SEE I HAVE SOMETHING TO LEARN ON THIS SUBJECT.


WHAT A UNIQUE AND UNANTICIPATED MINDSET AMONG THE FEMALE EMPLOYEES! DELVING INTO THE CORPORATE SIDE OF MY STUDY WILL BE MORE CHALLENGING... AND VALUABLE THAN I HAD ANTICIPATED!
I HAVE SOME CONCERNS, STAN, ABOUT MISS BUSH'S DEFINITION OF BEING "NON-DISTRACTING"!
I HAD A FEELING YOU MIGHT, ADAM! AND DON'T YOU WORRY, I'LL STAY ON TOP OF IT!


I MEAN, HAVING SOMEONE LIKE HER ROAMING THE HALLWAYS HERE WILL DO NOTHING BUT DISRUPT THE NATURAL EBB AND FLOW WE HAVE ESTABLISHED HERE AT ALEC CORP!
BECAUSE OF THAT, I MAY HAVE TO RESTRICT HER TO CERTAIN PARTS OF THE BUILDING AND ONLY THEN AT CERTAIN TIMES OF THE DAY!
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE HOW MISS BUSH AND DR. KIMBALL WILL REACT TO THAT!
WELL, FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN SO FAR, IT'S GOING TO HAVE TO BE THAT WAY IF THE UNIVERSITY WANTS THAT FUNDING I PROMISED!


DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING, ADAM! DESPITE WHAT SHE THINKS, I DO HAVE A STAKE IN MISS BUSH'S PROJECT!
AS HER MENTOR, MY NAME AUTOMATICALLY GETS ADDED TO ANYTHING SHE PUBLISHES! SO I'LL SEE TO IT SHE STICKS TO THE GUIDELINES I SET FOR HER!
THANKS STAN! BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, I THINK WE CAN KEEP OUR QUIRKY MISS BUSH IN CHECK AND STILL GET YOU A REASONABLY GOOD RESEARCH PROJECT!


"REASONABLY GOOD?!" I DON'T THINK SO!


Later that evening, back at Hannah's apartment...
OKAY, TELL ME AGAIN WHAT HAPPENED TODAY, MELANIE! IT COULDN'T HAVE REALLY BEEN THAT BAD!
OH, IT WAS WORSE THAN I EVER EXPECTED, HANNAH! THEY'RE CONSPIRING TO TRIVIALIZE MY WORK! BOTH LINDERMAN AND ROSS!
I OVERHEARD THEM DISCUSSING WAYS TO KEEP ME "IN CHECK" AND MINIMIZE MY EFFORTS BY RESTRICTING MY DATA GATHERING!
WHAT THEY'RE TRYING TO DO TO ME IS UNETHICAL, UNPROFESSIONAL AND SIMPLY UNDERHANDED! AND I WON'T STAND FOR IT!


OKAY, MELANIE... JUST CALM DOWN A MINUTE AND LET ME KNOW ONE THING...! DID THEY LIKE YOUR OUTFIT?
I KNOW IT WASN'T MY FIRST CHOICE FOR YOU, BUT IT WAS THE ONLY ONE WE COULD BOTH AGREE ON BECAUSE IT WAS BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND CUTE!
SO... WHAT DID THEY THINK? DID THEY SAY ANYTHING ABOUT IT?
SIGH! NO, HANNAH! NO ONE SAID ANYTHING ABOUT MY CLOTHES! BUT THAT'S MORE THAN LIKELY BECAUSE PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE FOR WOMEN AT THIS FIRM IS MORE ALONG THE LINES OF PROFESSIONAL STREETWALKERS RATHER THAN BUSINESSWOMEN!


REALLY? THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD'VE WORN ONE OF THE THE OTHER OUTFITS I PICKED OUT FOR YOU!
IT WOULDN'T HAVE MADE ANY DIFFERENCE, TRUST ME!
BUT WHY? WITH JUST MY TOP ON THE OTHER NIGHT, YOU WERE KNOCKING 'EM DEAD AT MCDOULS!
I KNOW THIS OUTFIT ISN'T QUITE AS SEXY, BUT YOU STILL HAD THE FLIRTING GOING ON, RIGHT?


OF COURSE NOT! THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A BUSINESS MEETING OF SORTS! A TIME TO DISCUSS ROSS'S COMPANY AND HOW IT FITS INTO MY RESEARCH!
FLIRTING IS A TACTIC BEST RESERVED FOR WOMEN SEEKING MALE COMPANIONSHIP... USUALLY IN BARS! THERE'S NO PLACE FOR IT IN ACADEMIA OR THE CORPORATE WORLD!
OH MELANIE, HONEY! HAVE YOU GOT IT ALL WRONG! IF USED PROPERLY, FLIRTING IS A GIRL'S BEST TOOL IN ALMOST ANY SITUATION WHERE A MAN IS INVOLVED!


LOOK, HANNAH... WHAT I DID IN THAT BAR THE OTHER NIGHT IS ONE THING, BUT TRYING TO FLIRT WITH PROF. LINDERMAN OR MR. ROSS IS, WELL... IT'S...!
EASIER! LOOK! CARL, THE BARTENDER, GETS FLIRTED WITH ON A REGULAR BASIS! GIRLS ARE ALWAYS COMING IN THERE AND HITTING ON HIM! HE'S USED TO IT! BUT YOU WERE STILL ABLE TO GET TO HIM!
NOW I DON'T KNOW THESE OTHER TWO GUYS YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH, BUT I BET THEY GET HIT ON A HELL OF A LOT LESS THAN CARL DOES! SO THEY'RE PROBABLY A HECK OF A LOT MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO A WOMAN'S CHARMS! GET IT?
I DON'T KNOW, HANNAH! YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW... DIFFICULT THAT IS FOR ME!


LOOK MELANIE! JUST HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS RESEARCH PROJECT TO YOU?
IT'S EVERYTHING TO ME! WHEN I EMBARK ON A RESEARCH PROJECT, IT IS MY SOLE AND PRIMARY FOCUS! NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT!
GOOD! BECAUSE IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO MAKE SOME MAJOR COMPROMISES IN YOUR PROJECT! UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU DECIDE TO TAKE BACK CONTROL!


SIGH! YOU'RE RIGHT! I'VE LET OTHERS TAKE THIS PROJECT AWAY FROM ME! SO... WHERE DO I START?
FIRST... TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE TWO GUYS! EVERY LITTLE DETAIL YOU CAN REMEMBER, NO MATTER HOW INSIGNIFICANT!
THAT SHOULDN'T BE DIFFICULT! I DO HAVE AN EIDETIC MEMORY AFTER ALL! AND THEN...?


AND THEN... WE GET TO WORK! STARTING WITH SHOPPING!


WELL, WELL, WELL...! LOOK WHO'S BACK? I DIDN'T THINK I'D BE SEEING YOU AGAIN SO SOON!
WHAT'S THE MATTER? SOMETHING OUT THERE GO ASTRAY?
YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL WHAT'S GOING ON AND WHY I'M HERE!


YES, I DO! BUT I JUST WANT TO HEAR YOU SAY IT!
SAY WHAT?
SAY HOW MUCH YOU SCREWED UP THAT MEETING WITHOUT ME THERE!


SIGH! FINE! IN HINDSIGHT, IT SEEMS A LITTLE OF YOUR INFLUENCE COULD HAVE HELPED SMOOTH THINGS OVER DURING THAT MEETING!
AND NOW..?
AND NOW.. I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP AFTER ALL IN INSURING THE SUCCESS OF MY PROJECT!


BUT... ON THE STIPULATION THAT WE WORK TOGETHER! I CAN'T AFFORD HAVING YOU SLIP OUT UNENCUMBERED THE WAY YOU DID AT THE BAR THE OTHER NIGHT! THE ONLY EMOTIONS I WILL ALLOW YOU TO EXPRESS ARE ONES THAT WILL FURTHER MY RESEARCH!
OF COURSE! I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY! WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER, BIG S!
WE'RE PARTNERS... SYMPATICO... TWO PEAS IN A POD!


WHY DOES YOUR EAGERNESS NOT FILL ME WITH CONFIDENCE?
RELAX, BIG S! EVERYTHING'S GONNA WORK OUT JUST FINE!


JUST FINE INDEED!


A couple of days later, in Prof. Llnderman's office...


EXCUSE ME, PROFESSOR LINDERMAN! DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
JESUS! CAN'T THESE KIDS READ THE SIGN BY MY DOOR?
SIGH! MY OFFICE HOURS AREN'T UNTIL ONE PM, SO IF YOU'LL KINDLY...!
Sam Linderman


PLEASE, PROFESSOR? IT'S VERY IMPORTANT AND I'LL TRY NOT TO TAKE UP TOO MUCH OF YOUR VALUABLE TIME!
WELL, I UMMM...! I GUESS I CAN GIVE YOU A FEW MINUTES, MISS...!


IT'S ME, PROFESSOR... MELANIE! MELANIE BUSH! WE MET JUST THE OTHER DAY AT MR. ROSS' OFFICE!


MELANIE? I'M SORRY! I... I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU! YOU JUST SEEM VERY DIFFERENT THAN YOU WERE THE OTHER DAY!
I KNOW, AND I WANT TO APOLOGIZE FOR THAT! I WAS VERY, VERY NERVOUS WHEN WE MET THE OTHER DAY!


IT WAS SUCH A LAST MINUTE KIND OF MEETING AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT FROM IT!
NOT TO MENTION MEETING WITH TWO VERY IMPORTANT MEN LIKE THAT, WELL...!
I MUST'VE COME OFF AS A TOTAL...! WELL, I'M SURE I PROBABLY DIDN'T SEEM LIKE A VERY PLEASANT PERSON!
NONSENSE, MELANIE! A LITTLE BRUSQUE, PERHAPS, BUT IT'S PERFECTLY UNDERSTANDABLE CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES!


BESIDES, I'VE NEVER BEEN A BIG BELIEVER IN FIRST IMPRESSIONS WHEN JUDGING A PERSON'S CHARACTER!
I'VE ALWAYS FOUND THAT SECOND AND SOMETIMES EVEN THIRD IMPRESSIONS ARE MUCH MORE RELIABLE!
SIGH! I'M GLAD! BECAUSE I SO WANTED TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON YOU, BEING MY MENTOR AND ALL!
AND YOU HAVE, MELANIE! TRUST ME!


SO, I WAS HOPING WE COULD DISCUSS MY PROJECT! IF YOU HAVE THE TIME, THAT IS!
AS MUCH AS I'D LOVE TO, I HAVE A CLASS TO TEACH IN A FEW MINUTES! AND I'M AFRAID THE REST OF MY AFTERNOON WILL BE SPENT GRADING THOSE TESTS!


"INVESTIGATIONS INTO ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY -- UNIT 2 TEST"?
YOU KNOW, MY MAJOR FIELD OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDY WAS IN ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY! IF YOU'D LIKE, I COULD GRADE THESE FOR YOU WHILE YOU TEACH YOUR CLASS!
IF I'D LIKE? IF YOU COULD EVEN MAKE A SMALL DENT IN THESE PAPERS, I'D JUST... WELL, I'D BE VERY, VERY GRATEFUL!


LET ME GET YOU THE ANSWER KEY AND THEN I'LL...!
OH, THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY! THIS ALL LOOKS PRETTY EASY TO ME!
YOU JUST GO ON TO CLASS AND LET ME WORRY ABOUT THESE!

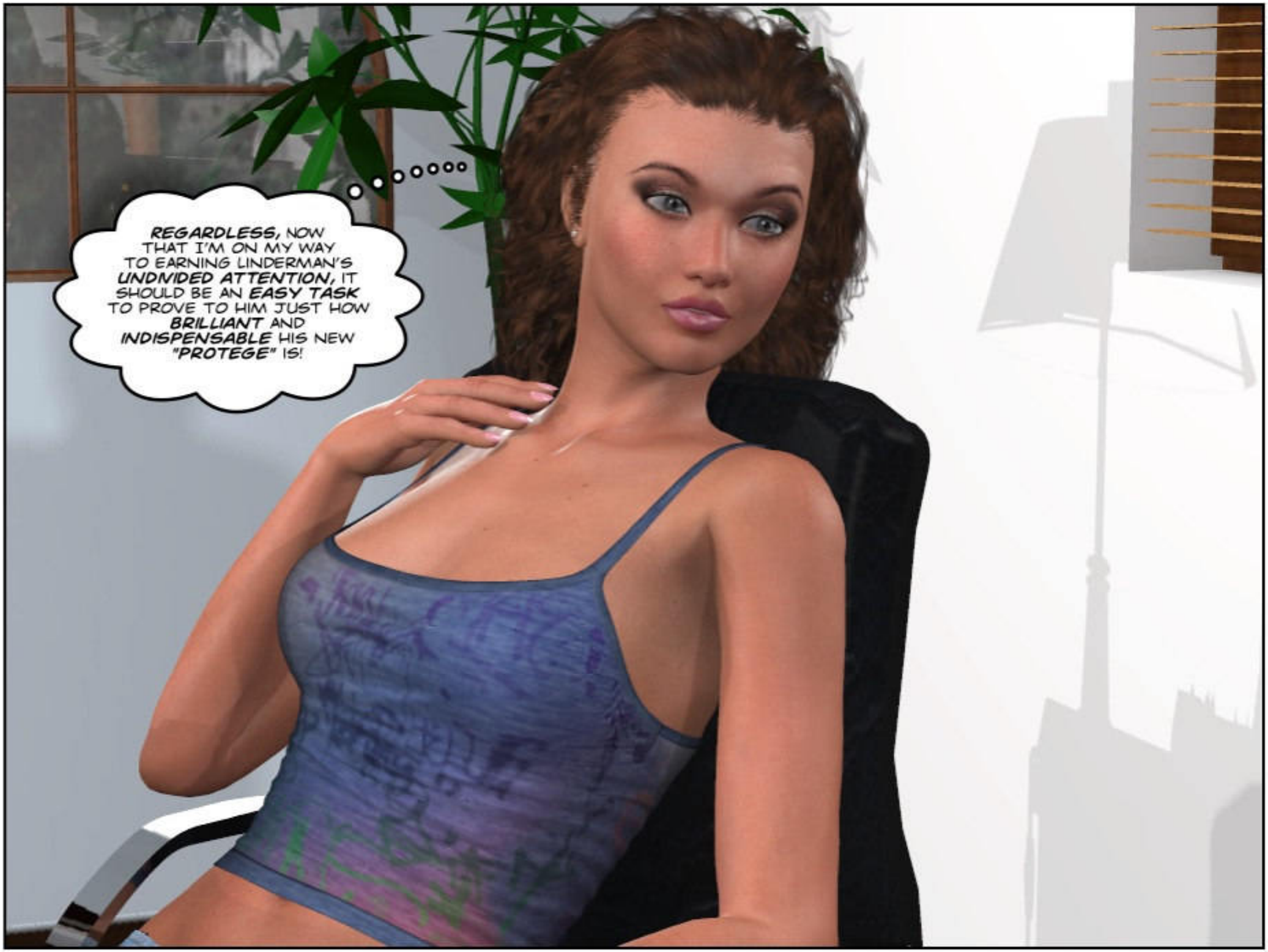

MELANIE, YOU... ARE A GODSEND! I'LL BE BACK IN ABOUT AN HOUR!
OKAY, PROFESSOR!


I'LL SEE YOU THEN!




WELL... THAT WAS BOTH DISTASTEFUL AND LOATHSOME, BUT IT SEEMS TO HAVE GOTTEN THE JOB DONE!
IT APPEARS HANNAH WAS CORRECT! ALTHOUGH A LITTLE EYE MAKEUP AND EMPTY COMPLIMENTS ARE EFFECTIVE TOOLS IN A WOMAN'S FLIRTATION ARSENAL...!


PROMINANTLY DISPLAYED BREASTS SEEM TO BE THE KEY MOTIVATOR TO THE INVOLVED MALE!
FORTUNATELY, THE COMPOUNDS I'VE BEEN TAKING HAVE ALLOWED ME TO DEVELOP MY OWN REASONABLY ATTRACTIVE FEMALE BREASTS!
DEVELOPMENTS THAT BESIDES BEING AESTHETICALLY PLEASING TO THE MALE EYE ALSO HAVE A CERTAIN... INTRINSIC PLEASURE ABOUT THEM!


REGARDLESS, NOW THAT I'M ON MY WAY TO EARNING LINDERMAN'S UNDIVIDED ATTENTION, IT SHOULD BE AN EASY TASK TO PROVE TO HIM JUST HOW BRILLIANT AND INDISPENSABLE HIS NEW "PROTEGE" IS!


AND ONCE THAT'S DONE, I'LL BE THE ONE SETTING THE "GUIDELINES" AROUND HERE... NOT HIM!
Stan Linderma


A few weeks later...
IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH A PERSON CAN GET ACCOMPLISHED WHEN THEY DON'T HAVE AN ANNOYING OFFICE MATE AROUND FOR WEEKS ON END! GOD! IT'S ALMOST BORING!
ID


WOW! THREE MONTHS INTO HIS SABBATICAL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA AND STILL NO WORD FROM SIDNEY!
EITHER HE'S TOO DEEP INTO HIS RESEARCH OF FREUD'S EARLY WORK TO BOTHER WITH US OR THE VIENNESE GOT SICK OF HIM AND DUMPED HIS BODY INTO THE DANUBE!
EITHER WAY... I FINALLY GET MY OWN OFFICE!


HEY, JEREMY, CAN YOU WALK WITH ME FOR A MINUTE? I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING!
UMMM... SURE, RUTH!


SO, HOW'S YOUR SEMESTER GOING SO FAR, JEREMY? GETTING A LITTLE LONELY WITHOUT SIDNEY TO KEEP YOU COMPANY?
OH, I THINK I'LL MANAGE TO GET BY... SOMEHOW!


BY THE WAY, I WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU KNEW THERE WERE NO HARD FEELINGS REGARDING THE MELANIE BUSH INCIDENT!
INCIDENT?!
OH CRAP! I JUST ASSUMED SIDNEY WOULD EMAIL HER THAT MELANIE WASN'T INTERESTED ANYMORE AND THAT'D BE THAT!
BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE SIDNEY, BEING SIDNEY, JUST HAD TO MAKE IT MORE COMPLICATED! WOULD'VE BEEN NICE IF HE'D CLUED ME IN BEFORE HE TOOK OFF!


WELL, I GUESS INCIDENT IS A STRONG WORD! MISS BUSH EMAILED ME AFTER YOUR MEETING A FEW MONTHS AGO AND STATED THAT THERE WERE SOME PERSONALITY CONFLICTS THAT PREVENTED HER FROM BEING ADMITTED HERE WITH YOU AS HER MENTOR!
WELL, UMMM... I'M GLAD THERE ARE NO HARD FEELINGS! I'M SURE SHE'S DOING FINE WHEREVER SHE ENDED UP!
WHAT THE...?! THAT SON OF A BITCH THREW ME UNDER THE BUS TO COVER HIS OWN ASS! CONSIDERING HOW MUCH RUTH WANTED TO ADMIT MELANIE, I'M LUCKY TO STILL HAVE A JOB!


OH, SHE'S DOING GREAT! LINDERMAN CAN'T STOP TALKING ABOUT HER!
LINDERMAN?! STAN LINDERMAN? PROFESSOR STAN LINDERMAN? OF OUR DEPARTMENT?!
WELL, OF COURSE! DIDN'T YOU KNOW? I ASSIGNED MISS BUSH TO STAN A FEW WEEKS AGO AND HE'S HAD NOTHING BUT GOOD THINGS TO SAY ABOUT HER SINCE!


THAT CRAZY SON OF A BITCH WENT AHEAD WITH HIS INSANE PLAN AFTER ALL! HE MUST BE DOING EVERYTHING VIA TEXTS, EMAILS AND ONLINE FROM VIENNA... AND GETTING AWAY WITH IT!
GOD, I HATE IT WHEN HE'S RIGHT!
WELL, I'M, UHHH... GLAD EVERYTHING WORKED OUT FOR HER AND THE UNIVERSITY!
OH, IT HAS! SHE SHOWS AMAZING PROMISE IN THE FIELDS OF PSYCHOANALYTICAL RESEARCH!


WE'RE GOING TO BE EXPECTING A LOT FROM THIS YOUNG LADY!
HAVE A GOOD DAY, JEREMY!
YOU TOO, RUTH!


BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR, RUTH! I GUARANTEE YOU DON'T WANT TOO MUCH FROM THIS PARTICULAR "YOUNG LADY"!
I DEFINITELY NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON HERE!


HMMM... I THINK THAT'S LINDERMAN'S ADVANCED PERSONALITY CLASS JUST GETTING OUT!
ACCORDING TO RUTH, HE SHOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO TELL ME EVERYTHING I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT HIS NEW MYSTERIOUS PROTEGE!


HEY STAN! HOW ARE THINGS GOING? RUTH TELLS ME YOU'VE GOT SOME PRETTY SERIOUS CANDIDATES UNDER YOUR WING THIS YEAR!
I WONDER IF RUTH KNOWS THAT LINDERMAN'S WUNDERKIND HASN'T ACTUALLY SET FOOT ON CAMPUS YET!
YOU'VE GOT THAT RIGHT, JEREMY! IN FACT, THERE'S ONE YOUNG LADY WHO'S DESTINED TO MAKE THAT WACKY FRIEND OF YOURS LOOK LIKE A HAS-BEEN!


I WOULDN'T EXACTLY CALL SIDNEY A FRIEND...!
AND THE KICKER IS YOU KNOW HER! IT'S MELANIE BUSH... THE SAME YOUNG GIRL THAT PASSED ON YOU AS A MENTOR AND ENDED UP WITH ME... TO MY GOOD FORTUNE!
THAT RIGHT THERE TELLS YOU JUST HOW INTELLIGENT SHE IS!


OH, YOU JUST KEEP BELIEVING THAT, STAN! THE HIGHER YOU PUMP YOURSELF UP, THE MORE FUN I'LL HAVE WATCHING YOU FALL!
YEAH, WELL... WHAT CAN YOU DO? SO, SHE'S YOUR STAR GRAD STUDENT, HUH?
NOT JUST GRAD STUDENT, SHE'S MY TOP GRADUATE ASSISTANT! IN ADDITION TO HER OWN RESEARCH, SHE GRADES MOST OF MY PAPERS AND HAS EVEN TAKEN OVER A COUPLE OF MY LECTURES!


YOU'RE KIDDING! REALLY? THAT'S A PRETTY NEAT TRICK!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN, I NEVER THOUGHT OF YOU AS SUCH A 21ST CENTURY KIND OF EDUCATOR! SKYPING LECTURES AND ONLINE GRADING SYSTEMS...! YOU'VE BECOME QUITE THE RENAISSANCE MAN!

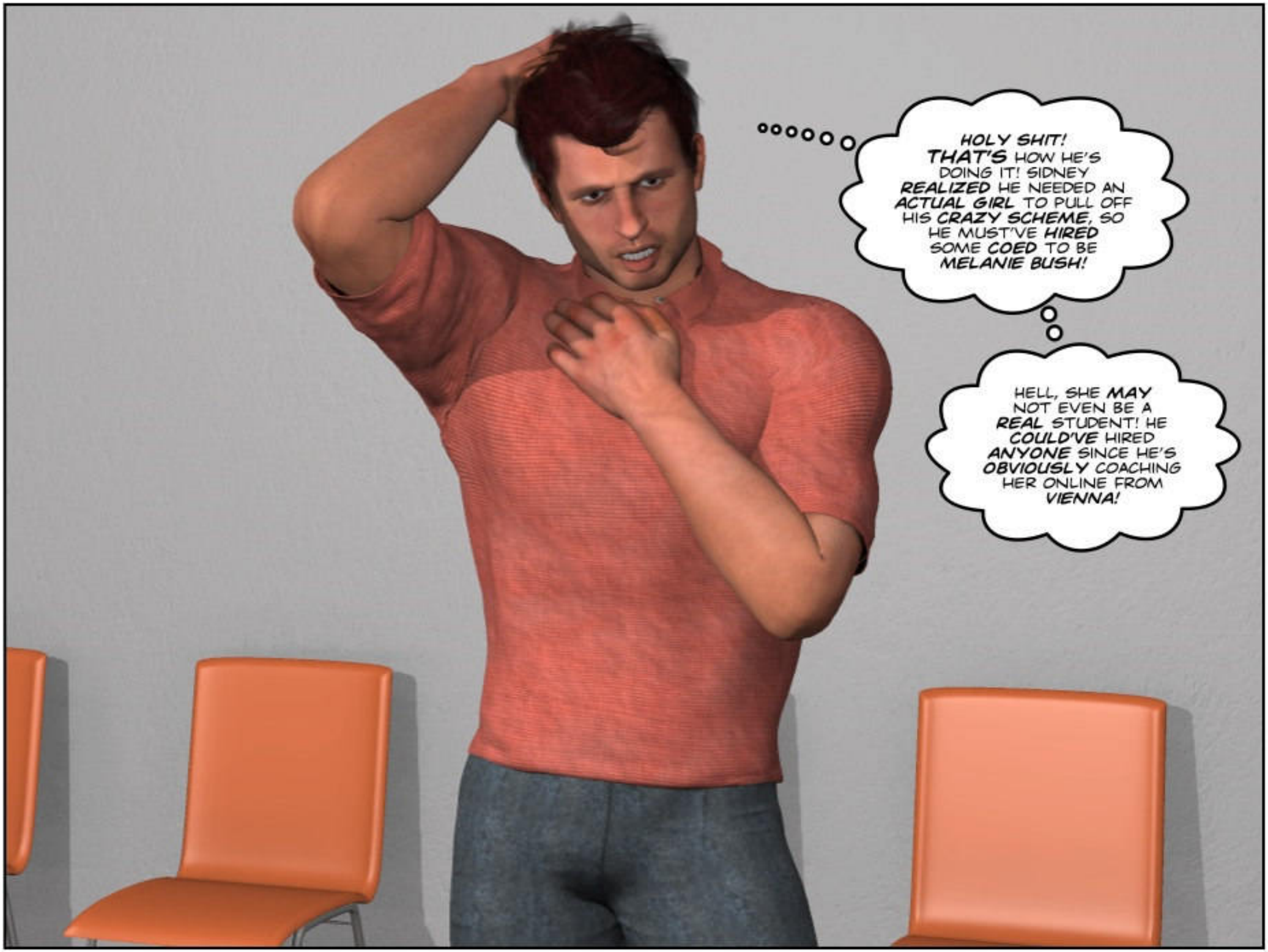

HELL! I DON'T DEAL WITH ALL THAT INTERNET CRAP! WHY WOULD YOU THINK THAT?
BUT, YOU SAID MELANIE LECTURES SOME OF YOUR CLASSES AND GRADES YOUR PAPERS! ISN'T SHE...?
USUALLY IN MY OFFICE... WORKING! UNLESS SHE'S CONDUCTING HER RESEARCH OR TEACHING ONE OF MY CLASSES!

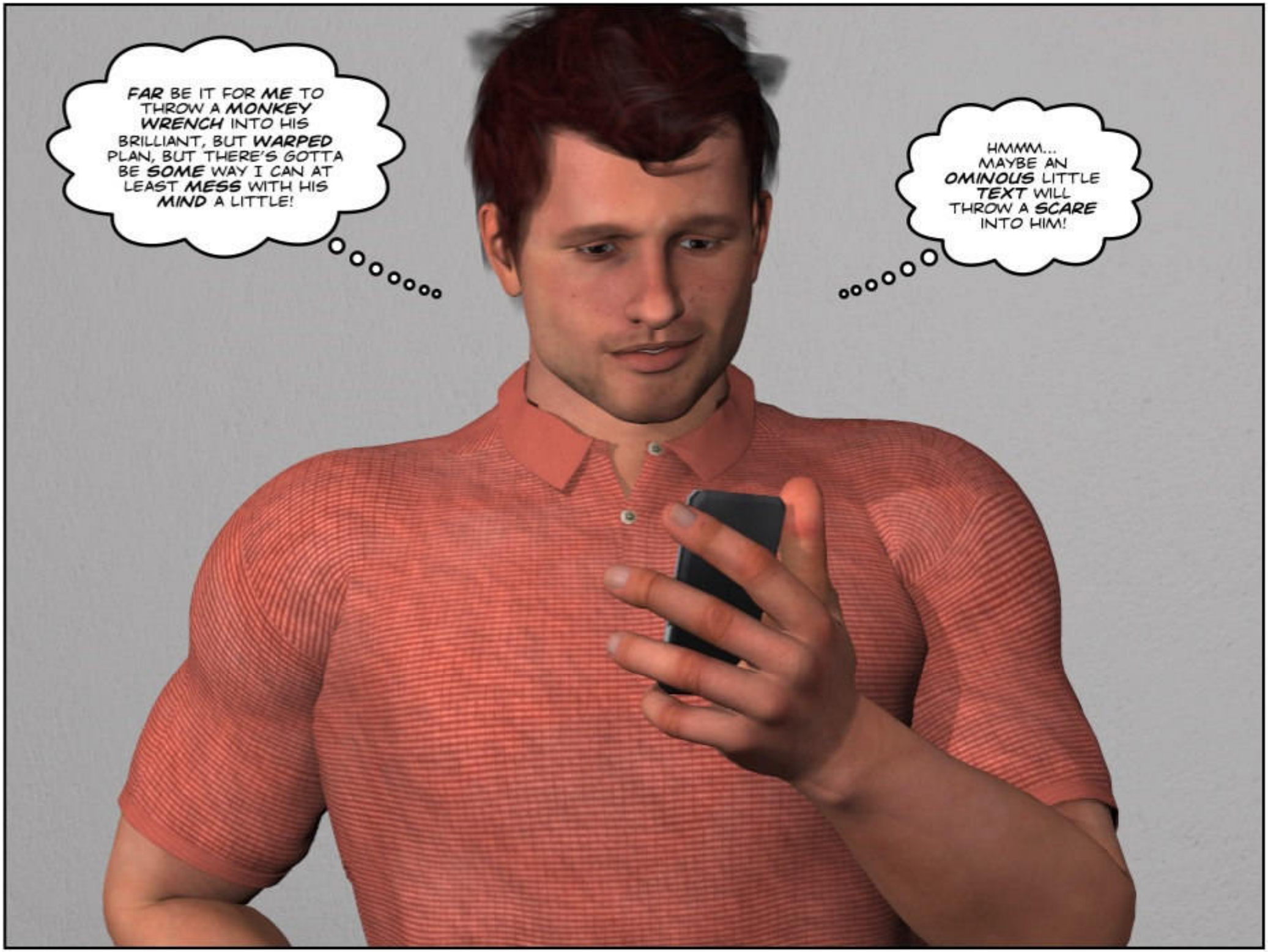

SHE'S HERE? ON CAMPUS?! ARE YOU SURE?!
UMMM... YEAH! IN FACT SHE JUST LEFT THIS CLASSROOM A FEW MINUTES AGO!

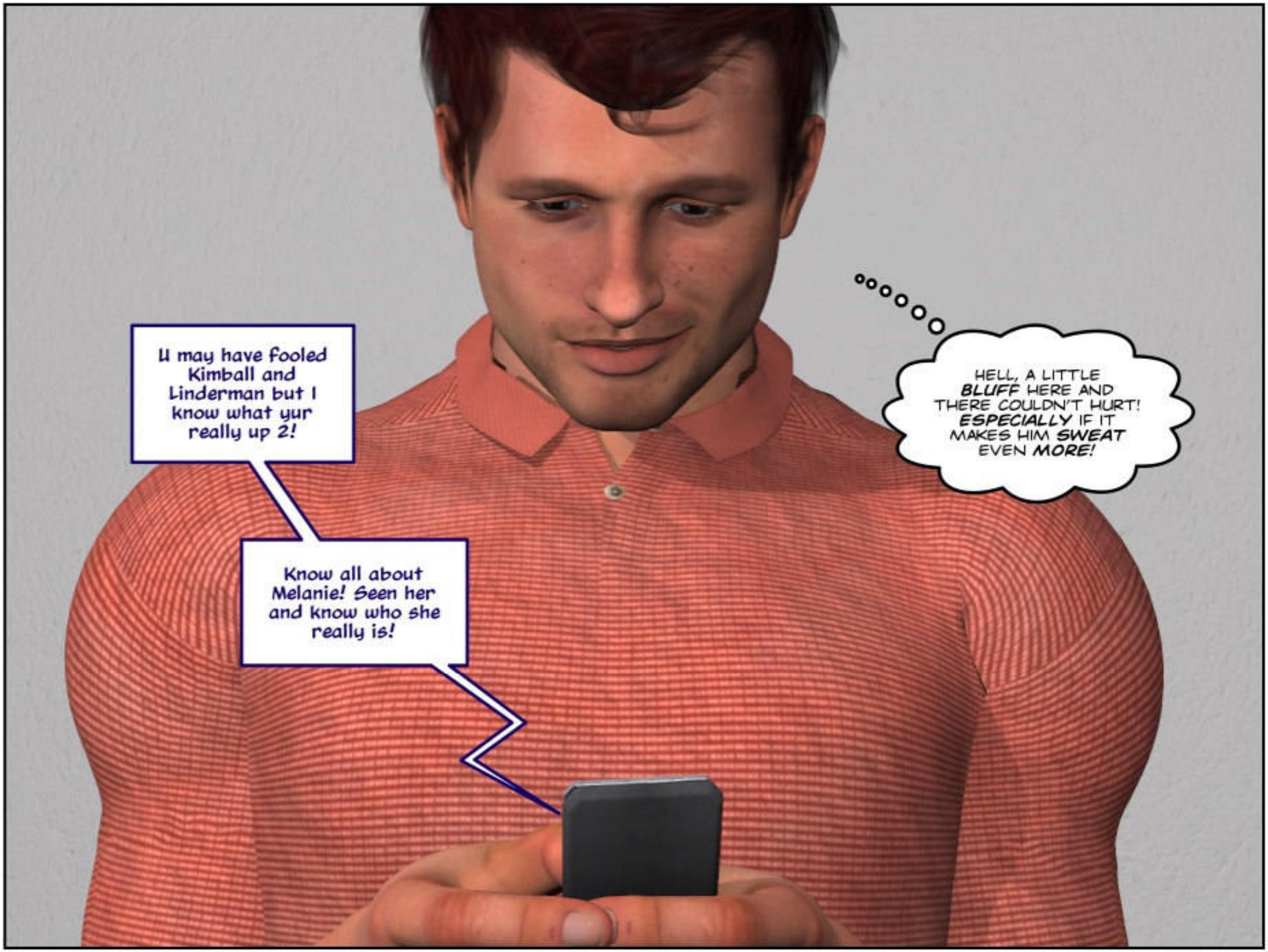

I'M SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T NOTICE HER! SHE'S QUITE A... SPECIAL YOUNG LADY, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!
YES, I, UHHH... KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN!

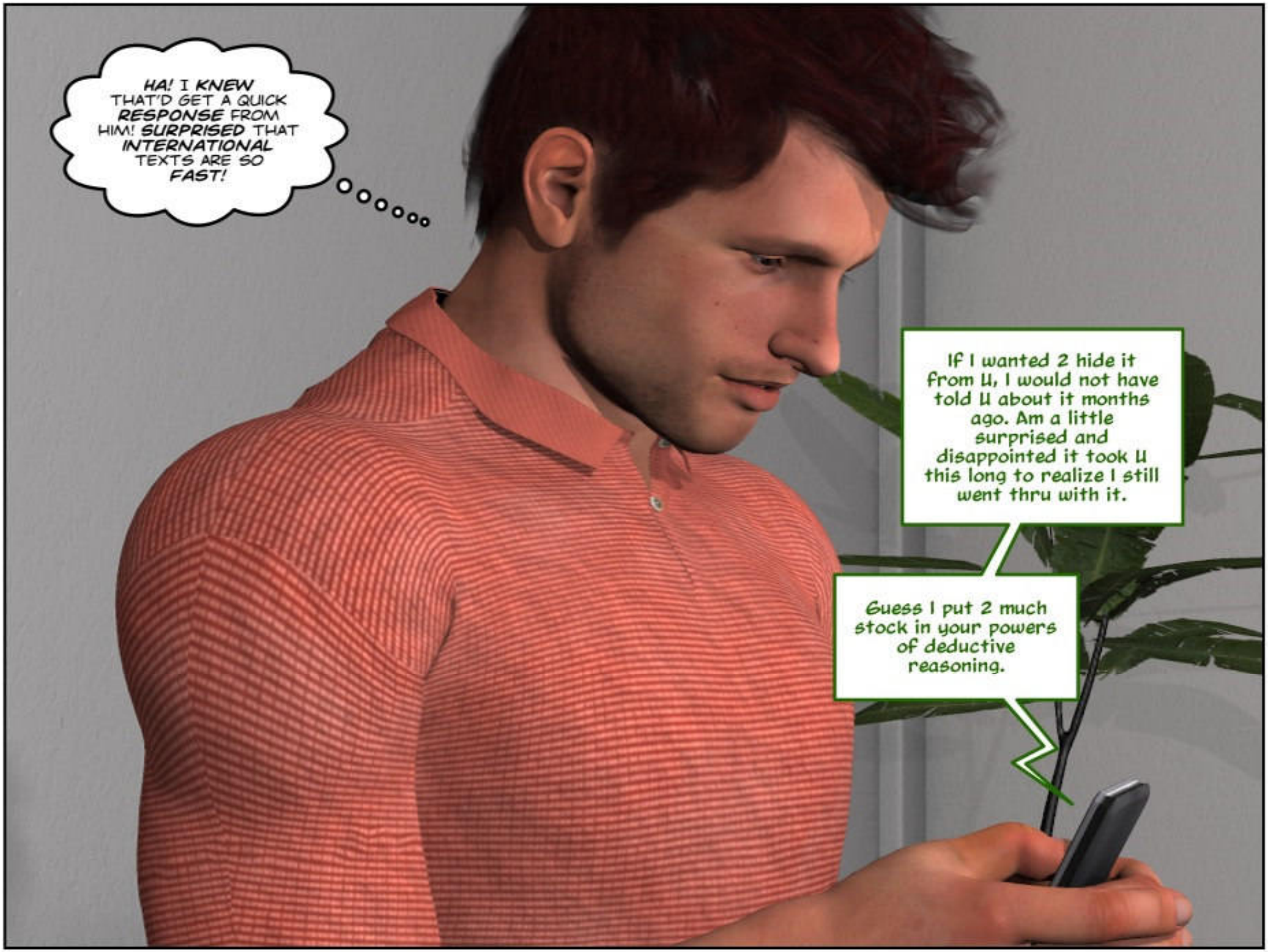

KNOWING LINDERMAN, THAT MEANS HE THINKS SHE'S PRETTY DAMN HOT! WHICH VERIFIES THAT IT CAN'T POSSIBLY BE SIDNEY!
UNLESS LINDERMAN HAS SUDDENLY DEVELOPED SOME VERY BIZARRE TASTES IN WOMEN!


WELL, I'VE GOT A MEETING TO GET TO!
LATER, PLOTKIN!

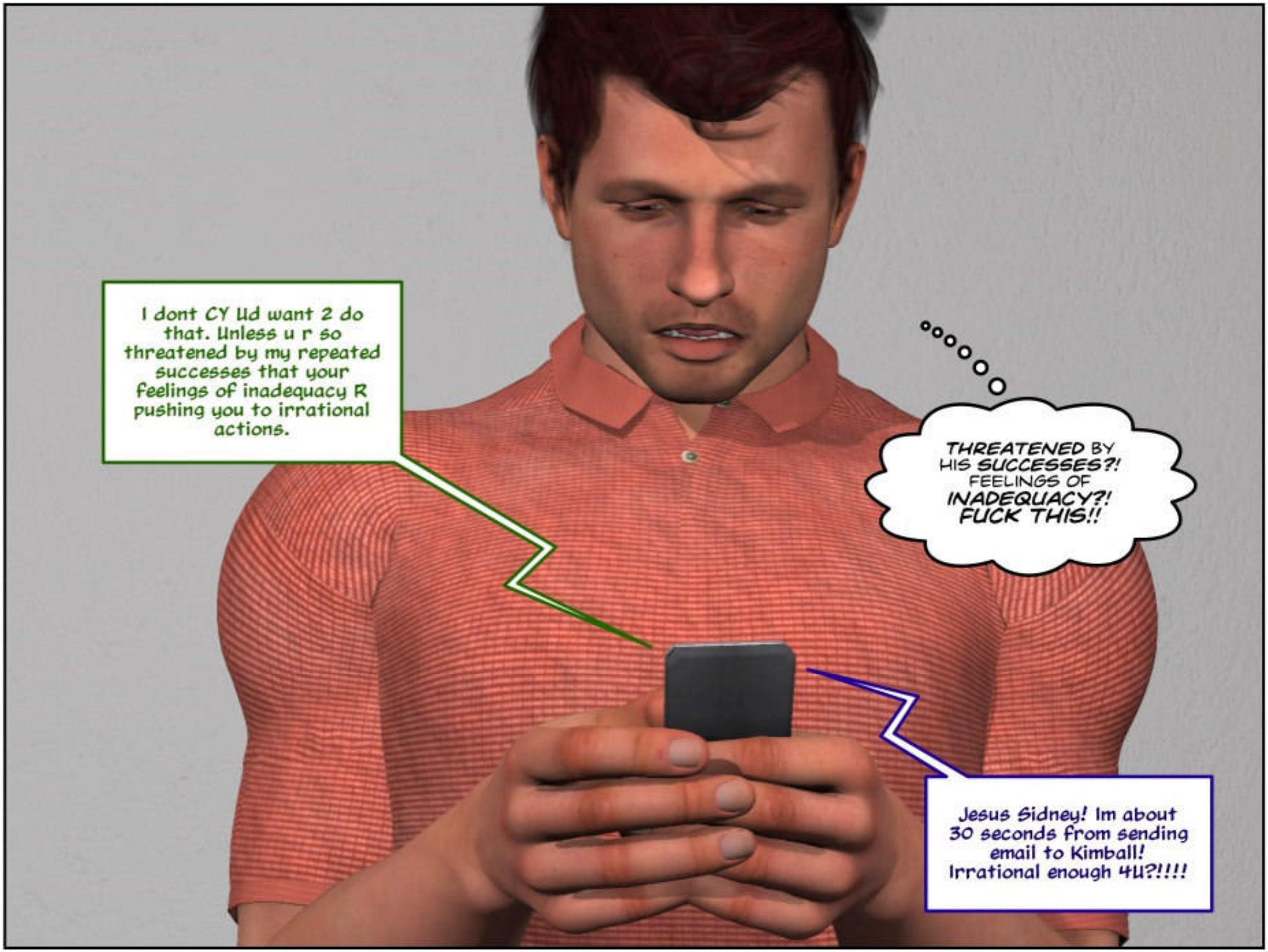

HOLY SHIT! THAT'S HOW HE'S DOING IT! SIDNEY REALIZED HE NEEDED AN ACTUAL GIRL TO PULL OFF HIS CRAZY SCHEME, SO HE MUST'VE HIRED SOME COED TO BE MELANIE BUSH!
HELL, SHE MAY NOT EVEN BE A REAL STUDENT! HE COULD'VE HIRED ANYONE SINCE HE'S OBVIOUSLY COACHING HER ONLINE FROM VIENNA!

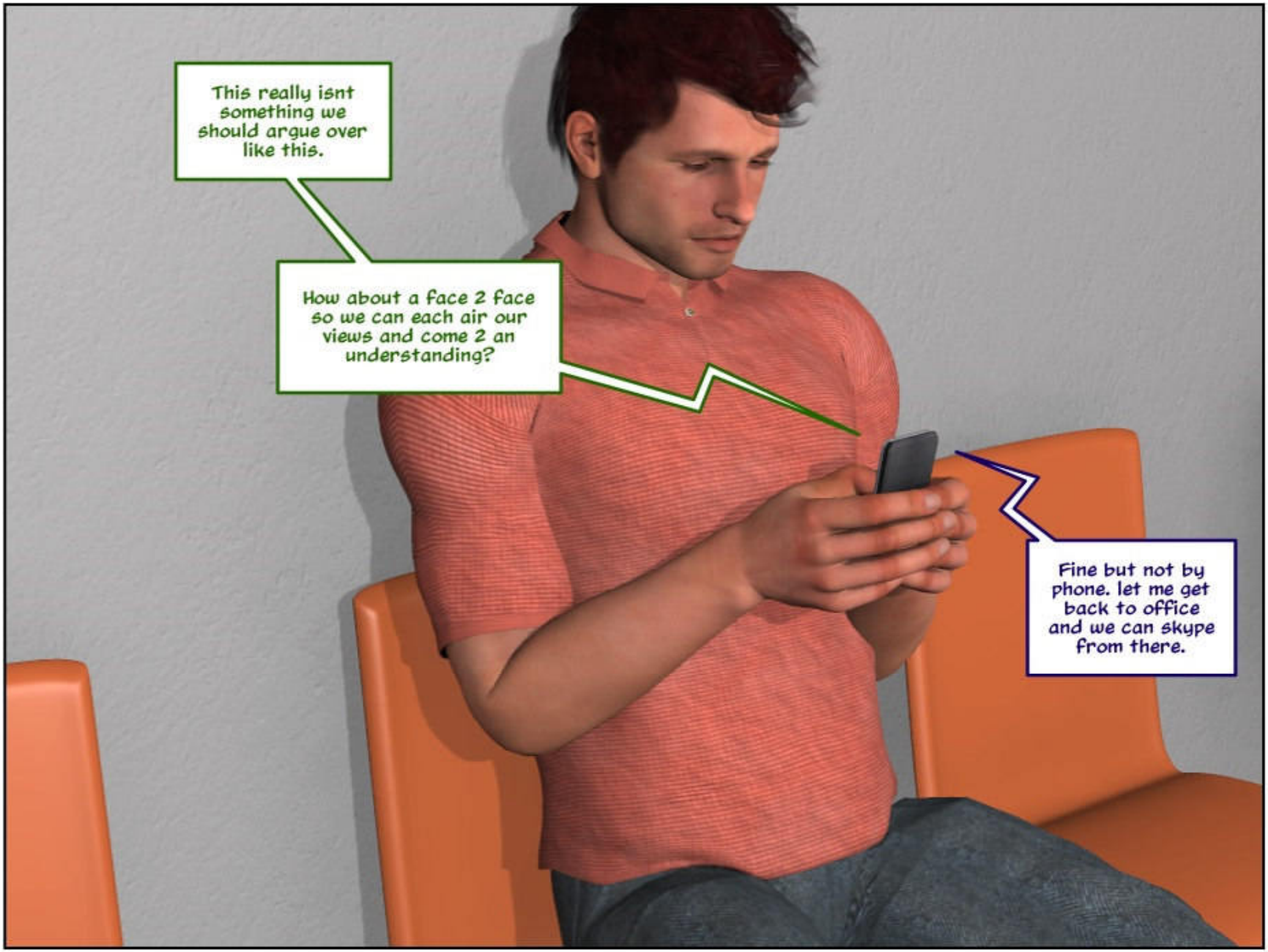

FAR BE IT FOR ME TO THROW A MONKEY WRENCH INTO HIS BRILLIANT, BUT WARPED PLAN, BUT THERE'S GOTTA BE SOME WAY I CAN AT LEAST MESS WITH HIS MIND A LITTLE!
HMMM... MAYBE AN OMINOUS LITTLE TEXT WILL THROW A SCARE INTO HIM!


U may have fooled Kimball and Linderman but I know what yur really up 2!
Know all about Melanie! Seen her and know who she really is!
HELL, A LITTLE BLUFF HERE AND THERE COULDN'T HURT! ESPECIALLY IF IT MAKES HIM SWEAT EVEN MORE!


HA! I KNEW THAT'D GET A QUICK RESPONSE FROM HIM! SURPRISED THAT INTERNATIONAL TEXTS ARE SO FAST!
If I wanted 2 hide it from U, I would not have told U about it months ago. Am a little surprised and disappointed it took U this long to realize I still went thru with it.
Guess I put 2 much stock in your powers of deductive reasoning.


SIGH! EVEN THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY, THAT POMPOUS SON OF A BITCH STILL MANAGES TO GET UNDER MY SKIN!
LET'S SEE IF I CAN RETURN THE FAVOR!
U really think its a good idea 2 insult the 1 person who could blow the lid off your little scam?
TAKE THAT, ASSHOLE!


I dont CY Ud want 2 do that. Unless u r so threatened by my repeated successes that your feelings of inadequacy R pushing you to irrational actions.
°°°°°°
THREATENED BY HIS SUCCESSES?! FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY?! FUCK THIS!!
Jesus Sidney! Im about 30 seconds from sending email to Kimball! Irrational enough 4U?!!!!


This really isnt something we should argue over like this.
How about a face 2 face so we can each air our views and come 2 an understanding?
Fine but not by phone. let me get back to office and we can skype from there.


THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, JEREMY...!
HUH...?!


RIGHT HERE AND NOW WORKS JUST FINE FOR ME!


Chapter 4
by CBlack
Superego


After a heated exchange of texts with Sidney, Jeremy gets an unexpected encounter...
WAIT! WHAT?! YOU... YOU MUST BE "MELANIE"! OR AT LEAST THE GIRL SIDNEY HIRED TO BE "MELANIE"!
HOW'D YOU KNOW I WAS HERE? HE'S TEXTING YOU TOO, ISN'T HE? THAT'S HOW!
LISTEN, JEREMY...


WOW! I'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO HIM! HE REALLY PULLED OUT ALL THE STOPS TO KEEP THIS CHARADE GOING!
BUT HE PUSHED IT TOO FAR THINKING I'D FALL FOR THIS!
Nice try but... really?!
JEREMY...!
DING!


HUH?
Nice try but... really?!


THAT... THAT'S SIDNEY'S PHONE! DID HE GIVE THAT TO YOU BEFORE HE LEFT?
I'VE BEEN TEXTING WITH YOU THIS WHOLE TIME, HAVEN'T I?
AND YOU'RE TEXTING HIM ON HIS NEW PHONE IN VIENNA! THAT'S WHY YOUR TEXTS SOUND SO MUCH LIKE HIM!
JEREMY...!


THAT'S GOT TO BE HOW HE'S DOING IT! WELL, YOU CAN JUST TELL HIM...!
JEREMY... IT IS INDEED ME, SIDNEY! STOP FOR A MOMENT AND THINK THIS THROUGH! IGNORE WHAT YOUR EYES ARE TELLING YOU AND ANALYZE YOUR FAULTY LOGIC IN TRYING TO EXPLAIN THIS!


IF I WAS IN VIENNA, WHICH I OBVIOUSLY AM NOT, ACCORDING TO YOUR THEORY, FOR EACH TEXT YOU SENT ME, THIS FAUX-MELANIE YOU IMAGINE WOULD HAVE TO FORWARD SAID TEXT TO ME... IN VIENNA!
I WOULD THEN HAVE TO RESPOND... FROM VIENNA, AND YOUR FAUX-MELANIE WOULD HAVE TO FORWARD MY TEXT ON TO YOU!
AS YOU'RE AWARE THAT I'M NOT VERY PROFICIENT AT TEXTING, THE REQUIRED TEXTING AND REPEATED FORWARDING ACROSS THE OCEAN AND BACK WOULD TAKE MINUTES, NOT SECONDS!


WELL, OKAY... BUT... BUT...! YOU CAN'T BE SIDNEY!! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE! YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY A WOMAN!
A STATEMENT THAT COULD EASILY BE PROVEN FALSE BY A QUICK TRIP TO THE RESTROOM, BUT I'D MUCH RATHER CONVINCE YOU WITHOUT RESORTING TO SUCH A GRAPHIC DISPLAY!


IF I WERE TO LET YOU QUESTION ME AD NAUSEUM, I WOULD MOST LIKELY EVENTUALLY CONVINCE YOU OF MY IDENTITY DUE TO MY EIDETIC MEMORY!
BUT PERHAPS I CAN SAVE US BOTH THE TIME AND TROUBLE BY RELATING A FEW TIDBITS OF INFORMATION THAT ONLY YOU AND I KNOW!
SUCH AS...?
WHEN I RELATED TO YOU THAT I BELIEVED I WOULD BE A BETTER CHOICE FOR DEPARTMENT CHAIR THAN RUTH KIMBALL, YOU REPLIED THAT I WAS A "CLASSIC MISANTHROPE" AND MOST OF MY "FREUD-BASHING PUBLICATIONS HAVE PISSED OFF MOST, IF NOT ALL OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMUNITY!"


UMMM... YEAH, BUT...!
AND WHEN I FIRST APPEARED IN OUR OFFICE AS MELANIE BUSH WEARING A SLEEVELESS, LAVENDER TOP, A WHITE, ANKLE-LENGTH SKIRT AND BLONDE WIG, YOU REMARKED THAT I LOOKED LIKE "NORMAN BATES WITH KID-SISTER ISSUES!"


DO I ALSO NEED TO RECITE THE BULK OF THE PORNOGRAPHIC WEBSITES YOU VIEW WHEN YOU THINK I'M NOT PAYING ATTENTION?
I COULD LIST THEM EITHER ALPHABETICALLY OR BY VIEWING FREQUENCY!


HOLY SHIT!! SIDNEY?! THAT REALLY IS YOU, ISN'T IT?!
HOW THE HELL...?!
FIRST AND FOREMOST, I NEED YOU TO LOWER YOUR VOICE, REFRAIN FROM CALLING ME SIDNEY AND ONLY REFER TO ME AS MELANIE! CAN YOU PLEASE DO THAT?


OH, UHHH... SURE! UHHH... MELANIE!
GOD! THIS IS SO WEIRD!
EXCELLENT! NOW... AS FOR MY APPEARANCE...!


After a painfully lengthy and detailed explanation...
SO, WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME IS THAT EVERYTHING, EXCEPT FOR THAT ONE LITTLE IMPORTANT PART, IS REAL?
THE CURVES, THE HAIR, THE FACE, AND... THOSE...! ALL REAL BECAUSE OF HEAVY DOSES OF EXPERIMENTAL FEMALE HORMONES?
BUT WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS TO YOURSELF? ARE YOU SAYING IT'S ALL IN THE NAME OF RESEARCH?
OF COURSE IT IS! WHAT OTHER REASON COULD I POSSIBLY HAVE TO DO THIS TO MYSELF?


I DON'T KNOW! IT JUST SEEMS... SO EXTREME! AREN'T YOU WORRIED THAT SOME OF THESE CHANGES MIGHT BE... HARD TO UNDO?
WELL, YOU'VE CERTAINLY **SUCCEEDED!** YOU'VE NOW GOT A SET OF **CURVES** MOST WOMEN WOULD **KILL** TO HAVE! AND YOU **DON'T** SEEM THE LEAST BIT **SHY** ABOUT **SHOWING THEM OFF!** I **STILL** CAN'T **BELIEVE** THAT'S ALL... **YOU!**
WHAT **CHOICE** DID I HAVE, JEREMY? THE ORIGINAL **PROSTHETICS** I **ATTEMPTED** TO USE WERE BOTH HIGHLY **INADEQUATE** AND EXTREMELY **UNCOMFORTABLE!** I **NEEDED** TO MAKE MYSELF A BIT MORE **CONVINCING!**


I COULD GIVE YOU A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE REDISTRIBUTION OF FAT AND LOSS OF MUSCLE ON MY ALTERED PHYSIQUE IF YOU'RE INTERESTED... BUT I HIGHLY DOUBT THAT YOU ARE!
I WAS FORTUNATE THAT A FORMER COLLEAGUE OF OURS, WHO HAS MOVED INTO BIOTECH, ALERTED ME TO THE EXISTENCE OF A NEW SET OF COMPOUNDS THAT WERE CAPABLE OF GIVING ME A VERY CONVINCING FEMALE FORM!
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT RANDOLPH?
UNFORTUNATELY, FOR SOME REASON HE'S BECOME RELUCTANT TO CONTINUE SUPPLYING ME WITH THE NECESSARY DOSES I NEED TO MAINTAIN MY FIGURE!


LET ME GUESS! YOU SAID SOMETHING STUPID AND OFFENSIVE SO NOW HE'S CUT YOU OFF?
I SIMPLY STATED THE OBVIOUS, THAT HE WAS IN OVER HIS HEAD AND WOULD WASH OUT IN BIOTECH THE SAME WAY HE WASHED OUT IN PSYCHOLOGY! IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME!
ACTUALLY... I WAS HOPING YOU MIGHT TALK TO HIM, PROCURE THE COMPOUNDS ON MY BEHALF... IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND!


SURE... WHY NOT! WHAT THE HELL KIND OF PERSON WOULD I BE IF I COULDN'T PROCURE MORE DRUGS FOR MY DISTURBINGLY SEXY, CROSS-DRESSING OFFICE MATE?
EXACTLY! YOUR ASSISTANCE IN MY ENDEAVOR WILL NOT GO UNAPPRECIATED, JEREMY!
AH, MELANIE! THERE YOU ARE!


YES, PROFESSOR LINDERMAN! I WAS JUST EXPLAINING SOME OF MY RESEARCH PROJECT TO PROFESSOR PLOTKIN BEFORE I RETURNED THESE GRADED TESTS TO YOUR OFFICE!


I'LL MEET YOU BACK THERE, PROFESSOR!
GOODBYE, PROFESSOR PLOTKIN!


DIDN'T I TELL YOU SHE WAS SOMETHING, JEREMY? AND SHE'S ALL MINE!
YES, I... I GUESS SHE IS, STAN! I GUESS SHE IS!


JESUS! FREUD HIMSELF WOULD GO NUTS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT EVERYTHING GOING ON INSIDE THAT BRILLIANTLY WACKO HEAD OF HIS!


That night, during Sidney/Melanie's nightly "reflection"...
I GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, BIG S, I THINK YOU'RE DOING GREAT OUT THERE!
BETWEEN HANNAH'S HELPFUL TUTORIALS AND MY LITTLE NUDGES HERE AND THERE, YOU'VE GOT THAT HOUNDDOG LINDERMAN RIGHT WHERE YOU WANT HIM!


YES, I DO SEEM TO HAVE CREATED A SCENARIO WHERE PROFESSOR LINDERMAN IS AGREEABLE WITH MOST ANYTHING I SUGGEST IN REGARDS TO MY RESEARCH PROJECT!
THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN US APPEARS TO BE FUNCTIONAL, WITH ONE DISTURBING SIDE NOTE!
WHICH IS...?


I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU APPEAR AS MY MELANIE ALTER-EGO, BUT WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS WHY MY APPEARANCE SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED IN HERE AS WELL! IT CAUSES ME SOME CONCERN!
WHY? THEY'RE JUST REFLECTIONS! WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
ometimes
a cigar is
just a cigar


BECAUSE I DON'T SEE MYSELF AS A WOMAN... MELANIE IS SIMPLY A CONSTRUCT! AND YET, THERE IS SOME SENSE IN WHAT YOU SAY! REFLECTIONS ARE SUBJECT TO THE SURFACES THEY REFLECT OFF OF, SO IT WOULD MAKE SENSE THAT MY IMAGE WOULD BE SOMEWHAT INFLUENCED BY YOU!
YOU TOOK THE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF MY MOUTH!


IT'S JUST THAT LITTLE BIT OF ME YOU NEED TO GET BY THAT MAKES YOU LOOK LIKE THAT IN HERE!
I KNOW THAT WHEN THIS PROJECT IS OVER WE'LL GO BACK TO BEING PLAIN OL' SIDNEY AGAIN!


EXACTLY RIGHT! THINGS ARE PROCEEDING SWIMMINGLY, AND SO THE TERMINATION OF OUR TIME AS MELANIE IS RAPIDLY APPROACHING!
Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar
YUP! EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO PLAN!


BY THE TIME I'M DONE, I'LL HAVE ENOUGH DATA AND MATERIAL TO WRITE A HALF DOZEN AWARD-WINNING STUDIES...
ALL WHILE EXPOSING THE RAMPANT SEXISM INHERENT IN THE UNIVERSITY!
YOU GO GIRL! I'M THERE WITH YOU... EVERY STEP OF THE WAY!


A few days later...


PANT! EXPLAIN TO ME AGAIN *GASP!* HOW PEOPLE CAN CONSIDER THIS ACTIVITY ENJOYABLE OR GOOD FOR ONE'S HEALTH?
PANT! CONSIDERING THAT AT THIS VERY MOMENT *PANT!* I'VE NEVER FELT WORSE IN MY ENTIRE LIFE, I'M DEFINITELY NOT ENJOYING MYSELF!
FOR YOUR FIRST TIME OUT, YOU'RE DOING GREAT! DON'T WORRY, IF YOU KEEP IT UP, YOU'LL REALLY LEARN TO ENJOY IT LIKE I DO!
IT'S ALSO GREAT FOR KEEPING THAT BOD OF YOURS TONED AND SEXY!


YOU KNOW WHEN YOU FIRST MOVED IN, I NEVER WOULD'VE GUESSED YOU HAD SUCH A SCORCHIN' HOT BOD UNDER THOSE FRUMPY CLOTHES YOU USED TO WEAR!
OHHH! HOT AND NAUSEOUS IS ALL I FEEL RIGHT NOW!


IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY YOU WERE GETTING SEXIER WITH EACH PASSING DAY! YOU HAVE SOME SECRET I DON'T KNOW ABOUT?
NO... NOTHING SPECIAL! IT JUST APPEARS THAT WAY DUE TO ALL YOUR HELPFUL HINTS AND WARDROBE SELECTIONS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS! THAT'S ALL!

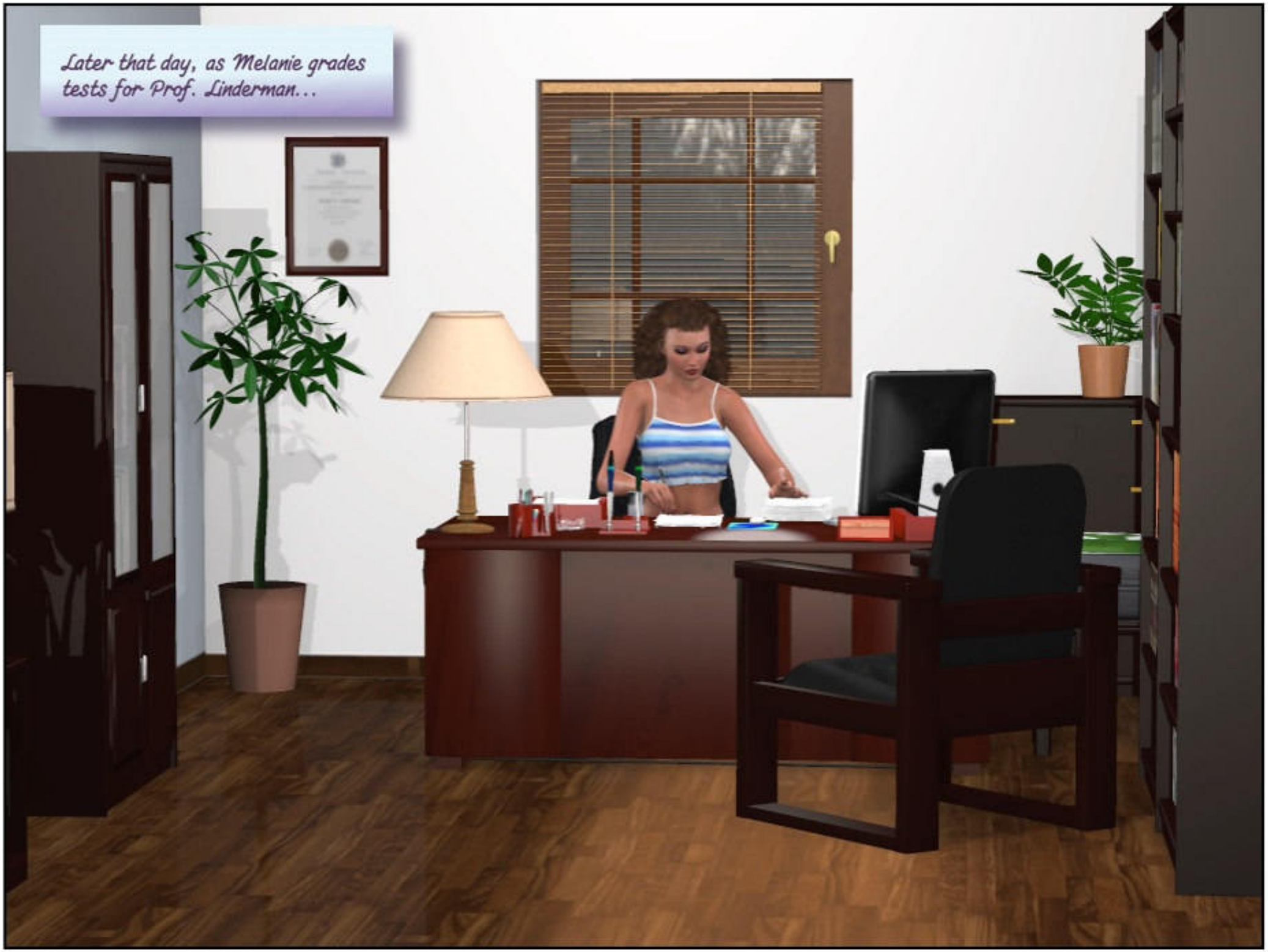

THAT AND A DAILY ADMINISTRATION OF SEVERAL COMPLEX HORMONE TREATMENTS, BUT THAT WILL HAVE TO REMAIN MY SECRET, HANNAH! SORRY!


WELL, WHATEVER IT IS, I'M PROUD OF YOU! YOU SEEM SO MUCH HAPPIER THAN WHEN WE FIRST MET, AND YOU LOOK AWESOME!
I'M SURE I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU THOSE GUYS WE PASSED EARLIER SURE THOUGHT SO, TOO!
SO IS THAT WHY WE HAD TO RUN THROUGH THAT AREA THAT WAS HEAVILY POPULATED WITH FOOT TRAFFIC RATHER THAN EMPTY PARK TRAILS THAT ARE DESIGNED SOLELY FOR AN ACTIVITY LIKE THIS?
OF COURSE! WHAT'S THE POINT OF WEARING THESE HOT LITTLE JOGGING OUTFITS IF THERE'S NO ONE AROUND TO APPRECIATE THEM?


AND REMEMBER, YOU PROMISED TO TRY THIS FOR AT LEAST A WEEK! AND I'M GOING TO HOLD YOU TO THAT!
'CAUSE YOU JUST COULDN'T BEAR TO DISAPPOINT YOUR NEW BESTIE! RIGHT?
REMIND ME AGAIN WHY I MADE SUCH A RIDICULOUS PROMISE WITHOUT PROPERLY RESEARCHING THE ACTIVITY FIRST!

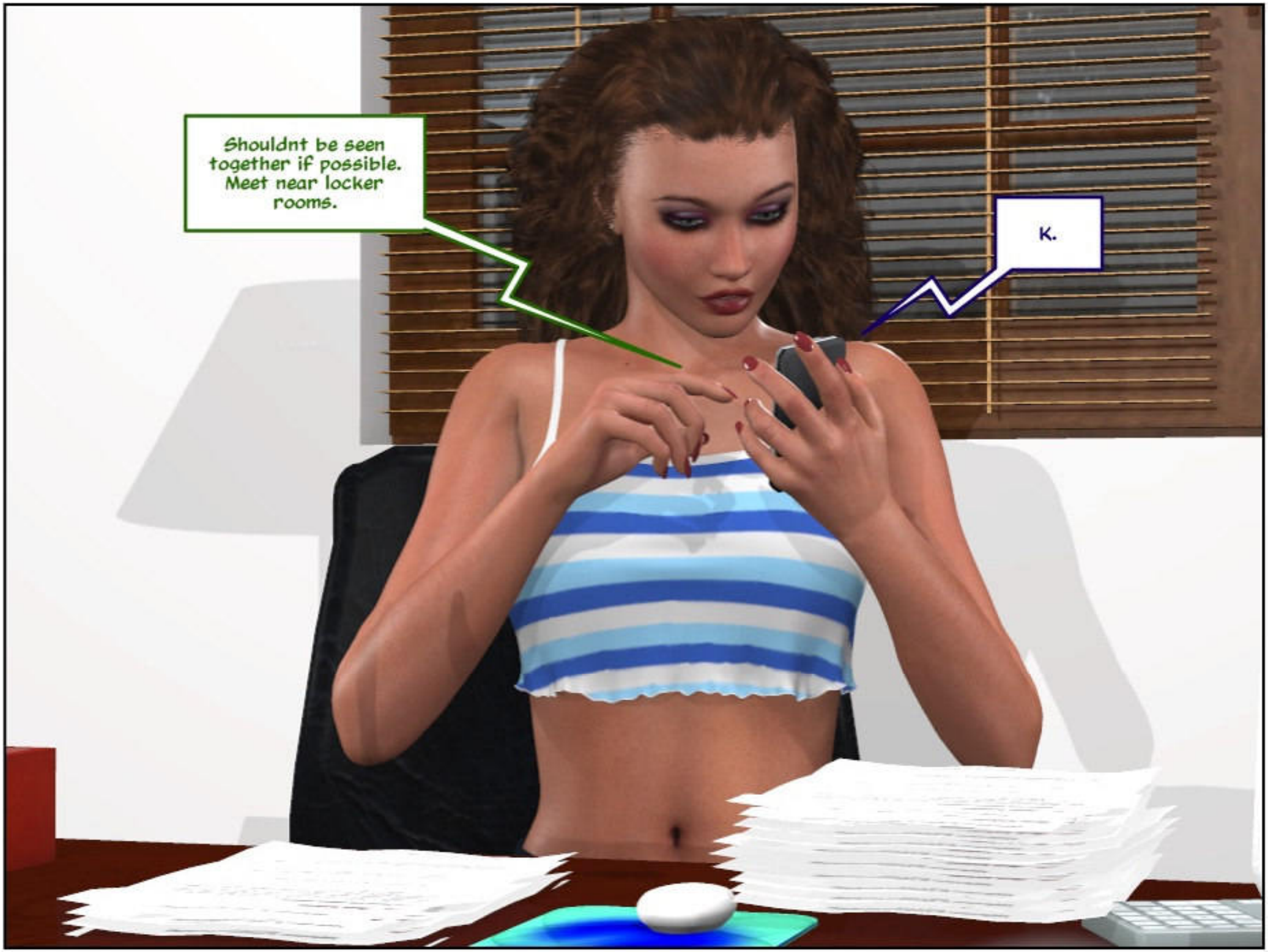

SIGH! I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT!
I GUESS THAT'S NOT TOO FAR FROM THE TRUTH! CONSIDERING HOW MUCH HELP HANNAH HAS BEEN TO ME, IT'S DIFFICULT TO REFUSE HER WHEN SHE MAKES SEEMINGLY MINOR REQUESTS OF ME!


OH! AND TO CELEBRATE YOUR FIRST MORNING RUN WITHOUT EVEN PUKING, I'M TREATING TO A NIGHT AT MCDOUL'S TONIGHT! AND I WON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER!
I WOULDN'T DREAM OF IT... BESTIE!


Later that day, as Melanie grades tests for Prof. Linderman...


UGH! SERIOUSLY? I HOPE THESE "STUDENTS" HAVE A BETTER GRASP OF MAKING CORRECT CHANGE AT THE DRIVE-THRU THAN THEY DO OF PSYCHOLOGY!
DING!


GOOD! IT SEEMS JEREMY HAS COME THROUGH FOR ME AFTER ALL!
I have something 4U. Want me 2 bring it there or U come here?


Shouldnt be seen together if possible. Meet near locker rooms.
K.

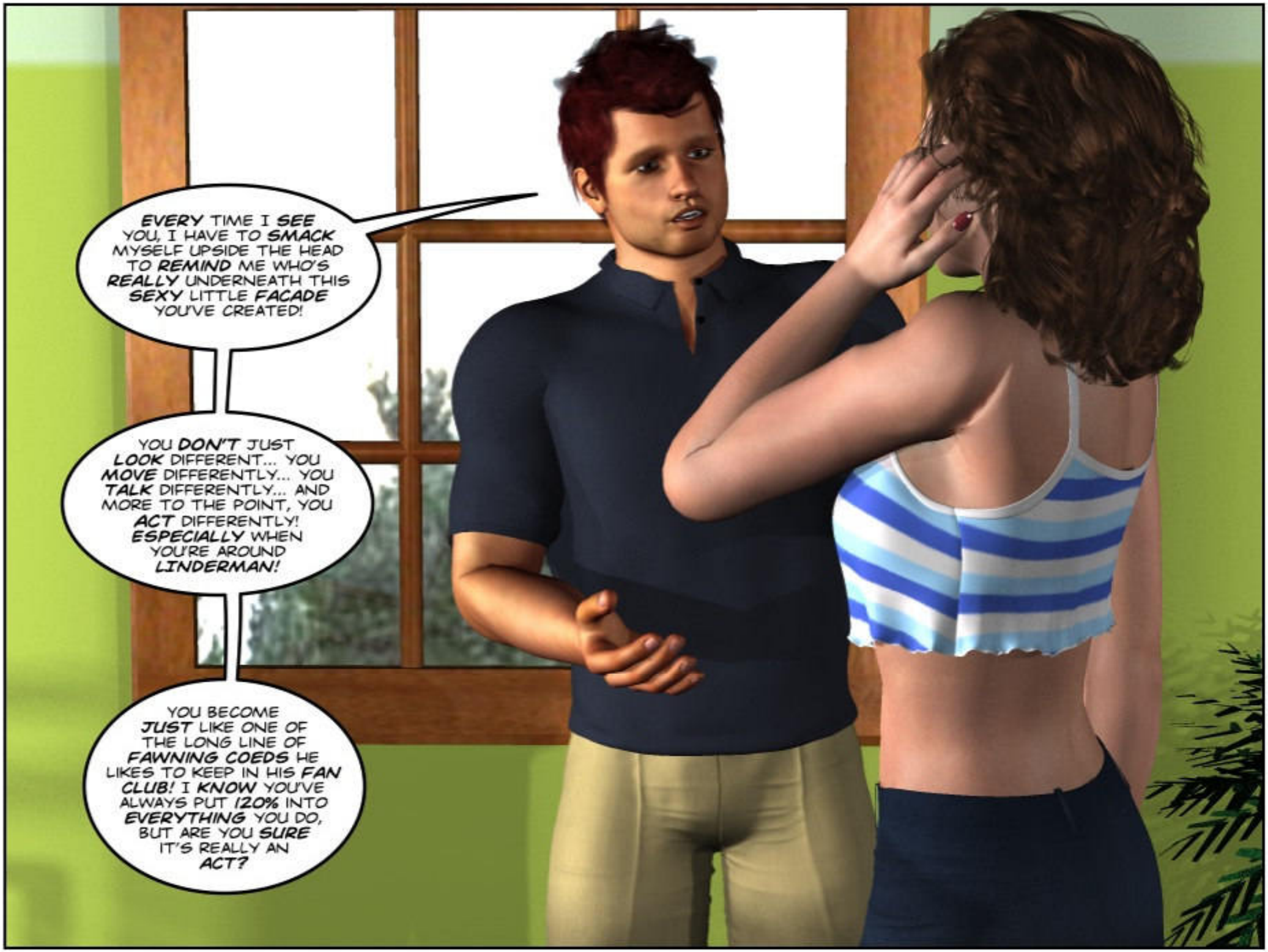

A few minutes later...
GREAT! NOW I'VE ESSENTIALLY BECOME A DRUG-RUNNER FOR HIM... I MEAN HER... I MEAN...! JESUS!
I'M THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO NEED A LONG SABBATICAL BEFORE ALL THIS IS OVER!


MAN! I STILL CAN'T GET OVER THE FACT THAT THAT'S REALLY SIDNEY!
GOOD! YOU'RE UNUSUALLY PUNCTUAL!
THAT IS, UNTIL HE STARTS TALKING!


OKAY, WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE CLOAK AND DAGGER STUFF? WHY DID WE HAVE TO MEET WAY OVER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CAMPUS LIKE THIS?
WELL YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE NO REASON TO COME TO LINDERMAN'S OFFICE, AND IF I WERE TO SHOW UP IN MY OLD OFFICE, IT COULD RAISE SOME SUSPICIONS AS TO MY TRUE IDENTITY!

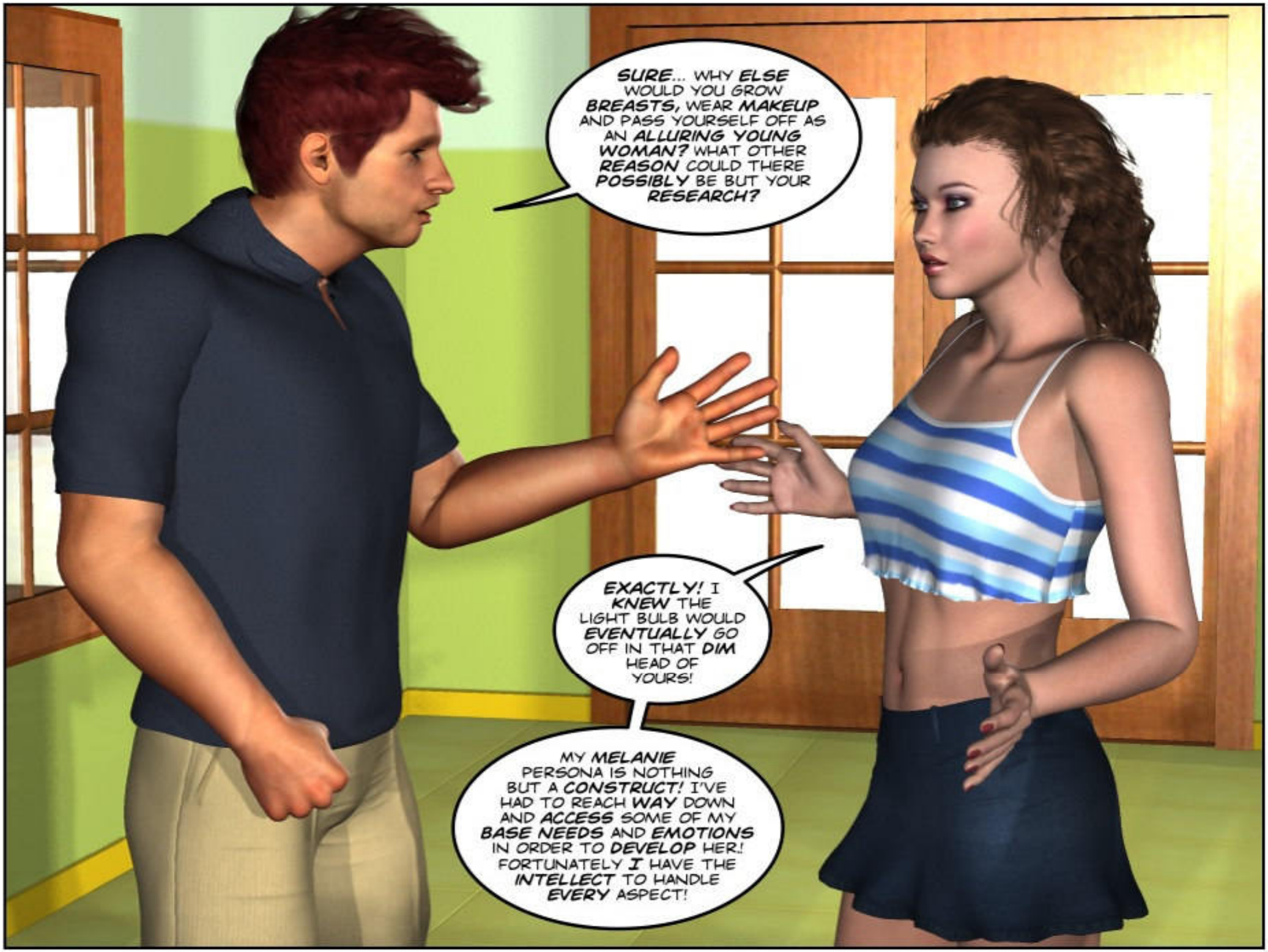

YOU'RE KIDDING! WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MIND COULD EVER POSSIBLY THINK THAT YOU'RE SIDNEY MOYER? I'M STILL HAVING TROUBLE BELIEVING IT!
WELL, I GUESS THAT'S TRUE ENOUGH! BUT REMEMBER, I ALSO TOLD KIMBALL THERE WERE SOME "PERSONALITY CONFLICTS" BETWEEN US, SO THERE SHOULD BE NO GOOD REASON WHY WE WOULD BE SEEN TOGETHER... ESPECIALLY ALONE IN YOUR OFFICE!


ONLY YOU COULD RATIONALIZE PARANOIA! AT LEAST THAT'S SOMETHING ABOUT YOU THAT HASN'T CHANGED!
YOU'RE KIDDING! RIGHT?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT? EXCEPT FOR THE OBVIOUS PHYSICAL CHANGES, I'M STILL EXACTLY THE SAME PERSON I ALWAYS HAVE BEEN!


EVERY TIME I SEE YOU, I HAVE TO SMACK MYSELF UPSIDE THE HEAD TO REMIND ME WHO'S REALLY UNDERNEATH THIS SEXY LITTLE FACADE YOU'VE CREATED!
YOU DON'T JUST LOOK DIFFERENT... YOU MOVE DIFFERENTLY... YOU TALK DIFFERENTLY... AND MORE TO THE POINT, YOU ACT DIFFERENTLY! ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE AROUND LINDERMAN!
YOU BECOME JUST LIKE ONE OF THE LONG LINE OF FAWNING COEDS HE LIKES TO KEEP IN HIS FAN CLUB! I KNOW YOU'VE ALWAYS PUT 120% INTO EVERYTHING YOU DO, BUT ARE YOU SURE IT'S REALLY AN ACT?


I REALIZE THIS IS ALL VERY DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND, SO I'LL TRY AND MAKE IT AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE!
EVERYTHING I AM DOING IS FOR MY RESEARCH! I HAVE ALWAYS EXCELLED AT EVERYTHING I'VE FELT WORTH OF MY ATTENTION, AND THIS ENDEAVOR IS NO EXCEPTION!
I AM FULFILLING THE EXPECTATIONS OF MY TEMPORARY GENDER IN ORDER TO BLEND IN! DISPLAYS OF FLESH AND COQUETTISH BEHAVIOR ARE SIMPLY TOOLS OF THE TRADE. NOTHING MORE!


ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT? YOU ALWAYS SEEMED TOTALLY ASEXUAL BEFORE THIS... UHM... TRANSFORMATION!
I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER IF THIS IS WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS TRULY WANTED... THAT YOUR RESEARCH IS MORE OF AN EXCUSE TO TRANSFORM YOURSELF THAN ANYTHING ELSE!
DON'T BE ABSURD! I THOUGHT YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, WOULD UNDERSTAND THE NECESSITY OF THE SACRIFICES I AM WILLING TO MAKE FOR MY WORK... BUT APPARENTLY I WAS MISTAKEN!


SURE... WHY ELSE WOULD YOU GROW BREASTS, WEAR MAKEUP AND PASS YOURSELF OFF AS AN ALLURING YOUNG WOMAN? WHAT OTHER REASON COULD THERE POSSIBLY BE BUT YOUR RESEARCH?
EXACTLY! I KNEW THE LIGHT BULB WOULD EVENTUALLY GO OFF IN THAT DIM HEAD OF YOURS!
MY MELANIE PERSONA IS NOTHING BUT A CONSTRUCT! I'VE HAD TO REACH WAY DOWN AND ACCESS SOME OF MY BASE NEEDS AND EMOTIONS IN ORDER TO DEVELOP HER! FORTUNATELY I HAVE THE INTELLECT TO HANDLE EVERY ASPECT!


SO YOU'RE NOT WORRIED ABOUT ANY LONG-TERM EFFECTS? YOU'RE WILLING TO FIELD TEST YOUR "SUPEREGO-ID" THEORIES ON SOMETHING THIS EXTREME?
WHY NOT? AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THEY'RE MORE THAN THEORIES... THEY'RE SCIENTIFIC FACT!
MY SUPEREGO HAS BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO INTEGRATE ONLY AS MUCH OF MY ID AS NECESSARY TO GET THE JOB DONE!


I STILL THINK YOU'RE TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF A SLIPPERY SLOPE THAT YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO HANDLE!
OH PLEASE, JEREMY! YOUR "SLIPPERY SLOPE" ARGUMENT IS UNFAIRLY TAINTED BY UNSUBSTANTIATED CONJECTURE, AND...!




Theater


WHAT THE...?!




I HOPE I'M NOT INTERRUPTING ANYTHING IMPORTANT, PROFESSOR PLOTKIN!
HOLY...!


RUTH! I MEAN... DR. KIMBALL! THIS... THIS REALLY ISN'T WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE! YOU SEE, UMMM...!


I'M AFRAID THIS IS ALL MY DOING, DR. KIMBALL! YOU SEE, I KISSED PROFESSOR PLOTKIN AND HE HAD NO IDEA I WAS GOING TO DO IT!
I SEE...! AND YOU ARE...?


MELANIE... MELANIE BUSH, DR. KIMBALL! I'M PROFESSOR LINDERMAN'S GRADUATE ASSISTANT!
MELANIE?! MY WORD, DEAR! YOU LOOK RATHER... DIFFERENT FROM WHEN WE ORIGINALLY MET!
YES, I... I KNOW! MY LOOK HAS CHANGED A BIT FROM WHAT IT USED TO BE!
SO, YOU WERE SAYING HOW PROFESSOR PLOTKIN HERE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT I JUST WITNESSED?


YES, YOU... YOU SEE, I'M AFRAID I'VE BEEN ATTRACTED TO PROFESSOR PLOTKIN EVER SINCE WE FIRST MET SEVERAL MONTHS AGO!
THAT'S WHY I ASKED FOR A DIFFERENT MENTOR! I DIDN'T THINK IT APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO BE ONE OF HIS CANDIDATES WHEN I HAD FEELINGS FOR HIM!
AND OF COURSE PROFESSOR PLOTKIN HAD NO IDEA I FELT THIS WAY ABOUT HIM! WELL... UNTIL NOW, THAT IS!


YOU SEE, DR. KIMBALL, A COMPUTER GLITCH CAUSED ME TO LOSE A GREAT DEAL OF DATA AND AS A RESULT I WAS VERY, VERY UPSET!
PROFESSOR PLOTKIN HAPPENED BY AND, SEEING HOW DISTRESSED I WAS, MERELY ATTEMPTED TO CHEER ME UP!
BUT AS EMOTIONAL AS I WAS, I GUESS I JUST LOST CONTROL AND KISSED HIM BEFORE I EVEN REALIZED WHAT I WAS DOING!


AND THAT'S THE STORY YOU WANT TO STICK WITH?
I PROMISE YOU THAT PROFESSOR PLOTKIN WAS JUST AS SURPRISED BY THAT KISS AS YOU WERE!
PLEASE DON'T BLAME HIM FOR MY RECKLESS IMPULSIVENESS, DR. KIMBALL! I GUARANTEE IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN!


WELL, SINCE YOU AREN'T ONE OF PROFESSOR PLOTKIN'S STUDENTS AND YOU'RE BOTH OVER TWENTY-ONE, THERE REALLY ISN'T ANY UNIVERSITY REGULATION AGAINST YOU TWO.. BEING INVOLVED!
BUT...!
HOWEVER, I WOULD RECOMMEND MORE DISCRETION IF SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY WERE TO PRESENT ITSELF AGAIN IN THE FUTURE!


THANK YOU FOR BEING SO UNDERSTANDING, DR. KIMBALL!
DON'T THANK ME... THANK THE UNIVERSITY BY-LAWS!


HMMM... MISS BUSH HAS DEVELOPED A SIDE TO HERSELF I DID NOT ANTICIPATE!
WHEN I ASSIGNED HER TO STAN, I FIGURED HER MOUSY AND ANNOYING NATURE WOULD KEEP HIS USUAL PREDATORY BEHAVIOR IN CHECK!
BUT IF SHE PREFERS A DWEEB LIKE PLOTKIN, THEN I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANY INVOLVEMENT BETWEEN HER AND STAN!


I WONDER IF HER NEW APPEARANCE WILL HAVE ANY EFFECT ON HER OBSERVATIONS AT ALEC!
HOPEFULLY SHE'LL STILL BE ABLE TO DOCUMENT AND VERIFY HOW WOMEN ARE REALLY TREATED OVER THERE!


ARE YOU INSANE?! YOU TOLD HER THAT YOU... AND THAT WE...!
AND... YOU KISSED ME!!
I SAW KIMBALL APPROACHING AND KNEW WE'D NEED TO CREATE A PLAUSIBLE REASON AS TO WHY WE WERE TOGETHER!


AND THAT'S WHAT YOU CAME UP WITH?! HOLY CRAP, MEL! YOU COULD'VE COST ME MY JOB!
HARDLY! I'M WELL AWARE OF ALL THE UNIVERSITY'S BY-LAWS AND KIMBALL'S STRICT OBSESSION WITH FOLLOWING THEM!
THE KISS, BESIDES THROWING HER OFF GUARD, GAVE ME TIME TO COME UP WITH THE STORY THAT HAS NOW PUT US BOTH IN THE CLEAR!
AND NOW THAT I'VE ESTABLISHED A REASON FOR US TO BE SEEN TOGETHER, I THINK IT BEST I COME BY YOUR OFFICE LATER FOR THOSE COMPOUNDS!

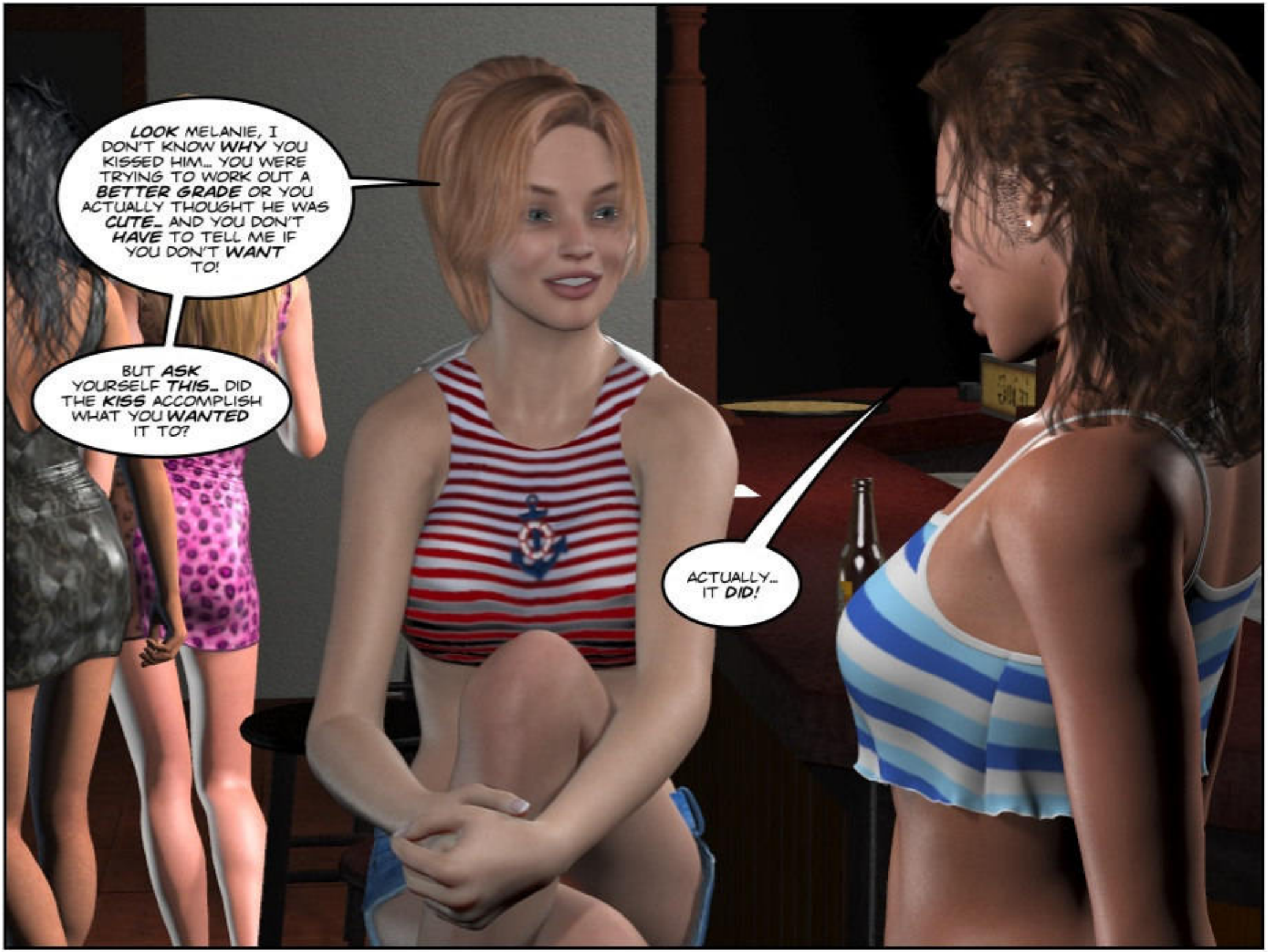

AND THAT'S IT?! ALL FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR RESEARCH? YOU CAN REALLY JUST KISS ME LIKE THAT AND STILL CLAIM THIS ISN'T HAVING ANY LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON YOU?
OF COURSE! I ONLY DID WHAT WAS NECESSARY! DON'T READ ANYTHING ELSE INTO IT!
I'VE FOUND THAT MEN OFTEN BECOME DISTRACTED BY MY PHYSICAL FORM AND PROJECT THEIR OWN NEEDS UPON ME! I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D BE ONE OF THEM.


IF YOU SAY SO!
IT SURE FELT LIKE A REAL KISS!


That evening, at McDoul's...


OH MY GOD! YOU REALLY KISSED ONE OF YOUR PROFESSORS?! THAT'S MY GIRL!
THEN WHY'D YOU DO IT? HE DIDN'T MAKE YOU, DID HE?
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, HANNAH! I'M NOT HAPPY OR PROUD ABOUT WHAT I DID!
OF COURSE NOT! HE WAS COMPLETELY CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY THE WHOLE THING!


SOMETIMES THAT'S THE BEST WAY!
YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT, HANNAH! BY NATURE, I'M NOT AN IMPULSIVE PERSON... I NEVER HAVE BEEN!
SO WHAT I DID EARLIER TODAY HAS GOT ME A LITTLE... CONCERNED!


LOOK MELANIE, I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU KISSED HIM... YOU WERE TRYING TO WORK OUT A BETTER GRADE OR YOU ACTUALLY THOUGHT HE WAS CUTE.. AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME IF YOU DON'T WANT TO!
BUT ASK YOURSELF THIS.. DID THE KISS ACCOMPLISH WHAT YOU WANTED IT TO?
ACTUALLY... IT DID!


THEN WHAT ARE YOU WORRYING ABOUT?
I... I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, HANNAH! IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE ENDS DO JUSTIFY THE MEANS AFTER ALL!
NO ONE WAS HURT OR INCONVENIENCED AND I GOT WHAT I WANTED! SO, LIKE YOU SAID... WHY SHOULD I WORRY?
ATTA GIRL! NOW YOU'RE GETTING IT! HOW ABOUT ANOTHER ROUND?


OKAY, BUT I'LL GET THIS ONE!
HEY CARL, CAN WE GET ANOTHER ROUND OVER HERE?
CARL?!
Beer - 2.99
Wine
Shots -
Liquors


FORGET IT, HONEY! AS LONG AS THOSE TWO ARE AT THE BAR, STEVE'S PERIPHERAL VISION, HEARING, AND EVERY OTHER SENSE IS NON-EXISTENT!
BUT... THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!


FOR THE MOST PART, OUR FIGURES ARE AS ALLURING AS THEIRS! AND OUR FACIAL FEATURES ARE IN A SIMILAR RANGE IN TERMS OF BOTH SYMMETRY AND PROPORTIONS.
THEIR ATTIRE APPEARS TO BE GAUDIER, BUT SURELY THAT WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TO MAKE CARL PREFER THEM OVER US... WOULD IT?
ARE YOU KIDDING? SOME GUYS CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THAT TYPE OF GLITZY WOMAN... AND CARL'S DEFINITELY IN THAT CAMP!


INTERESTING!
I DON'T MEAN THE SITUATION IS INTERESTING! I WAS REFERRING TO THE SUDDEN CHANGE IN FEELINGS I'M EXPERIENCING!
NO, IT REALLY ISN'T! IT'S JUST A SAD FACT OF LIFE!
YEAH, I'M GETTING A FEW OF THOSE FEELINGS MYSELF!


DON'T GET ME WRONG, I'LL BE THE FIRST GIRL TO DOLL MYSELF UP AND PUT ON MY SLINKIEST OUTFIT FOR A NIGHT OUT ON THE TOWN!
BUT MCDOUL'S JUST ISN'T THAT KIND OF PLACE... AND THEY KNOW IT!


ON THAT NOTE, I'M HEADED TO THE LADIES ROOM! HOPEFULLY STEVE WILL NOTICE ONE OF US BY THEN... BUT I'M NOT COUNTING ON IT!
BACK IN A FEW!
UMMM... SURE!


FASCINATING! UNTIL NOW, I WAS UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT MY NEW FEMALE APPEARANCE, ENHANCED BY HANNAH'S TUTELAGE, WAS SUFFICIENT TO MANIPULATE THE MALES AROUND ME!
AND IN THE CASE OF LINDERMAN, IT'S BEEN MORE THAN ENOUGH! BUT IT SEEMS THAT WHAT IS SUFFICIENT FOR A MAN LIKE LINDERMAN MAY NOT BE ADEQUATE FOR MEN LIKE CARL... OR POSSIBLY ADAM ROSS!
THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THE GENERAL ATTIRE AND APPEARANCE OF ALL THE WOMEN IN HIS COMPANY!
Beer - 79
Wine - 59
Shots - 5
Liquors - 1


AND YET... WHILE SOME OF THE ANNOYANCE I'M FEELING IS DIRECTLY TOWARD MYSELF...
A GREAT DEAL OF IT SEEMS TO BE DIRECTED PRIMARILY AT THOSE GIRLS AND THE FACT THAT THEY'RE BETTER AT SOMETHING THAN ME!

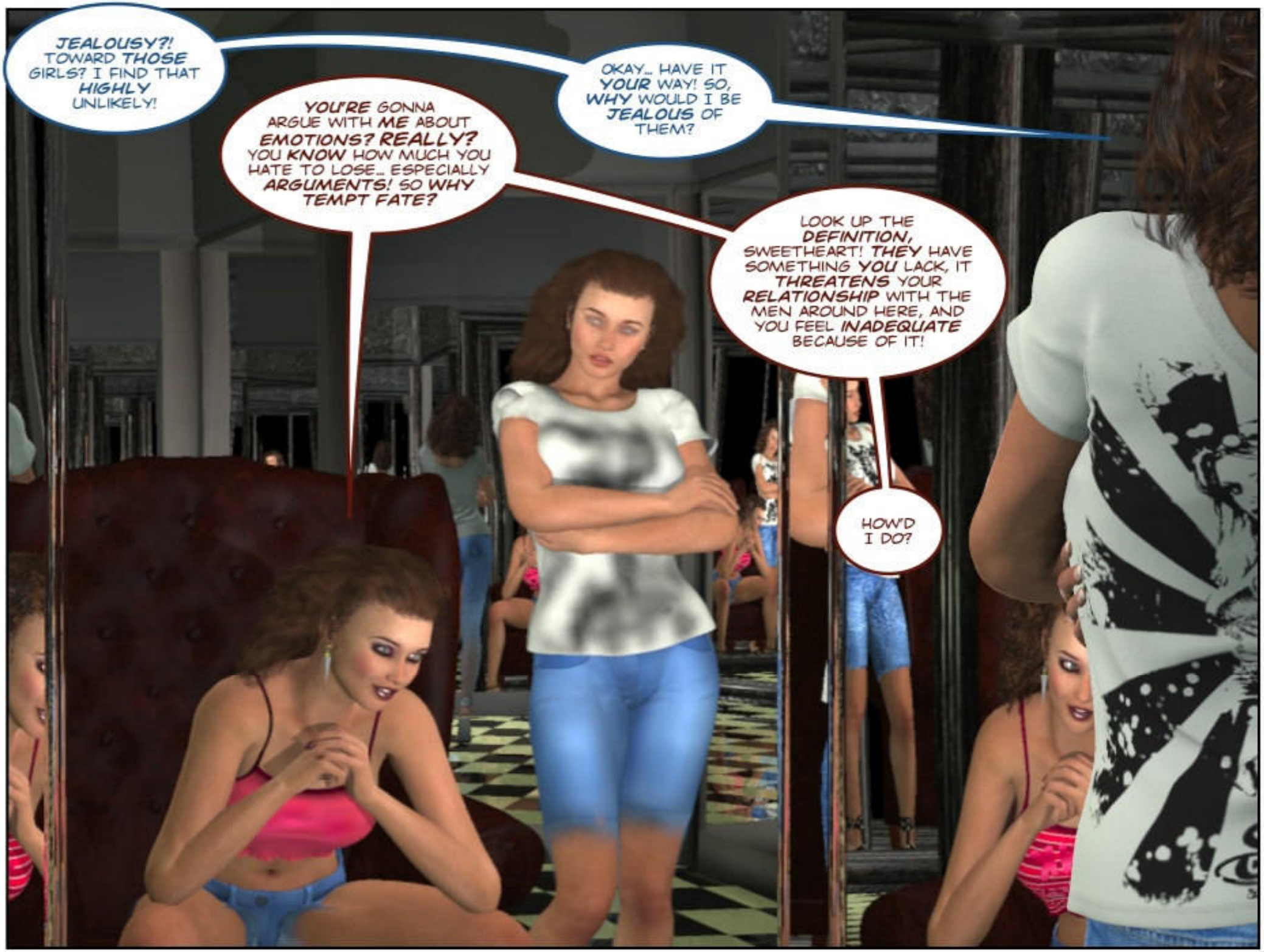

THERE'S A COMPETITIVE URGENCY WELLING WITHIN ME THAT I'VE RARELY EXPERIENCED BEFORE SINCE FEW HAVE BEEN MY INTELLECTUAL EQUALS!
BUT THERE'S ALSO SOMETHING ELSE GOING ON... !


SOMETHING I DON'T THINK I'VE *EVER* EXPERIENCED BEFORE...!


HEY THERE, BIG S! WHAT'S UP WITH THE IMPROMPTU VISIT? IF YOU WANNA MAKE DROP-INS LIKE THIS AT LEAST CALL AHEAD SO I CAN PENCIL YOU IN!
I COULD BE ON A HOT DATE! YOU NEVER KNOW!
YOUR HUMOR ESCAPES ME, BUT IF YOU FEEL YOU NEED A REASON FOR OUR CURRENT CONVERSATION, IT'S BECAUSE OF SOME UNUSUAL... AND PERPLEXING EMOTIONS I'M EXPERIENCING!


AND OF COURSE YOU ASSUMED I JUST DUMPED THEM ON YOU FOR THE HELL OF IT, RIGHT?
THAT WAS MY LOGICAL ASSUMPTION!


SIGH! BIG S, BIG S, BIG S...! LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT EMOTIONS! THEY'RE LIKE INGREDIENTS! YOU CAN MIX UP A COUPLE OF LITTLE ONES AND GET A WHOLE NEW BIG ONE OUT OF THE DEAL!
I GAVE YOU ONLY WHAT YOU WANTED... JUST ENOUGH EMOTIONS TO HELP YOU PULL OFF THE GIRLY-GIRL ACT YOU'VE GOT GOING ON!
BUT... AND THIS IS A BIG "BUT"... YOU MIX ALL THOSE UP WITH YOUR NATURAL TYPE-A COMPETITIVENESS AND YOU'VE WHIPPED YOURSELF UP A BIG BOWL OF JEALOUSY TOWARD THOSE SKANKS OVER THERE!


JEALOUSY?! TOWARD THOSE GIRLS? I FIND THAT HIGHLY UNLIKELY!
OKAY... HAVE IT YOUR WAY! SO, WHY WOULD I BE JEALOUS OF THEM?
YOU'RE GONNA ARGUE WITH ME ABOUT EMOTIONS? REALLY? YOU KNOW HOW MUCH YOU HATE TO LOSE... ESPECIALLY ARGUMENTS! SO WHY TEMPT FATE?
LOOK UP THE DEFINITION, SWEETHEART! THEY HAVE SOMETHING YOU LACK, IT THREATENS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEN AROUND HERE, AND YOU FEEL INADEQUATE BECAUSE OF IT!
HOW'D I DO?


WITHOUT VALIDATING YOUR HYPOTHESIS, LET'S RENDER IT MOOT BY HAVING YOU RETRACT THE JEALOUSY I'M FEELING BACK INTO YOURSELF WHERE IT BELONGS!
UH-UH! NO CAN DO, BIG S! FIRST OFF, I DON'T COLLECT EMOTIONS... I AM EMOTIONS! BESIDES, EVEN IF I COULD, I DIDN'T GIVE IT TO YOU, SO I CAN'T TAKE IT BACK!
YOU CREATED THIS ONE ALL ON YOUR OWN, SO YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH IT!
BUT... HOW?


THAT'S SOMETHING YOU'VE GOTTA FIGURE OUT ON YOUR OWN, BIG S!
REALLY? NO DRINKS YET?!


HEY SHE-WHO-IS-ZONED-OUT! STILL NO RESPONSE FROM CARL?
WHAT?! OH, UHH... NO! HE, UMMM... HASN'T LOOKED AWAY FROM THEM AT ALL SINCE YOU LEFT!


WELL, TO HELL WITH THIS! I MAY JUST HAVE TO FLASH HIM MY TITS TO GET HIS ATTENTION!
OH NO... DON'T DO THAT, HANNAH! I DON'T NEED ANOTHER DRINK THAT BADLY!
BESIDES, I WANT TO ASK YOU SOMETHING!
OKAY... SHOOT!


YOU SAID YOU COULD "DOLL YOURSELF UP" AND LOOK LIKE THOSE GIRLS IF YOU WANTED, DIDN'T YOU?
SURE! I DO PRETTY REGULARLY, BUT NOT AT PLACES LIKE MCDOUL'S! I SAVE IT FOR DATES... OR THE NIGHTCLUBS!
WHY DO YOU ASK?


BECAUSE I BELIEVE MY "EDUCATION" IS A LITTLE LACKING!


Chapter 5
by CBlack
Superego


Over the next few days Melanie's "training" kicks into high gear...
THOSE SANDALS YOU'VE BEEN WEARING DO MAKE YOUR LEGS LOOK GREAT, BUT THEY'RE MOSTLY FOR CASUAL WEAR AND THEY'RE JUST NOT QUITE HIGH ENOUGH TO HAVE THE OPTIMUM EFFECT!


HIGHER? ISN'T MY CENTER OF GRAVITY HIGH ENOUGH AS IT IS?
OH, IT'S GOING TO GET EVEN HIGHER BEFORE WE'RE DONE WITH YOU, TRUST ME!


SERIOUSLY! THE AREA OF CONTACT OF THESE SHOES IS MAYBE SIX SQUARE INCHES AT BEST!
ARE THE HEELS MADE OF TITANIUM OR SOMETHING EQUALLY AS STRONG TO SUPPORT THE RESULTING PRESSURE?


HMMM... TITANIUM? CONSIDERING THE NUMBER OF HEELS I'VE BROKEN, THAT WOULDN'T BE SUCH A BAD IDEA!
I WAS BEING FACETIOUS! THE COST OF TITANIUM WOULD PUT THE PRICE OF THESE SHOES AT WELL OVER A THOUSAND DOLLARS!
IS THAT ALL? HELL, I KNOW A LOT OF WOMEN WHO'D EASILY PAY THAT TO GUARANTEE NO MORE BROKEN HEELS!


AND NOW I HOPE YOU'RE BEING FACETIOUS!
YOU'D BE SURPRISED, GIRLFRIEND!
C'MON... LET'S SEE HOW THOSE LOOK ON YOU!


WELL, THE WAY THEY EXTEND THE GASTROCNEMIUS MUSCLES DOES SEEM TO ENHANCE THE SHAPE AND APPEARANCE OF MY LEGS AND BUTTOCKS, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT!
IN LAYMAN'S TERMS, THEY MAKE YOUR LEGS AND ASS LOOK GREAT!


HOWEVER THE LACK OF STABILITY IN THESE SHOES HAS DECREASED THE EFFICIENCY OF MY MOBILITY EXPONENTIALLY!
THEY'RE TOUGH TO MOVE AROUND IN, I GET IT! BUT YOU'RE NOT RUNNING ANY MARATHONS IN THEM, SO JUST TAKE IT SLOW AND EASY AND YOU'LL GET USED TO THEM!


SO, NOW THAT WE KNOW YOUR SIZE, LET'S SHOP AROUND FOR A FEW MORE PAIRS! THEN, IT'S OFF TO FIND YOU SOME NEW DRESSES!


NOW, THE OUTFITS YOU'VE BEEN WEARING LATELY HAVE BEEN ADORABLE! THE TOPS AND SKIRTS WERE DEFINITELY CUTE AND SEXY!
BUT INSTEAD OF CUTE AND SEXY, WE'RE LOOKING FOR SLINKY AND SEDUCTIVE! THAT'S WHERE THE RIGHT COCKTAIL DRESS COMES IN HANDY!


UNLESS THIS DRESS HAS A LOW COEFFICIENT OF ELASTICITY, IT WILL NEVER FIT SOMEONE OF MY DIMENSIONS!
SIGH! YES, IT'S DESIGNED TO BE STRETCHY! THAT WAY IT CONFORMS TO AND SHOWS OFF ALL OUR CURVES!


SOMETHING A WELL-DESIGNED SCUBA SUIT COULD DO EQUALLY AS WELL... WITHOUT THE RESTRICTED BREATHING!
YEAH... WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT? JUST TRY THE DRESS ON? PLEASE?


YOUR DEFINITION OF ALL OUR CURVES IS DISTURBINGLY APPROPRIATE!
HOW SO?


THIS DRESS NOT ONLY REVEALS MY CURVES BUT ALSO THE MAJORITY OF MY UNDERGARMENTS!
I ASSUME THAT IS NOT ONE OF ITS INTENTIONS!
NOPE! THAT'S WHY OUR NEXT STOP IS THE LINGERIE DEPARTMENT!


LINGERIE?! TRYING ON SHOES AND DRESSES IN THE COMPANY OF ANOTHER PERSON IS ONE THING, BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DRAW THE LINE AT UNDERGARMENTS!
DESPITE THE FACT I'VE LEARNED HOW TO HIDE MY GENITALIA WITHOUT THE USE OF A GAFFE, I'VE NEVER BEEN COMFORTABLE WEARING NOTHING BUT UNDERWEAR AROUND OTHER PEOPLE!


UMMM... INSTEAD OF MODELING VARIOUS UNDERGARMENTS FOR YOU, I WOULD BE MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE HANDLING THIS ASPECT OF MY CLOTHING ON MY OWN!
I'VE SO FAR BEEN ABLE TO ESTIMATE MY CORRECT SIZES WITH A FAIR DEGREE OF ACCURACY! KNOWING THAT, I CAN RESEARCH THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF GARMENTS AVAILABLE TO ME, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE COVERAGE NECESSARY TO REMAIN CONCEALED BENEATH THE DRESSES WE PURCHASE!
BUT WITHOUT ME I SERIOUSLY DOUBT YOU'LL CHOOSE ANYTHING I'D CALL SEXY ENOUGH! BESIDES, A PROFESSIONAL FITTING IS A HELL OF A LOT MORE ACCURATE THAN YOUR ESTIMATIONS!


AND YOU DO KNOW YOU'LL ONLY BE TRYING ON BRAS, DON'T YOU? ANY STORE THAT WOULD LET YOU TRY ON PANTIES IS NOT ONE I WANT TO SHOP AT!
OH, UMMM... OF COURSE I KNEW THAT! I WAS JUST THINKING THAT YOU MIGHT BE GETTING A LITTLE BORED WITH ALL THIS BY NOW!


BORED? WITH SHOPPING?! HELL, MELANIE! I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ME BETTER THAN THAT! I LIVE FOR THIS SHIT!
YOU KNOW, I'M STARTING TO SENSE A LITTLE RELUCTANCE ON YOUR PART! YOU'RE NOT GONNA BOLT ON ME, ARE YOU?
HEAVENS, NO! THAT WOULD BE UNFORGIVABLY RUDE ON MY PART! ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING HOW MUCH TIME AND EFFORT YOU'VE PUT INTO ALL THIS!


BESIDES, I'M ALMOST CERTAIN I'LL NEED EVERY IOTA OF HELP YOU CAN GIVE ME IN ORDER TO FIT IN AT THE ALEC CORPORATION!
SO, TELL ME AGAIN WHAT IT IS YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH AT THIS ALEC COMPANY! I THOUGHT ALL YOUR RESEARCH WAS ON CAMPUS!


IT HAS BEEN TO DATE... THANKS TO YOU! WHAT YOU'VE DONE SO FAR IS UPGRADE MY APPEARANCE TO MAKE ME MORE ESTHETICALLY PLEASING TO MY PROFESSOR THAN ANY OF THE OTHER COEDS HE LIKES TO SURROUND HIMSELF WITH!
THIS HAS MADE IT EXTREMELY EASY TO MANIPULATE HIM AND PERFORM MY RESEARCH WITHOUT ANY INTERFERENCE FROM HIM!
GLAD TO HELP OUT... IN THE NAME OF RESEARCH OF COURSE!


WHAT I NEED TO DO NOW IS MUCH THE SAME, BUT AT A CORPORATE LEVEL RATHER THAN THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL! THE CEO, MR. ROSS, ALSO PREFERS TO SURROUND HIMSELF WITH ATTRACTIVE WOMEN, BUT AT A MORE SOPHISTICATED LEVEL THAN YOUR AVERAGE COLLEGE COED!
I THINK I GET IT! WHAT DID YOU SAY THIS CEO'S NAME WAS AGAIN?
ROSS... ADAM ROSS!
WHY DOES THAT NAME SOUND SO FAMILIAR?


WELL, SHIT! NO WONDER THAT NAME RANG A BELL! THIS GUY IS HUGE IN THE FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL SCENE!
BESIDES BEING A MAJOR PLAYER FINANCIALLY, HE'S ALSO QUITE THE A-LIST PLAYBOY! HE'S EVEN GOT A FEW SUPER-MODELS ON HIS SOCIAL RESUME!
ALTHOUGH I'M WELL AWARE OF HIS FINANCIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS, I'M AFRAID YOU LOST ME AT "A-LIST PLAYBOY!"
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, AND DOES IT AFFECT MY RESEARCH?


WELL, IF YOUR PLAN IS TO DISTRACT HIM ENOUGH SO YOU CAN DO YOUR RESEARCH, THEN... HELL YEAH!... THIS INFO MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE!
HOW SO?
THIS GUY IS USED TO HANGING OUT WITH SUPER MODELS! IF YOU WANT TO "DISTRACT" HIM, WE'VE GOT TO STEP UP YOUR GAME... TO THE PENTHOUSE LEVEL!


WHY DO I GET THE FEELING THAT "STEPPING UP MY GAME" WILL INVOLVE EVEN MORE THINGS I'M NOT VERY COMFORTABLE WITH?
THAT'S THE POINT! YOU'VE GOT TO GET MORE COMFORTABLE BEING THE KIND OF GIRL THAT'LL GET HIS ATTENTION!
WHAT THAT MEANS IS WE HAVE TO TAKE YOUR MAKE-OVER IN A WHOLE NEW DIRECTION, AND GET YOU SOME PRACTICE!


PRACTICE? JUST WHAT DO I NEED TO PRACTICE... AND WHY?
HAVING THE RIGHT LOOK IS ONE THING, BUT IF YOU CAN'T CARRY IT LIKE YOU OWN IT, NO ONE'S GONNA BUY IT!
SIGH! SO, HOW DO YOU PROPOSE I "PRACTICE" CARRYING MY NEW "LOOK?"


OH, MELANIE HONEY... YOU JUST LEAVE THAT TO ME!


That night, at one of the more popular local nightclubs...


I CAN'T BELIEVE I LET YOU PERSUADE ME TO DO THIS!
IN YOUR OWN WORDS, HONEY... ALL IN THE NAME OF RESEARCH! RIGHT?


AND IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO "DISTRACT" A GUY LIKE ADAM ROSS, THIS IS THE PLACE TO PRACTICE YOUR MOVES!
MY MOVEMENTS ARE EXCEEDINGLY HAMPERED BY THE HEIGHT OF THESE HEELS AND THE TIGHTNESS OF THIS DRESS!
NOT TO MENTION THE DISTRACTIONS OF THESE OVER-SIZED PENDULUMS HANGING FROM MY EARLOBES!


GET USED TO IT AND MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU, MELANIE! THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE!
SIGH! THE THINGS I DO IN THE NAME OF RESEARCH!


WELL, IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER, YOU'RE ONE OF THE TWO HOTTEST WOMEN IN THIS PLACE!
AND FROM THE LOOKS WE'RE GETTING, EVERYONE HERE KNOWS IT!
FROM THE LOOKS WE'RE GETTING, I FEEL LIKE A CRUSTACEAN IN A TANK AT A SEAFOOD RESTAURANT!


IT MAY SEEM LIKE THAT RIGHT NOW, BUT ONCE YOU GET THE HANG OF THIS, YOU'LL REALIZE THAT WE'RE THE ONES ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE TANK!
I APPRECIATE YOUR ATTEMPT TO FURTHER MY ANALOGY, BUT REGARDLESS, THE AMOUNT OF PREPARATION INVOLVED IN THIS EVENING SEEMS EXTREME!


TWO HOURS AT A SALON TO MAKE MY HAIR LOOK LIKE IT'S BEEN THROUGH A WIND TUNNEL...
MORE PAINT ON MY FACE THAN SEURAT'S "UN DIMANCHE APRÈS-MIDI À L'ÎLE DE LA GRANDE JATTE"...
AND EVEN I'M BAFFLED BY THE PHYSICS NECESSARY FOR THIS DRESS TO MAKE MY BREASTS LOOK THIS WAY!


BUT YOU CAN'T DENY THE END RESULT OF TOTALLY HOT AWESOMENESS! SO RELAX, FOLLOW MY LEAD AND HAVE FUN!
MONEY IS ONE THING GIRLS LIKE US DON'T NEED IN A PLACE LIKE THIS!
A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO DO SINCE WE DIDN'T BRING ANY MONEY... AT YOUR INSISTENCE!
BUT I DON'T SEE WHY..!
FROM THE GENTLEMEN AT THE END OF THE BAR!


SEE? IT'S ALMOST TOO EASY!


EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE A LITTLE SMARMY-LOOKING, THEY'RE STILL CUTE, SO GO AHEAD AND GIVE 'EM A LITTLE "COME HITHER" SMILE AS A REWARD FOR THE DRINKS!
BUT WOULDN'T A POSITIVE ACKNOWLEDGMENT LIKE THAT LEAD THEM TO BELIEVE WE WERE INTERESTED IN PURSUING A SOCIAL ENCOUNTER WITH THEM?
THAT'S HOW IT WORKS, HONEY!


LOOK HANNAH, I KNOW I AGREED TO COME OUT WITH YOU AND OBSERVE, AND EVEN PARTAKE OF TO A POINT, THE SOCIAL RITUALS YOU DEEM SO IMPORTANT!
BUT YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THAT THIS IS MUCH MORE THAN I WAS EXPECTING OR AM CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH! EVERYTHING IS MOVING MUCH, MUCH TOO FAST!
HEY, YOU'VE GOTTA GET YOUR FEET WET BEFORE YOU CAN SWIM, MELANIE!


HOW THAT ANALOGY PERTAINS TO THIS SITUATION ESCAPES ME, BUT ...!
HELLO LADIES! I'M DEL AND THIS IS RANDY!
IT MEANS THESE GUYS ARE THE LITTLE FISH WE'RE GONNA THROW BACK AFTER PLAYING WITH 'EM FOR A BIT! GET READY... 'CAUSE HERE THEY COME!
HOW YOU DOIN' TONIGHT?


I'M HANNAH AND THIS IS MY FRIEND, MELANIE! SAY HI TO THE GUYS, MELANIE!
UMMM... HELLO!
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE HER! SHE JUST MOVED HERE FROM THE MIDWEST AND THIS IS HER FIRST TIME IN A CLUB LIKE THIS!
I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE! A GIRL AS GORGEOUS AS YOU LOOKS LIKE SHE BELONGS IN A PLACE LIKE THIS!


UMMM... CAN YOU EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT... PLEASE?


HANNAH, THIS SITUATION IS UNCOMFORTABLE ENOUGH AS IT IS, BUT WHY ARE YOU DELIBERATELY INFORMING THEM OF MY NAIVETÉ? WON'T THAT MAKE THEM EVEN MORE PREDATORY?
PROBABLY! BUT IT ALSO EXPLAINS WHY I'LL BE DOING MOST OF THE TALKING! SO PLAY ALONG AND TAKE NOTES!


SO, A SMALL-TOWN GIRL IN THE BIG CITY, HUH? NICE!
AND REST ASSURED WE'LL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO MAKE SURE YOUR FIRST TIME HERE IS MEMORABLE!
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY SINCE EVERY INSTANCE OF THIS EVENING'S ACTIVITIES WILL BE FIRMLY IMPRINTED IN MY MEMORY!
UNFORTUNATELY!


GASP!
OH, BUT I INSIST! YOU CAN CONSIDER ME YOUR PERSONAL TOUR GUIDE TO THE MOST EXCITING NIGHT OF YOUR LIFE!


YOU... YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT AS I HAVE TO USE THE FACILITIES!
WANT ME TO COME WITH YOU, MELANIE?
NO! NO... THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, HANNAH! I'LL RETURN SHORTLY!


WELL, I DON'T MIND SHARING FOR THE TIME BEING IF YOU DON'T!
HEY, WORKS FOR ME, DUDE!
YOU'RE KIDDING... RIGHT?


THIS HAS GOTTEN COMPLETELY OUT OF HAND!


I KNOW HANNAH SAID TO **PLAY ALONG,** BUT WHEN SAID PLAY STARTS TO INVOLVE **INAPPROPRIATE** GROPING, **THAT'S** WHERE I HAVE TO DRAW **SOME** KIND OF LINE!
IF I'D KNOWN **THIS** KIND OF BEHAVIOR WAS **STANDARD FARE** FOR THIS EVENING, I WOULD **NEVER** HAVE AGREED TO IT!


I CAN'T RECRIMINATE HANNAH, THOUGH! SHE'S BEEN NOTHING BUT HELPFUL IN EVERY WAY AND TRULY BELIEVED THAT TONIGHT WAS NECESSARY FOR MY "DEVELOPMENT"!
SHE REALLY HAS NO WAY OF KNOWING JUST HOW COMPLETELY ALIEN THIS LIFESTYLE IS FOR ME! I AM TOTALLY OUT OF MY ELEMENT HERE AND HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO CONTINUE!


AND TO TOP IT ALL OFF, I SEEM TO HAVE RESORTED TO CHILDISH *TEARS* DUE TO *ANOTHER* UNEXPECTED INCURSION OF MY *ID!*


THERE YOU GO AGAIN! BLAMING ME FOR A SITUATION YOU CAN'T HANDLE!
IF YOU'D TAKEN THE TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT, YOU'D REALIZE THOSE TEARS ARE PROBABLY DUE TO ALL THOSE HORMONES YOU'VE BEEN PUMPING US WITH!


REGARDLESS, THE FACT THAT I'M EXHIBITING TEARS AT ALL IS A TESTAMENT TO THE UTTER FAILURE OF THIS EVENING!
I HAVE NEVER BEEN IN A SITUATION WHERE I FELT THE ONLY RECOURSE WAS TO GIVE UP! UNTIL NOW, THAT IS!
SO YOUR SOLUTION IS TO SNEAK OUT AND LEAVE HANNAH TO DEAL WITH THOSE TWO SLEAZY CARNIVORES ON HER OWN? NICE!


BUT WHAT ELSE CAN I DO? I AM TOTALLY INCAPABLE OF DEALING WITH THE KIND OF SITUATION THAT HANNAH HAS INTRODUCED ME TO TONIGHT!
TRUE! VERY TRUE! EVEN WITH THAT MINISCULE BIT OF HELP YOU ALLOW FROM ME, YOU SUCK AT THIS!
I GUESS BOLTING ON HER IS YOUR BEST AND ONLY CHOICE, ISN'T IT?


OF COURSE, THAT'LL MEAN YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN FROM HERE ON OUT, 'CAUSE YOU CAN KISS ANY FURTHER HELP FROM HANNAH GOODBYE!
BUT YOU DIDN'T WANT TO DO ANY OF YOUR RESEARCH AT THE ALEC CORPORATION ANYWAY, DID YOU?
AND SO WHAT IF KIMBALL BLAMES YOU WHEN SHE LOSES ALL THAT FUNDING! FUCK HER ANYWAY!


BUT IF DR. KIMBALL LOSES HER FUNDING, SHE'LL PULL MY RESEARCH... ALL OF IT! I... I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN!
IT SEEMS THE FUTURE OF MY RESEARCH HINGES MORE ON THIS EVENING THAN I'D ANTICIPATED... AND I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO PROCEED!
WELL... I HAVE AN IDEA! BUT YOU MAY NOT LIKE IT!
AT THIS POINT I'M OPEN TO MOST ANY IDEA... NO MATTER HOW EXTREME!


YOU, BIG S, ARE ALL ABOUT LOGIC AND MORALITY, TWO THINGS THAT ARE AS FOREIGN TO A PLACE LIKE THIS AS FAIR AND BALANCED ARE TO FAUX NEWS!
THIS PLACE, HOWEVER, IS ALL ABOUT DESIRE, DECEPTION, PRIDE AND MORE THAN JUST A FEW OF THOSE "TABOO" THINGS OUR PARENTS DEMONIZED WHEN WE WERE A KID!
I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT, BUT AS WE'VE BOTH SEEN, I'VE BEEN RENDERED INEFFECTIVE WITH JUST A VERY SMALL DOSE OF THOSE EMOTIONS! ANY MORE AND I WOULD PROBABLY END UP CATATONIC!


NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M GETTING AT! WE BOTH AGREE THAT YOU CAN'T HANDLE IT OUT THERE... BUT I CAN!
WHAT?!
I TOLD YOU YOU MAY NOT LIKE IT! BUT IF YOU'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA, NOW'S THE TIME FOR IT 'CAUSE WE CAN'T HIDE OUT IN HERE MUCH LONGER!


IT'LL BE OKAY! WE'LL GO 80-20. 80% ME, AND 20% YOU! THAT WAY I'LL BE IN CONTROL, BUT YOU'LL STILL BE IN THE BALLGAME.
AND IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER, WHEN WE GET HOME I'LL PASS THE BATON RIGHT BACK TO YOU! CROSS MY HEART!
I DON'T KNOW! YOU... WITH A MAJORITY OF CONTROL? BUT THE MOST I'VE EVER GIVEN YOU IS 5%!


SOUNDS LIKE WE'VE RUN OUT OF TIME, BIG S! WHAT'LL IT BE?
Bang, Bang, Bang!!
HEY, C'MON! HURRY IT UP IN THERE!


OH...
DAMN!


JESUS! HOW LONG IS THAT BITCH GONNA BE IN THERE?


'BOUT DAMN TIME!


WHATEVER, SKANK!
HEY!


SORRY IF I SEEMED A LITTLE ABRUPT BACK THERE, BIG S, BUT CAN YOU BLAME ME? THIS IS MY FIRST TIME OUT IN... FOREVER! AND I WANNA HAVE A LITTLE FUN!
BUT DON'T SWEAT IT! I'LL MAKE SURE I USE EVERYTHING HANNAH'S TAUGHT US, ALONG WITH MY MORE "PERSONABLE" ATTRIBUTES, TO GET US THROUGH THIS EVENING AND READY FOR ADAM ROSS!


SO SIT BACK, ENJOY THE RIDE AND DO LIKE HANNAH SAID! TAKE NOTES... LOTS AND LOTS OF NOTES!
THERE YOU ARE! I WAS BEGINNING TO WORRY ABOUT YOU!
OH, I'M FINE! JUST HAD TO DETOX AFTER THAT LITTLE IMPROMPTU GROPE-FEST! HAD TO GET THE SLIME OFF!


NO KIDDING! I THINK NOW'S A GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO TEACH YOU THE FINER POINTS OF SLEAZE AVOIDANCE!
TEACH ON, OBI-WAN! I'M ALL EARS!
HEY! THERE'S MY GIRL!
ALL RIGHT! WE'RE A FOURSOME AGAIN! TIME FOR SOME SERIOUS PARTYING!


SORRY GUYS, WE APPRECIATE THE DRINKS, BUT WE'RE REALLY NOT INTERESTED! SO IF YOU DON'T MIND...!
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA, SWEET THING! NOT SO FAST! WE HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER!
YEAH, WHAT'S THE HURRY, DOLL? WE'VE GOT ALL NIGHT!


LOOK! I SAID WE'RE NOT INTERESTED! DO I HAVE TO COMPLAIN TO THE BARTENDER?
GO AHEAD, HOT STUFF! CHARLIE AND I GO WAY BACK! IF HE WASN'T WORKING THE BAR, I'M SURE HE'D BE RIGHT HERE WITH US MAKING SURE YOU LOVELY LADIES GET THE "ENTERTAINMENT" YOU DESERVE!
THAT'S RIGHT! SO WHAT SAY WE ALL HEAD BACK TO A COZY BOOTH AND GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER... REALLY, REALLY WELL!


WELL SHIT! PLAN A AND PLAN B WERE BOTH BUSTS!
IS THERE A PLAN C?
YEAH, BUT IT INVOLVES A BIG SCENE AND, CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES, PROBABLY MEANS GETTING KICKED OUT OF HERE!


HMMM... I THINK I MAY HAVE A PLAN D! TAKE A LOOK BY THE DOOR!


I SEE WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT! GOOD THINKING!
THINK WE CAN GET THEIR ATTENTION?
UNLESS THEY'RE GAY... NO PROBLEM! JUST FOLLOW MY LEAD!


LOOK DAN, I *APPRECIATE* WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO, BUT I *REALLY* DON'T THINK I'M *READY* FOR THIS YET!
YEAH, BUT THIS IS THE *THIRD* PLACE YOU'VE DRAGGED ME TO TONIGHT AND I'M *STILL* NOT FEELING UP TO THE CHALLENGE!
STEVE, IT'S BEEN *TWO MONTHS* SINCE YOU AND JULIA *BROKE UP!* IT'S *TIME* TO GET *BACK* UP ON THAT *HORSE!*
IT *SHOULDN'T* BE A CHALLENGE *AT ALL,* BUDDY! *ESPECIALLY* WITH ALL THOSE *BABES* YOU WORK WITH! IT *SHOULD* BE *EASY PICKINS!*


TELL YOU WHAT... IF THIS PLACE ALSO TURNS OUT TO BE A BUST, WE CALL IT QUITS FOR THE NIGHT! OKAY?
WELL, ALL RIGHT! BUT I STILL THINK IT'S ALL A BIG WASTE OF...!
WHOA!!
WHOA?! WHAT IS IT?


WOW! NOW THOSE ARE THE TWO HOTTEST COME-HITHER LOOKS I'VE EVER SEEN!
NO KIDDING! BUT... IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE WITH THOSE GUYS! WHY WOULD THEY BE GIVING US THAT KIND OF LOOK IF THEY'RE ALREADY TAKEN?


PROBABLY 'CAUSE THEY'RE DYING TO GET AWAY FROM THOSE TWO SLEAZEBALLS!
AND HERE'S HOW WE'RE GONNA HELP THEM DO JUST THAT...!


SO, HOW 'BOUT THAT COZY BOOTH, HMMM GORGEOUS?
LOOK! WE'RE... WE'RE WAITING FOR SOMEONE!
THAT'S RIGHT, DOLL! AND HERE WE ARE! ALL YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE!
THERE YOU ARE!


I THOUGHT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE MEETING OUTSIDE! DAN AND I HAVE BEEN WAITING OUT THERE FOR ABOUT A HALF HOUR!
YEAH! STEVE WANTED TO COME IN EARLIER, BUT I INSISTED WE WAIT JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES! SO I GUESS IT'S MY FAULT WE'RE SO LATE!
HUH?!
WHAT THE..?


NO! DON'T BLAME YOURSELF... DAN! MELANIE KEPT TRYING TO TELL ME WE WERE SUPPOSED TO MEET OUTSIDE, BUT I WOULDN'T LISTEN!
RIGHT, STEVE! AND YOU KNOW HOW STUBBORN HANNAH HERE CAN BE WHEN SHE SETS HER MIND TO SOMETHING!


THANKS FOR KEEPING AN EYE ON OUR LADIES FOR US, GUYS! WE REALLY APPRECIATE IT!
YEAH! LET US BUY YOU TWO A ROUND BEFORE YOU HEAD BACK TO YOUR TABLE! IT'S THE LEAST WE CAN DO!
UMMM... THAT'S OKAY! WE WERE, UHHH... HEADING UPSTAIRS TO THE DANCE FLOOR ANYWAY!


WE'RE JUST GIVING UP THE TWO HOTTEST CHICKS IN THIS PLACE TO THOSE GUYS? LIKE, WHAT GIVES, DUDE?
THEY'RE LIKE TWICE OUR SIZE, DUDE! BUT DON'T WORRY! AS LONG AS THEY STAY DOWN HERE, WE'LL HAVE THE PICK OF THE SECOND STRING LADIES UPSTAIRS!


THANK YOU SO MUCH... DAN, IS IT? THOSE GUYS JUST WOULD NOT GO AWAY! AND THEY WERE STARTING TO GET A LITTLE TOO AGGRESSIVE!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE WOULD'VE DONE IF YOU TWO HADN'T COME TO OUR RESCUE!


WELL, IT WAS PRETTY OBVIOUS THAT YOU LADIES WANTED THOSE GUYS GONE! AND PRETENDING TO BE YOUR DATES SEEMED THE BEST WAY TO DO IT WITHOUT CAUSING A SCENE!
WE'RE JUST GLAD WE COULD HELP!


TWO LONGNECKS, PLEASE!
MELANIE, I HATE TO PUT YOU IN THIS SPOT YOUR FIRST NIGHT OUT LIKE THIS! BUT... THOSE TWO GUYS ARE GREEK GODS! IF WE LET THEM WALK AWAY, I SWEAR WE'LL BOTH REGRET IT FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!
WELL, I... UMMM...!


I KNOW WHAT YOU'D DO, BIG S! AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHY WE DECIDED I'D RUN THE SHOW TONIGHT!
YOU NEED PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE AT BEING THIS KIND OF WOMAN! AND I'M GOING TO SEE THAT YOU GET IT!
PLEASE, MELANIE?!


AND FOR SOMEONE WHO'S ALWAYS BEEN COMPULSIVE ABOUT QUALITY AND PERFECTION, EVEN YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THESE TWO ARE REMARKABLE SUBJECTS TO PRACTICE ON!
UMMM... EXCUSE ME, GUYS...!


WHY YES, LADIES...?
WE WERE WONDERING IF YOU TWO WOULDN'T MIND JOINING US FOR AWHILE! YOU KNOW... IN CASE THE SLEAZEBALLS COME BACK!
AHHH! JUST TO KEEP THE RUSE GOING, SO TO SPEAK!


AMONG OTHER REASONS, I'M SURE! RIGHT, MELANIE?
OHHH... I SUPPOSE SO, HANNAH! I'M SURE THERE ARE A FEW GOOD REASONS TO KEEP THESE TWO CLOSE BY IN A PLACE LIKE THIS!


THEN, BY ALL MEANS, LADIES, WE'D LOVE TO JOIN YOU!


A short while later, after the introductions are more formalized...


SO MELANIE, YOU'RE REALLY A GRADUATE STUDENT... IN PSYCHOLOGY?
YES... I AM! AND WHY DO YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT? DON'T YOU BELIEVE ME?
OH, I BELIEVE YOU! IT'S JUST THAT YOU LOOK NOTHING AT ALL LIKE THE MENTAL IMAGE THAT SPRINGS TO MIND WHEN ANYONE SAYS GRAD STUDENT! ESPECIALLY IN PSYCHOLOGY!

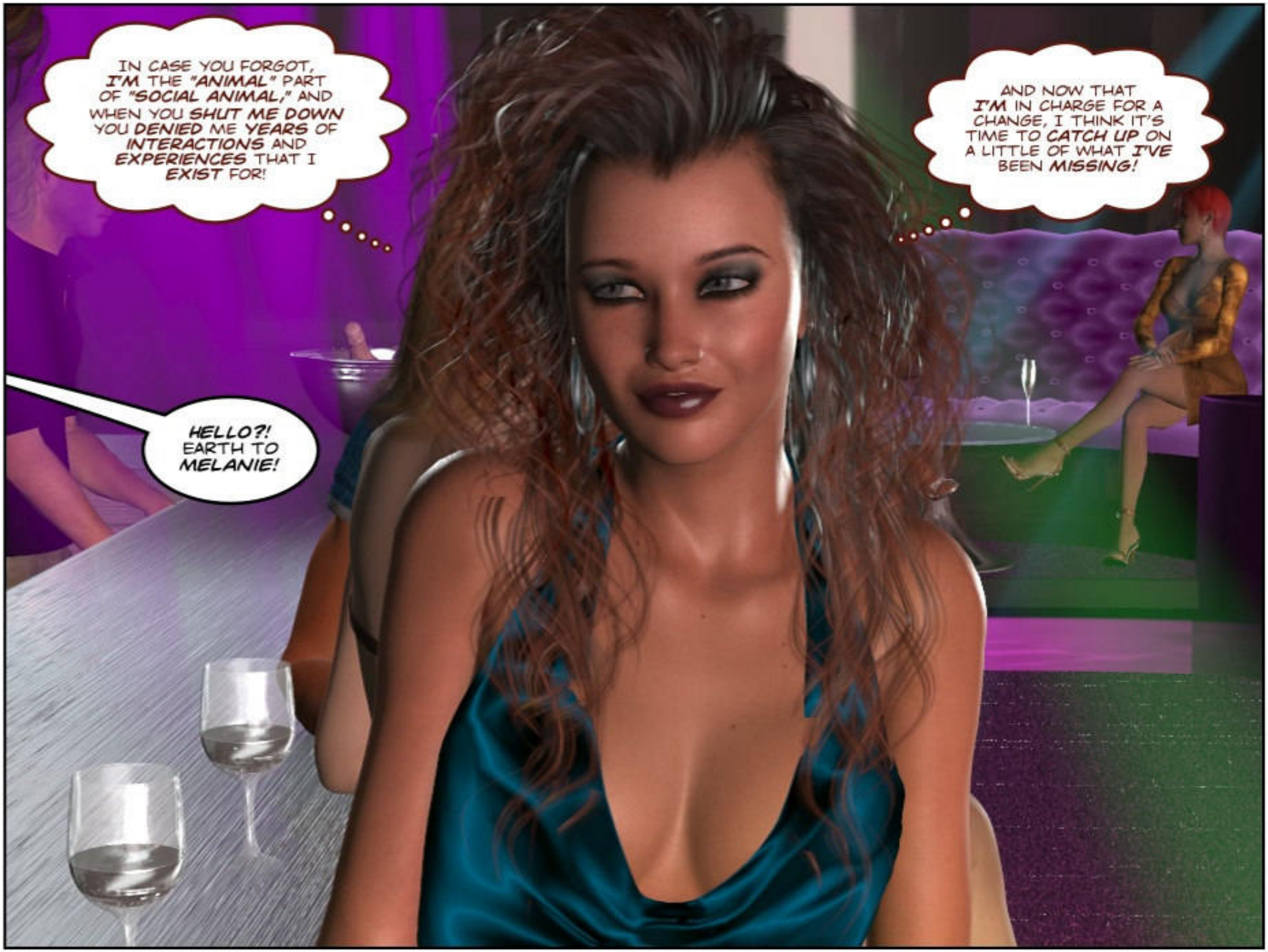

OH, REALLY? AND WHATS WRONG WITH THE WAY I LOOK?
WRONG? HOLY COW, MELANIE! EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU IS SO HELL AND GONE FROM BEING WRONG, IT'S... IT'S AMAZING!
YOU TAKE SMART, BEAUTIFUL AND SEXY TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL!


REALLY?
WHOA! NOW THERE'S A COMPLEMENT I CAN SINK MY TEETH INTO! IT SURE BEATS THE HELL OUT OF ALL THOSE I GOT FROM TEACHERS AND PROFESSORS FOR BLOWING UP THE GRADING CURVE IN ALL THEIR CLASSES!


THOSE KIND OF HALF-ASSED COMPLIMENTS MAY HAVE BEEN YOUR CUP OF TEA, BIG S, BUT THIS ONE... FROM THIS GUY... THAT'S THE KIND THAT GETS MY ATTENTION AND SENDS A WARM FUZZY FEELING ALL THROUGH MY BOD!
AND THAT'S SOMETHING I WANT TO FEEL LOTS MORE OF!


I'M SORRY IF IT SOUNDS LIKE I'M GOING OVERBOARD! I'M SURE YOU HEAR THAT KIND OF THING ALL THE TIME!
NO... NO I REALLY DON'T! SO DON'T YOU DARE STOP!
NO ONE'S EVER TALKED TO ME THE WAY YOU ARE, AND I LIKE IT! I LIKE IT A LOT! IN FACT, IT'S ALMOST LIKE A NARCOTIC I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF!


IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT, YOU KNOW, BIG S! OH SURE, AS A KID WE WERE FRIENDLESS BECAUSE WE WERE SO DAMN SMART! BUT ALL CHANCES OF CHANGING THAT WENT DOWN THE TUBES WHEN YOU LOCKED ME AWAY!
JUST WHEN WE WERE GETTING TO THE AGE WHEN WE COULD'VE USED OUR BRAINS TO MAKE FRIENDS, YOU DECIDED TO ISOLATE US FROM EVERYONE ELSE! FINE FOR YOU... BUT A LIVING NIGHTMARE FOR ME!


IN CASE YOU FORGOT, I'M THE "ANIMAL" PART OF "SOCIAL ANIMAL," AND WHEN YOU SHUT ME DOWN YOU DENIED ME YEARS OF INTERACTIONS AND EXPERIENCES THAT I EXIST FOR!
AND NOW THAT I'M IN CHARGE FOR A CHANGE, I THINK IT'S TIME TO CATCH UP ON A LITTLE OF WHAT I'VE BEEN MISSING!
HELLO?! EARTH TO MELANIE!


WHAT? OH, I'M SORRY, STEVE! I MUST'VE ZONED OUT THERE FOR A MINUTE!
WELL, I HOPE I'M NOT BORING YOU!
NO, OF COURSE YOU'RE NOT! IT'S JUST THAT I'VE NEVER BEEN IN A PLACE LIKE THIS BEFORE, AND IT'S A LITTLE... DISTRACTING!


I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT YOU'VE NEVER BEEN IN A NIGHTCLUB BEFORE! YOU'RE SO PERSONABLE, FRIENDLY AND OVER THE TOP GORGEOUS! YOU FIT IN PERFECTLY!
OOOO... THAT'S IT! FEED MY NEW ADDICTION! I LIKE THIS GUY!


WELL YOUR COACH DID AN EXCELLENT JOB! ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE ENJOYING YOURSELF!
ACTUALLY, I'M THE NEWBIE, BUT HANNAH'S AN OLD PRO AT NIGHTCLUBBING! SHE HELPED ME PREP FOR TONIGHT!
OH, I AM! I HONESTLY CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING I'VE ENJOYED AS MUCH AS THIS EVENING SO FAR!


THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW! AND I'M ALSO VERY HAPPY THAT I GET TO BE A PART OF IT!
I AM TOO!


DOUBT YOU'D BE THIS HAPPY IF YOU WERE SPENDING THE EVENING WITH SIDNEY INSTEAD OF MELANIE!
GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, BIG S! YOU HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD WHEN YOU CREATED MELANIE TO GET YOUR RESEARCH DONE!


HELL, EVEN WITH YOU FULLY IN CHARGE, EVERYONE LIKES MELANIE A HELL OF A LOT MORE THAN THEY LIKED... OR WOULD LIKE SIDNEY!
AND NOW WE'RE GETTING THE CHANCE TO SEE JUST HOW MUCH MORE THEY'LL LIKE HER WHEN I'M RUNNING THE SHIP!


HEY, YOU TWO! WE'RE GONNA GO HIT THE DANCE FLOOR! WANNA COME?
YEAH, STEVE! C'MON AND SHOW MELANIE YOUR MOVES!
OH, UMMM... MY "MOVES" ARE NOTHING I'M REALLY COMFORTABLE SHOWING ANYONE!
YEAH... YOU GUYS GO AHEAD! I'D MUCH RATHER STAY HERE, TOO!


WELL, OKAY! WE'LL BE BACK LATER! HAVE FUN YOU TWO!
YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY WITH THIS?
DEFINITELY! YOU WOULD NOT WANT TO BE SEEN ON ANY DANCE FLOOR WITH ME! MY DANCING SKILLS ARE ESSENTIALLY NON-EXISTENT!
WELL, THEY CAN'T BE ANY WORSE THAN MINE!


BESIDES, I CAN'T THINK OF ONE PLACE, EVEN A DANCE FLOOR, WHERE I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE SEEN WITH YOU!
MAYBE ONE OF THESE DAYS WE CAN FIND SOME PLACE TO WORK ON OUR DANCING MOVES TOGETHER!
CAREFUL! I JUST MIGHT TAKE YOU UP ON THAT!
WHEW! YOU MAY NOT HAVE MOVES ON THE DANCE FLOOR, BUT THE ONES YOU'VE GOT HERE ARE DEFINITELY GETTING THE JOB DONE!


Over the course of the remainder of the evening, Steve and Melanie become essentially oblivious to the goings on around them...


As their connection begins to deepen...


And Melanie's newly released emotions start to steer her in a very definite direction...


LAST CALL, PEOPLE!
WOW! CLOSING TIME ALREADY? HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?
I DON'T KNOW! MAYBE WE WERE BOTH DISTRACTED BY SOMETHING AND JUST DIDN'T NOTICE THE TIME!


I WONDER WHERE HANNAH AND DAN ARE?
DON'T YOU *REMEMBER?* THEY CAME THROUGH A FEW MINUTES AGO AND SAID THEY WERE GOING FOR A WALK!
I THINK THEY SAID TO MEET THEM AT HANNAH'S CAR IN ABOUT 45 MINUTES!


WOW! I TOTALLY MISSED IT!
WELL, LIKE YOU SAID, YOU WERE PROBABLY DISTRACTED BY SOMETHING!
THAT I'M SURE OF!


SHALL WE FOLLOW SUIT AND TAKE A LITTLE WALK OURSELVES... GET SOME AIR?
I'D LIKE THAT!


SIGH! DON'T KNOW WHY YOU ALWAYS CRINGED SO MUCH AT HUMAN CONTACT, BIG S! 'CAUSE I'M FINDING I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT!


NO MATTER WHERE I GET IT!


YOUR EX MESSED YOU UP THAT MUCH, HUH?
YOU KNOW, I ALMOST DIDN'T COME HERE TONIGHT! DAN HAD TO PRACTICALLY DRAG ME KICKING AND SCREAMING TO GET ME OUT OF MY APARTMENT!
YEAH... YEAH, SHE DID! BUT I'M OVER THAT NOW... THANKS TO TONIGHT... AND TO YOU!


ME? WHAT DID I DO?
YOU PROVED THAT THERE ARE STILL BEAUTIFUL AND INTELLIGENT WOMEN OUT THERE WHO ARE INTERESTING... AND INTERESTED!


WELL, THOSE FIRST THREE I'LL HAVE TO TAKE YOUR WORD ON!
BUT AS FOR THE FOURTH ONE, I CAN GUARANTEE YOU...!


I AM VERY, VERY INTERESTED!


STOP!!


WH... WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE, BIG S? I'M ABOUT TO KISS THIS GUY!


BUT... BUT YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
REALLY? AND WHY NOT?
BECAUSE... BECAUSE WE'RE NOT GAY!


WE'RE NOT? REALLY? HAVE YOU LOOKED AT YOURSELF LATELY? DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT WE ARE?
WHAT?! HOW... WHY AM I...?!
YEAH, I DECIDED TO TWEAK OUR WARDROBE IN HERE, WHAT WITH ALL THE TIME I HAVE ON MY HANDS! YOU'RE WELCOME, BY THE WAY!


AS FOR THE QUESTION AT HAND, I ASK BECAUSE BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, WHICH ONE DO YOU THINK IS PRIMARILY IN CHARGE OF OUR SEXUAL IMPULSES, HMMM? YOU? OR ME?!
WELL, I...!


'CAUSE THE WAY I REMEMBER IT, WE WERE JUST HITTING PUBERTY WHEN YOU DECIDED TO TAKE ME, THE PART OF US THAT INITIATES AND RESPONDS TO EVERY FUCKING SEXUAL NEED, AND SHOVE ME INTO A DEEP, DARK HOLE BEFORE WE EVER GOT A CHANCE TO DO, OR EVEN FEEL ANYTHING SEXUAL!


BUT MAYBE YOU WERE ABLE TO FIGURE IT OUT WITHOUT ME! WITHOUT ANY SEXUAL ACTIVITY, SEXUAL URGES OR EVEN ANY SEXUAL THOUGHTS... YOU WERE ABLE TO DETERMINE OUR SEXUAL IDENTITY!
SO TELL ME, BIG S... WHICH IS IT? ARE WE HETERO, GAY, BI, TRANSGENDERED, OR SOMETHING NO ONE'S DEFINED YET? HMMM? C'MON, YOU'RE THE BRAINS OF THE OUTFIT. TELL ME!
WELL... ACCORDING TO STATISTICS... THE ODDS POINT TO US BEING HETEROSEXUAL. AND SINCE WE'RE REALLY A MAN...


I SEE! THEN MAYBE YOU CALL TELL ME, BIG S, WHAT IS IT THAT GETS YOUR MOTOR RACING ABOUT WOMEN? ARE YOU A BREAST MAN? OR DO YOU LIKE A BIG BUTT YOU CAN GRAB WITH BOTH HANDS? WHAT IS IT THAT GETS A MAN LIKE YOU ROCK HARD?
WELL... BREASTS ARE NICE...!


WE'RE NOT TALKING NICE HERE!
YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT GETS ME GOING? ANY PHYSICAL CONTACT I CAN GET FROM A LIVING, BREATHING HUMAN BEING! AFTER BURYING ME DOWN HERE FOR OVER TEN YEARS, SUPPRESSING AND REPRESSING ALL OUR NEEDS AND DESIRES, I'M READY TO FUCKIN' BURST! DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?


STEVE'S A TOTAL HUNK, AND WE'RE ESSENTIALLY A WOMAN... SO YOU CAN CALL US STRAIGHT, GAY OR WHATEVER THE HELL YOU WANT! IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME!
THE ONLY THING I KNOW IS THAT I WANT HIM... SO BAD... AND IF YOU FUCK THIS UP IN ANY WAY YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF IN THE BACK SEAT A HELL OF A LOT LONGER THAN WE ORIGINALLY AGREED ON! UNDERSTAND?
BUT...!


I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO DO EVERYTHING A WOMAN CAN, BUT YOU CAN BET YOUR SWEET ASS I'LL DO WHATEVER I CAN GET AWAY WITH!


OH, AND DON'T WORRY! I WON'T LET HIM FIND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT US... IF I CAN HELP IT!


SO SIT BACK AND WATCH THE SHOW, SUPER E! IF YOU CAN EVER RELAX ENOUGH TO LET YOUR GUARD DOWN, YOU MIGHT EVEN ENJOY IT!


NOW... WHERE WERE WE?






OOOOOHHH! THAT WAS ONE HELL OF A FIRST KISS!
DAMN GLAD I FOUND A GUY WHO KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!


MMMMMM! SUCH STRONG HANDS! I'VE NEVER BEEN TOUCHED LIKE THIS BEFORE... IT FEELS SO GOOD!
AND HE OBVIOUSLY KNOWS ALL THE RIGHT SPOTS TO HIT...


"GASP!" GOD! IS THAT ALL HIM BACK THERE? AM I REALLY EXCITING HIM THAT MUCH? ALMOST AS MUCH AS HE'S EXCITING ME!
CHRIST, HE'S HUGE! AND IT... IT FEELS SO GOOD PRESSING INTO ME LIKE THAT!


UMMM, MAYBE... MAYBE WE SHOULD SLOW DOWN A LITTLE!
I MEAN, I DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK THAT THIS IS THE ONLY REASON I'M WITH YOU!


WHAT I THINK ... IS THAT YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE I'VE NEVER FELT BEFORE! LIKE I NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE!
AND I DON'T WANT THAT FEELING TO STOP!

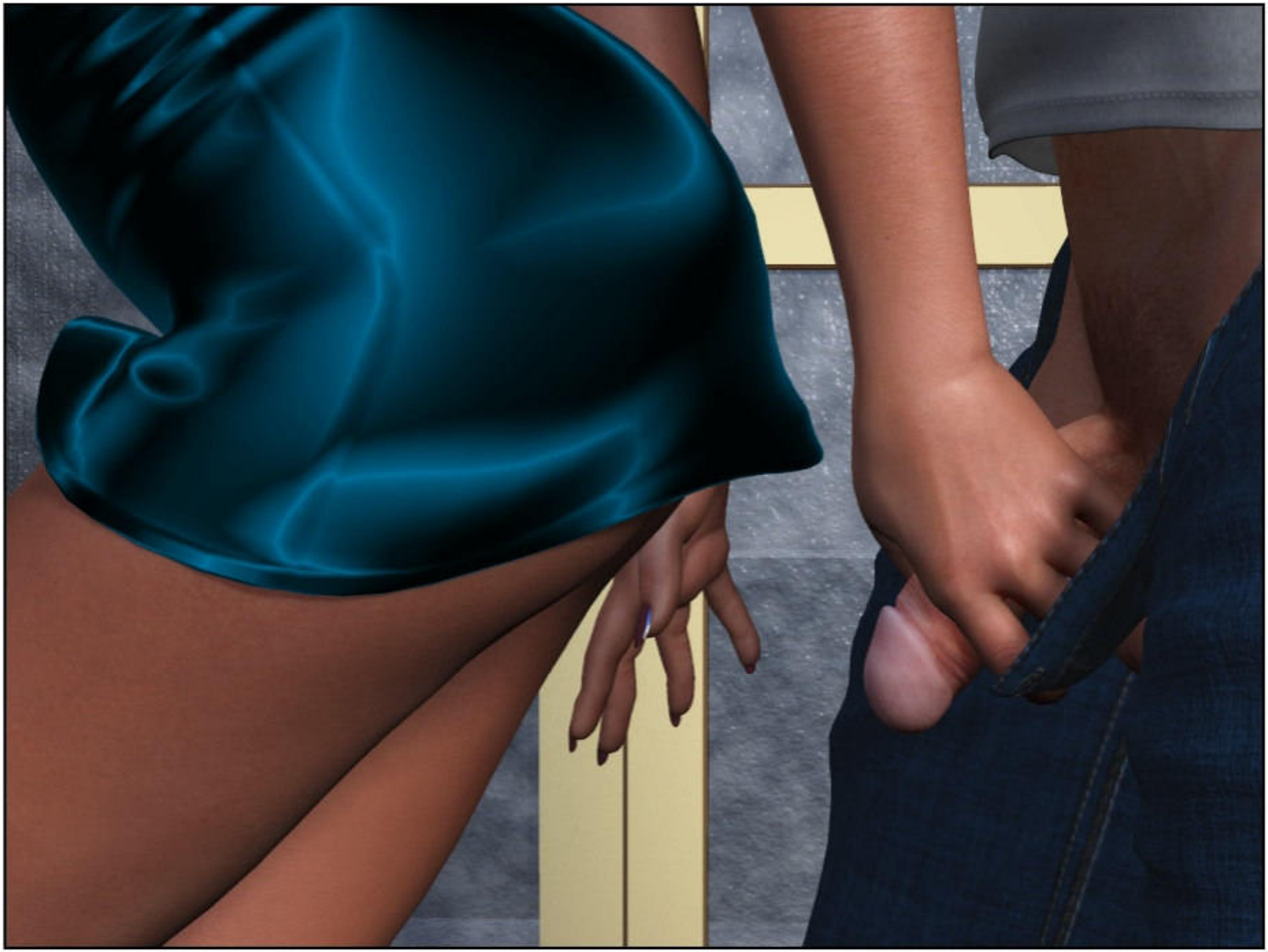

SO... FULL STEAM AHEAD, COWBOY!
WHO AM I TO ARGUE WITH THE LADY?


OOOOHHH GOD!
THAT FEELS...
INCREDIBLE! TITS...
ARE INCREDIBLE!


DON'T CARE WHAT YOU THINK, BIG S! NO MATTER WHAT... THE TITS STAY!


MMMMM! EVERY SQUARE INCH OF MY BODY'S ON FIRE! NEVER IMAGINED I COULD FEEL SO... ALIVE!


BUT... I NEED MORE! GOT TO FEEL... MORE!




SO HARD...
SO STRONG...!
I'VE JUST GOT
TO...!


I... I DIDN'T BRING ANYTHING! I WASN'T EXPECTING ANYTHING LIKE THIS!
I... I KNOW, BUT... I DON'T CARE! I'VE GOT TO FEEL YOU... HAVE YOU...!


HERE! TAKE ME HERE! NOW!
ARE... ARE YOU SURE? I'VE... I'VE NEVER...!


I'VE GOT TO HAVE YOU... INSIDE ME! FEEL YOU... FEEL... EVERYTHING!


NOW, STEVE! NOW, GOD DAMN IT!


MELANIE! ARE YOU TWO OUT HERE? IT'S US, HANNAH AND DAN! WHERE ARE YOU?
DAMN! DAMN, DAMN, DAMN!
HURRY, STEVE! BEFORE THEY GET HERE!
WHAT? WE... WE CAN'T! WHAT IF THEY SEE US?


THEN HURRY UP AND DO IT BEFORE THEY FIND US!
PLEASE, STEVE BABY! I HAVE TO FEEL YOU INSIDE ME!
MAYBE... MAYBE ANOTHER TIME, BUT... BUT NOT LIKE THIS, MELANIE!


WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU? A GORGEOUS BABE IS BEGGING YOU TO FUCK HER BUTT AND ALL YOU CAN DO IS WHINE?!
WHAT THE HELL KIND OF MAN ARE YOU ANYWAY?
MELANIE! CALM DOWN! YOU'RE GETTING WAY TOO EXCITED OVER SOMETHING WE...!


I MEAN, ALL I'M ASKING IS FOR YOU TO TAKE THAT LONG, HARD THROBBING COCK OF YOURS AND RAM IT UP MY QUIVERING ASS!
IS THAT TOO FUCKING MUCH TO ASK?
I'M SERIOUS, MELANIE! YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN!


WELL, IF YOU'RE NOT UP TO IT, MAYBE DAN IS! OR MAYBE ONE OF THE OTHER GUYS AT THE BAR!
YOU DON'T MEAN THAT, MELANIE!


THE HELL I DON'T!
THIS COULD BE MY ONLY CHANCE TO FINALLY KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO... TO...!


MELANIE?! WHAT'S WRONG?
OOOOHHHHHHHHH!


MELANIE!!


Chapter 6
by CBlack
Superego


OOOOOHHH! WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?
NOTHING THAT I SHOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED TO HAPPEN WITH YOU IN PRIMARY CHARGE!


LAST THING I REMEMBER, I WAS WITH STEVE... AFTER WE LEFT THE CLUB! AND WE WERE...!
AND YOU WERE DEMANDING A DEVIANT SEXUAL ACT FROM HIM!
HEY! ONE PERSON'S "DEVIANT SEXUAL ACT" IS ANOTHER'S BREAD AND BUTTER!


REGARDLESS, YOUR BEHAVIOR WAS EXACTLY WHAT I SHOULD HAVE SEEN COMING HAD I BEEN MORE LUCENT WHEN I AGREED TO GIVE YOU PRIMARY CONTROL!
GLAD I COULD BE SO PREDICTABLE FOR YOU!
SO, WHAT HAPPENED ANYWAY? DID I PASS OUT OR SOMETHING?
YES YOU DID... FORTUNATELY! I HATE TO THINK OF THE CONSEQUENCES IF YOU HADN'T!


BUT... WHY DID I PASS OUT? I HARDLY DRANK ANYTHING!
I WOULD CONJECTURE THAT YOUR SEXUALLY CHARGED ACTIVITIES EXCITED OUR BODY WAY BEYOND ANYTHING IT'S EVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE, THUS CAUSING OUR HEART RATE TO RACE ACCOMPANIED BY AN EXTREMELY RAPID RATE OF BREATHING!
IN OTHER WORDS, I HYPERVENTILATED AND FAINTED!
YES... I BELIEVE I JUST SAID THAT!


SO, WHERE THE HELL ARE WE NOW?
UNKNOWN, SINCE WE'RE STILL UNCONSCIOUS!
YOU MEAN, WE COULD STILL BE LYING ON THE GROUND SOMEWHERE DOWNTOWN?
POSSIBLE, BUT DOUBTFUL! HOWEVER, LACKING ANY ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL INPUT, I'M RELUCTANT TO OFFER ANY OTHER POSSIBILITIES AT THIS TIME!
JUST FUCKING GREAT!


IT DOES, HOWEVER, GIVE US AN UNINTERRUPTED OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS YOUR BEHAVIOR THIS EVENING!
YEAH, I DID BLOW IT, DIDN'T I? I SHOULD'VE GOTTEN HIM OUT OF THE CLUB SOONER!
THOSE FEW EXTRA MINUTES WOULD'VE BEEN ALL I NEEDED TO...!


THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN, AND YOU KNOW IT!
YOU WERE DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO ALLOWING HIM TO DISCOVER OUR TRUE GENDER!
OKAY... I ADMIT IT! THAT COULD HAVE BEEN A BIG PROBLEM IF WE'D GOTTEN THAT FAR!
BUT THAT WAS THE ONLY PROBLEM I CAN SEE... AND IT DIDN'T HAPPEN! SO WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?


THE BIG DEAL IS THE FACT THAT YOU WERE COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL! SOMETHING THAT WE CANNOT ALLOW TO HAPPEN AGAIN!
WELL GEE, I'M SORRY, BIG S! NEXT TIME I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP OUR SEXUAL NEEDS IN CHECK, WON'T I?
OH WAIT! I AM SEXUAL NEEDS... BY DEFINITION! SO SCREW THAT IDEA!


SO PERHAPS THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION THEN, IS TO RETURN YOU TO WHERE I'VE KEPT YOU THESE LAST 10 YEARS! THUS AVOIDING ANY MORE OF THESE CONTROL ISSUES!
OH YEAH, THAT'LL WORK OUT JUST FINE! WE BOTH SAW HOW WELL YOU DID LAST NIGHT BEFORE I TOOK OVER!
SO, GO AHEAD! LOCK ME UP AGAIN!


'COURSE, WITHOUT ME, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO FUNCTION AT ALL AS A WOMAN! NOT ONE LITTLE BIT!
AND THEN YOU CAN KISS YOUR RESEARCH GOODBYE!
I... I GUESS MY PROPOSED SOLUTION WASN'T AS WELL THOUGHT OUT AS I'D HOPED!


AND SOMETHING ELSE I WANNA POINT OUT...!
SIGH! AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?
THE ONLY THING YOU SEEM TO HAVE A PROBLEM WITH IS ALMOST GETTING DISCOVERED TONIGHT! RIGHT?
OF COURSE!


BUT YOU HAVEN'T COMPLAINED AT ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING ELSE WE DID WITH STEVE! THE KISSING... GETTING FELT UP... ALMOST GETTING...!
I... I WAS JUST WAITING TO ADDRESS THAT AT A LATER TIME! THAT'S ALL!


BULLSHIT! YOU CAN'T LIE WORTH SHIT... ESPECIALLY TO ME... AND YOU KNOW IT!
YOU LIKED IT! YOU LIKED IT ALL! ALMOST AS MUCH AS I DID!


WELL... I ADMIT, THE PHYSICAL SENSATIONS WERE PLEASURABLE...!
AND THEY DID INVOKE HEIGHTENED LEVELS OF... CURIOSITY!
YEAH... I DO REMEMBER A STRONG SENSE OF CURIOSITY TONIGHT... AMONG LOTS OF OTHER THINGS!


BUT REGARDLESS OF MY REACTIONS TO TONIGHT'S PHYSICAL... STIMULATIONS, IT'S YOUR REACTIONS THAT WE MUST DEAL WITH!
WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE CONTROL LIKE YOU DID TONIGHT! IT WOULD RUIN EVERYTHING!
OKAY, I ADMIT IT! I GOT A LITTLE CRAZY TONIGHT! BUT CAN YOU BLAME ME?


MY FIRST INTERACTIONS WITH THE PHYSICAL WORLD IN YEARS, AND I'M IN A BODY LIKE THIS! BEING ATTENDED TO BY A GUY LIKE STEVE!
I GUESS IT WOULD BE SOMEWHAT OVERWHELMING!
GEE... YA THINK?!


SO MY SUGGESTION IS TO RETURN TO A MORE... RESTRAINED RATIO BETWEEN US, POSSIBLY KEEPING OUR 80-20 RELATIONSHIP YOU SUGGESTED, BUT REVERSING OUR RESPECTIVE PERCENTAGES!
THAT WOULD GIVE YOU MORE INPUT THAN OUR ORIGINAL ARRANGEMENT, BUT ALLOW ME TO RETAIN CONTROL!
UMM, YEAH...! LET ME THROW ANOTHER IDEA AT YOU, BIG S!


YOUR IDEA MIGHT BE OKAY FOR AROUND CAMPUS, BUT FOR WHAT WE GOT COMIN' UP WITH ROSS, YOU'RE GONNA NEED MORE THAN JUST 20% OF ME TO GET THE JOB DONE!
I MEAN, YOU GOTTA ADMIT, UP UNTIL THE END THERE, I WAS DOING A DAMN GOOD JOB WITH STEVE!
YES, I... I SUPPOSE YOU WERE!


SO MY IDEA IS, INSTEAD OF SOME LOUSY FIXED RATIO, YOU AGREE TO A MORE FLUID EXCHANGE OF INPUT AND CONTROL!
FLUID?
YOU KNOW, WHEN I'M NOT NEEDED, I'LL HANG BACK! BUT IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS, YOU LET ME PROVIDE ANY AND ALL INPUT AND CONTROL NECESSARY WITHOUT ANY LONG-WINDED DISCUSSIONS IN THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNHOUSE OF OURS!
WELL...!


AND IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, IF YOU GIVE ME MORE TIME OUT THERE, I'LL GET MORE EXPERIENCES UNDER MY BELT, WHICH WILL HELP US AVOID ANY MORE EMBARRASSING EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWNS LIKE I HAD TONIGHT!
WHAT DO YOU SAY, BIG S? GREAT IDEA, HUH?
I HAVE TO ADMIT, IT HAS ITS MERITS! AND ALTHOUGH I'M SURE THERE'S GOT TO BE A DOWNSIDE TO IT SOMEWHERE... I CAN'T IMMEDIATELY IDENTIFY ONE!
WITH SUFFICIENT PRACTICE, WE'LL BECOME MORE NIMBLE, ABLE TO HANDLE ANY UNUSUAL SITUATIONS THAT MAY ARISE OVER THE COMING WEEKS!


OKAY! WE'LL GIVE IT A TRIAL RUN AND SEE HOW IT WORKS OUT!
YES! YOU WON'T REGRET IT, BIG S! I PROMISE!


IT'S GONNA BE SO MUCH BETTER HAVIN' ME RIDING SHOTGUN INSTEAD OF JUST BACK-SEAT DRIVING... FROM THE TRUNK!
WE'LL HAVE A BLAST TOGETHER! YOU'LL SEE!
AS LONG AS OUR NEW COLLABORATION EXPEDITES MY RESEARCH, I'LL BE MORE THAN SATISFIED!


HEY... SATISFACTION IS WHAT I'M ALL ABOUT, BIG S!
MELANIE?! ARE YOU OKAY? MELANIE?!


MELANIE?!
ARE YOU OKAY,
MELANIE?!


ARE YOU ALRIGHT, MELANIE?


WHOA! WH... WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE AM I?
YOU PASSED OUT LAST NIGHT AND STEVE AND DAN HELPED BRING YOU BACK TO MY APARTMENT!
HOW DO YOU FEEL?


CONFUSED, BUT... OTHERWISE OKAY! IS... IS STEVE STILL HERE?
NO, THEY LEFT A COUPLE OF HOURS AGO! YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY?
I'M FINE... REALLY! DID... DID STEVE SAY WHAT HAPPENED?


HE SAID YOU TWO WERE TALKING AND THEN YOU GOT A LITTLE DIZZY AND PASSED OUT! THAT WAS RIGHT BEFORE DAN AND I CAUGHT UP WITH YOU!
THAT... THAT'S ALL HE SAID? NOTHING ELSE?
NO... BUT I COULD TELL HE WAS PRETTY WORRIED ABOUT YOU!
WHY? IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOU TWO?


NO... NOT AT ALL! I PROBABLY JUST HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK... THAT'S ALL!
HMMM! I'M SURPRISED STEVE DIDN'T GO INTO MORE DETAIL ABOUT MY BEHAVIOR LAST NIGHT!
I'D THANK HIM FOR HIS DISCRETION, BUT DOUBT I'LL EVER GET THAT CHANCE!


LOOK, I'M SORRY THE EVENING ENDED THE WAY IT DID FOR YOU! BUT IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, YOU ROCKED LAST NIGHT!
YOU THINK SO?
OH, HELL YEAH! YOU HAD STEVE EATING OUT OF THE PALM OF YOUR HAND LAST NIGHT! YOU'RE A NATURAL, GIRLFRIEND!
WELL... IF I REALLY AM, IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU!


AND FROM WHAT I SAW LAST NIGHT, I THINK YOU'RE READY TO DEAL WITH MR. ADAM ROSS! WHAT DO YOU THINK, MEL?
I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT, HANNAH! I'VE PUT OFF THAT PART OF MY RESEARCH LONG ENOUGH!


AWESOME! THE FIRST THING WE NEED TO DO IS GO OUT AND GET YOU THE PERFECT "OFFICE" OUTFIT FOR YOUR FIRST DAY AT THE ALEC COMPANY!
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I AGREE! BUT BEFORE WE HAVE ANOTHER ADVENTURE SHOPPING, I NEED TO DO FURTHER RESEARCH ON MR. ROSS!
I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING I POSSIBLY CAN ABOUT HIM BEFORE I SHOW UP THERE AGAIN! HIS BUSINESS PRACTICES, FAMILY HISTORY, PERSONAL PREFERENCES... EVERYTHING!


THAT SHOULDN'T BE TOO DIFFICULT! HE'S BEEN WRITTEN UP IN PRETTY MUCH EVERY PUBLICATION FROM FORBES TO PLAYBOY!
YOU'RE REALLY GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT THIS, AREN'T YOU?
I CAN'T STRESS HOW MUCH MY RESEARCH MEANS TO ME, HANNAH! AND IT TURNS OUT THAT ADAM ROSS IS KEY TO COMPLETING THAT RESEARCH!


HANNAH, YOU'D BE SURPRISED AT THE DEPTHS I'D GO TO FOR MY RESEARCH!
IT'S THAT IMPORTANT TO YOU, HUH?


The following Monday...
LOOK STAN, I KNOW I PROMISED RUTH I'D ALLOW YOUR LITTLE PROTEGE TO DO HER RESEARCH HERE, BUT AFTER OUR FIRST MEETING WITH HER I'VE BEEN RELYING ON YOU TO KEEP HER OUT OF MY HAIR! AND YOU'VE DONE A GOOD JOB... UNTIL NOW!
BUT I GOT A HEATED CALL FROM RUTH OVER THE WEEKEND WONDERING WHY MISS BUSH'S RESEARCH WAS BEING DELAYED AND THAT SHE WAS SENDING HER OVER TODAY, WHETHER I LIKED IT OR NOT!


I THOUGHT WE HAD AN UNDERSTANDING, STAN! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO KEEP BOTH OF THEM OFF MY BACK! WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?
LOOK ADAM, YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT NO ONE CAN FULLY CONTROL RUTH! SHE DOES WHAT SHE DAMN WELL PLEASES!
WELL, I CAN DEFINITELY ATTEST TO THAT! BUT IF YOU'D KEPT MISS BUSH UNDER CONTROL, LIKE YOU PROMISED, THERE'D BE NO PROBLEM AT ALL! RIGHT?


AND AS FOR MELANIE... MISS BUSH, THAT IS... KEEPING HER UNDER CONTROL HAS BEEN A MOOT POINT!
SHE'S BEEN A MODEL GRADUATE ASSISTANT FROM THE GET-GO! A COMPLETE TURNAROUND FROM THE YOUNG LADY WE SAW AT THAT FIRST MEETING!
YOUR POINT BEING..?


MY POINT IS THAT THE MELANIE BUSH YOU'LL SEE TODAY IS INTELLIGENT, INQUISITIVE, POLITE AND... VERY ATTRACTIVE!
QUALITIES WE BOTH APPRECIATE IN YOUNG WOMEN! ESPECIALLY THAT LAST QUALITY, IF I REMEMBER OUR CONVERSATION CORRECTLY!
YOU DO, BUT...!


TO BE TRUTHFUL, ADAM, I'D MUCH RATHER HAVE MELANIE BACK HERE AT THE U WITH ME! SO IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS WITH HER WHATSOEVER, I'LL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO RECALL HER AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE! GUARANTEED!
I'M GOING TO HOLD YOU TO THAT, STAN!
I'LL BE IN TOUCH!
Click!

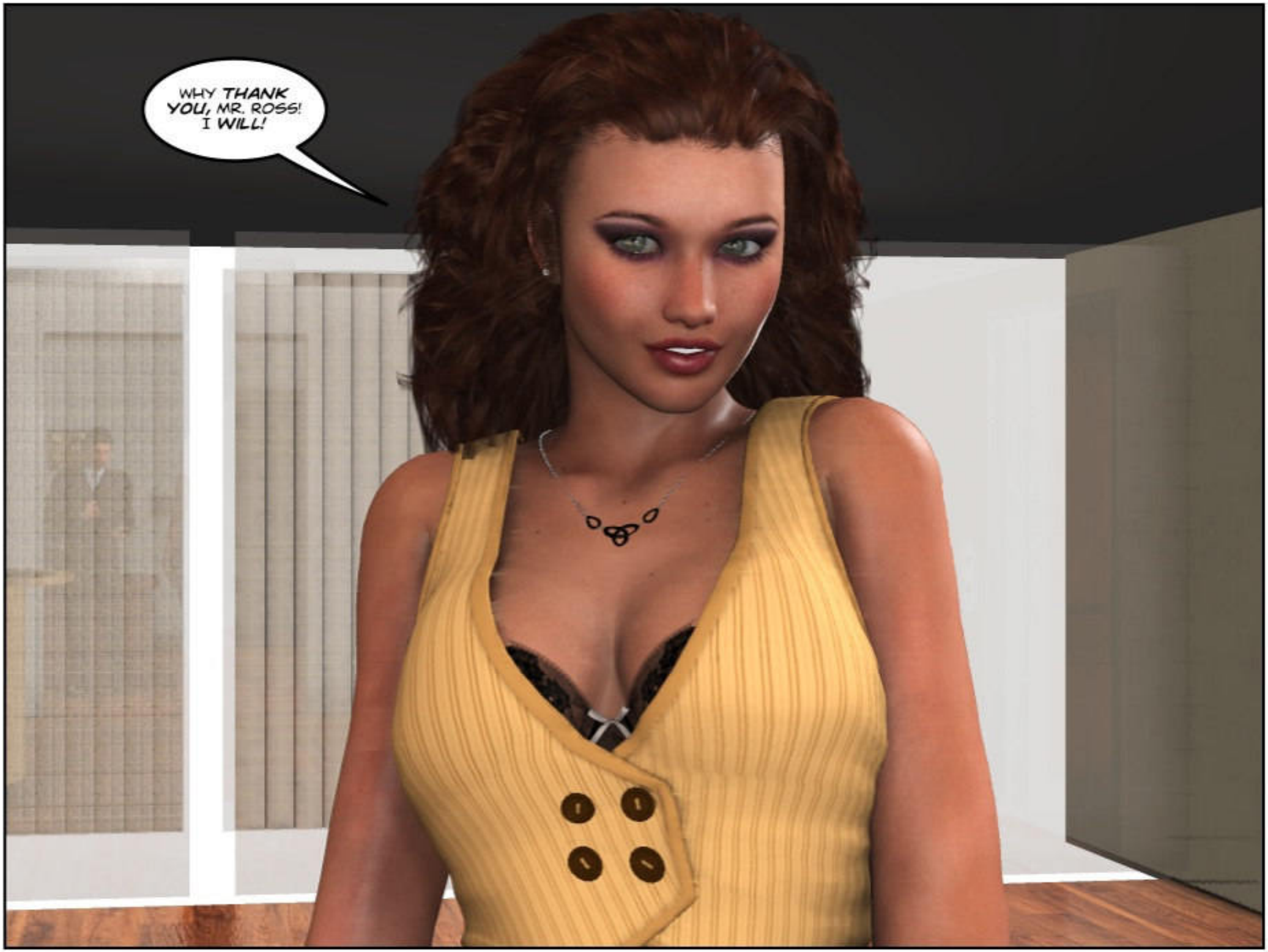

HMPH! LINDERMAN SEEMS AWFULLY SURE HIS LITTLE PROTEGE WON'T CREATE ANY PROBLEMS HERE! BUT I'LL BE THE JUDGE OF THAT!
EVEN IF HE HAS FOUND A WAY TO TURN THAT ABRASIVE, PANTSUIT-WEARING COMPUTER INTO ONE OF HIS DOE-EYED, COED GROUPIES, THAT'S NOT WHAT I NEED AROUND HERE!


HE MAY GET OFF ON THE YOUNG, WIDE-EYED NANETE OF ALL THOSE BARELY-21 GIRLS HE HAS AT THE UNIVERSITY, BUT THAT'S HARDLY THE TYPE I'M INTERESTED IN!
AND DEFINITELY NOT THE TYPE I NEED WANDERING AROUND HERE, GUMMING UP MY WELL-OILED CORPORATE MACHINE!
ONE DAY! THAT'S ALL I'LL GIVE HER TO PROVE SHE'S NOT GOING TO BE A MAJOR PAIN IN THE ASS! THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO SATISFY EVEN RUTH!
zn-sunny


MR. ROSS...? MISS BUSH IS HERE!
THANK YOU, SARAH! SEND HER ON IN!
WELL... TIME TO START THE CLOCK AND GET THIS OVER WITH!


GOOD MORNING, MR. ROSS! IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
SIGH! GOOD MORNING, MISS...!


GASP! MISS... BUSH!? IT'S VERY, VERY GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN AS WELL!
WON'T YOU HAVE A SEAT?


WHY THANK YOU, MR. ROSS! I WILL!


I HAVE TO SAY, YOU SURPRISE ME, MISS BUSH!
YOUR APPEARANCE AND DEMEANOR HAVE CHANGED DRAMATICALLY SINCE WE FIRST MET!
REALLY? HOW SO?


I HOPE THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM!
ON THE CONTRARY! I CONSIDER THE CHANGES DEFINITE IMPROVEMENTS!
TRUTH BE TOLD, I WASN'T LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE SAME YOUNG LADY I MET HERE SEVERAL WEEKS AGO!


I KNOW, AND I APOLOGIZE FOR THAT! DR. KIMBALL ONLY GAVE ME A FEW HOURS NOTICE FOR THAT MEETING AND I WAS ILL-PREPARED FOR IT AS A RESULT!
SHE STRESSED TO ME THAT IT WAS A BUSINESS MEETING SO I PUT ON MY BEST "BUSINESS WOMAN" FACADE HOPING TO IMPRESS YOU!
AND I'M AFRAID I FAILED MISERABLY!
NONSENSE! IF YOU HAD FAILED THAT BADLY, I WOULDN'T HAVE ASKED YOU BACK!


I MUST ADMIT, THAT IF YOU'D COME TO THE FIRST MEETING LOOKING LIKE THIS I WOULD'VE WANTED YOU BACK MUCH, MUCH SOONER!
WELL, THANK YOU! THAT'S VERY NICE TO KNOW!
I AM CONFUSED ABOUT SOMETHING, HOWEVER!
AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?


I JUST GOT OFF THE PHONE WITH YOUR PROFESSOR LINDERMAN AND WHILE HIS DESCRIPTION OF YOU WAS INDEED FLATTERING...!
THAT WAS AWFULLY SWEET OF HIM!
IT DID LEAD ME TO EXPECT A MUCH MORE... RETICENT AND UNSOPHISTICATED GIRL RATHER THAN THE CONFIDENT WOMAN WHO SITS BEFORE ME!
WHY IS THAT?


WELL... IT WASN'T HARD FOR ME TO DISCOVER THAT PROFESSOR LINDERMAN HAS A WEAKNESS FOR CUTE, DOTING COEDS! HE PROBABLY DESCRIBED ME TO YOU THAT WAY BECAUSE THAT'S HOW I PRESENT MYSELF TO HIM!
AS SUCH, I CAN PRETTY MUCH WRITE MY OWN TICKET AS TO WHEN, WHERE AND HOW I CONDUCT MY RESEARCH ON CAMPUS WITHOUT ANY INTERFERENCE!


INTERESTING! I'VE HEARD OF COEDS USING THEIR SEXUALITY TO GET BETTER GRADES, BUT YOU SEEM TO HAVE CHANGED THE RULES TO THAT LITTLE GAME!
OH, STAN IS MUCH TOO AFRAID OF LOSING HIS TENURE, OR HIS WIFE, TO RISK AN ACTUAL LIASON WITH ANY OF HIS STUDENTS!
HE SEEMS CONTENT WITH JUST SURROUNDING HIMSELF WITH INFATUATED EYE-CANDY!


SO I TAKE IT YOU'RE NOT MUCH OF A TEAM PLAYER!
AND AS FOR GRADES, THAT'S ONE AREA WHERE I DO NOT NEED ANYONE ELSE'S HELP! IN FACT, I'M POSITIVE ANY INPUT HE MIGHT TRY TO ADD TO MY RESEARCH WOULD SIMPLY DIMINISH ITS QUALITY!
THAT DEPENDS ON THE TEAM! TO DATE, THOUGH, I'VE YET TO WORK WITH ANYONE COMPETENT ENOUGH TO KEEP UP WITH ME!


SO IF YOU'RE NOT THE ABRASIVE ALL-BUSINESS WOMAN FROM SEVERAL WEEKS AGO OR LINDERMAN'S INQUISITIVE, FAWNING, COLLEGE COED, THEN WHO IS THE REAL MELANIE BUSH?


SHE'S WHOEVER SHE NEEDS TO BE TO GET WHAT SHE WANTS! CURRENTLY, THAT MEANS SHE'S THE WOMAN SITTING BEFORE YOU RIGHT NOW!


I HOPE THAT'S NOT TOO FLIPPANT OF AN ANSWER, MR. ROSS!
ON THE CONTRARY, MISS BUSH! I FIND IT REFRESHINGLY HONEST!
AND PLEASE, CALL ME ADAM!
ONLY IF YOU'LL CALL ME MELANIE!


SO, MELANIE, IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, YOU WANT TO OBSERVE A LARGE CROSS SECTION OF MY EMPLOYEES, IS THAT CORRECT?
YES, AND I ALSO HOPE TO ACTUALLY TALK TO A FEW TO GATHER SOME MORE INSIGHTFUL DATA, ALL WHILE REMAINING AS UNOBTRUSIVE AS POSSIBLE, I ASSURE YOU!
WELL, I HAVE SOME IDEAS ABOUT HOW WE CAN MAKE THAT WORK FOR YOU!


LET ME TALK TO SARAH FOR A FEW MINUTES TO SET THINGS UP! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
OF COURSE, ADAM! AND THANK YOU!


THAT... WENT BETTER THAN I COULD HAVE POSSIBLY HOPED!
OF COURSE HE OBVIOUSLY WASN'T THE PUSHOVER THAT LINDERMAN WAS! HENCE THE MORE... EXTREME TACTICS!
HMPH! IF I'D PULLED ANY OF THOSE MOVES ON LINDERMAN, I DO BELIEVE HE'D HAVE FAINTED!


CHALK UP ANOTHER WIN FOR PROPER, IN-DEPTH RESEARCH TECHNIQUES! WITHOUT THEM, I DON'T THINK I COULD'VE WON HIM OVER SO EASILY!
TO THINK, I ALMOST DISMISSED HIS PLAYBOY INTERVIEW AS DRIVEL!


BUT WITHOUT IT I WOULDN'T HAVE LEARNED OF HIS PROPENSITY FOR WOMEN WHO WEAR BLACK LINGERIE!
I DO BELIEVE THAT ASPECT OF MY OUTFIT WAS THE CLINCHER!
OKAY, YOU'RE ALL SET!


SARAH HERE WILL SHOW YOU AROUND AND GIVE YOU THE FEEL OF THE PLACE! I'D DO IT, BUT I HAVE A MEETING TO ATTEND!
BUT PLEASE, LET ME KNOW IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE I CAN DO TO HELP, MELANIE!
OH, YOU'VE BEEN SO WONDERFUL AS IT IS! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP, ADAM!


HI MELANIE! JUST FOLLOW ME THIS WAY!


SO... MELANIE! YOU'VE DEFINITELY CHANGED YOUR LOOK A BIT SINCE THE LAST TIME YOU VISITED US!
YES, I KNOW! I'VE KIND OF COME TO THE REALIZATION LATELY THAT EVERYTHING DOESN'T ALWAYS NATURALLY WORK OUT FAIRLY AND LOGICALLY!
SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO GO THAT EXTRA STEP AND USE WHATEVER'S AVAILABLE TO YOUR FULL ADVANTAGE!


WHY? DON'T YOU APPROVE?
ON THE CONTRARY! I SAY, "YOU GO, GIRL!" 'CAUSE I THINK YOU LOOK GREAT!
BUT LET ME GIVE YOU ONE LITTLE PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT MR. ROSS!
AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?


HE LOVES WOMEN! ESPECIALLY YOUNG, SEXY WOMEN, AS YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED! BUT HE LOVES THEM ALL... NOT ANY ONE IN PARTICULAR, IF YOU GET MY MEANING!
SO, IF THIS IS ALL SOME SORT OF PLAN TO TRY AND SNAG MR. ROSS FOR YOURSELF...!
THAT... IS THE FARTHEST THING FROM MY MIND, SARAH! TRUST ME ON THAT!
I WAS SENT HERE BY MY DEPARTMENT CHAIR TO DO MY RESEARCH, AND THAT'S ALL I PLAN TO DO!


BELIEVE ME, I'D NEVER EVEN HEARD OF ADAM ROSS BEFORE DR. KIMBALL SUGGESTED THAT I...!
KIMBALL? THAT WOULDN'T BE RUTH KIMBALL WOULD IT?
ACTUALLY, IT WOULD BE! SHE'S BEEN OUR DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR!
RIGHT AFTER SHE "RESIGNED" FROM HERE! IT FIGURES!


I... I DIDN'T KNOW SHE WORKED HERE!
WELL, IT WASN'T FOR VERY LONG! SHE WAS ONLY HERE A COUPLE OF MONTHS BEFORE SHE WAS ASKED TO RESIGN BY MR. ROSS HIMSELF!
REALLY? AND DO YOU KNOW WHY?
UNFORTUNATELY, NO! AS MUCH AS EVERYONE WAS ACHING FOR THE SORDID DETAILS, ONLY SHE AND MR. ROSS KNOW THE REAL REASON!


AND, OF COURSE, YOU DIDN'T HEAR ANY OF THIS FROM ME! RIGHT?
COOL! NOW THAT WE'VE GOT ALL THE IMPORTANT DIRT OUT OF THE WAY...!
I'M SORRY, SARAH! DID YOU SAY SOMETHING? I'M AFRAID I ZONED OUT AND HAVEN'T HEARD A WORD YOU'VE SAID FOR THE LAST, OH.... MINUTE OR SO!


WE'VE SET YOU UP AT THIS DESK AS KIND OF YOUR BASE OF OPERATIONS! MR. ROSS THOUGHT IT'D BE BEST IF WE TOLD EVERYONE YOU WERE AN INTERN GATHERING DATA FOR HUMAN RESOURCES!
HE FIGURED EMPLOYEES MIGHT BE A LITTLE MORE COMFORTABLE TALKING TO SOMEONE FROM HR THAN A STUDENT GATHERING DATA FOR A SCHOOL PROJECT!
THIS IS HARDLY A "SCHOOL PROJECT"! THE RESEARCH I'M DOING WILL...!

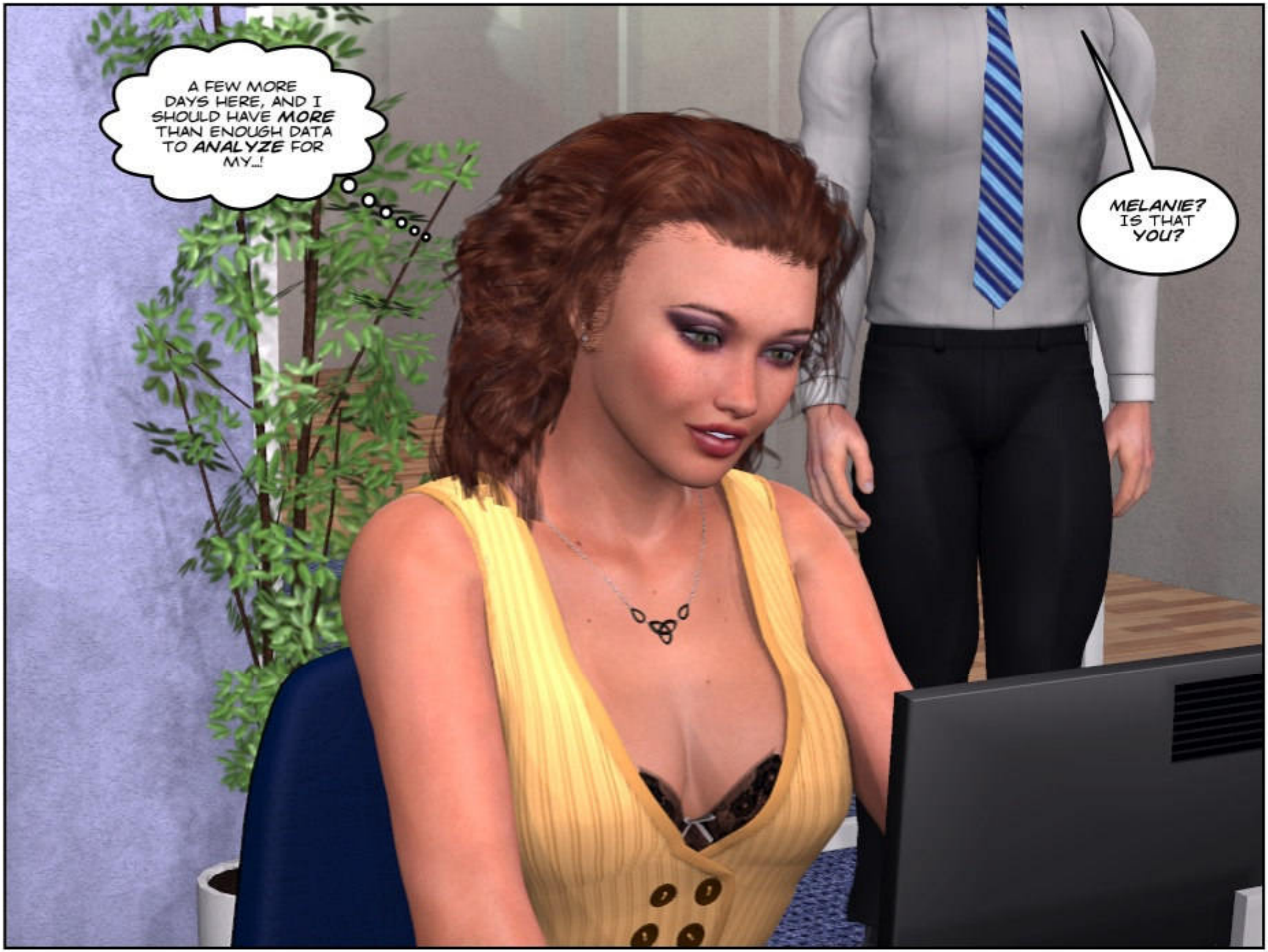

"HMPH!" "SCHOOL PROJECT" INDEED!
IF YOU NEED ANYTHING ELSE, JUST GIVE ME A CALL!


IT'S INTERESTING THAT RUTH INSISTED I GATHER RESEARCH FROM THIS PARTICULAR COMPANY! ONE THAT SHE USED TO WORK AT AND RESIGNED FROM UNDER SEEMINGLY INAUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES!
DISCOVERING HER MOTIVES FOR ASSIGNING ME HERE WHILE NOT TELLING ME OF HER HISTORY AT ALEC CORP. COULD PROVE VERY INTERESTING AND ENLIGHTENING!


BUT, AS ALWAYS, MY RESEARCH COMES FIRST! TIME TO GET STARTED!


Later that afternoon...
A VERY GOOD START! IN LESS THAN ONE DAY I'VE ACCUMULATED RESPONSES FROM SEVERAL DOZEN EMPLOYEES AS WELL AS OBSERVED AND DOCUMENTED NEARLY ONE HUNDRED INTERACTIONS!


IT SEEMS ADAM WAS CORRECT! HIS EMPLOYEES SEEM MUCH MORE AT EASE WITH AN HR INTERN THAN WITH A PSYCHOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT!
IT SEEMS DATA-GATHERING IN A CORPORATE SETTING IS MUCH EASIER THAN THE UNIVERSITY SETTING! I'LL HAVE TO KEEP THAT IN MIND FOR ANY FUTURE STUDIES!


A FEW MORE DAYS HERE, AND I SHOULD HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH DATA TO ANALYZE FOR MY...!
MELANIE? IS THAT YOU?


GASP! STEVE?!
I THOUGHT THAT WAS YOU, BUT I WASN'T SURE UNTIL NOW! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?


I... I'M COLLECTING DATA FOR MY RESEARCH! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I WORK HERE! I HAVE FOR ABOUT FIVE YEARS! I EVEN HAVE MY OWN OFFICE DOWN ON THE 3RD FLOOR... WHICH IS ACTUALLY MORE OF A CONVERTED CLOSET, BUT IT'S BETTER THAN THE BULLPEN!


I... I GUESS IT'S A GOOD THING WE'VE RUN INTO EACH OTHER AGAIN!
BECAUSE I REALLY WANTED TO EXPLAIN ABOUT THE OTHER NIGHT!
REALLY?
OH...!


FIRST, I WANT TO APOLOGIZE FOR MY BEHAVIOR! I WAS HAVING A REALLY WONDERFUL TIME WITH YOU UNTIL I... WELL, I ESSENTIALLY LOST CONTROL OF MYSELF!
ALTHOUGH ALCOHOL DID PLAY A PART, IT DOESN'T EXCUSE THE WAY I ACTED BEFORE I PASSED OUT!
YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE, MELANIE!
YES... YES I DO, BECAUSE I ALSO WANT TO THANK YOU FOR NOT TELLING HANNAH HOW I BEHAVED AND WHAT WE ALMOST DID!


I'M EMBARRASSED ENOUGH WITHOUT ANY MORE PEOPLE KNOWING!
LOOK MELANIE, THESE THINGS HAPPEN! AND IF IT MAKES ANY DIFFERENCE, I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING TO DAN ABOUT IT EITHER... AND I DON'T PLAN TO!


YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I APPRECIATE YOUR DISCRETION AND YOUR GALLANTRY!
ANOTHER MAN MIGHT HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION, BUT INSTEAD, YOU MADE SURE I GOT HOME SAFELY!


AND I REALLY, REALLY WANT TO THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID! AND... FOR WHAT YOU DIDN'T DO!
HMMM! I'VE NEVER BEEN CALLED "GALLANT" BEFORE! I THINK I KIND OF LIKE IT!


I'M ALSO GLAD WE'VE RUN INTO EACH OTHER AGAIN, SINCE I NEVER GOT YOUR NUMBER THE OTHER NIGHT!
I WAS HOPING WE COULD GET TOGETHER SOMETIME... MAYBE EVEN TONIGHT!
OH!


A... A DATE?! THAT MEANS BEING ALONE WITH STEVE AGAIN... LIKE WE WERE THE OTHER NIGHT!
BUT UNLIKE THE CLUB, A DATE PRESUMES A MUCH MORE... INTIMATE SETTING! I... I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD...!
MELANIE! COULD I SEE YOU IN MY OFFICE, PLEASE?


UMMM... I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, ADAM!
ADAM?!


I'M SORRY, STEVE! CAN I GET BACK TO YOU ABOUT THIS?
OF COURSE! AROUND HERE, WHEN MR. ROSS CALLS, YOU'VE GOTTA JUMP!
ADAM?!


I CAN'T BELIEVE HE STILL WANTS TO ASSOCIATE WITH ME AFTER THE WAY I BEHAVED THE OTHER NIGHT!
CONSIDERING THE WAY I THREW MYSELF AT HIM, I SHOULD BE SKEPTICAL OF HIS MOTIVES!
BUT FROM EVERYTHING I'VE OBSERVED ABOUT HIM... THE WAY HE'S TREATED ME, BOTH THAT NIGHT AND TODAY... TELLS ME I CAN TRUST HIM!


OH MY...! LISTEN TO ME! DEBATING WHETHER OR NOT TO GO ON A DATE! WITH... A MAN!? IT'S UTTERLY RIDICULOUS TO EVEN CONTEMPLATE!
I MEAN IT HAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH MY RESEARCH! NOTHING AT ALL TO BE GAINED FROM IT!


JUST THE COMPANY OF A PLEASANT, INTELLIGENT PERSON... WHO TREATS ME WITH RESPECT... AND ALSO SEEMS TO CARE...!


.. CARE IN A WAY I'VE NEVER..!






YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, ADAM?
YES, COME IN, MELANIE! HAVE A SEAT!


SO, HOW DID IT GO TODAY... FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW, THAT IS!
IT WENT EXTREMELY WELL! THANKS TO YOUR IDEA, I WAS ABLE TO COLLECT A GREAT DEAL OF DATA TODAY!
EVERYONE TOOK ME FOR JUST ANOTHER EMPLOYEE AND HAD NO QUALMS WITH MY OBSERVATIONS AND OCCASIONAL QUESTIONS!


THAT MAY HAVE HELPED SOMEWHAT, BUT FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND, YOU ARE THE PRIMARY REASON EVERYTHING IS GOING SO SMOOTHLY!
YOUR EFFICIENCY AND THE WAY YOU HANDLED YOURSELF AROUND MY PEOPLE LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR QUITE SOME TIME!
WELL, ALTHOUGH I HAVE BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR... SEVERAL YEARS, I MUST ADMIT THAT THIS IS MY FIRST REAL FORAY INTO GATHERING DATA IN THIS TYPE OF SETTING!


I FIND THAT VERY HARD TO BELIEVE!
THEN I THINK I CAN SAFELY SAY THAT YOU'RE A NATURAL AT IT, MELANIE!
WHAT CAN I SAY? ITS TRUE!
WELL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH, ADAM!


WHICH IS WHY I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT AN OPPORTUNITY I THINK YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN!
OPPORTUNITY? FOR WHAT?
AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND YOUR RESEARCH BASE EXPONENTIALLY!


EXPAND MY RESEARCH?! OKAY, YOU'VE DEFINITELY GOT MY ATTENTION! PLEASE... TELL ME MORE!


I WOULD LOVE TO, MELANIE, BUT UNFORTUNATELY I HAVE ANOTHER MEETING I HAVE TO GET TO, AN ENGAGEMENT TO ATTEND THIS EVENING AND THEN I'M BOOKED SOLID THROUGH TOMORROW!
BUT, IF IT'S ABOUT MY RESEARCH...?


I UNDERSTAND YOUR EAGERNESS TO HEAR THE DETAILS, AND MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT IT UP WITHOUT ALLOWING MYSELF MORE TIME TO DISCUSS IT WITH YOU!
BUT IT SEEMS IT WILL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW!
JUST A FEW DETAILS WOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH, ADAM! PLEASE!
WAITING AT LEAST TWO WHOLE DAYS FOR THIS KIND OF INFORMATION IS JUST A LITTLE MADDENING, TO SAY THE LEAST!


I UNDERSTAND, I TRULY DO, AND I'M SORRY FOR BRINGING IT UP! UNLESS...!
UNLESS..?


THE FUNCTION I'M ATTENDING TONIGHT IS A SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT! IF YOU WERE WILLING TO ACCOMPANY ME, WE WOULD HAVE AMPLE TIME TO DISCUSS ALL THE DETAILS YOU WISH!
A SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT? SO, IT WOULD BE LIKE A... A DATE?
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, I GUESS YOU COULD CALL IT THAT!


BUT... IF YOU'D RATHER WAIT SEVERAL DAYS OR HAVE PLANS, I UNDERSTAND...!
NO! NO... I DON'T HAVE ANY PLANS! AND...
YES, MELANIE...?


AND... I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO JOIN YOU THIS EVENING, ADAM!
EXCELLENT! SARAH WILL GIVE YOU ALL THE DETAILS YOU'LL NEED FOR THE EVENING!


I'LL SEE YOU THIS EVENING THEN, MELANIE!
I... I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT, ADAM!




HI SARAH... ADAM SAID YOU HAD THE DETAILS ABOUT HIS ENGAGEMENT THIS EVENING?
YES, I'LL HAVE THEM FOR YOU IN JUST A MINUTE!




THIS WASN'T MY IDEA!
I KNOW!


IT WAS ALL HIS IDEA!
OH, I KNOW!


HERE... HE'LL BE SENDING A CAR FOR YOU AT 7:30!
TRY TO BE READY! HE HATES IT WHEN HIS DATES ARE LATE!
BUT I'M NOT HIS...! *SIGH!*


CAN YOU LOOK UP A NUMBER FOR ME, SARAH? IT'S HERE IN THE BUILDING!
OH... OKAY! THANKS!
WELL, I HAVE TO GET THESE PAPERS TO THE MESSENGER BEFORE HE LEAVES! BUT YOU CAN ACCESS ANY PERSON IN THE BUILDING BY NAME!




Searching— Harrison
Results— Harrison, Alice
Harrison, Mark
Harrison, Steve


THIS IS STEVE HARRISON...!
HI STEVE! IT... IT'S MELANIE...!


After the disappointing phone call, a time for some inner-reflection...
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ACTUALLY TURNED STEVE DOWN! DO I HAVE TO REMIND YOU HOW MUCH FUN WE HAD WITH HIM?


...IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE?
I'M WELL AWARE OF THE GROWING ATTRACTION YOU HAVE FOR HIM!


AND EVEN IF I DIDN'T THINK IT PRUDENT TO SLOW DOWN AND ANALYZE THE CONVOLUTED AND IRRATIONAL SITUATIONS THAT WILL UNDOUBTIBLY CREATE, THE OPPORTUNITY MENTIONED BY ADAM OBVIOUSLY TAKES PRECEDENCE!


YOU DO KNOW HE'S DANGLING THAT LITTLE "OPPORTUNITY" OF HIS IN FRONT OF YOU JUST TO GET INTO OUR PANTIES, DON'T YOU?
THAT PROSPECT HAD CROSSED MY MIND! AND IT'S AN OUTCOME THAT OBVIOUSLY CANNOT AND WILL NOT HAPPEN!


FAMOUS LAST WORDS, BIG S! FAMOUS... LAST... WORDS!
WHEN THE TIME COMES... AND IT WILL... DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN KEEP GRABBY MCMONEYBAGS AT BAY WITHOUT SACRIFICING THIS "WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY" HE'S PROMISING YOU?
OR EVEN BLOWING YOUR CURRENT RESEARCH IF YOU PISS HIM OFF ENOUGH?


SIGH! I ADMIT THAT EVEN WITH THE INCREASED INPUT YOU'VE PROVIDED ME WITH THE LAST FEW DAYS, THAT IS A SCENARIO I MAY BE ILL-EQUIPPED TO HANDLE!
YEAH, WE WERE ONE SEXY CHICK TODAY... AT ARM'S LENGTH AND FOR SHORT PERIODS OF TIME, AT LEAST! BUT A WHOLE EVENING OF UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL? THAT'S GONNA BE TOUGH!


TOUGH_ BUT DOABLE!
HMMM... YOUR CONCEPT OF "DOABLE" IS RARELY IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE WHOLE! OR HAVE YOU ALREADY FORGOTTEN THE OTHER EVENING?
BIG S, HONEY... I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT EVENING! WOOF!


HOWEVER, TAKING A NOTE FROM YOU, I'VE LEARNED FROM MY MISTAKES!
I DON'T MAKE MISTAKES...!
JUST WORK WITH ME HERE, BIG S! OKAY?!


FIRST, WE FILL HANNAH IN ON THE DETAILS OF TONIGHT! SHE GOT US READY FOR THE NIGHT AT THE CLUB, SO SHE SHOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM GETTING US READY FOR SOME HIGH-CLASS SNOOZE-FEST UNIVERSITY FUND-RAISER AT AN ART GALLERY!
SHE MAY NOT BE THERE WITH US THIS TIME, BUT SHE CAN SURE AS HELL GIVE US ENOUGH POINTERS AHEAD OF TIME TO GET US THROUGH THE EVENING!
MAYBE...! AND NOW, THE OTHER SHOE...?
YOU KNOW ME SO WELL!


AND SECOND... GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE INPUT THIS EVENING! I'M NOT ASKING FOR TOTAL CONTROL, BUT A LITTLE MORE THAN WHAT I HAD TODAY WOULD GO A LONG WAY IN KEEPING MCMONEYBAGS HAPPY WITHOUT LOSING OUR COOL!
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
SURPRISINGLY LUCID AND WELL THOUGHT OUT! MAYBE YOU ARE LEARNING FROM ME AFTER ALL!
THAT'S ABOUT THE CLOSEST I'LL EVER GET TO HEAVY PRAISE FROM YOU, SO... I'LL TAKE IT!


HEY, IF WE WRAP UP THIS SHINDIG EARLY ENOUGH, MAYBE WE'LL STILL HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO SEE STEVE? CAN'T WE WORK HIM IN? HMMMM?
AS MUCH AS I'M SURE YOUR WAYWARD LIBIDO WOULD LOVE THAT, LET'S JUST FOCUS ON THE PRIMARY PROBLEM AT HAND! SHALL WE?
AWWW... YOU'RE NO FUN!


Chapter 7
by CBlack
Superego


That evening, at the Schwartzenheim Art Museum...




OKAY, I DIDN'T THINK IT POSSIBLE, BUT... YEAH! THIS IS MORE BORING THAN WATCHING GOLF ON TV!
WHY THE HELL RUTH INSISTED I COME TO THIS THING, I HAVE NO IDEA!


GOOD EVENING, JEREMY! I SEE YOU MADE IT AFTER ALL!
CONSIDERING YOU PRETTY MUCH TOLD ME TO COME, I DIDN'T THINK I HAD MUCH OF AN OPTION NOT TO!


YOU LOOK PRETTY OUTSTANDING TONIGHT, IF I MAY SAY SO!
AND YOU... YOU'RE WEARING A SWEATER! YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN HERE, DISCOUNTING THE WAIT STAFF, WHO'S NOT WEARING A COAT AND TIE!
I THOUGHT I WAS PRETTY SPECIFIC ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS EVENING AND THE EXPECTED ATTIRE, JEREMY! WHAT HAPPENED?


RUTH, THE ONLY JACKET I OWN IS BRIGHT RED, REPELS WATER, IS FLEECE-LINED AND I ONLY WEAR IT SKIING! OTHER THAN THAT, I HAVE NO USE FOR A DRESS COAT!
I DID ROUND UP A TIE, THOUGH! SEE? MY BEST STAR-TREK TIE!
YES... THANK GOD YOU WORE A SWEATER OVER IT, AT LEAST!


LOOK, I'M SORRY, RUTH, BUT I TOLD YOU I'VE NEVER BEEN TO ONE OF THESE HIGH-SOCIETY FUND RAISERS BEFORE! SO WHY'D YOU STILL INSIST I COME?
IT'S AT FUNCTIONS LIKE THIS WHERE WE, AS A STAFF, NEED TO IMPRESS THE PEOPLE WHO DONATE MONEY TO THE UNIVERSITY!
CAN YOU HONESTLY THINK OF ANYONE ELSE IN OUR DEPARTMENT WHO COULD REPRESENT US AS WELL AS YOU?


WELL... WHAT ABOUT STAN?
SURE! WHY NOT? HE'S BEEN HERE LONGER THAN ME! AND... I'M PRETTY DAMN SURE HE HAS A SUIT!
LINDERMAN? ARE YOU SERIOUS?


THE LAST TIME STAN WAS AT ONE OF THESE FUNCTIONS, HE DID LITTLE MORE THAN OGLE THE ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMEN THERE!
HE SPENT THE BULK OF THE EVENING PRACTICALLY STALKING ONE BUXOM YOUNG LADY WHO TURNED OUT TO BE THE DAUGHTER OF ONE OF OUR MOST BENEVOLENT DONORS!
OOPS!


AND CONSIDERING THE AMOUNT OF CLEAVAGE I'M SEEING AROUND HERE THIS EVENING, HE'S THE LAST PERSON I WANT REPRESENTING OUR DEPARTMENT!
I GET YOUR POINT!
SO, AM I IMAGINING THINGS, OR ARE ALMOST ALL THE MEN HERE A LOT OLDER THAN THE WOMEN?
NO, YOU'RE NOT MISTAKEN... UNFORTUNATELY!


TOSSING ASIDE MATURE, BUT RELIABLE "COMMODITIES" IN FAVOR OF NEW, FLASHY MODELS IS VERY PREVALENT AMONG THE WEALTHY AND INFLUENTIAL!
THEY HAVE THE POWER AND THE MONEY TO DO PRETTY MUCH AS THEY PLEASE, NO MATTER WHO IT HURTS!
YET, SINCE THE STATE REFUSES TO FUND US PROPERLY, WE ARE FORCED TO KOW-TOW TO THESE "PILLARS" OF THE COMMUNITY IN ORDER TO KEEP OUR DEPARTMENTS FINANCIALLY SOLVENT!


AND, SPEAK OF THE DEVIL, THERE HE IS HIMSELF... THE POSTER-CHILD FOR THE ONE PERCENT... ADAM ROSS!
THE IRONY IS THAT THE WORST OFFENDER IS POTENTIALLY OUR LARGEST DONOR!


AND, AS USUAL, STRUTTING AROUND SHOWING OFF HIS TROPHY-MODEL DU JOUR!
PHEH! GIRLS LIKE THAT OBVIOUSLY HAVE NO SELF-RESPECT!
WHO NEEDS SELF-RESPECT WHEN YOU'VE GOT LEGS LIKE THAT? OUCH!
Oooo


SO, GET OUT THERE AND PUT A FACE ON THE DEPARTMENT! SHOW THEM WE'RE NOT JUST A COLLECTION OF OLD WHITE MEN WITH HEAVY ACCENTS!
I'M COUNTING ON YOU, JEREMY!
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN, RUTH!


JESUS! NO PRESSURE THERE AT ALL! THANKS A LOT, RUTH!
YOU HAVE ANYTHING BACK THERE BESIDES CHAMPAGNE?
I'M AFRAID NOT, SIR!
GREAT...!


THIS EVENING JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER!
ANOTHER CHAMPAGNE, PLEASE!
I'LL NEED TO GET SOME MORE GLASSES FROM THE BACK, MA'AM! IT WON'T TAKE ME A MOMENT!
THAT'S FINE!


WHOA! IT'S ADAM ROSS'S UBER-HOT DATE!
MAYBE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON HER WILL TRANSLATE INTO A GOOD IMPRESSION ON ROSS! COULDN'T HURT TO TRY!


YOU CAN HAVE THIS ONE, MISS! I CAN WAIT UNTIL HE GETS BACK!
WHY, THANK YOU, JEREMY!
OH, YOU'RE WELCOME, BUT...!


UMMM... HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME? I NEVER..!
OH... HOLY....!!


OH MY GOD, SID...!
AS USUAL, I'LL HAVE TO IMPLORE YOU TO KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN AND REMEMBER THE CORRECT NAME TO USE WHEN ADDRESSING ME, JEREMY! PLEASE!


JESUS, SID... MEL... MELANIE! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU...! I MEAN, YOU LOOK SO...! AND... AND...!


AND YOU'RE DATING ADAM ROSS?!
OF COURSE I'M NOT DATING HIM! I'M MERELY ACCOMPANYING HIM HERE THIS EVENING TO FURTHER MY RESEARCH!
HOW THE HECK DOES BEING ADAM ROSS'S MEGA-HOT DATE FURTHER YOUR RESEARCH?


HE SAID HE HAD A REMARKABLE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER MY RESEARCH, BUT TONIGHT WAS THE ONLY TIME HE HAD TO TALK ABOUT IT FOR SEVERAL DAYS, BECAUSE...!


YOU... YOU REALLY THINK I'M MEGA-HOT?
HUH?!
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? HAVE YOU LOOKED AT YOURSELF IN THE MIRROR?
EVERY GUY IN THE PLACE HAS BEEN EYEING YOU! HELL, EVEN RUTH REFERRED TO YOU AS A "TROPHY-MODEL"!


DR. KIMBALL IS HERE?
YEAH! OVER THERE! GREEN DRESS... SCARY MAKEUP...! YOU CAN'T MISS HER!
INTERESTING! HOW DID SHE REACT WHEN SHE SAW ME?
WELL, SHE DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS YOU, BUT REGARDLESS, SHE WASN'T VERY HAPPY SEEING ADAM ROSS WITH SUCH A YOUNG, HOT BABE! I MEAN, UHHH...!


DID YOU KNOW SHE USED TO WORK FOR ADAM?
PROBABLY BECAUSE SHE WAS ONLY THERE FOR A SHORT TIME BEFORE BEING ASKED TO RESIGN!
ADAM?
RUTH USED TO WORK FOR ROSS? BUT... SHE'S NEVER MENTIONED ANYTHING ABOUT THAT!
ASKED TO RESIGN? WHY?


I DON'T KNOW! NOBODY AT THE COMPANY SEEMS TO KNOW EITHER!
BUT I'M STARTING TO DEVELOP A WORKABLE HYPOTHESIS!
SUCH AS...?
JEREMY...?!


OH, UH... HI AGAIN, RUTH!
I'M SURE I DON'T HAVE TO REMIND YOU, JEREMY, THAT THE REASON YOU'RE HERE TONIGHT IS NOT TO HANG AROUND THE BAR, BUT INSTEAD TO MINGLE WITH ALL THE GUESTS!
OH, I'M WELL AWARE OF THAT, RUTH! YOU SEE, I...!


I'M SURE THIS YOUNG... LADY... WOULD MUCH RATHER HURRY BACK TO MR. ROSS!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I REALLY SHOULD BE GOING BACK TO HIM, AND...!
I DON'T THINK I CAUGHT YOUR NAME, MY DEAR...!
OKAY... HAVE IT YOUR WAY, RUTH!


IT'S... ME, DR. KIMBALL! MELANIE BUSH!
MELANIE?!
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING HERE?!


MORE IMPORTANTLY... WHY ARE YOU WITH ADAM ROSS?! AND DRESSED LIKE... LIKE THAT?!
MR. ROSS ASKED ME TO ACCOMPANY HIM HERE THIS EVENING TO DISCUSS MY RESEARCH! IT WAS THE ONLY TIME HE HAD AVAILABLE TO DO SO!
AND AS FOR MY ATTIRE, COMPARED TO MOST OTHER WOMEN HERE, IT SEEMS MOST APPROPRIATE FOR THE OCCASION!


HE SAID HE WANTS TO "DISCUSS YOUR RESEARCH?" IF YOU BELIEVE THAT THEN YOU'RE A LOT MORE NAIVE THAN YOU LOOK!
WHY SHOULD I HAVE ANY REASON TO DOUBT HIS INTENTIONS?
BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW HIM THE WAY I...!


I MEAN... IF HE'S LIKE MOST MEN, HE'LL SAY MOST ANYTHING TO GET WHAT HE WANTS! ESPECIALLY IF WHAT HE WANTS IS FROM A WOMAN!
YOU JUST MAKE SURE YOU KEEP YOUR... INVOLVEMENT... PROFESSIONAL AND NOTHING MORE! UNDERSTAND?


ACTUALLY, DR. KIMBALL, I'M UNAWARE OF ANY UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS THAT WOULD PERTAIN TO ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MYSELF AND MR. ROSS! IF WE WERE TO HAVE ONE, THAT IS!
ALTHOUGH I APPRECIATE YOUR APPARENT CONCERN FOR MY WELL-BEING, YOUR DIRECTIVE REGARDING MY OFF-CAMPUS PERSONAL LIFE IS FRIVOLOUS!
WHY... HOW DARE YOU...?!


NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I SHOULD BE GETTING BACK TO ADAM!
ADAM?!


SO, GOOD EVENING, DR. KIMBALL... PROFESSOR PLOTKIN!


OH!! THAT LITTLE...!!!


OH MAN! I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS SID THINKS HE'S DOING! BUT WHATEVER IT IS, I'M STAYING THE HELL OUT OF IT!


JESUS! A GUY COULD MAKE A CAREER OUT OF TRYING TO ANALYZE WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE THAT HEAD OF HERS... I MEAN, HIS... I MEAN... SHEESH!


INTERESTING! I DO BELIEVE THAT'S THE CLOSEST I'VE EVER COME TO LOSING MY TEMPER!
A LITTLE DISORIENTING, YET EXHILARATING, ALL AT THE SAME TIME!


I MEAN, WHO DOES THAT WOMAN THINK SHE IS, TELLING ME WHO I CAN AND CANNOT ASSOCIATE WITH?
I REALLY DO THINK I'D ENJOY SEEING HER GET HER COMMUPPANCE ONE OF THESE DAYS!


THERE YOU ARE, MELANIE! I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK YOU'D ABANDONED ME!
I'M SORRY I TOOK SO LONG! I GOT IN A... CONVERSATION WITH SOME OF MY PROFESSORS!


YES, I SAW YOU TALKING TO RUTH KIMBALL! SHE SEEMED UPSET ABOUT SOMETHING!
I HOPE YOU AREN'T HAVING ANY DIFFICULTIES WITH HER BECAUSE OF ME!
WELL, SHE WAS DEFINITELY SURPRISED SEEING ME HERE WITH YOU, BUT I ASSURED HER THAT IT WAS NO CONCERN OF HERS AT ALL!
IT ISN'T, IS IT?


OF COURSE NOT! WHOMEVER I CHOOSE TO SOCIALIZE WITH IS NONE OF HER BUSINESS!
WHATEVER HISTORY SHE PERCEIVES US TO HAVE HAD, IS JUST THAT... HISTORY!
REALLY? I HAD NO IDEA YOU AND RUTH WERE THAT FAMILIAR WITH ONE ANOTHER!


YOU'LL HAVE TO TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT SOMETIME!
UNLESS, OF COURSE IT'S TOO PERSONAL IN NATURE!
FOR SUCH A BEAUTIFUL AND INTELLIGENT WOMAN WHO CAN SO EASILY HANDLE PEOPLE LIKE RUTH KIMBALL, I HAVE NO SECRETS!


BUT OUT HERE, WHERE WE RUN THE RISK OF BEING INTERRUPTED, JUST WON'T DO!
PERHAPS IF WE EXCUSED OURSELVES TO THE NEXT GALLERY..?
UH-HUH! ALMOST EXACTLY AS HANNAH PREDICTED HE'D SAY!
WELL, I WOULDN'T WANT TO TAKE YOU AWAY FROM YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES HERE...!
BESIDES, THAT GALLERY LOOKS LIKE IT'S CLOSED TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC!


SINCE I DONATED THAT PARTICULAR WING, WE DON'T COUNT AS "GENERAL PUBLIC"! BESIDES, IT WOULD ALSO GIVE US THE CHANCE TO DISCUSS THE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY I MENTIONED!
OH! MY RESEARCH? WELL, IN THAT CASE, MAYBE SOMEPLACE WITH FEWER DISTRACTIONS WOULD BE BETTER!


MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY!


MY WORD! THIS IS VERY IMPRESSIVE!
NIKE OF SAMOTHRACE
LUCRETIA


YOU DONATED ALL THIS?
THE WING... YES, AND SOME OF THE ARTWORK! THERE'S STILL MORE TO BE ADDED BEFORE THEY OPEN IT TO THE PUBLIC!


WOULD YOU CARE FOR A PRIVATE, PERSONAL TOUR?
I... I'D LIKE THAT!


WHAT I'D REALLY LIKE IS TO GET PAST ALL THIS SEXUAL INNUENDO AND FIND OUT ABOUT THIS RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY HE KEEPS HINTING AT!
NOT TO MENTION ALSO LEARNING ABOUT HIS AND RUTH'S INVOLVEMENT! I... I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING ALL ABOUT THAT!


OH, I KNOW FULL WELL WHAT HIS INTENTIONS ARE, AND IF I WAS THINKING MERELY WITH MY HEAD, I NEVER WOULD HAVE COME HERE TONIGHT!
BUT THE CHANCE TO EXPAND MY RESEARCH BASE IS TOO TEMPTING OF AN OFFER TO IGNORE! AND I'M SURE HE KNOWS THAT AND IS USING IT AS A CARROT TO KEEP ME AT HIS SIDE!


IT'S ALSO GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO IGNORE HOW I'M REACTING TO ALL THE ATTENTION I NOW RECEIVE AS MELANIE!
I HADN'T EVER PLANNED ON HER BEING THIS TYPE OF WOMAN, BUT I HAVE TO ADMIT MY NEW APPEARANCE AND ATTITUDE IS AN EXTREMELY POTENT COMBINATION! IT'S OPENED MORE DOORS THAN I'D THOUGHT POSSIBLE!


INTERESTING! THE EXTENT TO WHICH I'VE EMBRACED BEING "THIS" MELANIE RAISES SOME THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS.
I THOUGHT I WAS DRAWN TO STEVE SIMPLY BECAUSE A PART OF ME CRAVED PHYSICAL CONTACT! BUT NOW I AM BEGINNING TO THINK THESE FEELINGS MAY APPLY TO OTHER MEN AS WELL.
I BELIEVE MY ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING MY SEXUALITY NOW REQUIRE AMPLE REEXAMINATION...


SO... WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT ALL?
OH! IT'S... UMMM, MAGNIFICENT! A VERY IMPRESSIVE COLLECTION, TO SAY THE LEAST!
I'M GLAD YOU THINK SO! I WANTED JUST THE RIGHT BACKGROUND WHEN I DISCUSSED MY IDEAS WITH YOU!


YOUR IDEAS ABOUT MY RESEARCH? YES! I'D LOVE TO HEAR ALL ABOUT THEM!
FINALLY!


SEEING YOU TODAY, THE WAY YOU SO EASILY HANDLED PEOPLE AND THE DATA YOU COLLECTED, GOT ME THINKING HOW MUCH YOU COULD ACCOMPLISH IF YOU HAD EASY ACCESS TO A MUCH LARGER AND DIVERSE POPULATION OF PEOPLE!
YOU COULD REALLY DO THAT? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW EXPANDING THE DATA POOL COULD IMPROVE MY STUDY?
SO... I TAKE YOU'RE EXCITED BY THE IDEA!
ARE YOU KIDDING? IN MY FIELD, IT COULD MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MERE JOURNAL SUBMISSION AND THE HUMBOLDT PRIZE!


I THOUGHT SO! BECAUSE THE BUILDING YOU WERE IN TODAY WAS MERELY THE LOCAL CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS FOR ALEC! THERE ARE A MULTITUDE OF COMPANIES AND BUSINESSES ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND AROUND THE WORLD THAT I CONTROL AS CEO OF ALEC!
ONE EMAIL FROM ME AND YOU'D HAVE ACCESS TO EVERY EMPLOYEE IN EVERY ONE OF THOSE COMPANIES! TENS OF THOUSANDS OF EMPLOYEES OF DIFFERENT RACES AND DIFFERENT ETHNICITIES, WHOSE JOBS RANGE FROM WHITE-COLLAR EXECUTIVES TO BLUE-COLLAR LABORERS!
OH, AND IF I INCLUDE ALL THE CORPORATIONS WHOSE BOARDS OF DIRECTORS I SERVE ON, THAT NUMBER CLIMBS INTO THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS!


SO, MELANIE...! INTERESTED?


INTERESTED!? HOW ON EARTH DO I RESPOND TO AN OFFER OF THIS MAGNITUDE? SOMETHING THAT COULD FINALLY GAIN ME THE RECOGNITION I'VE WORKED FOR AND DESERVED ALL THESE YEARS?!
MY GOD, ADAM! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY! IT'S MORE THAN I COULD POSSIBLY HAVE HOPED FOR!


WELL, A WOMAN AS INTELLIGENT AS YOURSELF WOULD OBVIOUSLY SAY "YES"!
OF... OF COURSE! BUT I... I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO... HOW I CAN... HOW I...!




OOOOHHH! I HAD SERIOUSLY HOPED TO AVOID SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENING!
BUT THE CONFLUENCE OF EVENTS THIS EVENING... ADAM'S ATTENTIVENESS... THE WAY THIS DRESS MAKES ME FEEL...! IT'S ALL MAKING IT VERY HARD TO...!
WAIT A MINUTE! IS... IS THAT RUTH?!


OH MY GOD! THAT IS RUTH... HIDING IN THE DOORWAY WATCHING US! SHE MUST HAVE SEEN US COME IN HERE AND FOLLOWED!
I'M BEGINNING TO GET A PRETTY GOOD PICTURE OF WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP SHE AND ADAM HAD AND WHY SHE WAS ASKED TO RESIGN!


WELL, IF MY DEPARTMENT CHAIR/ STALKER INSISTS ON SPYING ON US, THEN I SEE NO REASON NOT TO GIVE HER A PROPER SHOW!
YOU'RE VERY QUIET ALL OF A SUDDEN! I HOPE MY FORWARDNESS HASN'T UPSET YOU!


ON THE CONTRARY! I CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER WAY TO SEAL OUR NEW... RELATIONSHIP!
NOW... WHERE WERE WE?


UCRETIA


WHY THAT LITTLE SLUT! I'LL BET SHE HAD THIS ALL PLANNED FROM THE START!
PLAYING THE YOUNG STUDIOUS COED JUST LONG ENOUGH TO GET HER CHANCE TO SINK HER TEETH INTO SOMEONE LIKE ADAM! AND I FELL FOR IT!


BUT IF SHE THINKS I'M GOING TO LET HER GET AWAY WITH IT, SHE'S GOT ANOTHER THINK COMING!


I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SLOW THIS DOWN SOON BEFORE ADAM'S NATURAL OVER-CONFIDENCE GETS OUT OF CONTROL!
BUT I DO SO HOPE RUTH "ENJOYS" THE SHOW WHILE IT LASTS!
SERVES HER RIGHT FOR SPYING ON US, AND TAKING MY RIGHTFUL SPOT AS DEPARTMENT CHAIR!
VENUS


WHAT? SHE'S GONE? ALREADY?
WELL... FINE! I GUESS THAT MEANS IT'S TIME TO PUT AN END TO THIS!
CRET


OOOHHH!
WELL... MAYBE
NOT QUITE
YET!


I HAD NO IDEA THE STERNOCLEIDOMASTOIDEUS WAS AN EROGENOUS ZONE!


OHHH, I REALLY SHOULD PUT A STOP TO THIS BEFORE IT GETS TOO OUT OF CONTROL!
DONT YOU DARE!
LUC
VENUS


THAT IS THE FACE OF A SUPREMELY HAPPY WOMAN! WHY THE HELL WOULD YOU WANT TO FUCK THAT UP?


BECAUSE, AS USUAL, I'M THE ONLY ONE LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE AND REALIZING WHAT COULD AND WOULD HAPPEN IF THIS IS ALLOWED TO CONTINUE TOO LONG!
NO, AS USUAL, YOU'RE JUST A PARTY-POOPER!
HOW COULD YOU NOT BE ENJOYING THIS?


ON THE CONTRARY, ADAM'S NEWS ABOUT THE EXPANSION OF MY RESEARCH BASE HAS GOT ME POSITIVELY TICKLED!
"TICKLED"? SERIOUSLY? YOU'VE GOT ONE OF THE RICHEST GUYS IN THE COUNTRY NIBBLING ON YOUR NECK AND ALL YOU FEEL IS "TICKLED"?


SHIT! LEFT TO ME, WE'D BE A QUIVERING MESS MOANING LIKE A TEN DOLLAR HOOKER!
OH YES! JUST THE IMPRESSION I WAS HOPING TO PRESENT HIM WITH!


YOU GOTTA ADMIT, THOUGH, WE ARE DOIN' PRETTY DAMN GOOD TONIGHT!
YOU'RE NOT HYPERVENTILATING IN THE BATHROOM AND I'M NOT TRYING TO MOLEST HIM ON THE SIDEWALK!
ALL IN ALL, A PRETTY SOLID PERFORMANCE!


OOOOHHH! BUT WHEN HE STARTS PLAYIN' WITH THE GIRLS LIKE THAT, ALL BETS ARE OFF! I LOVE THAT SHIT!


YES, I ASSUMED AS MUCH, HAVING NOTICED THAT THEY SEEM MUCH MORE PROMINENT ON YOU LATELY!
AND WHY NOT? THIS IS WHO I AM, BIG S! A LUSTY AND VOLUPTUOUS WOMAN!
THE "PLEASURE-PRINCIPLE" PERSONIFIED!


WHILE I APPRECIATE YOUR DEDICATION TO THIS ENDEAVOR OF MINE, LET'S NOT DELUDE OURSELVES, SHALL WE!
ALTHOUGH YOU ARE, BY NATURE, LUSTFUL, AND YOUR APPEARANCE IS UNDENIABLY VOLUPTUOUS, WE MUSTN'T DISREGARD OUR TRUE NATURE!
MEANING?
LUC


MEANING... WE'RE NOT ACTUALLY FEMALE! I ASSUMED THAT POINT WAS OBVIOUS!
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, BUTCH!
'CAUSE, IN MY CASE, WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET!


YES, I BELIEVE I'VE ALREADY ACKNOWLEDGED YOUR DEDICATION TO THIS EXPERIENCE!
BUT DON'T LET YOUR ENTHUSIASM DEVOLVE INTO AN ABSURD DELUSION!
NYMPH


"DELUSION", HUH?
WH... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?


DOES THIS LOOK LIKE A DELUSION?
OH MY LORD...!!


NOT BAD FOR YOUR VERY FIRST PEEK AT ONE, HUH?
WHAT ON EARTH...?! WHY WOULD YOU...?!
I... I DON'T KNOW IF I'M MORE BEWILDERED OR APPALLED!
MELANIE IS A CONSTRUCT... NONE OF THIS IS REAL... OR MEANT TO BE THE LEAST BIT PERMANENT! YOU KNOW THAT AS WELL AS I DO!


NOT REAL?! TAKE A LOOK AT US, BIG S... A GOOD LONG LOOK! WE ARE ONE HOT BABE!
DO YOU REALLY THINK WE COULD'VE PULLED THIS OFF WITHOUT AT LEAST ONE OF US GOIN' ALL IN?
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I LIKE BEING THIS WAY! ADMIT IT, DON'T YOU FEEL MORE ALIVE RIGHT NOW THAN YOU EVER DID WHEN WE WERE SIDNEY?


BUT WE ARE SIDNEY! THIS IS JUST A... A FANTASY! ONCE I FINISH COLLECTING THE NECESSARY DATA, I WON'T NEED TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF MEN LIKE ADAM... OR STEVE... ANY LONGER!
AT THAT POINT, WHEN SUCH INTERACTIONS ARE NO LONGER REQUIRED, I'LL COMPLETE MY RESEARCH AND FINISH OUT THE SCHOOL YEAR AS MELANIE IN RELATIVE ANONYMITY!


SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN, BIG S! BUT LET ME POINT OUT SOMETHING YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER!
MCMONEYBAGS HAS JUST OPENED A VERY WIDE DOOR FOR US. DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'LL FINISH COLLECTING THAT VAST AMOUNT OF DATA ANYTIME SOON? THAT MEANS WE NEED TO MAINTAIN OUR ROLE AS HIS SULTRY AND SEDUCTIVE EXTRA-SPECIAL "FRIEND" FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE!
NIKE OF SAMOTHRACE


MAYBE WE WILL EVENTUALLY GO BACK TO BEING POOR, PATHETIC SID! THAT'S IN YOUR HANDS.
BUT FOR NOW, WE NEED TO THINK AND ACT LIKE WE'RE FULLY FEMALE... REGARDLESS OF THAT LITTLE REMNANT BETWEEN YOUR LEGS THAT SAYS OTHERWISE!
I... I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT...!


I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DON'T WANT TO BE LIKE THIS... ALWAYS! IT'S SUCH A RUSH! I MEAN, DON'T YOU GET A KICK OUT OF PLAYING LINDERMAN LIKE A PUPPET? ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS SMILE AND ARCH OUR BACK A LITTLE AND HE'LL DO ANYTHING WE ASK!
WE'VE FINALLY GOT THAT ARROGANT PUTZ RIGHT WHERE WE WANT HIM! GRUBBY OLD SIDNEY COULD NEVER ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING LIKE THAT!


WELL, I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT BEING ABLE TO MANIPULATE LINDERMAN SO EASILY IS SOMEWHAT... GRATIFYING! AND BEING ABLE TO DRIVE RUTH TO DISTRACTION IS EVEN MORE... DELICIOUS!
BUT NONE OF IT CHANGES OUR ULTIMATE TRAJECTORY! WE WILL BE SIDNEY AGAIN AFTER ALL THIS IS OVER!


HAVING SAID THAT, I FEEL YOU ARE CORRECT IN YOUR ASSESSMENT OF OUR NEED TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO FOR THE MOMENT IN ORDER TO RETAIN OUR CREDIBILITY WITH ADAM, AS WELL AS USE THE TALENTS WE'VE DEVELOPED AS MELANIE TO FEND OFF RUTH.
WHOA! YOU AGREE WITH ME? THIS IS A FIRST!


YOU REALIZE, OF COURSE, THAT I AM ONLY AGREEING WITH YOU FOR THE SAKE OF MY WORK!
NOW THAT I HAVE A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT ADAM IS OFFERING, I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO MAKE SURE WE TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THIS UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY!
EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING?


SIGH!
YES, I'M AFRAID SO... NO MATTER WHAT!
YES!!


OHHH...
YES!


MMMM...! AS MUCH AS I'M ENJOYING THIS, I FEEL THE NEED TO PAUSE AND ASK YOU A SERIOUS QUESTION!
ASK AWAY...!


YOU MEAN, WHAT WOULD I HAVE DONE IF YOU'D HAVE WALKED OFF IN AN INDIGNANT HUFF RATHER THAN RETURNING MY ADVANCES THE WAY YOU HAVE?
WOULD THIS AMAZING OPPORTUNITY YOU OFFERED ME STILL BE ON THE TABLE IF I WEREN'T HERE WITH YOU NOW... LIKE THIS?
YES...!


WHY, I WOULD HAVE IMMEDIATELY WITHDRAWN THE OFFER, OF COURSE!


YOU LOOK SURPRISED AT MY RESPONSE!
I... I AM! AT BOTH THE UNETHICAL NATURE OF IT AND YOUR BRAZEN HONESTY!


REALLY? CONSIDERING OUR DISCUSSION EARLIER TODAY IN MY OFFICE I WOULD THINK YOU OF ALL PEOPLE WOULD APPRECIATE MY CANDOR!
WELL, I... I DO! BUT, I GUESS I JUST WASN'T EXPECTING THE SAME LEVEL OF HONESTY FROM YOU... ESPECIALLY IN REGARD TO THAT PARTICULAR QUESTION!


SURELY, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DENY ME THE SAME QUESTIONABLY ETHICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD GETTING WHAT I WANT THAT YOU YOURSELF USE, ARE YOU?
SIGH! I SUPPOSE I DESERVED THAT, DIDN'T I?
JUST MAKING SURE WE BOTH KNOW WHERE WE STAND WITH EACH OTHER!


FINE! THEN I SUPPOSE IT'S ONLY FAIR THAT I CLARIFY MY PERCEPTION OF OUR... RELATIONSHIP!
OKAY... NOW LET'S SEE IF I CAN BLUFF MY WAY THROUGH THIS!
OH, PLEASE DO!


I ADMIT I DO FIND YOU A VERY ATTRACTIVE, INTERESTING AND EXCITING MAN AND I'VE OBVIOUSLY ENJOYED OUR TIME TOGETHER THIS EVENING...!
SOUNDS FINE SO FAR, BUT I'M WAITING FOR THE "BUT..."!


BUT... I AM NOT ONE OF YOUR USUAL FAWNING, AIR-HEADED BIMBOS WHO JUMP INTO BED WITH YOU AT THE DROP OF A HAT!
SO IF THAT'S WHAT YOU EXPECT OF ME AS A CONDITION FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY, THEN I'M AFRAID YOU'VE OFFERED IT TO THE WRONG GIRL!
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEEAASSEEE.. DON'T CALL MY BLUFF!


YOU KNOW, I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME ANYONE, ESPECIALLY A WOMAN, DARED TO PUT ME IN MY PLACE THE WAY YOU JUST DID!
I FIND IT... REFRESHING!
YES!! IT WORKED!


AND CURIOUSLY... AROUSING!
UH-OH! NOT WHAT I WAS EXPECTING!
oooo


BUT... I MAY STILL BE ABLE TO MAKE THIS WORK TO MY ADVANTAGE!


I THOUGHT I MADE MYSELF PERFECTLY CLEAR, BUT IT SEEMS I DIDN'T! SO LET ME RESTATE MY POSITION AS SUCCINCTLY AS POSSIBLE...!
OUR DATE IS OVER! CALL YOUR DRIVER, BECAUSE I'M READY TO LEAVE!
LEAVE?! JUST LIKE THAT?


OF COURSE! FROM WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME, I HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF WORK TOMORROW AND NEED MY REST TO PREPARE FOR IT!
VERY IMPRESSIVE! NOT ONLY DID YOU PLAY LINDERMAN AND RUTH, BUT YOU'VE ALSO PLAYED ME AS WELL!
YOU GOT WHAT YOU WANTED, AND NOW YOU'RE JUST GOING TO SET ME ASIDE! RIGHT?


OH, WHO SAYS I'M DONE WITH YOU, ADAM? I WASN'T LYING WHEN I SAID I FOUND YOU TO BE AN ATTRACTIVE AND EXCITING MAN!
I'M SURE A MAN LIKE YOU CAN COME UP WITH A MULTITUDE OF UNIQUE WAYS OF KEEPING A GIRL INTERESTED!
AND VICE-VERSA... I HOPE!




NOW... WHY DON'T YOU GET MY COAT AND CALL THAT DRIVER OF YOURS!
WHATEVER THE LADY WISHES!
LUC


HOLY FUCKING SHIT! WE PULLED IT OFF!
HOW THE HELL DID YOU KNOW HE'D REACT LIKE THAT?
I DIDN'T KNOW FOR SURE! BUT HIS REACTIONS TO MY STRAIGHTFORWARD AND SOMEWHAT STERN STATEMENTS SUGGESTED THAT HE MIGHT HAVE LATENT OR EVEN DORMANT PSYCHO-SEXUAL SUBMISSIVE TENDENCIES TOWARD STRONG WOMEN!
VENUS


I TOOK A CHANCE AND IT SEEMS TO HAVE PAID OFF RATHER WELL, DESPITE YOUR UNEXPECTED ASSISTANCE AT THE END!
JUST LETTING HIM KNOW WE'RE IN CHARGE IN MY OWN SPECIAL WAY, BIG S! I THOUGHT YOU'D APPRECIATE IT!


I DO ADMIT KEEPING HIM ON THE HOOK SO TO SPEAK IS IN OUR BEST INTEREST, BUT THE WAY YOU DID IT...!
HEY, YOU FELT HOW HARD WE GOT HIM! WE'VE GOT THIS GUY BY THE BONER!


MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO SEE JUST HOW FAR WE COULD LEAD MCMONEYBAGS! THAT COULD BE FUN!
YOU KNOW FULL WELL THAT THAT WOULD CONFLICT WITH OUR FEELINGS TOWARD STEVE!
THAT RELATIONSHIP WILL BE COMPLICATED ENOUGH WITHOUT ADDING ROSS TO THE MIX!
SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU EVER TURNED AWAY FROM SOMETHING JUST BECAUSE IT'S COMPLICATED?


I'M JUST SURPRISED YOU'RE WILLING TO IGNORE AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESEARCH THE PSYCHO-SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF MEN FROM SUCH A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE!
OH WELL...!
WAIT... RESEARCH?!


HMMM...
I HADN'T CONSIDERED THAT ASPECT!
WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITHOUT ME, BIG S?


I MUST SAY, MELANIE, THAT WHILE THIS EVENING IS NOT ENDING IN THE MANNER I ORIGINALLY ENVISIONED, I AM STILL DELIGHTED AND INTRIGUED BY YOUR COMPANY!
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT, ADAM!


AND ALTHOUGH YOU MADE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP PERFECTLY CLEAR EARLIER, I HOPE WE CAN CONTINUE THAT DISCUSSION WHEN I SEE YOU TOMORROW!
BECAUSE, REST ASSURED, I DON'T OFFER OPPORTUNITIES LIKE THIS WITHOUT CERTAIN "RETURNS" ON MY INVESTMENT!
OF COURSE! WHAT SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSPERSON WOULDN'T?


EXCELLENT! I'M GLAD WE UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER SO WELL!
THAT WE DO, ADAM! THAT WE DO!
WELL, IT SEEMS I'VE MERELY POSTPONED THE INEVITABLE! AND BY ONLY ONE DAY!


HOW ON EARTH AM I GOING TO PULL THIS OFF?


Chapter 8
by CBlack
Superego


Later, as Melanie returns home...
"SIGH!" I SWEAR, MY OBSESSION WITH RESEARCH WILL BE THE DEATH OF ME IF I'M NOT CAREFUL!


I SHOULD HAVE FORESEEN HOW THIS EVENING WOULD HAVE ENDED IF MY REASONING HADN'T BEEN CLOUDED BY ADAM'S OFFER!
I HAVE NO ONE TO BLAME BUT MYSELF FOR THE PREDICAMENT I FIND MYSELF IN!


3
AND THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN *HELP* ME HAS NO IDEA WHO I *REALLY* AM AND HOW MUCH I'VE BEEN *DECEIVING* HER!
IN FACT, *SHE'S* ACTUALLY BEEN MORE INFLUENTIAL IN *CREATING* THIS *DECEPTION* THAN ANYONE ELSE... SIMPLY BY BEING A *FRIEND!*

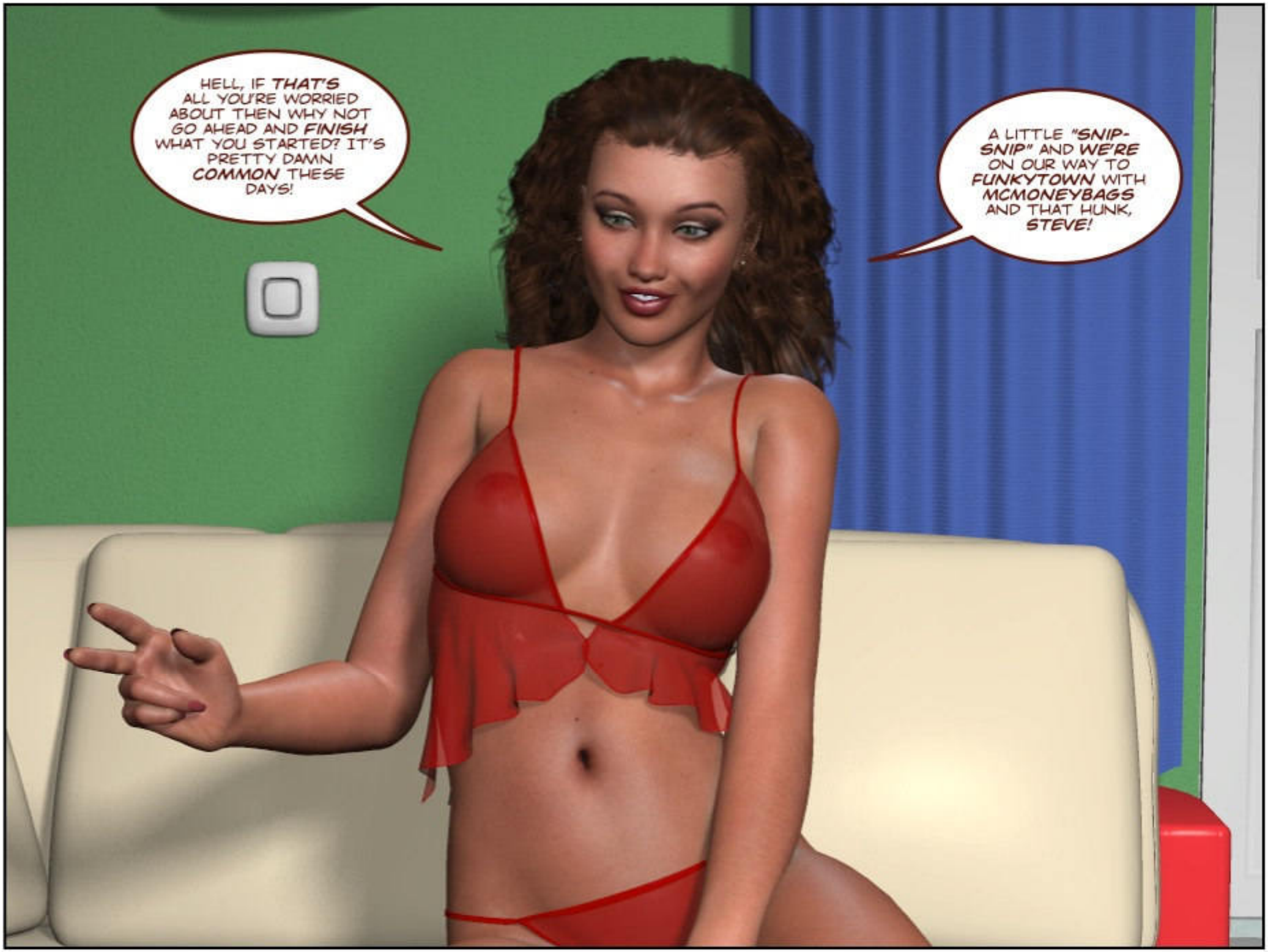

NONE OF WHAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH AS MELANIE WOULD BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT HANNAH!


IT FEELS GOOD TO GET OUT OF THAT DRESS! I WAS HAVING TROUBLE BREATHING IN THAT THING!
ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮРЪ


OH, BUT YOU'VE GOTTA ADMIT, WE LOOKED AWESOME IN IT!
ADAM WANTED TO NAIL US SO BAD I COULD TASTE IT!


YES, I'M SURE YOU COULD! AND IF LEFT TO YOU, HE MOST LIKELY WOULD BE! MUCH TO HIS SURPRISE, I'M SURE!
STILL NOT HEARIN' ANY MAJOR OPPOSITION TO THE IDEA FROM YOU, BIG S! JUST EXCUSES...!


ТЕАТР
МИНІАМЮ
ПРОИЦКАЯ
EXTREMELY VALID EXCUSES, IF I MAY SAY SO! BECAUSE ANY ATTEMPT ON HIS PART WOULD EASILY REVEAL THE TRUTH ABOUT US!
A REVELATION WHICH I'M SURE WOULD IMMEDIATELY LEAD TO THE END OF MY RESEARCH ONCE AND FOR ALL!

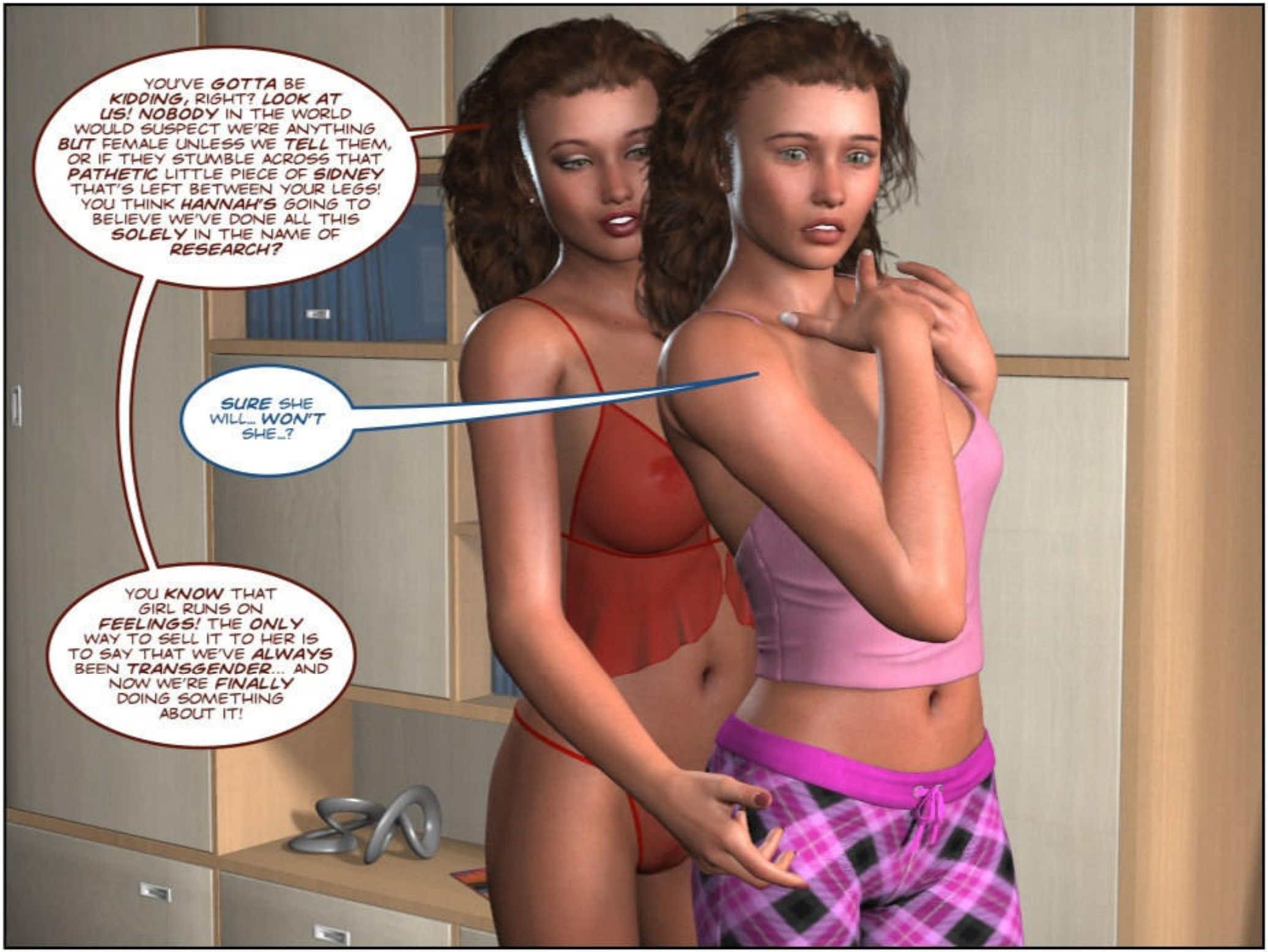

HELL, IF THAT'S ALL YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT THEN WHY NOT GO AHEAD AND FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED? IT'S PRETTY DAMN COMMON THESE DAYS!
A LITTLE "SNIP-SNIP" AND WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO FUNKYTOWN WITH MCMONEYBAGS AND THAT HUNK, STEVE!


I AM NOT HAVING THIS CONVERSATION! ESPECIALLY WITH SOMEONE WHO REVELS IN FLAUNTING AROUND IN SOME SEE-THROUGH... WHATEVER THAT IS!
I CAN SEE EVERYTHING, YOU KNOW!
THAT'S THE POINT! DUH!
WELL, THEN YOU SHOULD COMPREHEND THAT, IN SPITE OF YOUR INCLINATIONS, MY RESOLVE REMAINS UNALTERED! MELANIE IS MERELY A CHARADE I AM USING IN THE NAME OF RESEARCH!


OKAY, WHATEVER! KEEP TELLING YOURSELF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FEELINGS ON THE MATTER! I WON'T PRESS IT ANY FURTHER... AT LEAST FOR NOW!
HOW ABOUT WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING... OR RATHER SOMEONE ELSE YOU'VE GOT FEELINGS ABOUT? HANNAH!
WHAT ABOUT HER? YOU ACTUALLY THINK I WANT TO SLEEP WITH EVERYONE, DON'T YOU?


NAH! I KNOW HANNAH'S JUST A FRIEND. BUT I ALSO KNOW YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT DECEIVING HER! SO WHY NOT CHANGE IT UP? IF I HAD A VOTE, I'D SAY WE TELL HER EVERYTHING!
WHAT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY EVERYTHING?
YOU KNOW... WHAT'S GOING ON BETWEEN US AND MCMONEYBAGS... HOW WE GET ALL HOT AND BOTHERED WHENEVER WE THINK ABOUT STEVE!
BUT I DON'T... WELL... SHE HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONALLY EAGER TO DEEPEN OUR FRIENDSHIP. I'M SURE SHE WOULD APPRECIATE A BIT OF THE "GIRL TALK" SHE SEEMS TO CRAVE SO MUCH.


I CAN JUST SEE HER FACE WHEN WE ALSO TELL HER HOW WE USED TO BE SIDNEY!
WHAT?! YOU REALLY THINK WE SHOULD...!
WAIT! WHAT DO YOU MEAN "USED TO BE SIDNEY"?! WE ARE SIDNEY!


YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING, RIGHT? LOOK AT US! NOBODY IN THE WORLD WOULD SUSPECT WE'RE ANYTHING BUT FEMALE UNLESS WE TELL THEM, OR IF THEY STUMBLE ACROSS THAT PATHETIC LITTLE PIECE OF SIDNEY THAT'S LEFT BETWEEN YOUR LEGS! YOU THINK HANNAH'S GOING TO BELIEVE WE'VE DONE ALL THIS SOLELY IN THE NAME OF RESEARCH?
SURE SHE WILL... WON'T SHE...?
YOU KNOW THAT GIRL RUNS ON FEELINGS! THE ONLY WAY TO SELL IT TO HER IS TO SAY THAT WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN TRANSGENDER... AND NOW WE'RE FINALLY DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT!


YOU CAN TELL HER THAT WE ALWAYS ENVIED WOMEN, EVER SINCE WE WERE LITTLE KIDS... HOW MUCH WE CRAVED TO HAVE SOFT SKIN AND A FEMININE FIGURE! HOW WE ACHED TO FEEL PRETTY AND DESIRABLE... AND THAT THIS WAS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS WE WITHDREW FROM SOCIETY AND BUILT UP OUR DEFENSES UNTIL EVERYONE SAW US AS A MISANTHROPIC GEEK... ALL BECAUSE WE COULDN'T DEAL WITH OUR GENDER ISSUES!
DOESN'T THAT HAVE A NICE RING TO IT? WOULDN'T IT BE A SATISFYING THING TO TELL HER?


BUT... IT'S NOT TRUE! I DETERMINED AT THE AGE OF 15 THAT WE WERE GOING TO LIVE A LIFE OF THE MIND. THAT DEVELOPING OUR MENTAL CAPACITY TO THE FULLEST EXTENT MEANT MAKING SACRIFICES.
I GRANT YOU THAT OUR SEXUALITY HAS BEEN STUNTED, BUT FOR ALL THE BEST REASONS... IN ORDER TO BE THE VERY BEST AT ANY AND ALL OF OUR INTELLECTUAL ENDEAVORS!
I'VE CREATED A WORTHY LIFE FOR US... A NOBLE LIFE!
FOR YOU, MAYBE! I NEVER AGREED TO ANY VOW OF CELIBACY!

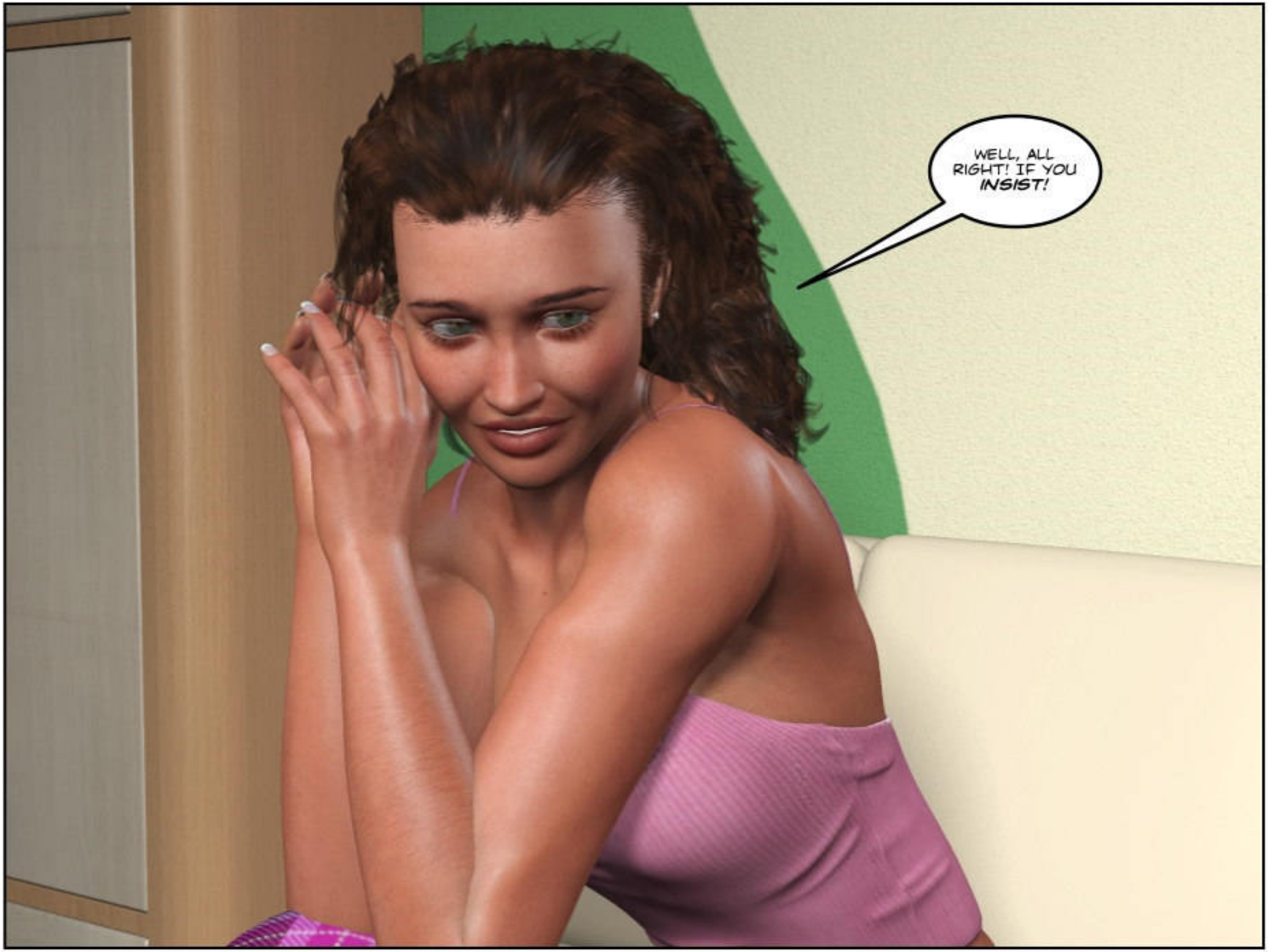

MELANIE? ARE YOU STILL UP?
THIS IS OUR CHANCE, BIG S! TAKE THE LEAP!
I... I...!
Knock!! Knock!!

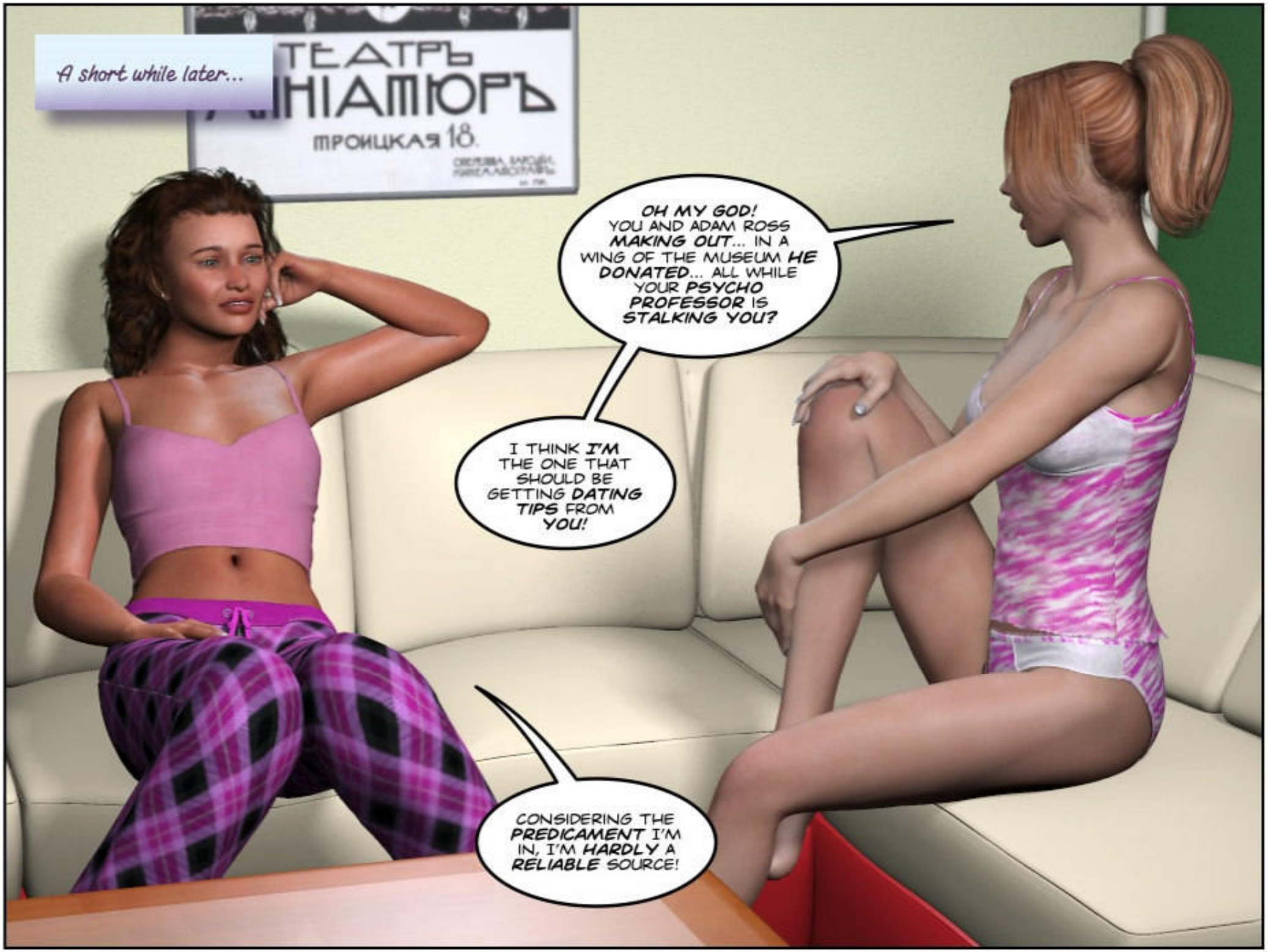

MELANIE?!
GO AHEAD, TELL HANNAH EVERYTHING THE WAY YOU SEE IT! I WON'T TRY TO STOP YOU... OR EVEN TRY AND INFLUENCE YOU!
THE WAY I SEE IT, IF YOU TELL HER YOUR REALITY... ALL THE CHANGES WE'VE GONE THROUGH... I'M PRETTY SURE THAT WILL BE ENOUGH! IN OTHER WORDS, BIG S, EVEN YOU CAN'T SCREW THIS UP!
YOU THINK SO?


UMMM... HI, HANNAH! WHAT'S UP?
WHAT'S UP? WE SPENT ALL THAT TIME GETTING YOU DRESSED TO KILL FOR YOUR DATE WITH ADAM ROSS AND EXPECT ME TO WAIT TO TOMORROW FOR THE JUICY DETAILS? ARE YOU SERIOUS?


SIGH! LIKE I TRIED TO TELL YOU EARLIER, IT WASN'T A DATE!
UH-HUH... RIGHT! THAT BOD... IN THAT DRESS... WITH ADAM ROSS...? HONEY, IT WAS A DATE!
AND WHY ARE YOU HOME SO EARLY... AND ALONE TO BOOT? AS HOT AS YOU WERE TONIGHT, I CAN'T IMAGINE HE DIDN'T TRY TO GET YOU BACK TO HIS PLACE FOR A LITTLE BILLIONAIRE BOOTY-CALL!


OH, HE MADE HIS INTENTIONS PERFECTLY CLEAR TO ME, BUT I WAS ABLE TO FORESTALL HIM... FOR TONIGHT AT LEAST!
REALLY? THIS, I'VE GOT TO HEAR! CMON, GIRLFRIEND! DETAILS!


WELL, ALL RIGHT! IF YOU INSIST!


A short while later...
ТЕАТРЪ
МІНІАМЮРЪ
ТРОИЦКАЯ 18.
OH MY GOD! YOU AND ADAM ROSS MAKING OUT... IN A WING OF THE MUSEUM HE DONATED... ALL WHILE YOUR PSYCHO PROFESSOR IS STALKING YOU?
I THINK I'M THE ONE THAT SHOULD BE GETTING DATING TIPS FROM YOU!
CONSIDERING THE PREDICAMENT I'M IN, I'M HARDLY A RELIABLE SOURCE!


LOOK MELANIE, IF YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO SLEEP WITH HIM... ALTHOUGH I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY!... THEN, DON'T!
AND IF HE PRESSES YOU ON IT, RAISE A STINK! THREATEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT IF YOU HAVE TO!


NO! ANY KIND OF PUBLIC ATTENTION IS THE LAST THING I WANT OR NEED!
BESIDES, ADAM HAS BEEN NOTHING IF NOT HELPFUL, CONSIDERATE AND ATTENTIVE! I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE HIM ANY PROBLEMS!
WELL IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU FEEL ABOUT HIM, THEN I THINK I HAVE THE PERFECT SOLUTION TO ALL THIS!
YOU DO? WHAT IS IT?


SLEEP WITH HIM ALREADY! HE'S RICH, GOOD-LOOKING, TREATS YOU LIKE A QUEEN AND YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE SOME PRETTY STRONG FEELINGS TOWARD HIM!
YOU... YOU ALSO THINK THAT I WANT TO BE WITH HIM?
HONEY, IT'S WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE! SO WHY NOT JUST TAKE HIM UP ON IT? YOU GET YOUR RESEARCH AND A PIECE OF ONE OF THE MOST ELIGIBLE BACHELORS IN THE COUNTRY!


YOU'VE BEEN A GOOD GIRL ALL YOUR LIFE, I GET IT! BUT NOW'S THE TIME TO MAKE THE LEAP! ADAM SOUNDS LIKE THE TYPE OF GUY WHO COULD TOTALLY ROCK YOUR WORLD!
IF ONLY THINGS WERE THAT EASY! UNFORTUNATELY, CONSUMMATING THAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH ADAM... OR ANYONE... IS JUST NOT POSSIBLE!


DO YOU MIND TELLING MY WHY NOT? I MEAN, I'D UNDERSTAND IF IT WAS A RELIGIOUS OR ETHICAL THING, BUT YOU DON'T STRIKE ME AS A VERY RELIGIOUS PERSON!
I'M NOT...!
AND, DON'T GET ME WRONG, BUT CONSIDERING THE TECHNIQUES WE'VE BEEN PRACTICING AND THE REASONS YOU NEEDED THEM, I DON'T THINK YOU'RE PARTICULARLY RESTRICTED BY YOUR ETHICS!
AND YOU WOULD AGAIN BE CORRECT...!


THEN WHAT'S GOING ON, MELANIE? THERE'S SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME, AND I'D REALLY LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IT IS!
C'MON, GIRLFRIEND... LET ME HELP!


SIGH! I'M AFRAID THERE IS SOMETHING I'VE BEEN KEEPING FROM YOU, HANNAH! I'VE WANTED TO TELL YOU FOR QUITE SOME TIME, BUT IT'S AN... UNUSUAL SITUATION, TO SAY THE LEAST!
I'VE HEARD LOTS OF WEIRD THINGS FROM LOTS OF WEIRD FRIENDS OVER THE YEARS, MELANIE! I'M SURE WHATEVER YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME WON'T BE ANYTHING I HAVEN'T HEARD BEFORE!
I SINCERELY DOUBT THAT!
TRY ME!


ALL RIGHT, BUT... PLEASE, KEEP AN OPEN MIND ABOUT WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU!
I PROMISE!


I'M... NOT WHO I CLAIM TO BE! I'M NOT SIDNEY'S COUSIN! IN FACT, SIDNEY MOYER DOESN'T HAVE ANY COUSINS... OR SIBLINGS, OR ANY OTHER RELATIVES ROUGHLY HIS SAME AGE!
YOU'RE NOT? BUT... YOU'RE SO MUCH LIKE HIM! AT LEAST YOU WERE WHEN WE FIRST MET! AND YOU EVEN LOOK ALIKE... ALMOST LIKE BROTHER AND SISTER!
YES, THERE'S A DEFINITE REASON FOR THE SIMILARITIES! BUT NOT FOR THE REASONS I TOLD YOU!
THEN... HOW?


SIGH!
I... I AM
SIDNEY!






HA, HA, HA,
HA, HAAAA!!!!


HA, HA, HA, HA, HAAA!! OH MAN!!!


I'M SORRY, HONEY! I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE SIDNEY, AND I HAD THIS IMAGE OF SIDNEY MAKING OUT WITH ADAM ROSS!
IT WAS JUST SO WEIRD IT WAS FUNNY!


BUT, THAT IS WHAT I SAID, HANNAH! I... AM... SIDNEY!
I KNOW HOW UNBELIEVABLE THAT SOUNDS, BUT IT'S THE TRUTH, HANNAH!
YOU... YOU'RE SERIOUS, AREN'T YOU?!


OKAY, THAT'S JUST CRAZY! FIRST OFF, YOU'RE NOT A GUY! 'CAUSE I KNOW GUYS! ALL KINDS OF GUYS!
EVEN GUYS LIKE SIDNEY!


AND THERE'S JUST NO WAY THAT YOU'RE A ...!
GASP!


OH... MY... GOD!!!


I'M SORRY I HAD TO RESORT TO SUCH AN EXHIBITIONISTIC APPROACH, HANNAH!
BUT SINCE THERE REALLY AREN'T ANY ANECDOTES BETWEEN SIDNEY AND YOU THAT I CAN REFER TO, THIS SEEMED THE QUICKEST AND MOST RELIABLE WAY OF CONVINCING YOU!
ТЕАТРЪ
ИНІАМЮРЪ
ТРОИЦКАЯ 18
OH... MY GOD! YOU... YOU'RE A GUY!? NO WAY!!
THEN THAT MEANS...!!


IS THAT REALLY YOU, SIDNEY?!
YES, IT REALLY IS ME, HANNAH! IN THE FLESH, SO TO SPEAK!
THIS IS SOOO WEIRD!


OKAY, THE FIRST AND MOST OBVIOUS QUESTION...!
WHY?!
FOR MY RESEARCH! I... I WANTED TO PROVE THAT THERE ARE BIASES IN ACADEMIA THAT FAVOR WOMEN... AND THAT IF I... I PASSED MYSELF OFF AS A WOMAN, I'D BE ABLE TO GO FURTHER THAN I EVER COULD AS SIDNEY!


YOU MEAN... YOU DID THIS FOR YOUR CAREER?
WELL, FOR ONE RESEARCH PROJECT IN PARTICULAR. I HAD ANTICIPATED IT WOULD BE A SHORT-TERM ENDEAVOR, BUT... TO BE HONEST, LIFE AS MELANIE HAS PROVEN TO BE MORE COMPLICATED THAN I ANTICIPATED.
I'LL BET! BUT I SAW YOU FLIRTING WITH STEVE... AND ADAM... IS THAT ALL PART OF YOUR RESEARCH?
UHM... NOT EXACTLY!


THIS IS BLOWING MY MIND! I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH YOU'VE CHANGED IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS! YOUR BODY IS PRACTICALLY... PERFECT!
IT'S ALL DUE TO AN EXPERIMENTAL HORMONE TREATMENT! EVEN THOUGH THE RESULTS ARE DRASTIC, I'M CONFIDENT I CAN CHANGE BACK TO MY FORMER SELF WHEN THE TIME COMES!
OH... AND WHEN IS THAT? I... I'VE GOTTEN USED TO HAVING MELANIE AROUND.


I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE! I STILL HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF RESEARCH TO DO... DATA I CAN ONLY ACCESS AS MELANIE!
I'M STILL TRYING TO GET MY MIND AROUND THIS... THAT MY ANNOYING MALE NEIGHBOR OF THREE YEARS IS NOW MY BEST GIRLFRIEND! HOW CRAZY IS THAT?!
THAT SEEMS A RATHER ACCURATE STATEMENT!
IT'S KIND OF TWISTED AND AWESOME ALL AT THE SAME TIME, DON'T YOU THINK?


TO THINK THAT I'VE HAD MORE FUN WITH SIDNEY MOYER THAN I'VE HAD WITH ANYONE IN A LONG, LONG TIME! IF SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME THAT THREE MONTHS AGO, I NEVER WOULD HAVE BELIEVED THEM!
ONLY YOU'RE NOT SIDNEY ANYMORE. YOU'RE MELANIE! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO SEE YOU ANY OTHER WAY!
REALLY?
ABSOLUTELY! I'VE BEEN SO LONELY SINCE I MOVED HERE THREE YEARS AGO! BUT EVER SINCE MELANIE MOVED IN ACROSS THE HALL, EVERYTHING'S BEEN SO MUCH NICER, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
ТЕАТРЪ
ТРОИЦКАЯ 18.


OUR GROWING FRIENDSHIP HAS BEEN EXTREMELY PLEASURABLE. I SUPPOSE I ALSO HAD SIMILAR FEELINGS OF LONELINESS. TO BE HONEST, I NEVER ANTICIPATED THAT I COULD DEVELOP SUCH A KEEN AFFINITY WITH YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE!
BUT NOW THAT IT'S HAPPENED, I FIND MYSELF OVERWHELMINGLY PLEASED. IT'S THE STRANGEST THING!
IT'S NOT STRANGE! WE'RE BESTIES NOW! ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY?

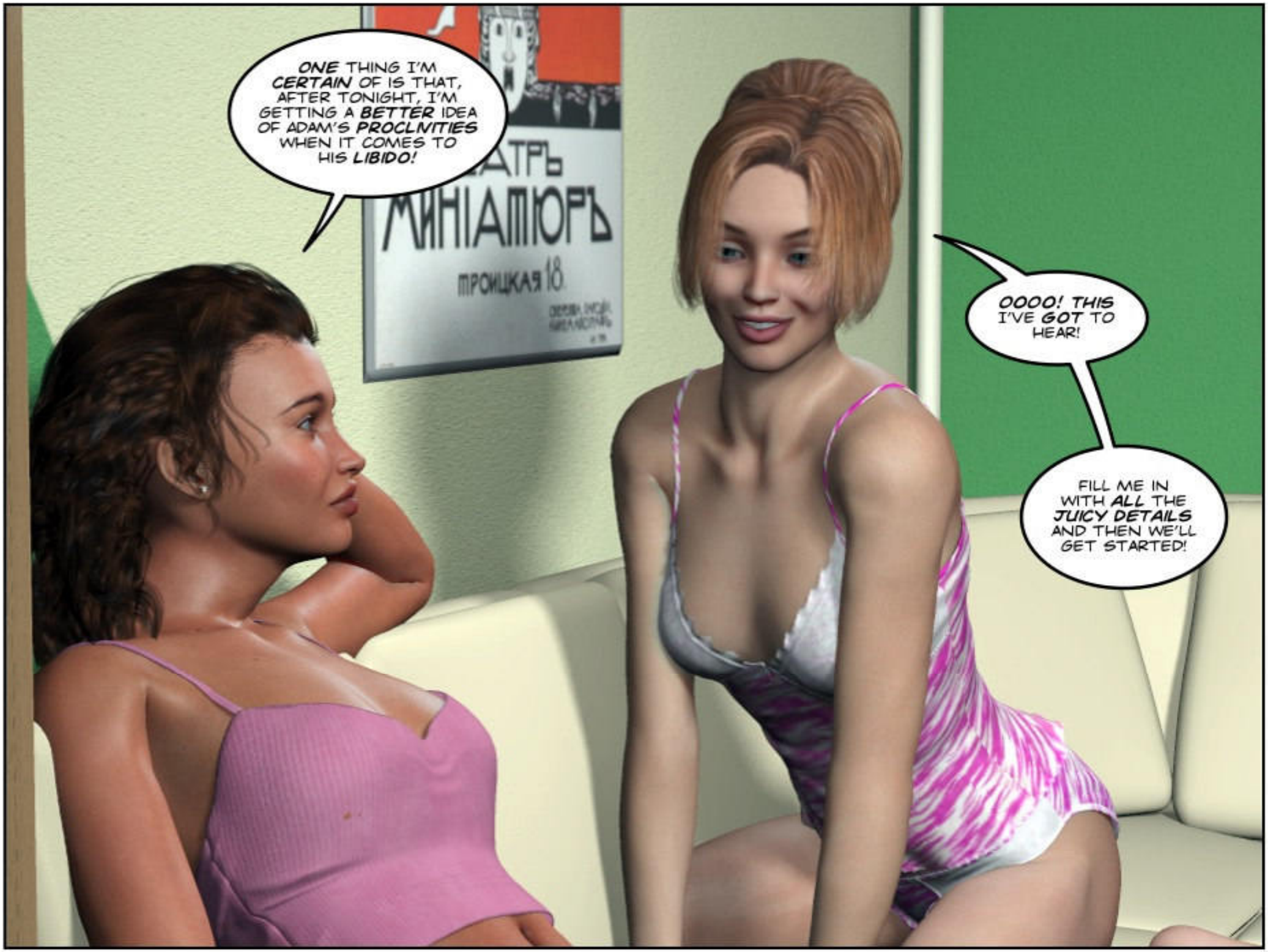

I... I GUESS IT IS_ BESTIE!
ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮ
ТРОИЦКАЯ


COOL! BUT PLEASE PROMISE ME YOU'LL NEVER, EVER FLASH ME LIKE THAT AGAIN! OKAY?
I CAN UNEQUIVOCALLY GUARANTEE THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN! I PROMISE!


ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮР
18.
GREAT! AND NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU OBVIOUSLY CAN'T SLEEP WITH ADAM ROSS, WE CAN PUT OUR HEADS TOGETHER AND FIGURE OUT HOW TO KEEP HIM OUT OF YOUR PANTIES BUT STILL KEEP HIM INTERESTED!


DO YOU STILL THINK I CAN MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM KNOWING WHAT HE EXPECTS FROM ME?
OH HONEY, THERES ALL SORTS OF THINGS A GIRL CAN DO TO KEEP A GUY INTERESTED WITHOUT GIVING UP THE GOODS!


BUT MY QUESTION IS... IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE THAT LITTLE BIT OF SIDNEY BETWEEN YOUR LEGS, WOULD YOU GO FOR IT?
WELL, OBVIOUSLY I'M WILLING TO GO TO GREAT LENGTHS FOR MY RESEARCH, BUT COITUS WITH ADAM? I... I'M NOT SURE!
WHAT IF IT WASN'T FOR YOUR RESEARCH? WHAT IF IT WAS JUST FOR FUN?
IT'S HARD FOR ME TO SAY! I... I DON'T EXACTLY TRUST MY FEELINGS IN THAT AREA!


ONE THING I'M CERTAIN OF IS THAT, AFTER TONIGHT, I'M GETTING A BETTER IDEA OF ADAM'S PROCLIVITIES WHEN IT COMES TO HIS LIBIDO!
ТРОИЦКАЯ 18
OOOO! THIS I'VE GOT TO HEAR!
FILL ME IN WITH ALL THE JUICY DETAILS AND THEN WE'LL GET STARTED!


The next day...


INTERESTING! I FULLY EXPECTED ADAM TO CALL ME INTO HIS OFFICE FIRST THING TODAY TO DISCUSS LAST NIGHT, BUT HERE IT IS, ALMOST NOON, AND NOT ONE WORD FROM HIM!
ALTHOUGH HANNAH DID SUGGEST THAT I LET ADAM MAKE THE FIRST MOVE TODAY, I REALLY DIDN'T THINK HE'D BE ABLE TO DRAW THIS OUT SO LONG!


THEN AGAIN, HE MAY JUST NOT BE IN YET OR HAVE APPOINTMENTS ALL MORNING!
YOU KNOW, UNTIL RECENTLY I RARELY MADE IT TO THIS PART OF THE BUILDING! BUT HERE I AM, TWICE IN TWO DAYS! I WONDER WHY THAT IS?


WELL, IT CAN'T POSSIBLY BE THE COFFEE IN OUR BREAK ROOM! I TRULY BELIEVE SOMEONE USED RECYCLED OIL FILTERS INSTEAD OF COFFEE FILTERS FOR THIS MORNING'S BATCH!


SO IT MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE THAT DRAWS YOU TO OUR LITTLE CORNER OF THE WORLD! I HAVE AN IDEA, BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE PRESUMPTUOUS!
ACTUALLY, I'M RATHER FOND OF THE COFFEE DOWN HERE, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE WE BOTH KNOW WHY I'M HERE!


I TRULY AM SORRY I HAD TO TURN YOU DOWN YESTERDAY! AN IMPORTANT... EVENT CAME UP THAT I WAS REQUIRED TO ATTEND!
BUT I DID PROMISE YOU A RAIN CHECK!
WHICH I'M HERE TO COLLECT ON! UNLESS YOU HAVE SOME OTHER PLANS FOR LUNCH...?


AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DON'T! SO I'D LOVE TO JOIN YOU FOR...!
MISS BUSH, CAN YOU REPORT TO MY OFFICE, PLEASE... AT ONCE!


AGAIN?! HIS TIMING SEEMS AWFULLY COINCIDENTAL!
UMMM...JUST A MOMENT, STEVE, WHILE I TAKE CARE OF THIS!


I WAS JUST GOING TO LUNCH, MR. ROSS! CAN THIS WAIT UNTIL I RETURN?
NOT REALLY, SINCE I HAVE ANOTHER MEETING AT ONE!
SIGH! ALL RIGHT! I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!


I'M SORRY, STEVE! IT SEEMS...!
IT SEEMS OUR MASTER'S VOICE SUMMONS YOU ONCE AGAIN! DON'T WORRY, I'LL JUST HOLD ON TO THAT RAIN CHECK A LITTLE LONGER!
THANK YOU FOR BEING SO UNDERSTANDING!


A few minutes later...
HELLO, SARAH! MR. ROSS IS EXPECTING ME!
HI, MELANIE! HE ASKED IF YOU'D WAIT A MOMENT WHILE HE FINISHES A CONFERENCE CALL!
OH... OF COURSE!


HMPH! FORCES ME TO BREAK MY LUNCH DATE WITH STEVE AND THEN MAKES ME WAIT!
IF I WERE A MORE SUSPICIOUS PERSON, I'D SWEAR HE WAS DOING THIS ON PURPOSE BECAUSE OF THE WAY I TURNED HIM DOWN LAST NIGHT!


BUT HOW COULD HE POSSIBLY...?
Oooo


HMMMM!


UMMM... EXCUSE ME, SARAH! BUT ARE THERE SECURITY CAMERAS LIKE THAT IN THE SECOND FLOOR BULLPEN?
OH, THERE ARE CAMERAS IN EVERY ROOM OF THIS BUILDING... EXCEPT THE BATHROOMS, I HOPE!
MR. ROSS INSISTS ON TOP-NOTCH SECURITY IN EVERY ONE OF HIS BUILDINGS!


WHICH MEANS HE PROBABLY HAS ACCESS TO ALL THE VIDEO FEEDS, RIGHT?
OH, I'M SURE HE DOES! HE'S VERY HANDS ON WHEN IT COMES TO HIS COMPANIES!
YES... I'M SURE HE IS!


AH, MELANIE! SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING! PLEASE, COME IN!
NO PROBLEM AT ALL, MR. ROSS!


MR. ROSS! THAT SOUNDS VERY... FORMAL!
I THOUGHT IT BEST TO AT LEAST TRY TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE'S NOTHING MORE THAN A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US!
I THOUGHT YOU'D PREFER THAT!


FOR THE REST OF THE EMPLOYEES, OF COURSE! BUT SARAH IS MY PERSONAL ASSISTANT! I TRUST HER TO MANAGE ALL MY APPOINTMENTS, BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL!
SO YOU DON'T NEED TO HIDE ANYTHING FROM HER! SARAH KNOWS ALL!
WELL, THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW... I GUESS!


SO, WHAT DID YOU NEED TO SEE ME ABOUT THAT COULDN'T WAIT OR BE CONFERRED THROUGH A PHONE CALL?
I'M TAKING A SHORT TRIP TOMORROW TO DROP IN ON A FEW OF MY OTHER HOLDINGS AROUND THE COUNTRY AND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THE EXECUTIVES!


YOU... YOU MEAN YOU WANT ME TO GO WITH YOU? OUT OF TOWN?
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT'S NECESSARY?
OF COURSE! IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE GRANTED ACCESS TO THEIR EMPLOYEES, THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS LET THEM MEET YOU FIRST!


AND YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT'S THE ONLY REASON YOU'RE INVITING ME ALONG WITH YOU?
OF COURSE NOT! YOU'RE MUCH TOO INTELLIGENT TO BUY THAT! AND I RESPECT YOU TOO MUCH TO EVEN TRY TO LIE TO YOU! I THOUGHT WE ALREADY ESTABLISHED THAT!


IT WILL ALSO GIVE US THE CHANCE TO... FURTHER DEVELOP THE RELATIONSHIP WE INITIATED LAST EVENING... WELL BEYOND THE JUDGING EYES OF YOUR PROFESSORS... OR COWORKERS!
YOU DID, AFTER ALL, WANT ME TO COME UP WITH SOME UNIQUE WAYS TO KEEP YOU INTERESTED, DIDN'T YOU?
I DID SAY THAT DIDN'T I? I GUESS I JUST DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE SO SOON... AND IN SUCH A GRANDIOSE MANNER!


BUT WHAT GIRL CAN SAY NO TO BEING WHISKED AWAY BY A POWERFUL AND EXCITING MAN SUCH AS YOURSELF!








MY WORD! I... I TRUTHFULLY WASN'T EXPECTING THAT!
GOOD! I FIND THAT DISORIENTATION IS A VERY EFFECTIVE WAY OF KEEPING A MAN LIKE YOU... INTERESTED!

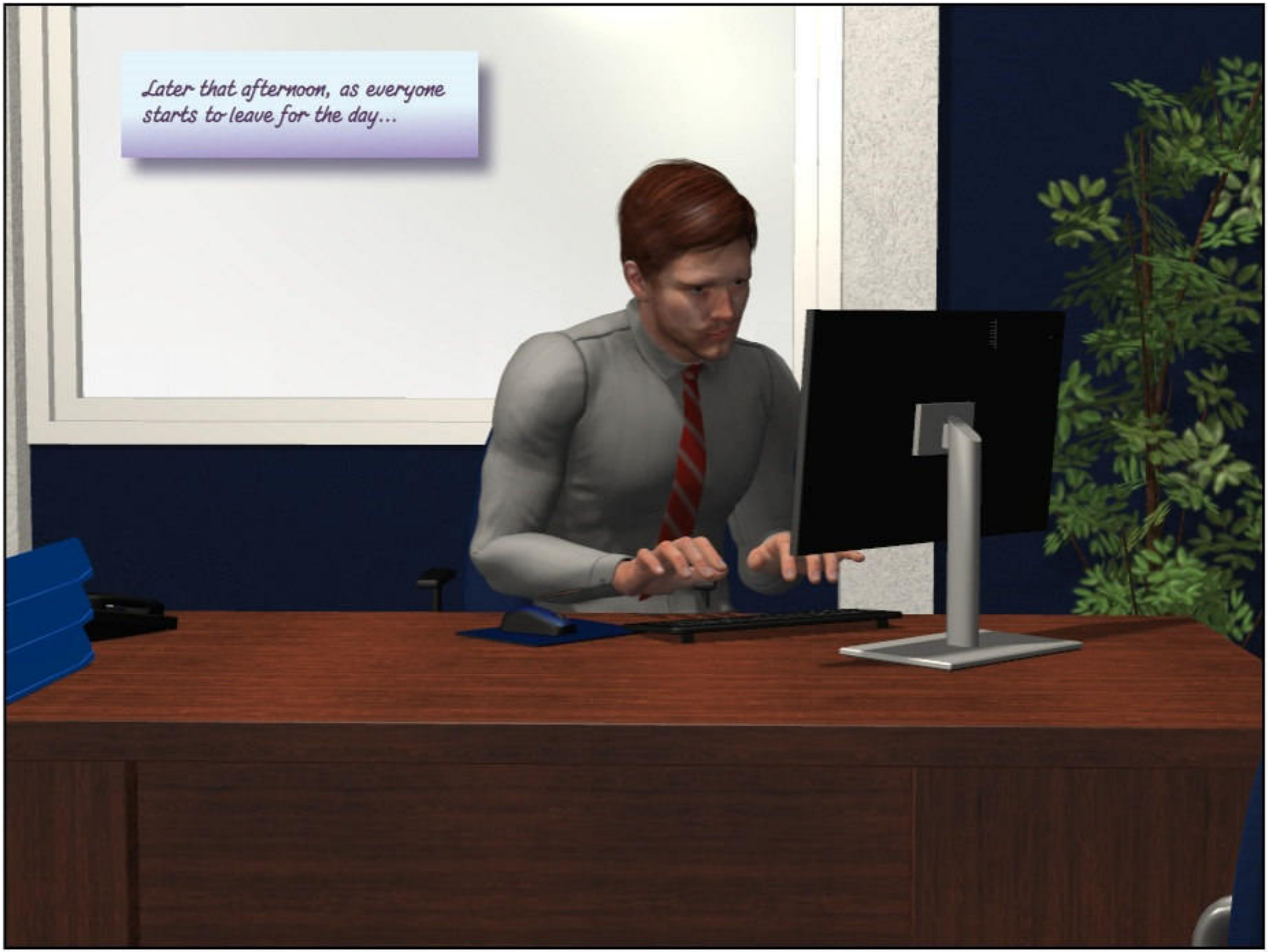

I ASSUME YOU'LL HAVE SARAH EMAIL ME OUR ITINERARY ALONG WITH ANY OTHER INFORMATION I'LL NEED FOR OUR LITTLE EXCURSION!
UMMM... OF COURSE!
GOOD!


I'D STAY LONGER, BUT I HAVEN'T HAD LUNCH YET AND YOU HAVE THAT VERY IMPORTANT MEETING AT ONE!
SO, I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW, ADAM!


WOW!!


SO, HE HAS BEEN KEEPING AN EYE ON ME EVER SINCE I STARTED MY WORK HERE! HE CAN SEE ME AT MY DESK, IN THE PARKING GARAGE, THE ELEVATOR... EVERYWHERE!
AND WHENEVER STEVE GETS WITHIN ARM'S LENGTH, ADAM CALLS ME AWAY JUST TO KEEP US APART! HOW MACHIAVELLIAN!


WELL... I THINK I KNOW HOW JUST TO USE THAT TO MY ADVANTAGE!


Later that afternoon, as everyone starts to leave for the day...


HI THERE!
HI THERE YOURSELF! WHAT'S UP?


IT'S RAIN CHECK TIME! HOW ABOUT TAKING ME OUT FOR A DRINK?
SURE! WHEN?
HOW ABOUT RIGHT NOW!


YOU'RE ON!


A couple of hours later, in the company parking garage...


WELL, THANKS AGAIN FOR THE DRINKS! I HAD A *REALLY* NICE TIME!
ME TOO! I HOPE WE CAN DO IT AGAIN WHEN YOU GET BACK FROM YOUR TRIP!
OH, *DEFINITELY!* MY RESEARCH WILL ONLY TAKE A COUPLE OF DAYS, SO I'LL CALL YOU WHEN I GET BACK!
SOUNDS *GREAT!*


I'M ALSO GLAD WE GET A CHANCE TO END THIS DATE ON A MUCH MORE POSITIVE TONE THAN THE LAST ONE!
OH, I DON'T KNOW! YOU HAVE TO ADMIT, IT WAS AN EVENING I'LL NEVER FORGET!


WELL, LET'S SEE IF I CAN GIVE YOU SOMETHING ELSE TO REMEMBER!








Later that evening...
HE WANTS TO TAKE YOU OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW DAYS?! HOLY CRAP, MELANIE! THAT'S HUGE!
ARE YOU GOING?
ТЕАТРЪ МИНІАТЮРЪ
OF COURSE! I DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE IN THE MATTER UNLESS I WANT TO THROW AWAY EVERYTHING I'VE WORKED FOR!


ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТ
ТРОИЦК
AND FROM WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME ABOUT HIM TODAY... WATCHING YOU AND TRYING TO MANIPULATE YOU AWAY FROM STEVE... I'D SAY HE'S BORDERLINE OBSESSED WITH YOU!
I DON'T KNOW IF I'D WANT TO BE ALONE WITH A GUY LIKE THAT... ESPECIALLY OUT OF TOWN!


ON THE CONTRARY! PSYCHOLOGICALLY SPEAKING, HIS OBSESSIVE TENDENCIES ARE A WEAKNESS I HOPE TO BE ABLE TO EXPLOIT!
REALLY? I'M SURPRISED TO HEAR TALK LIKE THAT FROM YOU, MELANIE!


TELL ME MORE!


Later, after lots and lots of girl talk...
WELL, I THINK WE'VE COVERED ABOUT EVERY POSSIBLE SITUATION YOU MIGHT EXPECT ON YOUR TRIP WITH ADAM! I HOPE IT'S ENOUGH!
I HOPE SO TOO!


BUT WITH MY VAST KNOWLEDGE OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE ALONG WITH YOUR CONSIDERABLE EXPERTISE IN FEMININE WILES, I THINK I CAN HANDLE MOST ANYTHING ADAM THROWS AT ME OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS!
PINK FRIEND


WELL, WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU KNOW I'M JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY!
OF COURSE! I'LL KEEP YOU UPDATED EVERY CHANCE I GET!
I'LL BE LOOKING FORWARD TO IT!


BE CAREFUL, BUT HAVE FUN, MELANIE!
I'LL DO BOTH, HANNAH! AND THANKS AGAIN!


YOU DO REALIZE THINGS WILL GET HOT AND HEAVY ON THIS TRIP, DON'T YOU?
ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮРЪ


OF COURSE I DO! MY REFUSAL TO SUCCUMB TO HIS SEXUAL ADVANCES HAS PIQUED HIS INTEREST!
HIS EGO DEMANDS THAT HE TRY AND DOMINATE THE WILLFUL WOMAN WHO CONTINUES TO VEX HIM!
UH-HUH! AND YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN HANDLE HIM?


NO... I DON'T! BUT I'M CONFIDENT WE CAN!
WELL OF COURSE YOU'LL NEED ME! BUT JUST HOW MUCH ARE YOU GONNA LET ME CONTRIBUTE?
WHATEVER IT TAKES!


NO SHIT? CARTE BLANCHE?!
IF NECESSARY...!
ТЕАТРЪ МИНІАТЮРЪ


OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS WE'VE PROVEN THAT WE CAN WORK TOGETHER FLUIDLY TO CREATE A UNIFIED, COHESIVE INDIVIDUAL!
HOWEVER, I REALIZE THAT, OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, I AM VERY LIKELY GOING TO RELY ON YOU MORE THAN I EVER HAVE BEFORE, AND I... I BELIEVE YOU WILL FUNCTION COMPETENTLY ENOUGH WHEN CALLED UPON.


AWWW! YOU'RE LEARNING TO TRUST ME, AREN'T YOU, BIG S?
THE SITUATION MERELY NECESSITATES IT, THAT'S ALL!
BESIDES, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WITH THE CHUTZPAH TO WEAR OUTFITS LIKE WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY ALMOST WEARING!


AND THAT'S THE BEST I'M EVER GONNA GET OUT OF YOU, ISN'T IT?
I UNDERSTAND YOUR NEED FOR VALIDATION, SO IF IT WILL HELP ACHIEVE OUR SHARED GOALS, THEN YES... I'M DOING MY BEST TO NOT DISTRUST YOU!


YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO SWEET TALK A GIRL, DON'T YOU, BIG S!


The next day, in Stan Linderman's office...


IS THAT GRADUATE ASSISTANT OF YOURS AROUND ANYWHERE, STAN? I NEED TO TALK TO HER!
WELL, GOOD MORNING TO YOU TOO, RUTH! AND YES, I'M FINE, THANK YOU! HOW ARE YOU?
SLAM!!!


YEAH, YEAH... WHATEVER! MELANIE BUSH! WHERE IS SHE?
SHE'S NOT HERE!
I CAN SEE THAT, STAN! BUT WHERE IS SHE?
SHE CALLED ME LAST NIGHT AND SAID SHE'D BE OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW DAYS... GATHERING DATA AT SOME OF ADAM ROSS'S OTHER COMPANIES!


WHY? WHAT'D YOU NEED TO SEE HER FOR?
NOTHING THAT CONCERNS YOU, STAN! DON'T WORRY!
WELL, I HOPE SHE'S NOT GONE TOO LONG! SHE'S REALLY INDISPENSABLE!


OH, PLEASE STAN! INDISPENSABLE? I'M SURE SHE'S NOTHING MORE THAN EYE-CANDY FOR YOU TO DROOL OVER!
IF I WEREN'T SO SHORT-STAFFED AS IT IS, I'D HAVE YOUR LECHEROUS ASS THROWN OUT OF HERE!
I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO DIGNIFY THAT COMMENT WITH A RETORT! BESIDES, I HAVE A CLASS TO GET TO!
EXCUSE ME, RUTH! I'M SURE YOU CAN LET YOURSELF OUT!


HMPH! PRETTY INDIGNANT FOR SUCH A LECHEROUS OLD FART!

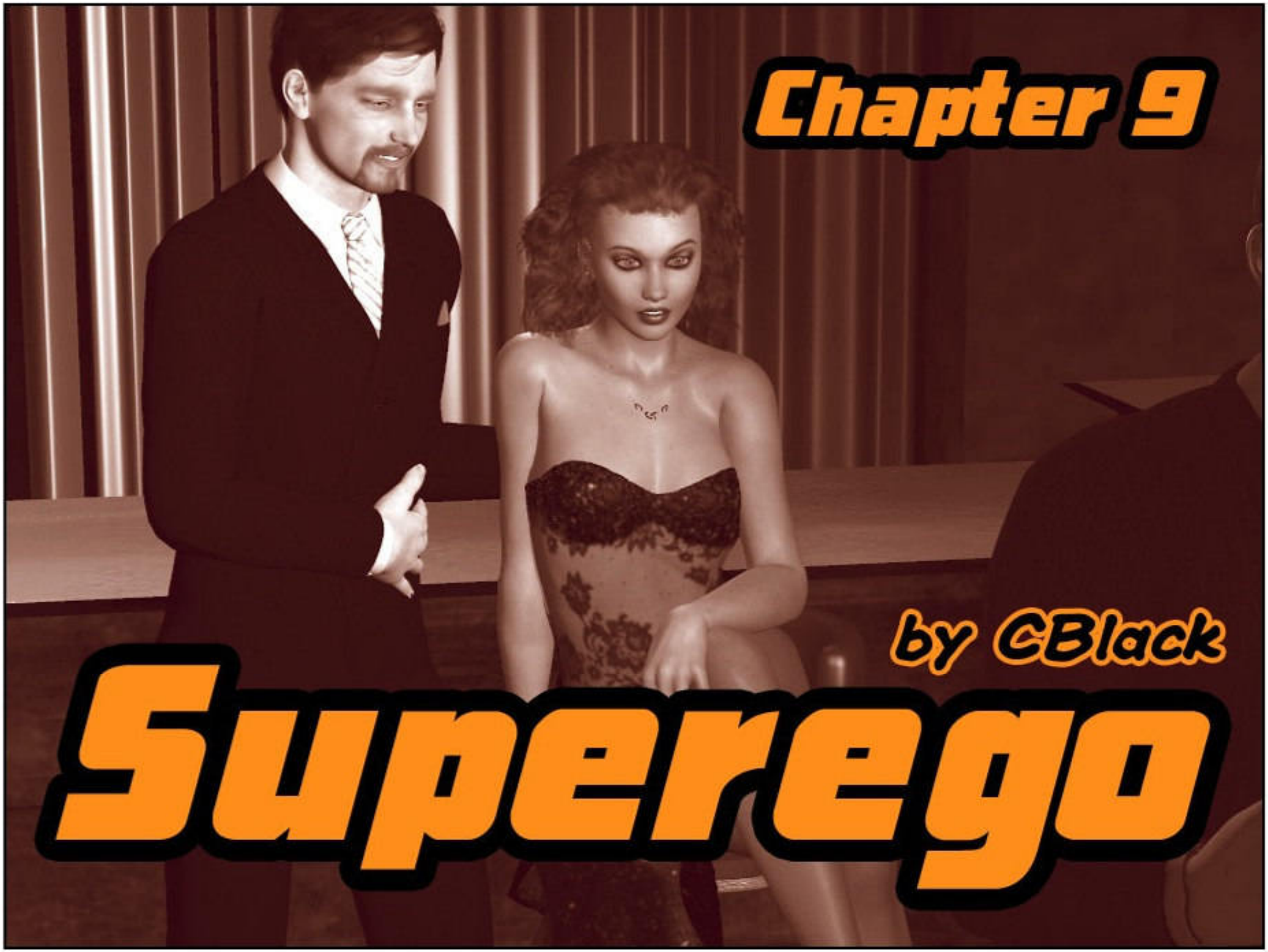

YES, CAN I SPEAK TO ADAM ROSS PLEASE! TELL HIM IT'S RUTH KIMBALL!
I'M SORRY, DR. KIMBALL, BUT MR. ROSS IS OUT OF TOWN ON BUSINESS FOR A FEW DAYS!
I CAN HAVE HIM RETURN YOUR CALL WHEN HE RETURNS!
NO! THAT... THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY! GOOD BYE!


SO... ROSS IS OUT OF TOWN ON BUSINESS, HUH? THE SAME TIME AS THAT LITTLE TRAMP?
COINCIDENCE MY ASS!


I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS! IT'S TIME TO SEE JUST WHAT THE HELL THAT LITTLE GOLD-DIGGER IS REALLY ALL ABOUT!


DUCKWORTH INVESTIGATIONS!
HELLO, BOB? THIS IS RUTH... RUTH KIMBALL! YOU REMEMBER ME, OF COURSE!
OH YEAH! HOW YOU DOING RUTH? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?


I HAVE ANOTHER LITTLE JOB FOR YOU, BOB!


Chapter 9
by CBlack
Superego


The next day, in the lobby of a Denver hotel...


SO, WHAT DID YOU THINK OF YOUR FIRST BOARD MEETING?
FRANKLY, I DIDN'T THINK MUCH OF IT! BUT THEN AGAIN, I HAVE NO BASIS FOR ANY COMPARISONS!


HOWEVER, I WAS CORRECT WHEN I TOLD YOU PRESENTING ME TO YOUR EXECUTIVES WOULD BE POINTLESS!
THEY EITHER DIDN'T CARE OR WERE POLITELY DISMISSIVE WHEN YOU INTRODUCED ME!
ON THE CONTRARY! I'M SURE THEY RECOGNIZED YOUR INTRODUCTION AS A COURTESY SINCE THE ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE ME JUST IMPOSING YOU UPON THEM!


NOT THAT THEY WOULD POSSIBLY MIND HAVING A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN SUCH AS YOURSELF IMPOSED UPON THEM! I KNOW I SURE DON'T!
EVEN THOUGH YOU CHOSE TO DRESS SIGNIFICANTLY MORE BUSINESSLIKE THAN USUAL TODAY! WHY IS THAT?


BECAUSE THERE WAS NO NEED FOR ME TO COERCE ANY OF THESE MEN TO GET WHAT I WANTED! I HAD YOU TO DO THAT FOR ME!
HENCE, I COULD DRESS MORE APPROPRIATELY FOR THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT! I ASSUMED YOU'D APPRECIATE MY PROFESSIONALISM!
OH, I DO, MY DEAR... I DO! I ESPECIALLY APPRECIATE HOW AMAZING YOU LOOK EVEN WHEN YOU'RE NOT TRYING TO!


SIGH! HOW A MAN AS EASILY DISTRACTED AS YOU COULD AMASS SUCH A CORPORATE EMPIRE BAFFLES ME!
IT'S MY DISTRACTIONS THAT MAKE ME WHO I AM!
HOW ABOUT I EXPLAIN IT TO YOU OVER DINNER TONIGHT? I KNOW OF A MARVELOUS DINNER CLUB DOWNTOWN!
I'LL COME BY YOUR ROOM AT SEVEN, AND THEN WE'LL...!


YOU'LL MEET ME HERE...IN THE HOTEL LOBBY AT SEVEN! AND THEN WE'LL LEAVE FROM HERE!


SIGH!
FINE! HAVE IT
YOUR WAY,
MY DEAR!


Later that evening...


HAVE I MENTIONED HOW BREATHTAKINGLY BEAUTIFUL YOU LOOK THIS EVENING?
FIVE TIMES BY MY COUNT! BUT DON'T WORRY, I BELIEVE I CAN WITHSTAND A FEW MORE REPETITIVE COMPLIMENTS LIKE THAT BEFORE THEY BECOME TIRESOME!


AND I DON'T BELIEVE I'VE MENTIONED HOW **WONDERFUL** DINNER WAS! YOU WERE CORRECT WHEN YOU SAID THIS WAS A **MARVELOUS** DINNER CLUB!
I CAN TELL! WE SEEM TO HAVE RUN INTO NEARLY A **DOZEN** PEOPLE THAT YOU KNOW!
THANK YOU, MY DEAR! I **ALWAYS** MAKE IT A POINT TO COME HERE **WHENEVER** I'M IN TOWN!
WHAT CAN I SAY? I HAVE A **LOT** OF **FRIENDS!**


I HOPE YOU'LL ALSO ENJOY THEIR NIGHTCLUB AS MUCH AS I DO!
SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN JAZZ HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO STOP BY HERE, UNANNOUNCED, AND OFFERED UP IMPROMPTU JAM-SESSIONS!
ALTHOUGH I'VE NEVER BEEN A BIG FAN OF JAZZ, THIS IS MUCH NICER THAN SOME OF THE CLUBS I'VE FREQUENTED BACK HOME!


ADAM ROSS, YOU OLD DOG! HOW YOU DOING? AS IF I HAD TO ASK!
AS ALWAYS, I'M LIVING THE DREAM, CHUCK!


MELANIE, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE, CHARLES GRANT!
CHUCK, THIS IS MELANIE BUSH, A NEW FRIEND OF MINE!
IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU, MR. GRANT!


OH, HELL! MY FRIENDS CALL ME CHUCK, LITTLE LADY! AND I KNOW FOR DAMN SURE I'D LIKE TO CONSIDER YOU A FRIEND! HEH-HEH!
OF COURSE... CHUCK!


HELL, ADAM! ANOTHER SWIMSUIT MODEL? JESUS! YOU'VE GOTTA LEAVE A COUPLE FOR THE REST OF US, YOU KNOW! HAW!
WHAT CAN I SAY, CHUCK? MY TASTES ARE WHAT THEY ARE! I JUST CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO LOWER MY STANDARDS!


YOU MAKE SURE YOU TAKE CARE OF MY MAN HERE, OKAY LITTLE LADY?


TALK AT YOU LATER, ADAM!
WILL DO, CHUCK!


INTERESTING FRIEND YOU'VE GOT THERE!
A LITTLE MORE BOISTEROUS THAN MOST, BUT YES... WE DO GO WAY BACK!
MM-HMM! AND I'M SURE IT'S JUST A COINCIDENCE THAT WE'RE IN AN ESTABLISHMENT WHERE ALL YOUR FRIENDS ARE!
WELL, IT IS A POPULAR PLACE...!


AND YOU CAN SHOW OFF THE LATEST EDITION OF "EYE-CANDY" HANGING ON YOUR ARM! I DO SO HOPE THEY'RE NOT DISAPPOINTED IN MY LACK OF MONO-SYLLABIC GUSHING OVER YOU!


WELL, TO BE TRUTHFUL, YOU ARE CONSIDERABLY LESS DEMONSTRATIVE TOWARD ME THAN ANY OF THE OTHER COMPANIONS I'VE BROUGHT HERE! I'D BE SURPRISED IF THEY HADN'T NOTICED!
I THOUGHT WE ESTABLISHED THE FACT THAT I AM NOT ONE OF YOUR BIMBOS-DU-JOUR! I DO NOT AND WILL NOT FAWN OVER POWERFUL MEN! EVEN YOU!
OH, I'M WELL AWARE OF THAT! BUT WOULD A LITTLE PDA BE SO BAD! I DO HAVE A REPUTATION TO MAINTAIN, YOU KNOW!


HMMM...! THIS COULD BE JUST THE OPPORTUNITY I WAS LOOKING FOR!


NOW, I WOULDN'T PUT IT THAT WAY, MELANIE! IT'S JUST THAT...!
WELL, HEAVEN FORBID I DO ANY DAMAGE TO YOUR SACROSANCT REPUTATION! HOW OTHERS PERCEIVE YOU IS OBVIOUSLY OF IMMENSE IMPORTANCE TO YOU, REGARDLESS OF MY PREFERENCES!


BUT ON FURTHER REFLECTION, I DO UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT PERCEPTION IS TO SOMEONE LIKE YOU!
YOU DO?
OF COURSE! AND WHO AM I TO DETRACT FROM THE PROFESSIONAL AS WELL AS THE AMATORY PRESENCE YOU BRING TO A ROOM!
AND THAT MEANS...?


AND THAT MEANS, IF IT PLEASES YOU, I WILL DEBASE MYSELF AND PLAY THE PART EXPECTED OF ME... IN PUBLIC!
YOU'D DO THAT FOR ME?
OF COURSE... AS LONG AS YOU'D MAKE SIMILAR... INDULGENCES TO ME IN PRIVATE!


INDULGENCES, HMMM? SUCH AS...?
OH, WE'LL DISCUSS THOSE LATER! IN PRIVATE!
BUT FOR NOW, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BEGIN MY PUBLIC DUTIES, SHOULDN'T I?
YOU WON'T HEAR ME COMPLAIN!




DANCE WITH ME!
WHAT BETTER WAY TO SHOW YOU OFF? DANCE WITH ME!
BUT NO ONE ELSE IS DANCING!
AS THE GENTLEMAN WISHES!












A few songs later...
WHEW! I DON'T THINK THE REGULARS HERE ARE USED TO SEEING MOVES LIKE THAT!
YOU DID SAY YOU WANTED TO SHOW ME OFF, DIDN'T YOU?
I GUESS I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO THROW YOURSELF INTO IT SO... PHYSICALLY!
WHY NOT? I'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO EXCEL AT EVERYTHING I DO!


HMMM... LOOKS LIKE CHUCK IS BACK! NOW I KNOW HE'S LOUD AND BOORISH, BUT PLEASE BEAR WITH HIM IF YOU CAN!
OH, I THINK I CAN FIND A WAY TO CUT HIS VISIT SHORT!


DAMN, ADAM! YOU AND THAT LITTLE DARLIN' OF YOURS REALLY KNOW HOW TO HEAT THE JOINT UP!
WHAT CAN I SAY, CHUCK? SHE JUST BRINGS OUT THE YOUNG MAN IN ME!


BABY, I'M BORED! CAN WE GO BACK TO THE HOTEL NOW?
I CAN THINK OF LOTS OF THINGS I'D MUCH RATHER BE DOING WITH YOU!


SORRY TO CUT THE REUNION SHORT, CHUCK, BUT WHEN THE LADY CALLS...!
DON'T I KNOW IT! YOU LUCKY BASTARD!


SO... SATISFIED WITH MY PUBLIC PERFORMANCE?
MELANIE, MY DEAR, IF THE REST OF OUR EVENING IS ANYTHING LIKE THAT, THEN I BELIEVE MY SATISFACTION IS GUARANTEED!


GOOD! SO LONG AS YOU KEEP UP YOUR END OF OUR AGREEMENT IN PRIVATE!
OH, MY CURIOSITY HAS BEEN PIQUED! I CANT WAIT TO SEE WHAT YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR US!


I CANT EITHER...!


A short while later, back at the hotel...


SHALL WE CONCLUDE THE EVENING IN MY SUITE?
ACTUALLY, I'D RATHER WE MEET IN MY SUITE INSTEAD!
WORKS FOR ME!


BUT I NEED ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES TO... PREPARE, IF YOU WILL! HERE'S AN EXTRA KEY TO MY ROOM! JUST LET YOURSELF IN!
I SUPPOSE I CAN WAIT THAT LONG FOR WHAT I'M SURE WILL BE A MEMORABLE EVENING!


SIGH!
MEMORABLE DOESN'T BEGIN TO DESCRIBE WHAT MAY HAPPEN TONIGHT IF I'M NOT CAREFUL!
oooooo


YOU WORRY TOO MUCH, BIG S! THAT DEAL YOU STRUCK WITH HIM WAS A STROKE OF GENIUS! WISH I'D THOUGHT OF IT!
WELL, IN A WAY, YOU DID! AT LEAST PARTIALLY!
NOW IT'S JUST A MATTER OF SEEING WHAT WE CAN GET AWAY WITH TONIGHT!

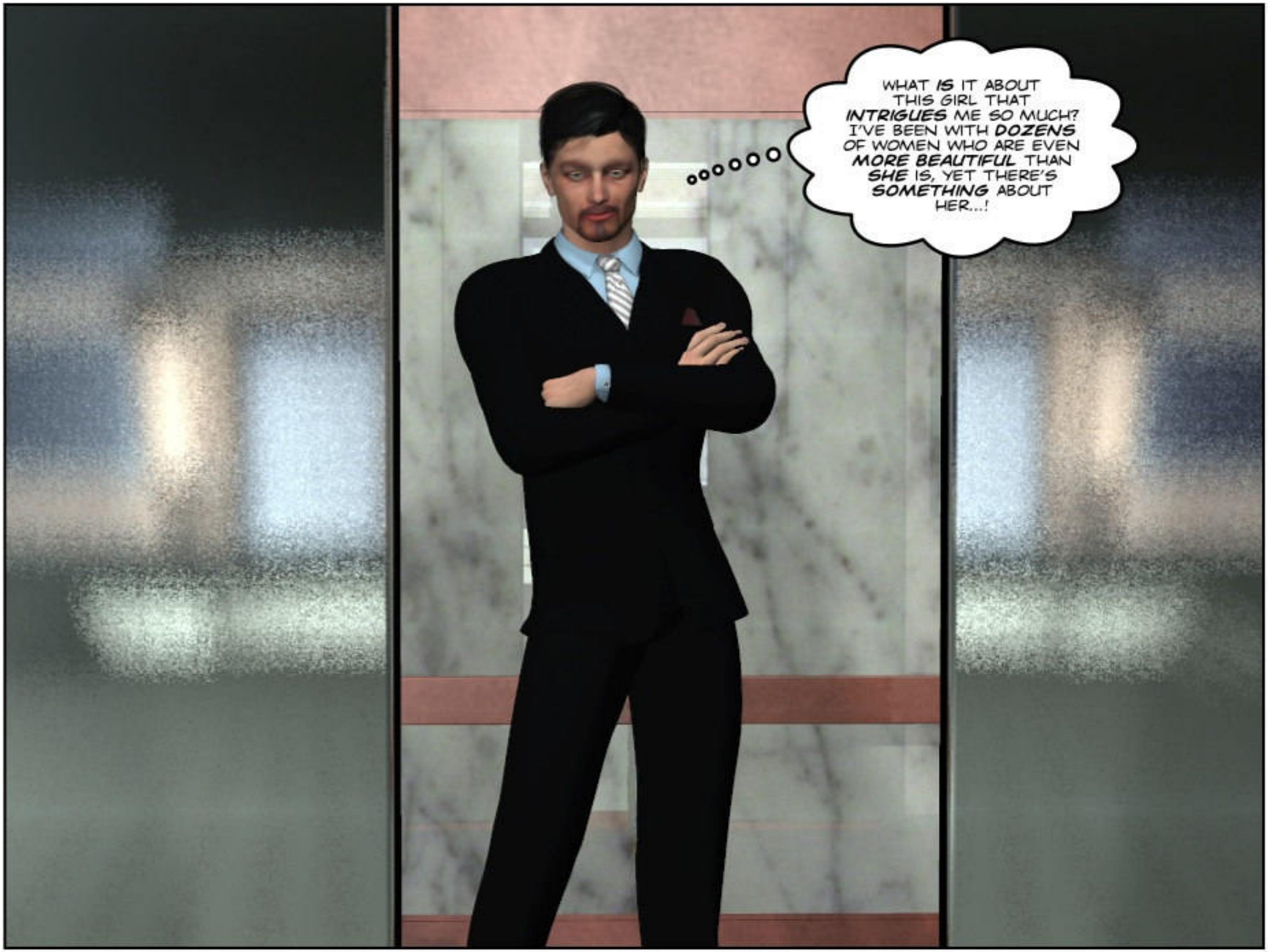

WHICH PUTS ME FRONT AND CENTER STAGE IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY!
YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL THERE'S NO WAY I ALONE COULD DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE!
YEAH... I KNOW! I JUST LIKE HEARING YOU ADMIT IT!


I'LL ADMIT ANYTHING YOU WANT AS LONG AS YOU CAN ASSURE ME YOU WON'T LOSE CONTROL TONIGHT!
I DON'T HAVE TO REMIND YOU WHAT'S AT STAKE!
OF COURSE YOU DON'T! REMEMBER, IF WE GET OUTED WE'LL PROBABLY LOSE BOTH OF OUR BOY-TOYS! AND WHERE WILL THAT LEAVE ME?


FORTUNATELY, THE INCREASED DOSAGES OF THE HORMONES SEEMS TO HAVE HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT! MY GENITALIA HAVE SHRUNKEN EVEN MORE AND REMAIN FLACCID EVEN WHEN I AM SEXUALLY AROUSED!
THEY SHOULD BE MUCH EASIER TO KEEP HIDDEN.. NO MATTER WHAT WE WEAR!
ANOTHER GENIUS MOVE ON YOUR PART, BIG S! PURE GENIUS!


SO DON'T SWEAT IT, BIG S! I'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING! YOU'LL SEE!


And, twenty minutes later...


WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS GIRL THAT INTRIGUES ME SO MUCH? I'VE BEEN WITH DOZENS OF WOMEN WHO ARE EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN SHE IS, YET THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HER...!


SHE'S WITHOUT A DOUBT THE MOST ASSERTIVE YOUNG LADY I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED!
NONE OF MY OTHER COMPANIONS WOULD EVER DREAM OF STANDING UP TO ME ON A CONSISTENT BASIS THE WAY MELANIE HAS!


I WONDER IF THAT'S WHY I FIND HER SO FASCINATING?


WELL, WHATEVER THE REASONS, I KNOW OUR RELATIONSHIP IS JUST ABOUT TO SKYROCKET TO THE NEXT LEVEL!


I HOPE YOU APPRECIATE *PUNCTUALITY* AS MUCH AS I, BECAUSE IT'S BEEN *EXACTLY* TWENTY MINUTES!


I DO APPRECIATE IT! BUT I STILL NEED A MINUTE OR TWO, SO MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE!
HMMM... HOW COMFORTABLE WOULD YOU LIKE ME?
I'LL LEAVE THAT UP TO YOU!


THIS IS GOING EVEN BETTER THAN I'D HOPED!
THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE A WOMAN MAKING AN ENTRANCE IN A FLIMSY, SEXY LITTLE NOTHING!


HMMM, BLACK SILK BOXERS! WHY AM I NOT SURPRISED?
I THINK TONIGHT WILL BE FULL OF SURPRISES, MY DEAR! JUST WAIT UNTIL I...!


OH MY...!
JUST WAIT UNTIL I WHAT? FINALLY SUCCUMB TO THE INFAMOUS CHARMS OF ADAM ROSS?
AS YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE, I HAVE OTHER PLANS!


I... I HAD NO IDEA YOU WERE INTO...! I MEAN...!
SO WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY IS THAT MY PERSONAL "INDULGENCES" HAVE CAUGHT YOU QUITE OFF GUARD?
GOOD! BECAUSE THAT'S EXACTLY HOW I WANT YOU TO FEEL!


AND RIGHT *HERE* IS WHERE I WANT YOU TO BE!
OOF!!


AHHH, THIS IS MUCH BETTER! I'VE ALWAYS PREFERRED LOOKING DOWN AT MY MEN!
IT GIVES ME A MUCH BETTER PERSPECTIVE SO I CAN SEE WHAT I HAVE TO WORK WITH!
WO... WORK WITH?


OH YES! TAKE YOUR AMPLE, BUT NOT TOO TERRIBLY IMPRESSIVE, COCK THAT'S CURRENTLY STRAINING AGAINST THESE LOVELY SILK BOXERS OF YOURS!
I'M SURE IT'S ADEQUATE FOR MOST OF THE WOMEN YOU'VE BEEN WITH, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE... I'M NOT LIKE THOSE OTHER WOMEN! AM I?
NO... DEFINITELY NOT!


AND A WOMAN LIKE ME DESERVES SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST AN ADEQUATE COCK... DON'T YOU AGREE?
OF... OF COURSE YOU DO!
GOOD BOY! YOU'RE LEARNING!


YOU SEE, ADAM... NO MAN GETS TO SLIP HIS COCK INTO ME BEFORE HE PROVES THAT HE KNOWS HOW TO USE IT... AND USE IT TO MY RATHER STRINGENT SPECIFICATIONS!
THAT ALMOST ALWAYS REQUIRES A LITTLE... TRAINING! YOU UP FOR A LITTLE TRAINING, ADAM?
OH GOD... YES!


GOOD ANSWER! SO GOOD, IN FACT, THAT I THINK YOU'VE EARNED A LITTLE REWARD!


LET'S SEE IF YOU KNOW THE PROPER WAY TO RESPECT AND PLEASURE THESE!


OH HONEY, IF THAT'S THE BEST YOU CAN DO, THEN WE MIGHT AS WELL CALL IT QUITS!


MMMMMMM!
THAT'S MORE
LIKE IT!


OOOHHHH! THAT... IS DEFINITELY BETTER!
JESUS! YOU COULD DO THAT TO ME ALL NIGHT LONG, ROSSY-BOY! BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S NOT PART OF THE PLAN!


MMMMMMMM! BUT A FEW MORE MINUTES SURE AS FUCK WON'T HURT!


UH-OH!
SOMEONE'S
STARTING TO GET A
LITTLE TOO
ADVENTUROUS!


OH, NO YOU DON'T! YOU'RE NOWHERE NEAR TO EARNING YOUR WAY IN THERE!


BUT I JUST WANTED TO...!
WHAT YOU WANT ISN'T IMPORTANT AT THE MOMENT, OR HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED THAT OUT YET?
SIGH! I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO BE MORE EXPLICIT IN EXPLAINING OUR DEAL TO YOU!


OUT THERE, IN PUBLIC, YOU GET YOUR WAY! I'LL DRESS THE WAY YOU WANT, BEHAVE THE WAY YOU WANT... BE WHATEVER YOU WANT!
WE DO, AFTER ALL, HAVE TO MAINTAIN YOUR STELLAR REPUTATION AS A LADIES MAN!


HERE, HOWEVER, IN PRIVATE, OUR ROLES ARE REVERSED AND I AM IN CHARGE!
WHICH MEANS THAT YOU WILL BEHAVE THE WAY I WANT YOU TO... WITHOUT QUESTION! UNDERSTAND?
OW! OF... OF COURSE, MY DEAR! I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY!


GOOD BOY! NOW THAT WE'VE GOT THAT ALL STRAIGHTENED OUT, LET'S CONTINUE WITH YOUR TRAINING, SHALL WE?
BY ALL MEANS!


WELL, WELL, WELL! YOU CERTAINLY MUST BE ENJOYING THIS CONSIDERING HOW EAGER SOMEONE SEEMS TO BE GETTING!
OOOOHHH! THIS IS WITHOUT A DOUBT THE MOST EROTIC THING ANY WOMAN HAS EVER DONE FOR ME!


AND FROM THE FEEL OF THINGS, I'LL BET YOU'RE JUST DYING FOR RELEASE RIGHT NOW, AREN'T YOU?
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH! PLEASE....!


THEN DON'T LET ME STOP YOU!
HUH?! BUT I THOUGHT YOU'D...!
AND DEAL WITH ALL THAT MESS? HARDLY!
BUT...!


UH-UH-UH!
WHAT I WANT!
WITHOUT QUESTION!
REMEMBER?


AND WHAT I WANT IS TO WATCH YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN LITTLE NEEDS!
BECAUSE THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GOING TO BE UNTIL WE COMPLETE YOUR TRAINING!


BUT IF YOU NEED A LITTLE... INSPIRATION, I SUPPOSE I CAN PROVIDE SOME OF THAT FOR YOU!
ESPECIALLY SINCE I'M MUCH BETTER AT THIS THAN YOU!


OH, I'LL ADMIT, ALTHOUGH YOU'RE VERY GOOD WITH YOUR TONGUE, YOUR HAND WORK LEAVES A LOT TO BE DESIRED!
SO WHILE YOU'RE WORKING ON YOURSELF DOWN THERE, WHY DON'T I SHOW YOU HOW A WOMAN REALLY WANTS TO BE HANDLED!


THE "GROPE AND SQUEEZE" YOU SEEM SO FOND OF MAY BE APPROPRIATE DURING MORE INTENSE MOMENTS...!
BUT HANDLING THESE WITH FINESSE CAN BE SO MUCH MORE ENJOYABLE.. FOR BOTH OF US!


MEN... LIKE YOU... CAN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND HOW SENSUAL... AND EROTIC... IT FEELS TO HAVE BREASTS!
ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE HANDLED... MMMMM... APPROPRIATELY!


OOOOOO! ALTHOUGH YOU'D NEVER ADMIT IT, I JUST KNOW YOU'RE ENJOYING THIS AS MUCH AS I AM, BIG S!
SO I HOPE YOU'RE TAKIN' NOTES, 'CAUSE I DON'T ALWAYS WANT TO BE THE ONE DOIN' ALL THE WORK AROUND HERE!


I SURE HOPE HE CAN KEEP THAT UP FOR A NICE, LONG TIME, 'CAUSE THE LONGER I GET TO DO THIS TO MYSELF, THE BETTER!


BESIDES THAT, THERE'S SOMETHING AMAZING ABOUT WATCHING HIM POUND AWAY AT HIMSELF LIKE THAT... SWEATY AND HARD... AND ALL BECAUSE OF HOW MUCH I TURN HIM ON...!


MMMMM...! IT'S JUST SO... EMPOWERING! I COULD REALLY GET USED TO THIS!
IN FACT, BIG S, I THINK WE SHOULD...!
OHHH... OHHHH...!


OOOOOOOOOO!!!
OH WOW, BIG S! LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT US A GUSHER!


SIGH! OHHH...! I HAVEN'T DONE THAT IN QUITE SOME TIME!
REALLY? I'M SURPRISED, BECAUSE YOU SEEMED TO BE QUITE PRACTICED AT SELF-MINISTRATIONS!


WELL... I DID HAVE SOME VERY STIMULATING VISUAL AIDS!
THAT WAS THE WHOLE POINT, WASN'T IT!
NOW, WHY DON'T YOU GO GET YOURSELF CLEANED UP BEFORE YOU GO?


GO?! BUT I THOUGHT...!
YOU THOUGHT THAT ALL THIS WAS JUST A WARM-UP TO THE "MAIN EVENT"?
HARDLY, DARLING! TONIGHT WAS ALL ABOUT YOU LEARNING THE RULES OF OUR PRIVATE RELATIONSHIP... INCLUDING THE BOUNDARIES!


YOU'VE GOT A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE I THINK YOU'RE WORTHY OF WHAT YOU MIGHT CONSIDER THE BIG "PAY-OFF!"
BUT I CAN TELL YOU'RE DEFINITELY THE KIND OF MAN WHO'LL ENJOY THE JOURNEY I HAVE PLANNED FOR YOU!


I... I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT!
OF COURSE I AM!


NOW, DO AS I SAID AND GET YOURSELF CLEANED UP!
WE HAVE AN EARLY FLIGHT TO CATCH TOMORROW!


MMMMM... I DON'T THINK THAT COULD'VE GONE ANY BETTER!
THAT, OF COURSE, DEPENDS ON YOUR DEFINITION OF "BETTER"!


YOU DON'T SERIOUSLY THINK YOU COULD'VE DONE BETTER, DO YOU, BIG S?
OF COURSE NOT! BUT, THE THINGS YOU HAD TO DO... THE THINGS YOU MADE HIM DO...!
WASN'T THERE SOME OTHER WAY?


IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, YOU OFFERED NO IDEAS WHATSOEVER! THAT'S WHY IT ALL FELL ON MY SHOULDERS!
AND FROM EVERYTHING I SAW, MISSION ACCOMPLISHED! HE'S OUT OF OUR PANTIES UNTIL WE SAY SO, AND HIS INTEREST HAS RISEN OFF THE SCALE!
IF WE PLAY OUR CARDS RIGHT, WE CAN KEEP THIS THIS LITTLE GAME RUNNING INDEFINITELY!


I... I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT!
BUT IF ONLY IT DIDN'T LEAVE US FEELING SO... SO...!
THE WORD YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS HORNY, BIG S! WITH A CAPITAL H!
THAT'S WHY OUR NIPPLES ARE HARD ENOUGH RIGHT NOW TO CUT GLASS!


THAT'S ALSO WHY I'M HANDING OVER THE CAR KEYS TO YOU RIGHT NOW AND HEADING BACK TO MY OWN LITTLE CORNER OF OUR MIND!
WHAT?! BUT WHY...?!


BECAUSE IF I DON'T TAKE CARE OF THIS MOIST LITTLE MOUND OF MINE RIGHT NOW, I'M GONNA LOSE CONTROL, AND I PROMISED YOU WOULDN'T DO THAT!
BUT... BUT YOU CAN'T JUST... LEAVE ME...!


AHHH, THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG, BIG S! DON'T FORGET THAT, UNLIKE YOU, I'VE GOT THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT... THE GENITALIA WE BOTH WANT!
SO IF YOU DON'T HEAR FROM ME FOR A WHILE, DON'T WORRY! I'LL JUST BE... BUSY!
BUT... BUT WHAT DO I DO ABOUT ADAM?!


JUST KISS HIM GOODNIGHT AND SHOVE HIM OUT THE DOOR, BIG S! YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT IN THE MORNING!
BUT....!


OH... MY! THIS IS NOT AT ALL WHAT I EXPECTED! LEAVING ME IN COMPLETE CHARGE... WITH ADAM... DRESSED LIKE THIS?!
WOW! YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO CHANGE ON MY ACCOUNT!


"GASP!" OH! YOU... YOU STARTLED ME!
BUT I MUST SAY THAT A WOMAN WHO CAN CARRY SO MANY DIFFERENT LOOKS THE WAY YOU DO IS A RARE FIND INDEED!

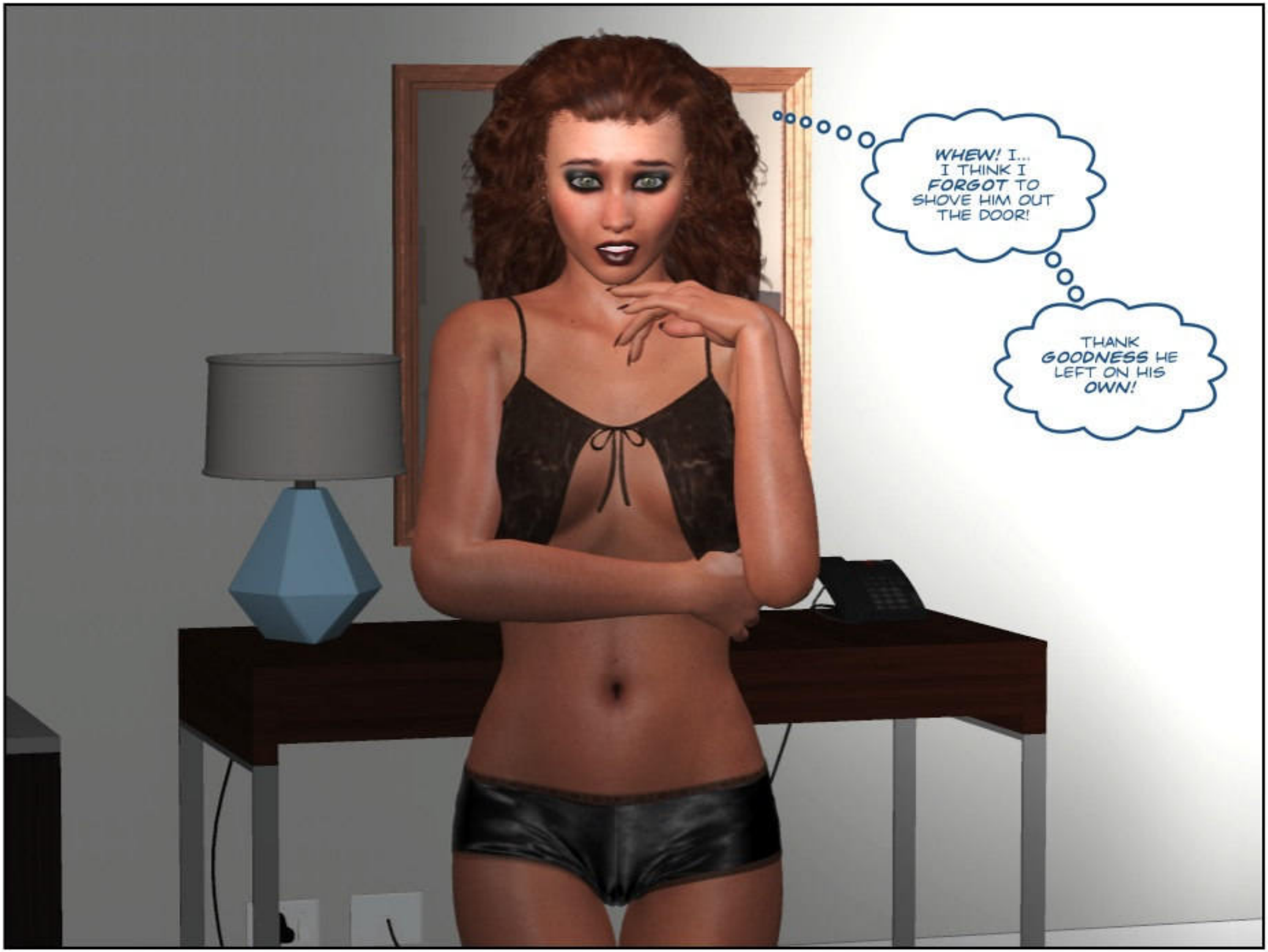

ARE YOU SURE YOU STILL WANT ME TO LEAVE?
Y...YES! OF COURSE I DO! I WOULDN'T HAVE SAID IT IF I HADN'T MEANT IT!


TOO BAD!



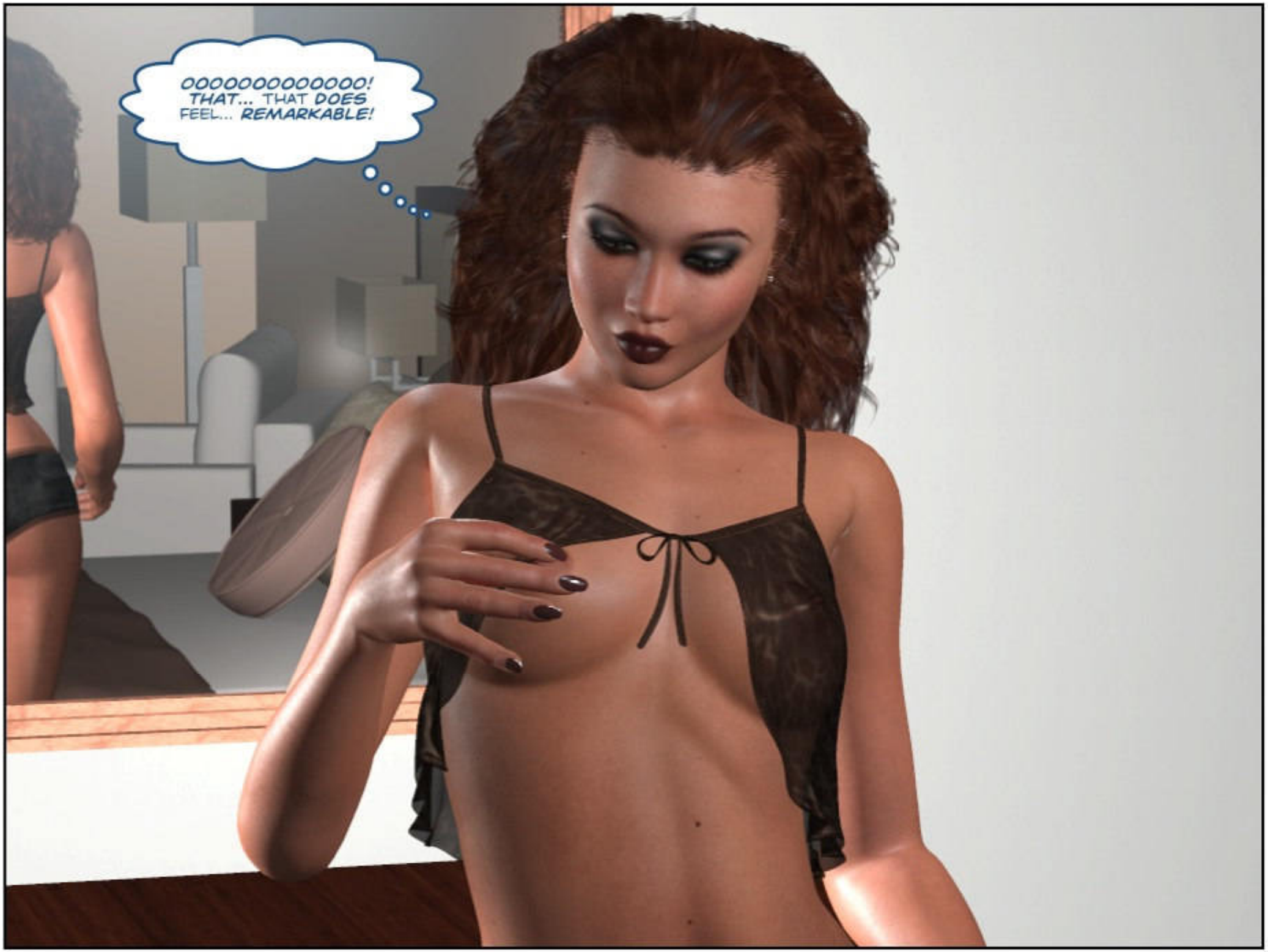



UNTIL TOMORROW THEN!


WHEW! I... I THINK I FORGOT TO SHOVE HIM OUT THE DOOR!
THANK GOODNESS HE LEFT ON HIS OWN!


SIGH! WHY, OH WHY, COULDN'T YOU HAVE WAITED AT LEAST UNTIL WE WERE ASLEEP BEFORE YOU LEFT ME IN COMPLETE AND TOTAL CHARGE OF OUR BODY WHEN IT'S IN THIS STATE?


YOU KNOW FULL WELL I HAVE NO EXPERIENCE WHATSOEVER IN DEALING WITH THE TYPES OF PHYSICAL URGES I'M FEELING RIGHT NOW!
IT'S ALMOST MADDENING! IT'S... IT'S...!


OOOOOOOOOOOO!
THAT... THAT DOES
FEEL... REMARKABLE!


I... I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS MYSELF! IT'S ALWAYS BEEN HER.. OR AT LEAST MOSTLY HER!
BUT IT TAKES ON A WHOLE NEW SENSATION WHEN I'M THE ONE WHO...!

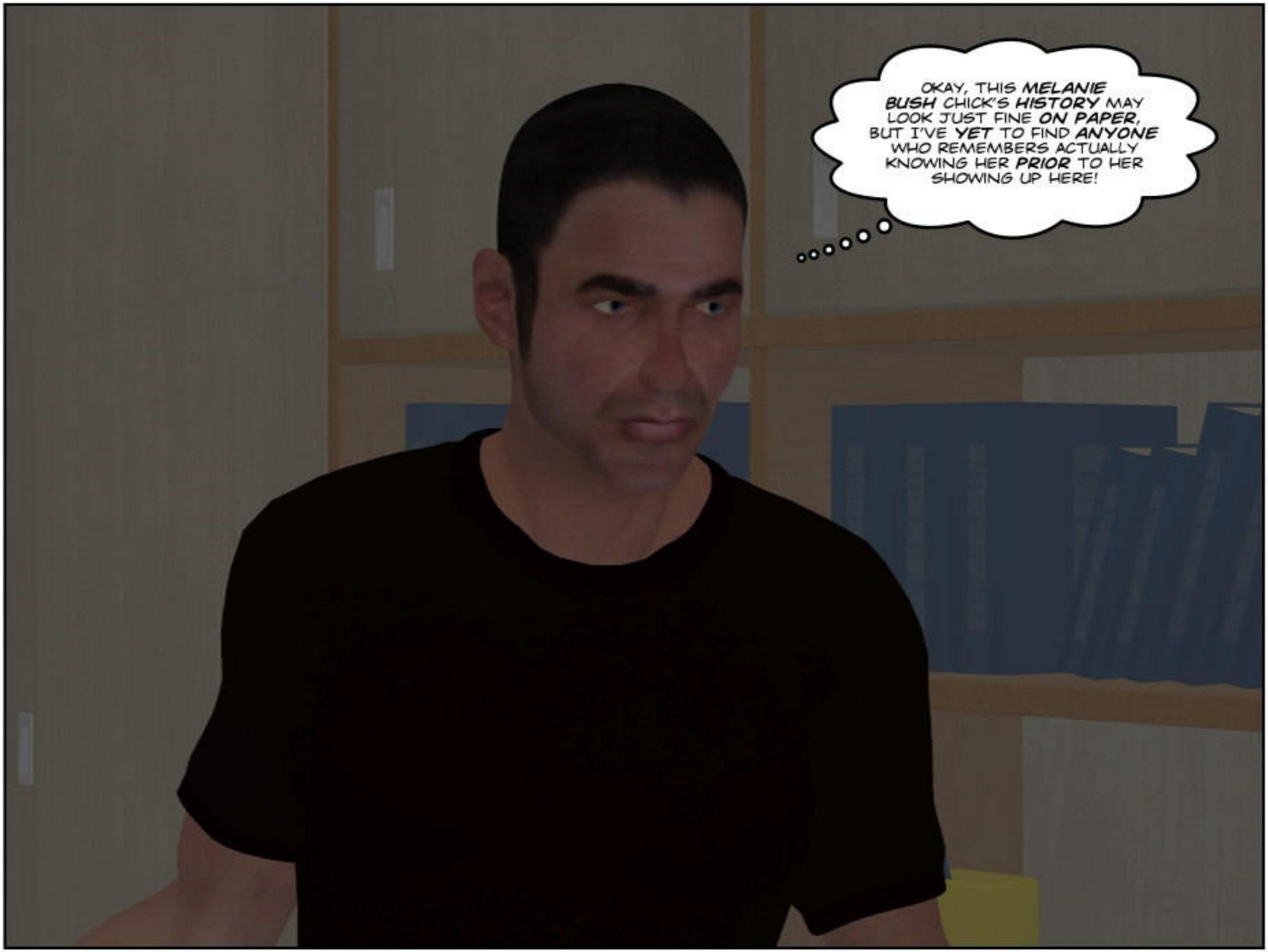

OOOOOOOHHHHHH!


NO WONDER SHE REVELS IN THESE SOOO MUCH...!
THEY'RE SO... SO...!


ATTA GIRL! IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME...!
OOOOOOOOO...!

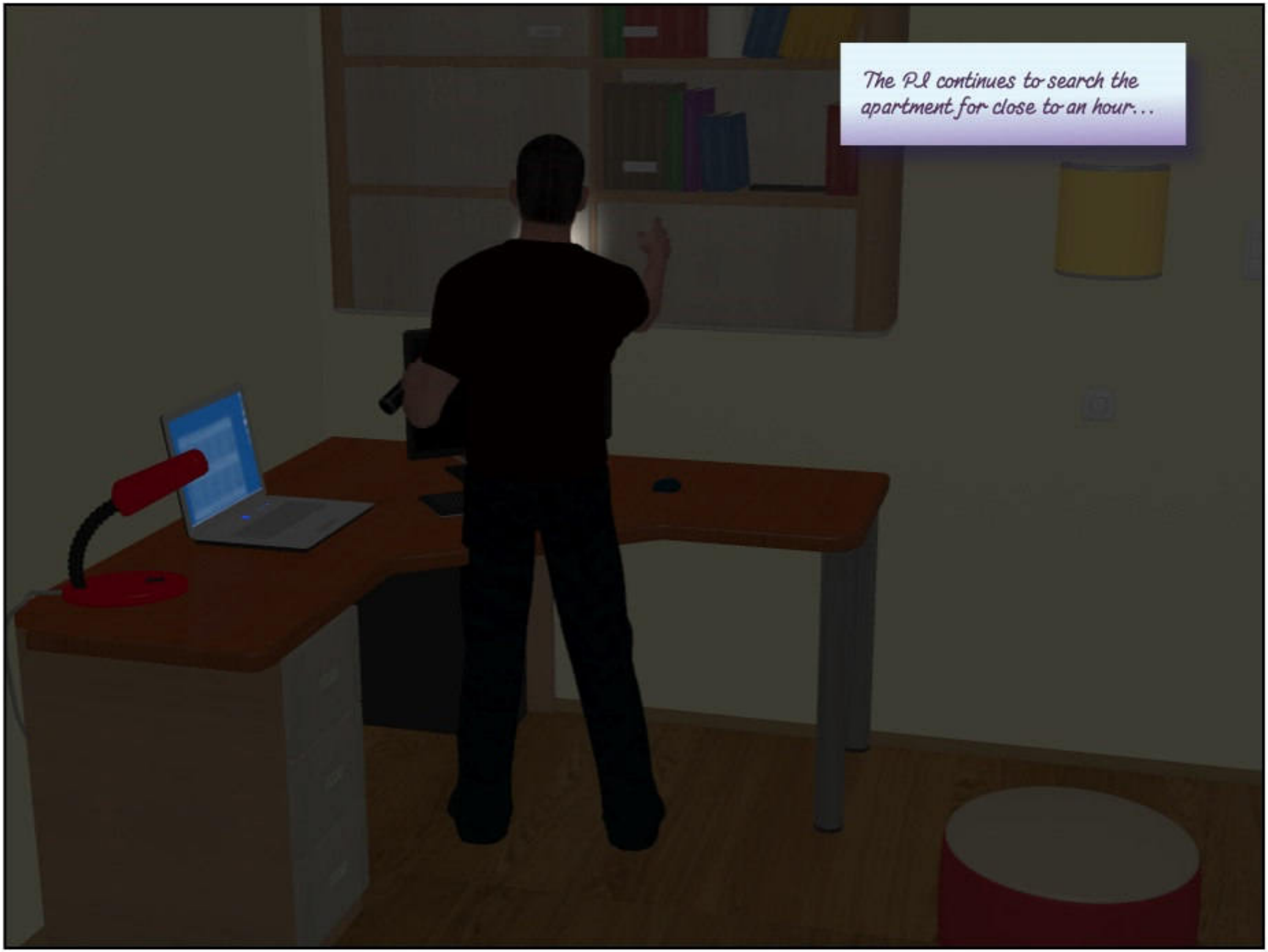

Meanwhile, back at Sidney's apartment...




OKAY, THIS MELANIE BUSH CHICK'S HISTORY MAY LOOK JUST FINE ON PAPER, BUT I'VE YET TO FIND ANYONE WHO REMEMBERS ACTUALLY KNOWING HER PRIOR TO HER SHOWING UP HERE!


AND THE DUDE SHE'S SUBLETTING THE APARTMENT FROM SEEMS TO HAVE DROPPED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH!
HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE IN AUSTRIA, BUT NO ONE THERE CAN CORROBORATE THAT EITHER!


THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING HERE THAT'LL TELL ME WHAT THE HELL'S GOIN' ON!


The P.I continues to search the apartment for close to an hour...


HMMM...! DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS STUFF IS, BUT SHE'S GOT SEVERAL FULL BOTTLES OF IT IN HER MEDICINE CABINET AND A SHITLOAD OF EMPTIES IN THE TRASH!
MAYBE SHE'S GOT SOME MEDICAL CONDITION!


LET'S SEE WHAT A WEB SEARCH BRINGS UP ON THIS "TIRESIALIS" STUFF...!
ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮРЪ

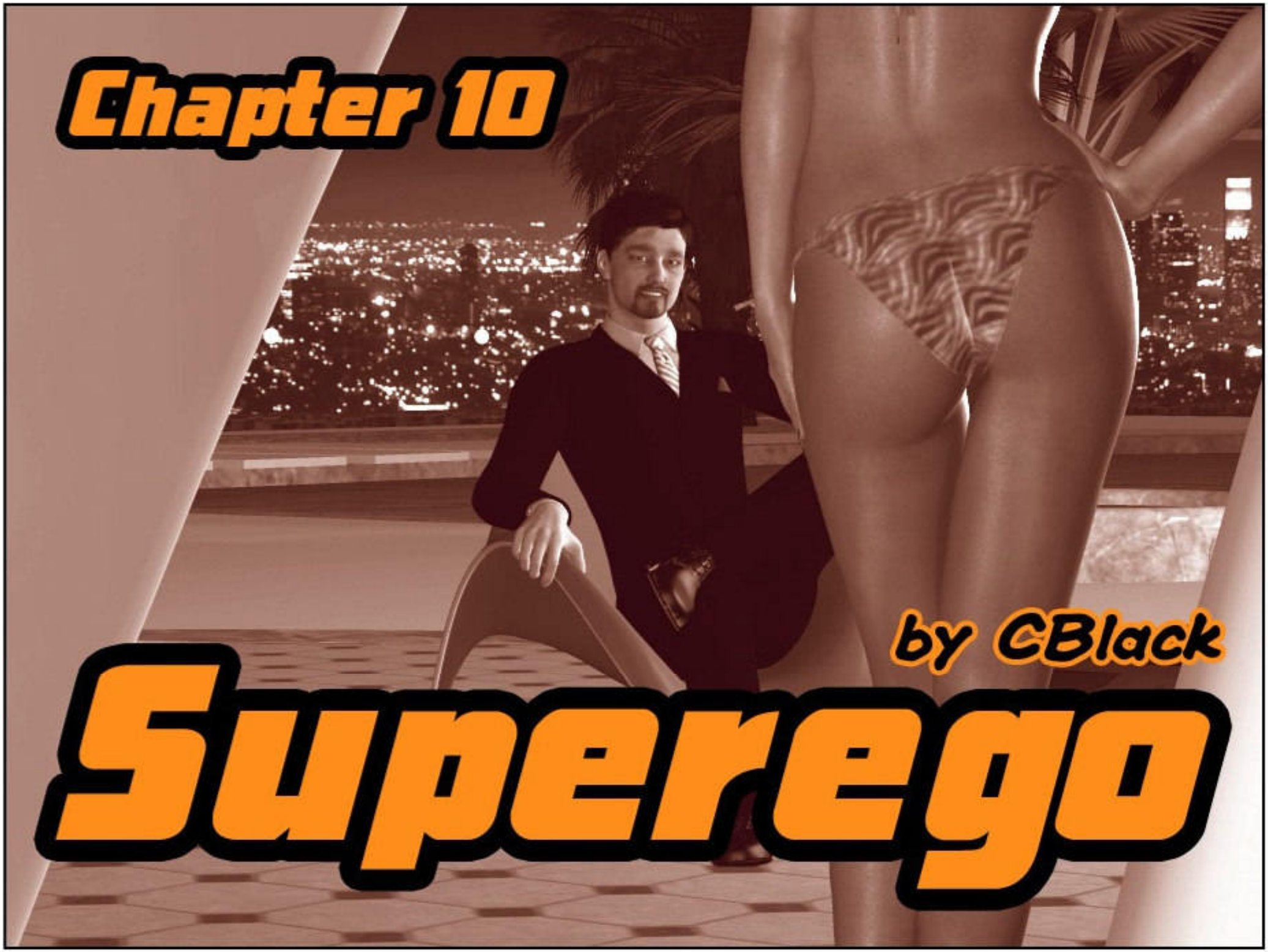

AH! THERE IT IS!
AN EXPERIMENTAL
HORMONE TREATMENT
DESIGNED FOR...!


HOLY SHIT!
YOU HAVE GOT TO
BE FUCKIN'
KIDDING ME!!


WELL, WELL! IF I PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT, THIS LITTLE BIT OF INFO WILL EARN ME A NICE, HEALTHY CHUNK OF CASH!


HEY THERE! IT'S BOB... BOB DUCKWORTH! SORRY TO BOTHER YOU SO LATE!


BUT I'VE FOUND OUT SOMETHING YOU REALLY OUGHTA KNOW!
ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮРЪ
ПРОЦКАЯ 18


Chapter 10
by CBlack
Superego


The next day, on the flight to Los Angeles...
N60659
WORLDLINER


I CAN'T STRESS ENOUGH HOW MUCH I ENJOYED LAST NIGHT!
IT'S NOT OFTEN SOMEONE CAN SURPRISE ME AS MUCH AS YOU DID!
WELL, I'M GLAD YOU'RE PLEASED WITH OUR "ARRANGEMENT"!


OH, PLEASED IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT! THE PERSON YOU SHOWED ME LAST NIGHT EXCEEDED ALL MY EXPECTATIONS!
I CAN'T *WAIT* TO SEE WHAT SHE HAS PLANNED FOR ME *TONIGHT!*
WELL... WHY WOULD TONIGHT BE ANY DIFFERENT FROM LAST NIGHT?


BECAUSE LOS ANGELES IS DEFINITELY NOT DENVER!
BESIDES HAVING DIFFERENT COMPANIES AND DIFFERENT FRIENDS THERE, THE CULTURE, THE LIFESTYLES, THE... EXPECTATIONS ARE ALL VERY UNIQUE IN LA!
AND I'M HOPING MY PUBLIC COMPANION WILL REFLECT THOSE EXPECTATIONS!


I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED YOU'D RAISE THE STAKES IN OUR LITTLE GAME!
I SUPPOSE THAT'S ONE PREDOMINANT ASPECT OF YOUR NATURE THAT I'LL JUST HAVE TO GET USED TO!


SIGH! FINE! BUT YOU DO REALIZE THAT YOUR REQUEST REQUIRES ME TO DO SOME SERIOUS SHOPPING SOMETIME AFTER OUR MEETING TODAY!
THE MEETING SHOULD CONCLUDE EARLY THIS AFTERNOON, GIVING YOU AMPLE TIME TO PREPARE FOR OUR EVENING OUT IN THE CITY OF ANGELS!


AND, OF COURSE, I'LL FOOT THE BILL FOR YOUR ENTIRE SHOPPING EXCURSION!
I WOULD EXPECT NOTHING LESS!


That evening, in the hills outside of Los Angeles...


ADAM, OLD MAN! I'M SO SORRY I DIDN'T MEET YOU AT THE DOOR WHEN YOU ARRIVED!
HAD TO TRACK DOWN ANOTHER CASE OF THE PINOT NOIR FROM THE WINE CELLAR AND GOT SIDETRACKED!


CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME FOR BEING SUCH AN INCONSIDERATE HOST?
CONSIDERING ALL THE MARVELOUS TIMES I'VE HAD AT THIS EXQUISITE HOME OF YOURS, THE LAST THING I WOULD EVER CALL YOU, CLAUDE, IS AN INCONSIDERATE HOST!


WELL, YOU JUST DON'T GET OUT TO THIS COAST OFTEN ENOUGH, SO WHEN YOU DO, I LIKE TO PULL OUT ALL THE STOPS!
THAT YOU DO, MY FRIEND! THAT YOU DO!
IN FACT, I CAN'T THINK OF ONE TIME THAT HASN'T BEEN... MEMORABLE!


SPEAKING OF MEMORABLE, ARE YOU FLYING SOLO TONIGHT OR DO I NEED TO INTRODUCE YOU AROUND A BIT... NOT THAT YOU NEED ANY HELP IN THAT DEPARTMENT!
THANKS, BUT I BROUGHT MY OWN TONIGHT! SHE'S FRESHENING UP AT THE MOMENT! IN FACT, YOU MET HER EARLIER TODAY AT THE BOARD MEETING!


THAT LITTLE GRAD STUDENT WHO'S COLLECTING PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA ON OUR EMPLOYEES? REALLY?
SHE SEEMS A LITTLE MORE... CEREBRAL THAN YOUR NORMAL FARE!
WELL, MAYBE MY TASTES ARE CHANGING WITH OLD AGE!


SO, WHERE'S THAT STUNNING REDHEAD YOU WERE SEEING THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE?
WHAT WAS HER NAME...? MILLIE, MINDY...?
IT WAS MANDY! SHE TRADED ME IN FOR A SAUDI OIL TYCOON A FEW MONTHS AGO!
I MAY BE RICH AND GOOD-LOOKING, BUT EVEN I CAN'T COMPETE WITH THAT KIND OF MONEY!


YOU SEEM TO HAVE WEATHERED THE BREAK-UP RATHER WELL!
OF COURSE! HAVE YOU EVER KNOWN ME TO LET THE GRASS GROW UNDER MY FEET?
NEVER!
EXACTLY! THERE'S JUST TOO MUCH TALENT IN THIS TOWN TO LET IT GO UNTAPPED!


SEE THAT BEVY OF YOUNG BEAUTIES IN THERE?
HOW COULD I NOT?
THE BLONDE IS VALERIE, MY NEW... DIVERSION!


NOT THE BRIGHTEST BULB IN THE BUNCH, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, SHE MAKES UP FOR IT IN SO MANY OTHER WAYS!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'D ACTUALLY PASS ON ONE OF THESE WILLING YOUNG THINGS IN FAVOR OF THE BRAINY TYPE!
WHO SAID I WAS DOING ANYTHING OF THE KIND?


OKAY, I ADMIT THAT GRAD STUDENT OF YOURS IS CUTE, BUT SHE DOESN'T HOLD A CANDLE TO ALL THE PARTY-GIRL/STARLET-WANNABES THAT HAVE BEEN OUR BREAD AND BUTTER FOR THESE MANY YEARS!
OH, MY GRAD STUDENT MAY JUST SURPRISE YOU, MY FRIEND!


AH, HERE COMES MY VALERIE NOW! AND SHE'S BROUGHT SOME NEW FRIENDS WITH HER!
ARE YOU SURE YOU WOULDN'T CARE TO HAVE A TASTE OF OUR UNIQUE CALIFORNIAN HOSPITALITY... AT LEAST UNTIL YOUR LITTLE STUDENT SHOWS UP?


WELL, NOW THAT I *THINK* ABOUT IT, IT WOULD BE TERRIBLY *RUDE* OF ME TO REBUKE YOUR *FINE* GENEROSITY!


AND THIS AFFECTIONATE YOUNG LADY DOES SEEM QUITE... TAKEN WITH ME!
MMMM, BABY! LEMME TAKE YOU UPSTAIRS AND SHOW YOU JUST HOW AFFECTIONATE I CAN BE!


SO, VALERIE! ARE YOU GOING TO INTRODUCE US TO YOUR NEW FRIENDS?
SURE, HONEY! THIS RIGHT HERE IS GRACE! WE WORK OUT AT THE SAME HEALTH CLUB!
HIYA!


AND THIS IS...! OMIGOD! I'M SUCH A DITZ! WE JUST MET TONIGHT BUT I'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN YOUR NAME!


IT'S MELANIE... MELANIE BUSH! AND IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU, MR. DEFRANCO!


WELL, ITS VERY NICE TO MEET BOTH OF YOU, AND...!
WAIT A MINUTE! MELANIE BUSH? ADAM, ISN'T THAT THE NAME OF YOUR...?


I TOLD YOU SHE'D SURPRISE YOU, CLAUDE!


WELL, CAN YOU BLAME ME FOR BEING SURPRISED?
ARE YOU *REALLY* THE SAME *DEMURE* YOUNG LADY THAT WAS INTRODUCED TO US AT TODAY'S BOARD MEETING?


OH, THAT WAS ME ALL RIGHT! BUT AS ADAM HERE KNOWS ALL TOO WELL, I'M A VERY FLEXIBLE WOMAN!
I ENJOY ADAPTING TO NEW SITUATIONS AND NEW ENVIRONMENTS!
AND SHE DOES IT EXTREMELY WELL... AS YOU CAN SEE!


MMMMM... ANYTHING FOR YOU, BABY!
SO, MELANIE... GRACE AND I ARE GONNA CHECK OUT THE REST OF THE PARTY! WANNA COME?


OKAY WITH YOU, ADAM?
OF COURSE! JUST DON'T LEAVE ME FOR ONE OF THESE YOUNG, TANNED STUDS, OKAY?
WOULDN'T DREAM OF IT, BABE!

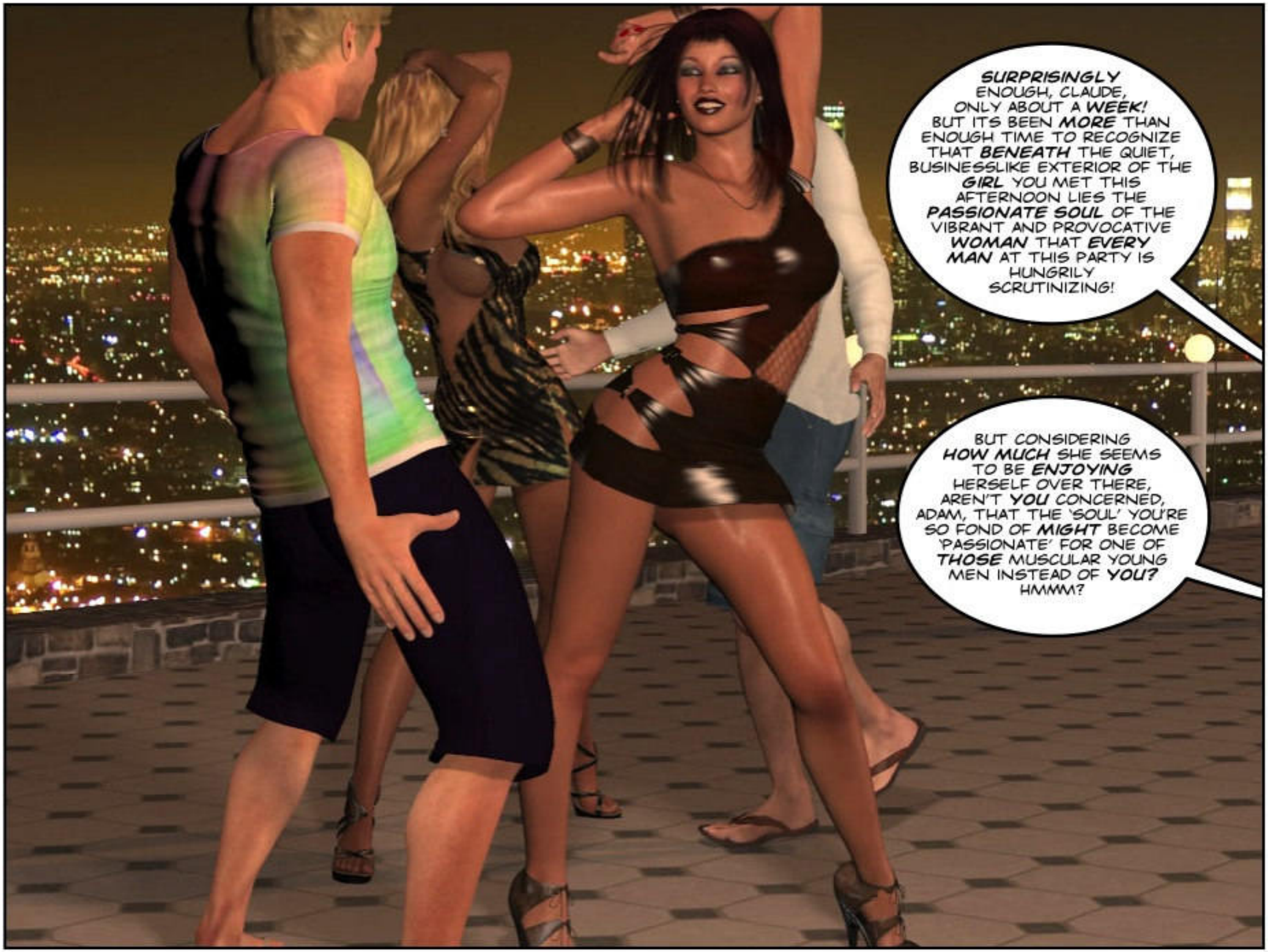

YAY! LET'S PARTY, GIRLS!


HMMM... DO YOU ALWAYS INVITE SUCH STRAPPING YOUNG MEN TO YOUR PARTIES?
AREN'T YOU CONCERNED THAT ONE OF THEM MAY SWEEP YOUR VALERIE OFF HER FEET?
NOT AT ALL! I INVITE THEM TO KEEP OUR YOUNG LOVELIES ENTERTAINED DURING THE PARTY!
THEY'RE NOT A THREAT BECAUSE, UNLIKE CERTAIN SAUDI OIL TYCOONS, THEY CAN'T GIVE THE YOUNG LADIES THE SAME SORT OF LIFESTYLE THAT YOU OR I CAN OFFER THEM!


AND FOR MOST OF THESE YOUNG LADIES, MY VALERIE ESPECIALLY, THEY RETURN TO US IN A MUCH MORE... ANIMATED STATE AFTER SPENDING A BIT OF TIME AROUND THOSE YOUNG MEN!
WHY? ARE YOU CONCERNED THAT YOUR MELANIE MAY BE OVERWHELMED BY ALL THE ATTENTION SHE'LL UNDOUBTABLY RECEIVE HERE TONIGHT?
CONCERNED? NOT IN THE LEAST! I ONLY WISH A SCENARIO LIKE THIS WOULD RATTLE HER!


LIKE YOU, I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH MY YOUNG COMPANION GARNERING ATTENTION FROM THOSE YOUNG BEEFCAKES!
BUT MY REASONS DIFFER A BIT FROM YOURS!
HOW SO, OLD FRIEND?


SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT MELANIE AND I HAVE A SOMEWHAT... PLAYFUL RELATIONSHIP!
WE BOTH THOROUGHLY ENJOY CHALLENGING THE OTHER... AS WELL AS BEING CHALLENGED! IT'S A KIND OF GAME WE PLAY!
REALLY? AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU TWO BEEN TOGETHER?


SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH, CLAUDE, ONLY ABOUT A WEEK! BUT ITS BEEN MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME TO RECOGNIZE THAT BENEATH THE QUIET, BUSINESSLIKE EXTERIOR OF THE GIRL YOU MET THIS AFTERNOON LIES THE PASSIONATE SOUL OF THE VIBRANT AND PROVOCATIVE WOMAN THAT EVERY MAN AT THIS PARTY IS HUNGRILY SCRUTINIZING!
BUT CONSIDERING HOW MUCH SHE SEEMS TO BE ENJOYING HERSELF OVER THERE, AREN'T YOU CONCERNED, ADAM, THAT THE 'SOUL' YOU'RE SO FOND OF MIGHT BECOME 'PASSIONATE' FOR ONE OF THOSE MUSCULAR YOUNG MEN INSTEAD OF YOU? HMMM?


TRUST ME, OLD FRIEND... MELANIE IS DEFINITELY NOT THE KIND OF WOMAN WHO'LL CASUALLY DROP HER PANTIES FOR A ONE-NIGHT STAND! THERE'S MUCH, MUCH MORE TO HER THAN THAT! BELIEVE ME!


BABY, I WOULD JUST LOVE TO TAKE YOU UPSTAIRS AND DO YOU UP RIGHT!
SIGH! I WAS REALLY HOPING YOUR NEANDERTHAL TENDENCIES WOULD SUPPRESS THEMSELVES LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO ENJOY THIS EXPERIENCE A LITTLE LONGER! BUT I GUESS THAT WAS NOT TO BE!


HUH?!
OKAY... IN WORDS YOU MIGHT BETTER UNDERSTAND...
SORRY, BABY! YOU'RE HOT AND ALL THAT, BUT I ALREADY KNOW WHO I'M LEAVING WITH TONIGHT... AND IT'S NOT YOU! MAYBE SOME OTHER TIME, OKAY?


SORRY TO PUT A DAMPER ON THE FUN, GIRLS, BUT THAT GUY WAS EXPECTING A LOT MORE THAN I'M WILLING TO GIVE HIM!
NOT A PROBLEM, MEL! I WAS GETTING A LITTLE BORED WITH THEM MYSELF!
MMMM...! NOT ME!


THEY DEFINITELY WEREN'T THE MOST MENTALLY STIMULATING MEN I'VE MET, BUT I MUST CONFESS, ALL THAT DANCING WITH THEM HAS MADE ME SOMEWHAT... SHALL WE SAY... ANTSY!
UNFORTUNATELY, ADAM DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE'S READY TO LEAVE ANYTIME SOON!


HAPPENS TO ME ALL THE TIME! AND I KNOW JUST HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THAT LITTLE PROBLEM!
REALLY? YOU DO?
WE COULD GO BACK TO THE GUYS...?!

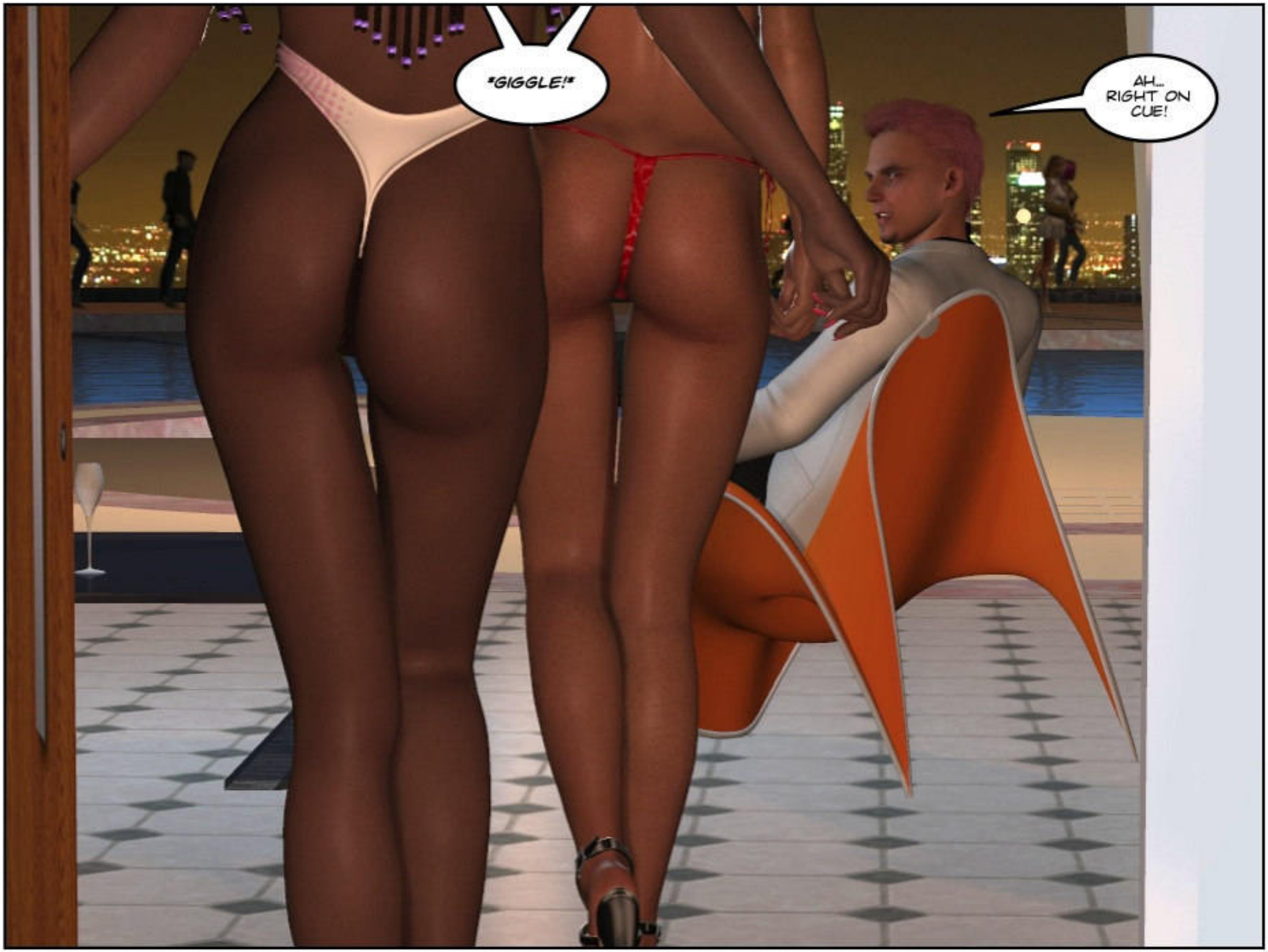

FOLLOW ME, LADIES!


A while later...
I STILL CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU KEEP YOUR HEADQUARTERS WAY ON THE EAST COAST WHEN HALF YOUR SUBSIDIARIES ARE HERE IN THE WEST!
WHAT THE HELL COULD POSSIBLY BE KEEPING YOU BACK THERE? IT FOR DAMN SURE ISN'T THE WEATHER!
HEY! I LIKE HAVING ALL FOUR SEASONS, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!


YES, BUT CONSIDERING YOUR PENCHANT FOR THE YOUNG AND NUBILE, I CAN'T IMAGINE ANY PLACE BETTER FOR YOU THAN HERE!
I'M SURE THAT CURRENT YOUNG LADY OF YOURS WOULDN'T MIND RELOCATING! SHE SEEMS TO FIT IN RATHER NICELY, DON'T YOU THINK?


SPEAKING OF THE LADIES... WHERE'D THEY GO? I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM FOR A WHILE!
OH, I SAW THEM FOLLOWING VALERIE INSIDE A WHILE BACK!
INSIDE? WELL THAT DOESN'T DO US MUCH GOOD NOW, DOES IT?


NO OFFENSE, BUT IT ISN'T MUCH OF A PARTY WITHOUT THE YOUNG LADIES CAVORTING ABOUT!
OH, I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, OLD BUDDY! IF MY VALERIE STAYS TRUE TO FORM, THE CAVORTING YOU ENJOY SO MUCH IS ABOUT TO GET AMPED UP!
MEANING...?


"GIGGLE!"
AH... RIGHT ON CUE!


HI, SWEETIE! THOUGHT WE'D GO FOR A LITTLE SWIM!
WHY NOT? THAT IS A NEW SWIMSUIT AFTER ALL, ISN'T IT?
THIS OLD THING? OH, I'VE HAD IT FOR DAYS! C'MON, GRACE!


UMMM... I DON'T SUPPOSE MELANIE IS JOINING YOU ALL, IS SHE?
I DON'T THINK SO! WE TRIED TO TALK HER INTO IT, BUT SHE SEEMED PRETTY HESITANT AND TOLD US TO GO ON WITHOUT HER! SORRY!
NO APOLOGIES NECESSARY!


YOU DON'T SEEM VERY UPSET... OR EVEN SURPRISED THAT MELANIE ISN'T JOINING THEM!
OH, I'M DISAPPOINTED, DON'T GET ME WRONG!
BUT I JUST DON'T THINK MY MELANIE WOULD BE COMFORTABLE WEARING SOMETHING LIKE THAT IN PUBLIC!


AH, I GET IT! EAST COAST GIRL TALKS A GOOD GAME, BUT WHEN IT COMES RIGHT DOWN TO IT, SHE CAN'T STEP UP TO THE TRUE WEST COAST STYLES! AM I RIGHT?
UMMM... SOMETHING LIKE THAT!


OR, MAYBE THIS EAST COAST GIRL JUST NEEDED A LITTLE MORE TIME TO PICK OUT THE RIGHT SUIT!


OR MAYBE MR. DEFRANCO IS RIGHT AND I DON'T MEASURE UP TO ALL THESE WEST COAST WOMEN!


IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK, BABY? HMMM?
THINKING IS RATHER PROBLEMATIC FOR ME AT THE MOMENT SINCE A GOOD DEAL OF BLOOD HAS RUSHED FROM MY HEAD TO ANOTHER PART OF MY BODY!


THAT'S EXACTLY THE RESPONSE I WAS HOPING FOR, SWEETIE!
YOU KNOW I'LL DO ANYTHING TO MAKE YOU HAPPY, DON'T YOU?
OF COURSE, MY LOVE! I'VE NEVER DOUBTED THAT FOR A MINUTE!


JUST AS I KNOW YOU'LL DO ANYTHING TO PLEASE ME WHEN WE GET BACK TO THE HOTEL! RIGHT_ BABY?
LOOKING FORWARD TO IT, MY DEAR!


THAT IS SOME YOUNG LADY YOU'VE GOT THERE, MY FRIEND!
DON'T I KNOW IT, CLAUDE! DON'T I KNOW IT!


SO... HOW'D IT GO? DID HE LIKE THE SUIT?
OH YEAH! HE LIKED IT A LOT! ESPECIALLY SINCE HE THOUGHT I WOULDN'T BE CHANGING INTO ONE AT ALL... THANKS TO VALERIE!
JUST HELPIN' OUT LIKE YOU ASKED ME TO!


YOU LIKE MESSIN' WITH HIS HEAD LIKE THAT, DON'T YOU!
OF COURSE! IT ESSENTIALLY KEEPS ME IN CHARGE... WHETHER HE KNOWS IT OR NOT!
IF I DO IT RIGHT, I ONLY HAVE TO GIVE A LITTLE WHILE HE ENDS UP GIVING A LOT!


YEAH, I HEAR YOU! IF CLAUDE WASN'T AS RICH AS HE IS AND AS GENEROUS, THERE'S NO WAY I'D BE BOFFING A GUY THAT OLD!
OH, DON'T GET ME WRONG... ADAM IS A SWEETHEART AND ALL THAT, BUT HE, UMMM... LET'S SAY HE'S NOT THAT HOT IN THE SACK SO I LIKE TO KEEP THAT PART OF OUR RELATIONSHIP TO A MINIMUM IF I CAN!


I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN! I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I HAD A REAL ORGASM WITH CLAUDE!
HE ALWAYS FINISHES UP TOO QUICK AND FALLS ASLEEP... LEAVING ME ALL SWEATY, STICKY AND UNSATISFIED!
SO WHAT DO YOU DO ABOUT THAT?


I USE MY NEW SECRET WEAPON_ THE SURPRISE HUMMER!
THE SURPRISE HUMMER?! WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT?
YOU KNOW! I GO DOWN ON HIM WHEN HE LEAST SUSPECTS IT! THAT WAY HE'S SATISFIED AND I GET SOME ALONE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF THE RIGHT WAY!
YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW GENEROUS THESE GUYS CAN GET WHEN YOU SLIP HIM ONE EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE! RIGHT, GRACE?


OH YEAH! MOST OLDER GUYS LOVE IT! I CAN'T BEGIN TO COUNT HOW MANY AUDITIONS IT'S EARNED ME!
BUT ISN'T SOMETHING LIKE THAT A LITTLE, I DON'T KNOW... DEMEANING?
NO MORE DEMEANING THAN HIM BOUNCING AWAY ON TOP OF YOU FOR TWO MINUTES AND THEN LEAVING YOU TO CLEAN UP THE MESS!


AND, IF YOU DO IT RIGHT, THERE'S NO MESS AT ALL TO CLEAN UP! *GIGGLE!*
BESIDES, IT'S ALSO A LOT LESS TIME AND TROUBLE THAN ALL THOSE MIND GAMES YOU LIKE TO PLAY!
I'LL... I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND!


HMMM... IT LOOKS LIKE ADAM WANTS TO LEAVE SOON! I'D PROBABLY BETTER GO GET CHANGED!
HEY, IF YOU'RE GONNA BE AROUND TOMORROW, I'D LOVE TO SHOW YOU ALL THE BEST PLACES TO SHOP!
WE CAN HAVE A GIRLS' DAY OUT... ALL THREE OF US!


I'D LIKE THAT! I'LL SEE YOU TWO TOMORROW, THEN!
IT'S A DATE!
OH! AND DON'T FORGET WHAT I TOLD YOU ABOUT THAT SUIT!


OH, I WON'T! THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I CHOSE IT!


AND IF IT WASN'T FOR THE WATERPROOF TAPE I'M USING, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO WEAR IT AT ALL!
NOT TO MENTION THE STRATEGIC WAXING JOB I SUBJECTED MYSELF TO THE OTHER DAY! I JUST HOPE I NEVER HAVE TO GO THROUGH AGONY LIKE THAT EVER AGAIN!


I'D NEVER PLANNED ON WEARING SOMETHING *THIS* REVEALING IN PUBLIC, BUT WHEN ADAM SAID WE WERE COMING TO *CALIFORNIA*, I THOUGHT IT BEST TO BE PREPARED FOR *ANYTHING!*


THE RESULTING "DISAPPEARING ACT" PRACTICALLY ENSURES THAT NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE THE TRUTH ABOUT ME... NOT THAT ANYONE, INCLUDING ADAM, HAS DEMONSTRATED SUSPICIONS IN THAT AREA!
STILL... A LITTLE VISUAL REINFORCEMENT CAN'T HURT!


MY, MY! IT APPEARS THAT THE SWIMSUIT I CHOSE IS AFFECTING ADAM EXACTLY AS INTENDED. THE MORE AROUSED I CAN MAKE HIM IN PUBLIC, THE MORE CONTROL I'LL HAVE OVER HIM IN PRIVATE!
I DO BELIEVE HE'LL BE PUTTY IN MY HANDS LATER TONIGHT!


HI BABE! YOU READY TO GET OUT OF HERE AND HAVE OUR OWN PARTY BACK AT THE HOTEL? HMMM?
THERE'S NOTHING I'D ENJOY MORE! BUT YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT CHANGING FIRST! YOU'RE STILL A LITTLE WET!


OH, BABY! DON'T YOU KNOW? I'M ALWAYS A LITTLE WET WHEN I'M AROUND YOU!


BUT I'LL GET AS DRY AS I CAN, CHANGE AND BE BACK IN A FEW! OKAY?
PERFECT, MY DEAR!


ADAM, OLD FRIEND, HAVE I GOT A PROPOSITION FOR YOU!
FORGET IT... OLD FRIEND! SHE'S MINE!


WHEW! THAT WENT SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD!
"SIGNIFICANTLY?" HELL, BIG S, YOU ROCKED OUT THERE!


AND WITH ONLY A LITTLE HELP FROM ME!
WELL, I WOULDN'T SAY I "ROCKED"...!
BULLSHIT! YOU HAD ADAM, AND EVERY OTHER GUY OUT THERE, ACHIN' TO SLIP US THE HIGH HARD ONE UNTIL WE SCREAMED LIKE A BANSHEE!


NOT EXACTLY HOW I'D PUT IT, BUT I DID SEEM TO HAVE INITIATED UNUSUALLY HIGH LEVELS OF AROUSAL IN THE MEN TONIGHT! ADAM ESPECIALLY, AND THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT AFTER ALL!
DAMN STRAIGHT! YOU COULD FEEL HOW MUCH WHEN WE SAT ON HIS LAP! WADDYA BET HE'LL BE SPORTIN' THAT MONSTER ALL NIGHT?
THAT'LL MAKE OUR PLANS FOR HIM BACK AT THE HOTEL THAT MUCH EASIER!
YES.. I SUPPOSE IT WILL!


SO, YOU WANNA GO AHEAD AND PASS THE BATON OVER TO ME NOW OR WAIT TILL WE GET BACK TO THE HOTEL ROOM LIKE WE DID LAST NIGHT?
UMMM... ABOUT THAT? IF IT'S AGREEABLE TO YOU, I'D LIKE TO AMEND OUR AGREEMENT REGARDING THE REST OF THIS EVENING!
REALLY? HOW SO?


AFTER PUTTING SOME SERIOUS CONSIDERATION INTO YOUR SUGGESTION FROM THE OTHER NIGHT, I'VE DECIDED THAT MY PERSPECTIVE ON THE PSYCHO-SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF MEN COULD BE A VERY VALID RESEARCH PROJECT!
I DO HAVE THE OCCASIONAL GREAT IDEA, YOU KNOW!
SO, DID YOU GET A LOT OF "DATA" FROM LAST NIGHT?
THAT'S JUST IT! SINCE LAST NIGHT WAS ALL YOU, MY "PERSPECTIVE" WAS DEFINITELY SKEWED AND NOT VERY ANALYTICAL!


MMMM! CAN'T WAIT FOR THE DAY WHEN WE CAN GET OUR "PERSPECTIVE" PROPERLY SKEWED! *GIGGLE!*
REGARDLESS...! IF I'M TO MAINTAIN SOME LEVEL OF OBJECTIVITY FOR THIS NEW RESEARCH, I REALLY THINK THAT I NEED TO BE MORE A PART OF OUR... ACTIVITIES WITH ADAM!
WHAT DO YOU THINK?


I THINK THAT'S AN AWESOME IDEA!
REALLY? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO FIGHT ME ON THIS?
HELL NO! WITH YOU RIDING SHOTGUN, THE CHANCES OF ME LOSING CONTROL ARE NULL AND VOID!


AND DON'T YOU WORRY! IF THINGS GET A LITTLE TOO HOT AND HEAVY FOR YOU, JUST LET ME KNOW AND I'LL FINISH HIM OFF SOLO WHILE YOU SLIP BACKSTAGE, SO TO SPEAK!
I DON'T ANTICIPATE THAT HAPPENING, BUT THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING ME THAT OPTION!


NOT A PROBLEM, BIG S! NOT A PROBLEM AT ALL! ESPECIALLY NOT WHEN WE'RE IN SYNCH ABOUT THESE THINGS!


Later on, back at their LA hotel...
NEVER, IN MY WILDEST DREAMS, DID I IMAGINE THAT THIS TRIP WOULD PLAY OUT THE WAY IT HAS!


MY YOUNG COMPANION HAS CERTAINLY SHOWN HERSELF TO BE FULL OF SURPRISES!
I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT SHE HAS IN STORE FOR US TONIGHT!


ARE YOU READY FOR ME, MY DEAR?
THAT DEPENDS! ARE YOU ON THE SOFA WEARING NOTHING BUT A LOOK OF ANTICIPATION?


I WILL BE IN THE FLASHIEST OF FLASHES!


SO, THINK YOU'RE READY, BIG S?
MY HEART RATE IS ELEVATED AND I DON'T BELIEVE THE KNOT I HAVE IN MY STOMACH IS BEING CAUSED BY BLOATING OR CRAMPS. AND MY LIPS ARE TREMBLING!


I BELIEVE I AM ACTUALLY EXPERIENCING THE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF EMOTIONS WITHOUT THE ACCOMPANYING COMPULSION TO WITHDRAW. IT'S A TRULY NOVEL SENSATION!
A COMBINATION OF FEAR AND DESIRE. ISN'T IT DELICIOUS?
DELICIOUS... AND TERRIFYING!


JUST REMEMBER, YOU CAN ALWAYS "TAP OUT" IF IT STARTS GETTING TOO INTENSE FOR YOU!
I HOPE THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY! BUT I DO HAVE ONE QUESTION BEFORE WE START!
WHICH IS...?


ARE YOU SURE WE CAN,,, CONTAIN OURSELF IN THAT OUTFIT? IT SEEMS A LITTLE... EXTREME!
AS TINY AND WORTHLESS AS THAT THING HAS GOTTEN AND THE WAY WE'VE LEARNED TO TUCK IT AWAY, WE CAN TOTALLY ROCK THAT OUTFIT WITHOUT ANY FEAR!
AND JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE HOW ADAM REACTS TO IT!


SO... NOW ARE YOU READY FOR ME?
I THINK THE MORE VALID QUESTION HERE WOULD BE...


ARE YOU READY FOR ME?
OH... MY!!


I'LL TAKE
THAT AS A
DEFINITE
MAYBE!


I... I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU TO COME DOWN HERE! I THOUGHT I'D COME UP THERE TO YOU, AND...!
AND MAKE A MESS OF MY BED? I DON'T THINK SO! HOWEVER, I HAVE NO USE FOR THE SOFA WHILE WE'RE HERE, SO THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL EVENTUALLY GET YOUR NEXT LESSON!


EVENTUALLY?
IF YOU'LL REMEMBER, I **TOLD** YOU I WANTED YOU **NAKED** AND **ON THE SOFA,** RIGHT?
YES... YES YOU **DID!**
AND SINCE YOU'RE **NOT** ON THE SOFA, AS I **ASKED,** WHY DON'T WE START OFF WITH **YOU** ON THE **FLOOR?**


OF... OF COURSE! YOU MEAN... LIKE THIS?
HARDLY! YOU KNOW, FOR A MAN WHO'S SO USED TO GIVING ORDERS, YOUR ABILITY TO FOLLOW THEM IS PALTRY AT BEST!


MUCH BETTER! I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW IMPRESSED I AM WITH THE WAY YOU'RE RESPONDING!
TRUTHFULLY, I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D BE ABLE TO HANDLE THIS SIDE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP! I'M VERY... PLEASED WITH YOU!
I'M VERY PLEASED AS WELL... MI- MISTRESS!


OH! I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT! I LIKE IT IMMENSELY!
SAY IT AGAIN!
OF COURSE! ANYTHING TO MAKE YOU HAPPY, MISTRESS!


WONDERFUL! MY GAMBIT HAS PAID OFF... IN SPADES! I NEVER THOUGHT HE'D CHOOSE TO CALL ME THAT... NOT WITHOUT AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF COAXING! IF HE'S ALREADY WILLING TO GO THIS FAR, THERE'S NO TELLING HOW MUCH FURTHER I CAN TAKE HIM!
IN FACT, THIS JUST MAY BE THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS ONE PARTICULAR PROBLEM THAT'S BEEN NAGGING AT ME!
I'M SO GLAD TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT! BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT YOU TO DO FOR ME!
ANYTHING, MISTRESS! JUST NAME IT!


YOU'VE BEEN A BAD BOY AND TRYING TO INTERFERE WITH MY OTHER RELATIONSHIPS! THAT STOPS NOW!
BUT, MISTRESS...!
TRY AND DENY IT AND EVERYTHING BETWEEN US ENDS RIGHT THIS INSTANT!


I'M JUST... JEALOUS, MISTRESS! THAT'S ALL!
YOUR PATHETIC JEALOUSY HAS NO PLACE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP!
I'M A COMPLICATED WOMAN WITH MANY... NEEDS! I WILL ADMIT THAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING AN ADEQUATE JOB OF FULFILLING MOST OF THEM!
THANK YOU, MISTRESS!


BUT SOME OF MY NEEDS YOU CAN'T FULFILL! IT'S NOT IN YOUR NATURE TO DO SO!
FOR THAT REASON, I WILL SEE OTHERS! OUR RELATIONSHIP WILL REMAIN INTACT AND UNAFFECTED, ONLY IF YOU DO NOT INTERFERE WITH MY... EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES!
CAN THAT LITTLE BRAIN OF YOURS COMPREHEND WHAT I'M SAYING?
OF COURSE, MISTRESS! EVERYTHING IS CRYSTAL CLEAR!


PERFECT! TIME TO SEAL THE DEAL WITH A LITTLE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT!
MMMM! I THINK YOU MAY HAVE JUST EARNED YOURSELF A LITTLE REWARD!
PULL OUT THE SOFA AND CLIMB ONTO IT!
YES, MISTRESS!


LIKE THIS?
OH YES... I DO LIKE THIS! AND IT'S OBVIOUS YOU DO AS WELL!


NOW... DO YOU WANT TO MAKE ME VERY HAPPY?
ALWAYS, MISTRESS!
THEN, NO MATTER WHAT I DO, I EXPECT YOU TO KEEP YOUR HANDS FROM TOUCHING ME UNTIL I SAY OTHERWISE! UNDERSTAND?
OF COURSE, MISTRESS!


YOU KNOW... I DON'T THINK IT'S QUITE AS HARD AS IT WAS LAST NIGHT!
WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO ABOUT THAT, ADAM? HMMM?
WH... WHATEVER YOU WANT TO DO WITH IT, MISTRESS!


WELL IT OBVIOUSLY NEEDS SOME ATTENTION, DOESN'T IT?
MAYBE IF I RUB IT WITH SOMETHING... SOMETHING LIKE THIS!
OOOOHHH!


OH, YES! THAT DOES SEEM TO BE DOING THE TRICK!
MMMMM!!


THERE WE GO! NOW THAT'S SOMETHING WE CAN WORK WITH! DON'T YOU THINK SO, ADAM?
UH-HUH... MI...MISTRESS!


NOW DON'T YOU DARE GO AND LET LOOSE UNTIL I SAY SO! BECAUSE WATCHING YOU SQUIRM LIKE THIS IS JUST TOO MUCH FUN!


SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK SO FAR, BIG S? GETTIN' ENOUGH OF THAT FIRST-PERSON PERSPECTIVE YOU WERE LOOKIN' FOR?
NOT TOO SHOCKING FOR YOU, IS IT?
ON THE CONTRARY! IT'S FASCINATING TO WITNESS JUST HOW MUCH CONTROL WE HAVE OVER ADAM!
I'M ALSO INTRIGUED BY HOW EASILY HE ASSUMED SUCH A SUBMISSIVE ROLE!


YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? WE'RE ESSENTIALLY DRY-HUMPING ADAM WITH LITTLE MORE THAN A THIN STRIP OF LEATHER BETWEEN THAT ROCK HARD COCK OF HIS AND YOUR LITTLE HIDDEN WILLY!
AND ALL YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT IS GETTING HIM ON THE PSYCHE COUCH? SERIOUSLY?
WHAT OTHER WAY COULD I POSSIBLY APPROACH MY RESEARCH?


HELLO?! FIRST PERSON? YOUR POINT OF VIEW... NOT HIS! DUH!!
GUYS LIKE HIM HAVE BEEN ANALYZED TO DEATH! WHAT'S GONNA MAKE YOUR RESEARCH ROCK IS YOUR UNIQUE TAKE ON HOW YOU FEEL TO BE WITH A GUY LIKE ADAM!
WE'VE ONLY BEEN A WOMAN, MORE OR LESS, FOR A FEW MONTHS AND WE'RE ALREADY IN THIS BIZARRE, STRANGELY SATISFYING RELATIONSHIP! IT'S OUR PERSPECTIVE THAT'LL SELL THIS! NOT HIS!
I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, BUT I'M NOT SURE HOW TO GAIN THE PROPER INSIGHT INTO OUR OWN EXPERIENCES!


BUT YOU'VE ALREADY STARTED, BIG S! TONIGHT, YOU'RE ALLOWING YOURSELF TO FEEL THINGS FOR THE FIRST TIME. SO GO AHEAD AND ANALYZE THOSE EMOTIONS THAT YOU'RE FINALLY LETTING IN!
WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE, TO HAVE THAT HARD, SWEATY COCK SLIDING AGAINST YOU? DOES IT MAKE YOU MORE EXCITED WHEN YOU GRIP IT BETWEEN YOUR BUTT CHEEKS?


AND WHAT ABOUT THE RUSH THAT WASHES OVER YOU AFTER YOU GET A POWERFUL MAN TO GIVE UP CONTROL SO EASILY?
OOOOO! I CAN TELL YOU'RE JUST ACHING TO SPRAY YOUR LOAD ALL OVER MY ASS AREN'T YOU, BABY! BUT YOU WON'T, WILL YOU? AT LEAST NOT UNTIL I TELL YOU TO!


WHAT'S IT FEEL LIKE WHEN YOUR NIPPLES ARE SO HARD THEY'RE ALMOST BREAKING THROUGH THOSE CHAINS?
MMMM! TOO BAD YOU DON'T HAVE PERMISSION TO HANDLE THESE TONIGHT! BECAUSE THEY FEEL WONDERFUL!
BUT... THOSE ARE ALL EMOTIONAL RESPONSES! THAT'S YOUR DOMAIN, NOT MINE!


THAT'S BULLSHIT, BIG S! AND IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU REALIZED THAT!
YOU'VE LET ME WORK SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH YOU, YOU'RE EVEN LEARNING TO HANDLE A TASTE OF EMOTIONS, BUT UNTIL YOU ACTUALLY EMBRACE AT LEAST A PORTION OF WHAT I'M ALL ABOUT, THIS WHOLE EXPERIMENT OF YOURS IS WORTHLESS!
BUT THAT'S NOT THE WAY IT WORKS! WE'RE SEPARATE BY DESIGN! WE CAN'T...!


THEN IT'S TIME TO STEP OUTSIDE THAT PRECIOUS BOX OF YOURS, STOMP IT TO PIECES AND TOSS IT INTO THE DUMPSTER!
YOU JUST NEED TO STOP THINKING WITH YOUR HEAD ALL THE TIME AND LET YOUR BODY TELL YOU WHAT'S GOIN' ON!
I... I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DO THAT!
THEN IT'S ABOUT FUCKIN' TIME YOU LEARNED!


WE'RE JUST ABOUT TO FINISH OFF OL' ROSSY-BOY HERE, SO THIS IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY!
JUST RELAX, CLOSE YOUR EYES, AND LET EVERYTHING WE FEEL BECOME A PART OF YOU! DON'T THINK ABOUT IT... JUST LET IT HAPPEN!
I...I'LL TRY...!


I AM SO IMPRESSED WITH YOU! I'M SURE ANY OTHER MAN WOULD'VE DISGRACED HIMSELF BY NOW!
TH... THANK YOU, MISTRESS! ANY... ANYTHING FOR YOU!


I KNOW! AND THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO FIND SOME WAY TO REWARD YOU FOR BEING SO GOOD! BUT WHAT SHOULD IT BE? HMMM?
UH-UH... NOT YET!
OH YEAH! FEEL THAT, BIG S? HE MAY NOT BE TOUCHIN' US, BUT THAT HOT BREATH OF HIS ON OUR NIPPLES IS DYNAMITE! TELL ME THAT DOESN'T DO SOMETHING FOR YOU!
IT IS... DIFFERENT, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT!


HMMM... I WONDER WHAT A MAN LIKE YOU WOULD ENJOY FROM A WOMAN LIKE ME?
I'LL JUST HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A BIT UNTIL I COME UP WITH SOMETHING... APPROPRIATE!
OOOOOHHHH!


I SEEM TO BE DRAWING A BLANK, BABY! ANY IDEAS FROM YOU?
OOOOOOOO!! I... I THINK I...!
FEEL HOW HARD WE'VE MADE HIM, BIG S! HE'S NEVER BEEN THIS BIG BEFORE! AND YOU CAN TASTE THE HUNGER OOZING FROM HIS PORES! HE COULDN'T WANT US MORE IF HE TRIED!
HE DEFINITELY IS... LARGE, AND THE SENSATIONS I'M PICKING UP FROM HIM ARE VERY... AROUSING, I MUST SAY!


YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GIVE UP ON ME NOW, ARE YOU?
N... NO! BUT... BUT I CAN'T HOLD IT MUCH LONGER BEFORE I...!


JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER, HONEY! THAT'S ALL!
WH... WHEN?!


OH, YOU'LL KNOW WHEN, BABY! TRUST ME... YOU'LL KNOW!


WAIT! WH... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
I THOUGHT THAT WAS FAIRLY OBVIOUS! WHY? YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH US DEEP-THROATING THIS GUY?
ARE YOU SERIOUS? OF... OF COURSE I DO!


ARE YOU DOING THIS BECAUSE OF WHAT VALERIE AND GRACE SAID TODAY?
MOSTLY... YEAH! WE ALREADY HAVE ADAM BY THE NUTS WITH THIS DOMINATRIX ROUTINE!
BUT IF WE START THROWING IN A "SURPRISE HUMMER" EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE THERE'S NOTHIN' HE WON'T DO FOR US!


IMAGINE IT! ONE OF THE RICHEST AND MOST POWERFUL MEN IN THE COUNTRY, MAYBE EVEN THE WORLD, COMPLETELY AND EFFORTLESSLY WRAPPED AROUND OUR LITTLE FINGER!
THINK OF THE POSSIBILITIES!
I... I ADMIT THAT ALL THIS... ROLE-PLAYING WITH ADAM HAS BEEN... STIMULATING!
THE TRAVEL, THE PARTIES, THE, UH... NOCTURNAL ACTIVITIES HAVE PROVIDED ME WITH INSIGHTS INTO A WORLD I NEVER KNEW EXISTED!


BUT I'M JUST NOT READY FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS! SO PLEASE... STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THIS?
I AM!


WELL, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, BIG S, THERE'S NOT MUCH I CAN DO ABOUT IT!
AND WHY NOT, PRAY TELL?
'CAUSE I'M NOT DOIN' ANY OF THIS RIGHT NOW! AND I HAVEN'T BEEN FOR AWHILE!
WH... WHAT ARE YOU TELLING ME?!


THAT'S ALL YOU OVER THERE, BIG S! LAYIN' A LIPLOCK ON HIS COCK LIKE A PRO!
WHAT?! NO, IT... IT CAN'T BE!!


GUESS YOU TOOK THAT LITTLE TALK FROM VALERIE TO HEART WITHOUT REALLY KNOWIN' IT, HUH?
NO! YOU... YOU'RE LYING! YOU'RE... YOU'RE...!
OOOOOOHHHHH!

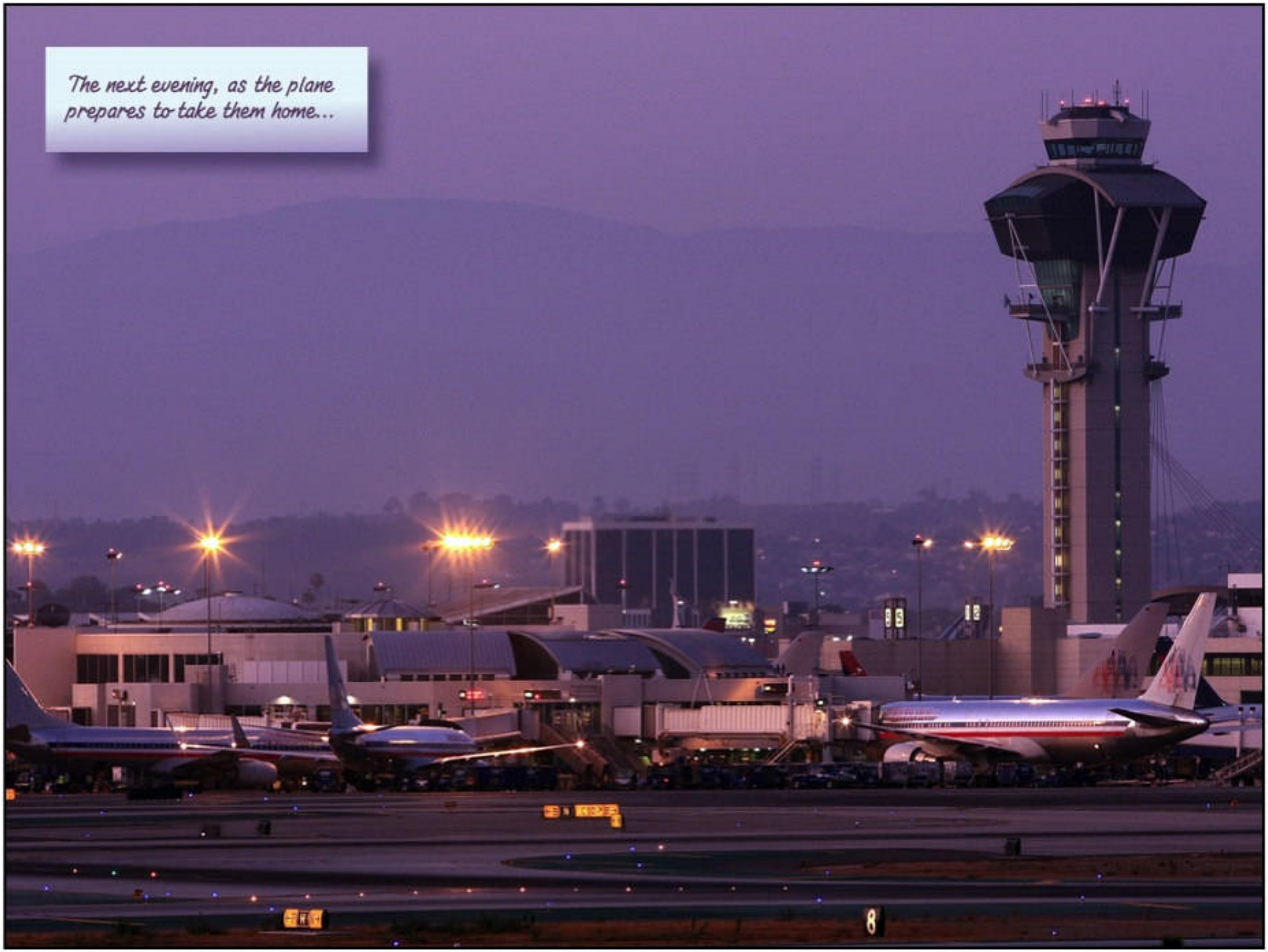

SCOOT OVER, BABY! I WANT TO BE A LITTLE MORE COMFY WHILE I FINISH YOU OFF!


OH MY GOD, YOU'RE... YOU'RE RIGHT! I... I AM DOING THIS! I CAN TELL NOW!
YOU STARTED IT... PROVIDED THE IMPETUS AND STEPPED ASIDE WHILE I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE CARRIED AWAY WITH THE MOMENTUM OF THE SITUATION!


AND... AND TRY AS I MIGHT, I HONESTLY CAN'T FIND ANY LOGICAL REASON TO STOP IT!
THEN LIVE IN THE MOMENT, BIG S, AND LET IT RIDE!


OHHH..
OOOOHHHHHH...


MMMMMMMMMMM!
INTERESTING!
THAT'S
MY GIRL!
OOOOOOHHHHHH!!


The next evening, as the plane prepares to take them home...

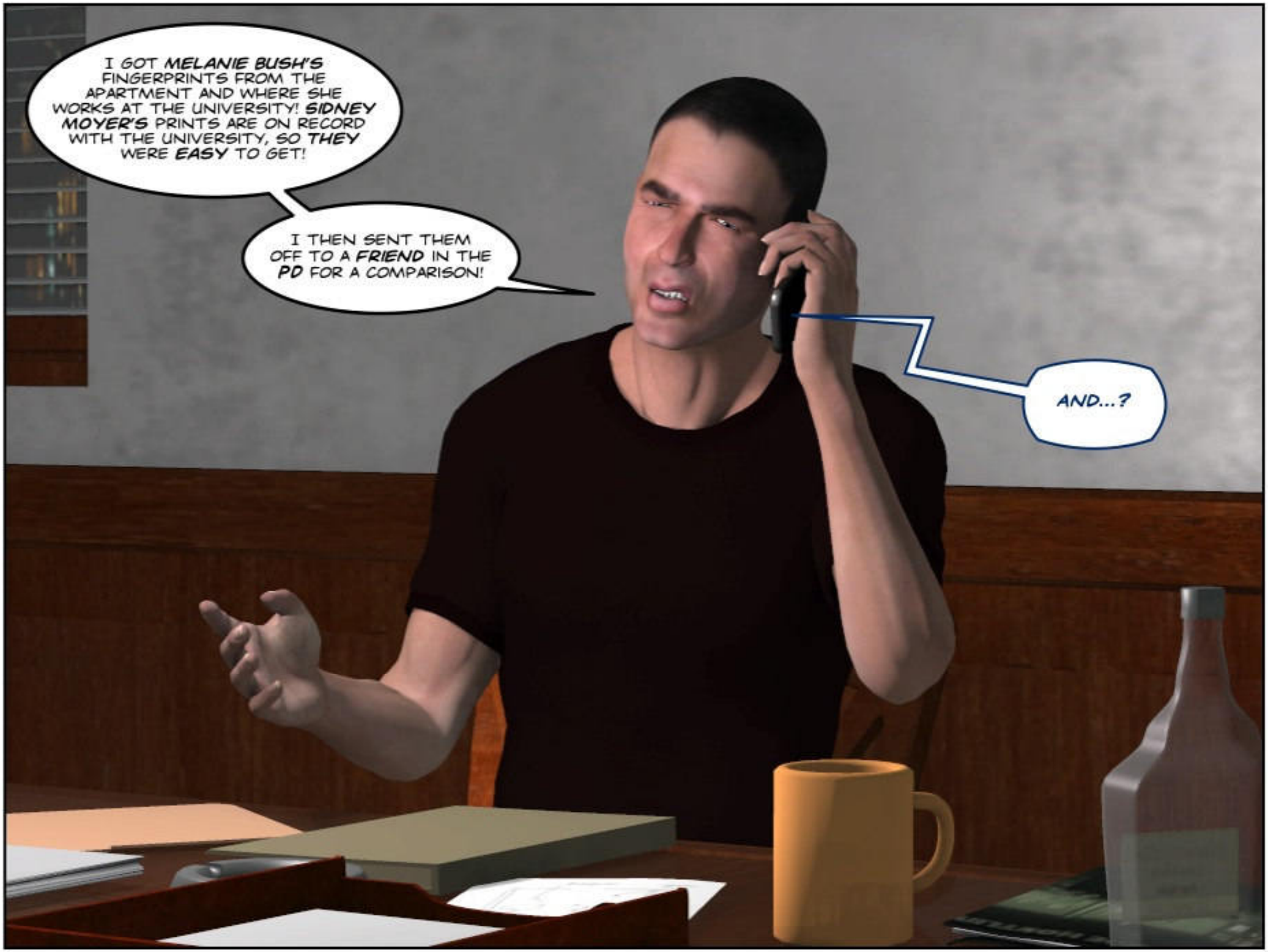

JUDGING BY THE AMOUNT OF NEW LUGGAGE YOU'RE RETURNING WITH, I'D SAY THAT YOUR SHOPPING TRIP TODAY WAS SUCCESSFUL!
ABSOLUTELY! VALERIE AND GRACE TOOK ME TO SOME OF THE MOST WONDERFUL BOUTIQUES!


WE EVEN FOUND TIME TO SPEND IN ONE OF THEIR FAVORITE SALONS! DO YOU APPROVE?
OH, I DO! VERY MUCH!


CAN I ALSO ASSUME THAT I'LL SEE A SIZABLE CREDIT CARD BILL AT THE END OF THE MONTH?
OF COURSE!
I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY!


I'M GOING TO GO POWDER MY NOSE BEFORE TAKE-OFF! BE RIGHT BACK!


At that moment, a few thousand miles away, in the office of Duckworth Investigations...
YES?
THIS IS BOB DUCKWORTH! IVE GOT THAT VERIFICATION YOU WANTED!
HOW DID YOU GET IT?


I GOT MELANIE BUSH'S FINGERPRINTS FROM THE APARTMENT AND WHERE SHE WORKS AT THE UNIVERSITY! SIDNEY MOYER'S PRINTS ARE ON RECORD WITH THE UNIVERSITY, SO THEY WERE EASY TO GET!
I THEN SENT THEM OFF TO A FRIEND IN THE PD FOR A COMPARISON!
AND...?


A 100% MATCH! SIDNEY MOYER AND MELANIE BUSH ARE THE SAME PERSON!
YOU'RE SURE?
I HAD THEM TRIPLE CHECK THE RESULTS! THERE'S NO QUESTION!

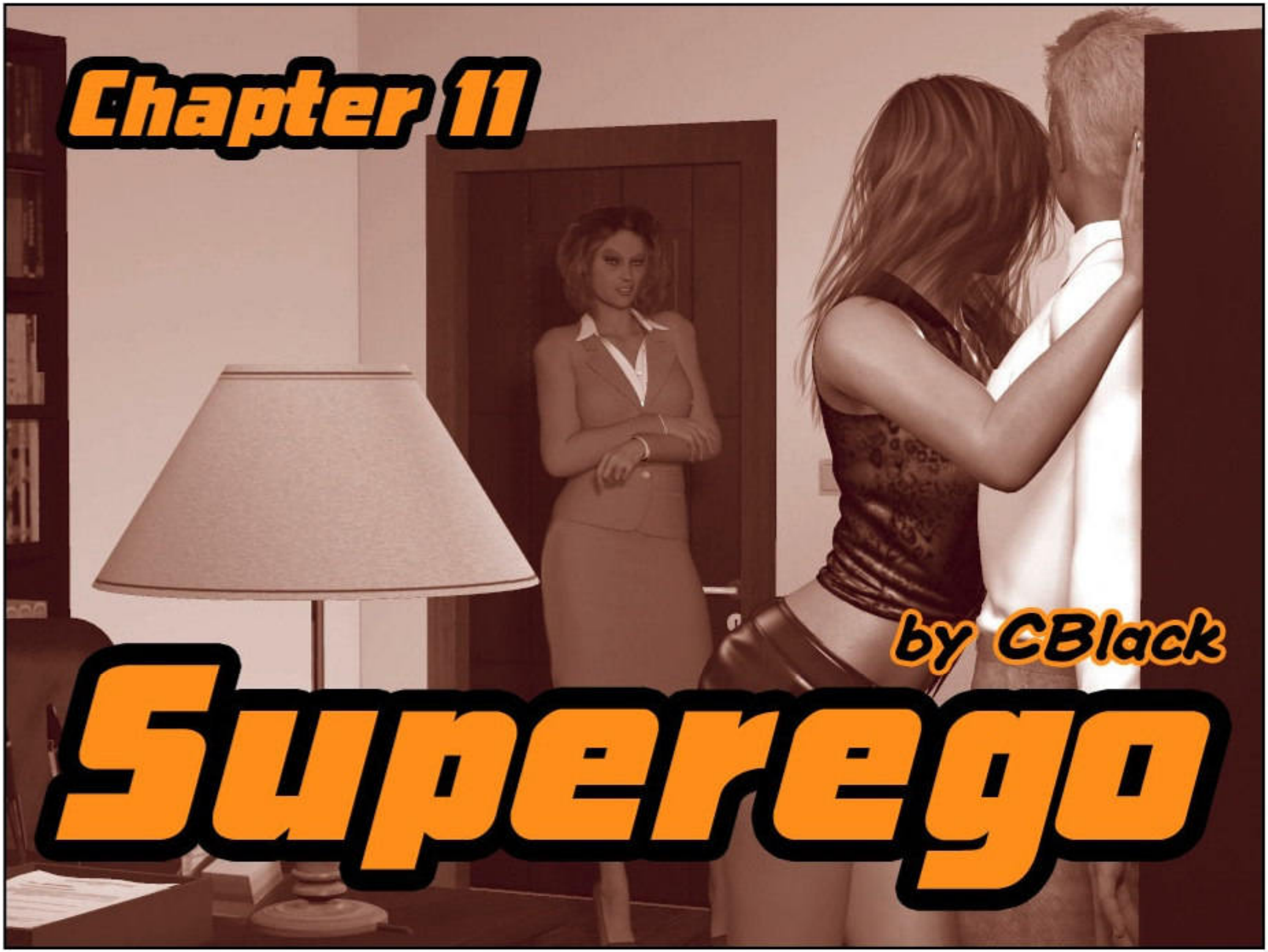

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I APPRECIATE YOUR WORK IN THIS, BOB!
I ESPECIALLY APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT YOU BROUGHT THIS TO ME FIRST INSTEAD OF RUTH KIMBALL!
HEY, YOU'RE MY NUMBER ONE CLIENT, MR. ROSS! YOU'VE ALWAYS COME FIRST!
AND YOU'LL BE HANDSOMELY COMPENSATED FOR YOUR LOYALTY, BOB... AS ALWAYS!


SO, DO I GO AHEAD WITH THE KIMBALL PLAN?
ABSOLUTELY! I KNOW YOU HAVE JUST THE SKILLS TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE!
YOU GOT IT, MR. ROSS! THANKS!
NO... THANK YOU!
ANYTHING IMPORTANT?


JUST TYING UP SOME LOOSE ENDS, THAT'S ALL!
SO, ALL IN ALL, DID YOU ENJOY OUR LITTLE CROSS-COUNTRY BUSINESS EXCURSION?
I THINK YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT IS A DEFINITE YES!


GOOD! I FIND YOU TO BE A SURPRISINGLY EXCITING YOUNG LADY, MELANIE BUSH! AND I'M NOT SURPRISED VERY EASILY!
BECAUSE OF THAT, I DO HOPE THAT OUR EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP ISN'T RESTRICTED TO THESE OUT-OF-TOWN VENTURES ONLY!
WELL, AS LONG AS WE BOTH ADHERE TO THE GUIDELINES WE'VE SET, I DON'T SEE WHY IT WOULD HAVE TO BE!


PERFECT! YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HAPPY THAT MAKES ME, MY DEAR!


Chapter 11
by CBlack
Superego


A few hours later, at O'Douls...
GOIN' SOLO TONIGHT, HANNAH? WHERE'S THAT FRIEND OF YOURS... MELANIE?
SHE'S BEEN OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW DAYS BUT SAID SHE'D BE GETTING BACK TONIGHT!


ACTUALLY, SHE'S PROBABLY HOME ALREADY... CRASHED OUT FROM THE JET LAG!
TOO BAD! YOU KNOW, SHE WAS A LITTLE WEIRD WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED BRINGING HER IN HERE, BUT LATELY, SHE'S REALLY BEEN...!


OH YEAH! NOW THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKIN' ABOUT!
SIGH! DON'T TELL ME! IT'S THE SKANK SISTERS AGAIN, ISN'T IT?
NOT BY A LONG SHOT, HANNAH!


IN FACT, I THINK IT'S FOR YOU!
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...?


WHA...?!
MEL...
MELANIE?!
SURPRISE! WE GOT BACK A LITTLE EARLIER THAN EXPECTED!


OH MY GOD, YOU LOOK AMAZING!
THANKS! SORRY TO BURST IN ON YOU LIKE THIS, BUT I JUST COULDN'T WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT MY TRIP!


SO SPILL IT, GIRLFRIEND! YOUR TEXTS WERE JUST TEASING ME ALONG! I WANT ALL THE GORY DETAILS!
ALL RIGHT, BUT GET COMFORTABLE! THIS COULD TAKE A WHILE!


Two rounds later...
YOU REALLY DID ALL THAT... AND THE BLOW JOB TO BOOT? WOW!
WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO GO THAT FAR?
I'M NOT SURE, REALLY! I WAS JUST CAUGHT UP IN THE MOMENT AND VALERIE'S ADVICE KEPT COMING BACK TO ME!
I GUESS I JUST WANTED TO ENSURE THAT I KEPT ALL THE CONTROL I'VE MANAGED TO EXERT ON ADAM!


OH YEAH! ALL GUYS THINK WITH THEIR DICKS! ONCE YOU START CONTROLLING THAT, YOU'VE GOT THEM RIGHT WHERE YOU..!
OOPS! FORGOT! SORRY ABOUT THAT, MELANIE!
NO NEED FOR APOLOGY! REMEMBER, BEFORE ALL THIS, MY SEX LIFE WAS COMPLETELY NON-EXISTENT! ALL I HAD WERE VAGUE IDEAS AND SUPPOSITIONS ABOUT WHAT I THOUGHT I MIGHT FEEL WHEN THE TIME FINALLY CAME!
ANY AND ALL ADVICE I CAN GET FROM YOU IS GREATLY NEEDED... AND ALWAYS APPRECIATED!


SO IS ADAM REALLY GOING TO LET YOU KEEP SEEING STEVE? FROM WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE, YOU DIDN'T GIVE HIM MUCH OF A CHOICE!
I TRULY BELIEVE HE WILL! AT LEAST I SINCERELY HOPE HE DOES!
DEVELOPING A SOFT SPOT FOR STEVE, HUH? GOOD FOR YOU!


TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S STEVE HIMSELF AS MUCH AS THE AFFECTIONATE AND WARM-HEARTED NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP IN GENERAL!
ALTHOUGH ADAM PROVIDES ALL THE SOCIAL, PHYSICAL AND SOME OF THE EMOTIONAL STIMULATIONS I'M WANTING TO EXPERIENCE, HE SEEMS TO BE LACKING IN A FEW ASPECTS I FIND DESIRABLE!
YOU WANT THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS! WHO DOESN'T? DO WHAT YOU'VE GOTTA DO TO BE HAPPY, HONEY! THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS!


UNFORTUNATELY, BOTH MY WORLDS ARE BASED ON DECEPTION! AS MUCH AS I'M ENJOYING THIS LIFE AS MELANIE BUSH, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE TRUTH WILL COME OUT!
HOW STEVE, ADAM AND EVERYONE REACT TO THAT IS THE IMMENSE UNKNOWN VARIABLE DOMINATING MY LIFE!
BUT WHY DOES THE TRUTH HAVE TO COME OUT AT ALL? WHY CAN'T YOU JUST CONTINUE ON LIKE THIS... AS MELANIE?
Gud
gelezis


MY RESEARCH IS BASED ON MY OBSERVATIONS OF LIVING A DUAL LIFE! THE ONLY WAY I CAN VERIFY THAT IS BY REVEALING WHO I REALLY AM!
OTHERWISE, MY RESEARCH... EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN WORKING FOR... IS WORTHLESS!


YOUR RESEARCH IS SO IMPORTANT THAT YOU'D THROW AWAY THIS WONDERFUL LIFE YOU'VE BUILT AS MELANIE? REALLY?
YES, HANNAH! DESPITE ALL THE CHANGES I'VE GONE THROUGH, I'M STILL AN OBSESSIVELY DEDICATED RESEARCH PSYCHOLOGIST! NOTHING WILL EVER CHANGE THAT!
Gudai.


OKAY, I GET WHY YOU HAVE TO EVENTUALLY "COME OUT" ABOUT YOURSELF... AT LEAST I THINK I DO!
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO STOP BEING MELANIE, DOES IT?
I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION YOU LIKED THIS NEW LIFE! ALL THE NEW EXPERIENCES... THE NEW FRIENDS...!
I... I DO ENJOY THIS LIFE, HANNAH! AND YOU'RE PROBABLY THE BEST PART OF IT!


THEN WHY NOT STAY MELANIE FOR GOOD?
SO MANY PEOPLE WOULD MISS MELANIE IF SHE WERE SUDDENLY GONE! YOU'VE AFFECTED THAT MANY LIVES!
AND I HATE TO BE BLUNT, BUT DO YOU TRUTHFULLY THINK ANYONE REALLY WANTS SIDNEY MOYER BACK?
NO... THEY PROBABLY DON'T! AND UNTIL RECENTLY, THAT REALLY WOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED ME VERY MUCH! BUT NOW...!

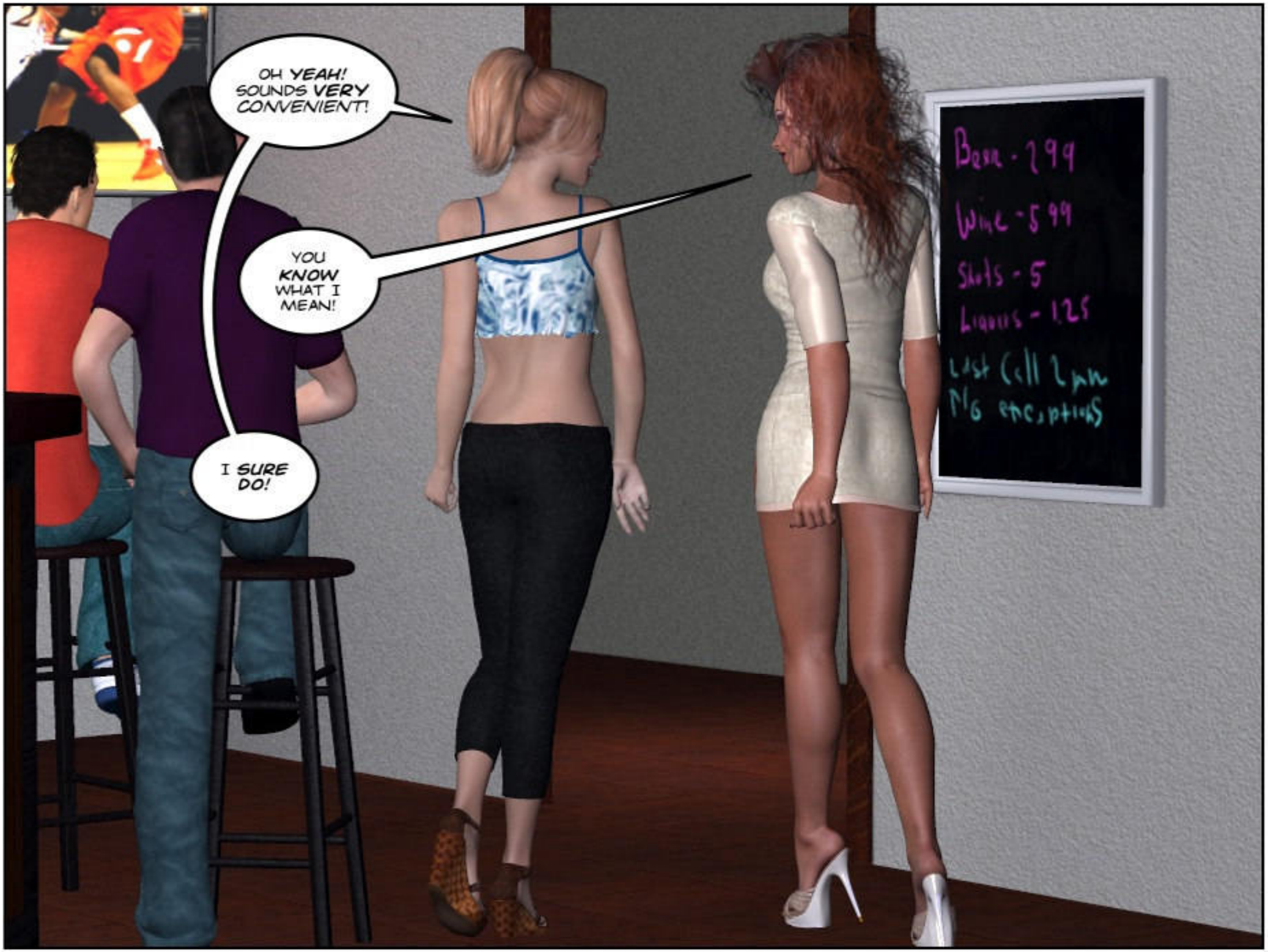

THEN DO IT! SCRAP SIDNEY MOYER ONCE AND FOR ALL!
GET THE OPERATION AND FINISH THE AMAZING JOB YOU'VE STARTED HERE!


OHHH, HANNAH! THAT WOULD BE SUCH AN ENORMOUS... AND PERMANENT STEP! A PART OF ME WANTS IT... SO BAD... BUT I DON'T THINK I COULD... EVER... BRING MYSELF TO DO IT!
MY TIME AS MELANIE WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE TEMPORARY. I HAVE TO CONTINUE ON THE PATH I SET OUT ON, COMPLETE THE CIRCLE BACK TO WHERE I BEGAN.
I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH FROM THIS EXPERIENCE... SO I KNOW MY LIFE AS SIDNEY WILL BE VERY, VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS BEFORE!


SIGH! I GUESS IT'S YOUR DECISION TO MAKE, NOT MINE!
BUT YOU DO REALIZE THAT MY FRIENDSHIP WITH SIDNEY CAN NEVER COME CLOSE TO WHAT I HAVE WITH YOU.. MELANIE!
I... I UNDERSTAND THAT, HANNAH! AND IT'S JUST SOMETHING WE'LL HAVE TO LEARN TO DEAL WITH!
Gudai


SNIFF! FINE! THEN I'M NOT GOING TO WASTE ONE MOMENT I HAVE WITH MY NEW BEST FRIEND BEFORE SHE LEAVES!
I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY, HANNAH!


GOOD! THEN LET'S HEAD HOME SO YOU CAN SHOW ME EVERYTHING YOU BOUGHT ON YOUR TRIP!
I'M ESPECIALLY EAGER TO SEE THOSE OUTFITS YOU WORE FOR ADAM! HUBBA-HUBBA!
THAT MAY TAKE A WHILE! I BOUGHT A LOT!
IN FACT, I ONLY BROUGHT ABOUT HALF HOME WITH ME. THE OTHER'S AT ADAM'S PLACE FOR CONVENIENCE!


OH YEAH! SOUNDS VERY CONVENIENT!
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!
I SURE DO!
Beer - 2.99
Wine - 5.99
Shots - 5
Liquors - 12.5
Last Call 2 am
No exceptions


A few days later...
YOU'D BETTER HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS FOR ME, BOB! BECAUSE I AM THIS CLOSE TO PULLING THE PLUG ON MY RETAINER WITH YOU AND FINDING MYSELF A NEW INVESTIGATOR!
OH, I THINK YOU'LL BE HAPPY WITH WHAT I'VE DISCOVERED ABOUT YOUR MELANIE BUSH!


I'D BETTER BE ECSTATIC CONSIDERING HOW MISERABLY YOU DID ON THAT LAST INVESTIGATION YOU DID FOR ME!
YOU'RE LUCKY I STILL USE YOU AFTER THAT DEBACLE!
WELL, I THINK WHAT I FOUND IS JUST WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR! I JUST SENT THE EMAIL SO YOU SHOULD BE GETTING IT ANY SECOND!
IT JUST POPPED UP ON MY SCREEN! GIVE ME A SECOND AND I'LL TAKE A LOOK!


HMMM... THE PICTURES ARE A LITTLE FUZZY, BUT...!
OH MY GOD! IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS?
IT SURE IS!
Ruth Kimball


BOB! YOU'VE REDEEMED YOURSELF! THIS IS BETTER THAN ANYTHING I COULD'VE IMAGINED!
GLAD TO BE OF SERVICE, RUTH!
Ruth Kimball


YOU'RE MINE NOW, YOU LITTLE BITCH!


A short time later, in Prof. Linderman's office...
AND YET ANOTHER CLUELESS UNDERCLASSMAN CLAIMS THAT THE ORIGIN OF THE SUPEREGO IS THE PLANET KRYPTON!
"SIGH!" MY DAYS OF PERFORMING THIS SCUT WORK FOR LINDERMAN CANNOT END TOO SOON AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED!


OF COURSE, NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, THERE'S REALLY NO REASON WHY I HAVE TO KEEP PLAYING THE PERFECT GRADUATE STUDENT FOR HIM!
HAVING TO PUT UP WITH HIS CONTINUAL LEERING AND FAWNING HAS GONE WAY BEYOND TEDIOUS! IT'S BECOME ANNOYING AND DEMEANING!


BUT... I SUPPOSE IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO STAY THE COURSE UNTIL THE END OF THE SEMESTER!
NO SENSE IN DRAWING ANY MORE UNDUE ATTENTION TO MYSELF WHEN I'M WITHIN REACH OF ACCOMPLISHING EVERYTHING I'VE SET OUT TO DO... AND SO MUCH MORE!


AH, MELANIE! I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE HERE HARD AT WORK!
OH, I JUST THOUGHT I'D GET A START ON THESE TESTS FOR YOU, PROFESSOR LINDERMAN, BUT IF YOU'D RATHER I DID SOMETHING ELSE...!


NO, NO... NOT AT ALL! JUST KEEP DOING WHAT YOU WERE DOING! DON'T LET ME INTERRUPT YOU!
I JUST NEEDED TO STOP BY FOR A MOMENT TO, UMMM... GET SOME NOTES FOR MY NEXT CLASS!
OF COURSE, PROFESSOR!


AND TO GET A FEW MORE LONG LOOKS DOWN MY TOP, AS USUAL! MY GOD, YOU'RE NOT EVEN VERY SUBTLE ABOUT IT!
YOU'RE SUCH AN EXERCISE IN HYPOCRISY, LINDERMAN! BOLD ENOUGH TO OPENLY OGLE, BUT TOO COWARDLY TO DO MUCH MORE!
I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS WORSE... LINDERMAN'S INSIPID LEERING OR GRADING PAPERS WRITTEN BY IMBECILES!
...AND I CAN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU WHAT A FANTASTIC JOB YOU'RE DOING...!


... AND I'VE ALREADY ASKED FOR YOU TO STAY ON AS MY ASSISTANT THROUGH NEXT TERM AND...!
OOOOO
OKAY... THAT DOES IT! "STAYING THE COURSE" IS OBVIOUSLY NOT GOING TO WORK!
TIME FOR MORE DRASTIC MEASURES!


... AND I FEEL THE RAPPORT WE'VE DEVELOPED IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR EDUCATIONAL CAREER HERE AND...!


I SO AGREE WITH YOU, PROFESSOR! ONE HUNDRED PERCENT!
EXCELLENT! I'M SO GLAD WE'RE ON THE SAME ...!


... PAGE?!
OH, WE ARE SO ON THE SAME PAGE, PROFESSOR LINDERMAN!
OR CAN I FINALLY CALL YOU STAN?


UMMM... I DON'T KNOW IF THATS SUCH A GOOD IDEA, MELANIE...!
YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE! IF OTHERS HEARD ME CALLING YOU STAN, THEY MIGHT FIGURE OUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON BETWEEN US!
GOING ON...?


BESIDES... I LIKE CALLING YOU PROFESSOR! IT'S KIND OF SEXY!
UMMM... I... I THINK YOU MIGHT'VE GOTTEN THE WRONG IMPRESSION FROM ME, MELANIE! I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD ...!


BUT HOW COULD I POSSIBLY BE WRONG, PROFESSOR! I'VE SEEN THE WAY YOU LOOK AT ME... THE WAY YOU REACT WHENEVER I'M NEAR YOU!
I CAN TELL WHAT IT IS YOU REALLY WANT OF ME!


THAT... THAT'S NOT EXACTLY TRUE! I'D NEVER ASK YOU TO...!
BUT THAT'S JUST IT, PROFESSOR! YOU DON'T HAVE TO ASK! NOT ANYMORE!


WELL, ISN'T THIS COZY!
RUTH! OH... UH...! THIS ISN'T WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE! WE WERE JUST... I MEAN, I WAS JUST ABOUT TO...!


DON'T HURT YOURSELF, STAN! JUST STEP OUT WHILE I HAVE A WORD WITH OUR MISS BUSH HERE!
UMMM... BUT IT'S MY OFFICE, AND...!
GET OUT, STAN!!


SO, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK ABOUT, DR. KIMBALL? ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR CONSISTENCY? FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION THEORY?
MAYBE A LITTLE DISCUSSION ON EGO DEPLETION? I'M FLEXIBLE!
OH, I'M SURE YOU ARE! BUT WHY DON'T WE START OUR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR BEHAVIOR?
IN PARTICULAR... IS THERE ANY MALE ON THIS STAFF, OR IN THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE, THAT YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO SPREAD YOUR LEGS FOR?


IF YOU'RE REFERRING TO LINDERMAN, THEN FIRST... EWWW! AND SECOND... WE BOTH KNOW WHAT A LECH HE IS! I WAS JUST SCARING HIM OFF BY CALLING HIS BLUFF SO HE'D LEAVE ME ALONE!
AND IS THAT ALSO WHAT YOU WERE DOING WHEN I CAUGHT YOU LIP-LOCKED WITH PROFESSOR PLOTKIN?
I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER EXPLAINING THAT AT THE TIME! IT WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SITUATION!


REALLY? SO WHAT KIND OF "SITUATION" DO YOU HAVE WITH CHARLES BENTLEY?
YOU MEAN UNIVERSITY CHANCELLOR CHARLES BENTLEY? WHY WOULD YOU ASK THAT? I'VE NEVER EVEN MET HIM!


LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE, SHALL WE, DR. KIMBALL? THESE WILD ACCUSATIONS AND FABRICATIONS ARE MERELY EXTERNALIZATIONS OF YOUR OBSESSION WITH MY RELATIONSHIP WITH ADAM ROSS!
DON'T YOU DARE TRY TO PSYCHO-ANALYZE ME!
WHY NOT? YOU'D BE A CLASSIC CASE STUDY!


WHY YOU ARROGANT LITTLE BITCH! WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE TALKING TO ME LIKE THAT?!
NOT ONLY COULD I HAVE YOU EXPELLED FROM THIS COLLEGE, BUT I COULD ALSO HAVE YOU BLACKBALLED FROM EVERY REPUTABLE INSTITUTION IN THE COUNTRY!


YOUR UNFOUNDED PARANOIA IS HARDLY ENOUGH TO GET ME THROWN OUT OF THIS, OR ANY OTHER, UNIVERSITY, RUTH!
SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO BACK TO YOUR OFFICE AND CONTINUE TO FANTASIZE ABOUT WHAT IT IS ADAM AND I DO WHEN WE'RE ALONE TOGETHER!


"UNFOUNDED", HUH? DOES THIS LOOK "UNFOUNDED" TO YOU?!
SIGH! WHAT NOW...?


GASP!
OH MY...!
I THOUGHT THAT MIGHT GET YOUR ATTENTION!
NOT SO COCKY NOW, ARE YOU?!


I DONT KNOW WHERE YOU GOT THAT, RUTH, BUT REST ASSURED... THAT'S NOT ME IN THAT PICTURE!
TRUST ME! THERE IS CATEGORICALLY NO POSSIBLE WAY THAT COULD BE ME!
WELL THIS AND THE PI I HIRED TO INVESTIGATE YOU SAY OTHERWISE!


A PI? ANY PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR WORTH HIS SALT WOULD'VE GIVEN RUTH A WHOLE LOT MORE THAN A DOCTORED PHOTO IN ORDER TO DISCREDIT ME!
BUT THE ONLY WAY I KNOW OF TO CONCLUSIVELY PROVE THAT ISN'T ME IN THE PHOTO IS TO REVEAL WHO I REALLY AM!
AND I DO NOT WANT THE TRUTH COMING OUT LIKE THIS! NOT BECAUSE OF RUTH KIMBALL!


THAT'S IT? A TACIT DENIAL IS THE BEST YOU CAN DO? I'M SO DISAPPOINTED!
WHAT'S THE POINT? YOU OBVIOUSLY HOLD A CONSIDERABLE GRUDGE AGAINST ME AND WANT ME GONE!
WHETHER YOU USE THAT BOGUS PICTURE OR NOT IS A MOOT POINT! WHEN THE CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT DECIDES IT'S TIME FOR A STUDENT TO LEAVE, THERE'S VERY LITTLE SAID STUDENT CAN DO TO PREVENT IT!
TRUE... VERY TRUE! BUT THAT PICTURE DOES GIVE ME SOME VERY TANGIBLE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT MY CASE AGAINST YOU!


YOUR NARROW-MINDED VINDICTIVENESS WILL BE THE COLLEGE'S LOSS! IF I LEAVE, I'D JUST FINISH MY RESEARCH AT ANOTHER INSTITUTION WHICH WOULD IN TURN REAP THE BENEFITS AND FUNDING IT WOULD NO DOUBT GENERATE!
I HATE TO BURST YOUR BUBBLE, DEAR, BUT ALL THE RESEARCH YOU'VE DONE WHILE AT THIS UNIVERSITY IS UNIVERSITY PROPERTY! IN OTHER WORDS, IF YOU LEAVE, ALL YOUR RESEARCH, DATA, EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE... STAYS HERE WITH US!
AND IF YOU EVEN TRY TO USE IT WHILE AT ANOTHER INSTITUTION, WE'LL SLAP YOU WITH A LAWSUIT SO FAST IT'LL MAKE THAT PRETTY LITTLE HEAD OF YOURS SWIM!


YOU... YOU CAN'T DO THAT! IT'S MY DATA... MY RESEARCH! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TAKE IT FROM ME!
YOU SHOULD'VE THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE YOU DECIDED TO WRAP YOURSELF AROUND ADAM'S... I MEAN, THE CHANCELLOR'S DICK!


IF YOU REALLY THINK I'M GOING TO JUST GIVE UP MY RESEARCH BECAUSE OF YOUR BASELESS THREATS, YOU OBVIOUSLY KNOW NOTHING ABOUT ME!
FINE! BUT I HAVE A FEELING THE CHANCELLOR MAY FEEL A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY WHEN HE SEES THE PICTURE!
YOU KNOW, THE "HAPPILY" MARRIED CHANCELLOR... WHOSE NEW LITTLE TROPHY WIFE WOULD DIVORCE HIM AT THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF ANY IMPROPRIETY ON HIS PART!


TO SHOW YOU THAT I'M NOT COMPLETELY HEARTLESS, I'LL LEAVE IT TO YOU TO DECIDE HOW YOU WANT YOUR EDUCATIONAL CAREER TO END!


BUT REST ASSURED, BY THE END OF THE WEEK, IT WILL BE OVER! ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!


THERE IS NO WAY IN HEAVEN, HELL OR EARTH THAT I'M GOING TO LET RUTH KIMBALL RUIN EVERYTHING LIKE THIS!


UNFORTUNATELY, I CAN THINK OF ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP HER...!


That night, outside Melanie's apartment...
I HAD A WONDERFUL TIME TONIGHT, STEVE!
ARE YOU SURE? YOU SEEMED VERY... DISTRACTED ALL EVENING!


I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT! THERE HAVE JUST BEEN SOME UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS WITH MY RESEARCH THAT I NEED TO WORK OUT!
ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP?


OH, I CAN THINK OF A FEW THINGS! BUT I THINK IT BEST WE DISCUSS THOSE INSIDE, DON'T YOU THINK?
WORKS FOR ME!


SO... HERE WE ARE!
YEP! HERE WE ARE!


HI THERE!
HI THERE YOURSELF!




CRAP! YOU'RE GOING TO TELL HIM, AREN'T YOU?
I HAVE TO! IF I WAIT, HE'LL LEARN, ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE, WHY I'M NOT HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH CHANCELLOR BENTLEY!
BUT IF I TELL HIM NOW, IT'LL BE BECAUSE I WANT HIM TO KNOW! AND... AND I DO WANT HIM TO KNOW!


OKAY, I GET THAT! BUT DOES IT HAVE TO BE RIGHT NOW?
HE'S ABOUT TO REACH THAT LITTLE SPOT ON OUR NECK THAT FEELS SOOO...!
I'LL TRY, BUT... NO PROMISES!


UH-OH! IT LOOKS LIKE THE WAIT IS OVER!


UMMM... I REALLY HATE TO SLOW YOU DOWN, BUT... WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT SOMETHING!
UH-OH! SOUNDS SERIOUS! DID I DO SOMETHING WRONG?
NO... NOT AT ALL! IT'S NOTHING YOU DID! IT... IT'S SOMETHING ABOUT ME!


SHOULD WE SIT DOWN FOR THIS?
NO! I JUST WANT YOU TO HOLD ME... HOLD ME TIGHT WHILE I DO ALL THE TALKING!
I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT! TALK AWAY!


THERE'S A VERY GOOD CHANCE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE HEARING SOMETHING ABOUT ME IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS! SOMETHING VERY... UNFLATTERING!


A few minutes later...
SO THIS PSYCHO-BITCH AT THE UNIVERSITY IS TRYING TO FORCE YOU OUT BY CLAIMING YOU'RE HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH THE SCHOOL'S CHANCELLOR?
BUT YOU'VE TOLD ME IT'S NOT TRUE, AND I BELIEVE YOU! SO WHO CARES WHAT ANYONE ELSE THINKS?
THAT'S SWEET... AND PROBABLY WHY I ADORE YOU SO MUCH!
BUT... THAT'S NOT QUITE EVERYTHING!


YOU SEE, IN ORDER TO PROVE TO EVERYONE ELSE THAT I DIDN'T HAVE THAT AFFAIR, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO REVEAL SOMETHING ABOUT MYSELF!
SOMETHING... THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE MAY NOT UNDERSTAND! SOMETHING I WANTED YOU TO KNOW FIRST, BECAUSE I HAVEN'T BEEN COMPLETELY HONEST WITH YOU!
WELL I'M SURE THAT WHATEVER IT IS, IT WON'T MATTER TO ME!


SIGH! I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT!
AND I HOPE YOU KEEP AN OPEN MIND...!


OH DAMN! I DIDN'T THINK TELLING HIM WOULD BE THIS DIFFICULT!
COME ON! IT'S SIMPLE! ALL YOU NEED TO SAY IS, "HEY STEVE, I'M REALLY A GUY NAMED SIDNEY!"
SURE, IF I WANTED TO TELL HIM IN AN ABRUPT AND CLASSLESS MANNER!

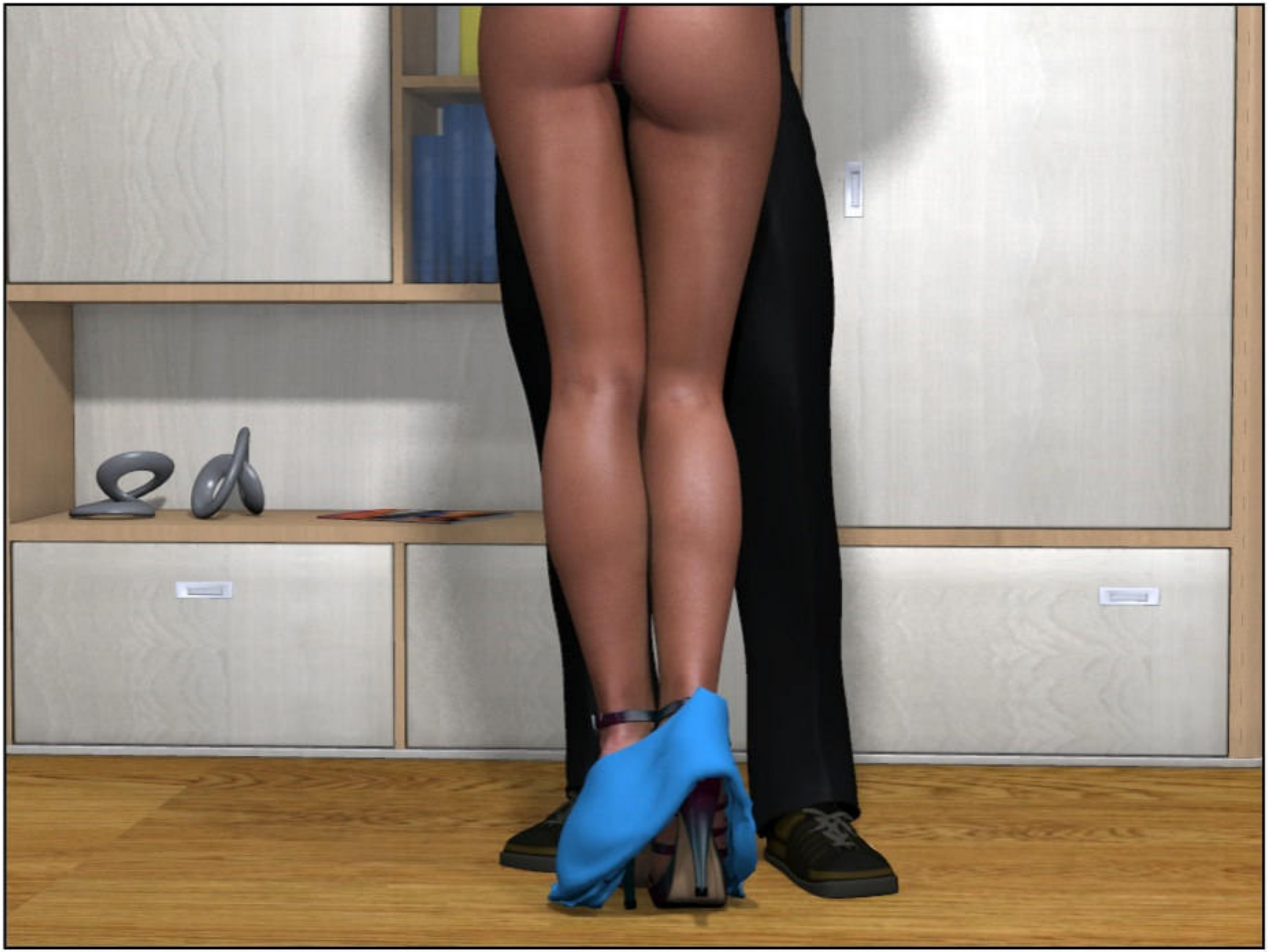

BUT CONSIDERING THE COMPLEXITIES OF MY SITUATION, I CAN'T SEEM TO COME UP WITH ANY SUCCINCT EXPLANATION!
AND I FEEL THE METHOD I USED WITH HANNAH WOULD BE FAR TOO GRAPHIC FOR STEVE!
WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IS REMIND HIM THAT FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, YOU'RE A WOMAN! A WOMAN WITH A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA!
I... I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT HOW DO I DO THAT?


WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE THAT TO ME, BIG S?


SO... YOU'RE AWFULLY QUIET ALL OF A SUDDEN! YOU KNOW, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME IF YOU DON'T WANT TO!
I DO, BUT... TALKING'S OVER-RATED!


I'VE THOUGHT OF A MUCH BETTER WAY FOR YOU TO LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT ME!






MMMM... LIKE THIS, YOU COULD TELL ME THE WORLD WAS COMING TO AN END AND I WOULDN'T GIVE A DAMN!


GLAD TO KNOW I HAVE THAT KIND OF EFFECT ON YOU, BABY!
YOU ALWAYS HAVE, BABE! EVER SINCE THE FIRST NIGHT WE MET!


MMMM! I THINK YOU'RE EVEN HARDER TONIGHT THAN YOU WERE THAT FIRST NIGHT!
I CAN'T HELP IT! A WOMAN LIKE YOU JUST NATURALLY HAS THAT EFFECT ON A GUY LIKE ME!


I'M SOOO GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY, BABY!


AND I WANT YOU TO KEEP THINKING THAT...!
NO POSSIBLE WAY THAT COULD EVER CHANGE!


... NO MATTER WHAT!
NOTHING YOU COULD DO OR SAY COULD EVER...!


WHA...?!


WHAT THE HELL?!


MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, BIG S! YOU CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE!
WHAT?! ARE... ARE YOU SERIOUS?!


YOU... YOU'RE A... YOU'RE A GUY?!
HOW THE HELL IS THAT POSSIBLE?


STEVE! LOOK AT ME! REMEMBER EVERYTHING YOU FELT ABOUT ME UNTIL THIS INSTANT!
EXCEPT FOR THAT ONE LITTLE PART OF ME, I AM ALL WOMAN! YOU SAID IT YOURSELF!
YEAH, BUT... THAT'S A PRETTY DAMN IMPORTANT LITTLE PART!


LOOK, I KNOW THIS IS A BIG SHOCK AND NOT WHAT YOU EXPECTED...!
NO SHIT! WHEN YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T BEING HONEST WITH ME, I WAS THINKING, WORST CASE SCENARIO, THAT YOU WERE MARRIED, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT!


BUT THIS?! THIS... NEVER, EVER CROSSED MY MIND!
I... I UNDERSTAND, STEVE! I CAN'T REALISTICALLY EXPECT YOU, OR ANY GUY, TO GET PAST SOMETHING LIKE THIS!
I JUST HOPE YOU WON'T THINK TOO HARSHLY OF ME AND REMEMBER THE FUN WE DID HAVE TOGETHER!


HEY! I'M NOT RUNNING OUT THE DOOR, BUT... I DEFINITELY DO NEED SOME TIME TO WRAP MY HEAD AROUND ALL THIS!
YOU ARE AN AMAZING PERSON, MELANIE, BUT... BUT I NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT BEFORE I DECIDE WHAT TO DO!
OF COURSE, STEVE! TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED! JUST LET ME KNOW WHEN, OR IF, YOU WANT TO SEE ME AGAIN!
ТЕАТРЪ
МИНІАТЮРЪ


I WILL, MELANIE! AND... GOOD NIGHT!
GOOD NIGHT, STEVE!


SIGH!


Knock! Knock!
MELANIE? IT'S ME, HANNAH! OPEN UP!


I HEARD YELLING AND THEN SAW STEVE LEAVING!
IS EVERYTHING OKAY?


OH HANNAH! I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, SWEETIE! WHATEVER IT IS, WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT TOGETHER! I PROMISE!


A couple of days later...
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, HANNAH, I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHAT I'M DOING HERE!
AS SOON AS KIMBALL GOES PUBLIC WITH THOSE PICTURES, MY RESEARCH IS OVER! SO EVERYTHING I'M DOING RIGHT NOW WILL BE MOOT!
AND GIVING UP IS JUST WHAT THAT BITCH WANTS YOU TO DO! SO DON'T YOU DARE GIVE IN TO HER THREATS! YOU'RE BETTER THAN SHE IS! SHOW THAT TO EVERYONE!


I'M TRYING, BUT IT'S DIFFICULT TO STAY MOTIVATED, KNOWING THAT IT COULD ALL COME TO AN END IN A MATTER OF DAYS!
THEN IT'S UP TO YOU TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE DAYS, WHETHER THEY'RE THE LAST ONES OR NOT!


I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT! AT LEAST I SHOULD BE ABLE TO ENJOY ONE LAST EVENING AS ADAM'S "PARAMOUR" AT A POLITICAL FUND-RAISER HE'S HOSTING TONIGHT!
ATTA GIRL! LOOK AT THE POSITIVES!
SPEAKING OF... ANY WORD FROM STEVE YET?
NOT A WHISPER! HE'S ONLY TWO FLOORS AWAY, BUT HE MAY AS WELL BE ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM ME!


WELL HANG IN THERE, HONEY! REMEMBER, WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU'VE STILL GOT YOUR BFF TO FALL BACK ON!
I KNOW, AND... THANKS, HANNAH! YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH THAT MEANS TO ME!
I'LL TALK TO YOU LATER!
YOU KNOW, IF I COULD GIVE HANNAH'S PHONE NUMBER TO DAN, HE'D OWE ME FOR LIFE!


I'LL... I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO!
THANKS! I'M TIRED OF ALWAYS BEING IN HIS DEBT!


SO, UMMM... DO YOU HAVE A FEW MINUTES SO WE CAN TALK?
SURE! I THINK THERE'S AN EMPTY ROOM RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER!


SO, I TAKE IT YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH TIME TO THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING!
YEAH, I HAVE! BUT FIRST I WANT TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE WAY I REACTED THAT NIGHT!
THAT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN EASY FOR YOU, TELLING ME ABOUT YOURSELF, AND MY BEHAVIOR DIDN'T HELP!


YOU'RE NOT AT FAULT HERE, STEVE! I'M THE ONE WHO KEPT THE TRUTH FROM YOU!
AND THEN THE WAY I SPRUNG IT ALL ON YOU...! I DON'T BLAME YOU ONE BIT!
AND I DON'T BLAME YOU EITHER, MELANIE! YOUR SECRET IS YOUR OWN PERSONAL BUSINESS! THE FACT THAT YOU CHOSE TO SHARE IT WITH ME SHOWS ME HOW MUCH YOU CARE!
AND, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, THERE REALLY IS NO EASY WAY TO SPRING NEWS LIKE THAT ON ANYONE, SO DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP FOR IT!


WELL... WE'VE GOT ALL THAT OUT OF THE WAY! NOW WHAT?
NOW... I WANT TO SAY SOME THINGS THAT I SHOULD HAVE SAID THE OTHER NIGHT, BUT... JUST COULDN'T!
I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU COULDN'T! GO AHEAD...!


I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I HAVE NEVER FELT ABOUT ANYONE THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT YOU!
YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL, BRILLIANT, SEXY, FUNNY...! DID I SAY BEAUTIFUL ALREADY?
YES, YOU DID!
WELL, IT DEFINITELY NEEDS TO BE SAID MORE THAN ONCE!


AND, AFTER WHAT YOU TOLD ME THE OTHER NIGHT, IT ALSO TURNS OUT THAT YOU'RE INCREDIBLY BRAVE!
I'M NOT SO SURE IF I'M WHAT YOU'D CALL BRAVE...!
YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO EMBRACE WHAT YOU'VE SOUGHT WITHOUT FEAR OF THE ATTITUDES OF OTHERS!
I CALL THAT BRAVE!


ALL OF THOSE ATTRIBUTES ADD UP TO THE KIND OF WOMAN ANY MAN, INCLUDING ME, WOULD WANT TO SPEND HIS LIFE WITH!
I'M SENSING A RATHER PROFOUND "BUT" LOOMING...!


BUT... AS MUCH AS I ADMIRE YOU, AND LOVE BEING WITH YOU, WHAT YOU SHOWED ME THE OTHER NIGHT MADE ME TAKE STOCK OF WHAT I WANT OUT OF MY LIFE!
WHICH IS...?
A FAMILY! CHILDREN OF MY OWN! I KNOW IT SOUNDS NARROW-MINDED, BUT I CAN'T HELP IT!
IT'S AS MUCH A PART OF ME, AS THIS IS A PART OF YOU!


AND THAT'S OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING I CAN NEVER GIVE YOU! THE DEAL-BREAKER!
I'M SORRY, MELANIE! I WISH I DIDN'T FEEL THAT WAY, BUT I DO! I HOPE YOU CAN FORGIVE ME!
OF COURSE, STEVE! IT'S NOT UNREASONABLE AT ALL FOR YOU TO WANT THAT FOR YOURSELF!


AND REST ASSURED, I WON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT YOUR SECRET! I PROMISE!
I APPRECIATE THAT, STEVE! ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR MUCH LONGER!


WELL, I... I SHOULD PROBABLY GET BACK UPSTAIRS! GOOD-BYE, MELANIE!
GOOD-BYE, STEVE!





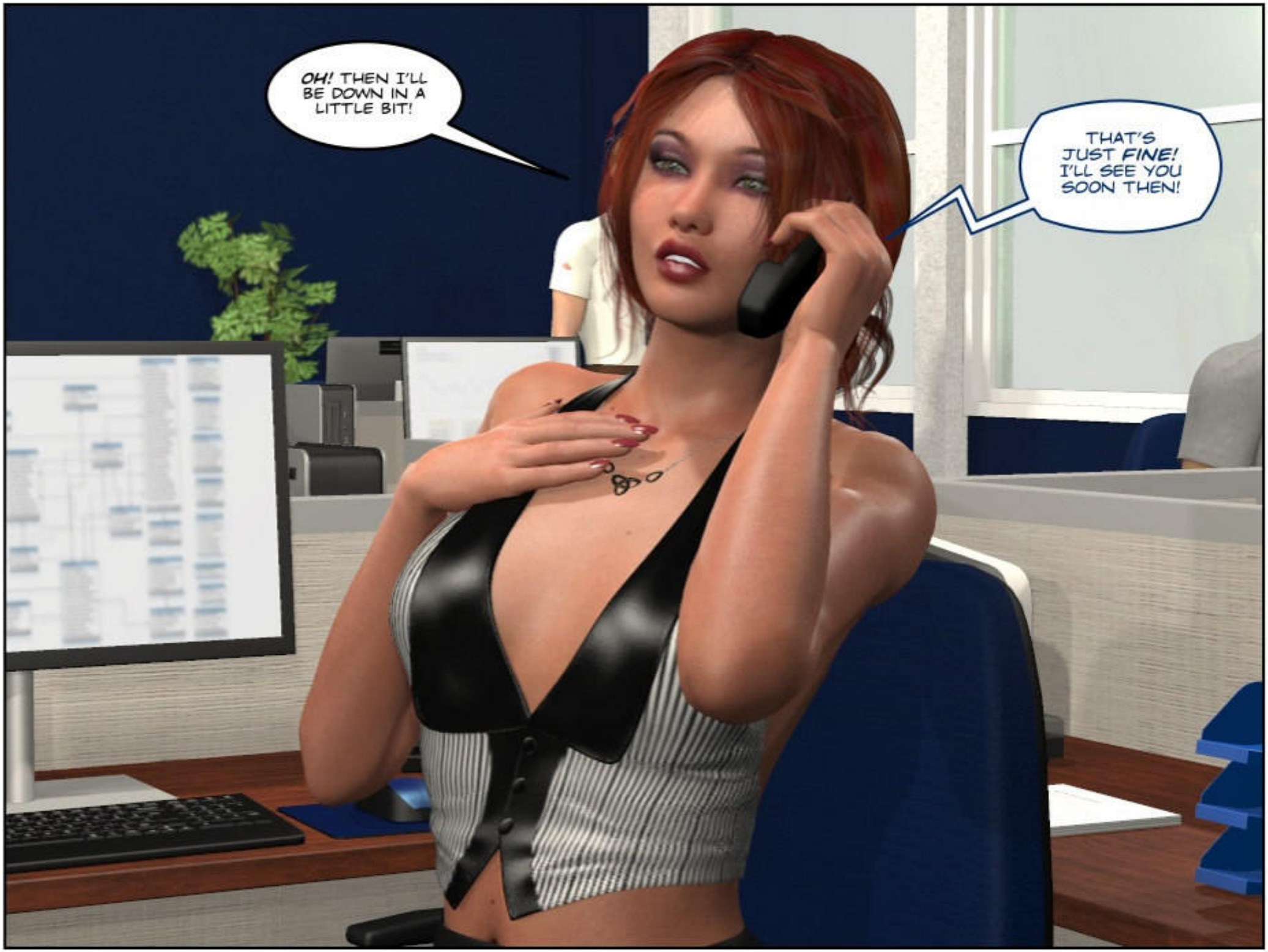

A while later...
oooo
SHAKE IT OFF, MELANIE! IT'S NOT LIKE YOU DIDN'T ANTICIPATE THE WAY THINGS PLAYED OUT!

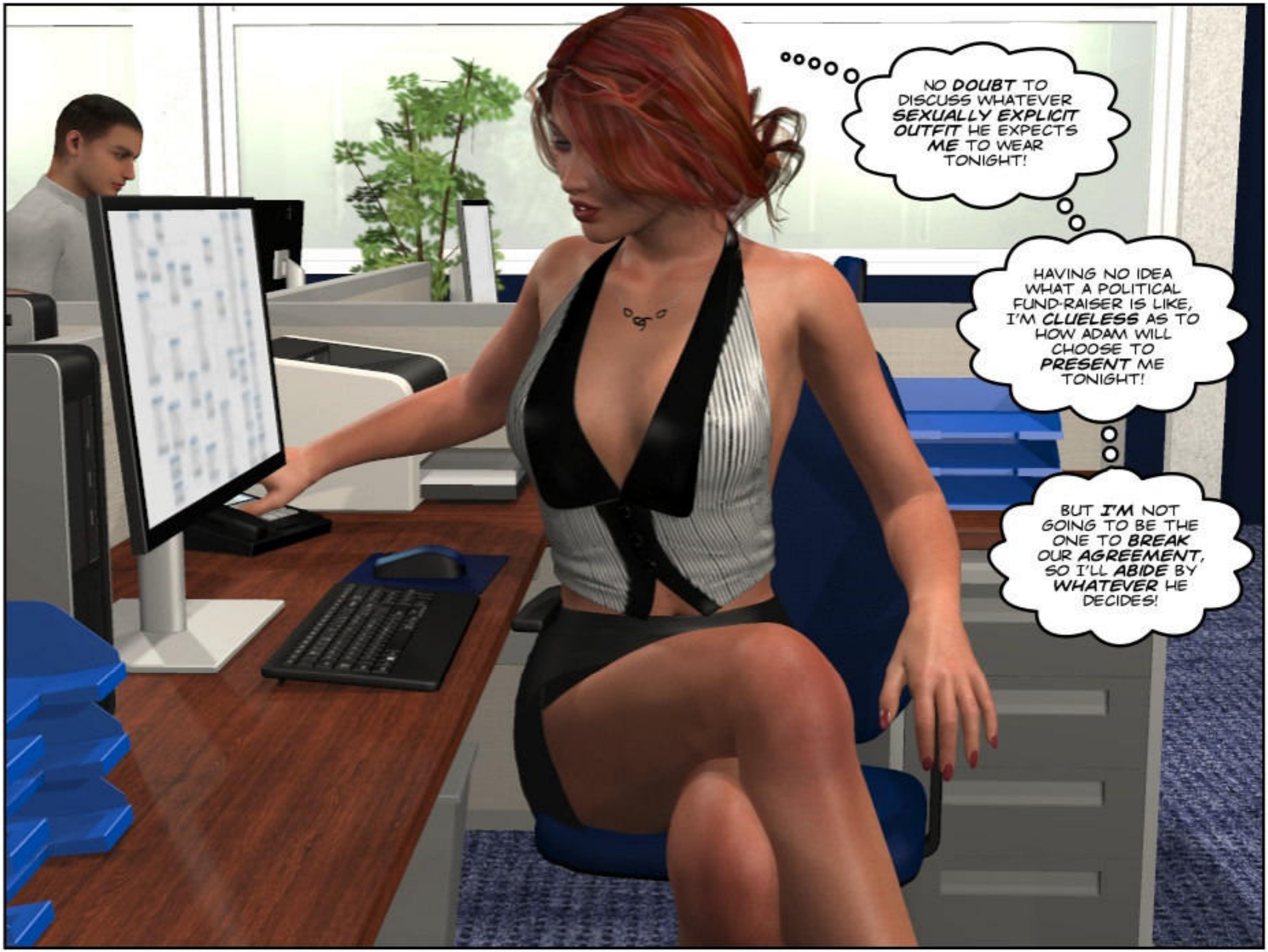

BESIDES, I STILL HAVE A LOT MORE TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE RUTH PULLS THE RUG OUT FROM UNDER ME!
BUZZZ!!


"SIGH!"
BUZZZ!!


I THOUGHT WE CAME TO AN AGREEMENT REGARDING YOUR INTERFERING WITH MY OTHER ACQUAINTANCES!
WE DID INDEED! THAT'S WHY I WAITED UNTIL I WAS SURE YOUR CONVERSATION WITH MR. WAINRIGHT WAS CONCLUDED!


WELL... OKAY! WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I WAS JUST HOPING YOU COULD STOP BY MY OFFICE WHEN YOU HAVE THE CHANCE TO DISCUSS THIS EVENING!
NO HURRY! JUST WHENEVER YOUR SCHEDULE, OR MOOD, ALLOWS IT!


OH! THEN I'LL BE DOWN IN A LITTLE BIT!
THAT'S JUST FINE! I'LL SEE YOU SOON THEN!


NO DOUBT TO DISCUSS WHATEVER SEXUALLY EXPLICIT OUTFIT HE EXPECTS ME TO WEAR TONIGHT!
HAVING NO IDEA WHAT A POLITICAL FUND-RAISER IS LIKE, I'M CLUELESS AS TO HOW ADAM WILL CHOOSE TO PRESENT ME TONIGHT!
BUT I'M NOT GOING TO BE THE ONE TO BREAK OUR AGREEMENT, SO I'LL ABIDE BY WHATEVER HE DECIDES!


I ACTUALLY THINK I'M GOING TO MISS THESE EVENINGS WITH ADAM!
I MEAN, HOW MANY PEOPLE GET TO LIVE OUT A FANTASY LIFE QUITE THE WAY I'VE BEEN ABLE TO! THE CLOTHES, THE TRAVEL, THE PARTIES...! IT'S BEEN QUITE A RIDE!


AND SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH, I'M ALSO GOING TO MISS THE LATER-EVENING ACTIVITIES ADAM AND I HAVE BEEN ENGAGING IN!
AND NOT JUST FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STIMULATION, EITHER! *SIGH!*


A short while later...
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, ADAM?
YES, MY DEAR! I JUST WANTED TO SEE IF YOU STILL WANTED TO ACCOMPANY ME TONIGHT!
WHY WOULD I HAVE CHANGED MY MIND?
WELL, AT THE RISK OF INCURRING YOUR WRATH, I NOTICED THAT YOU SEEMED UPSET AFTER YOUR DISCUSSION WITH MR. WAINRIGHT EARLIER!


YOUR PREDILECTION FOR VOYEURISM HAS BECOME MORE THAN JUST A LITTLE ANNOYING, ADAM!
I SWEAR, IF I HADN'T ALREADY PROMISED THAT I'D GO...!
THEN I'D CANCEL THE FUND-RAISER!


WHAT? CANCEL IT? WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?
THE PROSPECT OF SHOWING UP AT THIS FUNCTION, OR ANY FUNCTION, WITHOUT YOU ON MY ARM IS UNTHINKABLE! I'D RATHER CANCEL THE WHOLE AFFAIR THAN SHOW UP WITHOUT YOU!
YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE! BUT... NONE OF THEM ARE YOU!
OH, COME ON, ADAM! I'M SURE THERE ARE PLENTY OF DESIRABLE YOUNG WOMEN IN YOUR LITTLE BLACK BOOK WHO WOULD DIE TO BE YOUR 'PLUS ONE'!


AND PLEASE DO NOT INTERPRET THIS AS PRESSURE ON YOU IN ANY WAY! IF, FOR WHATEVER REASON, YOU CANNOT ATTEND TONIGHT, THEN THAT IS FINE!
I'LL JUST CANCEL THE FUNDRAISER WITHOUT GIVING IT A SECOND THOUGHT! IF THE GUESTS ARE INCONVENIENCED... SO BE IT!
THESE POLITICOS HAVE BEEN INCONVENIENCING THE REST OF US FOR YEARS! ANY OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN THE FAVOR IS WELL-DESERVED!


YOU DON'T HAVE TO CANCEL ANYTHING, ADAM! I'M FINE!
IN FACT, YOU'LL PROBABLY BE HAPPY TO KNOW THAT STEVE... MR. WAINRIGHT... AND I WILL NO LONGER BE SEEING ONE ANOTHER!
I GUESSED AS MUCH! I HOPE IT WASN'T A RESULT OF ANYTHING I DID!
NO... IT WAS JUST SOMETHING THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT!


SO... I'VE NEVER BEEN TO A POLITICAL FUND-RAISER BEFORE! I ASSUME YOU HAVE SOME DEFINITE SUGGESTIONS FOR MY ATTIRE!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I THINK I'VE PICKED OUT THE PERFECT OUTFIT FOR YOU TONIGHT!
I WAS HOPING YOU'D COME BY EARLY AND PREPARE AT MY PLACE!
I GUESS THAT WOULD MAKE THE MOST SENSE!


EXCELLENT! COME BACK HERE WHEN YOU'RE READY TO LEAVE AND WE'LL GO TOGETHER!
ALL RIGHT, I'LL SEE YOU THEN!


THAT WAS A VERY... WEIRD MEETING WITH ADAM! HE ACTUALLY SEEMED CONCERNED ABOUT ME!


I WONDER WHAT HE'S UP TO?


That night, at the Adam Ross estate...


ARE YOU ENJOYING YOURSELF SO FAR, MY DEAR?
I AM ACTUALLY! THIS PARTY OF YOURS IS A WHO'S WHO OF CELEBRITIES AND POLITICAL POWER-WIELDERS! IT'S VERY IMPRESSIVE!
WELL, THANK YOU! BUT I'M JUST HAPPY THAT YOU'RE HAVING A GOOD TIME! AND LOOKING LOVELY DOING SO, AS USUAL!


THANK YOU! BUT I HAVE TO ADMIT I'M A LITTLE SURPRISED YOU CHOSE THIS DRESS FOR ME TO WEAR TONIGHT! AND THE JEWELRY...!
WHY IS THAT? DON'T YOU LIKE IT?
ON THE CONTRARY, I LOVE IT! IT'S ALL SO CLASSIC, ELEGANT AND SEXY! NOT EXACTLY WHAT I WAS EXPECTING!


YOU WERE PERHAPS EXPECTING A REPLAY OF OUR ADVENTURES IN LA? ALTHOUGH I HAVE NO DOUBT YOU COULD PULL THAT OFF EVERY BIT AS WELL WITH THIS CROWD, IT'S NOT WHAT I NEEDED FROM YOU TONIGHT!
TONIGHT I NEEDED A SOPHISTICATED, INTELLIGENT AND BEAUTIFUL COMPANION WHO COULD HELP ME CHARM AND LIGHTEN THE WALLETS OF THESE PROSPECTIVE DONORS!
AND I MUST SAY, YOU'VE COME THROUGH WITH FLYING COLORS!


I DARE SAY YOU WERE BORN TO THIS LIFE, MY DEAR! YOU CARRY YOUR NATURAL BEAUTY AND SENSUALITY WITH A GRACE AND ELEGANCE UNMATCHED BY ANY WOMAN I'VE EVER MET!
I COULD EASILY SEE YOU MANAGING AND HOSTING FUNCTIONS LIKE THIS WITH NO TROUBLE WHATSOEVER!
ME? HOSTING PARTIES LIKE THIS? I DON'T SEE HOW...!


BUT FIRST, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO OUR GUEST OF HONOR, MELANIE! SENATOR JAMES SUTTON, MAY I PRESENT MISS MELANIE BUSH!
ROSS, THERE ARE ONLY TWO THINGS THAT COULD PULL ME AWAY FROM MY DUTIES IN WASHINGTON... ONE OF YOUR FUND-RAISERS AND THE CHANCE TO MEET A YOUNG LADY AS LOVELY AS THIS!


WHY... THANK YOU, SENATOR! IT... IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU!
I'LL LEAVE THE SENATOR IN YOUR CAPABLE HANDS, MELANIE, WHILE I TEND TO SOME OTHER BUSINESS!
THERE ARE CAMERAS EVERYWHERE, JIM, SO BEHAVE YOURSELF!
NO PROMISES, ADAM!


I HAD NO IDEA ADAM HAD FRIENDS IN THE SENATE!
OH, HELL! ADAM AND I HAVE BEEN FRIENDS FOR GOING ON TWENTY YEARS NOW!
HE'S ALSO BEEN ONE OF MY MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS EVER SINCE I FIRST WADED INTO THE POLITICAL SCENE IN THE STATE CONGRESS ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO!


I SURE COULD TELL YOU SOME STORIES ABOUT THAT GUY!
HMMM! I WISH YOU WOULD!


CHANCELLOR BENTLEY! SO GLAD YOU AND YOUR LOVELY WIFE COULD MAKE IT TONIGHT!
WELL AS INSISTENT AS YOU WERE THAT WE ATTEND, I DIDN'T DARE REFUSE!
WHAT MAKES THIS FUND-RAISER SO SPECIAL ANYWAY, ADAM?


OH, YOU'LL SEE SOON ENOUGH, CHARLES!


AS MUCH AS I'D LOVE TO SPEND THE EVENING TALKING TO YOU, MISS BUSH, I'M AFRAID DUTY REQUIRES ME TO WORK THE ROOM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!
I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND!
OH, I DO, SENATOR! MAYBE WE CAN TALK AGAIN LATER!


I'M COUNTING ON IT!

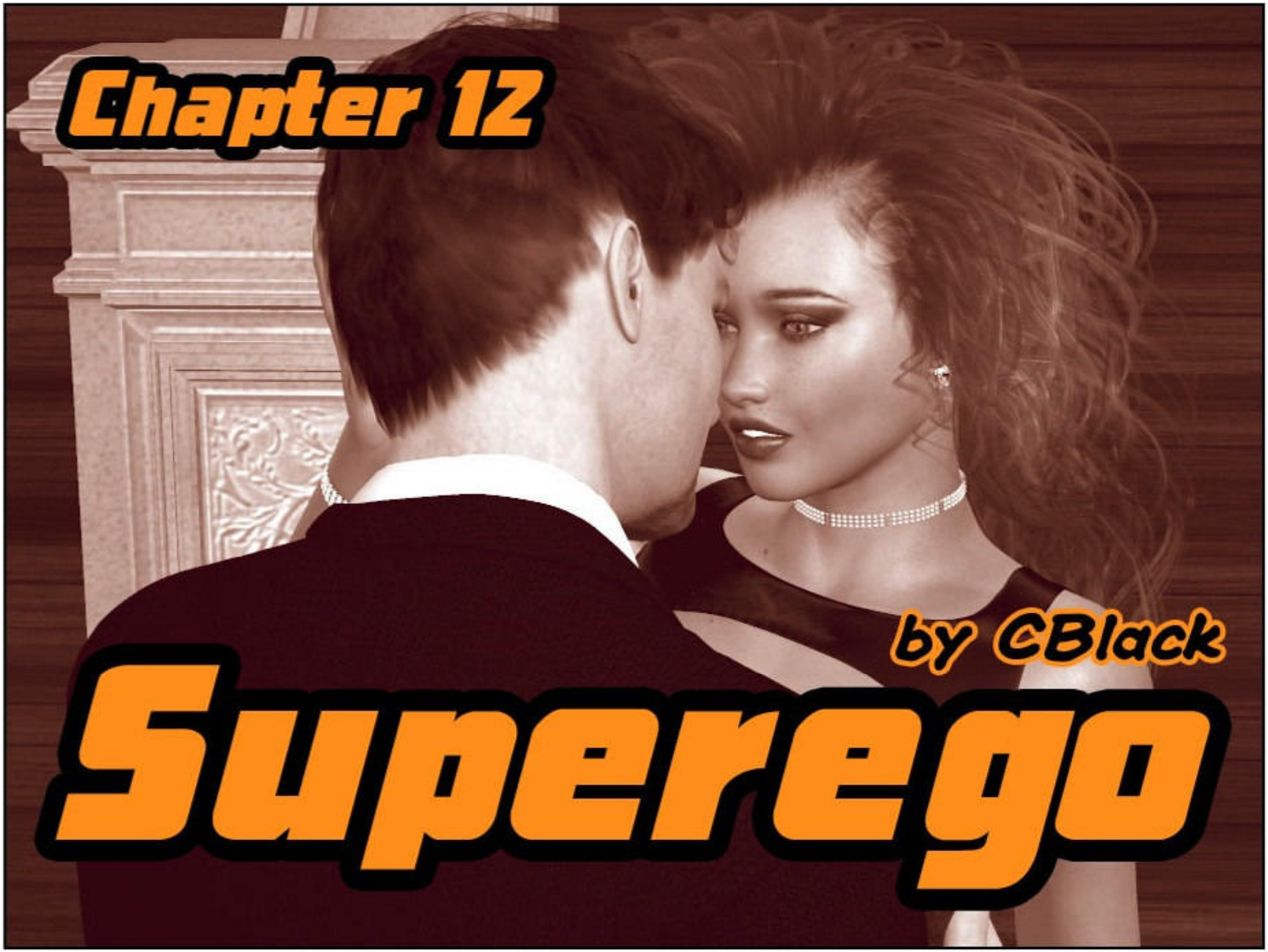

MY, MY, MY! YOU'VE GONE FROM PROFESSORS, TO CHANCELLORS TO SENATORS!
GOOD THING THE PRESIDENT'S NOT IN TOWN! THE COUNTRY DOESN'T NEED A SCANDAL LIKE THAT THESE DAYS!
SIGH! RUTH! YOUR IGNORANCE AS WELL AS YOUR ARROGANCE NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME!


THAT'S DR. KIMBALL TO YOU, LITTLE GIRL! AND DON'T YOU EVER FORGET IT!
CALLING YOU DR. KIMBALL IMPLIES RESPECT! AND WHAT LITTLE RESPECT I HAD FOR YOU VANISHED WHEN YOU TOOK ON THIS VENDETTA AGAINST ME... RUTH!


WELL THEN... I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED YOUR LITTLE RUN HERE AT OUR UNIVERSITY, BECAUSE IT'S ABOUT TO COME TO AN END!
I NOTICED THE CHANCELLOR AND HIS WIFE ARE BOTH HERE TONIGHT! I'M SURE HE'LL DO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING I WANT HIM TO DO IN ORDER TO KEEP HIS LITTLE TROPHY WIFE FROM SEEING A CERTAIN PICTURE OF YOU TWO!
WHAT DO YOU THINK? HMMM?


YOU REALLY HAVE NO IDEA OF WHAT YOU'RE INSTIGATING HERE, RUTH! THE ONLY RESULT WILL BE MISERY FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED... EVEN YOU!
REALLY? THE ONLY RESULT I SEE IS YOU DISGRACED AND GONE AND ME WITH A NEW OFFICE AND LARGER BUDGET... AT THE VERY LEAST!


SO YOU MIGHT WANT TO SAY YOUR GOODBYES WHILE YOU CAN, DEARIE! BECAUSE THE PROVERBIAL SHIT IS ABOUT TO HIT YOUR FAN!


Chapter 12
by CBlack
Superego


IF YOU'RE WAITING FOR A TEARFUL PLEA FROM ME, RUTH, YOU'RE GOING TO BE WAITING A VERY, VERY LONG TIME!
TOO BAD! I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO BE CONTENT WITH DESTROYING YOUR LIFE!


AND ALTHOUGH YOU SEEM TO BE VERY GOOD AT FEIGNING NONCHALANCE, I'M SURE I'LL GET A VERY DIFFERENT REACTION FROM THE CHANCELLOR, WHO I SEE STANDING RIGHT OVER THERE!
I'LL SAY IT ONE MORE TIME, RUTH... YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO DO THAT!


OH, I SO BEG TO DIFFER, DEARIE!
RUTH! HOW ARE YOU DOING THIS EVENING?


OH, I'M DOING SPLENDIDLY, ADAM! WE WERE JUST HAVING A LITTLE DISCUSSION REGARDING MS. BUSH'S FUTURE WITH THE UNIVERSITY... AMONG OTHER THINGS!
YES, I'M SURE YOU WERE!
DO YOU MIND IF I STEAL MELANIE AWAY FROM YOU FOR A BIT?


NOT AT ALL! I WAS JUST ON MY WAY OVER TO SPEAK WITH THE CHANCELLOR ANYWAY!
YOU TWO HAVE A WONDERFUL EVENING!


ARE YOU OKAY? YOUR CONVERSATION LOOKED A LITTLE HEATED BEFORE I ARRIVED!
THAT WOMAN... HAS HAD IT IN FOR ME EVER SINCE WE STARTED SPENDING TIME TOGETHER!
WHY IS SHE SO VINDICTIVE? I KNOW SHE USED TO WORK FOR YOU! CAN YOU PLEASE TELL ME WHAT THERE IS BETWEEN YOU TWO?


SIGH! WE HAD A NIGHT TOGETHER... ONE NIGHT, THAT WAS IT! IT WAS CONSENSUAL, BUT, AS IT TURNED OUT, VERY ILL-ADVISED!
SHE READ A LOT MORE INTO IT THAN I DID AND BECAME VERY OBSESSIVE ABOUT IT!
IN FACT, AT ONE POINT SHE EVEN HIRED A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR TO SEE IF I WAS "CHEATING" ON HER, EVEN THOUGH I'D ALREADY MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE HAD NO RELATIONSHIP TO CHEAT ON!


FORTUNATELY, THE PI SHE HIRED HAD WORKED FOR ME IN THE PAST AND FELT OBLIGATED TO LET ME KNOW WHAT SHE WAS UP TO!
THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED IT BEST TO ASK FOR HER RESIGNATION!
IT WAS ONLY AFTER SHE'D LEFT THAT I FOUND OUT SHE WAS PREGNANT! SHE DECIDED TO HAVE AN ABORTION, AND I DIDN'T TRY TO DISSUADE HER! STILL, I FELT BAD FOR HER, GUILTY, SO EVER SINCE, I'VE TRIED TO HELP HER OUT WHEN I CAN... BY HELPING HER GET OTHER JOBS... EVEN ALLOWING CERTAIN GRADUATE STUDENTS OF HERS TO RUN RAMPANT AROUND MY COMPANIES!
I SEE! NO WONDER SHE HATES ME SO MUCH! SHE CAN'T STAND THE FACT THAT WE'VE GROWN SO CLOSE!
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!


TO BE HONEST, I'M THROUGH WITH TRYING TO HELP RUTH, NOT AFTER THE WAY SHE'S TREATED YOU! AND PLEASE TRY TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE'S NOTHING SHE CAN DO AT THIS POINT TO HURT YOU!
I WISH THAT WERE TRUE! HER SPITEFUL VINDICTIVENESS IS GOING TO AFFECT A LOT OF PEOPLE! AND ALL BECAUSE OF ME!
NONSENSE! RUTH IS ALL BARK AND NO BITE! ALL RUMOR AND INNUENDO WITHOUT FACTS!
MAYBE, BUT SOMETIMES RUMORS AND INNUENDO CAN INDIRECTLY FORCE UNEXPECTED AND UNWANTED FACTS TO SURFACE!


REST ASSURED, MELANIE... THERE IS NOTHING, UNEXPECTED OR NOT, THAT CAN CHANGE THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT YOU!
I... I WISH THAT WERE TRUE, ADAM! BUT, IN ALL HONESTY, THERE IS SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW...!


HOLD THAT THOUGHT, LOVE! IT LOOKS LIKE I NEED TO RESCUE THE SENATOR FROM SOME LONG-WINDED ADMIRERS! I'LL BE BACK SOON!
BUT...!


OH...
DAMN!


CHANCELLOR BENTLEY! HOW ARE YOU THIS EVENING?
OH, UHHH... DR. KIMBALL IS IT? I'M FINE, THANK YOU!
DIDN'T I SEE YOUR LOVELY WIFE WITH YOU EARLIER?
YES, SHE'S POWDERING HER NOSE AT THE MOMENT!


GOOD! I WAS HOPING WE'D HAVE A CHANCE TO DISCUSS SOMETHING IN PRIVATE BEFORE SHE RETURNED!
REALLY? AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?


I WANTED YOU TO BE AWARE OF SOME... UNSEEMLY INFORMATION THAT HAS BECOME AVAILABLE TO ME!
UNSEEMLY? IN WHAT WAY?
WELL, IT'S A PICTURE THAT A CONCERNED PARTY SENT TO ME! A PICTURE THAT SEEMS TO DEPICT YOU IN A RATHER COMPROMISING SITUATION!


WHAT?! ME?!
WHAT PICTURE ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? AND WHERE DID YOU GET IT?
IT WAS SENT TO ME... UNSOLICITED, OF COURSE... BY AN ANONYMOUS SOURCE! AND I HAVE IT HERE ON MY PHONE, IF YOU'D LIKE TO TAKE A LOOK!
YOU'RE DAMN STRAIGHT I WOULD!


WHAT THE DEVIL...?
I BELIEVE I RECOGNIZE THE YOUNG LADY AS ONE OF OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS!
BUT I'M SURE THAT ONCE YOU HAVE HER REMOVED FROM THE UNIVERSITY, THE TWO OF US CAN WORK TOGETHER AND MAKE SURE NONE OF THIS GOES BEYOND THIS ROOM!


I'LL BE DAMNED! WHERE DID YOU SAY YOU GOT THIS PHOTO?
LIKE I SAID, AN ANONYMOUS SOURCE SENT IT TO ME!
JUST RIGHT OUT OF THE BLUE "SOMEONE" SENT THIS TO YOU, HUH? JUST YOU?
THAT'S WHAT I WAS TOLD! NOW, ABOUT THIS HORRIBLE LITTLE COED...!


AH, HONEY, YOU'RE BACK! TAKE A LOOK AT THIS!
WHAT IS IT?
A LITTLE SOMETHING YOU MIGHT FIND INTERESTING!
YOU... YOU'RE SHOWING IT TO YOUR WIFE?!


OF COURSE! CLAUDIA AND I HAVE NO SECRETS!
SO, HONEY... WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I HAVE ONE QUESTION...!
HMPH! JUST ONE...?


WHO IS THIS GIRL AND WHY IS HER FACE ON MY BODY?
WHAT?!


THIS IS A PICTURE OF CLAUDIA AND ME... SHORTLY BEFORE WE WERE MARRIED!
IT WAS TAKEN BY MY FIRST WIFE'S PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR AND SUBMITTED FOR EVIDENCE DURING THE DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS!
GOOD THING YOUR PI HAD THOSE PICTURES OF HER AND YOUR POOL BOY AS WELL!
TRUE, DARLING! VERY TRUE!


I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
I DON'T EITHER! WAS THIS PHOTO ALTERED BEFORE OR AFTER IT CAME INTO YOUR POSSESSION?
WHAT?! I ASSURE YOU, CHANCELLOR BENTLEY, I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS...!


MAYBE NOT! BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER WHY SOMEONE WOULD SEND SOMETHING LIKE THIS TO YOU!
CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT TO ME, DR. KIMBALL?
I... I'M SURE IT'S JUST A FLUKE, SIR... I MEAN...!


WHY DO YOU LOOK SO WORRIED, MELANIE? I TOLD YOU I'D BE RIGHT BACK, AND HERE I AM!
IT'S NOT THAT! I'VE JUST BEEN WATCHING RUTH TALKING TO THE CHANCELLOR!
AND I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT!


PROBABLY DISCUSSING RUTH'S EXIT STRATEGY FROM THE UNIVERSITY!
I MEAN, YOU CAN'T REALLY EXPECT TO KEEP YOUR JOB AFTER A THINLY VEILED AND POORLY EXECUTED BLACKMAIL ATTEMPT AGAINST YOUR BOSS!
WHAT?!


RUTH MAY BE MEAN-SPIRITED, VINDICTIVE AND SEMI-SOCIOPATHIC, BUT SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN TOO HOT-HEADED AND IMPULSIVE TO BE TOO MUCH OF A REAL THREAT!
IF SHE WERE TRULY DANGEROUS, SHE WOULD HAVE CHECKED THE VALIDITY AND AUTHENTICITY OF THAT PHOTO BEFORE WAVING IT AROUND AS PROOF POSITIVE!
YOU... YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PICTURE? AND THAT IT'S A FAKE? HOW...?!

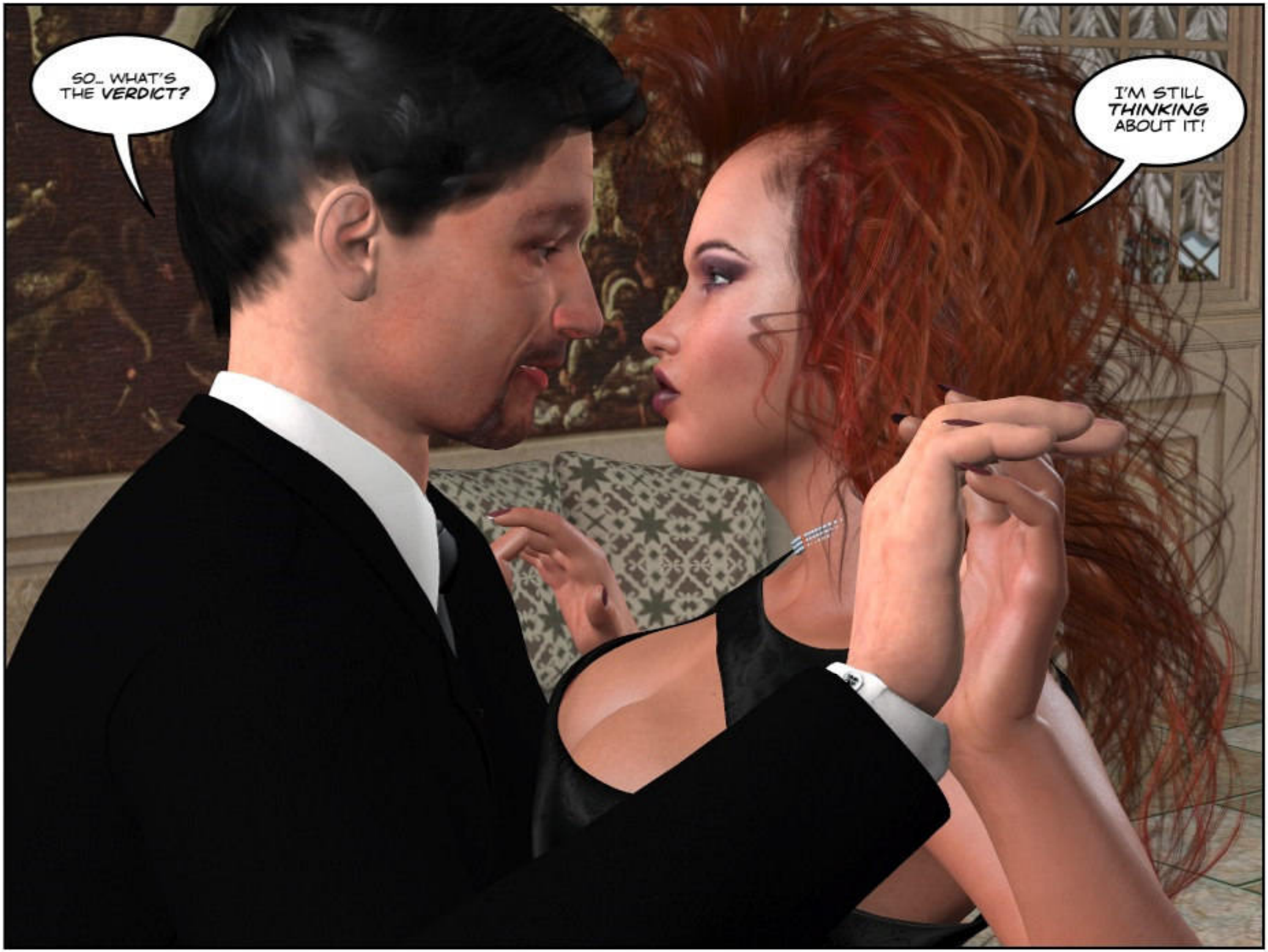

WHO DO YOU THINK ORCHESTRATED THE WHOLE THING? HMMM?
SHE ACTUALLY MADE IT QUITE EASY BY CONTINUING TO USE THE SAME PI THAT I USE!
AND I PAY HIM MUCH BETTER!


YOU SET THIS UP? AND LET HER TORMENT ME ALL WEEK?!
WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS TO ME?! I... I THOUGHT YOU CARED...!


OF COURSE I CARE, MELANIE! THAT'S WHY I DID THIS! IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO GET RUTH OUT OF BOTH OUR LIVES ONCE AND FOR ALL!
I KNOW HOW STRONG-WILLED YOU ARE AND THAT YOU WOULDN'T GIVE IN TO HER THREATS EASILY! I WAS COUNTING ON THAT TO FORCE HER TO TAKE THE PHOTO DIRECTLY TO THE CHANCELLOR!
THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT IT UNTIL NOW!


THE CHANCELLOR HAS ALREADY RECOGNIZED THE PHOTO AS A FAKE AND IS MOST LIKELY HANDING RUTH HER WALKING PAPERS AS WE SPEAK!
AND ON THE OUTSIDE CHANCE RUTH DECIDES TO RELEASE THAT PHOTO TO THE PUBLIC, IT CAN EASILY BE SHOWN TO BE ALTERED!


SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT..! THE FAKED PHOTO THAT RUTH HAS BEEN TORMENTING ME WITH ALL WEEK CAME FROM YOU! WHICH INFURIATES ME!
BUT IT WAS ALL A SETUP TO DISCREDIT HER, GET HER OFF OUR BACKS AND ULTIMATELY GET HER FIRED! WHICH I'M EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR!
GUILTY AS CHARGED!


SO... WHAT'S THE VERDICT?
I'M STILL THINKING ABOUT IT!










Later that evening, after all the guests have left...


I NEED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING!
ASK ME ANYTHING YOU WISH!


WHEN DID THIS INVESTIGATOR FIRST TELL YOU THAT RUTH WAS HAVING ME INVESTIGATED?
HE CONTACTED ME AS SOON AS HE DISCOVERED YOU AND I WERE... INVOLVED!
AND THEN WHAT?
AND THAT'S WHEN I INSTRUCTED HIM TO STONEWALL RUTH BY PROVIDING HER WITH FALSE INFORMATION!


AGAIN, I DEEPLY APOLOGIZE FOR PUTTING YOU THROUGH THAT ALL WEEK!
BETWEEN THAT AND WHAT YOU WENT THROUGH WITH MR. WENTWORTH TODAY, I WOULDN'T BLAME YOU AT ALL FOR CANCELING OUR USUAL EVENING ACTIVITIES IN LIEU OF A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP!


UH-UH! YOU'RE NOT GETTING OFF THAT EASILY, MISTER!
DESPITE ALL THAT, YOU WERE A VERY, VERY GOOD BOY TODAY! AND I HAVE EVERY INTENTION OF REWARDING YOU IN AN APPROPRIATE MANNER!
REALLY?


MMM-HMMM! JUST COME BACK HERE IN THIRTY MINUTES... SHARP! GOT THAT?
YES, MA'AM!


SIGH! EVEN THOUGH RUTH'S THREATS HAVE BEEN DEFUSED, I CAN'T CONTINUE DOING THIS MUCH LONGER!
LIKE IT OR NOT, TONIGHT MAY VERY WELL BE MY SWAN SONG WITH ADAM!


YOU'RE STILL SQUAWKING ABOUT GIVING ALL THIS UP? SERIOUSLY? WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE ALL THAT BLATHER ABOUT ETHICS AND OH-SO-IMPORTANT RESEARCH A REST?
I AM WHO I AM... JUST AS YOU ARE! I STILL SEE THIS AS A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT THAT GOT OUT OF HAND! THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO END IT!


I DON'T GET YOU! THERE'S A RICH, GOOD-LOOKING GUY OUT THERE WHO'LL OBVIOUSLY DO ANYTHING FOR YOU, AND YOU'RE GONNA JUST TOSS HIM ASIDE SO YOU CAN GO BACK TO YOUR SAFE, BORING LIFE AS SIDNEY MOYER, SOCIAL OUTCAST!
YOU'RE PATHETIC, BIG S! PATHETIC, AND A BIG, FUCKING COWARD!


THAT MAY ALL BE TRUE, BUT THAT'S WHO SIDNEY MOYER IS! WHO WE TRULY ARE! AND THAT'S THE PERSON WHO NEEDS TO PRESENT THIS RESEARCH, OTHERWISE IT'S MEANINGLESS!
BULLSHIT! AT LEAST YOU COULD BE HONEST WITH ME_ AND YOURSELF... WHY YOU REALLY WANT TO END IT!


OKAY... I ADMIT IT! I'M SCARED! I GET THE FEELING THAT ADAM... THAT... OH GOD! I THINK HE KNOWS THE TRUTH ABOUT US!
YOU THINK? DAMN! AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU WERE THE BRAINS OF THIS OUTFIT! TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH!
OF COURSE HE KNOWS THE TRUTH! WHY ELSE WOULD HE SUBMIT TO OUR LITTLE "DOMME" ACT SO EASILY?
YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK WE WERE FOOLING HIM DID YOU?


SEE!? THAT'S JUST IT! I SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SEE THAT! BUT I'VE BEEN DISTRACTED BY ALL... THIS!
YOU! YOU'RE EQUIPPED, BY DESIGN, TO DEAL WITH ALL THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPULSES WE'VE BEEN SUBJECTED TO!
I THOUGHT I COULD ADJUST AND ADAPT, BUT... BUT I VASTLY OVERESTIMATED MY CAPABILITIES!


WELL... SHIT! I GUESS THERE'S NOT MUCH I CAN DO ABOUT IT SINCE YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD THE UPPER HAND CONTROL-WISE!
TRUE, AND THIS MAY NOT MATTER TO YOU, BUT I'VE LEARNED TO VALUE YOUR INPUT! I'VE SIMPLY DETERMINED A DIFFERENT COURSE FOR US TO TAKE, THAT'S ALL!
IT'S TOTALLY NOT FAIR! THAT EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A TOTAL MESS, YOU STILL GET TO CALL THE SHOTS!


BEFORE YOU TOTALLY SHUT MELANIE DOWN FOR GOOD, CAN I ASK ONE FAVOR?
I SUPPOSE I OWE YOU AT LEAST THAT!
SINCE ADAM KNOWS... AND WE KNOW THAT ADAM KNOWS... CAN WE MAKE THIS LAST NIGHT SOMETHING EXTRA SPECIAL?
I... I HAVE A FEELING I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ASKING, AND I'M A LITTLE... HESITANT!


C'MON, BIG S! ONE LAST RIDE... TOGETHER! I PROMISE IT'LL BE SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER FORGET!
SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER WANT TO FORGET!
I... I GUESS YOU DESERVE ONE LAST HURRAH! AND WE ALSO OWE IT TO ADAM!
THAT'S MY GIRL! WELL... FOR NOW, AT LEAST!


SO YOU JUST HOLD ON TIGHT, AND LET ME DO ALL THE WORK!


Almost thirty minutes later... sharp...
ARE YOU READY? I TRIED TO BE AS PUNCTUAL AS I COULD!


GO ON INTO THE BEDROOM! I'LL BE OUT IN A MOMENT!
WHATEVER YOU WISH, M'LADY!


WELL, I'M GLAD TO SEE THAT YOU'RE GOOD AND READY FOR WHAT'S IN STORE!
OH MY...!


THATS A VERY... DIFFERENT LOOK THAN I WAS EXPECTING!
ARE YOU DISAPPOINTED?
ON THE CONTRARY, I'M DELIGHTED! WHAT'S THE OCCASION?


THE OCCASION IS THAT I THINK IT'S TIME WE WERE COMPLETELY HONEST WITH ONE ANOTHER!
HOW SO, MY LOVE?
I'VE BEEN KEEPING A LITTLE SECRET FROM YOU! A SECRET THAT I THINK YOU'VE KNOWN ABOUT FOR SOME TIME NOW!


SO I'VE BEEN KEEPING A SECRET FROM YOU... ABOUT YOUR SECRET? INTERESTING!
WELL, THE WAY I SEE IT, THESE TWO SECRETS MERELY CANCEL EACH OTHER OUT, RESULTING IN NO SECRETS WHATSOEVER!
DON'T YOU AGREE, MELANIE?
I WOULD LOVE TO THINK SO, BUT... DOESN'T IT BOTHER YOU THAT I ...!


IF IT BOTHERED ME, DO YOU REALLY THINK I'D BE HERE WITH YOU NOW? OR ANY OF OUR PREVIOUS EVENINGS OR DAYS TOGETHER?


IF YOU KNOW EVERYTHING, THEN WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM ME GOING FORWARD?
THAT IS TOTALLY UP TO YOU! THIS IS YOUR JOURNEY! I'M JUST HAPPY TO BE ON THIS PART OF IT WITH YOU!


I HOPE TO BE ON MUCH MORE OF IT WITH YOU, BUT IF THAT'S NOT THE CASE, THEN SO BE IT!






GOD! YOU ARE SO GONNA GET LUCKY TONIGHT!
AND I DEARLY HOPE YOU'LL LET ME RETURN THE FAVOR!


I'M COUNTING ON IT, LOVE!










ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
OH, MOST DEFINITELY!












The next morning...


SO... WAS IT EVERYTHING I SAID IT'D BE?
SIGH! EVERYTHING... AND SOOO MUCH MORE!


NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS DID I IMAGINE EXPERIENCES LIKE THAT! HOW DID YOU KNOW?
I DIDN'T! HOW COULD I?
THEN WHY AREN'T YOU AS AWE-STRUCK AS I AM?
I'M JUST BETTER AT DEALING WITH PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPULSES LIKE THAT... BY DESIGN! REMEMBER?


AND WAKING UP IN HIS ARMS LIKE THIS...! HE'S SOUND ASLEEP, BUT STILL... HIS TOUCH, HIS CARESS... IT'S ELECTRIC!
MAYBE... MAYBE I NEED TO GIVE MY DECISION A LITTLE MORE THOUGHT! NO NEED TO RUSH INTO ANYTHING... RIGHT?
ABSOLUTELY!


NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I THINK I'D JUST LIKE TO SNUGGLE FOR AWHILE LONGER BEFORE HE WAKES UP!
BY ALL MEANS... SIS!
YES!!


WHAT TH' FU...?!
OH MY GOD! YOU'RE KIDDING! RIGHT?!
Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar
GASP!


EGO?!
EGO?! BUT I HAVEN'T SENSED YOU FOR YEARS! I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD... THAT BIG S ABSORBED YOU! ISN'T THAT WHY SHE'S SO MUCH STRONGER THAN ME?
PINK FREUD
SERIOUSLY?!? MY GOD, I'VE FORGOTTEN HOW DENSE YOU CAN BE! WHEN S DECIDED HE WANTED TO TAKE OVER MY JOB, I WAS HAPPY TO GIVE IT UP! BEING THE INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN YOU TWO WAS SUCH A NIGHTMARE! I NEEDED A BREAK!
I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD LAST TEN YEARS, BUT FOR THE LONGEST TIME, EVERYTHING WAS NICE AND PEACEFUL. I NEVER HAD A REASON TO GET OFF MY KEISTER AND JUMP IN. LIFE WAS GOOD!
BUT THIS...? HOW CAN I STAY QUIET ABOUT THIS? I CAN'T BELIEVE THINGS HAVE GOTTEN SO OUT OF HAND!


S! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE CONSCIENCE AND REASON HERE! BUT ID HERE'S GOT YOU QUIVERING AND COOING LIKE A SCHOOLGIRL!
BUT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! I WAS JUST...!
JUST WHAT? ABANDONED EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN WORKING FOR JUST SO YOU COULD BE WHAT? ID, JR?! THAT'S SURE AS HELL WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!
OH, LIGHTEN UP, E! GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN, YOU KNOW!
PINK FREUD


NO... HE'S RIGHT! I'VE TOTALLY DISGRACED MYSELF WITH MY BEHAVIOR! I'VE JEOPARDIZED MY REPUTATION AND MY RESEARCH BY SETTING ASIDE MY INTEGRITY AND SENSE OF REASONING IN FAVOR OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL PLEASURES!
I'VE BECOME A LIABILITY TO OUR ENTIRE PSYCHOLOGICAL BEING!
I REALIZE NOW IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR YOU TO HANDLE, DOING BOTH OUR JOBS! YOU WERE BOUND TO CRACK! I BLAME MYSELF!
PINK FREUD


I DON'T SEE WHAT THE PROBLEM IS... WE FINALLY GOT LAID! AND WITH A GUY WE REALLY LIKE! WHO CARES WHAT EGO... OR ANYONE ELSE... HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT!
C'MON, SIS! WE CAN'T LET MR. SOURPUSS SPOIL OUR FUN! WHAT SAY YOU AND I GET OUR HEADS TOGETHER AND TOSS HIS ASS OUTTA HERE!
NO... EGO IS RIGHT! I HAVE COMPLETELY SHIRKED MY RESPONSIBILITIES, LED ASTRAY BECAUSE I ALLOWED MYSELF TO... TO FEEL THINGS!
I SET ALL THIS IN MOTION YEARS AGO AND NOW I'M PAYING THE PRICE! THIS IS ALL MY FAULT... SUCH ARROGANCE... AND NOW I NEED TO PUT THINGS RIGHT!


HANG ON, BIG S! THERE'S NO NEED TO DO ANYTHING RASH, NOT WHEN WE'VE FINALLY JUST...!
DAMN IT TO HELL!!


WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? THIS GOES WAY BEYOND BIG S'S USUAL WITHDRAWAL!
YEAH... IT FEELS LIKE S JUST... DISAPPEARED! I DON'T SENSE HIM ANYWHERE!
PINK FREUD


THIS IS JUST GREAT! YOU'VE PUSHED OUR SUPEREGO INTO WHATEVER CAVE YOU WERE HIDING IN ALL THESE YEARS! WHO KNOWS HOW LONG SHE'S GONNA STAY DOWN THERE... OR WHAT THE HELL SHE'LL DO WHEN SHE COMES OUT!
YOU NEED TO STOP REFERRING TO HIM AS "SHE", BECAUSE THAT'S COMING TO AN END RIGHT NOW!
FREUD


OH, I GET IT! THERE'S A NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN! NOT GONNA TAKE ANY CRAP FROM THAT DASTARDLY OL' ID, HUH?
I SUPPOSE YOU COULD PUT IT THAT WAY!
WELL, THE LEAST YOU COULD DO IS LET ME FINISH UP HERE BEFORE HAULING ME OFF TO THE OUTHOUSE FOR A GOOD OL' FASHIONED WHOOPIN'!


OH NO! I'VE SEEN YOUR TRICKS, THE WAY YOU MANIPULATED S! I'M PULLING THE PLUG... IMMEDIATELY!
YOU'RE NOT THINKING CLEARLY, E! YOU'VE BEEN OUT OF IT TOO LONG!
THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN SHUT THINGS DOWN WITHOUT HAVING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT BIG S AND I HAVE BEEN GOING THROUGH, AND THE ONLY WAY YOU'RE GOING TO GET THAT IS THROUGH FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE!
PINK FREUD


I'VE OBSERVED EVERYTHING! THERE'S NO NEED FOR ME TO... TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF YOUR SORDID ACTIVITIES AS MELANIE! IT'S OVER!
SEZ YOU! YOU NEED TO GET THIS THROUGH YOUR THICK SKULL... IF YOU DON'T LET ME HAVE MY WAY WITH ADAM... JUST ONE MORE TIME... THEN I'LL MAKE YOU PAY EVERY CHANCE I GET FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!
THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL YOU'LL BE ABLE TO KEEP ME IN CHECK, NOT EVEN IF BIG S COMES BACK AND JOINS YOUR SIDE! I GUARAN-FUCKING-TEE IT!
PINK FREUD


SIGH! WELL, I SUPPOSE IT WOULD BE BEST TO KEEP ADAM HAPPY, SO HE REMAINS SUPPORTIVE OF US. WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE?
PINK FREUD
IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE! I JUST WANT TO FEEL HIS HANDS ON MY SILKY SKIN, TO HAVE HIS STEELY COCK INSIDE ME ONCE AGAIN!
YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY STICK AROUND, BECAUSE OTHERWISE, WITHOUT BIG S ON THE PREMISES, I'M LIKELY TO GET CARRIED AWAY!
I... I GUESS I CAN DO THAT.


GOOD! THEN, LIKE I ALWAYS TELL BIG S, SIT BACK, TAKE NOTES AND LET ME DO ALL THE WORK!
UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU FEEL THE NEED TO GET INVOLVED! THEN, BY ALL MEANS, JUMP RIGHT ON IN!


LET'S SEE...! IF I WERE ADAM, HOW WOULD I BEST WANT TO BE WOKEN UP?
HMPH! THAT'S A NO-BRAINER!


oooooooooo...!


I CAN'T SAY I SEE THE APPEAL OF SUCH AN ACTIVITY. IT DOESN'T SEEM WORTH THE EFFORT.
OH, WE'RE JUST GETTIN' WARMED UP, HONEY!


MY, MY! NOW THIS IS HOW A MAN SHOULD WAKE UP EVERY MORNING!
ANOTHER MINUTE OR TWO AND YOU WOULD'VE WOKEN UP VERY DIFFERENTLY!
HMMM! MAYBE I SHOULD JUST GO BACK TO SLEEP THEN!


DON'T YOU
DARE!


WOW! THAT IS, UMMM... SOMETHING, ISN'T IT?
JUST YOU WAIT, E! IT GETS SOOO MUCH BETTER!


MMMMM! I'VE ALWAYS IMAGINED DOING THIS TO YOU, BABY! BUT NEVER DREAMED IT WOULD BE THIS AWESOME!


SO, WHADDYA THINK NOW? STILL NOT WORTH THE EFFORT?
I... I THINK I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THE APPEAL... WHY YOU AND S HAVE GOTTEN SO... INVOLVED IN ALL THIS!


I THINK I'VE FOUND A NEW WAY TO GET YOU WORKED UP FOR THE MAIN EVENT, BABY!
OOOOOOOOOOO!!


I... I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD BE SO EXCITING TO... TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT WITH... WITH THOSE!
OH YEAH! AND ISN'T IT GREAT!


FEELING HIS COCK SLIDING BETWEEN YOUR GIRLS LIKE THAT IS JUST AMAZING, WOULDN'T YOU SAY? IT'S ONE OF THE MANY PERKS OF HAVING A PAIR OF THOSE BEAUTIES!


I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT EACH STROKE OF HIS BEAUTIFUL DICK IS MAKING ME HOTTER! CAN YOU FEEL THE WAY IT'S THROBBING? MY GOD, IT MAKES ME ACHE FOR IT!


DARE I GUESS AT WHAT YOU MEAN BY THE MAIN EVENT?
OH, YOU KNOW DAMN WELL WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT, LOVE!
AND I HOPE YOU'RE UP FOR IT, BECAUSE I SURE AS HELL AM!


GASP! ARE WE REALLY GOING TO LET HIM..? I MEAN, IS HE ACTUALLY GOING TO..?!
YOU BET OUR SWEET ASS WE ARE!


BUT ISN'T THAT GOING TO...?
FULFILL SOME OF OUR DEEPEST DESIRES? MAKE US FEEL LIKE THE WOMAN WE LONG TO BE? I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT DESPITE ANY MINOR DISCOMFORT, I THINK IT'S JUST ABOUT THE BEST DAMN THING I'VE EVER FELT!


AND WHEN YOU HAVE SUCH A DELECTABLE ASS LIKE OURS, IT'S JUST A CRIME NOT TO USE IT TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL!


LIKE THE OLD SAYING GOES... "THE BIGGER THE SADDLE, THE BETTER THE RIDE!"


AND DON'T YOU JUST LOVE THE WAY ADAM IS RIDIN' US RIGHT NOW!


OOOOOOOOO...
YES!!


OH MY GOD! THAT... THIS... FEELS INCREDIBLE!
I KNOW, RIGHT?!
AND YOU WANTED TO ROLL IT ALL BACK TO THE BORING OLD DAYS OF SIDNEY!


OKAY, I ADMIT IT! I WAS TOTALLY OUT OF THE LOOP AND DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT!
I MEAN, HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHAT LIFE AS MELANIE TRULY WAS LIKE? IT SEEMED SO DIFFERENT WHEN I WAS WATCHING FROM AFAR!


MY GOD, THE WAY IT FEELS TO BE A SEXY, DESIRABLE WOMAN! IT'S... INTOXICATING, TO SAY THE LEAST!
AT THE VERY LEAST!


DAMN, I THINK I'VE REALLY SCREWED THINGS UP! THOSE NASTY THINGS I SAID TO S... HE TOOK THEM TO HEART!
WHENEVER HE DECIDES TO REEMERGE, HE'LL PROBABLY WANT TO PUT AN END TO MELANIE ONCE AND FOR ALL!
AND HE CAN DO IT TOO! HE'S THE STRONGEST OF THE THREE OF US!


I... I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO BEING SIDNEY! NOT ANYMORE! WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
EASY! WE DON'T WAIT FOR BIG S TO REEMERGE!


WE ACT
NOW!


ADAM, BABY! CAN I ASK A GREAT BIG, HUGE FAVOR FROM YOU?
I HAVEN'T DENIED YOU ANYTHING SINCE WE FIRST MET! WHY START NOW?


GOOD! BECAUSE THIS IS SOMETHING I THINK WE'LL BOTH GET A LOT OF ENJOYMENT OUT OF!


One week later...
MMMMMMM...!


WHAT THE...?! WHY AM I STILL IN ADAM'S HOUSE AND WHY DO I FEEL SO...!


OWWW!! WHAT THE...?!
BETTER TAKE IT EASY THERE, BIG S! WE'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT THE LAST FEW DAYS!


I CAN IMAGINE! WITH ME GONE, YOU UNDOUBTEBLY LET ADAM HAVE HIS WAY WITH US EVERY WHICH WAY IMAGINABLE!
IT'S NO WONDER I'M SO SORE IN MY...!


WAIT A MINUTE! THAT'S NOT WHERE THE PAIN IS!
IT BETTER NOT BE! OTHERWISE, THAT DOCTOR'S GOT SOME 'SPLAININ' TO DO!


DOCTOR?! OH MY LORD! WHAT DID YOU DO?!
SOMETHING WE ALL WANTED, BUT YOU WERE TOO PIG-HEADED TO ADMIT TO!
YOU DIDN'T!! YOU... YOU COULDN'T HAVE...!!


CONGRATULATIONS, BIG S! IT'S A GIRL!!
GASP! HO... HOW!!?


IT WAS PRETTY DAMN EASY, ACTUALLY!
ALL I HAD TO DO WAS DROP A LITTLE HINT TO ADAM, AND BEFORE YOU COULD SAY RENEE RICHARDS, HE HAD US ON A JET TO THE BEST CLINIC IN THE WORLD!


ADAM EVEN CONVINCED THE SURGEONS TO LET US RECUPERATE HERE AS LONG AS WE TOOK IT EASY AND HAD THE LOCAL DOCS MAKE A COUPLE OF HOUSE CALLS A DAY UNTIL WE'RE UP AND AROUND!
IF WE'RE LUCKY, WE CAN START "TEST RUNS" IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS! PRETTY SWEET, HUH?


BUT... BUT HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN? EGO WAS GOING TO PUT AN END TO IT ALL! WHY DIDN'T HE STOP YOU?
HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY DO ALL OF THIS WITHOUT HIM KNOWING?
WHO SAYS SHE DIDN'T KNOW?
SH...SHE...?!


MOST DEFINITELY... SHE!
EGO?! IS THAT REALLY YOU?
IN THE PROVERBIAL FLESH! WHAT DO YOU THINK, S?


WHAT DO I THINK? MY LORD! AFTER ACQUIESCING TO YOUR SUDDEN AND SOMEWHAT DRAMATIC CONDEMNATION OF THE WAY WE LET MELANIE EVOLVE, I SEQUESTERED MYSELF AWAY ALL THIS TIME TRYING TO PURGE MYSELF OF ID'S INFLUENCES...
... ONLY TO RETURN AND FIND THAT YOU HAVE DONE A COMPLETE ABOUT-FACE AND SUCCUMBED TO OUR FEMININE SIDE AS WELL!


SO... WE'RE TO TAKE THAT AS YOU'RE NOT TOO THRILLED ABOUT IT, HUH?
YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND! BY DOING... THIS, YOU'VE FORCED ME INTO A SITUATION I WAS NEVER PREPARED FOR AND HOPED TO AVOID!


ALL THE EXPERIENCES AND EMOTIONAL TURBULENCE I'VE BEEN THROUGH AS MELANIE HAD DRIVEN ME TO A CONCLUSION THAT I JUST COULDN'T ACCEPT!
I WAS DETERMINED TO DENY IT REGARDLESS OF WHAT IT MEANT TO OUR FUTURE AND OUR RESEARCH!


AND UP TO NOW, I HAD A WAY OUT! BUT... YOU TWO HAVE TAKEN THAT AWAY FROM ME!
SORRY TO FORCE YOUR HAND, BIG S! BUT YOU DIDN'T GIVE US MUCH OF A CHOICE!
TRUE! SO... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?


SIGH!
THE ONLY
THING I CAN DO!
WHAT I SHOULD
HAVE DONE
LONG AGO...!


HI THERE! HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?


COME HERE AND I'LL SHOW YOU!




DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU?
WELL, UNTIL THIS MOMENT, I COULD ONLY VENTURE A HOPEFUL GUESS SINCE YOU'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SAID IT!
I'M SAYING IT NOW! AND NOW THAT I HAVE, I CAN'T IMAGINE NOT SAYING IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN!


SIGH! I HOPE YOU KNOW HOW HAPPY IT MAKES ME TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT!
I DO, MY LOVE! OF COURSE I DO!


I SUPPOSE BEING AN ACTUAL COUPLE NOW NULLIFIES OUR LITTLE... AGREEMENT!
WHY WOULD YOU THINK SOMETHING LIKE THAT? I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO INTENTION OF RELEASING YOU FROM YOUR PUBLIC DUTIES TO ME JUST AS I HAVE NO DESIRE TO RENEGE ON MY PRIVATE OBLIGATIONS TO YOU!


I MEAN, WHY ON EARTH WOULD I WANT TO GIVE THOSE UP?
HMMM! I LIKE THE WAY YOU THINK, MR. ROSS!


AND I LIKE THE WAY YOU DO EVERYTHING, MISS MOYER!


True to their word, as soon as Melanie healed, they resumed their "arrangement"...


Both in public...

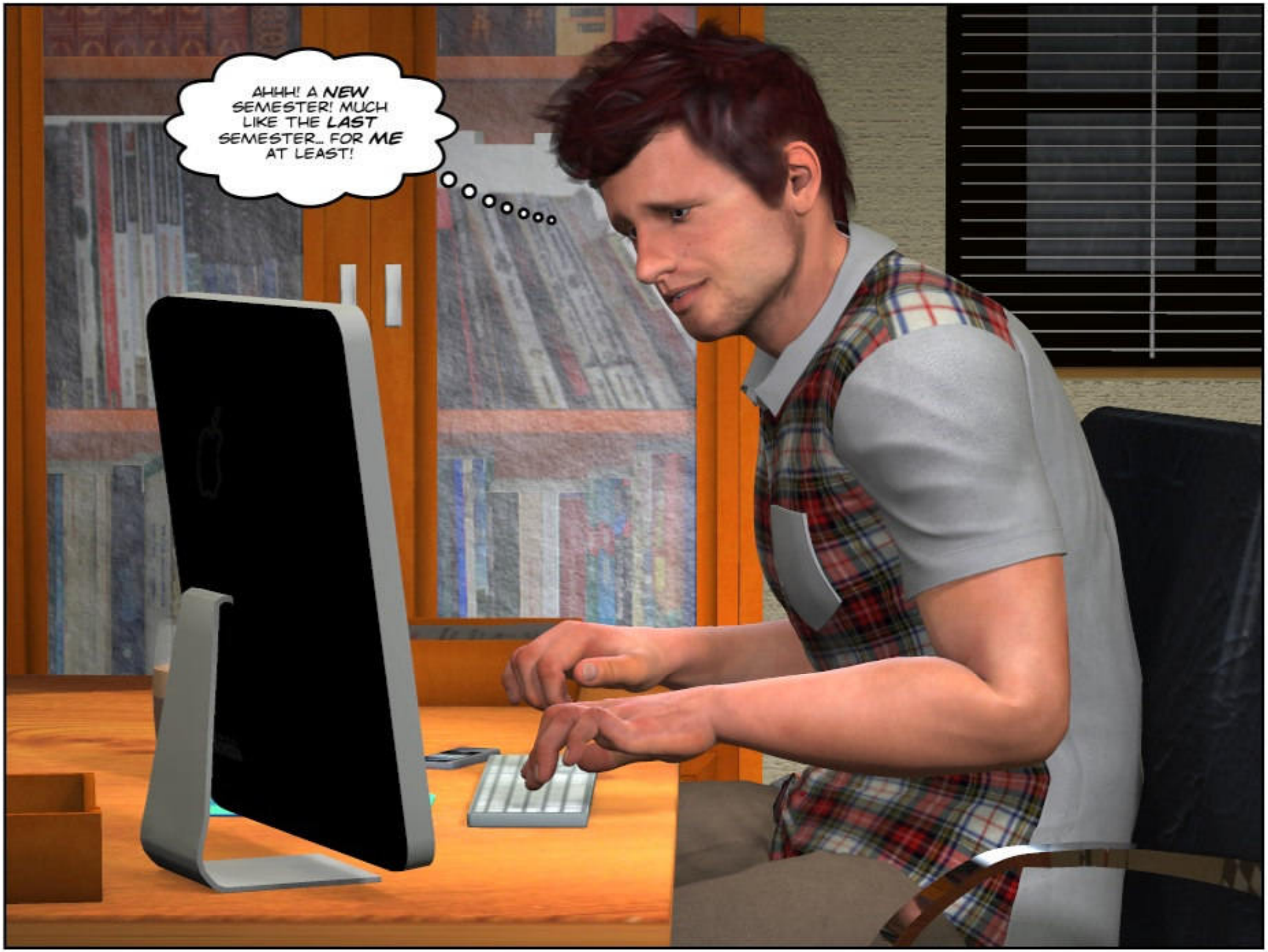

And in private...




...ESPECIALLY in private!


While always making time for enjoying girls' nights with her BFF, Hannah...


And... back at Brambledge University...
CAUTION
TUNING PARTS


AHHH! A NEW SEMESTER! MUCH LIKE THE LAST SEMESTER... FOR ME AT LEAST!


DESPITE THE DEPARTMENTAL OVERHAUL, I STILL HAVE MY OWN, UNSHARED OFFICE SPACE!
SIGH! I'LL HAVE TO THANK THE NEW DEPARTMENT CHAIR WHEN I GET THE CHANCE!


PLOTKIN! HAVE YOU SEEN THE NEW TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE SEMESTER? WHY, THEY'RE LUDICROUS!
GOOD MORNING TO YOU TOO, STAN! AND, YES, I HAVE SEEN THEM! WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?


THE PROBLEM IS THAT I'M TEACHING ALL FRESHMEN CLASSES! I HAVEN'T TAUGHT AN ENTRY-LEVEL CLASS IN YEARS! THE IDEA IS ABSURD!
WELL, IDEALLY, WE PROFESSORS SHOULD ALL BE ROTATING THROUGH THE CURRICULUM IF WE WANT TO BE MORE ...!
AND THAT'S NOT THE WORST OF IT!
OF COURSE IT ISN'T...!


MY GRADUATE ASSISTANTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN ASSIGNED TO ME... WITHOUT MY INPUT!
AND THEY'RE ALL MALE! EVERY ONE OF THEM!
ACTUALLY, THAT'S BEEN STATUS QUO FOR MOST OF US FOR YEARS, AND...!
HOW SAD FOR YOU...!


WHY, I'VE A MIND TO GO TELL THAT NEW CHAIR OF OURS WHAT I THINK OF HER NEW POLICIES!
THEN WE'LL SEE IF SHE'S GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO...!
EXCUSE ME JEREMY, HAVE YOU GOT A MINUTE?
FREUDIAN SLIP


WHY SURE, SID... I MEAN, UMMMM... BOSS_ UHHHH...!
FEEL FREE TO USE PROFESSOR MOYER, JEREMY! BUT I'D ACTUALLY LOVE IT IF YOU CALL ME MELANIE!


I THINK I'LL STICK WITH PROFESSOR MOYER, FOR NOW! IT'S GOING TO TAKE ME A WHILE TO GET USED TO NOT CALLING YOU SIDNEY!
THAT'LL BE FINE, JEREMY!


I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT THERE'LL BE SOME **MOVERS** COMING BY, LATER TODAY, TO MOVE ALL OF MY **FILES** AND **PERSONAL ITEMS** OVER TO THE **DEPARTMENT CHAIR'S** OFFICE!


YOU COULD'VE JUST SAID "MY OFFICE", YOU KNOW! NO NEED TO RUB IT IN!
OH, THAT'S WHERE WE DISAGREE, JEREMY! THE IRONY OF THE SITUATION IS JUST TOO PERFECT TO PASS UP!


LET ME KNOW IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, JEREMY! MY DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN!
AND STOP STARING AT MY ASS, STAN!
CAUTION


YOU KNOW, I STILL THINK SHE HAS THE HOTS FOR ME!
YOU'RE AN IDIOT, STAN!
The END