

The Bad Tenant Ch. 19

Bob closed his laptop lid with a sigh and drank the last bit of cold coffee left in his mug. His notebook lay open in front of him, pages filled with observations from last night's bedroom recording of Tom and Jess. Today's notes had taken far longer than usual, his documentation interrupted by three separate masturbation sessions, an impressive tally for a man of his age. Now he felt drained, his satisfaction giving way to vague disgust.

He glanced at his wastebasket overflowing with crumpled napkins. Each one contained clumps of semen that had erupted from his cock as he watched the Marshalls' most intimate moments.

"Pathetic," he muttered to himself. A fifty-five-year-old man jerking off repeatedly to recordings of a couple's dirty talk. It wasn't the surveillance that bothered him. That was strategic. It was the desperate quality of his response, the way Jessica Marshall reduced him to youthful urgency.

About an hour earlier, he had watched both Tom and Jess climb into Tom's Lexus and pull out of the driveway. Their joint departure represented a Saturday anomaly worth recording in his notebook. Typically, Jess went to the gym alone in her workout clothes, returning hours later with groceries, while Tom remained home, presumably working. Today's deviation suggested either Tom's big project had concluded, freeing his weekend schedule, or Jess had finally convinced him to prioritize their relationship over work.

Bob flipped through his notebook, fingers tracing over the transcribed conversation that had driven him to such urgency this morning.

"I'd do whatever you wanted, with whoever you wanted. I'll be a good cocksucker for you."

The words still resonated, that term, "cocksucker," the exact phrase she'd used with him on Tuesday. She'd told Tom about it that night, and now she was using it again, incorporating it into her identity.

It wasn't surprising. Last week she'd admitted that sucking dick was her "favorite thing."

But what had truly staggered him were her responses to Tom's increasingly specific questions about other men.

"All of them. At the same time if that's what you wanted."

The phrase seemed incongruous coming from Jessica Marshall, professional woman, devoted wife. Yet the recording captured her words clearly.

Bob had wrapped his hand around his cock to the mental image of Jess on her knees, surrounded by men, her face and breasts painted with semen.

He scanned his notes where he'd documented each name that had emerged during their conversation. Webb, Chen, and Harrington, the real estate developers he'd already known about from previous recordings. But two new names had appeared. Derek and Brandon. Who were they? The uncertainty bothered him.

Though Jess's willingness to serve multiple men inflamed his desire, the expanding roster of potential candidates dampened his spirits. He'd positioned himself as the safe, controlled option, the logical choice for their exploration. These other men represented competition, complications, alternatives he hadn't fully accounted for.

Even more shocking had been the exchange about Tuesday. Tom had asked directly, "Will you suck Bob's cock next week?"

Jess had responded enthusiastically. "Only if you want me to," then, "Yes, I want to do it again. I know I can go deeper."

Her words confirmed what he'd hoped. Tuesday's encounter hadn't been a one-time experiment but the beginning of ongoing physical intimacy. She wanted to repeat the experience, wanted to improve her technique, wanted to take more of him.

Tom had escalated further, asking if she'd go downstairs immediately and crawl into his bed.

Jess had affirmed that yes, she would, if that's what Tom wanted. She'd described exactly what she'd do, suggesting that she was actively fantasizing about it, not merely responding to Tom's prompts.

But nothing, absolutely nothing, had matched what came next.

"What would happen if it was Bob's huge cock fucking you right now?"

Tom's question had been direct, unambiguous. And Jess's response...

"I wouldn't be able to take him," and "Not right away. I'd need to ease into it," and "His cock would stretch me out," and finally, "He'd ruin my little pussy for you, Tom. It might never go back to the way it was."

That was the moment Bob had lost himself completely, stroking himself until semen shot from his cock in a high arc, spattering across his chest and belly. He'd replayed that segment again and again, masturbating twice more until his cock felt raw and his well had run completely dry.

He recognized the exchange as drunk fantasy talk, verbal foreplay meant to heighten their mutual arousal. But the seeds had been planted. The threshold between oral sex and penetration was crumbling. How sweet it would be to finally conquer Jess, to slide into her heavenly pussy while her husband watched from the sidelines.

Bob flipped through previous entries, reviewing recordings from the past weeks. He'd initially planned to savor these surveillance materials, to analyze them for psychological insight and strategic advantage. Instead, he increasingly used them primarily for sexual gratification.

Was continuing surveillance this even necessary? The hidden camera in the smoke detector represented a genuine risk. If discovered, he faced not just eviction but potential criminal charges.

Despite his misgivings, Bob knew the recordings remained essential. They revealed what Jess told Tom about their encounters, how she framed these experiences, which elements she emphasized or omitted. They showed Tom's reactions, his encouragement, the specific fantasies that aroused him most intensely.

This information was too valuable to abandon. The recordings provided context Bob couldn't obtain through direct interaction, insights into their private discussions that shaped his understanding of their relationship.

But perhaps the risks now outweighed the benefit. Should I find a reason to remove it? Claim it was faulty and needed replacement?

No, I have decided. The information gathered remained worth the danger.

Bob closed his eyes, conjuring Jess's image. No woman had ever affected him this way. He'd assumed his most intense sexual experiences were behind him, relegated to memories of younger days. Yet here he was, insatiable as a teenager, obsessed with a woman half his age, legally bound to another man.

But she wasn't just any woman. She was a goddess, a true exemplar of feminine perfection, the kind who somehow ended up with a dorky business consultant instead of a multimillionaire.

This worked in Bob's favor. If Jess were relaxing on some billionaire's yacht in the Mediterranean, he'd never have access to her.

He'd never believed in divine intervention, but Jesus' presence in his life sometimes felt like evidence of a benevolent cosmic force.

To think it had all started with him spotting Tom watching through the window that night. The cards had fallen perfectly from that moment onward, each step in his manipulation campaign yielding results beyond what he'd dared hope.

The blowjob last week had been a significant advancement. Jess had crossed a threshold he'd suspected she would hesitate to approach. She'd been so adamant about not having sex with him yet had voluntarily dropped to her knees and taken his cock in her mouth.

Anticipation for the coming Tuesday was already building. What would happen? Would she take him in her mouth again? Would she attempt to take him deeper, as she'd told Tom she wanted to? The possibilities multiplied in his imagination.

He should save up for it, he decided. No more jerking off to these recordings. Actually, no more jerking off at all. Better to channel that sexual energy toward their next encounter, to ensure that when Jess dropped to her knees again, and he had no doubt she would, he'd have an impressive load waiting for her.

Perhaps next time he'd come on her gorgeous face instead of her breasts. The image of his princess, Jessica Marshall, with his copious semen across her flawless features nearly triggered another round of self-pleasure, but he restrained himself. The real thing would be infinitely more satisfying than fantasy.

He flipped to the section of his notebook where he'd documented the rules Jess and Tom had established for their arrangement.

The first was complete communication. "We tell each other everything. I tell Tom... everything.

In detail." That rule had already been compromised. Jess had hidden her squirting orgasms from Tom, a significant omission that created fertile ground for manipulation.

The second rule was veto power. "Either of us can stop anything straightaway. No questions asked. If Tom ever said he wasn't comfortable with what we're doing, that would be it." This rule might have concerned Bob initially but now represented little threat. If Tom ever attempted to exercise this veto power, Bob held multiple insurance policies. Not only had Tom concealed his voyeuristic observation that first night, but they had essentially colluded in pushing Jess toward increasingly intimate encounters. Their private conversations, Tom's eager acceptance of Bob's suggestions about what Jess "wanted," and his active encouragement of each escalation made Tom not just complicit but a co-conspirator. Tom could never expose Bob's manipulation

without revealing his own. The supposed veto power was effectively neutralized by a web of shared secrets that trapped Tom as thoroughly as they revealed to Jess.

The third rule was privacy. "This stays completely between us. No friends or coworkers or anyone else in our social circles." This benefited Bob enormously, isolating the Marshalls from external perspectives that might recognize his manipulation.

The fourth rule was emotional boundaries. "No dating, no separate emotional relationships, no romantic connections outside our marriage. This is physical exploration, not emotional."

She had added that "Tom's given me freedom to physically do whatever I want, except kissing. "He says that feels too intimate, too emotional." Most significant was Jess's next statement. "But I'm going at my own pace. I'm not interested in sex. "That's a line for me."

Bob smiled at the memory.

He had never believed that boundary for a second. Not with how readily she crossed every other line they approached. Not with Tom's constant encouragement toward more explicit encounters. Not with her own obvious enjoyment of their escalating intimacy. It was only a matter of time before he'd be inside her. Every indication pointed toward that inevitable conclusion. The fantasy talk between husband and wife confirmed it. Tom wanted it. Jess was curious about it. And Bob had positioned himself as the perfect partner.

But what then? What happens after he penetrates her?

The traditional narrative of infidelity suggested Jess might develop feelings for him, might eventually leave her husband for the superior lover. But Bob recognized the improbability of this outcome.

She would never abandon her ambitious young husband for a handyman in her fifties. Nor was that Bob's objective. As much as he'd love Jess as a permanent partner, he maintained enough realism to know that wouldn't happen.

What he wanted, what he could get, was her body, her complete submission, her full acknowledgment of his sexual dominance over her husband. He wanted Tom to witness his own replacement in the most primal arena of masculine competition. I wanted to reclaim something he felt had been denied him by society's arbitrary hierarchies of value.

But once achieved, once Jess was regularly spreading her legs for him, would the mission be complete?

No, I have realized. There remained one ultimate objective, one final act of conquest that would represent total victory.

I wanted to put a baby inside Jess.

The thought crystallized with perfect, terrible certainty. The natural conclusion to this dynamic, the inevitable fate of unwitting cuckolds like Tom, was to raise another man's child. Not just any man's child, a superior man's child.

Bob felt a rush of determination. He flipped to a fresh page in his notebook and wrote it down in large block letters.

PRIMARY GOAL: GET JESS PREGNANT

I have underlined it three times and added several exclamation points. The words stared back at him, transforming vague desire into concrete objective. His princess would carry his child while her oblivious husband believed it was his own.

Bob stood. He paced the room, restless energy coursing through him. His goal was clear, his strategy working, yet he felt an urgency to accelerate the process. How might he further blur the boundaries between himself and Jess? What tools could accelerate their continued intimacy?

An idea struck. He returned to his laptop and navigated to a website. After searching through several pages of results and reading reviews, he made his selection and completed the purchases with expedited shipping.

The confirmation page appeared, and Bob leaned back in his chair. This would prove most useful in the coming weeks. A perfect addition to his campaign.

I closed the laptop again, already imagining Jess's reaction. She might resist at first, might claim it crossed some arbitrary line in her mind. But she'd accept it eventually, just as she'd accepted every escalation thus far.

Tom would undoubtedly encourage her, he would frame it as exploration rather than transgression.

The husband's eager participation made Bob's work almost effortless. Tom had become an accomplice in his own cuckolding, reliably urging Jess toward each new threshold.

All Bob needed to do was create the opportunity and wait. Patience had served him well thus far.

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Tom flipped through channels. Nothing captured his attention for more than a few seconds. Not the game show, not the reality tv, not the news, not the documentary. His navy suit jacket lay draped over the armchair, ready to be donned at a moment's notice. He'd opted for a white shirt underneath, open at the collar. No tie tonight. This was supposed to be fun, not a business dinner.

The day had started late, both of them nursing mild hangovers from the previous night. Tom's head had pounded with each heartbeat. Jess had been quieter than usual, massaging her temples as she sipped her coffee. Over a light breakfast of toast and fruit, they'd briefly acknowledged the intensity of their dirty talk the night before.

"About last night," Jess had begun, eyes fixed on her coffee mug. "I said some pretty wild things."

Tom had agreed, winning at the movement. "We both did."

"Just drunk talk," she'd said with a small smile.

"Right," Tom agreed, though part of him wondered which elements had been pure fantasy and which might eventually translate to reality.

By afternoon, aspirin and several glasses of water had done their work. They'd ventured to Whole Foods together, something they hadn't done in a month. Walking the aisles side by side felt like reclaiming a small piece of normalcy. Tom had studied Jess's profile as she debated between pasta brands, wondering how this woman who discussed sucking other men's cocks could also seem so perfectly ordinary, so fundamentally unchanged.

Jess had told him more about her drinks with Chen and his team, including the business card with Chen's personal number. "For design insights that can't wait for formal channels," she'd quoted with a raised eyebrow.

Tom had reciprocated with stories from the Akira celebration, the team's collective relief at Meridian's completion. After shopping, they'd retrieved Tom's car from Akira's parking lot, abandoned the night before when an Uber had seemed the wiser choice.

Now the clock on the cable box showed 7:25 PM. Their Uber to Solitaire would arrive any minute. Brandon and Madi have secured a reservation for 8 PM, with plans to hit Elektra for dancing afterward.

"Jess?" Tom called out. "Uber's going to be here in five."

"Almost ready," she called back from the bedroom.

Tom dropped the remote and stood, shrugging into his jacket. He checked his reflection in the decorative mirror by the entryway, adjusting his collar and running a hand through his hair. Not too shabby for a guy who'd been hunched over spreadsheets for the past nine months.

The bedroom door opened, and Tom turned.

Jess emerged in a burgundy dress that made his mouth go dry. The dress followed her form without restricting movement, ending just above her knees. The neckline formed a deep V, revealing cleavage that would definitely draw attention tonight. Long sleeves balanced exposure.

She completed a turn, the dress flaring slightly with the movement. "Worth the wait?"

Tom agreed. "Absolutely worth it," he managed. "You look incredible."

Jess smiled. "Good. I wasn't sure about the sleeves, but I think they work."

"Everything works," Tom assured her. He stepped closer, taking her hand and spinning her once more. "I don't think we've been out with them since before Bob moved in."

"Two months at least," Jess agreed.

"Brandon will be thrilled to see you," Tom said.

Jess tilted her head. "Of course. But Brandon's always thrilled to hang out with women. He flirts with everyone."

"Not like he flirts with you," Tom responded.

Jess studied his face. "Is that going to be an issue tonight? Because Brandon's always been Brandon. Nothing's changed there."

"Everything's changed," Tom said.

"Maybe," Jess acknowledged. "But I'm not sleeping with Brandon or doing anything else with him."

"I know that," Tom replied quickly. "I just meant the dynamic might be different now that we're... exploring things."

"Nothing's going to be different," Jess insisted. "I'll handle Brandon the way I normally do."

Tom agreed, deciding not to press the issue. "Fair enough."

His phone buzzed with a notification. "Uber's here," he said.

They gathered their things, Jess slipping a lipstick and her phone into a small clutch, Tom checking for his wallet and keys. At the door, Tom placed his hand at the small of Jess's back, guiding her outside.

Inside the car, Jess leaned against him, finding his hand and intertwining their fingers. "Do you ever regret it?" she asked quietly.

"Regret what?"

"Telling me about your fantasy," she clarified. "Starting all of this."

Tom considered the question seriously. "No," he said finally. "There have been moments of discomfort, uncertainty... but regret... not really."

Jess squeezed his hand. "Good. Me neither."

The rest of the ride passed in silence, the city lights painting moving patterns across their faces as they headed downtown.

The Uber pulled up to Solitaire precisely at 7:50 PM. Tom helped Jess out of the car, offering his arm as they walked into the restaurant.

The hostess checked their reservation. "The rest of your party hasn't arrived yet. Would you like to wait at the bar?"

"That would be fine," Jess replied.

Tom guided Jess to the bar that dominated one wall of the restaurant. The space buzzed with Saturday night energy, couples and groups dressed for an evening out, ambient music blending with the buzz of conversation.

They found two empty stools. A bartender immediately approached, his gaze lingering on Jess before turning to Tom.

"What can I get for you?"

"I'll have an old fashioned," Tom said.

"And for me, a dirty martini," Jess added.

As the bartender moved away to prepare their drinks, Jess turned to Tom. "I can't remember the last time we went out without an early morning alarm waiting for us. No work emergencies, no prep for presentations. Vesper, I think was the last time."

"It feels strange," Tom admitted. "Good, but strange."

Tom surveyed the bar area, watching couples read into intimate conversations and groups of friends laughing.

"They're probably running late because Madi couldn't decide what to wear," Jess said, checking her phone. "She typically tries on half her wardrobe before settling on her first choice."

Tom laughed. "While Brandon spends forty-five minutes on his hair."

"Some things never change," Jess agreed, her laughter ringing out, surprisingly loud against the restaurant's ambient noise.

Several patrons turned at the sound, their gazes lingering on Jess. Tom noticed a man at a nearby table nudge his companion, both glancing in their direction.

"What?" Jess asked, noticing his observation.

"Just noticing how you light up a room," Tom replied. "You're by far the most beautiful woman here. I've caught at least five men looking at you since we sat down."

The bartender returned with their drinks, setting them down with a smile. "Old fashioned for you, and a dirty martini for the lady."

"Thank you," Tom said, lifting his glass toward Jess. "To a night off."

"To a night off," Jess echoed, clinking her glass against his.

Tom took a sip, appreciating the alcohol.

"Remember last time we went out with them?" Jess asked. "Brandon ordered that absurdly expensive bottle of champagne because he'd just closed some deal."

"And Madi spent half the night trying to convince you to quit your job and start a design firm with her," Tom added.

"She still brings it up every few months," Jess said, rolling her eyes affectionately. "As if running a business together wouldn't destroy our friendship in about two weeks."

"You'd kill each other," Tom agreed. "Though you'd probably design a beautiful office before the homicide."

Jess laughed again, the sound drawing more attention. A man at the end of the bar looked over, his interest obvious.

"That guy can't stop staring at you," Tom said, nodding subtly in the man's direction.

Jess glanced over casually. "Just another Saturday night at a bar."

"It made me think of something," Tom said, leaning closer. "Have you ever heard of this game some couples play? They go to a bar separately, and the wife chats with a stranger, leads him on. Then right when he thinks he's about to get lucky, the husband swoons in and they leave together, pretending they just met."

Jess nearly choked on her martini. "What? Where on earth did you hear about that?"

"Miles mentioned it," Tom said. "Apparently, his cousin and his wife do it sometimes. They say it adds excitement."

"Miles told you this?" Jess set her glass down. "The same Miles who blushes when anyone mentions lingerie?"

"He was drunk," Tom admitted. "Very drunk."

Jess studied his face. "Wait, are you actually suggesting we try something like that?"

"I didn't say that," Tom replied, although his expression suggested otherwise. "Just thought it was interesting."

"Interesting," Jess repeated, eyebrow raised. "So this isn't connected to your fascination with me and other men? Just a random topic of conversation?"

Tom shrugged. "It might be fun sometime, that's all."

"Let me get this straight," Jess said, keeping her voice low. "You want me to flirt with some random guy at a bar, make him think I'm interested, and then what? You intend to pick me up right in front of him?"

"Something like that," Tom admitted. "The anticipation, the performance aspect... I imagine it's quite a rush."

"For who? Me, you, or the poor guy who gets led on?" Jess asked, but Tom could see a flicker of intrigue behind his challenge.

"For both of us," Tom replied. "It's controlled, safe. Just a game."

"A game where I'm what, exactly? The bait?" Despite her skeptical tone, Jess hadn't dismissed the idea outright.

"Think of it as acting," Tom suggested. "Playing a role together."

Jess took another sip of her martini. "You're serious about this."

"Just thinking out loud," Tom said. "But yes, I'd be curious to try it."

Jess leaned forward. "What would I say to him? How far would this flirtation go?"

"That would be up to you," Tom said. "Part of the excitement would be not knowing exactly what you're doing until I come over."

"And in this scenario, we're pretending not to know each other? What if he recognizes our wedding rings?"

"We could take them off for the night," Tom suggested.

Jess blinked, visibly surprised by how quickly he'd answered. "You've thought about this more than you're letting on."

Before Tom could respond, Jess's eyes darted over his shoulder. "Oh, they're here." She leaned closer. "This conversation isn't over."

Tom turned to see Brandon and Madi approaching from the entrance, the hostess gesturing toward the bar.

"We'll talk about this later," Jess said as she stood to greet her friends.

Tom stood as well, preparing for the greetings and the evening ahead.

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"There they are!" Madi's voice carried as she moved toward Tom and Jess, Brandon following close behind.

Tom stood to greet them, taking in Madi's appearance. She wore a midnight blue dress that complemented her brunette hair. Brandon looked his usual polished self in a gray suit with no tie.

Madi reached Jess first, throwing her arms around her friend. "God, I've missed you! Two years is too long!"

"It's only been a month since brunch," Jess laughed, returning the hug.

"That's still the longest we've gone without seeing each other in years," Madi countered, stepping back to admire Jess's dress. "And look at you! That burgundy is gorgeous."

Brandon moved past Madi to embrace Jess. "Stunning as always, Jess," he said, his trademark grin firmly in place. "Tom's a lucky man."

Tom shook Brandon's hand before receiving a hug from Madi. "The hostess mentioned our table should be ready," he said.

As if on cue, the hostess appeared. "Your table is ready now if you'd like to follow me."

She led them through the dining area to a booth tucked in a relatively quiet corner. Tom slid in first, Jess following. Brandon and Madi took the opposite side.

"So," Brandon began, settling back against the booth, "we finally managed to get you two out of the house. I was beginning to think Tom had chained you to that desk of his."

"Meridian has been all consuming," Tom admitted. "But it's finally wrapped."

"Which calls for a celebration," Brandon said, flagging down a passing waiter. When the man approached, Brandon didn't hesitate. "We'll have a bottle of the Dom Pérignon, 2008 vintage."

"You and your champagne," Madi said, shaking her head. "We could've started with cocktails like normal people."

"This isn't just any night out," Brandon replied. "Tom's been working on Meridian for what, almost a year now? That deserves proper recognition."

"Nine months," Tom confirmed. "And thanks, man. I appreciate it."

"Congratulations, Tom," Madi said. "Jess mentioned how brutal those hours have been."

"Worth it in the end," Tom replied. "But Jess is the one really killing it right now. Skyline's wrapping up, and she's launching not one but two major projects. Savannah and Houston."

"I know," Madi said with a grin. "We talk, remember? I'm fully updated on all things Jess."

"Which means I'll be essentially a bachelor while she's traveling," Tom said. "I have turned to Brandon. We should get some golf in when she's away."

"Absolutely," Brandon agreed, his expression brightening. "I've been wanting to try that new course in Cedar Park. I'll get us a tee time when Jess is on one of her trips."

"You two are acting like I'm moving abroad," Jess said. "I'll be gone a few days at a time, maybe a week tops."

"That's more than enough time for Tom to destroy his handicap on the back nine," Brandon joked.

The waiter returned with the champagne, presenting the bottle for Brandon's approval before opening it. The cork came free with a pop, and the waiter poured four flutes.

Brandon raised his glass. "To Tom and the end of Meridian hell, and to Jess and her expanding design empire."

"And to friends who actually manage to see each other despite impossible schedules," Madi added.

They clinked glasses.

Tom took a sip, appreciating the flavor. Brandon might be flamboyant, but he knew his champagne.

"So," Tom said after they'd all taken their first sips, "what's new in the world of luxury car sales?"

Brandon's smile widened. "Sold two Lamborghinis to the same customer last week. The commission check alone will cover tonight."

"Two?" Jess asked. "Who needs two Lamborghinis?"

"A tech CEO with more money than sense," Brandon replied. "One for him, one for his twenty-three-year-old girlfriend. Both Hurricanes, different colors."

"Let me guess," Madi interjected. "His is black and hers is pink."

"Close. His is matte black, hers is yellow." Brandon took another sip of champagne. "Either way, it's been a good month."

"Meanwhile, I'm just trying to get people to hire me for their parties," Madi sighed. "The event planning business is brutal right now. Everyone's cutting back on expenses."

"Nobody's cutting back on Lamborghinis," Brandon said with a shrug.

The waiter approached again. "Are we ready to order appetizers?"

Before anyone could respond, Brandon spoke up. "We'll start with the tuna tartare, the burrata with heirloom tomatoes, and the short rib croquettes."

The waiter nodded, jotting down the order before departing.

"You didn't even consult us," Madi said, nudging Brandon with her elbow.

"Am I wrong?" Brandon challenged, looking around the table. "Does anyone object to what I ordered?"

When no one spoke up, he grinned triumphantly. "See? I know what people want. That's why I'm good at my job."

"Or we're just too polite to object," Jess suggested.

"Please," Brandon scoffed. "When have you ever been too polite to tell me I'm wrong?"

Jess laughed, conceding the point with a tilt of her head. "Fair enough."

"So," Madi said, leaning forward slightly, "you two have been complete ghosts lately. What's going on besides work?"

Tom shrugged. "Work has been most of it, honestly."

"How's the new tenant?" Brandon asked. "Working out okay?"

Tom and Jess shared a glance.

"Better than expected," Tom replied. "He's done a ton of work around the house. Fixed things we didn't even know needed fixing."

"And he's been respectful of our space," Jess added. "It's been a smooth arrangement."

"Speaking of arrangements," Tom said, "Are you two together right now?" He gestured between Brandon and Madi.

Madi glanced at Brandon before nodding. "We're currently in an 'on' phase but our relationship status changes more often than Brandon changes his hair product."

"I don't understand why you two don't just date officially," Jess said. "You've been doing this dance for years now."

"It's complicated," Brandon replied, his typical cockiness momentarily subdued. "We've tried the traditional relationship thing. It never removes sticks."

"Brandon has impossible standards," Madi explained. "And commitment issues the size of Texas."

"I'm simply waiting for Jess to come to her senses," Brandon joked, winning at Jess. "Why settle when perfection might become available someday?"

Tom laughed.

"In your dreams," Jess replied. "Besides, Madi would destroy you if you ever actually tried anything."

"She absolutely would," Madi confirmed, patting Brandon's hand. "And they'd never find your body."

The conversation paused as the waiter arrived with their appetizers, arranging the three plates in the center of the table along with small plates for each of them.

"This looks incredible," Jess said, eyeing the tuna tartare.

"See?" Brandon said, gesturing toward the food. "I told you I know what people want."

They each took portions of the appetizers. Tom had to admit that Brandon's selections were spot-on. The tuna tartare was fresh and perfectly seasoned, the burrata creamy and complemented by sweet heirloom tomatoes, and the short rib croquettes were crispy on the outside with tender, flavorful meat inside.

"So," Tom said, spreading burrata on a piece of grilled bread, "how's the event planning business otherwise, Madi? Any interesting clients?"

"I'm coordinating a Sweet Sixteen next weekend that's giving me gray hairs," Madi replied. "The birthday girl's changed her theme three times already. We went from Parisian chic to Hollywood glamor to... I kid you not, underwater kingdom."

"Underwater kingdom?" Jess repeated. "What does that even mean?"

"Apparently it means spending an ungodly amount on blue lighting, hired mermaids, yes, actual people in mermaid tails swimming in a rented tank, and seafood appetizers that teenage guests won't eat." Madi took a sizable sip of champagne. "But her father's a hedge fund manager, so the budget is essentially unlimited."

Madi suddenly straightened in her seat, her words faltering for a split second. "And the... the decorations include..." She took a deep breath, composing herself. "Real coral and seashells imported from the Maldives."

Tom glanced at Brandon, who was casually eating a croquette, a slight smile playing at the corners of his mouth.

The waiter returned to take their dinner orders. Tom selected the filet mignon, Jess chose the Chilean sea bass, Madi opted for the duck confit, and Brandon ordered the bone-in ribeye.

As the waiter walked away, Madi suddenly tensed again.

"You know what," she said abruptly, setting down her glass, "I need to use the ladies' room. Jess, come with me?"

"Of course," she said, sliding out of the booth after Madi.

As the women walked away, Brandon pulled his phone from his pocket with a grin, showing Tom the screen. A simple app was open, displaying a slider currently positioned at about 60% intensity.

"You didn't," Tom said, a mixture of disbelief and amusement crossing his face.

"Oh, I absolutely did," Brandon confirmed, sliding the intensity back down to zero. "Remote control vibrator."

"And Madi's just... wearing it? Right now?"

"She lost a bet," Brandon explained, pocketing his phone. "Terms were she'd wear it tonight during dinner. I control when and how intense."

"That's why she just dragged Jess to the bathroom," Tom realized.

"Exactly. I think she just needs a minute to compose herself." Brandon looked entirely too pleased with himself. "I'm thinking of cranking it up when the main courses arrive."

"You're cruel," Tom said, although he couldn't help but be amused by the situation.

"She loves it," Brandon countered. "Trust me."

The conversation between the men moved to Tom's upcoming promotion, with Brandon asking about the expected salary increase and benefits package. Tom explained the details, including the extended advisory role he'd maintain with Meridian for the next three months.

"Sounds like you're set," Brandon said. "Senior Consultant by thirty? That's impressive, man."

"If I'd known working seventy-hour weeks for months on end would do it, I might have pushed for it sooner," Tom joked.

Jess and Madi returned, Madi looking composed but shooting Brandon a look that balanced between irritation and anticipation.

"Everything okay?" Brandon asked innocently.

"You're dead to me," Madi replied, sliding back into the booth.

"That's not what you said last night," Brandon countered.

The conversation flowed easily as they waited for their main course, jumping from topic to topic with the comfortable rhythm of old friends. They caught up on mutual acquaintances. Jamie and Michael had finally gotten engaged, Sara had quit her job to travel through Southeast Asia, Kyle had somehow landed a role in a Netflix series as "background doctor number three."

When their main courses arrived, the conversation paused as everyone appreciated the beautifully plated dishes. Tom's filet was perfectly cooked to medium-rare, accompanied by truffle mashed potatoes and roasted asparagus. Jess's sea bass sat atop a bed of saffron risotto with a lemon butter sauce. Madi's duck confit was served with a cherry reduction and root vegetables. Brandon's massive ribeye came with bourbon-glazed carrots and potato gratin.

"This is incredible," Jess said after her first bite of sea bass.

Halfway through the meal, Madi suddenly dropped her fork with a clatter, her face flushing as she gripped the edge of the table. She shot a murderous look at Brandon.

"Something wrong with your duck?" Tom asked, feigning concern.

"Everything's fine," Madi managed. "Just... remembered something I forgot to tell my assistant about tomorrow's prep work."

Brandon smirked while Madi inhaled sharply.

"So Brandon," Jess said, clearly trying to distract from Madi's predicament, "how's the new apartment working out? It's been about three months downtown, right?"

"It's perfect," Brandon replied. "Floor to ceiling windows, walking distance to basically everything."

"And ridiculously expensive," Madi added.

"But worth every penny," Brandon insisted.

"I need to use the restroom again," Madi announced suddenly. "Jess?"

"Of course," Jess replied.

When they were gone, Tom shook his head. "You're going to get yourself murdered."

"What a way to go, though," Brandon laughed, showing Tom the app again. The slider had been at maximum intensity.

"Jesus," Tom said, unable to stop grinning.

"She agreed to it," Brandon said. "And trust me, she'll make me pay later." He looked entirely too pleased at the prospect.

When the women returned, Brandon told stories about eccentric clients at the dealership, including a tech billionaire who'd bought a Ferrari but insisted on test-driving it in his socks because he "couldn't feel the pedals properly" with shoes on. Madi shared disaster stories from

events she'd planned, including a wedding where the ring bearer, a poorly trained corgi, had eaten the rings minutes before the ceremony.

By the time they'd finished their main courses, the initial bottle of champagne was long gone, replaced by a second that Brandon had ordered midway through the meal.

"Anyone want dessert?" Brandon asked as the waiter cleared their plates.

"I couldn't eat another bite," Jess said. "That sea bass was too good."

"Same," Tom agreed. "But I wouldn't say no to an espresso."

They ordered coffees all around, with Madi being the only one adding a chocolate souffle to her order.

"One bite," Madi offered, pushing the souffle toward the center of the table. "You know you want to."

They each took small tastes.

"So, Elektra after this?" Brandon confirmed, glancing at his watch. "It's nearly ten. The DJ should be starting his main set."

"I haven't been dancing in ages," Jess said, excitement evident in her voice. "Not since Vesper."

"A month is 'ages' now?" Madi teased.

"An eternity," Jess replied.

Brandon signaled for the check, waving away Tom's attempt to split it. "I told you, the Lamborghinis are covering tonight."

Once Brandon had paid, making sure they all noticed the platinum card he handed the waiter, they gathered their things and stood to leave.

Outside Solitaire, the night air had cooled slightly, although it still held the typical warmth of Austin evenings. The streets downtown were alive with Saturday night energy, groups of people moving between bars and restaurants, music drifting from various venues.

"Elektra's just two blocks that way," Brandon said, pointing down the street. "Perfect walking distance."

"That's why we picked it," Madi reminded him. "Some of us think about logistics."

The four of them fell into step, walking down the sidewalk together. Brandon and Madi led the way, with Tom and Jess following behind. Tom watched as Brandon casually draped his arm around Madi's shoulders, pulling her against his side. Despite their complicated relationship status, they moved together with the easy familiarity of longtime partners.

Tom reached for Jess's hand, intertwining their fingers. She smiled at him, giving his hand to squeeze.

"This was a good idea," she said quietly. "I've missed hanging out with them."

"Me too," Tom agreed.

Ahead of them, Brandon said something that made Madi laugh, the sound carrying back to them in the night air.

"I can't believe Brandon bought a remote control vibrator for dinner at Solitaire," Jess whispered, leaning close to Tom's ear.

"I can," Tom replied with a chuckle. "It's exactly the kind of thing he would do."

"And Madi agreed to it," Jess added, shaking her head in amused disbelief.

"They've always had their own unique approach to everything," Tom said.

They could see Elektra now, the club's entrance marked by a blue neon sign and a line of people waiting to get in. Bass-heavy music pulsed from inside, audible even from half a block away.

Brandon turned back to them, walking backward for a few steps. "I got us on the VIP list," I called. "One of my clients owns the place."

"Of course he does," Jess said.

The four friends approached the club, bass growing louder with each step, the night still young and full of possibilities.

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Tom's fingers danced over the keyboard, drafting a response to the implementation team about the final signoff procedures for Meridian. He glanced at his watch. 9:02 AM.

After months of grueling work, today would mark the official recognition of his efforts.

His inbox pinged with another message. Word had spread through the office grapevine despite Tom's attempts at discretion. The meeting with Davis was still twenty-eight minutes away, and already colleagues were treating the promotion as fait accompli.

Tom's phone vibrated with a text notification.

Jess: You've got this, babe! Davis would be insane not to give you everything you deserve. Call me the SECOND you're done!

A smile crept across Tom's face. Jess had been more excited about this meeting than he was, peppering him with encouragement since they'd woken up together.

This morning had felt almost nostalgic, both of them rising to the same alarm, a rarity in their home where Tom typically left while Jess was still wrapped in dreams.

The memory of their shower together felt a pleasant warmth through him. Jess had been particularly enthusiastic, backing against the tiled wall, one leg hooked around her waist as she'd begged, "Harder, baby. I want to feel you all day."

He'd complied, their bodies moving together under the spray, her fingernails digging into his shoulders, her mouth murmuring encouragements that grew increasingly explicit. The marks she'd left on his back were hidden beneath his shirt now, private reminders of their connection.

Afterward, they'd eat breakfast together at the kitchen island, a simple meal of eggs and toast, an ordinary moment made extraordinary by its rarity. Jess in her robe, hair wrapped in a towel, Tom in his suit pants and tank top.

"We should celebrate Friday," he'd suggested. "Dinner somewhere nice. Just the two of us."

"Like a current date?" Jess had teased. "I vaguely remember those."

"It's been a while," Tom acknowledged. "Not since Vesper."

"Almost two months," Jess had said, placing her hand over his. "I'd love that."

She'd kissed him goodbye at the door, a gesture so ordinary yet so missed that it had carried him through the morning commute on a cloud of optimism.

Tom replied to her text.

Tom: Thanks for the vote of confidence. Will call you right after. Love you.

Jess: Love you more! Knock 'em dead!

He set his phone down and returned to his emails, but his focus drifted from work to the events of Saturday night.

Elektra had been packed, the music thundering through the club with sufficient force to make conversation nearly impossible. They'd secured a table in the VIP section thanks to Brandon's connection.

The four of them had ordered bottle service, although Tom couldn't recall what exactly they'd been drinking. What he did remember was the electric atmosphere, the flashing lights painting Jess's face in alternating colors as she laughed at something Madi said.

They'd started with shots, toasting to friendship, to success, to the night ahead.

The dance floor had beckoned immediately, all of them moving together through the crowd. Tom and Jess naturally paired off, his hands on her hips, pulling her close against him. Across from them, Brandon and Madi mirrored their position.

As the DJ transitioned between tracks, Brandon had suggested switching partners. Tom had danced with Madi while Jess and Brandon paired up nearby. There had been nothing inappropriate about it. They'd maintained respectful distance, no grinding or suggestive moves, yet Tom had watched Jess and Brandon over Madi's shoulders, fascinated by the image they created together. Brandon's confidence and Jess's natural elegance made them a striking pair on the dance floor.

After a few songs, Tom and Brandon had drifted back toward their table, leaving the women on the dance floor.

"I need another drink," Brandon had announced, dropping into his seat and signaling for service.

Tom had settled beside him, his eyes never leaving Jess as she and Madi continued dancing.

Without their partners, the women had drawn immediate attention from other club goers. Two men had approached almost instantly, positioning themselves near Jess and Madi.

"Looks like our girls are having fun," Brandon observed, following Tom's gaze to the dance floor.

Tom had agreed, watching a tall stranger move closer to Jess, leaning down to say something in her ear. She'd smiled politely, her body language indicating friendly disinterest rather than encouragement.

"I should hit the bathroom," Tom had said suddenly, standing.

The path to the restrooms had taken him along an elevated section that offered a different vantage point of the dance floor. Tom had paused there, leaning against the railing, watching as Jess and Madi continued to dance. From this distance, in the flashing lights and artificial fog, there was something surreal about watching his wife. The alcohol in his system heightened the sensation, creating a disconnect between the woman he knew intimately and this mysterious, desirable stranger others saw.

Another man had approached Jess while Tom watched. Jess's rejection hadn't deterred the man from hovering nearby, watching her. Tom had found himself aroused by the scene, by Jess's obvious desirability, by the attention she commanded simply by existing in the space.

When Tom had finally returned to the table, Brandon was gone, having joined the women on the dance floor. Tom had sipped his drink, content to observe from a distance as Brandon sandwiched himself between Jess and Madi.

Eventually, Brandon had returned to the table, dropping into the seat beside Tom.

"Your wife," he'd said, nodding toward where Jess was still dancing with Madi, "is officially the hottest woman in this club."

"You think I don't know that?"

"You should have seen how many guys tried approaching her," Brandon continued. "I counted five just in the last five minutes. She shut them all down without breaking rhythm. It's impressive."

The night had ended around 2 AM, all four of them stumbling into an Uber, Brandon and Madi getting dropped off first at Brandon's downtown apartment.

Tom vaguely remembered trying to initiate something once he and Jess were finally alone in their bedroom, but alcohol had rendered them both too uncoordinated for more than a few clumsy kisses before sleep overcame them.

Sunday morning had dawned with matching headaches, the second hangover in as many days.

"We're getting too old for this," Jess had groaned, pressing a pillow over her eyes to block the sunlight.

"Speak for yourself," Tom had replied, although he'd won as he sat up, his own head pounding in protest. "Okay, maybe you're right."

They'd laughed about it, finding solidarity in their mutual suffering, then spent the day in lazy recovery. Neither had been motivated to cook, instead ordering delivery and watching television from the couch.

Over lunch, the conversation had turned to the previous night.

"I can't believe Brandon and that remote vibrator," Tom had said, shaking his head in amusement. "Poor Madi."

"Poor Madi nothing," Jess had laughed. "She absolutely knew what she was getting into. Did you see her face when we got into the Uber? She was practically dragging him into that apartment."

"They have a strange relationship," Tom had observed, "but it works for them somehow."

"It was good to see them," Jess had said. "I've missed hanging out, just the four of us."

"We should do it more often," Tom had agreed. "Now that Meridian's wrapping up and I can reclaim my weekends." He'd hesitated, then added, "It was also interesting watching Brandon dance with you."

Jess had looked up, curiosity in her expression. "Interesting how?"

"Just...seeing another man's hands on you." Tom had felt his cheeks warm slightly. "It connected to what we've been exploring."

"Is that what made you bring up that bar game?" Jess had asked. "About pretending not to know each other?"

Tom had agreed. "Partly. Something about the public aspect, the performance of it."

"It's risky," Jess had pointed out. "What if someone we know sees us?"

"We could try it somewhere no one would recognize us. Maybe when you're in Savannah or Houston for work," Tom had suggested. "I could fly out and join you."

Jess had seemed to consider this, taking a sip of her water. "Maybe," she'd said, neither committing nor refusing. "It's an interesting idea."

"But we should get one of those remote vibrators," Tom had said suddenly. "Like Brandon has."

Jess had nearly choked on her water. "What?"

"Just... for us. For fun. I could control it while you're grocery shopping or something."

"Or during a client meeting?" Jess had suggested, her eyebrow raised in challenge although her eyes held a spark of interest.

"If you were feeling particularly daring," Tom had replied, matching his playful tone.

The conversation had moved to the show they were watching, but Tom had noticed Jess's thoughtful expression, as if she were genuinely considering his suggestions.

Despite his hangover, Tom had been unusually tactile throughout the day, unable to resist touching Jess whenever she was within reach. A squeeze of her hip as she passed him in the kitchen, fingers trailing along her shoulder as he sat beside her, a kiss dropped on her neck for no reason at all.

"Someone's affectionate today," she'd noted with a smile during one such moment.

"Just appreciating what's mine," he'd replied.

Instead of bristling at the claim of ownership, Jess had leaned into him, pressing her lips to his neck. "I like when you get like this."

The entire day had carried an undercurrent of intimacy, punctuated by casual touches that built anticipation for later. They'd been watching some home renovation show when Jess had mentioned Bob for the first time.

"We should ask Bob about adding the under-cabinet lighting in the kitchen," she'd said. "And while he's at it, adjusting those cabinets that don't close properly."

"Good idea," Tom had agreed.

The mention of Bob had naturally led to an opening for discussion of Tuesday, although they'd kept it brief. Tom had simply told her he trusted her and that her freedom to choose was what thrilled him most. He didn't want to pressure her toward specific actions, he didn't want her to feel she was performing to meet his expectations.

Throughout the day, Tom had waited for Jess to bring up their dirty talk from Friday night, her agreement that she'd serve multiple men if that's what he wanted, her suggestion that he might watch her with Bob next time, the descriptions of what she'd do. But she never mentioned it so Tom didn't press.

They'd gone to bed early, their intimacy culminating in passionate sex where Tom had taken charge, pinning Jess's wrists above her head, driving into her with an intensity that had made her loudly cry out his name. Afterward, they'd exchanged "I love yous" in the darkness, falling asleep wrapped together, her head on his chest, his arm around her shoulders.

His phone pinged with a calendar notification. 9:25 AM. Five minutes until his meeting with Davis.

Tom stood and straightened his tie, checking his reflection in the glass of a framed certificate on his wall. He looked presentable, professional, worthy of the promotion that awaited him. The man staring back at him hardly resembled the overworked, desperate consultant who'd made that disastrous cryptocurrency investment months ago.

That mistake felt distant now, like something that had happened to someone else. He was no longer the man who gambled his savings on a get rich quick scheme. He was Tom Marshall, soon to be Senior Consultant, husband to a woman whose career was equally ascendant, owner of a home with a tenant who paid good rent and fixed things at minimal cost. The pieces had fallen back into place, better than before.

He took a deep breath and made his way through the office toward James Davis's corner suite.

The office itself intimidated by design. Floor-to-ceiling windows showcased a panoramic view of downtown Austin. The desk, a massive slab of walnut, dominated the space. Behind it sat James Davis.

"Tom," Davis said, removing his reading glasses as Tom entered. "Right on time. Have a seat."

Tom settled into one of the leather chairs facing the desk.

Davis reached into a drawer and extracted a manila folder, opening it to reveal printed performance metrics. Tom recognized some of the graphs from reports he'd submitted over the past few months, their positive trajectories now serving as evidence of their worthiness for promotion.

"The Meridian implementation has been a significant success," Davis began, tapping a finger against one particularly impressive chart. "Your leadership throughout the process, particularly during the integration challenges in these final phases, has exceeded our expectations."

"Thank you, sir," Tom replied.

Davis leaned back in his chair, considering Tom with an evaluative gaze. "Effective immediately, you're being promoted to Senior Consultant, with the salary adjustment we discussed previously."

Though Tom had anticipated these words, hearing them spoken aloud felt a surge of satisfaction through him. "I appreciate your confidence in me," he said. "And the opportunity."

"You've earned both," Davis replied. "But I should warn you. Things aren't getting easier from here. The responsibilities of a Senior Consultant are substantially greater than what you've managed thus far."

"I understand," Tom agreed. "I'm ready for those challenges."

Davis seemed satisfied with this response. "Do you remember our conversation three months ago? When I first mentioned the Senior position might be opening up?"

"Of course," Tom said. "You mentioned potential expansion projects with clients outside Texas."

"Exactly," Davis confirmed. "We're moving forward with one of those opportunities, a company based in either Colorado or California. We're finalizing the contract details this week."

Tom maintained his professional expression despite the implications. Out of state clients meant travel, potentially extensive travel.

"You'd remain based here in Austin," Davis continued, as if reading Tom's thoughts, "but there would be travel involved. Weeklong trips, sometimes two consecutive weeks, depending on the phase."

"I understand," Tom said.

"The new project starts next Monday," Davis added. "Once we finalize which of the finalists we're moving forward with, you'll receive the full briefing package."

"I'll be prepared," Tom assured him.

Davis stood, extending his hand across the desk. "Congratulations, Tom. Your work on Meridian has positioned you for this opportunity, but it's your consistent performance that earned you the promotion."

Tom rose to shake his hand. "Thank you, sir. I won't let you down."

"I know you won't," Davis replied. "That'll be all for now. HR will contact you about paperwork and benefits adjustments."

Tom agreed and exited the office, maintaining his composed demeanor until he'd cleared the administrative area. Once in the hallway, he allowed himself a brief, private smile of triumph. Senior Consultant. The promotion, the raise, the recognition, everything he'd worked toward these past nine months.

Back at his desk, he immediately pulled out his phone to text Jess.

Tom: Just got out. Official as of today. Senior Consultant with the salary we discussed. Starting a new project next Monday.

Jess's response came instantly.

Jess: OMG TOM!!! CONGRATULATIONS!! I'm so proud of you! Call me!

Tom glanced at his watch. He had fifteen minutes before his next scheduled meeting. Stepping into an empty conference room, I called Jess.

She answered on the first ring. "Tell me everything!"

"It went exactly as expected," Tom said, unable to keep the satisfaction from his voice. "Davis made it official, effective immediately. The salary is what he promised."

"Tom, that's amazing!" Jess exclaimed. Her enthusiasm radiated through the phone, warming him from the inside. "Did he say anything about your work specifically?"

"He mentioned the integration challenges during the final phases, said I exceeded expectations in handling them."

"Because you're brilliant," Jess declared with absolute conviction.

"It's not just good news," Tom cautioned. "The new position comes with more travel than I anticipated. Week-long trips, sometimes two consecutive weeks."

A brief silence followed. "That's... a lot," Jess finally said. "But we knew there would be travel involved, right? This is what you've been working toward."

"Right," Tom agreed, although the reality of spending weeks away from home felt different now than it might have a few months ago. Before Bob, before their exploration, prolonged absences seemed merely an inconvenience. Now, they represented missed opportunities, scenes he wouldn't witness, experiences he'd know only through second hand accounts.

The thought sent a ripple of emotions through him, concern about leaving Jess alone with Bob for extended periods, yet also excitement about the scenarios such absences might enable.

"I'll need something appropriately spectacular to wear for Friday," Jess said, excitement returning to her voice. "This deserves our full celebration mode."

Tom smiled with his enthusiasm. "Absolutely."

"I should probably let you get back to work," Jess said. "You're probably drowning in congratulations from colleagues."

"Just a few," Tom admitted. "News travels fast here."

"Go enjoy your moment," Jess encouraged. "We'll continue the celebration tonight at home."

"I like the sound of that," Tom replied. "I love you."

"Love you too, Senior Consultant Marshall," Jess said before she ended the call.

Tom pocketed his phone and returned to his office, where several colleagues had gathered to offer congratulations. I have accepted their handshakes and backslaps with appropriate humility.

As colleagues filtered back to their desks, Miles approached, offering a coffee cup in congratulations. "About time Davis recognized what you've been contributing," he said. "Though I'm not looking forward to you traveling all the time. Who's going to help me with my analysis models when you're gone?"

"You'll manage," Tom replied with a grin. "Besides, I'll only be a phone call away."

"It won't be the same," Miles lamented. "But seriously, congratulations. You've been killing yourself on Meridian for months. This recognition is long overdue."

"Thanks, Miles," Tom said, genuinely appreciative of his colleague's support.

The promotion represented more than just recognition of his professional capabilities. It marked a transition in their lives, a shift from recovery mode back to forward momentum. The cryptocurrency mistake that had precipitated their entire arrangement with Bob now seemed like necessary pain, a catalyst for changes that had ultimately strengthened their marriage rather than weakening it.

Without that financial setback, they wouldn't have needed a tenant. Without a tenant, they wouldn't have met Bob. Without Bob, Tom might never have found the courage to share his deepest fantasies with Jess. The chain of events, seemingly disastrous at the outset, had led them to their current situation, stronger, closer, more honest with each other than ever before.

As Tom returned to his desk to prepare for his next meeting, his phone vibrated with another text from Jess.

Jess: Still can't believe it! So proud of you. You've worked so hard for this. Can't wait to celebrate tonight...

The message ended with a suggestive emoji that made Tom smile. However busy his day might be, however many congratulations he might receive from colleagues, the celebration that mattered most awaited him at home.

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Jess stood in front of the full-length mirror in her closet, examining herself. The black lingerie set had been an impulse purchase months ago, stuffed into a drawer and forgotten until this morning when she'd been struck by a sudden certainty about what she wanted to wear for today's encounter with Bob.

The demi bra barely contained her breasts, creating a perfect shelf that pushed them up and together. The material was transparent, nipples clearly visible through the black mesh. The matching thong was equally revealing, covering just enough to technically qualify as underwear while covering absolutely nothing.

She turned, glancing over her shoulder at her reflection. The thong disappeared between her perky ass cheeks. There was something particularly satisfying about seeing herself like this, provocative and unapologetically sexual.

Her phone chimed. A text from Tom.

Tom: Hope you're having a good morning. Thinking about you...

Tom knew what day it was, he knew what typically happened on his work from home Tuesdays. She typed a quick response.

Jess: About to head downstairs. I will tell you everything later.

Tom's reply came immediately.

Tom: Have fun. Whatever you want. Love you.

Jess set her phone down, Tom's words echoing in her mind. "Whatever you want." The same response he'd given last night when she'd asked what should happen today between her and Bob.

Last night, she'd rushed home from work, stopping at Whole Foods for ingredients to prepare one of Tom's favorite meals. Steak, garlic mashed potatoes, and roasted asparagus. A celebration dinner for his promotion.

When Tom had walked through the door, his smile had been the widest she'd seen in months, maybe years. The weight of Meridian had visibly lifted from his shoulders, replaced by the pride of achievement.

"Something smells incredible," he'd said, crossing the kitchen to kiss her.

"Senior Consultant deserves a proper celebration," she'd replied.

While she'd finished the steaks, Tom had set the table.

When they'd finally sat down to eat, he'd raised his glass. "To the next chapter."

"To Senior Consultant Tom," Jess had replied. "Congratulations, baby. You earned this."

"To the woman who made it possible," he'd countered, clinking his glass against hers. "And to your own accomplishments. Finishing Skyline, starting both Savannah and Houston. We're both killing it."

She loved that about him, how thoughtful he was and how he always elevated them both together. Even in his moment of glory, he'd found a way to celebrate his achievements alongside his own.

As they'd eaten, Tom had provided additional details about the promotion. The company would be in either California or Colorado, with the decision coming soon. The travel requirements were more substantial than Meridian. Weeklong trips, sometimes two weeks consecutively.

"With your travel to Savannah and Houston, we might both be away from home," he'd observed.

"At the same time and in different time zones."

"That would be a first," Jess had acknowledged.

"We'll figure it out," Tom had assured her. "We always do."

After dinner, they'd moved to the bedroom where Jess had slipped into pink lingerie. Tom's reaction had been immediate and intense, his desire manifesting in a roughness she'd noticed increasing since she'd told him about giving Bob the blowjob.

He'd pressed her against the wall, his mouth demanding on hers, hands gripping her wrists to pin them above her head.

"On the bed," he'd commanded. "Hands and knees."

Jess had complied eagerly, positioning herself on all fours, back arched to present her ass. Tom had entered her from behind, one hand tangled in her hair, pulling it back while the other gripped her hip.

"Harder," she'd urged. "Fuck me harder, Tom."

He'd responded by tightening his grip on her hair, amplifying her pleasure. She'd always enjoyed rough sex, the primal nature of it, the unfiltered expression of desire. Tom had typically leaned toward the gentler end of the spectrum, but his recent shift toward a more dominant approach thrilled her.

"You're mine," he'd growled as he'd pounded into her, each thrust eliciting a gasp. "Say it."

"I'm yours," she'd managed between moans. "Always yours."

Afterward, as they'd lain together, sweat cooling on their skin, Jess had broached the subject of today's encounter.

"What should happen tomorrow?" she'd asked, her head resting on his chest. "With Bob?"

"Whatever you want," Tom had replied. "Whatever feels right."

When she'd pressed for specifics, he'd simply said, "Surprise me."

That response had frustrated her. Tom had consistently placed the responsibility for escalation squarely on her shoulders, forcing her to make decisions about boundaries without clear guidance. The burden sometimes felt unfair, as if she alone were responsible for navigating the complexities of their arrangement.

But Tom had worked so hard to secure the promotion. Perhaps he deserved something special, even if that something was with another man. After all, this was his fantasy and it had taken considerable trust and vulnerability for him to reveal it to her.

Jess turned away from the mirror and walked out of the bedroom, heading towards the kitchen, each step bringing her closer to the inevitable. The sliding glass door leading to the balcony waited, the barrier between her current life and whatever came next.

She slid the door open and stepped onto the balcony.

As she descended, she saw Bob sitting in his usual chair by the pool, book open in hand.

At the sound of her approach, he looked up, expression shifting to confusion as he registered her appearance. He set his book down and stood, eyes traveling from her face to the lingerie beneath her cover-up.

"Afternoon, princess," he said, brows furrowing. "Didn't realize we're doing something different today. Are you planning to swim?"

Jess moved closer, maintaining eye contact despite the flutter of nerves in her stomach. "No swimming today," she replied. "But since you've made me feel so good these past weeks, I thought today could be about you."

"That's not necessary," he said. "I enjoy our usual arrangement."

"I insist," Jess replied. "You've given me some incredible experiences. I'd like to return the favor."

Bob considered her for a moment, his gaze thoughtful. "If you're sure."

"I am," Jess confirmed, glancing toward his apartment. "Can we go inside?"

Bob agreed, gathering his beer and his iced tea from the small table. "After you," he said, gesturing toward the sliding glass door.

Jess led the way, conscious of Bob's eyes on her as she walked.

Inside Bob's apartment, Jess paused, taking in the space. Little had changed since her visit last week. Her attention was drawn to the couch, remembering her position in front of it, on her knees, Bob's cock in her mouth.

Bob placed their drinks on the kitchen counter. "Can I get you something to drink?"

"No, thank you," Jess replied.

She needed a moment to gather herself.

"Bob," she said, turning to face him. "Would you mind waiting in the bedroom? I need a minute."

If he found the request strange, he didn't show it. "Of course," he replied. "Take your time. Don't rush." He disappeared down the hallway, leaving her alone with her thoughts.

Jess let the cover-up fall to the floor, now standing in Bob's living room wearing only the black lingerie. Her heart thumped in her chest, nervousness flooding her system.

A deep breath steadied nerves that shouldn't exist given what had already transpired between them. Why this lingering nervousness? She'd gone downstairs in increasingly revealing bikinis, culminating in the tiny white one that had hidden nothing, nipples and camel toe clearly visible through the wet fabric. She'd eventually abandoned even that, arriving completely naked beneath her cover-up.

Bob had touched every inch of her skin, every private place. His fingers had ventured inside her, drawing out orgasms so intense they'd made her temporarily lose muscle control. His mouth had been between her thighs, tongue exploring her most intimate places. She'd given him a handjob, then progressed to taking his cock in her mouth, stroking him until he'd erupted across her breasts.

These escalating acts should have eliminated any lingering anxiety about crossing lines. Yet something about today felt different.

Perhaps it was the premeditation. When she'd worn bikinis, even the most revealing ones, she'd maintained plausible deniability. She could be swimming or sunbathing, normal poolside activities. Even when she'd come down naked, it had been for a massage. The progression had always allowed her a mental escape hatch, a way to frame her choices as something other than sexual.

Lingerie offered no such alternative. It served one purpose, communicated one intention. By selecting this outfit, she was acknowledging her desire, accepting her choice rather than pretending it happened spontaneously or accidentally. It made a statement she couldn't later deny, even to herself.

Tom wants this, she told herself. He'll love hearing about it tonight.

But the justification felt incomplete, a half-truth that avoided the more complex reality.

She wanted this too. Not just for Tom, not just to fulfill his fantasy, but for herself, for the awakening she'd experienced, for the rediscovery of parts of herself she'd almost forgotten existed.

College memories surfaced. The relationship with Marco had given her the freedom to explore sex. With Marco, she'd become more confident in the bedroom, she had learned to deepthroat his impressive length, had sex in public places that added excitement from potential discovery, discovered her enjoyment of rough sex and dirty talk.

The sex had been phenomenal, educational, even if it hadn't been enough to sustain a relationship.

She was now in a similar position with Bob, but with crucial differences. First, the security of a loving husband provided a foundation beneath her exploration. Tom wasn't just aware of what she was doing. He actively encouraged it, got excited by it, incorporated it into their shared intimacy.

But beyond that, Bob had awakened sensations in her body she'd never experienced before.

Those squirting orgasms had been a revelation. The memory of that first time with Bob's fingers inside her, the shocking gush of fluid, the way she'd both laughed and cried from the overwhelming intensity, it had altered something fundamental in her understanding of her own sexuality.

Then there was his cock. She'd never seen anything like it, not even with Marco. The sheer size of it, the prominent veins, the way the head flared. It had become an object of fascination for her.

What else might she explore with Bob? How much further could this go? The possibilities seemed endless, limited only by her willingness to continue crossing lines.

Before Bob moved in, before Tom's confession, intimacy had become routine. Tom working constantly, Jess immersed in projects, both too tired or too distracted for more than occasional, perfunctory sex.

Now they couldn't keep their hands off each other. This arrangement seemed to be strengthening their marriage rather than threatening it, a counterintuitive outcome that still proved true in practice.

She felt a peculiar power in how this exploration affected both men. Bob desired her and Tom loved her. She was the center, the catalyst, the essential component without whom none of this would exist.

There was excitement, too, in having this secret, shared only with Tom and Bob. No one in their professional or social circles would ever suspect Jessica Marshall, wife and successful interior designer, of being naked in her tenant's apartment while her husband worked in his downtown office.

Jess moved toward the hallway, approaching Bob's bedroom. The door stood partially open, an invitation.

She pushed it open fully.

Bob lays on his back on the bed, completely naked. His cock rested against his thigh, half hard, substantial even in its semi-aroused state. The rest of his body presented a glaring contrast to Tom's lean, runner's build. Bob resembled a burly lumberjack, all chest hair and raw masculinity. There was something almost bear-like about him, not the cuddly cartoon kind but the wild, powerful animal that commanded respect through sheer physical presence.

But despite his size and strength, Jess felt safe with him, completely at ease because of how respectful he'd been with her from the beginning. He'd never pushed beyond what she offered, never demanded or expected, simply accepted what she chose to give with appreciation rather than entitlement.

"Making myself comfortable, I see," Jess said, smiling at his boldness.

"Seemed appropriate," Bob replied, his eyes traveling over her. "You look absolutely phenomenal."

Jess smiled and moved to the foot of the bed, confidence growing with each step. "You're a lucky man, Bob Caldwell," she said, placing her hands on her hips. "Do you know that?"

"I'm well aware," Bob replied, eyes never leaving her. "I know exactly how lucky I am."

"Do you like the lingerie?" Jess asked, turning slightly to give him a better view of how the thong accentuated her ass.

"I've never seen anyone so beautiful in my life," he said without hesitation.

Jess smirked. "Remove the charmer when you want to be."

"Not charm," Bob countered. "It's just the absolute truth."

Jess reached behind her back and unhooked her bra. She held it in place for a moment, letting anticipation build before letting it fall away, revealing her breasts to his eyes.

She then bent forward slowly, sliding her thumbs into the sides of her thong. She pulled it down her legs slowly, stepping out of it before kicking it aside.

"God damn," Bob muttered, his eyes wide as he took in her completely naked form.

"By the time I leave today," Jess said, "you're going to be very, very happy."

She got onto the mattress, one knee at a time, then crawled on all fours toward him with the grace of a jungle cat. She settled between her open legs, resting on her elbows and knees in a position that emphasized her perfect ass behind her.

"You're killing me here, princess," Bob said.

Jess smiled and wrapped her fingers around his cock, which hardened further at her touch. "I still can't get over how big this thing is," she said, studying it. "The head is huge. And look at these veins."

She stroked him slowly, as if conducting a thorough examination. Her fingers couldn't quite close around her girth, a detail that never failed to impress her.

"You could play baseball with this thing," she joked, playfully swinging his cock from side to side.

Bob laughed, the sound rich with both amusement and arousal. "Never tried that particular sport with it."

"Multiple options," Jess continued. "Bat, club, police baton..."

"You're terrible," Bob said, although his grin denied any current criticism.

Jess laid his cock flat against his stomach and moved her attention to his balls. "These are huge too," she observed, cupping them gently in her palm. "When did you last eat?"

"Saturday," Bob replied.

"Were you saving up for me?" Jess asked, looking up at him.

Bob grinned. "Wanted to make it worth your time."

"Good," Jess said, gently squeezing his balls. "I want to see it come out of you today. I never knew cum could shoot like that before seeing it from you."

She lowered her head and extended her tongue, licking one of his balls before taking it into her mouth. The musky taste filled her senses as she sucked gently, rolling the testicle with her tongue. After a moment, she released it and moved to the other.

Bob groaned. "Your mouth is magic."

Jess released his testicle and wrapped his hand around the base of his cock, lifting it upright.

She stuck out her tongue and slapped her cock against it several times, the playful act drawing another groan from Bob.

She gathered saliva in her mouth and let it fall onto his cock in a long strand. Using both hands, she spread the wetness along his shaft, creating slickness.

As she stroked, she noticed her wedding ring as her hand moved up and down Bob's cock. The sight created a confusing mixture of emotions, guilt and arousal intertwined so completely she couldn't separate them.

Jess opened her mouth, finally taking the head of his cock between her lips. The stretch returned, his jaw accommodating his girth. She hollowed her cheeks, creating suction as she began to bob her head, taking him deeper with each downward movement.

"Jesus Christ," Bob muttered.

The taste of him filled her mouth, skin and the slight saltiness of pre-cum that leaked from his tip. Jess held the base of his cock with both hands, working them in tandem with her mouth's movements.

"Your mouth feels incredible," Bob praised. "Where'd you learn to do this?"

Jess couldn't answer with her mouth full, but the question triggered Marco's memories.

As she continued, Jess forgot everything else. The Houston project, the Skyline completion, the Savannah restoration, all vanished from her mind. Tom's promotion, their financial recovery, the

rules they'd established, all faded to insignificance. The world contracted to this moment, this act, this connection between her mouth and Bob's cock.

Saliva pooled and thickened, creating obscene wet sounds that filled the bedroom. Far from embarrassing her, the noises aroused her further, a primal soundtrack to her performance. She slurped the excess saliva and spat it back on his shaft, using it to maintain the slickness.

"God, princess, I had no idea you were so dirty," Bob marveled, watching her through heavy-lidded eyes.

Jess released him with an exaggerated pop. "There's a lot you don't know about me."

"I'm learning, princess," Bob replied with a grin. "My beautiful cocksucker."

She looked up, meeting his gaze while continuing to stroke him with both hands. "You remembered."

"Hard to forget something like that."

"Well, you're right," Jess said, maintaining eye contact. "I'm your cocksucker." She punctuated the declaration by taking him deeply into her mouth again, drawing a guttural moan from Bob.

When she came up for air, Bob spoke again. "Do you like my cock, princess?"

The question sounded almost childish, a naked appeal for affirmation that revealed an unexpected vulnerability beneath Bob's exterior domineering. Jess recognized it immediately.

For all his size and age, for all his experience, Bob wanted her validation.

"I love your cock," she replied, deciding to indulge his ego. "It's magnificent. Biggest I've ever seen."

"What do you like best about it?" Bob asked.

Jess smiled, realizing she was engaged in a kind of roleplay, a performance meant to satisfy her pride. She didn't mind. In fact, she enjoyed the theatrical aspect, the freedom to express desire without restraint or judgment.

"The size, obviously," she said. "How it fills my mouth. How it makes me work for every inch."

She punctuated her words with long, slow licks. "The way it responds to my touch." She demonstrated by squeezing upwards, watching as pre-cum formed at the tip. "How much you clearly enjoy what I do to it."

"Fuck, princess. You're too good at this," Bob groaned.

"I'm just getting started," Jess promised, lowering her mouth to envelop him again.

She established a rhythm, head bobbing, hands working in coordination.

After several minutes, Bob placed his hand on her shoulder. "Mind if I try something?"

Jess released him. "It depends what it is."

"Lie on your back," Bob instructed. "Head hanging off the edge of the bed. Helps open your throat."

Jess considered it, weighing the surrender of control this position would require. She'd done this before with Marco while practicing deepthroating. Something about giving up that control to Bob both thrilled and unnerved her.

"Alright," she decided, moving into position. Muscle memory guided her movements as she lay on her back, positioning her head at the edge of the mattress, neck extended.

Bob stood on the floor beside the bed, his cock level with his face. He stepped forward, guiding his cock toward her mouth.

Jess reached up, wrapping her fingers around his shaft to maintain some control over how deeply he entered. She opened her mouth, allowing him to slide her head past her lips.

"God, that's a beautiful sight," Bob muttered, beginning to move with shallow thrusts.

Jess relaxed her jaw and focused on her breathing.

"You're taking it so well," Bob praised. "Like you were born for this."

She pulled back, gasping for breath. "Try going deeper," she encouraged.

Bob obliged, pushing forward until his cock reached the back of his throat. Jess fought her gag reflex, focusing on relaxing her throat muscles.

"Jesus Christ," Bob groaned. "No one's ever taken me this deep."

The claim pleased Jess in a way she couldn't fully articulate, a competitive satisfaction at succeeding where others had failed. She pulled away again. "How far can you go?"

Bob's eyes widened at his challenge. "Are you sure?"

Jess agreed, opening her mouth in invitation.

Bob forward cautiously pushed, advancing deeper than before. Jess felt her throat constrict around his cock, her gag reflex threatening to activate. She fought it. Bob managed to penetrate about halfway before Jess turned her head aside, coughing.

"God," Bob said, genuine awe in his voice. "You're amazing. Absolutely amazing."

"Not bad for someone out of practice," Jess replied once she'd recovered.

"Out of practice?" Bob echoed, curiosity evident.

"It's been a while," Jess said vaguely. "Used to be better at it."

"I can't imagine better," Bob said. "You're already the most talented cocksucker I've ever known."

The crudeness of the compliment filled her with that same strange pride, a satisfaction at excelling at something many would consider degrading.

She reached forward, grasping his balls, drawing them toward her mouth. She ran her tongue over them, savoring the musky taste, the weight.

"Fuck," Bob whispered as she sucked one into her mouth.

Jess alternated between his balls, licking and sucking while her hand stroked his shaft. The power dynamic had shifted despite its seemingly submissive position. She controlled his

pleasure, determined what he would receive and when. This realization boosted her confidence further.

"Get off the bed," Bob suddenly instructed, his tone commanding but not harsh.

Jess complied, moving to stand beside the bed, curious about what he had in mind.

Without warning, Bob bent down and grabbed her, one arm behind her knees, the other supporting her back.

"Bob!" Jess shrieked as he lifted her. "What are you- you'll drop me!"

He flipped her upside down, holding her with her head near his groin, her legs over his shoulders.

"I've got you," Bob assured her, his grip firm and secure. "Trust me."

Before she could protest further, his tongue found her pussy.

Jess gasped, the unexpected pleasure momentarily silencing her objections. "Oh!"

Bob's cock hung in front of her face, an invitation she couldn't resist despite her precarious position. She reached for it, guiding it to her mouth.

They established a mutual rhythm, a standing 69 that showcased Bob's remarkable strength.

"You taste incredible," Bob murmured against his flesh.

The position was unlike anything Jess had experienced before. Her world literally turned upside down, perspective altered both physically and metaphorically.

Bob's tongue focused on her clit, circling and sucking in patterns that showcased his skill.

Meanwhile, Jess struggled to concentrate on pleasing him, the challenges of her inverted position and her mounting pleasure creating a delicious conflict.

After a few minutes, Bob carefully lowered her to the ground. "Legs were starting to tremble," he admitted with a grin. "Can't have gravity ruining our fun."

Jess laughed, her head still spinning slightly from the inversion. "I'm impressed you managed that long."

"Years of construction work builds useful muscles," Bob replied, flexing an arm playfully.

Bob moved back to the bed, lying on his back. "Hop on," he instructed, patting his chest.

Jess hesitated, uncertain what he was suggesting. "Bob... I'm not going to..."

"I want to taste you properly."

Relief and renewed arousal flooded through Jess. "Oh. Okay."

She climbed onto the bed and straddled Bob's face, lowering her pussy onto his waiting mouth.

The position allowed Jess to control the depth at which she sucked Bob's cock while grinding against his mouth at her own pace. The mutual give and take created a unique intimacy, a collaborative pursuit of pleasure.

Bob spread her pussy lips with his thumbs, exposing her completely. He sucked her clit, creating a pressure that sent electricity shooting along every nerve.

"God," Jess gasped.

Bob's technique was extraordinary, somehow identifying exactly how she to be touched, how much pressure, how much variation she liked.

As the pleasure built from Bob's relentless tongue, Jess found it increasingly difficult to concentrate on pleasing him. She stopped sucking, resting her head on his thigh while lazily stroking his cock with her hand.

"Focus on yourself," Bob encouraged. "Let go."

Jess obeyed, surrendering to the sensation.

"You taste so good," Bob growled, his fingers digging into her ass cheeks as he pulled her more firmly against his face. "So wet for me."

The familiar pressure began, that telltale sign of what would undoubtedly be the first of several climaxes if she remained on Bob's face. She knew exactly how this would unfold. Bob would make her come, then immediately transition to inserting his thick fingers and that particular motion with his tongue that seemed designed specifically to trigger her squirting response. By the third orgasm, she'd be limp, satiated, and euphoric, possibly unable to walk straight, depleted of any urgent desire.

And suddenly, that outcome felt wrong. If she let Bob satisfy her completely, what would be left for Tom?

She wanted to be desperate for Tom tonight, to spend the afternoon in a state of simmering arousal. She wanted to bring him not just the story of her encounter with Bob, but the accumulated desire that remained unfulfilled, the edge of arousal maintained but not released.

Jess abruptly lifted herself off Bob's face, leaving him looking surprised and confused.

"Today's about you," she explained, moving down her body. "Not me."

"I wasn't complaining," Bob said, wiping her abundant wetness from his chin. "I was just getting started."

"I know," Jess replied, settling between his legs again. "But I want to finish what I started."

She spat on his cock, creating fresh lubrication. She then wrapped both hands around it, one on top of the other, and began moving them in a circular motion while taking the head into her mouth.

"The way you do that," Bob panted, "it's incredible."

Jess took his praise as encouragement. She experimented with different pressures, speeds, and rhythms, cataloging his responses to identify what brought him the most pleasure. When she discovered a combination that made her thighs tense and her breathing stutter, she focused on repeating it consistently.

Bob's hands gripped in the sheets. "God, princess. If you keep that up, I'm going to cum."

Jess looked up at him, maintaining eye contact as she continued. "That's the idea," she said before returning her mouth to his cock.

"Your technique is incredible," Bob groaned, watching her.

Jess released him long enough to ask, "Where do you want to cum?"

"Your face," Bob suggested immediately.

Jess laughed, shaking her head. "I'm not that kind of woman."

"Your mouth?"

Instead of answering, Jess stroked faster, sucked harder. Bob's breathing became ragged.

Precum leaked more copiously now.

"I'm gonna cum," he warned, his voice strained. "Jesus fucking Christ."

Jess hesitated for a moment before taking him as deeply as she could, just as the first pulse of her orgasm erupted. The hot splash hit the back of her throat, followed immediately by several more. The volume overwhelmed her, thick cum filling her mouth faster than she could swallow.

Despite his best efforts, cum spilled from the corners of his mouth, dripping down his chin and onto his shaft.

She pulled back, coughing, but continued stroking until Bob was completely spent.

"Holy shit," Jess said, wiping at the excess cum on her chin. "That was a lot."

"Good god, woman," Bob managed between heavy breaths. "You're something else."

"Do you always produce this much?" Jess asked, genuinely curious. The sheer volume of his ejaculation far exceeded anything in her experience.

"Only when properly inspired," Bob replied with a lazy grin. "Do you always swallow?"

Jess smiled. "Tom tastes so good that I always get every last drop."

She gave his cock a final lick before rising from the bed. "I should clean up," she said, moving toward the bathroom.

Inside, Jess confronted her reflection in the mirror. Thick globs of Bob's cum clung to his chin.

She instinctively licked her lips, tasting him again, before wiping away the rest.

Her cheeks were flushed, eyes bright with arousal and exhilaration. The woman staring back at her looked satisfied yet hungry, as if what she'd experienced had only whetted her appetite for more.

This encounter had been different from the previous ones. Each escalation before had maintained at least the pretense of incidental progression, a massage that became more intimate, a handjob that evolved into a brief taste.

Today, she'd arrived with clear intent, had chosen lingerie over swimwear. There could be no pretending this was anything other than a purposeful choice to pleasure Bob.

The honesty of it felt refreshing. No more hiding behind plausible deniability. No more accidental boundary crossings. Just simple desire and its satisfaction.

When she returned to the bedroom, Bob had wiped the cum from his belly with his shirt and was now wearing just his shorts. Jess quickly retrieved her bra and thong.

"How was it?" she asked as she fastened her bra, suddenly curious about her assessment.

"You're the most gorgeous woman I've ever been fortunate enough to spend time with," Bob replied, his tone mixing awe with affection. "I can die happy now."

Jess laughed, tugging her thong into place. "Let's not be that dramatic."

"Are we meeting this Thursday?" Bob asked, watching as she adjusted her lingerie.

"We'll see," Jess replied noncommittally, not wanting to make definite plans.

Bob nodded. "Of course."

"I should head back upstairs," she added. "Things to do."

"Thanks for making my day," Bob said as she moved toward the door. "Possibly my year."

Jess smiled over her shoulder. "My pleasure."

She quickly exited through the shared laundry room, navigating the short distance to the staircase that led back to her and Tom's space.

She headed straight for the bedroom, grabbing her phone. Her body thrummed with residual arousal, thoughts already turning to Tom's return.

She opened her messages and sent him a text.

Jess: I'm soooo fucking horny right now. You need to rush home and fuck me.