

# THE CONTACT

*Part 6: The Descent*

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## Chapter 6 — “The Descent”

The clock read four-fifty and James had already been staring at it for forty minutes.

Jenna beside him, breathing slow, one leg thrown over the bunched sheet. The sheet had slipped to her thighs in the night and her ass was right there — heavy, pushed out of the underwear she slept in, the cotton riding up and lost between her cheeks because nothing she owned could contain that shape by morning. The ass he’d been opening with graduated plugs for three weeks. The ass he was going to finally fuck tomorrow night.

His cock thickening against his thigh before he was fully conscious — the replay starting on its own the way it did now, running itself without permission.

*What if I’ve been going to his apartment. Letting him bend me over his kitchen counter after work while you think I’m stuck in traffic.*

Six hours ago. Her hand wrapped around him in this bed. Her voice in his ear while she worked him over with that patient, devastating grip, and his whole body clenching and betraying him at the same time. She’d pinned his wrist when he reached for her. *Just this. Just my hand.* And he’d come like a man being turned inside out.

The mediation ran underneath it. Carpet cleaner and Sandra’s pen and Braddock looking at him point-blank: *Was the filing partly a response to the chemistry itself?* James hearing his own voice — steady, almost convincing — say the word *threatened*. In a room with three strangers and his wife and the man whose finger had been in his wife’s ass on their couch. Sandra wrote it down. And Jenna’s eyes had drifted toward Ray’s side of the table. Half a second. Involuntary. Confirming.

He got up. Shower running hot enough to turn his shoulders red, the water drumming on tile while his mind kept doing the thing it wouldn’t stop doing. The two memories braided together: the conference room where he’d said *threatened* out loud, and the dark bedroom where his wife had made him come so hard he’d grabbed her wrist with both hands. Connected. The same wire running through both, carrying the same current, and he couldn’t find where to cut it.

Tomorrow.

Tomorrow night he was going to slide his cock into his wife's ass for the first time. Slow. Lube warming between his fingers, her face in the pillow, her breathing going shallow the way it went when the plug opened her — that small caught sound and then the exhale, the letting go, the moment her body stopped resisting and just *took* it. Weeks of training. The graduated set in the nightstand. She'd worked up to the large one on her own, standing at her bathroom counter while he watched from the doorway, her thighs shaking, her voice saying *I think I'm ready*.

Saturday. Short ribs braising for hours while she showered and dressed and came to him in whatever she chose, and then the wine and the candles and the bedroom and the thing he'd been imagining for seven years of marriage — her body opening for him where she'd always said no. His. Finally his. The one thing Ray Vogler's finger and four-line text message hadn't taken. Weeks of following another man's blueprint — the plugs, the lube, the graduated patience — and hating every night that the blueprint worked. Hating that Ray had been right. But she'd said yes to *him*. She was opening for *him*. And tomorrow the first cock inside her there would be her husband's, and whatever Ray had started, he was going to finish on his own terms.

He was granite-hard in the shower and he didn't touch himself. He was saving it.

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She was in the kitchen when he came down. Leggings, bare feet, wet hair dark against her neck. Leaning on the counter with her phone and a coffee, and the leggings were doing what leggings always did on Jenna — painted over that ass, the high tight curve of it obscene in workout fabric.

"You're up early."

"Couldn't turn my brain off."

She set her phone face-down on the counter. Full attention.

"Yesterday?"

"Yesterday. Last night. Tomorrow." He poured coffee. "Pick one."

"Yesterday was awful," she said. Direct. "I know what I asked you to say in that room. I know what it cost."

"You didn't ask me to say *threatened*. That was mine."

"I didn't leave you much room in there." Quiet. She knew it. "The way I framed it — you had one answer that didn't blow everything up."

“Yeah.” He drank. The coffee was too hot and he didn’t care. “And I gave it.”

She watched him for a moment. Then, quieter: “Last night was a lot. What I said — while I was—” She gestured vaguely with her mug. “I was testing something. I think you know that.”

He did know that. He’d known it while it was happening — her hand on his cock, her voice finding the exact words that made him throb harder, the precision of it. She’d been mapping him. Finding the edges.

“Did you find what you were looking for?”

She held his gaze. “I found that it works on you. The stuff I was saying. The scenarios.”

“I know it works on me.”

“Does that scare you?”

The kitchen was quiet. He could hear the neighbor’s sprinkler through the window, the tick of it sweeping across their yard.

“Ask me again Sunday,” he said.

She smiled. Small, private, but real. “Fair.” She picked up her phone, then put it down again. “Tomorrow night.”

“Tomorrow night.”

“I want you to know I’ve been thinking about it all week.” She was looking at him steadily now. “Every night with the plug in, I’m thinking about your cock there instead. What it’s going to feel like. Whether I’ll be able to take all of you.”

His hand tightened on the mug.

“I want it to be good,” she said. “I want — I’ve been saying no to this for seven years and I’m done saying no. I want you inside me there. I want to give you that.”

“Jenna.”

“I’m serious.” She pushed off the counter and crossed to him — close, her hand on his chest, her face tilted up. “Tomorrow night. Whatever yesterday was, whatever last night was — tomorrow is ours. Yours. I’m giving you something I’ve never given anyone and I want you to take it.”

He put his coffee down. His hands found her waist and he pulled her against him, her body warm through the thin fabric, and he pressed his forehead to hers and breathed.

“I’ll grab the wine on my way home,” she said against his mouth.

“Deal.”

She kissed him — brief, warm, the taste of coffee — and stepped back. “Go to work. Stop making that face at me or you’re going to be late.”

He picked up his keys. Twenty-four hours.

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Twelve hours before James’s alarm went off, Ray was home from the mediation and hadn’t thought about it once.

That was a lie. He’d thought about it constantly — not the way you think about a problem, but the way you think about a meal that landed perfectly. The meal was finished. The aftertaste was exquisite.

He was sitting at his desk in boxers and an undershirt gone transparent at the belly with sweat. The AC had been broken since Tuesday. He hadn’t called about it. The apartment was dim and close, the Szechuan containers open on the counter behind him filling the room with that sharp oily smell, and his laptop screen was the only real light — bluish, flat, catching the sheen on his forehead and the grey stubble coming in along his jaw. His cock was hard against his thigh. Had been for twenty minutes. He wasn’t touching it yet.

First: the plan.

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He pulled up the calendar app. The pink one — CycleTrack, the icon a small flower, designed for women trying to conceive. Two data points were all it took: the first time, when she’d mentioned her period timing to him in passing and taken Plan B the next morning, giving him a cycle length. The dinner, when she’d told him afterward — bare, freshly creampie’d on her own couch — that she was “nowhere near her window.” That gave him the anchor. The app did the rest: a neat little calendar, days color-coded, a green window highlighted just ahead.

Fertile. This weekend.

The green window was everything. It meant bare vaginal was dangerous for her. It meant she’d resist penetration — she was smart, she was practical, she wasn’t taking Plan B again. Which meant the door she’d close on his cock would open somewhere else. She just needed to be at the right place at the right time.

A data-integrity issue had been sitting in the Ashford receiving-dock system for weeks. A real irregularity — procurement timestamps preceding purchase orders, approval signatures backdated. He’d spotted it months ago and sat on it. Buried it under three layers of routine reporting where

Braddock's compliance team would find it exactly when Ray wanted them to find it. Tomorrow morning, an automated reconciliation flag would surface it. By 9 AM Braddock's office would have the email drafted: both leads required on-site, two days, hotel booked. Jenna's phone would buzz while she stood at her kitchen counter with her morning coffee.

The training was close to done — he'd seen the medium plug seated in her during their last one-on-one, the slight shift in her posture when she sat down, the careful way she crossed her legs. Comfortable enough to wear to work meant the husband was close. Days, not weeks. James was still being patient. Still doing the careful, tender, pathetic work of preparing his wife's body for a moment Ray intended to steal before it arrived. The Ashford crisis would land Jenna at the hotel deep in the fertile window, the overnight giving Ray the hours he needed. If the training wasn't finished — and Ray was betting it wasn't, because Jenna was still gatekeeping, still making James earn it one careful night at a time — then Ray would get there first. And first was the only thing that mattered.

The fertile window closed the vaginal door. The overnight gave Ray the hours. And the training James had been doing for weeks — the plugs, the patience, the graduated opening — had prepared Jenna's body for a cock she didn't know was coming.

James had trained his wife's ass for Ray. The thought made his cock throb against his thigh and he let it, didn't touch it, held the pressure there the way you hold a good hand before you play it.

The fertile window was a trade. He let himself feel the cost of it — her pussy, bare, the slick grip of her around him on that couch, the sound she'd made when he came inside her without a condom for the first time in her life. He'd miss that. The wet heat of it, the way she'd clenched when he emptied into her, the knowledge that nothing existed between his cock and the deepest part of her. But what James had been training open was something Jenna had never given anyone. The first. The only. That was worth more than what the fertile window was taking off the table.

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The mediation surfaced. He let it.

James in that conference room. The image had a specific quality Ray held on his tongue — the first sip of something rare and aged. Braddock at the head of the table. Sandra's notepad angled away. The two Cortec HR reps flanking. And James Whitfield in his pressed shirt and his careful

haircut and his wedding ring, looking like a man who'd walked into the wrong room and couldn't find the exit.

Braddock had lobbed something neutral — the timeline, the context, something procedural. James's voice going thin. That was the word for it: *thin*. The sound of a man reaching for authority and closing his fist on air. His wife had stepped in — *Ray and I have worked through it. My husband was more upset than I was*. And James had sat there. Hands in his lap. Absorbing it. The image of his own wife reframing him as the insecure one, the overreactor, the man who made more of it than it was — while James sat like a child at the adults' table and let it happen because the alternative was the nuclear option and James was too smart to press the button and too weak to walk away.

The room rearranged in Ray's head. Same conference table. Same fluorescent buzz. Sandra's notepad. Braddock at the head with his hands folded over a folder, the patient bureaucratic expression of a man working through an agenda.

Except now Jenna was standing at the head of the table in nothing but her work skirt hiked to her waist and the white cotton underwear Ray had seen the outline of through her trousers in their last meeting. Barefoot. Her blouse gone, her bra gone, her tits out and her posture perfect — the posture of a woman delivering quarterly findings, except she was half-naked and her nipples were hard and she was looking at Ray the way she'd looked at him from her knees in her office.

*Mr. Whitfield*, Braddock said, in the same tone he used for adjusting the cost-allocation model. *For the record. The next item on the agenda*. He turned a page in the notepad. *Mrs. Whitfield, could you confirm for the mediator — some time after the incident described in the initial complaint, when Mr. Vogler inserted his finger into your anus without prior verbal consent during the dinner of November fourteenth — did you find that acceptable?*

Jenna's hand still on her hip. The professional tilt of her head, the one she used when she was about to disagree with a vendor's timeline.

Yes.

*And the sexual intercourse that preceded it. Unprotected. Could you characterize your level of satisfaction with Mr. Vogler's performance.*

*Exceptional*. No hesitation. The word delivered with the same crispness she used for budget sign-offs. *I came three times. My husband was present*

for all three.

Braddock made a note. Sandra's pen scratched.

*Mr. Whitfield. Your wife has indicated satisfaction. The committee would like to confirm — would it be acceptable to your household if Mr. Vogler took your wife's ass at the Ashford property this Saturday? Bare.*

James across from him. The pressed shirt. The careful haircut. Wedding ring catching the fluorescent light. His mouth a thin line. The HR reps waiting, polite, professional, for the response to log.

*Mrs. Whitfield, Braddock continued, flipping to a new page, a related matter. Has your husband's ass training adequately prepared you for Mr. Vogler's dimensions?*

Jenna looking at Ray now. The dark eyes. The mouth that had said *his cock is so big* into a pillow while her husband fucked her from behind.

*I don't know yet.* The small smile. The one that was supposed to be just for James. Aimed at Ray. *I'm looking forward to finding out.*

*Noted.* Braddock's pen. *Mr. Whitfield?*

James nodding. Once. The slow, controlled, defeated nod of a man who has decided the alternative is worse.

*Noted,* Braddock would say, and turn the page in the notepad.

Ray almost laughed in his apartment. The fantasy was absurd and exactly right — the granular, paperwork-textured version of what had already happened in that room. A small, sour grin pulled at the corner of his mouth and stayed there.

His cock was aching. He'd been hard through the whole thing — the mental theater, the imagined committee, James's nod — and now his body wanted the next thing. Not his hand. Not yet. First he needed to dress her.

He opened the browser. Typed *lingerie* into the search bar and clicked past the first three results — too cheap, too pink, too much like a costume. The fourth site had the right look. Expensive. Clean white background, the kind of photography that made fabric look like it cost what it cost. He needed something for Jenna to put on for him at Ashford. Something that framed her the way he wanted to see her framed. The night has to be perfect.

He opened four tabs and moved through them methodically — assessing, discarding.

Red bodysuit. Sheer lace, cut high on the hips, practically a thong in the back. The model was some anonymous brunette — wrong body, wrong

face, wrong everything. He erased her and put Jenna there instead.

Red lace against that fair skin. The warmth of her coloring making the fabric look like it was burning against her body. Her tits — heavy for her frame, the dark of her nipples shadowing through the sheer cups, straining the lace because everything was a size too small on Jenna, her body exceeding whatever you put it in. He imagined her riding him in it — red lace bunched at her waist, her hands braced on his gut for leverage, those tits bouncing in his face while she worked herself down onto his bare cock. Her pussy so wet he could hear it. The red fabric darkening between her thighs where their bodies met. His hands gripping her hips hard enough to shred the lace.

He was fully hard. The head of his cock slick against the cotton of his boxers.

He scrolled.

Black fishnet. Crotchless. The kind of thing where her pussy and her ass were just *there* — framed by the netting like something on display in a case. He put Jenna in it on all fours. The long arch of her back, blonde hair falling across one eye, sweaty, looking over her shoulder at him with that expression she got when she knew exactly what she was doing to a man. Her ass in the fishnet — that *ass* — each cheek heavy enough to overflow his grip, the netting cutting into the soft give of her hips, and below the crotchless gap: everything. Pink. Wet. Open. His cock pushing into her from behind with nothing between them, bare, his gut pressing against the swell of her ass every time he bottomed out, the black netting digging welts into her hips where he gripped the straps and hauled her back onto him.

He clicked through.

Pink babydoll. Sheer, ruffled at the hem, a girlish cut with ribbon straps. Three seconds. Wrong. Too soft. Too sweet. The kind of thing a college boyfriend buys from a mall kiosk. He closed the tab.

And then there it was.

White lace. A teddy. The fabric gossamer-thin, essentially transparent — built to frame, to cling, to show everything while technically covering it. Low-cut. The lace draping over breasts it would never contain on Jenna. A small satin bow between the cups — girlish. Almost bridal. Thong back. He scrolled through the photos and his breathing had changed and his hand was on his cock through the slit of his boxers and he knew.

He put Jenna in it.

The teddy barely there against her skin. Her nipples dark through the lace like shadows pressed against frosted glass. The bow sitting between tits that would strain the cups until the fabric pulled taut and the lace gaped. The thong back disappearing between the cheeks of her ass — that absurd, perfect, heavy ass that had been following him since the first time he saw her walk across a conference room and he'd had to shift in his chair. White stockings. A garter belt with delicate clips framing her thighs, the straps pulling taut where her hips flared.

The red and the black were about fucking. The white was about something else. The woman her mother raised. The wife James married. The woman who wore pearls to client dinners and crossed her ankles under the table and called him *Mr. Vogler* in front of Braddock. That woman, in his room, in intricate white, giving him the thing her husband had been tenderly, patiently preparing for weeks.

Every touch a defilement of it. Every second of his cock inside her a ruin of the picture. The white said: *come to me looking like his, and leave looking like mine.*

He added the garter belt and stockings to the cart. A choker — white lace, narrow, a small silver clasp. White. The complete set.

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His hand wrapped around his cock — thick fingers, the familiar insufficient grip — and he built the image he'd been holding back all night.

Jenna on all fours on the hotel bed. The white teddy still on her — straps slipped off both shoulders, the bow twisted sideways between her shoulder blades, the lace bunched and clinging and coming apart on her body. Garter straps cutting taut lines down the backs of her thighs. The thong tugged aside and balled out of the way, stretched and useless. Face down. Ass up. Blonde hair spilling across the duvet, one cheek pressed into the bedding.

Her ass. Bare. Pushed up toward him. The muscle of each cheek tensed, the crease between them deep, and at the center — pink, tight, puckered, the small ring of muscle that James Whitfield had spent weeks training with graduated silicone and lube and his careful tender voice. *Breathe through it, baby.*

James's encouraging words and handiwork. Ray's cock.

He stroked himself slow. Three and a pause. Three and a pause. Building it.

His cock — bare, thick, slick with her — pressing against that opening. The seal of the head against the muscle. The resistance. Then the give — the first half-inch where her body opened around him and she made a sound. High. Broken. Surprised. The sound of a woman being stretched past what her husband's careful training had prepared her for because her husband's careful training had used silicone and Ray was flesh and Ray was *bigger* — thicker than the large plug, thicker than anything she'd taken, the real thing after weeks of rehearsal with props.

Her face when the head went in. The dark brows pulling together. The mouth opening around the stretch — not a moan, not yet, something closer to a gasp that didn't know how to finish. Her hands fisting the duvet. Her wedding ring catching on the cotton, knuckles going white. The white lace going crooked — riding up over one hip, the strap off her shoulder, the careful bridal picture coming apart on her body one inch at a time as he buried himself deeper.

The sound she'd make when he was halfway. The sound she'd make when he was *all the way*. Different sounds. The first one surprise, the second one something else — lower, fuller, the sound of a body discovering a sensation it had no reference for.

He stroked faster. His gut clenching, his thighs tensing against the chair.

And the look. The one she'd give him over her shoulder — dark eyes wet, mascara starting to run, blonde hair stuck to her cheek with sweat, and that expression. The expression that said *you got there*. The face she'd make for him. For *him*. Not James with his candles and his wine and his patient, tender, pathetic approach — Ray. With his gut and his pockmarked face and his sweat and his ugly thick cock buried in the place James had only ever sent silicone.

The image of James at home. In their bed. The large plug still in the nightstand drawer. Waiting for a first that would never come.

*One last item.* Braddock's voice, formal, measured. *Mrs. Whitfield — the garment you've selected for this evening. You intend to wear it for Mr. Vogler. Not your husband. Is that correct?*

Jenna at the head of the table. The white lace visible at the edges of her open blouse. The dark eyes steady on Ray's across the room. The small smile — the one that was supposed to be just for James — aimed directly at the man who'd bought it.

She nodded. Once. Slow. Without looking away.

He came.

He opened his eyes. Breathing through his mouth. Cock softening in his grip. Come cooling on his knuckles, his stomach, the ruined undershirt.

He sat there for a minute. Let his pulse come back down.

Then he wiped his hand on his undershirt, stood up, and confirmed the shipping address. Overnight delivery. The hotel's front desk would hold the package for him.

He closed the laptop and went to shower. The AC was still broken. The apartment was still hot. He didn't care. In forty-eight hours Jenna Whitfield was going to walk into his hotel room, and when she walked out Sunday morning, she'd feel him with every step — his cock's work written into the muscle of her ass, stretched past what the husband's careful plugs had ever asked of it.

He'd set everything into motion. All that was left was the evening itself.

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The email landed in Jenna's inbox on Friday morning, the day after the mediation. From Braddock. Subject line: *Ashford — Data Integrity / On-Site Required*. She was at her kitchen counter with her second coffee, James in his office down the hall on a call, and she opened it standing up.

Four paragraphs of dry technicality she had to read twice to absorb. Procurement entries that didn't reconcile. Vendor payment timestamps preceding the corresponding purchase orders. Approval signatures dated after the disbursements they were meant to clear. A migration error or a compliance breach — the kind of ambiguity that turned a Friday meeting into a forensic exercise. Then the last paragraph, which was the one that did it:

*Both the Cortec account owner and the Meridian lead analyst required on-site. Two days. Hotel booked. Tomorrow through Sunday.*

She read it twice. Three hours away. Too far to commute. Tomorrow through Sunday.

She turned, put her back to the counter, and looked at the grey backyard through the kitchen window. Ray would be there. Same floor. Adjacent rooms. Tomorrow night — Saturday night. *Saturday is ours*, James had said, his hand on her hip in the dark hallway after they'd brushed their teeth. Saturday was the date they'd been building toward. And now Saturday was a hotel in Ohio with Ray two doors down.

She heard James end his call. She picked the coffee cup back up and held it with both hands until she could trust them again.

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She told him while he was rinsing his glass at the sink.

“Braddock’s sending me to Ashford tomorrow. Overnight. Through Sunday.”

He turned off the tap. Set the glass down. The dishwasher hummed through its cycle and for three seconds that was the only sound in the kitchen.

“Who.”

“Ray and me.”

James looked at her. She was leaning against the counter with her arms crossed — the posture she took when she’d already made the decision and was delivering it, not discussing it.

“He made this happen.”

“Probably.”

“Probably.” James said the word back to her and let it sit. “A procurement irregularity surfaces the morning after a mediation he sailed through, and it just happens to require both of you on-site with a hotel room on a weekend.”

“I know what it looks like.”

“It looks like what it is.”

Jenna didn’t flinch. “The irregularity is real. The timestamps don’t reconcile. Whether he planted it or found it and sat on it — I can’t prove either and neither can Braddock’s team. It’s a real compliance flag and I’m the Meridian lead on the account.”

“And if you say no?”

“Then I’m the analyst who refused to show up for a site audit on a deal I’ve been running for eight months. While the HR complaint is sitting in probationary status.” She held his eyes. “I can’t say no, James.”

He knew. He’d known before he asked. The asking was the last door he could try before admitting the hallway was a dead end.

“Saturday,” he said.

She didn’t answer immediately. The word did its own work in the room.

“Yeah.”

He leaned back against the sink. Crossed his arms. Mirror of her posture, three feet of kitchen between them — the leggings painted over her

hips, the t-shirt slipping off one shoulder, wet hair dark against her neck, bare feet on the tile. The hottest woman he had ever seen in his life, telling him she was spending the weekend in a hotel with another man. “I’ve been thinking about Saturday for three weeks. Every night I’m beside you in that bed — I’ve been counting down to it. You know how much I’ve been looking forward to this, and he just takes it.”

“He’s taking a Saturday. He’s taking a work trip. He’s taking a hotel room.” She held his gaze. “He’s not taking that.”

“He’s taking you three hours away on the one night—”

“James. He gets a conference room and a procurement audit. You get Sunday. You get me. You get everything we’ve been building toward.” She pushed off the counter. “Those are different things.”

He breathed. Let it sit.

“Nothing is going to happen,” she said.

The sentence landed between them and they both heard it. The last time those words had been in this kitchen, Jenna was cooking dinner sending James to open the door for Ray. By midnight his cock was in her mouth. By one AM he was fucking her bare on their couch — no condom, no discussion, James in the armchair watching his wife take another man inside her without a single barrier between them. *Nothing is going to happen* had a history in this house.

He could see her remembering it too. The small shift in her expression — the acknowledgment that she’d said the wrong thing, or the only thing available, and they both knew what it was worth.

“Tell me why,” he said. “Tell me why this time is different. Specifically.”

She looked at him. Measured something in his face. Then:

“I’m in my window. So even if he tried — which he won’t — I can’t go bare. I won’t take Plan B again.” She said it flatly. The facts of the situation, delivered the way she delivered project timelines. “It’s a procurement audit, James. Two days of spreadsheets and Braddock breathing down our necks.”

“With Ray.”

“With Ray.” She didn’t flinch. “Who is a colleague. On a work trip. With HR watching.”

“HR isn’t watching at eleven PM in a hotel hallway.”

“He’s a fifty-three-year-old man who sweats through his shirts. I’m not — James, come on. I’m going to sit in a conference room and come home.”

She said it like it was simple. Like the man who'd fucked her bare on their couch eight weeks ago was just a number on an org chart. And maybe she believed it — or maybe she needed James to believe she believed it. He couldn't tell. He'd stopped being able to tell, somewhere in the last month, where her certainty ended and her performance of certainty began.

“Okay.”

“Okay?” She looked at him. Waiting for the other thing. The thing underneath *okay* that she could feel him holding.

“I just—” He exhaled. “He’s smarter than we give him credit for. That’s all. The timing of this. The way it landed on a Saturday. *Our* Saturday. You don’t think that’s—”

“I think he’s opportunistic. I think he probably sat on the irregularity until it was useful.” She held his gaze. Steady. “That’s different from me being in danger.”

*Is it?* He wanted to ask. He wanted to ask what she thought the opportunity *was*. But the question had an answer he didn’t want to hear in this kitchen, standing upright, with the lights on. That answer belonged somewhere else — the dark, her hand on him, the voice she used when she was testing which bruise made him hardest.

“He’s a disgusting man,” James said instead. The thing they could both agree on. The safe ground.

“He is.” Something crossed her face — fast, barely there. A flicker that wasn’t quite disgust and wasn’t quite anything else. Then it was gone, replaced by the steady look she was giving him. “And he’s my colleague and I’m going to survive a work trip and come home Sunday and be yours.”

She came to him. Close enough that he could smell her hair and see the flush starting at her collarbones, and even now, even furious, he wanted her so badly his hands ached. Her hand on his jaw, thumb tracing the line of his cheekbone.

“You want to know what I’ll be thinking about in that hotel room?” The voice shifted. Lower. The register from last night — the one that belonged to their bed and had no business in the kitchen. “I’ll be thinking about coming home to you. About Sunday. About what you’re going to do to me when I walk through that door.”

Her thumb moved across his jaw. The dirty-talk voice making a promise that was also, he understood, a deflection. A door closing on the conversation they’d been having and a different door opening — one she

could control, one that pointed toward them instead of toward the thing in Ohio.

“The wine,” he said.

“The wine. Candles. Whatever you want.” Her eyes. Dark, steady, the faintest edge of the woman who’d whispered *come like the man who sat in that chair* twelve hours ago. “Sunday night is ours. That hasn’t changed.”

He held her gaze. Chose to believe her. Chose it the way you choose a card from a hand where none of them are good — not because it was the right play, but because it was the only one that let him stay in the game.

“I’ll call you before bed,” she said. “Both nights.”

He put his hand over hers. Held it against his face. The kitchen was quiet except for the dishwasher cycling into rinse.

“Okay,” he said. One word. The word that meant: I see the trap, and I can describe every piece of it, and I’m letting you walk into it because the alternative is being the man who couldn’t. “Okay.”

She kissed him — brief, warm, her lips tasting like the wine they’d had with dinner — and stepped back. They moved through the rest of the evening carefully, together, the silence between them full of what they’d said and the one thing sitting underneath all of it: that she’d told him nothing would happen, and he’d chosen to believe her, and the last time he’d made that choice he’d spent the night watching Ray Vogler fuck his wife.

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The drive was three hours of flat highway and the kind of weather that turned Ohio into a colorless rumor of itself. She drove her own car — Meridian had offered a corporate ride and she’d declined without thinking about why and then thought about why for the first forty miles.

Dark jeans. V-neck cashmere in oatmeal, ankle boots. Heels packed in the duffel for the evening sessions because Braddock liked the senior team looking the part once the day shifted to dinner with the facility leads. Coffee in the cup holder going cold. Podcast on, not listened to. The phone face down on the passenger seat because Ray had texted at 9:14 — *driving in. see you at noon* — and she had not answered.

Three hours is a long time to sit with yourself.

She kept coming back to James’s face. Last night in the kitchen — the anger, the fear, the thing underneath both that she’d pressed on and he’d stopped her. *Not tonight*. The firmness of his hand on her wrist. She’d felt it

the way you feel a guardrail on a mountain road: the thing between you and the drop. He'd been right to stop her. She'd been cruel to start.

And before that — the night before the night before — her hand on him in the dark, his body answering every escalation. She'd been testing him and the test had been conclusive and the conclusion was something she was still holding at arm's length, turning over, not yet sure what to build on it.

Mile marker 47. The highway unreeling gray and flat. A semi passed her and the car shuddered in the draft.

The office.

She didn't want to think about the office. Her body thought about the office — the memory lived in her thighs and her jaw and the low pull behind her navel that arrived without invitation. On her knees on rough corporate carpet, the plug seated full inside her, his cock in her mouth and his hand on her head and the taste of him on her tongue and the sentence she'd said — *please let me suck your cock* — that she still heard in her own voice at unexpected moments. In meetings. In the shower. Lying next to James in the dark while he breathed the steady breathing of a man who trusted her.

Ray had come to her office with leverage they both knew was an excuse, and she'd let him close the door, and somewhere between the pretense of options and his hand on her head she'd gone to her knees with his balls against her chin and her eyes looking up at him and the sound of her own voice begging for something she hadn't known she wanted until it was in her mouth.

And she hadn't told James.

The secret sat differently now. It had calcified. Become part of the structure of her daily life — she moved around it the way you move around furniture, unconscious of the accommodation until someone pointed it out. She thought about it less. Felt it more. The weight of it surfacing at odd moments: James kissing her good morning, her mouth that had been somewhere else. James saying *I trust you*, the trust landing on her like a hand.

Except — and this was the part she couldn't stop turning over, the part that made the guilt curdle into something stranger — she knew what his body did when she told him the version where he didn't know. *What if I've been going to his apartment after work while you think I'm stuck in traffic.* His cock had jumped so hard she'd felt it through her whole palm. *What if*

*you can't even tell.* He'd come faster to that than to anything else she'd said. The fantasy that got James off hardest wasn't the one where he watched. It was the one where she did it behind his back and he was oblivious. And she was *living that fantasy* — giving him exactly what his body begged for in the dark — and he didn't know. Couldn't consent to knowing. The thought made her feel sick and powerful in equal measure, and she didn't know what to do with either feeling so she held them both and drove.

Mile marker 83. She passed a truck stop and the gas station where she'd buy coffee on the way back Sunday. She was already planning the return trip. Already building the Sunday version.

*I'm going to sit in a conference room and come home.*

She believed it. Mostly. The part of her that didn't believe it was the same part that had said *please* on her office carpet. The same part that had clenched around the plug when Ray's hand settled on her skull and everything in her head went silent. That part didn't believe anything she told it. That part operated below language, below decision, in the body's own logic where disgust and desire shared a frequency she couldn't separate by force of will.

But — and this was the thing she was building the whole drive around, the wall she was constructing mile by mile — she didn't have to separate them. She just had to not act on them. Not acting was a skill. She'd been not-acting on impulse her entire adult life: not kissing the wrong person at the Christmas party, not telling her mother about the pregnancy scare at twenty-two, not saying *I hate this city* to James when they moved for his job. The muscle was there. She just had to use it for forty-eight hours.

The sign for Dayton came and went. Thirty miles.

She thought about the plug. The one she'd put in that morning in her office, standing at the bathroom mirror — not the small one, the medium — before Ray knocked. The one her husband had bought and warmed in his hands and eased into her with patience and tenderness. The one that was seated inside her while another man's cock filled her mouth. The image had a quality she couldn't look at directly, the way you can't look at a bright thing without squinting. The transgression of it. The geometry of her body — James's project below, Ray's cock above, her on her knees in the middle holding both of them inside her without either of them knowing about the other.

Something about it. She couldn't put her finger exactly on it. Something about the doubleness — the two men's investments in her body overlapping in a single moment that neither of them would ever see from the outside. Something about being the only person who knew the full truth. Something about the ugliness of it — the crude, thick, sweating man and the patient careful husband and her body holding both of them and the pleasure cutting through her like a blade that didn't care whose hand was on the handle.

She'd put the plug in that morning.

She hadn't planned to. She'd stood at the bathroom mirror at 6 AM with the medium in her hand and her toothbrush in the other and thought: *why*. The answer that came wasn't about Ray. It was about being ready for Sunday — about staying open, staying where James had gotten her, not losing two days of ground to conference rooms and hotel beds. The answer after that — the honest one, the one she didn't examine too long — was about the way it made her sit. Straighter. More present. The small constant hum of awareness that sharpened everything, the way a second coffee sharpened a morning. She'd worn it to work before. She knew what it did to her posture, her focus, the way she occupied a room. Today she needed every edge she could find.

She turned up the podcast. Something about housing starts. Listened to forty seconds and turned it off.

The Ashford property was a glass and steel rectangle on a flat lot off a state road, the kind of corporate building that existed to house servers and middle managers and looked it. She pulled into the lot. Ray's car — a black sedan, larger than it needed to be — was already in the row marked for visiting executives. He'd arrived before her.

Of course he had.

She sat for thirty seconds with the engine off and looked at his car. Built the wall one more time in her head: conference room, audit, dinner with Braddock, her room, locked door, phone call to James, sleep. Sunday morning. The drive back. The door opening. James. The romantic dinner. Everything she'd promised.

The wall held. Right now, sitting in the car, the wall held.

She got out.

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She was in the second-floor corridor pulling her laptop bag onto her shoulder when Ray came around the corner. Moving fast for a man his size

— the kind of purposeful stride that made people step aside without being asked. He saw her and changed trajectory, angling toward her, and before she could compose the professional smile she'd rehearsed in the elevator mirror he was beside her, close, his hand on her elbow steering her two steps back from the conference room door.

“We have a problem.” Low. Not the voice from the office — not *Blondie*, not the lazy drawl. This was the other Ray. The one who closed nine-figure deals and hadn't lost a client in a decade. His eyes were sharp and dry and looking at her with the focused attention of a man who was about to move a room.

“Patel's not here to validate the migration theory. She's here to pin it on our integration. Garrison's been feeding Braddock a story for two weeks — vendor-side failure, receiving-dock discrepancies he blames on our layer. If that sticks, the deal restructures and our commission evaporates. Both of us.”

She looked up at him. Close enough to smell — the cologne too heavy, the warmth underneath it, the musk she'd had in her nose on her knees in her office.

“How do you—”

“Because I've been in forty rooms like this and you haven't.” He said it without cruelty. The flat assessment of a man stating a fact. “This isn't about the data. Your analysis is bulletproof — I've read it twice. This is about who controls the room when the auditor's pen comes out. Garrison's going to try to put you on your heels and then Patel's going to write down whatever version of the story is standing when the dust settles.”

His hand was still on her elbow. She was aware of it the way she was aware of the plug — a constant, low-grade signal running beneath everything else.

“Your numbers are right. But being right isn't enough in a room like this — I've watched people who were right get buried because they defended when they should have attacked. You handle Patel on the technical. When Garrison moves — and he will — you look at me. Don't respond to him. Don't engage. Let me work.”

*Let me work.*

“I've done this a hundred times.” His eyes holding hers. The certainty in them absolute — not arrogant, just true. The certainty of a man who had been winning rooms since before she'd finished her MBA. “Your job is the

data. My job is the kill. Follow my lead and we walk out of here with the deal intact. Both of us.”

*Follow my lead.*

The words settled into her body before her brain finished processing them. The same tone — the same assumption of compliance — as *get that for me* and *on your knees, Blondie*. The quiet directive of a man who had never once wondered whether the room would rearrange itself around his instructions.

“Okay,” she said.

He let go of her elbow. Straightened his tie. Became, in one breath, the professional version — the senior Cortec rep walking into a compliance audit with his game face flat and nothing in his expression suggesting his hand had ever been anywhere near her body.

“Good girl.” Barely audible. Already turning toward the door.

Her thighs clenched. The plug shifted.

She followed him in.

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The conference room was glass-walled, beige carpet, an oval table seating twelve. A black polycom sat dead center, green LED blinking — Braddock dialed in from Chicago. The on-site arrangement had been his directive from the original email: both leads in the room together, compliance auditor face-to-face, no phone wall between Cortec and the findings team.

At the far end: Patel, senior compliance auditor — mid-forties, glasses pushed up on her head, a legal pad already half-filled. Three chairs down, her junior, writing in tight controlled bullets. Across from Jenna: Garrison. Ashford’s facility operations lead — a man in his late forties whose title had grown faster than his capability, the kind of middle manager who survived by deflecting blame downward and sideways. Laptop open. The studied casualness of a man who had loaded his ammunition before the door opened.

And beside Garrison, taking the chair without being directed to it, spreading into it the way he spread into everything: Ray. Sleeves already pushed past the forearm. The posture of a man settling in for exactly as long as it took to win.

Patel opened.

“I want to start with the disbursement sequence. Ms. Whitfield, your reconciliation report identifies the timestamp inversions as a migration artifact — batch-processing lag creating phantom precedence. Walk me through the mechanism.”

Jenna walked her through it. The system-architecture migration from legacy to SAP, the twenty-four-hour batch windows, the way disbursement records processed in FIFO sequence while purchase orders ran on a separate parallel queue. The inversions weren't fraud. They were a sequencing artifact — two systems talking to each other on a slight delay, creating timestamp overlaps that looked like backdating but were actually just queue collision.

Patel listened. Her pen moved. Halfway through, she held up a hand.

“The batch-processing windows — are those configured at the vendor level or the facility level?”

“Vendor level. Cortec configured them during the Phase I integration handoff.”

“And those configurations were validated by the receiving-dock team on-site?”

“They were signed off in the Phase I acceptance documentation. I have the sign-off sheet — Garrison's team countersigned.”

Patel wrote something. Looked at Garrison. Back at Jenna.

“Walk me through how the disbursement timestamps preceded the corresponding POs for three consecutive weeks if this is purely a migration artifact. Three weeks is a long window for a sequencing lag.”

Jenna pulled the data. Walked through the three-week window — the system migration had overlapped with a receiving-dock staffing transition, creating a compounding lag where manual entries were being backdated to align with the automated queue. She showed the normalization after week three when the staffing issue resolved. The pattern disappeared. The timestamps aligned.

Patel sat back. Considered.

“The methodology is sound on its face. But I'm still looking at three weeks of anomalous data that could support either interpretation. Ms. Whitfield, have you ruled out the possibility that the batch-processing configuration itself was incorrectly implemented at the integration layer?”

Before Jenna could answer, Garrison leaned forward.

“That’s what I’ve been flagging for weeks.” His voice the particular flavor of reasonable that corporate men used when sliding a knife between someone’s ribs. “With all respect to Ms. Whitfield’s analysis — and it’s thorough work, I’m not questioning the effort — the foundation it rests on assumes the integration layer was implemented correctly. My receiving-dock team has been documenting discrepancies with the vendor-side configuration for weeks. I’ve raised it internally. If the system architecture has a flaw at the integration point, then Ms. Whitfield’s entire reconciliation methodology is built on a faulty premise.”

He said it to Patel but it was aimed at the polycom. At Braddock. At the record. The move was clean — wrapped in professionalism, anchored by “weeks of flagging,” positioning himself as the responsible party who’d been raising concerns no one listened to. And if it landed, Jenna’s analysis — her bulletproof, airtight, correct analysis — would be footnoted as *built on unvalidated assumptions* in Patel’s findings letter.

She opened her mouth.

Ray’s hand moved on the table. One inch. A gesture so small it might have been involuntary — his index finger lifting from the wood and settling back down. She saw it. Closed her mouth.

*Look at me. Don’t engage. Let me work.*

Ray otherwise stayed perfectly still. The same position he’d held for five hours — weight settled, hands flat, the patience of a man who had been waiting for exactly this moment since he sat down.

“Garrison.” Quiet. Almost friendly. “Six weeks of documented discrepancies with the vendor configuration. That’s a long time.”

“It is. We’ve been—”

“Who did you escalate to?”

Garrison paused. The pause was a half-second. Maybe less. But the room heard it.

“My team raised it through our internal—”

“Not internally.” Ray’s voice hadn’t changed register. Hadn’t gotten louder. The same easy tone — the tone of a man asking about the weather, about a lunch order. “You said you flagged discrepancies with the *vendor-side* configuration. The vendor is Cortec. I’m senior account on this engagement and I have been for fourteen months. Did anyone from your team contact me? An email? A call? A flag in the project-tracking system?”

Garrison’s mouth opened. Closed.

“Because I went through my records this morning.” Ray reached for the folder beside his laptop — the motion of a man reaching for a glass of water. He opened it. A single printed sheet. “This is the Phase I integration acceptance document. Your signature is at the bottom. Dated two months ago. The configuration you’re now calling flawed — you validated it. Personally. You signed off on the batch-processing architecture, the queue parameters, and the disbursement-routing logic.” He slid the sheet two inches toward Patel’s end of the table. “You accepted the deliverable as meeting spec. Two months ago.”

The polycom crackled. Braddock’s voice: “Neil, did your team accept the integration deliverable at Phase I close?”

Garrison’s face had lost a shade of color. “The acceptance was — the scope of the sign-off didn’t necessarily cover—”

“It’s a comprehensive acceptance form.” Ray still hadn’t raised his voice. “Section three: *System architecture validated and confirmed operational per agreed specifications*. Your initials are on every page.”

Patel was looking at Garrison with the expression of an auditor recalculating which direction her findings letter needed to point.

“So here’s what I’m curious about.” Ray sat back. The chair creaked under his weight. “If the integration layer has been flawed since Phase I, and your team signed off on it, and then your receiving-dock team documented six weeks of discrepancies they never escalated to the vendor — what exactly was your operations team doing for six weeks, Garrison? Because from where I’m sitting, it sounds like you accepted a system, failed to flag issues through the contractual channel, let anomalies accumulate for half a quarter, and now you’re asking this auditor to put it on the woman who found the problem and diagnosed it correctly.”

Silence. The polycom LED blinked.

“That’s — that’s a mischaracterization of the—”

“Ms. Patel.” Ray turned to the auditor. Not dismissing Garrison. Worse — moving past him. The way you move past furniture. “If you need a root-cause finding for your letter, the root cause is a two-month gap in operational escalation at the facility level. The timestamps are a symptom. Ms. Whitfield diagnosed the symptom correctly. The disease is sitting at the other end of this table.”

Garrison’s laptop screen reflected blue light onto a face that had gone very still.

Braddock's voice through the polycom: "I'm going to want Garrison's team's escalation records for the last six weeks. Garrison, have those to my office by Tuesday." A pause. "Jenna, your reconciliation methodology stands. We'll build the findings brief around the migration-artifact framework. Good work."

"Thank you," she said. Her voice level. Professional. Giving away nothing.

Garrison stared at his screen. Patel made a note. Her junior turned a page.

Ray picked up his water glass and drank. Set it back down. The small satisfied motion of a man who had drawn the right card at the right moment because he'd stacked the deck before he sat down.

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The meeting continued. Four more hours of reconciliation detail — line items, disbursement logs, quarterly cadence reviews. Patel asked questions. Jenna answered them. The adversarial edge was gone from the room. Garrison spoke twice more, both times about peripheral operational details, both times without meeting Jenna's eyes or Ray's.

But underneath the clean professional surface, something else was running.

Every time Ray spoke — his voice filling the room, effortless, the voice of a man who had never needed to raise it — the plug shifted inside her. Not because she moved. Because her body clenched around it. Involuntary.

She'd watched him dismantle Garrison. He'd had the sign-off sheet ready. He'd been sitting on it for hours, waiting for the exact moment Garrison committed to his position before producing the document that made the position untenable. The patience of it. The precision. The absolute certainty that the room would move where he pointed it once he decided to point.

She knew this feeling.

She'd felt it on her knees under a conference table with his hand on her head. The silence. The absolute silence in her mind when he said *good girl* and her body answered before her thoughts could intervene. The same quality was here — diluted, professional, operating through contracts and compliance language instead of his palm on her skull — but the quality was identical. The room was his. She was in the room. And something in her

responded to the combination with a submission so automatic it frightened her.

An hour later, Patel asked a follow-up about the Q3 sign-off cadence — routine, no trap in it — and while Jenna was pulling the data, Ray spoke.

“Jenna’s Q3 analysis flagged the anomaly before anyone else saw it. For the record.” He said it to Patel but his eyes moved to Jenna. A glance — half a second, maybe less. Not sexual. Not crude. The brief, warm acknowledgment of a man crediting good work.

And her body responded as if he’d put his hand on her head again.

The plug clenched. Heat spread low in her belly and pooled between her thighs. She felt herself getting wet — not gradually, not building, but sudden, the arousal arriving like a switch thrown. The cotton of her underwear pressing damp against her. Her thighs tightening under the table.

*Follow my lead.*

A fantasy flashed in her mind. Him in that chair. Her under this table. The same voice — the one that had said *Garrison* and made a man’s career flash before his eyes — saying *come here*. Saying *open*. His hand finding the back of her head, fingers threading into her hair, pulling her forward between his spread thighs. His other hand on his belt — the clink of the buckle, the rasp of the zipper — and his cock coming free, thick and heavy and already hard, the head dark and slick, close enough that she could smell him. The same voice, above the table, still talking to Patel about disbursement timelines, never faltering — and below the table his hand guiding her mouth onto him, the head pushing past her lips, her jaw stretching around his width. The taste of him flooding her tongue. The plug pressing deep as she shifted her knees on the carpet. And his voice — *the reconciliation methodology is sound* — while her throat worked around the first three inches and her eyes watered and her hand braced against his thigh and his fingers tightened in her hair with a single instruction: *deeper*.

“Jenna?”

She blinked. The conference room. Patel looking at her over her glasses. The junior’s pen hovering. Ray across the table, one eyebrow slightly raised, the corner of his mouth doing nothing, his eyes doing everything.

“Sorry — could you repeat the question?”

Patel repeated it. Cadence review for the migration window. Jenna answered on autopilot — numbers she knew cold, the analyst’s voice coming out level, composed, professional — and her face betrayed nothing

of the fact that thirty seconds ago she'd been imagining this man's cock in her throat under the table while he defended her work to a room full of people.

Ray's eyes held hers one beat too long across the table. Then he looked down at his notepad and wrote something. The small motion at the corner of his mouth. He knew. He'd seen something in her face in that half-second — the flush, the pupils, the micro-expression she hadn't controlled — and he knew.

She spent the next hour answering every question perfectly. Flawlessly. The best work of her career. And underneath it, steady as a second heartbeat: the awareness of him. The way he watched her present — not the content, not the slides. *Her*. The quiet proprietary attention of a man watching something he considered, on some level that professional language couldn't reach, already his.

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Sixth hour. Patel closing her laptop. The junior capping his pen. Braddock wrapping through the polycom: "I'll have the reconciliation brief by Tuesday. Good work today. Both of you." Garrison leaving first, without eye contact, the compressed posture of a man who had walked in planning to bury someone and walked out with his own grave half-dug. Patel shaking Jenna's hand — firm, professional, a degree warmer than she'd been at noon. The junior nodding. The room emptying.

Ray stood last. Stretched — the motion pulling his shirt across his gut and chest, his full size reasserting itself now that the professional stillness was done. He looked at her across the table where the folders still sat and the polycom light had gone dark.

"Told you." The grin pulling at one corner. Not kind. Satisfied. The face of a man who had won a room and wasn't shy about it. "Follow my lead."

She gathered her laptop. Her notebook. Her pen. Stood on legs that had been sitting too long and were also trembling at the inner thigh in a way that had nothing to do with six hours of sitting.

"Dinner's at seven," he said from the doorway. His back already half-turned, hand on the frame — the same posture as *same time next week?* in her office building after his hand on her head, after *good girl*. "Braddock wants both of us with the facility leads. After that—" The shrug. The big shoulders lifting and settling. "I'll be around."

He left. His cologne stayed. The room was empty and she stood in it with the plug seated full inside her and her underwear soaked through and the wall she'd built in the parking lot — *conference room, locked door, phone call to James* — still holding.

She'd built the wall for his persistence. For the knock. For the crude proximity she'd described to James.

She hadn't built it for this.

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Dinner was the hotel restaurant because the day ran until seven and neither of them had eaten since the drive. Braddock had wanted both leads with the facility team, but Garrison begged off — the short goodbye of a man still tasting his own blood — and the two facility engineers followed him out. Which left the two-top by the window, a bottle of Malbec Ray ordered before she sat down, and the specific quiet of two people who had just spent six hours winning something together.

She should have gone upstairs. She knew it the way she knew a line item was wrong before pulling the backup — the certainty running ahead of the proof. But she was hungry and tired and still running on the residual hum of the session, the faint buzz in her thighs that was the plug and was also the six-hour memory of watching him work, and her body had sat down before her judgment weighed in.

The first glass was professional. The remediation timeline. Braddock's sign-off sequence. What Patel needed from her team by Tuesday. Easy. The kind of conversation she could have with her posture straight and her breathing even and the plug behaving itself.

The second glass drifted.

"Garrison's going to be a problem through Tuesday," she said, turning her glass on the tablecloth. "He's embarrassed and embarrassed men get creative with blame."

"Garrison's done. He'll sign off because the alternative is Braddock finding out his team sat on six weeks of discrepancies." Ray leaned back. The chair protested. "I've dealt with a hundred Garrisons. They fold clean once you take the option of not folding off the table."

"You had that sign-off sheet ready for hours."

"Since breakfast."

She shook her head. Almost smiled. "You just sat on it. Through the entire morning session, through Patel's opening salvo, through Garrison's

whole little performance — you just sat there and waited.”

“Waiting’s what I do.”

“It was surgical.” She said it to her glass. Not to him. “The way you let him build his entire case and then produced the one document that made all of it collapse. He didn’t even know it was over. He was still talking.”

“He was still talking,” Ray agreed. The corner of his mouth doing the thing it did — not a smile, just the movement of a man who enjoyed his own competence the way other people enjoyed food.

A couple at the next table caught her eye — the woman leaning in, laughing at something, and the man across from her glancing sideways toward Jenna. The quick scan she’d been cataloguing since she was nineteen. He took in the face, the cashmere, whatever the V-neck was doing, then looked back at his date and pretended he hadn’t. The woman hadn’t noticed. Jenna had. The restaurant’s ambient confirmation: she was still who she was, sitting across from who she was sitting across from, and anyone walking past this table would wonder what the hell the pairing was. The hot blonde in the cashmere and the man who looked like he sold used cars for a living and ate the inventory.

“You did good work today, Blondie.”

Her eyes came back to him. Hard. “Don’t call me that.”

“Force of habit.”

“Break the habit or I’ll break your kneecap with this wine bottle.”

He grinned. The full one — the one that cracked his face open and showed the teeth and made him look like exactly what he was: a large, sweaty, dangerous man who had just been threatened by a woman half his size and found it charming.

“Jenna.” Correcting himself. The grin staying. “You did good work today.”

“Thank you. So did you.” She drank. Set the glass down. “In a terrifying, morally questionable sort of way.”

“I’ll take it.”

Quiet. The restaurant sounds. Silverware, the couple laughing again, a server opening a bottle somewhere behind them. She watched Ray’s hands on the table — the thick fingers, the rough knuckles, the way they rested on the white cloth like they owned the surface. She’d felt those hands on her head two weeks ago. In a conference room. On her knees. The memory was

a powerful thing — it lived in her scalp and her jaw and the low pull below her navel that had been running all day.

She looked away.

“I have something for you upstairs,” Ray said.

She almost laughed. “No.”

“An outfit. Picked it out a couple weeks ago. Had it sent here.”

“Ray.” She put her glass down and looked at him with the version of herself that had filed the HR complaint, the version that had said *don't ask again* at the elevator bank and meant it. “You don't buy me things.”

“Think of it as a celebration.” He spread his hands. The gesture of openness — nothing hidden, nothing threatening. The salesman's favorite posture. “I just saved the biggest deal of your career. I'm not asking for a medal — I'm asking for a little dress up and a lap dance.”

She stared at him. “A lap dance.”

“Come upstairs. Put the outfit on. Give me five minutes. You'd do that much for an esteemed coworker who saved your quarterly review, wouldn't you? Plus, it's not like we don't have history...”

“I would not give a lap dance to Craig from accounting, no.”

“Craig from accounting didn't just pull Garrison's skeleton out of the closet and beat him with it.”

“Craig from accounting doesn't weigh two-seventy and sweat through dress shirts.”

“You're not helping your case.”

“I'm not making a case. I'm saying no.”

And underneath the no — beneath it, behind it, in the part of her that had spent six hours clenching around a plug every time his voice filled a room — a flash. Brief and vivid and completely involuntary. Her in something probably pornographic knowing Ray in the warm light of a hotel room, straddling his lap in the armchair, his hands gripping her hips, and his cock — that thick, ugly, impossible cock — hard against her through the fabric while she rolled her hips and felt him twitch against her. The image was there and gone in two seconds and left heat pooling between her thighs like a spill she couldn't wipe up.

“This — whatever *this* is — is for my husband,” she said. Not sure why she was explaining. “Whatever you're imagining — that's not available. You already took my Saturday by engineering this little field trip. You don't get the night too.”

“I didn’t engineer anything. Braddock’s compliance team surfaced the —”

“Shut up.” Not angry. Almost amused. The exhaustion and the wine giving her a register she wouldn’t normally use with him. “You sat on that irregularity for weeks and surfaced it the day after mediation cleared you. On a weekend. You’re a lot of things, Ray, but subtle isn’t one of them.”

He looked at her. The small eyes doing their calculation. Then the grin — slow, conceding. “You’re smarter than most people I work with.”

“I’m smarter than all the people you work with. Including you.” She picked up her water glass. “The answer is no.”

“Message received.” He picked up his own glass. Drank. Set it down with the careful placement of a man who had heard *no* and was not yet done hearing it. “But I hear you.”

He flagged the server. Asked for the check. Dropped three bills on the table without looking at the total. Stood. The chair scraped back and the full mass of him was upright and the table felt smaller without his presence occupying half of it.

“Enjoy your evening, Jenna.” His hand on the back of her chair as he passed — not her shoulder, not her back. The wood of the chair. The barest displacement of air near her neck. “Room seven-fourteen if you change your mind. I’ll leave the door unlocked.”

“I won’t change my mind.”

“I know.” The grin again, half-turned away, already leaving. “But I like hearing you say it.”

He left. She sat at the table alone. The Malbec was gone. The restaurant was thinning out — the couple at the next table settling their check, a server resetting a four-top. Her phone was in her bag. Her room was upstairs. The plug inside her. The wetness she’d been ignoring for an hour. The image of herself in his lap that she had not asked for and could not entirely unfeel.

She finished her water. Gathered her bag. Went upstairs to her room.

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Ray pulled his phone out as he made it to the elevator.

The hallway was empty. Beige carpet, identical doors, the ice machine humming at the far end. He leaned against the wall and called James.

It rang. Four times. Five. Voicemail.

Ray waited for the beep. Then he started talking — the same voice he used in closing rooms, low and measured, the voice that made people sign

things they'd come in planning to refuse.

“James. Your wife’s going to call you in about ten minutes. She’s going to tell you I asked her to come to my room tonight. Put on an outfit I bought her. Maybe a lap dance.” He watched the elevator arrive. Didn’t get in. Let the doors close. “She said no at dinner. Very firmly. You should tell her yes.”

He let the pause sit. Two seconds. Three. The voicemail still recording.

“Here’s why. Braddock’s probationary window runs eight weeks. That’s eight weeks where one piece of hallway gossip — one overheard comment, one anonymous tip to compliance — triggers a second review. You know what a second mediation looks like? Sandra pulls the file back out. The questions get specific. Someone asks you, on the record, whether you encouraged your wife to have sexual contact with a vendor representative. Whether you suggested she go to his hotel room at a conference. Whether you sat in your own armchair and watched.” Another pause. The grin pulling at the corner of his mouth, though no one was there to see it. “You want to answer those questions in front of Sandra and Braddock? Because I can make that meeting happen with a few rumors. People love to talk.”

He hung up. Pushed off the wall. Started walking toward his room.

His phone buzzed before he’d made it ten steps.

James: *go fuck yourself ray*

Ray smiled at the screen. Typed one-handed:

*I figured. So let me put the easy version in writing. She comes upstairs. Puts on something pretty. Gives me a dance and maybe puts that mouth on me for ten minutes. Then she goes back to her room and comes home to you tomorrow and nobody sits in front of Sandra again. And if we’re being honest — you’ll probably be getting off to the details by midnight. You came in your own fist watching her ride me on your couch, James. Let’s not pretend this is all sacrifice on your end. Those are your options. Pick one.*

Forty seconds. A minute.

James: *you are a piece of shit*

*Yeah.* Ray let himself into 714. Tossed the keycard on the desk. Sat on the bed. The mattress compressed under him. *But I’m a piece of shit who’s offering you the easy version. The hard version involves your wife finding out you’ve been lying to her since the airport.*

His phone buzzed.

James: *you planned this. the whole trip. the irregularity, the hotel. you planned all of it.*

*The irregularity is real. Ask your wife — she ran the reconciliation herself. I just know when to surface things. A beat. Then: I'll send you a video. Proof nothing went past what I'm telling you. A dance, her mouth, and then she walks. You'll have it on your phone before she's back in her own room.*

No response for a full minute. Ray looked at the white shopping bag on the desk — the teddy, the garter, the stockings, all folded in tissue paper — and waited. Patience was physical with Ray. He could hold a silence the way other men held their breath.

At one minute fifty, his phone buzzed.

James: *it stops at the bj. nothing else. she keeps the outfit on the whole time. you dont push past what she offers.*

Ray read it twice. Typed:

*She keeps the outfit on. She does what she wants with her mouth. Then she goes back to her room. Deal.*

Twenty seconds.

James: *and ray. if it goes further than that — even an inch further — i blow this whole thing open. all of it. everything you did. the texts, the switch, the recording. yes i go down too. yes she'll hate me. but you lose her, ray. forever. completely. and we both know thats the worst thing that could happen to you.*

Ray stared at the message. Read it again. The kid had teeth after all. Not many — but enough. Because James was right. Ray could survive exposure. He could survive HR and lawyers and professional fallout. He'd survived worse. What he could not survive — what sat outside the walls of any contingency he'd built — was Jenna Whitfield looking at him with the expression she'd use on a stranger who'd grabbed her in a parking lot. The permanent door-close. The version where she walked through the rest of her career and her marriage and her life and he was nothing in it. Not even a memory she returned to. Just gone.

The kid knew. Somehow, the kid knew where the wire was.

*Deal*, Ray typed. Sent it. Set the phone down.

He sat there for a minute. Let his pulse do what it was doing. Then he stood and unbuttoned his shirt. The room was warm. He hung it on the desk chair. Pulled the undershirt over his head — the gut, the grey chest hair

thinning at the sternum, the ruddy skin that had never once apologized for itself. Left the slacks on.

He thought about her in that restaurant. The cashmere pulled tight across her chest when she'd leaned forward to make a point. The flush on her throat when she'd said *it was hot* and then looked away like the words had come out of someone else. Six hours in that conference room and she'd been squirming every time he opened his mouth. Whatever she was wearing under those jeans had been driving her out of her mind all day and she'd held it together with nothing but professionalism and spite and the wall she kept rebuilding every time he put a crack in it.

He sat in the armchair under the window lamp. Rested his hands on the armrests. His cock thickened against his thigh and he left it there.

Ten minutes. Maybe fifteen.

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James set the phone on the nightstand and stared at the ceiling. Saturday. Tomorrow night. The night that was supposed to be his.

He lay in the dark of their bedroom and felt the anger move through him like something with a pulse. Three weeks. Every night beside her in this bed — the plugs warming in her hand, the lube on the nightstand, the patience, the *breathe through it, baby* that had become their phrase. Her body opening for him one careful increment at a time. The look on her face the first night the medium slid home and she'd said *oh* in a voice he'd never heard before and then laughed and then said *don't you dare stop*. All of it — the tenderness, the trust, the slow work of earning something she'd refused him for ten years — and Ray Vogler takes it with a phone call and a compliance flag he'd been sitting on for months.

He picked up the phone. Played Ray's voicemail again — the voice certain, the cadence of a man selling something he knew you'd buy. Then read the text that followed. The words sitting on the screen like something smeared there.

*She comes upstairs. Puts on something pretty. Gives me a dance and maybe puts that mouth on me for ten minutes.*

He should call Jenna right now. Tell her everything. The texts from the beginning — the spoofed number, the switch at the hotel, the recording Ray cropped. Every lie he'd maintained for months. Blow the whole thing to pieces and let Ray choke on the shrapnel.

Version one. He knew version one. He'd run it a thousand times in this bed, in the shower, at his desk with the variance reports open and his cursor blinking. He tells Jenna the truth. She looks at him with the expression she saves for people who have fundamentally disappointed her — not anger, worse: the withdrawal of warmth, the HR voice, the woman who stops being his wife and becomes someone assessing a vendor who failed to deliver. She would never forgive him. Not for the lie. For letting her believe, for weeks and weeks, that what happened at the hotel was something they'd chosen together. The marriage survives the truth about Ray. It does not survive the truth about James.

Version two. He refuses. Tells Ray to go fuck himself a second time and means it. Ray makes a phone call Monday morning. A rumor surfaces — not evidence, nothing provable, just enough smoke for compliance to reopen the file. A second mediation. Sandra's notepad. Braddock at the head of the table. And this time the questions are different. *Mr. Whitfield, there have been suggestions that the relationship between your wife and Mr. Vogler was consensual — even encouraged. Can you confirm whether the sexual contact at the conference took place with your knowledge or approval?* James in that chair. The pressed shirt. The wedding ring. Answering questions about whether he'd signed off on his wife fucking another man. Whether the whole thing was some kind of arrangement. Whether the complaint was theater. Sandra writing it all down. Braddock's face. Jenna's face.

Version three.

He didn't want to run version three. His body was already running it.

Jenna in a hotel room two doors from Ray. Putting on whatever was in that bag. Walking out in something Ray had chosen for her — lace, straps, whatever a man like that bought when he was dressing a woman like her. Standing in front of him. The dance. His hands on her hips. And then — the part Ray had named so casually, *maybe puts that mouth on me* — Jenna on her knees. Ray's cock. The sound she'd make when the head pushed past her lips, the sound James had heard through a laptop speaker and then heard again, refined and embellished, in her whispered retellings in this bed.

He was hard.

He noticed it the way you notice a bruise — not when it forms, but when you press it. His cock straining against his boxers, the fabric tented,

his pulse beating in it. He hadn't decided to be hard. His body had listened to version three and voted without consulting him.

The nightstand drawer was six inches from his hand. The large plug was in there — the one she'd graduated to, the one that made her gasp and grip the sheets. Beside it, the small one she'd started with. The lube. The whole careful toolkit of a project that was supposed to end tomorrow night with his cock where those plugs had been, in the body of the woman he'd spent three weeks preparing. His project. Built on another man's blueprint.

The medium was missing.

He stared at the gap where it should have been. The small. Then nothing. Then the large. She'd taken the medium with her. Three hours to Ohio, a hotel room, a weekend — and she'd packed the plug in her bag. The one that fit her now. The one she was comfortable with. The question of *why* arose, and every answer was worse than the last.

He picked up the phone again. Not Ray's texts this time.

The photo was in a folder he'd made and buried three screens deep. No label. He opened it the way he always opened it — quickly, like speed made it less of a choice.

Jenna's face. Dark eyes looking up at the camera. Her lips swollen, parted. Ray's cock pressed against her cheek — thick, flushed, a thread of saliva connecting the head to the corner of her mouth. The expression on her face was the thing he couldn't stop returning to. Not shame. Not reluctance. Something else. Something that looked, if he was honest, like a woman exactly where she wanted to be.

He'd AirDropped this to his own phone. Nobody made him do that. James had transferred it to his own device and buried it in a folder and looked at it — how many times now? Ten? Twenty? At two AM with Jenna breathing beside him. In the bathroom with the fan running. At his desk at work with the door closed. Every time telling himself he was studying evidence, building his case, understanding the enemy. Every time gripping himself through his pants within thirty seconds.

He looked at it now. His wife's face. The cock against her cheek. The thread of spit.

His hand moved to his boxers. He stopped it. Held it on his stomach. Felt his cock throb against the elastic and didn't touch it.

She was going to call in a few minutes. She was going to tell him what Ray had asked. And he was going to have to say the words — *what if you*

went, *what if you did it* — and make them sound like they came from him. Like permission. Like the stag deciding. Not like a man who'd been threatened into compliance by the same man who'd fucked his wife on his couch and was now asking for her mouth as a service charge.

The worst part — the part that made him want to put his fist through the nightstand — was that Ray was right. About the couch. About James coming in his own fist while he watched. About the photo on his phone and the dark and the hand in his boxers and the thing he was — not a stag — something the framework was supposed to contain and couldn't. Ray had seen it before James had. Ray had been selling to it for months. And the product was working because the customer wanted it, and the customer was James, and the wanting was the thing he could not make stop no matter how many times he told himself the man on the other end of those texts was a predator and a manipulator and a disgusting human being.

His phone lit up. Jenna's name on the screen.

He let it ring once. Pressed his palm against his cock through the boxers — one second, the pressure almost enough — and then pulled his hand away and answered.

"Hey." His voice steady. Almost.

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"Hey." Jenna pulled her legs up under her. "Long day. We just finished dinner."

"How'd the session go?"

"Good. Actually good — the reconciliation methodology held up. Braddock signed off." She picked at the bedspread with her thumbnail. "Ray was useful. I'll give him that."

"Useful."

"Don't."

"You called to tell me Ray Vogler was *useful*?"

She exhaled. "He was more than useful, James. He had the whole thing mapped before we walked in. Garrison — the facility lead — tried to pin the integration failure on our layer, and Ray just let him talk. Let him build his whole case. And then he pulled out a sign-off sheet with Garrison's initials on every page and the entire room flipped. It was —" She stopped.

"It was what."

"It doesn't matter."

"Say it."

“It was like the mediation.” Quieter now. “The way he just — waits. Sees the whole thing before anyone else knows there’s a thing to see. And then moves.”

Silence on the other end. She could hear him breathing. The sound of a man absorbing something he didn’t want to absorb.

“Yeah.” James’s voice flat. Controlled. “He’s good at getting what he wants. We know that.”

She heard the double meaning. Let it sit between them.

“He asked me to come to his room tonight.”

She said it the way she said everything that mattered — clean, no frame. Let it land.

The silence that followed was wrong. Not the stunned silence she’d expected — not the intake of breath, not the sharp *what*. Something else. A silence that had a shape to it, like a space that had already been cleared.

“What did he ask for.” His voice was careful. Too careful. The measured voice he used when he was managing something.

“He bought me something. An outfit — probably something tasteless and pornographic, knowing him. He wants me to put it on and do a lap dance for him.” She let a beat pass. “I told him no. Firmly. Repeatedly.”

“What did he say.”

“He said *message received* in that voice that means *I heard you and I don’t care*.” She shifted on the bed. “He’s a creep, James. He sat across from me at dinner and asked me for a lap dance like he was ordering dessert.”

Quiet. She waited for the anger. For the version of James who had said *nothing is going to happen on this trip* in their kitchen yesterday morning with his arms crossed and his jaw set. That version would say *absolutely not*. That version would say *lock your door and call me in the morning*.

“Jen.” His voice was different now. Lower. Deliberate. She’d heard this voice before — in the dark, in their bed, in the careful moments when he was building toward something he wasn’t sure he should say. “What if you went?”

Her stomach dropped.

“What?”

“What if you went up there. Put on whatever he bought. Did the dance.” A pause. She could hear him swallow.

“James — what are you talking about?”

“I’m asking you a question. Were you hoping I’d say this?”

The sentence landed in the center of her chest. She opened her mouth. Closed it. The hotel room was very quiet. She could hear the HVAC and her own pulse and the absence of the answer she should have been giving, which was *no, of course not, what is wrong with you.*

“That’s not fair,” she said.

“That’s not an answer.”

She pressed the phone against her ear. Hard. The plastic biting into her cheekbone. Her face was hot and she’d been wet since four o’clock and she’d sat across from Ray at dinner and said no with her mouth while every nerve below her waist said something else — and now James was standing at the door she’d locked and offering her the key and she couldn’t tell if this was a trap or a gift or both.

“I sat at that table,” she said, slow, choosing every word, “and I told him no. And I meant it. And the whole time I was saying it I was thinking about his hands on me while I danced for him and I hated myself for thinking it. Is that what you want to hear?”

“Yes.” Rough. Immediate. The speed of it telling her everything about what was happening on his end of the phone. “That’s exactly what I want to hear.”

“You’re hard right now.”

Silence.

“You’re lying in our bed with your hand on yourself and you’re hard thinking about me going to Ray Vogler’s room.”

“Yeah.” Barely above a whisper. “Yeah, I am.”

She closed her eyes. The guilt and the want twisted together into something that had no name — the specific vertigo of being married to a man whose deepest arousal was the thing that should have been his deepest fear. She’d mapped this. In the dark, with her hand on him, she’d pressed every bruise and catalogued every response. *What if I’ve been going to his apartment. Jump. What if you can’t even tell.* Harder. She knew what James was. She just couldn’t say it out loud yet, and neither could he.

“Okay,” she said. “So let’s talk about this like adults.”

“Okay.”

“If I go up there — *if* — here’s what happens. He gets the dance. He gets to look. And you know he’s going to push for more than looking,

because he's Ray, and what Ray wants from me has never stopped at looking."

"I know."

"So where's the line, James. Where do we draw it. Because I need to hear you say it before I walk down that hallway."

He was quiet. She heard him shift — the mattress, the creak, the sounds of their bedroom traveling through the phone. When he spoke his voice had the quality it got during the dirty talk — raw, stripped, the careful man letting the other thing drive.

"He doesn't fuck you. That's the line. Whatever else happens — the dance, if you end up with his cock in your mouth — he doesn't fuck you. You come back to your room, to me, and that's still mine. Sunday is still mine."

*If you end up with his cock in your mouth.* The sentence hung between them. Not a command. Not exactly permission. Something in between — the sound of a man naming the thing he knew was going to happen and trying to hold it inside a boundary he could survive.

"You want me to suck his cock," she said. Flat. Testing the weight of it in her own mouth. "That's what you're saying."

"I'm saying if it goes there — if *you* take it there — that's as far as it goes."

"If I take it there." She almost laughed. "James. I've had that man's cock in my mouth already. In a hotel room. With his hand on my head and my mascara running and me asking for it. You know that. We've talked about it in this bed for months. The question isn't *if* I'm capable of doing it again. The question is whether I come home afterward or whether something breaks."

"Nothing breaks."

"You don't know that."

"Nothing breaks because you won't let it. That's who you are."

She held the phone against her face and breathed. She wanted to believe him. She wanted to be the woman he was describing — the woman who could walk into a room and do a thing and walk out unchanged. But the woman who had knelt on her office carpet four days ago and said *please let me suck your cock* without being asked — that woman had not walked out unchanged. That woman had walked out carrying a secret she still hadn't told the man on the other end of this phone.

“Okay,” she said. Quiet. The real version. Not breezy, not performed. The voice of a woman making a decision she could feel the weight of. “Okay.”

Quiet. His breathing. She could hear what it was doing to him — the words, the image, her voice in the register that belonged to their bed saying things that didn’t belong anywhere civilized. She was giving him fuel. She knew it. The same way she’d given him fuel two nights ago with her hand on him in the dark, pressing the scenarios that made him throb, mapping the edges of what he could take. Except this time the scenario wasn’t hypothetical. This time it was a room number and a shopping bag and forty feet of hotel corridor.

“I wonder what he bought me,” she said.

The shift in her voice was deliberate. The dirty-talk tone — low, warm, the voice from two AM, from the pillow, from her mouth against his ear while she worked him. She let it come because it was the only language they had for this. The only space where what they were doing made sense.

“Knowing Ray? It’s a vinyl nurse costume. With the little hat. And cutouts where the nipples go.”

“Jenna—”

“Or one of those full-body harness things — just straps, nothing else. Fifteen buckles and a thong made of dental floss. I’d have to read the instructions. There’d be a diagram.”

She heard him exhale. Half laugh, half something else.

“Maybe it’s leather,” she said. Warming to it now. The cruelty and the heat braided together, the voice that made this bearable by making it theirs. “Like a leather corset with the tits just — shelf. Pushed up and out on a shelf, like pastries in a bakery window. And a collar. He probably bought a collar, James. With a little ring on it. For leading me around his hotel room like a poodle at a dog show.”

“You’re enjoying this.”

“I’m *coping*.” But she was smiling. She could hear it in her own voice and she could hear him hearing it. “Or — oh God — what if it’s themed? What if it’s a French maid outfit? A sexy French maid outfit, with the tiny apron and the feather duster? What if Ray Vogler bought me a feather duster?”

James made a sound. The sound from the dark — the involuntary thing his throat did when the image hit right. Except this time it was tangled up

with a laugh he was trying to swallow, and the combination — the heat and the absurdity — was so specifically *them* that her chest ached with it.

“Whatever it is,” she said, softer now, “I guarantee it’s something a fifty-three-year-old man ordered off the internet at midnight with one hand. It’s going to be ridiculous. And I’m going to put it on for him and give him his ten minutes and come back here and call you and we’re going to laugh about it and then I’m going to tell you every detail and you’re going to come so hard you see God.”

“Jen.”

“He gets to look at your wife in his sad little costume. You get to have her. Those are different things.”

Quiet. Both of them holding the phone. The distance between them — three hours of highway, the dark house, the hotel room — compressed into the sound of breathing.

“I want to see it,” James said.

“See what.”

“If you — when you —” He stopped. Started again. The careful man fighting his own sentence. “If it goes there. I want to see it.”

She was quiet for a moment. Not shocked — the request had a logic to it she recognized. The armchair. The laptop screen in the hotel room. James had always needed to *see*. The watching was the thing with James. It had been the thing since the beginning, since the chair in the corner, since his eyes on her while Ray’s hands were somewhere else. He processed through his eyes. He needed the image more than the event.

“You want me to film myself sucking Ray Vogler’s cock.”

“Yes.” No hesitation this time. The word coming out clean, like he’d been holding it in his mouth for minutes and was relieved to spit it out.

“On my phone.”

“On your phone. You hold it or you prop it up or — I don’t care about the production value, Jen. I just want to see your face.”

Something moved through her. Not disgust — she was past disgust with James’s wants. Something closer to tenderness, and under it, the low steady heat that had been running all day. He wanted to see her face. Not Ray’s cock, not the act itself — her face. The expression she made. The version of her that existed in that moment with that man’s cock in her mouth. He wanted to study it the way he studied everything — carefully, repeatedly, in the dark, alone.

“And you’ll watch it.”

“Yes.”

“In our bed.”

“Probably.”

“With your hand on yourself.”

He didn’t answer. He didn’t need to.

“Okay,” she said. Softer. “I’ll figure it out.”

“And Jen.” His voice steadied. The careful man surfacing through the raw one, assembling conditions the way he assembled spreadsheets. “If it goes past what we agreed — if he pushes and you feel it tipping — you leave. You just leave. You say no and you walk out.”

“I will.”

“I need more than *I will*. I need you to mean it. Because he’s good at this, Jen. He’s been good at this since the beginning. He gets you in a room and the room becomes the next room and the next room becomes the room after that. I’ve watched him do it.”

She was quiet. He was right. She knew he was right. The office sat in her chest — the locked door, the pretense of options, the way *no* had turned into *get that for me* had turned into *on your knees* had turned into *please*. She hadn’t said no in that room. She’d said *please*. And she hadn’t told James about it, and she was about to walk into another room with the same man and the same voice and the same hands and promise that this time was different.

“I hear you,” she said. Quiet. Not the breezy version. The real one. “I hear what you’re saying and I’m taking it seriously.”

“That’s all I need.”

Quiet. Then, very soft: “Come home to me tomorrow.”

“I’m coming home to you tomorrow. Sunday. The wine. Everything we planned.” She pressed the phone harder against her ear, wanting the closeness of him, the warmth, the thing she was about to walk away from for a room two doors down. “I love you.”

“I love you.” Then, rougher: “Call me the second you’re back in your own room. Whatever time. Whatever happened.”

“I will.”

“Promise.”

“I promise.”

She hung up. Sat there. The room hummed. Her phone was warm from her face. She looked at the dark window and saw herself in it — the tired woman in jeans and cashmere, the hair let down, the eyes that didn't match the rest of her expression. The eyes were already going.

She stood. Checked her reflection. Pulled the heels from her duffel — the nude pumps she'd packed for dinner and never worn. Held them by the straps. Looked at herself in the dark glass one more time and thought about James in their bed, three hours away, his hand probably still on himself, the images she'd put there — the vinyl nurse, the harness, the collar — playing behind his eyes while he gripped himself and hated how much he wanted this.

She left the room.

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The hallway was long and beige. Identical doors, spaced evenly, the carpet pattern repeating in a way that made the walk feel like a treadmill — moving without arriving. Her heels were in her hand. The small absurdity of the picture — barefoot on hotel carpet, the nude pumps dangling from her fingers like a teenager sneaking back in after curfew — almost made her turn around.

Almost.

Room 714. She stopped. Raised her hand to knock.

The door opened before her knuckles touched it.

Ray. Width and mass and the warm animal smell of him — sweat under starch, the deeper musk that lived in his skin, the heat of a large man in a warm room. He'd changed. The dress shirt was gone. An undershirt stretched over the gut, damp at the chest, the grey hair curling through the neckline. Slacks still on. Bare feet. He'd been waiting behind the peephole or with his ear against the wood — some mode of vigilance that this massive, patient, calculating man had been reduced to. Unable to wait the three seconds it would take for a knock. The eagerness in the gesture was the most honest thing he'd shown her all day.

She looked at him. He looked at her. The hallway hummed behind her.

"I said no," she said.

"You did."

"At dinner. I said no, clearly, several times, and I meant it."

"You meant it."

“And now I’m standing in your doorway barefoot at eleven o’clock at night.”

“You are.”

“This is not a pattern I feel great about, Ray.”

The corner of his mouth moved. Not a grin — something smaller, closer to real. “You want to come in, or you want to keep standing in the hallway telling me about it?”

She stepped past him into the room.

It was hotel-generic: a king bed against the long wall, a desk under the window, a single armchair in the corner under a floor lamp that cast a circle of warm yellow light. The bedspread was smooth. The curtains drawn. Not their living room. Not the couch she’d picked out with James three years ago. Not anywhere she’d been before. The anonymity of it was its own kind of permission — a room that held no memory and would hold none after.

On the desk: a white shopping bag. Tasteful. No logo she recognized. It had the weight of something that had been sitting there all day, waiting.

She turned back to face him. He’d closed the door — the soft click of the latch louder than it should have been — and taken two steps into the room. The bulk of him filling a third of the visible floor space. Close enough that she could see the sweat beading along his hairline, the pockmarks on his jaw rough in the lamplight.

“Rules,” she said.

“Rules.”

“I put on whatever’s in that bag. I give you your dance. If I decide to do more than dance, that’s my decision, not yours. You don’t push. You don’t grab. You don’t do the thing where you tell me what I want before I’ve said it.”

“Jenna—”

“I’m not done.” She held his eyes. “My husband knows I’m here. He knows exactly what we agreed to. If this goes one inch past what I’m telling you right now, I walk out and you spend the rest of the Ashford deal explaining to Braddock why your co-lead won’t be in the same room with you.”

He watched her. The small sharp eyes doing their reading — whatever he saw in her face, her posture, the heels still dangling from her hand. Then he nodded. Once.

“Your show, Blondie.”

“Jenna.”

“Your show, Jenna.”

She looked at the bag on the desk. He looked at the bag. Then back at her, with the small inclining gesture a man uses to offer a chair to a colleague. *That’s for you. In there.*

She picked it up. Felt the weight of it — lighter than she expected. Tissue paper rustled inside. She resisted the urge to open it here, in front of him, with his eyes on her hands. That was a private moment. Whatever was in there, her face when she saw it was hers, not his.

“I’ll be a few minutes,” she said.

“Take as long as you need.”

She walked past him to the bathroom. Felt the warm displacement of air near her shoulder where his body was close enough to touch and didn’t. The door closed behind her and she stood in the fluorescent light and breathed and looked at the bag in her hand and thought: *I’m here. I actually came.*

And then, quieter, underneath: *I was always going to come.*

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Fluorescent light. The harsh, flattening, hospital-grade fluorescence hotels installed to make everything look worse. She stood in front of the mirror and the woman looking back was tired and flushed and had wine on her breath and was holding a shopping bag a fifty-three-year-old man had purchased specifically so she would put on whatever was in it and walk out the door for him.

She opened the bag.

White lace. She pulled the teddy out and held it up and the first thought was: *this isn’t what I expected.* She’d expected crude. She’d expected to feel the insult of his taste and use it as fuel for her contempt and walk out wearing something vulgar and let the vulgarity be the wall between what she was doing and what it meant.

But this was not vulgar.

The teddy was almost beautiful. White lace, delicate, sheer enough that she could see her hand through it when she held it to the light. The cups were soft — no underwire, no structure, just lace that would drape over breasts rather than contain them. A small satin bow sat between the cups. Thong back. She turned it over in her hands, feeling the quality of the fabric, the careful stitching, and the care in the selection was the thing that made her stomach drop. This was not a man grabbing the first slutty piece

on the page. This was a man who had thought about it. Who had built the picture in his head and shopped to match.

The perversity of that was worse than anything crude could have been.

She pulled out the rest. A garter belt — white, delicate hardware heavier than it looked. White stockings, sheer, the kind that caught light. A choker — white lace, narrow, with a small silver clasp. She held the belt against her hip and the clips hung cool against her thigh and she understood immediately what it was for. Not the mall version. The real thing — the kind of garment that existed to frame a woman's legs for a man who knew exactly what he wanted to see between them.

James had never bought her a garter. James had bought her black lace and a wide silk ribbon and a vibrator with a discreet box. A garter belt was a different request — older, dirtier, the kind of thing a man chose when he'd already built the shot in his head and needed her body to match it. She could feel the shot in the weight of the clips against her skin. She could feel what her thighs would look like in the straps. The heat that went through her stomach was not about the garment. It was about the man who'd sat in his apartment choosing it for her, and the fact that the choosing made her wet.

She set the belt on the counter next to the teddy. Her hand was not steady. She did not let herself look at her own face in the mirror yet.

She undressed. Sweater first, pulled over her head, folded on the toilet lid. Jeans. Her own bra — black, practical, the kind she wore to work — and her underwear. She stood naked in the fluorescent light and looked at herself and thought: *James told me to come here*. Not in those words. In the careful, measured, raw-voiced words of a man who couldn't say *I want you to do this* so he said *what if you went* and *were you hoping I'd say that* and let her close the distance herself. But the distance was his to open and he'd opened it and she'd walked through and now she was naked in a bathroom in Ohio with another man's shopping bag on the counter.

She thought about his voice asking her to film it. The roughness in it. The need. She thought about what he'd do with the video — alone, in their bed, in the dark — and the thought sent heat through her stomach that had nothing to do with Ray and everything to do with the man who loved her enough to hand her to someone else and hate himself for how hard it made him.

She stepped into the teddy.

Pulled it up over her hips — the lace catching on her skin, whispering against the flare of her waist, settling over her body like it had been cut for her and it nearly had. She adjusted the straps. Settled the cups. Looked down.

Her tits spilled over the lace. There was no other word for it — the cups were decorative, a suggestion, two scraps of sheer white that pushed her breasts up and together and then gave up the project entirely. The fabric was so thin she could see the dark circles of her areolae through it, the brown-pink flush of them, and her nipples — hard already, hard since the hallway, hard since the phone call if she was honest — pressed through the lace like they were trying to escape. The bow sat between them, a ridiculous small satin thing, and the effect was a woman gift-wrapped by someone who wanted most of the gift visible through the paper.

The thong was nothing. A white string that disappeared between her ass cheeks and emerged as a narrow triangle in front that covered approximately what a postage stamp would cover and left the rest — the soft mound, the crease of her thighs, the lips already flushed and swollen from twelve hours of the plug doing its work — visible to anyone standing within ten feet of her. She could feel the string seated between her cheeks, feel it pressing against the plug, and the sensation was so specific and so filthy that she had to put her hand on the counter and breathe.

She looked up at the mirror.

*Jesus.*

The woman looking back was obscene. Not in the way she'd imagined on the phone with James — no vinyl nurse costume, no harness with a diagram. This was worse. This was a woman in almost-nothing white lace that made her look like a bride being unwrapped on her wedding night by someone who wasn't the groom. Her tits were practically bare. Her nipples were visible. The thong hid nothing — she could see the shadow of her own landing strip through the sheer triangle, the dark narrow line of hair that James kept trimmed with his careful hands, now on display for a man whose hands were the opposite of careful.

The garter belt next.

She clipped it at her waist and the silver hardware bit cold against her hip bones. Four straps dangled against her thighs, swinging when she moved, the little clips catching the fluorescent light. She looked down at herself — the belt cinching the narrowest part of her waist, the straps

framing the front of her thighs like lines on a map that said *look here, here, follow the straps down* — and something clenched low and deep inside her that had nothing to do with the plug.

The stockings. She sat on the edge of the tub and rolled the first one up her right leg, slowly, the sheer white fabric catching on her ankle, gliding over her calf, smoothing over her knee and up along the inside of her thigh. She clipped the front garter. The back. The stocking snapped taut and the strap pulled with it, drawing a tense line from her hip to mid-thigh, and the strip of bare skin above the stocking top — three inches of naked inner thigh between the lace band and the thong — was the most pornographic thing about the entire outfit. Three inches of bare Jenna between one piece of fabric and another. She rolled the second stocking up. Clipped it. Felt both straps pull, felt the stockings grip her thighs, felt the garter belt tighten at her waist with every breath.

She stood. Lifted her hair and clasped the choker at her nape — the lace settling into the hollow of her throat, snug against her pulse.

She stepped into the heels.

Everything changed.

Three and a half inches of nude leather and her whole body rearranged itself. Her calves went taut. Her weight pitched forward onto the balls of her feet. Her back arched — not by choice, by physics — and the arch pushed her tits forward against the lace and her ass up and out behind her, the high round shape of it suddenly *there*, suddenly the loudest thing in the room, framed by the garter straps and the thong string and absolutely nothing else. The heels made her legs go on forever. The stockings caught the light. The strip of bare thigh above each stocking top was wider now, pulled by the new angle, the skin there so pale and soft it looked like it would bruise if you breathed on it.

She turned to check the back.

Her ass in the mirror took her own breath away and she'd been living with it for thirty-three years. Full, round, high — the genetics and the running and the specific architecture of a body that had been stopping men in hallways since she was nineteen. The thong string ran straight down between her cheeks and vanished. The garter straps framed each side — two taut vertical lines that said *this, look at this, this is what you came for*. The lower curve of each cheek swelled below the straps, bare and heavy and catching the bathroom light, and the shadow between them where the

string disappeared was deep and dark and the place her husband had been patiently, tenderly opening for three weeks for a night that was supposed to be tomorrow and was now something else entirely.

She faced the mirror again.

She took herself in — all of it, the full view, top to bottom. Her face, flushed, dark eyes too bright. The thick blonde hair falling past her shoulders. The white lace at her throat like a collar she'd put on herself. The tits overflowing the lace, nipples hard and visible, the small bow sitting between them like a joke about innocence. The narrow waist cinched by the garter belt. The flat stomach. The thong that hid nothing — the shadow of the landing strip, the swollen press of her lips against the sheer fabric, the damp spot she could already see darkening the white triangle because she'd been wet for hours and the teddy was doing nothing to disguise it. The thighs framed by the stockings and the straps. The heels making everything longer and tighter and higher.

She was the hottest woman she had ever seen in her life and she was about to walk out that door for a man who looked like he drove a cab.

The thought — the absurdity and the cruelty of it, the mismatch that was the whole engine of whatever this was — made her face do something complicated in the mirror. Not a smile. Not shame. The expression of a woman looking at a body every man she'd ever met had wanted and knowing she was about to hand it to the one man no one would choose. The one man who had never once, in three years, stopped wanting it. The one man whose wanting had the weight and patience of something geological, something that would outlast her objections and her marriage and her sense of what she deserved, and she was going to walk through that door and let him see her in this and the seeing was going to feed something in him that would never be full.

She thought about the video she'd promised James. Her face while Ray's cock was in her mouth. James in their bed, watching it later, his hand working himself to the sight of his wife on her knees for another man. She thought about the expression on her face in that video — would it look like the photo? The dark eyes, the swollen lips, the thread of saliva? Would James watch it and come and then watch it again?

She was so wet the thong was ruined. She could feel it — the fabric soaked through, clinging, useless, the arousal running past what the string

could hold. She hadn't been touched. Nobody had touched her. Just the clothes and the mirror and the knowledge of what was about to happen.

She turned from the glass. Faced the door. Behind it: the warm yellow light, the armchair, the man.

She opened the door.

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He was in his boxers when she opened the door.

The shirt was gone. The slacks were gone. Just the grey cotton boxers and the body underneath — the broad fleshy shoulders, the chest hair going silver and sparse at the sternum, the gut hanging over the elastic waistband, the ruddy skin that had never apologized for itself. He was sitting in the armchair under the lamp, legs spread, hands on the armrests, and the boxers were doing nothing about the situation between his thighs. His cock was a thick dark ridge pushing the cotton sideways, the head straining toward his hip, the fabric pulled translucent over the crown. He was hard enough that the elastic had given up containing him and the shaft angled out past the leg opening, an inch of flushed skin and a vein she could see from the doorframe.

She'd had a line ready — *your ten minutes start now* — but it died in her mouth because her eyes went to his cock and stayed there two seconds longer than a woman with a clock to enforce could afford.

Two seconds. Long enough for her thighs to clench. Long enough for the memory to surface — the conference that started it all, the other hotel room. The stretch of him pushing inside her for the first time, the sound she'd made that she didn't recognize as her own voice, and then the condom breaking and the bare heat of him — every ridge, every vein, the depth that reached places she didn't know she had — and her own voice into the mattress saying *I can feel everything*. Long enough for the plug to shift inside her when she clenched and the wetness that had been building all day to pulse fresh against the ruined thong.

He watched her look. Let her.

“Hi,” she said. Recovering. Squaring her shoulders in the doorframe.

His eyes traveled her body and the traveling was slow and thorough and made no effort to be polite. Her tits spilling over the lace. Her nipples dark and hard through the sheer cups. The bow. The cinch of the garter at her waist. The thong that hid nothing. The stockings. The heels.

“Jesus Christ.”

“Blondie, right?” She crossed her arms under her breasts, her eyes narrowing — the posture pushing them up and together, the lace cups straining, her cleavage deepening into a line that made his eyes drop and stay. She knew what she was doing with her arms. She’d known since she was twenty. “That’s what you’re about to say?”

“I wasn’t going to say anything.” His voice had gone rough. “I was going to sit here and look at you until...”

“Charming.” But the corner of her mouth moved. She killed it. Stepped into the room. The heels sank into the carpet and the motion swayed her hips and his eyes tracked the sway the way a compass tracks north. “You’re in your underwear.”

“Seemed redundant to stay dressed.”

“For a lap dance.”

“For whatever you’re offering.”

“I’m offering a lap dance. That’s the deal.” She stopped three feet from his knees. The light caught the sheer lace across her tits, the shadow of her areolae, the hard points of her nipples. She could feel him looking at them the way she could feel sun on bare skin. “You sit. I give you a dance. Your hands stay on the armrests.”

“My hands stay on the armrests.”

“Until I say otherwise.”

He spread his fingers on the armrests. The thick fingers flattening against the fabric. The gesture of a man showing compliance — his favorite trick, the open hands that said *see, nothing hidden*. She didn’t trust it. She didn’t trust any part of him. But she was standing in his hotel room in white lace and garters and heels with a plug in her ass and his cock feet from her face and wasn’t sure if she even trusted herself.

She stepped between his knees.

Close. Close enough to smell him — the musk and the heat, no cologne now, just the animal warmth of a large man’s skin and the sharper note underneath that she recognized from his lap, from his groin, from the base of his cock where she’d pressed her face in her office and breathed him in. Her thighs brushed the inside of his knees. The fabric of his boxers was warm against her stocking tops.

She put her hands on his shoulders. Leaned in. Let her hair fall forward and brush his chest.

“Don’t move,” she said. Close to his ear. Her lips almost touching the lobe.

She rolled her hips.

Slow. One long rotation, her pelvis tracing a circle in the air between them, her weight shifting from one heel to the other. The teddy pulled across her tits with the motion, the lace dragging over her nipples, and the friction sent a line of heat straight down through her belly to the plug. She did it again. Slower. Her hips describing a figure eight, the motion rolling through her waist and her ass and the garter straps pulling taut against her thighs with every shift. She was three inches from his lap. Not touching. Close enough that he could feel the warmth of her skin through the air between them.

His breathing changed. She heard it — the deeper draw, the held exhale. His fingers flexed on the armrests. She watched his knuckles go white.

She turned around.

Slowly. Letting him see the rotation — her waist, her hip, the curve of her ass emerging into view as she turned. She heard the sound he made when the back of her came into full view. A low, broken exhale. The sound of a man seeing something he’d been imagining for three years and finding the reality obscene.

Her ass was inches from his face.

She bent forward. Slowly. Hands on her own knees, her back arching, her spine dipping into the curve that tilted her hips up and back and opened everything for him. The arch was instinct — the body’s oldest presentation, the posture that bypassed every language she spoke and said the one thing language couldn’t improve on. She held it. Let him take it in.

The soaked thong peeled against her skin as the arch shifted it — a small, wet, audible sound in the quiet room, the sound of fabric pulling away from flesh it had been stuck to, and she felt the cool air hit the dampness between her thighs and knew he’d heard it.

The thong string ran straight down between her cheeks and disappeared into the cleft, the white cord bisecting her — pulled taut by the arch, buried in the soft deep crease between the two fullest, roundest, most obscenely perfect cheeks Ray Vogler had ever put his eyes on from this distance. The lower curve of each one swelled bare beneath the garter straps, the skin smooth and pale and catching the warm lamplight with the faint sheen of a woman running hot. The cleft was deep and shadowed and the thong hid

nothing inside it — the string had shifted, pulled to one side by the arch, and the dark puckered ring of her asshole was visible. And seated in it, snug and unmistakable: the flared silicone base of the plug. Flush against her. Buried. The skin around it flushed and tight, her body gripping it the way a body grips something it has learned to hold.

Below it — below the plug, below the string, where the thong widened into the sheer triangle between her thighs — her pussy. Swollen. The lips flushed dark and pressed against the soaked fabric, the lace clinging to every contour, the outline of her slit visible through the wet sheer like a word written on fogged glass. The damp spot had spread past the triangle and onto the garter straps at her inner thighs. She'd been wet for hours and the evidence was on display six inches from his mouth.

She heard him inhale. Not a breath — a pull. Deep, through the nose, the involuntary draw of a man hit with the warm sweet musk of a woman's arousal from six inches away. The scent of her — hours of it, built and layered and concentrated in the soaked fabric and the slick skin underneath — filling his head. She felt his cock jump against the inside of her thigh. Not the half-hard press from before. The full thing. The twitch and surge of a man going rigid, the shaft swelling against her stocking top hard enough that she felt the pulse in it.

She looked back over her shoulder. Down at his lap. The boxers were tented past what cotton could reasonably manage, the head straining against the fabric, a dark wet spot spreading where the tip pressed the cloth.

“Easy, Ray.” Low. Over her shoulder. The smile in her voice sharper than a knife. “I haven't even sat down yet.”

She rolled her hips — slow, deliberate, the kind of motion she'd learned at twenty-one in a club in Atlanta and hadn't used since grad school — and the roll rippled through her ass and the plug shifted and his breath hit the small of her back, hot, ragged.

She straightened. Brought her hands off her knees. Reached back and found his thighs — the thick muscle under her palms, the heat of him through the cotton — and used them as rails. She lowered herself. Inch by inch. Controlled. Her thighs spreading over his, her back sliding against his chest, the gut warm and solid against her lower back, and she felt the head of his cock catch against the curve of her ass before she'd fully settled — the blunt pressure nudging up between her cheeks, finding the groove, and she sank the last two inches and let her full weight drop into his lap.

The heat. The length. The *thickness* — the shaft pressing up between her cheeks, the head reaching past her tailbone, the entire rigid line of him fitting into the groove of her ass like he'd been engineered for it. The thin cotton of his boxers and the thinner string of her thong were the only things between his bare cock and her skin and they might as well have been nothing. She could feel every inch. She could feel the ridge of the head. She could feel the vein on the underside pulsing against the inside of her cheek.

She ground down. One slow roll of her hips, pressing her ass back against him, and the plug shifted inside her and a sound fell out of her mouth before she could stop it — a small, wet, broken *ah* that she tried to catch and couldn't because the sensation was too much: the plug pressing deep from the roll of her hips, his cock pressed against her pussy through soaked fabric, the head nudging her clit through the lace on every forward grind. Plug in her ass, cock against her pussy, and her body trying to fuck both of them at once.

“Look at you,” she breathed. “Hands right where I'd put them, good boy.”

His fingers were gripping the armrests so hard she could hear the fabric creak.

She ground again. Rolled her hips in a slow circle, her ass describing the shape of what she wasn't giving him, and the wet slide of her thong against his shaft made a sound in the quiet room — a soft, slick, obscene sound, the sound of soaked lace dragging over hard cock. She was so wet it had soaked through the thong and through his boxers and she could feel the damp patch spreading between them.

“You're destroying my underwear,” he said. Rough. Strained. The voice of a man holding onto something with both hands.

“You deserve it.”

She leaned back against his chest. Let her head fall against his shoulder. The mass of him behind her — the gut pressing against her lower back, the chest hair rough against her shoulder blades through the lace, the heat of him enormous. She reached back and put her hand on the back of his neck and rolled her hips and felt his cock twitch against her and his whole body shuddered underneath her.

“You like this?” Low. Against his ear. The dirty-talk voice — the one that belonged to her bedroom, to two AM, to James. She was using it on

Ray. “You like me in your little outfit, grinding on your cock? This what you were shopping for?”

“Yes.” Not performed. Genuine. Wrecked.

“You sat in your apartment picking out bows and garter clips and thinking about my ass in your lap.” She rolled again. The plug shifted. Her eyes fluttered. “Thinking about this. About — *fuck* — about exactly this.”

She stood. His cock dragged against her as she lifted off and the loss of contact pulled a sound out of both of them. She turned to face him — slow, letting the rotation do its work, her hips and the garter straps and the lace moving through his line of sight — and then she was straddling him. Knees on either side of his thighs, the armchair barely wide enough, her hands on his shoulders. His cock pressed up against the soaked thong between her legs. Her face close to his. She could see the sweat on his upper lip, the pulse in his throat, the small dark eyes trying to look everywhere at once.

His hand left the armrest.

She felt it before she saw it — the thick palm settling on her hip, fingers spreading across the lace, the grip warm and heavy and proprietary. She should have stopped him. That was the rule. Hands on the armrests.

She didn’t stop him.

His hand slid from her hip to her ass. Cupping. The span of his palm covering half of one cheek, his fingers pressing into the soft give of her flesh through the thong. He squeezed and a small sharp inhale escaped her and she hated the sound and couldn’t stop it. His other hand came off the armrest and found her other cheek and now both of his hands were on her ass, gripping, spreading, his thick fingers kneading the muscle while she ground on his cock, and the size of his hands on her body — the way they engulfed her, the way her ass, her *ass* that she knew was extraordinary, disappeared under his palms — made her feel small in a way that lit something up behind her navel.

His right hand moved. Thumb sliding along the thong string, down between her cheeks, following the cord into the cleft of her ass with the casual certainty of a man who knew the territory.

She felt the pad of his thumb press against the base of the plug and she went still.

Completely still. Her hips stopped. Her breath stopped. The room contracted to the point of contact — his thumb on the flared silicone base,

pressing, the touch deliberate, a man confirming with his hands what his eyes had already found when she'd bent over for him thirty seconds ago.

He didn't say anything for three seconds. His thumb circled the base. Slow. Learning the shape of it.

"I saw this." Low. Almost conversational. The voice of a man who'd been sitting on information and choosing his moment — because of course he had, because that was what Ray did. "When you bent over. I saw it and I thought — *she walked down that hallway with this inside her.*"

"Ray—"

"You've been wearing this all day." Not a question.

She didn't answer. Her face was hot. The confession was in her body — seated inside her, pressed against his thumb, the evidence of three weeks of training that James had done and Ray had initiated and she had walked down this hallway carrying like a secret she'd swallowed.

He pressed the base. Gently. The plug shifted a quarter-inch inside her and her whole body clenched and a moan leaked out of her, thin, involuntary, the sound of a woman caught.

"That's not the small one." His thumb circled the base. Exploring. Measuring. "That's bigger than the one I saw in your office."

"Medium," she said. To the wall. Not to him.

"Medium." He pressed again. She gripped his thigh. "*Husband* been busy."

"Shut up."

"The graduated set?" His thumb hooked the edge of the base and rocked it — a small motion, barely a centimeter of movement, and her hips bucked back against his hand and the moan that came out of her was louder than the last one and she could feel his cock jump against her through the boxers. "This what James has been up to? Every night? Working you up? You're telling me you walked down that hallway with this in your ass."

"I've been wearing it since six this morning." She didn't know why she said it. The same impulse that had made her tell him about the plug at dinner in the last draft of a life she wasn't living. The confession falling out of her body first, her mouth just the messenger. "Through the meeting. Through dinner. It's been inside me for sixteen hours."

The sound he made was not a word. A low, guttural, almost pained noise — the sound of a man whose fantasy had just been exceeded by a margin he

hadn't thought possible. His hands tightened on her ass. His cock throbbed against her so hard she felt it through both layers of fabric.

His face was inches from hers. Sweat on his forehead. The pockmarks. The heavy jaw. The small eyes that had been reading rooms for thirty years and were now reading her at a distance of three inches and finding the same thing they always found — the gap between what she said and what her body did.

“You wore a plug for me,” he said. Quiet. Certain. “Not for your husband. He doesn't know you wear it outside the bedroom, does he. He doesn't know you think about my cock stretching your pussy on the couch with my finger up your ass every time it goes in, does he?”

She didn't answer.

“That's mine.” His hand came up. Cupped her jaw. The palm rough, warm, enormous — her jaw disappearing into his grip the way her ass disappeared into his hands. “That plug. What it does to you. The way you've been squirming in that chair all day. That's not his project. That's mine.”

“It's not—”

“It's mine.” He kissed her.

Not gently. His mouth covered hers and his tongue pushed past her lips before they'd decided to part and the thickness of it — wider than James's, more insistent, the same overwhelming proportion as everything else about him — filled her mouth and she tasted wine and something bitter underneath and her hands came up to his chest and she didn't push him away. She pulled him in. Fistfuls of chest hair and the slack skin over heavy muscle and the heat of him pouring into her through every point of contact.

She kissed him back.

Her hips moved on their own — grinding forward against his cock through the wet fabric, the plug rocking inside her with every roll, and the dual sensation was building something in her that had its own momentum now, its own gravity, a warmth that was pulling everything toward the center of her and she could feel the orgasm in the distance like weather approaching. His hands were on her ass again, both of them, fingers digging into the flesh, spreading her cheeks around the plug, and every time he squeezed the base shifted and she moaned into his mouth and he swallowed the sound.

She bit his lip. Hard enough to taste copper. He grunted — the sound vibrating into her mouth, through her chest, into her nipples where they pressed against the coarse hair of his chest through the lace. His cock was leaking. She could feel the wet heat of pre-come soaking through his boxers, mixing with her own wetness, the fabric between them a warm soaked ruin. She ground against the head and felt it push the lace into her — not in, almost in, the blunt pressure of it spreading her lips through the thong — and they both made a noise at the same time — his a groan, hers a gasp.

She pulled back. Breathing hard. Her hands on his chest. His hands on her ass. Two inches between their faces. Lipstick smeared on his mouth. Spit on his chin. His eyes — small, sharp, stripped of every performance — locked on hers.

His hips shifted underneath her. A roll — subtle, deliberate, the salesman's incremental advance. She felt him reach between them with one hand, felt the elastic of his boxers pulled to the side, and then the head of his cock was free and pressing against the soaked lace of her thong — bare skin against wet fabric, the blunt heat of him sliding along the crease of her pussy, nudging the thong aside at the edge. The wet sound it made — the slick drag of his head through the mess she'd made of the lace, the obscene sucking noise of soaked fabric and arousal and pre-come — was loud in the quiet room. He rolled his hips again and the head caught at her entrance, the thong the only thing between the tip and bare contact, and she felt herself open against it — just the pressure, just the parting of her lips around the shape of him through one thin string of wet lace.

She grabbed his wrist.

“Ray.” Her voice was different. The heat still in it but the edge underneath — the edge that had filed a complaint, that had said *I'm not done* in this room an hour ago. “I'm fertile. Right now. This week. Do you understand what I'm telling you?”

His hips stilled. The head of his cock stayed where it was — pressed against her, the lace between them, the heat unbearable.

“If that goes inside me, I could end up pregnant. And I promise you, Ray — whatever you're imagining right now, it is not worth the version of me you'd be dealing with if that happened.”

He looked at her. The calculation running behind the small eyes. Then his hand came away from his boxers. Settled back on her hip, and the grip

said *for now* louder than his mouth could have.

“So.” She loosened her grip on his wrist. Let her thumb trace a circle on the inside of it — light, almost idle, the cruelty of a soft touch after a hard no. “You got your dance. You got to put your hands where they weren’t supposed to go. You got to kiss me.” She tilted her head. The corner of her mouth doing something dangerous. “And since you dealt with that prick Garrison so well today, I’ll get on my knees and let you find out if my mouth has gotten any better since my office.”

The sound that came out of him was almost a laugh. Almost.

“You’re negotiating me down to a blowjob like it’s a concession.”

“It *is* a concession.” She rocked her hips once — a single slow grind against his cock, the wet slide of it, a reminder of what she was taking off the table. “A generous one. From a woman wearing your outfit and sitting on your cock with a plug in her ass. You should be writing me a thank-you note.”

His hands squeezed her hips. The thick fingers gripping and then releasing. The restraint visible in his arms, the tendons standing out, the effort of a man choosing to take what was being offered instead of reaching for what wasn’t.

“Your show,” he said.

She slid off his lap. Her knees hit the carpet between his thighs. She looked up at him — the gut, the grey chest, the face — and reached for the waistband of his boxers. He lifted his hips. She pulled the cotton down and his cock fell heavy against his belly, thick and flushed dark and already slick at the tip — slick with her, she realized, her wetness shining on the head and the first two inches of the shaft — the head swollen wider than the shaft, the vein on the underside pulsing.

She wrapped her hand around the base. Her fingers didn’t close. They never closed with Ray — not in the hotel, not in her office, not now. She looked at it in her hand and felt the specific vertigo of holding something that was too much for her grip and too much for her mouth and too much for any part of her and wanting it anyway with a need that had no words for itself.

She looked up at him. Dark eyes. Swollen lips. The bow between her tits crooked. Mascara starting to smudge at the corner of one eye. Her hand wrapped around his cock, her face inches from the head.

“We have to film this,” she said.

He looked down at her. Blonde hair spilling over one shoulder, mascara starting to run, her fist barely closing around the base of him. Her mouth close enough that he could feel her breathing on the head. The expression looking up at him was not embarrassment.

“My husband wants a video.”

Ray didn't blink. The corner of his mouth moved — not surprise, something else. Satisfaction. The deep, private satisfaction of a man watching a machine he built perform exactly as designed. He knew. Of course he knew. He'd told James to go along with it. He'd offered James proof — a video, a leash. And now the wife was on her knees asking for the camera on her own, and the husband was three hours away in the dark waiting for the footage, and every piece of it was landing where Ray had placed it.

She reached behind her without looking — her hand finding her phone where she'd left it on the arm of the chair when she'd first straddled him. Held it out to him.

“You hold it,” she said. “I need both hands.”

He took the phone. Angled it down. The screen showed her face — flushed, lipstick half gone, mascara starting to smudge, blonde hair falling across one eye. Behind her face: white lace, the bow, the tops of her tits in the sheer cups. His cock in her hand, the head dark and swollen, inches from her mouth.

She looked at the lens. Held the gaze. Spoke to it.

“Hi, baby.” Soft. The bedroom voice. The voice from two AM, from the pillow, the voice she used when she was about to tell James something that would make him grip the sheets. “I'm on my knees for Ray. In the outfit he bought me. And I'm about to put his cock in my mouth, and I wanted you to see my face when I do it.”

She paused. Looked at the cock in her hand. Back at the camera.

“Well. Maybe I should warm him up first.”

She turned from the camera to the cock in her hand. Held it at the base, angled it toward her face, and didn't put it in her mouth.

Instead she pressed her lips to the shaft. A kiss. Slow, soft, almost chaste — the kind of kiss you'd put on someone's forehead — except it was three inches below the head of Ray Vogler's cock and her lipstick left a faint pink smear on the skin. She kissed lower. Another smear. Her lips dragging down the underside, tracing the vein, feeling it pulse against her mouth. She could

feel the heat of him on her face, the musk of him thick in her nose, the pre-come leaking from the tip and running a slow clear line down the shaft toward her fingers.

She caught the line with her tongue. A long, flat, deliberate drag from her fist to the head — collecting the slick trail, tasting the salt and the bitter warmth of it, her tongue pressing the vein flat and feeling it jump. She reached the head and circled it. Slow. The tip of her tongue tracing the ridge where the shaft met the crown, dipping into the groove, finding the slit and pressing against it until another bead welled up and she licked it clean.

She looked at the camera. Let James see her tongue on the head. Let him see the clear thread of pre-come stretching between the slit and her lower lip.

“He tastes different than you.” Said to the lens. Conversational. The voice from the pillow, from the dark, from the place where she told James the things that made him come hardest. “Heavier. Thicker.” She dragged her tongue across the slit again. Held the bead on her tongue for a beat before swallowing. “There’s so much of it, baby. He won’t stop leaking. I’ve barely touched him and my hand is soaked.”

She held the shaft up against his belly and went low — pressing her open mouth against the base, her lips soft and wet against the root where the coarse grey hair started, breathing him in. She dragged her mouth up the underside in a long wet stripe, lips parted, tongue flat, spit trailing behind her — a glossy line from base to tip. She reached the head and kissed it. Open-mouthed. Her lips wrapping around just the crown, the barest entry, her tongue swirling the tip once before pulling off with a wet pop that was loud in the quiet room.

Ray’s thigh was shaking under her hand. She could feel the tremor running through the big muscle, the effort of a man holding still while a woman took him apart one lick at a time. His breathing had gone ragged — short, harsh pulls through his nose, the exhales shuddering out of him.

“You want to see me take it?” To the camera. Her hand stroking him now — slow, twisting, spreading the mess of spit and pre-come until his entire shaft was slick and her fist made a wet obscene sound on every pass. “You want to see how wide he stretches my mouth?”

She opened her mouth. Wide. Let the camera see the pink of her tongue, the spit pooling at the back. She guided the head to her lips and held it there — just resting on her lower lip, the swollen crown filling the frame between

her parted lips, not yet inside. The weight of it on her mouth. The taste of him on her tongue before she'd even taken him in.

She looked at the lens one more time. Dark eyes. Wet lips. The head of another man's cock resting on her tongue like communion.

Then she closed her lips around him and took the head inside.

The stretch spread her jaw wide. Wider than her jaw wanted to go — the familiar ache at the hinges that she remembered from the hotel, the specific price her mouth paid for the width of him. Her tongue flat against the underside, tasting the salt and the bitter slick of pre-come, feeling the slit leak onto her tongue. She looked up at the camera.

“God, he's thick.” Said around the head, her lips distorted, the words sloppy and wet. For James. “I forgot how thick he is. My jaw's already—” She took him deeper and the sentence dissolved into a muffled *mmph* and her eyes watered.

Ray's free hand found the back of her head. Not pushing. Resting. The heavy warm weight of his palm on her skull — the same weight from the conference room, from *good girl*, from the silence that fell when his hand settled and everything in her went quiet. She felt it now. The quieting. The noise of the day — the meeting, the dinner, the phone call, the guilt, the want — all of it falling away under the pressure of his hand on her head and his cock filling her mouth. Just this. Just the taste and the weight and the stretch and the slow slide deeper.

She pulled off. A wet string of spit connected her lower lip to the head and she let it hang there, let the camera see it. Her hand worked his shaft — slow, twisting, spreading the spit.

“He's leaking all over my tongue.” Looking at the lens. Dark eyes, swollen lips, the thread of spit catching the lamplight. “Every time I take him deep he leaks and I can taste it. It's—” She licked the head. A slow flat drag of her tongue across the slit, picking up the clear bead that had formed there. “It's so much, James. There's so much of him.”

She went back down. Deeper this time. The head pushed past her tongue and pressed the back of her throat and she gagged — *glk* — a wet convulsive sound that she didn't try to hide, and the gagging made spit flood her mouth and pour down his shaft in a thick glossy sheet. She held him there. Eyes streaming. Throat working around the head. His hand tightened in her hair — one degree, involuntary — and the groan that came out of him was low and gutted and genuine.

She pulled off gasping. Spit on her chin, on her chest, on the lace between her tits. The bow was wet. Her mascara was running — two dark tracks from the corners of her eyes. She looked like a woman who had been doing exactly what she'd been doing and she looked at the camera and let James see it.

“You should see his face right now.” Breathless. Grinning. The grin of a woman who was ruining two men simultaneously and knew it. “He’s *shaking*, James.”

Ray’s thigh was trembling under her hand. She could feel it — the big man’s body running past what his composure could hold. She turned from the camera back to his cock. Gripped the base. Angled him up and went low — under the shaft, down to his balls. She took the left one in her mouth. Rolled it on her tongue. The skin loose and warm and the weight of it heavy against her lower lip. She felt his whole body go rigid. His hand in her hair spasmed.

She let it fall from her mouth. Took the right one. Sucked gently. Her hand still working his shaft, twisting at the head where the pre-come was now running steadily, and the wet sounds of her hand on his slick cock filled the quiet room between his ragged breathing.

She looked up at him from below. Not at the camera — at him. And the performance fell away for a second. Just a second. The version of this that wasn’t for James, wasn’t for the lens, wasn’t for the arrangement or the deal or the negotiation. The version that was her on her knees for this man because something in her answered to something in him and she could not make it stop.

He saw it. She watched him see it — the flicker in his eyes, the mask slipping, the man underneath registering what was in her face.

She took him back in her mouth. Deep. Past the gag. Held him in her throat and swallowed around the head and his hips bucked off the chair and a sound came out of him that wasn’t English — a long, guttural, animal noise that she felt in her chest. She held it. Swallowed again. Her nose against his belly, the coarse hair against her forehead, her throat stretched around the widest part of him — the lace choker pulled taut, the delicate band straining over the shape of the head lodged behind it. Tears ran freely down her face. Spit pooled at the corners of her mouth and spilled. She couldn’t breathe and she didn’t pull off and the power of having a man this size helpless under her mouth — the thighs locked, the hand shaking in her

hair, the desperate broken cursing above her — was a drug she had not known she needed until it was in her bloodstream.

She pulled off. Gasping. A thick strand of spit broke and landed on the bow between her tits.

She reached up and took the phone from Ray's hand. Ended the recording. Set it face-down on the carpet beside her knee.

The room was quiet except for their breathing. His cock stood slick and dark against his belly, twitching, the head almost purple. Her face was a wreck — spit, tears, mascara, lipstick on her chin. She was still on her knees between his thighs in the armchair and her jaw ached and her throat ached and she was so aroused she could feel her pulse in her clit.

She started to lean back in. Her mouth already open, her hand already tightening on the base — the automatic return of a woman who hadn't finished what she was doing.

His hand caught her jaw. Not hard. He tilted her face up.

“Stand up.”

“I'm not done—”

“You're done with that.” His thumb traced her swollen lower lip. Collected the spit there. His eyes were different — the calculating patience burned off, replaced by something rawer. Hungrier. “You've been soaking through that thong since I sat down in the conference room this morning. Sixteen hours, Jenna.” His hand slid from her jaw to the back of her neck. “I'm going to finish you.”

She looked up at him. Spit on her chin. Mascara on her cheeks. The woman who had walked in with rules and a countdown nowhere visible in her face.

“We can't fuck, Ray.” Quiet. The last wall standing. Barely.

“I know.”

He stood. The armchair creaked as his weight left it. He pulled her up with him — one hand on her arm, effortless, the strength of it lifting her off her knees before her legs were ready, and she stumbled into the mass of him. His hands found her waist. He turned her, walked her backward three steps, and the backs of her thighs hit the edge of the mattress.

He put his palm flat on her sternum — between the lace cups, over the wet ruined bow — and pressed. Steady. The controlled pressure of a man laying something down where he wanted it. She went back onto the bed. Her shoulders, her spine, the bedspread cool against her bare skin.

He knelt at the foot of the bed. The floor creaked under his weight. His hands hooked behind her knees and pulled her toward him — the lace sliding on the duvet, her body dragged to the edge until her ass hung off the mattress, her legs over his shoulders, her heels — she was still wearing the heels — digging into the broad plane of his back. The thong was a ruin. He caught the string in his teeth and pulled it sideways, the elastic scraping across her swollen lips, and the cool air hit her and she heard the sound she made — high, thin, the sound of a woman opened.

He looked at her. Between her thighs, her pussy flushed dark pink and swollen, the lips parted, glistening. The landing strip above. Below, the white cord of the thong pulled aside, and deeper, the brushed-silver base of the plug still seated in her ass. He looked at the full picture — the wet, open, plugged, desperate picture — and the sound he made was almost reverent.

*“Look at you.”*

His mouth closed over her clit. No buildup. No teasing. The flat of his tongue wide and hot and pressing, and her hips came off the mattress and she grabbed his head with both hands and the noise she made didn't belong to anyone she recognized.

He ate her the way he kissed — without precision and without apology. His tongue everywhere at once — wide flat strokes from her entrance to her clit, then the tip circling, then the flat again, then pushing *inside* her, the thickness of his tongue spreading her open, and the wet sounds his mouth made against her were loud and obscene and she could hear them and each one sent a jolt through her. His unshaved jaw scraped her inner thighs raw. His nose pressed her clit on the downstrokes. Spit and her own arousal ran down the crease of her ass and pooled where the plug was seated and his chin was soaked and her thighs were soaked and the duvet under her was soaked.

*“Fuck — fuck, Ray — right there, don't stop, don't—”*

He found the rhythm she needed. Two fingers pushing into her pussy — thick, rough, curling against the front wall — while his tongue worked her clit in tight circles. She could feel the plug through the thin wall between, his fingertips pressing against the silicone from the inside, and the fullness of both — fingers in her pussy, plug in her ass — was a pressure that was building toward something enormous.

His other hand found the plug base.

He didn't ask. He pressed it — rocked it gently, a small rotation — and her back arched off the mattress and the moan that came out of her was a sound she'd never made for James. Low, guttural, from somewhere below her chest. His fingers inside her felt the plug move through the wall and pressed back against it and the sensation of being worked from both sides made her vision blur.

He pulled the plug.

Slow. The widest part stretched her on the way out and the moan became a cry — not pain, the sharp bright edge where too-much met not-enough — and her hands fisted the duvet and her hips pushed back against his hand and the plug came free with a soft wet sound and her body clenched on nothing and the emptiness was its own shock.

“*Oh God—*”

He set the plug aside. She heard the soft *thunk* of silicone on the nightstand.

His tongue was there before the emptiness could settle.

Hot. Wet. The tip of his tongue circling her rim, tracing the muscle that was still clenching from the plug's exit, and the sensation was so far past anything she had language for that her whole body locked and then melted in the space of one breath. Nobody's mouth had been here. James's fingers, yes — careful, gentle, with lube and patience. The plugs. Never a mouth. Never the raw, wet, intimate press of a tongue against the most private part of her.

He licked her there the way he'd licked her pussy — thorough, unashamed, the flat of his tongue pressing against her opening and the tip pushing past the muscle in small deliberate pulses. She could feel his breath, his stubble, the wetness of his mouth mixing with the lube the plug had left behind. His fingers stayed inside her pussy — curling, pressing, finding the spot that made her thighs shake — while his tongue worked her ass in slow circles.

“*Ray — oh my God — Ray—*”

His tongue pushed in. Past the ring. The heat and the width and the wet of it inside her where only silicone and his finger had been, and the intimacy of the act — his face buried between her cheeks, his tongue *inside* her ass, his fingers deep in her pussy — was so extreme that she felt tears prick her eyes that had nothing to do with gagging. She was being known. In the most physical, crude, inescapable way a body could be known by

another body. His tongue in her ass and his fingers in her cunt and the sounds he was making — the low satisfied hum of a man savoring — and she was spread open on a hotel bed in white lace with her heels on his back and she could not pretend this was anything other than what it was.

Ray Vogler. His tongue in her ass. The man half the office called Pig Ray behind his back, the man Diane wrinkled her nose at when he passed in the hallway, the man whose sweat stains were a running joke at vendor mixers — that man had his face buried between the cheeks of the woman every man at those mixers wanted to take home. The hottest woman in the building, in the state, in white lace and garter clips and heels, spread open on a hotel bed while the industry's walking punchline licked her ass like it was the last meal of his life. James should be here. James should be the one with his mouth on her, his careful hands, his patient tongue. Instead it was Ray — crude, heavy, pockmarked, relentless — and her hips were pushing back against his face and the sound she was making was not a sound she'd ever made for her husband.

He added a finger alongside his tongue. Thick. The second knuckle stretching her wider than the plug had. She whimpered — high and thin, beyond anything she could shape into a word — and her hips rocked against his face in pulses she couldn't control.

“You're close.” He said it against her, lips moving on her rim. Not a question.

She nodded. Couldn't speak. The orgasm was right there — right behind his tongue, right under his fingers, a wave she could feel cresting, her body coiling tight around every point of contact, her thighs shaking, her hands fisting the duvet, every nerve she had converging on the place where his mouth and his hands were working her from both sides and she was going to come, she was going to come so hard she—

He stopped.

Everything. At once. His tongue withdrew. His fingers slid out of her pussy with a wet sound that the room held onto. He pulled back from between her thighs and the sudden absence of contact — the cool air where his mouth had been, the emptiness where his fingers had been, the stillness where the relentless pressure had been — hit her like a door slamming.

“No—” She grabbed for his head. His hair. Anything. Her hips bucked up against nothing. “Ray — don't stop, don't you *dare*—”

He was standing. Already standing. The mass of him rising from between her legs, his face slick from his mouth to his jaw, his chin dripping, his cock jutting out from his body so hard it didn't move when he stood — just hung there, rigid, dark, twitching, pointing at her. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. Looked down at her.

She was a wreck on the edge of the bed. Legs open, heels still on, one stocking at her knee, the teddy bunched around her waist, her tits bare and heaving, her pussy swollen and glistening and clenching on nothing. The orgasm was dissolving. She could feel it leaving — the crest retreating, the wave pulling back, the unbearable fullness of almost-there collapsing into the unbearable emptiness of not-quite, and her body was screaming at her in a language older than words.

“Why did you stop?” Her voice was wrecked. Hoarse. She sounded like a woman who'd been sucking cock for twenty minutes and edged to the brink of her mind and she didn't care how she sounded. “I was right there, Ray. I was *right there*.”

He didn't answer. He put his knee on the mattress. The bed dipped under his weight. Then his other knee. He was climbing over her — his shadow falling across her body, and his cock dragging against her thigh on the way up, heavy and slick, leaving a wet trail of pre-come on her stocking. The head bumped her hip. Slid across the hollow below her navel. She felt every inch of him moving over her skin and her hips chased the contact — arching up, seeking, the desperate motion of a body that had been promised release and robbed of it.

His arms bracketed her head. His chest lowered. The coarse grey hair and the warm bulk of him pressing against her bare tits, her nipples dragging against his skin, and his cock settled into the slick groove between her thighs. Not inside. Along her. The bare head sliding through the mess of spit and arousal coating her pussy, nudging her clit on the first pass, and the sound she made was feral.

“*Fuck—*” Her hips rolled up into him. Grinding. The head of his cock sliding through her folds, parting her lips, the bare heat of him dragging over every swollen nerve, and she was so wet the sound it made was obscene — a thick, slick, sucking sound, his cock gliding through her arousal like the contact had been greased for it. She couldn't stop her hips. She ground against him and the head caught at her entrance and she felt herself open around it — just the tip, just the spreading of her lips around

the ridge, the bare blunt heat of him pressing where he'd been weeks ago, where he'd broken through a condom and fucked her raw and held her down and come inside her—

“We can't.” She said it into his chest. Her hips still moving. “Ray. I'm fertile.”

“I know.” His voice was strained. Tight. The head of his cock pressed against her entrance and his hips made one slow involuntary push and she felt herself spread another millimeter and a moan came out of both of them.

“If you come in me—”

“I'm not going to.” But his cock pressed harder. The head half-parting her, the wet heat of it, the bare skin, and her body wanted to take him in with a need that was bypassing every circuit in her brain. Her hand found his chest. Pushed. Not hard — the push of a woman whose arm wasn't getting the same message as her hips.

He pulled back. The head slid free of her entrance with a wet sound and the loss of it made her eyes close and her jaw clench and something in her chest crack.

He held himself above her. His cock lay against her pussy, the full length of it slotted between her lips, bare and hot and slick, and he was breathing like a man holding a door shut against something enormous. She could feel him twitch against her clit.

Then he shifted lower.

His hips dropped. The head of his cock dragged down through her folds — past her entrance, past the soaked crease below, sliding through the slick that had pooled between her cheeks from his mouth and the flood of her own arousal. She felt where he was going before her mind caught up to the geography of it.

It came to rest there.

A long pause. Both of them held still.

She could feel exactly where it was. The blunt swollen head against the small tight ring his tongue had been working twenty minutes ago. The contact was specific — the flat heat of his cockhead against the puckered skin, the wetness from his mouth and her own body smeared between them, the size disparity announcing itself through pressure alone. His thick dark shaft against the small pink opening of her. Bare. Slick. Waiting.

She looked down between them.

She shouldn't have looked. The visual was worse than the feel. His enormous flushed cock — thick veined, the head swollen and glistening with her, the dark of his arousal pressed up against the pale skin of her thighs — held against her tightest, smallest, most carefully kept opening. The contrast was obscene. He was too big.

“Ray. *No.*” Her voice was thin. “No — this is — James and I have been planning this for him. This is *his.*”

He didn't move. The head rested where it was. Just pressing. Warm.

“This is for him. We talked about it. We've been — *Ray.*”

“I hear you.”

“This is *his.*”

“Then tell me to pull back.”

He didn't move. His weight stayed exactly where it was — the head of his cock waiting, the size of him a fact she could feel through bare skin, the heat of him reading itself directly into the nerves she had never given to anyone. He was not pushing. He was only there. The choice was entirely hers and they both knew it.

She didn't say pull back.

The pause stretched. In it, something happened she had not budgeted for. The picture between her thighs — the gross old man, the heavy ugly cock, the way it was nudging against her with crude waiting weight — the picture was not what she wanted to be aroused by. The picture was supposed to be repulsive. The picture James had been building toward for weeks was supposed to be sweet — his clean hands, his careful patience, his anxious *tell me if it's too much*, the scented candle and the slow night and the man who loved her doing this with her like an event. That was Saturday. That was the picture she was supposed to want.

This was the wrong picture. This was a man whose name she had filed a complaint against three years ago, in a hotel room, with his shirt half-open and his cock bare at her ass and no negotiation in his weight at all, about to take the thing James had spent weeks preparing her for.

Her body answered the wrong picture.

A thought surfaced — Thursday night, her hand on James in the dark. His cock jumping when she whispered *what if I've been going to his apartment*. Coming so hard to the version where she went further than he knew that she'd barely had to move her wrist. The thought lasted one heartbeat and did the work of permission.

The clench between her cheeks against the pressure of his cockhead was an answer, and the clench was wet, and the wet was hers, and her hips lifted a fraction — a quarter inch, an opening of her own — and she felt herself give the answer before her mouth caught up.

“That’s for James.” She said it without looking at him. Her voice thin. “Saturday. He’s been — three weeks, Ray. Every night. I was going to give him this.”

The silence held. His cock held. The warm blunt pressure against her didn’t waver and didn’t push.

“This was his.” Barely a whisper now. Her hips still doing the small traitorous thing they were doing. “The one thing I was keeping for him and you’re — I’m —”

She couldn’t finish because finishing meant saying *I’m going to let you take it* and her hips were already saying it and her voice couldn’t compete with the truth her body was telling.

“Do you want me to stop?”

She did not. Her mouth could not say it. Her hips said it — the small definite lift against the pressure of his cock, a quarter-inch of opening that was louder than anything she’d said all night.

His eyes closed for half a second. Whatever crossed his face when he opened them was not strategy.

His mouth came down on hers. Not soft. The rough mouth that tasted like her — her pussy, her ass, the deep musk of everything his tongue had been doing for the last twenty minutes — and she opened for him and tasted herself and the filth of it sent heat flooding down through her belly. He kissed her while his free hand slid between them. Two thick fingers pushed into her ass — slick from his mouth, from her arousal, from the mess pooling between her cheeks — and she gasped against his lips. He scissored them. Slow. Stretching her wider than the plug, wider than his finger at dinner, her trained muscle opening around his knuckles the way it had been taught to open. Three weeks of James’s careful patience paying dividends to a man who had never been as patient about anything in his life as this.

“Breathe.” Against her mouth. Not a request.

She breathed. His fingers twisted and spread and she felt herself give around them — loose, slick, ready. The training was good. James had been thorough. She was going to think about that later and it was going to cost her something she couldn’t afford right now.

He pulled his fingers out. The sound they made leaving her was wet and loud and she felt the cool air on the stretched ring for one second before the head of his cock replaced them.

The yield.

Her body opened around him and the sound she made was high and bright — *ah* — a single startled note, not pain, not pleasure, the specific shock of a living cock where only silicone had been. He was different from the plug in the way a heartbeat is different from a metronome. Hot. Throbbing. The head pulsing against the most sensitive ring of nerves she had, and she could feel his heartbeat through the thin wall of muscle gripping him. Alive inside her. The thick blunt crown seated just past her rim, and the rest of him — the full heavy shaft — a fact still outside her body.

He stopped. Held. His hands on her hips, fingers dug in hard enough to dimple the skin. His face above hers. The small sharp eyes locked on hers and he was not smug — not anywhere in the vicinity of smug. He looked like a man who'd just been given something he'd spent three years wanting and was afraid to breathe on it.

“Good girl.”

The words hit her like his hand on her head in the conference room. The same wire, the same current — the low hum in her belly, the clench around him that was involuntary and total. Her ass gripped the head and he groaned — low, guttural, felt through the place where they were joined more than heard.

“*Fuck.*” He said it through his teeth. “*Fuck, you’re tight.*”

“I know I am.” Barely a whisper. Her nails in his forearms. Her legs locked around his waist.

He pushed deeper.

The shaft fed into her in slow thick inches and she could feel every ridge as it crossed the threshold — the flare of the head, the heavy veined girth behind it, the slight upward curve pressing against the wall she shared with her pussy. Her mouth fell open. No sound came out. Then all the sound came out — a long shaking moan that she couldn't shape into a word, her body processing the fullness as information it didn't have a category for.

“Look at me.”

She looked. His face an inch from hers. Sweat on his forehead. The pockmarks. The heavy jaw. The man who had ruined Garrison without

raising his voice, who had dismantled her complaint, who had sat on the sign-off sheet since breakfast and waited. That man's cock was inside her ass and her body was taking it and the wrongness of the pairing — his face above hers, the gut pressing her thighs apart, the rough hands gripping her hips while she whimpered for more — was the heat itself.

“Look down.”

She looked between them. He pulled back — just an inch — and she saw it: the slick dark shaft emerging from her body, her small pink rim stretched taut around the widest part of him, glistening. He pushed back in slow and she watched herself take him — watched the muscle grip and yield and grip again, watched the wet shine of her on his cock, watched the obscene disparity of his thickness and her tightness and how her body was winning the argument anyway.

“That's you.” Low. Directive. The voice from the conference room, the voice from *follow my lead*. “That's your ass taking my cock. You see that?”

“I see it.” She could barely talk. Her voice was a ruined thing. “Ray, it's so — it's *different* than the plug — I can feel you—”

“Feel what.”

“Your heartbeat. Inside me. I can feel your—” He pushed the rest of the way in and the sentence broke apart in her mouth and became a sound instead.

The base of him met her. His balls pressed against her ass. The full length buried and the fullness was absolute — not the stretch of her pussy taking him on her couch or at the conference, not the silicone of the graduated set on her vanity. This was the live throb of a man's cock sealed inside the tightest part of her, every pulse of his blood registering against the ring of muscle gripping his base, her body wrapped around him so tight she could feel the vein on the underside ticking against her inner wall.

She gripped his forearms and held on and her legs shook and she said his name in a voice she didn't have a name for.

He started to move.

The first full stroke pulled him almost out — the drag of it, the wet slow tug at her rim, the suction sound of her body trying to hold him — and slid him back to the base in one long push, and the sound that came out of her was raw and open and surprised, the kind of sound that comes from a woman finding out her body can do something she didn't know it could do.

“Again.” She said it before she decided to. “Do that again.”

He did it again. Slower. And something in the angle shifted — the head pressing a new place on the way back in, grazing the thin wall between her ass and her pussy from the inside, and the sensation forked through her in two directions and her back arched and her nails broke the skin on his arms and she heard herself say *oh god oh fuck oh god* in the rapid thoughtless cadence of a woman past every pretense she'd ever held.

He found his rhythm. Slow, deep, complete strokes — the full length of him out and back, the soft wet sound of his cock moving in her ass filling the room between her moans and his breathing. Her thigh was over his hip. One stocking was gone. The teddy bunched at her waist, her tits bare and moving with every thrust, her nipples hard and dark and brushing against the coarse hair of his chest. The garter belt was twisted, the clips hanging loose, the whole careful costume she'd assembled in the bathroom reduced to scraps around a woman getting fucked in the ass by a man who sold industrial equipment and sweated through dress shirts.

His fingers found her clit.

The touch was blunt. No delicacy — the rough pad of his middle finger sliding through the flood of wetness between her thighs and pressing her clit in firm circles. Both points of contact arrived at once: the deep steady drag of his cock in her ass, the pressure on her clit, working the same tempo, and her whole body seized and released and seized again and she moaned — raw, guttural, barely human.

“Ah — *fuck* — Ray, don't stop, don't you fucking stop—”

“Not stopping.” His mouth at her throat — lips catching the edge of the choker, the last scrap of lace still where she'd put it. His hips keeping the pace. His finger keeping the pace. Everything synchronized, everything relentless, and she was pinned between the two points of contact — his cock deep in her ass, his thumb grinding her clit — with nowhere to go but the thing that was building in her.

“I can't believe I'm—” The next stroke buried the sentence. She tried again. “This was supposed to be — *oh god* — this was supposed to be James's—”

“I know whose it was supposed to be.”

“He was so careful. He was so *patient*. And you're just—” Another stroke, deeper, and her eyes rolled and her hand grabbed the back of his neck. “You're just *taking* it.”

“Yeah.” His voice was rough. Cracked. The composure that had held through the dinner, through the dance, through the blowjob — gone. She’d broken it. “I am.”

“You don’t deserve this.” She was babbling now, the words spilling out between moans, her hips rising to meet every stroke, her clit grinding against his finger. Her voice had the cadence of the dirty talk from the phone call — the two AM voice, the voice from the pillow — except she wasn’t performing. She was stating facts while Ray Vogler’s cock bottomed out in her ass. “You know that, right? You — *ah* — you disgusting, sweaty, manipulative — *fuck, right there* — you don’t deserve any part of me and you’re in the one place I’ve never let anyone—”

“Say it.”

“You’re in my ass, Ray.” Hoarse. Looking at him. The dark eyes bright and wet. “You’re fucking me in my ass and my husband has been getting me ready for this for three weeks and you’re the one who’s — *oh* —” His finger pressed harder and the sentence dissolved into a moan that arched her off the mattress.

A flash of James. Brief. The careful hands. The lube warming between his fingers. *Tell me if it’s too much*. The look on his face the night the medium slid home and she’d said *oh* and he’d said *there you go, baby, breathe*. James had opened her with love. Ray was inside her with something that wasn’t love and wasn’t not-love and she didn’t have the bandwidth to sort it because his cock was hitting something deep inside her that was rewiring her understanding of her own body.

His thumb sped up on her clit by a fraction.

She was close. The orgasm wasn’t approaching — it was already in the room, in her thighs, in the rhythmic clenching of her ass around his shaft, in the slick sounds between them that were getting louder and wetter and more obscene. She could feel him swelling inside her — the cock getting thicker, the strokes shorter, his breathing going ragged above her.

“Come on my cock.” He said it against her throat and the words hit the wire and the wire caught fire. “Come with me in your ass. Give me that too.”

She came.

It started where he was — the ring of muscle clamping around his shaft in hard rhythmic pulses, gripping him, milking him, the involuntary clench and release that she couldn’t control and didn’t want to. It rolled forward

through the thin wall into her pussy where her walls contracted on nothing and the wetness flooded out of her. It rolled up through her belly and broke behind her sternum and her thighs locked around his waist and her back came off the mattress and the sound she made was long and shaking and fractured between two languages.

“*Dios mío* — fuck, *Raymond*.”

His full name. Not Ray — the conference-room shorthand, the negotiated version. *Raymond*. It came out of her in a voice she’d never used, honest and wrecked and intimate in a way that didn’t belong in this room with this man, and she heard it leave her mouth and couldn’t call it back.

Something happened to his face. The small eyes went wide. The mask didn’t slip — it fell. What was underneath was not a man closing a deal. What was underneath was hungry and startled and almost young, like a door had opened that he hadn’t known was there.

His shaft thickened inside her. One massive pulse. His lungs locked. His hand on her hip went white-knuckled and she felt him right at the edge — the cock rigid and swelling, the balls drawn tight against her, every muscle in his body clenched against the thing his body wanted to do. He was about to come. Inside her ass. And the restraint of not doing it — of holding the edge while her orgasm milked his cock in waves — was a violence she could feel in his arms, his jaw, the tremor running through his chest where it pressed against hers.

He held.

He held through every aftershock, every clench, every wet pulsing grip of her body on his cock. He held while she shook and moaned and said his name again — *Raymond, Raymond* — and the sound of it was costing him something visible. His jaw clamped shut. The cords in his neck stood out like cables. His cock twitched inside her, desperate, denied.

He was not ready to let this night end yet.

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When the contractions slowed he pulled out.

The drag of his cock leaving her was a long slow theft — the ridge of the head catching at her rim on the way out, the wet sound of separation, and then the emptiness. The hollow of it hit her like a hand pulled away mid-touch — the sudden absence of something her body had already

decided it needed — and she whimpered, thin and involuntary, the sound of a woman who'd just lost something she shouldn't have wanted.

She lay there. Breathing. The ceiling was white and featureless and she stared at it while her pulse came down and her body hummed with the aftershock and the room was quiet except for his breathing and hers and the air conditioning and the creak of the mattress as his weight shifted.

Three seconds. Maybe four. The window opened.

She turned her head and caught herself in the dark glass of the hotel window across the room. The curtains were drawn but the gap between them showed a strip of black glass and in it: a woman. Ruined from the lace up. Mascara in two dark tracks. Lipstick where lipstick should not be. The white of the teddy — what was left of it — was the brightest thing in the reflection, and it looked like what it looked like. Something pristine that had been worn to be ruined. Something white that a man had put on a woman because the white was the point.

Her phone was on the floor by the armchair. The video on it. James in their bed three hours away with no idea that the ceiling had caved in an hour ago and the rubble was still settling. Saturday. The wine. The candles. The careful, patient, *tell me if it's too much*. Gone. She'd given it away on a hotel bed in Ohio to a man James had told her to go to — and she'd come so hard she'd said his full name and meant it.

“God.” She said it to the ceiling. Not to Ray. The single syllable holding everything she couldn't unpack right now — the guilt and the wonder and the grief and the wet throb between her legs that was already, already, asking for more. “What am I doing.”

“You know what you're doing.” His voice from beside her. Not gentle. Not checking in. The flat certainty of a man who read rooms for a living and had read her face in the dark window the same way she had. He'd seen the clarity arrive. He'd seen the three-second window.

He was not going to give her a fourth second.

His hand found her hip. Gripped. Turned her onto her side — not asked, moved, the way he'd moved the whole room at the Ashford table. Her body followed because her body had stopped negotiating an hour ago. He fitted himself behind her — the broad warm wall of his chest against her back, the gut pressing into the curve of her spine, the coarse hair scraping her shoulder blades, and his cock slotting back between her cheeks. Slick. Hard.

The head finding her opening with a precision that shouldn't have been possible at his size.

“Ray, I just—”

He pushed in.

Her body opened around him on the first stroke. Easier. Trained now — trained by the last twenty minutes of him inside her, the muscle remembering, the resistance softened to acceptance. The full length slid home and settled deep and the sound she made was different from the first time. Lower. Darker. The sound of a woman who knew what was happening and had decided to let it happen again.

“Oh *fuck*.” Into the pillow. Her hand gripping the mattress edge. “That’s — you can’t just—”

“Just did.” His mouth at her ear. The arm that came across her waist was heavy and proprietary, his palm flat on her stomach, pulling her back against him so his cock bottomed out. She felt his balls against her ass. His chest hair damp on her skin. His heartbeat thumping against her back faster than it should have been for a man this composed.

“You’re a bastard.” She said it with no heat. Her hips were already rocking back against him, small involuntary pushes that took him deeper on every roll. “I was having a moment.”

“I know you were.” He pulled back — the slow drag, the tug at her rim — and drove in deep. She gasped. “Moment’s over.”

His hand slid from her stomach down between her thighs. His finger found her clit — swollen, hypersensitive from the orgasm, and the first touch made her jerk and grab his wrist.

“Too much—”

“No it isn’t.” He circled lighter. Reading her. Adjusting. The rough pad of his fingertip barely grazing the hood, and even that sent sparks through her thighs. “Breathe.”

“Stop telling me to breathe, I know how to—” He thrust and the sentence evaporated. Her grip on his wrist went from pushing-away to holding-there in the space of one stroke.

The angle from this side was different. She could feel the entire length of him on every drag — the head tracing a longer path through her, pressing new places, the curve of his shaft grinding against the thin wall between her ass and her pussy and sending shocks forward into her clit where his finger was waiting to catch them. Everything converging. His cock deep in her

ass, his finger on her clit, his body wrapped around hers from behind. She was enclosed. Surrounded. The mass of him at her back and the heat of him inside her and nowhere to go except into the sensation.

“Squeeze me.” At her ear. Not asking.

She clenched around him. The grip made a wet sound and he hissed — the sharp intake through his teeth, half curse, half something helpless — and his arm tightened across her waist.

“Again. Harder.”

She squeezed harder and rocked her hips back and the combination hit something inside her that made her vision white out for a half-second and the sound she made was high and startled and his stroke faltered behind her.

“*Fuck*. Do that again.”

“Which part.” Breathless. Almost laughing. The absurdity of the sentence — *which part* — while Ray Vogler’s cock was buried in her ass for the second time in ten minutes.

“All of it.”

She did all of it. Squeeze. Rock. The wet grip of her ass on his cock and the roll of her hips driving him deep and his finger pressing her clit and the bed creaking under them in a slow heavy rhythm. His mouth found the side of her throat. Open. Wet. His teeth grazed the tendon and she tilted her head to give him more of it without thinking.

“You know what you feel like?” Low against her throat. His breath hot on the damp skin.

“Tell me.”

“Tighter than anything I’ve ever been in. Tighter than your pussy at the hotel. Tighter than that condom that blew apart inside you because your pussy was too wet and too greedy to let me fuck you through latex.”

“Shut *up*, Ray.” But she was clenching around him while she said it and the wet between her thighs was running down his finger and she could hear what her body sounded like — the slick rhythmic sound of his cock in her ass, the softer sound of his finger in her folds, the creak of the bed, her own breathing.

His hand left her clit. Came up. The thick palm settled at the column of her throat — not squeezing, not closing. Just there. Fingers loose around her neck, thumb finding her pulse. The weight of it. The implication arriving in her body before her brain could sort it — her breath going shallow, her pulse jumping under his thumb, a flush spreading down her chest that had

nothing to do with the cock in her ass and everything to do with the hand on her throat and what it meant about what she wanted from this man.

“There it is.” He felt her pulse spike. His thumb pressed the artery lightly and the rush of blood in her ears was a new kind of heat. “There’s my girl.”

“I’m not your—”

Three long strokes. His hand warm on her throat. His cock deep in her ass. Each one rolling through her entire body — the drag and the push and the pressure at her neck and the weight of him behind her. On the third she clenched around him hard enough that his rhythm broke. His hips stuttered. His hand at her throat tightened one degree and released and the groan he made into her hair was the sound of a man whose control had been the last thing holding and the last thing was fraying.

He pressed deep on the next stroke. Held. His cock pulsing inside her, his breathing ragged at her ear, and she could feel it — the edge he’d swallowed down ten minutes ago climbing back up his spine. He was close. Closer than he wanted to be.

She reached back. Found his thigh. Dug her nails in.

“Don’t you dare come yet.” Her voice was raw and commanding and it was the first thing she’d said all night that sounded exactly like the woman who had walked into this room with rules. “I’m not done with you.”

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He pulled her up.

Not a suggestion. His hands at her hips, lifting, turning — the efficient repositioning of a man who had decided what came next. Her body followed because following was what her body was doing now. Hands and knees. What was left of the white lace hung from her like something that had already given up. Her hair fell around her face and she could smell herself in it — sweat, sex, the musk of everything they’d been doing.

She was on all fours on a hotel bed for Ray Vogler. The thought arrived with the position, clear and specific: *I am on my hands and knees for a man who looks like he repairs vending machines and his cock has been in my ass for twenty minutes and I told him not to come yet.* The thought should have been sobering. The thought made her push her ass back toward him.

He fitted himself behind her. She felt his knees spread hers wider — the nudge of his thighs, insistent, opening her until the cool air of the room hit the wet mess between her legs and she could feel how exposed she was.

Everything on display. Her ass, her pussy — swollen and slick and briefly untouched and aching — the stretched ring where he'd been, still open, still soft from the work his cock had done. She felt him looking. The weight of his gaze on her spread-open body as tangible as his hands.

He pressed back in.

The angle changed everything. Deeper. More direct. The head of his cock hit something on the first stroke that the other positions hadn't reached and her fingers clawed the sheets and a sharp “*Oh—*” punched out of her before she could catch it. He bottomed out. His hips flush against her ass, his balls resting against her pussy — she could feel them there, heavy and warm against her swollen lips — and the fullness at this angle was staggering.

He held. His thumbs pressing into the flesh above her ass, spreading her, and she knew what he was looking at. His cock buried to the base in her ass, the pink rim of her stretched taut around the widest part of his shaft, glistening. Her ass — her ass that stopped men in hallways, that James cupped in his sleep, that she'd caught Ray staring at across conference tables for three years — wrapped around his cock from behind like it had been waiting for him.

Then he started to fuck her.

Long strokes. The full length of him pulling almost out — the drag of the head catching at her rim, the wet sucking sound of her body trying to hold him — and driving back in to the base. Slow enough that she felt every inch on the way out and every inch on the way back and the sounds they were making filled the room: the slick drag of his cock through her, the heavy wet *smack* of his belly meeting her cheeks on every push, the creak of the bed finding a rhythm, and underneath all of it the small punched-out *uh* she made at the depth of every stroke that she could not stop making no matter how hard she bit the inside of her cheek.

Her tits swung free below the bunched lace. Bare, heavy, her nipples hard and dark, swaying under her on every thrust. The deepest strokes swung them forward far enough that her nipples dragged against the duvet and the scrape of fabric on the oversensitive tips made her whimper and arch her back and the arch changed the angle and his cock went deeper and she moaned loud enough to hear herself through the pillow.

“You have *no* idea—” She was talking into the sheets, her voice muffled, her hips pushing back to meet him on every stroke. “—what this

feels like from this side.”

“Tell me.”

“It’s so deep I can feel you in my *stomach*, Ray, I can feel—” He drove in hard and the sentence crumbled. “*Ah—* I can feel every — *fuck* — every time you push in, something inside me—”

“Something inside you what.”

“*Moves*. Something moves and I can’t — I’ve never—” Another stroke. Her arms shook. “I’ve never felt anything this deep in my life and it’s in my *ass*, Ray, you’re in my *ass* and it’s—”

“Say it.”

“It’s so *good*.” The confession falling out of her in a voice that was almost crying, almost laughing. “It’s so good and it shouldn’t be, it should hurt, it should feel wrong, and instead I’m—” He bottomed out and held and her back arched and she pressed her face into the sheets and finished the sentence into the cotton: “—I’m losing my fucking mind.”

His hand pressed warm at the small of her back. Then his weight came down along her body — chest to her shoulders, the gut against her lower back, the heat of him blanketing her completely. She was pinned. His mass covered her from shoulder to thigh and the weight pushed her flat onto the mattress, her tits crushed against the sheets, her hips pressed down, and his cock sank the last fraction deeper and the helpless sound she made was pre-verbal. She was very small underneath him. He was everywhere.

His mouth found her shoulder blade. Open. Wet. His hips kept grinding — short, tight, deep strokes that didn’t pull back far, just pushed and pushed and pushed — and she could feel every flex of his belly against her back, every rough exhale against her skin.

“You know what the best part of all this is?”

“Don’t, Ray—”

“Hm?”

“Whatever you’re about to say—”

“You remember what I told that room in Dallas?”

Every muscle in her body went still.

“Three years ago.” His mouth wet on her spine. His hips grinding slow. “The meeting that cost me a lot. You remember what I said about this *ass*?”

“Ray, don’t—”

“I said it was wasted. On one man. On careful and patient and *one slow inch at a time*.” A long slow stroke that pulled a moan out of her she

couldn't suppress. "And here you are — face in the mattress, my cock as deep as it goes, pushing your hips back for more. So tell me, Jenna." Another stroke. Deeper. "Was I wrong?"

"*Shut up.*"

"Was I wrong?"

"You're a *pig*, Ray, you're a disgusting—" He ground in deep and her voice broke into a moan that gutted the insult. Her hips lifted against his. Her pussy was clenching on nothing, the arousal running down the inside of her thigh, and the wet sound of his cock in her ass was obscene and rhythmic and she could hear what she sounded like — like a woman getting exactly what she wanted from exactly the wrong man.

"That's what I thought." She felt him grin against her shoulder blade — the shape of his mouth spreading, the satisfaction settling into his skin. The grin of a man cashing a bet he'd been carrying since the first hour he saw her walk into a room.

"You're the *worst.*"

"I'm in your ass, Blondie. Deep in your perfect, gorgeous, *extraordinary* ass." A slow grind. "Hard to be the worst from here."

She made a sound that was half laugh, half groan, and it dissolved on the next stroke into something she couldn't categorize.

His hand slid under her. Found her clit. The pad of his finger slick with the arousal that had been running out of her for the last half hour, and the first circle pulled a jolt through her that made her bite the sheet. Her clit was swollen, hypersensitive from the orgasm, and the touch was almost too much — almost, not quite, the line where overwhelming tipped into unbearable and she lived on that line while his cock kept the steady deep drive from behind and his finger kept the circles at the front and her body clenched and pulsed between the two points of contact.

Her arms gave. Her face went into the duvet. Her ass stayed up because his hand at her hip held it there. She was folded — face down, ass up, the oldest position, the crudest, and Ray Vogler's cock was filling her from behind while his finger worked her clit and her moans were muffled in the sheets and she had never in her life been fucked like this. Not at the hotel. Not on the couch. Never.

He slapped her ass.

Sharp. Open-palmed. The *crack* startled a yelp out of her that she felt in her teeth and her hips jerked forward into his finger and the jolt ran straight

from the sting on her cheek through her clit to the base of her spine. The sting bloomed warm. Spread. Pulsed.

“Ah— what—”

His cock didn't stop. His finger didn't stop. The slap was a new instrument in the same song.

“What's your name?”

“*Jenna.*” Automatic. Voice muffled. The reflex polished over fourteen months of refusing him the other word.

He slapped again. Harder. The sound sharper. The warm sting layering on top of the first. Her ass cheek was burning and her pussy was flooding and the combination was doing something to her wiring that she didn't have time to examine.

“Try again. What's your name?”

She didn't answer. His cock moved in her — slow now, every stroke deliberate, every inch an announcement — and his finger kept circling her clit with the pressure he'd learned from the last one, and she was shaking, and the orgasm was right there, and the word was right there too, sitting in her mouth the way his cock sat in her body — something that had been pushed in from outside and was now impossible to expel.

“Look at you.” His mouth at her shoulder. “Face down. Ass up. What's your name, sweetheart?”

He slapped a third time. The sound filled the room. Her cheek was burning. Her cunt was gripping on nothing and the arousal was soaking his hand and the orgasm was one circle of his thumb away and the word was—

“Blondie.” Barely a whisper into the duvet.

She heard herself say it and something unknotted in her chest and something else tightened, and the feeling was vertigo — the specific vertigo of handing a man a thing he'd been asking for since the first day he saw her and having the handing-over feel like relief instead of loss. Every clipped *my name is Jenna*. Every cold rebuff. Every meeting where she'd refused him the syllable. Ending here. In this position. With his cock deep in her ass and her face in a hotel pillow and her hips pushing back for more.

“Again.” *Slap*

“Blondie.” Louder. Clear. Her voice not broken now — steady, almost defiant, the sound of a woman making a choice she could feel all the way down.

“Whose ass is this.”

“*Yours.*” No hesitation.

“Whose ass is this, Blondie.”

The moan and the word came out at the same time, loud enough that her own voice startled her and the wall between this room and the next was not thick enough: “*Yours, Ray — yours—*”

“*Good girl.*”

She came.

It hit on the next stroke — his cock buried to the base and his finger pressing her clit and the sting of his palm still hot on her cheek — and the orgasm ripped through her in waves that stacked on top of each other. Her ass clamped down around him in hard rhythmic pulses. Her arms went out entirely. Her face ground into the duvet and the sound she made was long and muffled and raw, the kind of sound that comes from the floor of a woman’s body, from the place below pride and below language and below the name she goes by in conference rooms — and under it, barely a whisper into the duvet, *no pares, no pares.*

His hands clamped on her hipbones. Bruising. He stopped moving. He held her there — her ass pulsing on his cock, milking him in waves she couldn’t control, her body clenching and releasing and clenching around the full thick length of him — and his jaw locked and the cords in his neck stood out and for the second time in five minutes he was right at the edge and the edge was trying to swallow him.

“*Christ.*” Through his teeth. His cock swelling inside her on one thick pulse. “*Fuck — Christ, baby—*”

He breathed through it. Forced it down. Held her on him while her body finished and the contractions slowed and the wet sounds between them softened. His hands on her hips were shaking. His chest heaving against her back. The restraint was costing him everything he had and she could feel the cost in the tremor of his thighs, the white of his knuckles, the clenched-shut silence of a man refusing to let go.

He pulled out slowly. The loss of him was physical — the fullness collapsing inch by inch, the cool air finding the places he’d been — and the whimper it pulled out of her was something she didn’t try to hide. Her whole body contracted around the absence.

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He sat back on his heels and pulled her up.

She came off the mattress boneless — arms useless, hair plastered to her neck with sweat, the teddy hanging off one shoulder. He moved up the bed, settled against the headboard, spread his thighs. Drew her back into his lap facing away. She went where he put her. Her body had stopped having opinions about where it went.

Her back against his chest. The warm bulk of him behind her. His gut pressing her lower back, his chest hair rough against her shoulder blades, his cock — still hard, impossibly still hard, slick and hot — resting in the cleft of her ass. She could feel it twitch against her. She could feel the pre-come smearing on her skin.

She reached down between them without being asked. Her hand found his shaft — the fingers not closing, never closing, the width of him a fact her hand would never solve — and she guided the head to her rim. She was open. Soft. The resistance that had been there an hour ago was gone. Her body knew him now. She settled the head at her opening and sank.

Quarter-inch at a time. Slow. Her own weight doing the work — gravity and the slick mess between them pulling her down onto him, his hands at her hipbones steadying her but not pushing. She took him inch by inch and felt every one — the head spreading her wide, the shaft following, the stretch no longer startling but deep and specific and *good*, the good she hadn't expected and couldn't deny, the good that had made her say *I'm losing my fucking mind* into a hotel pillow ten minutes ago.

When her ass met his lap and the full length of him was seated inside her she stopped. Held. Her head dropped back onto his shoulder. The sound that came out of her was low and surrendered — not the sharp *ah* of the first entry but a long slow *ohh* that she felt in her ribs. She was full. She was sitting in Ray Vogler's lap with his cock buried in her ass and her feet planted on either side of his hips and the wet of her arousal was soaking his thighs and she had put herself here. Her own hand. Her own weight.

"Take it." His voice at her ear. Cracked. Wrecked. "However you want."

She started to roll her hips.

Small circles at first. Grinding down on him, the shaft shifting inside her in tight rotations, the angle deeper than any of the others because her own weight pressed her onto him and gravity was doing what his hips had been doing from the other positions. Every roll pushed him against something deep and she gasped on each one — small bright sounds, *ah, ah, ah*, her mouth open, her eyes half-closed.

She found it. The rhythm. Long slow rolls, each one grinding her down on the full length of him, each one pressing the head against the deep spot that made her thighs shake. She was riding him. In his lap, her back to his chest, her ass full of his cock, and she was *riding* him — setting the pace, choosing the depth, her hips doing exactly what they wanted while his hands rested at her waist and let her work.

She reached back. Her hand found his belly — the soft heavy give of it, the coarse hair, the warm damp skin — and she pressed her palm flat and used it. Leverage. She pushed herself up an inch and dropped — the wet *smack* of her ass on his thighs filling the room, her moan chasing the sound. She did it again. And again. Controlled, deliberate, her small hand braced on his gut while she fucked herself down onto him, the slap of her ass on his lap getting louder and wetter and the sounds coming out of both of them getting less and less composed.

She caught the reflection in the dark window.

The gap in the curtains. The strip of black glass. And in it: her. A small golden woman in shredded white lace riding a large, flushed, ugly man propped against a headboard. Her back arched against his chest. Her tits bare and bouncing with every drop of her hips. Her hand braced on his hairy belly. Her mouth open. And below — visible in the glass, just — the dark thick shaft of his cock appearing and disappearing between her spread thighs as she rose and fell on him. She looked like something from a video she would have closed immediately if she'd found it on the internet. She looked extraordinary.

Somewhere in the last minute his hips had started driving up to meet hers — thick hard thrusts from below that slammed her down onto the full length of him, his cock punching deeper on every upstroke, the wet slap of his belly against her ass loud enough to hear through the wall. She'd felt his grip crush her waist, his breathing go ragged at her ear. Both of them fucking each other now.

His pace broke.

She felt it — his cock jumping inside her, a low broken *fuck* hissed into her hair, his fingers digging into her waist. She stopped moving. Held still on him, the full length of him sealed inside her, and she could feel his cock pulsing against her inner walls in thick desperate throbs.

“Wait—” Through his teeth. His head dropped against her shoulder.  
“Wait — *Christ* — give me a—”

He couldn't finish yet. She could feel his whole body straining underneath her — the tremor in his thighs, the clench of his stomach against her back, the white-knuckle grip on her waist. He was right at the edge. One more roll of her hips and he would come inside her ass and the effort of not doing it was shaking him apart.

She turned her head on his shoulder. Looked at his face. Eyes squeezed shut. Cords standing in his neck. Sweat running from his temple. Jaw clamped. The man who engineered rooms and leveraged hours and moved people like inventory — undone by the clench of her body on his cock. She had done that. She was *doing* that, right now, by sitting still.

She watched him in the window. Their reflection. His arms around her waist. Her body on his. Both of them flushed and gleaming and spent.

She rolled her hips. One slow deliberate circle.

“*Jesus—*” His grip crushed. “You’re going to make me—”

“*Shh.*” She rolled again. Smaller. Tighter. The corner of her mouth turned up — the first real smile since the bathroom mirror, the smile of a woman who had found the one piece of power left in the room and was using it. “*Breathe, Ray.*”

His own word. Thrown back at him. She felt his chest seize behind her with something that was either a laugh or a sob.

She rode him slow. Watching their reflection in the glass — the small controlled rolls of her hips, his face at her shoulder contorting, his hands on her waist trembling. She leaned forward an inch and the angle changed and the sound he made was long and broken and she felt his cock swell inside her and held the angle and made him live in it.

She reached behind her for his hand.

Not to stop him. Not to guide him. She laced her fingers between his thick rough ones and pulled his hand up off her waist and pressed it flat against her chest, over her sternum, over the bone above her heart. His palm covered her from collarbone to the swell of her breast. He let her hold it there. His thumb moved once across her knuckles. She squeezed. He squeezed back. And they held hands while she fucked herself on his cock and neither of them acknowledged it and the tenderness of the gesture inside the crudeness of the act was the most confusing thing that had happened all night.

His free hand slid down between her legs. Found her clit.

She was drenched. His finger slid through the wet and found the swollen nub and the first circle pulled her hips off the mattress and a moan out of her that was almost a scream. Two orgasms in and her clit was raw, oversensitive, every touch a jolt that sat right on the line between pleasure and too much. His finger circled lighter. Found the pressure. She sank back down on him and the two sensations — his cock deep in her ass, his finger on her clit — stacked on top of each other and her body couldn't decide which one to chase so it chased both.

“Ray—”

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She lifted off him.

The slow withdrawal made them both groan — and the sound he made when the head slipped free was something she'd never heard from a man. Guttural. Bereft. The sound of losing something he'd been holding inside for three hours of patience and planning and the careful disassembly of a woman's resistance.

She turned on his lap.

Swung her leg over. Faced him. Her thighs settling across his hips, her hands finding his shoulders, her face inches from his. His face was destroyed — sweat running from his temples, the flush spreading from his cheeks down his neck to his chest, his mouth swollen from her teeth. She looked at him. This man. This crude, heavy, pockmarked, sweating man. She was about to put his cock back in her ass herself and finish him.

She reached between them. Wrapped her hand around his shaft — slick with her, slick with the mess of the last hour, and the wet sound of her fist on him was loud between their bodies. She lifted her hips. Guided the head to her rim. Pressed down.

The entry was easy. Her body opened around him like a hand closing around something familiar and the full length slid home in one slow continuous sink — her weight pulling her down onto him, her ass swallowing his cock inch by inch while she watched his face and his eyes went glassy and his mouth fell open and his hands found her hips and gripped.

She stopped at the base. The full length sealed inside her. Her ass flush against his thighs. His cock pulsing deep in a place she'd been a virgin two hours ago and would never be a virgin again.

She heard herself think it: *I'm about to make Ray Vogler come inside my ass.*

The thought should have been the thing that stopped her. It was the thing that made her roll her hips.

She kissed him. Wet. Open. Her tongue in his mouth while she moved on him — long slow rolls, chest to chest, the ruined teddy crushed between them, her tits dragging against his chest hair, his belly warm and heavy against her stomach. His arms came around her and she was inside the circle of a man twice her size and her hips kept working and his pulse was hammering in his throat under her thumb.

“Fuck me.” Against his mouth. No pretense left. The voice that had said *your ten minutes start now* in a doorway two hours ago now saying this. “Fuck me with that cock, Ray.”

He started to move under her. His hips lifting into hers on every roll, meeting her on the way down, and the depth he reached when they both drove at the same time was obscene — deeper than the doggy, deeper than the side, the angle pushing him past where she'd thought her body ended. She gasped against his teeth and her gasp turned into a laugh — small, breathless, incredulous.

“How is it *deeper* from here—”

“Your weight.” Rough. Into her mouth. “You're sitting on it. All of it.”

“All of it.” She rolled down. Took him to the base. Held. “I can feel you in my *chest*, Ray.”

“You wanted this.”

“I want it *now*.” Her hips drove down. Hard. The slap of her ass on his thighs cracked through the room. “I want it right now. Don't stop.”

She bit his lower lip. Pulled. He growled into her mouth and his hands moved from her hips to her ass — both palms gripping, spreading her cheeks around his shaft, and the feeling of his huge hands opening her wider while she rode him made her moan into his mouth and grind down harder.

He grabbed a fistful of her hair at the nape and pulled. Her head tipped back. Throat bare. He kept fucking up into her and his mouth found her pulse point and she could feel his teeth against the tendon and the scrape of his stubble on the soft skin and his cock driving into her from below.

She heard herself. The sounds she was making — wet, rhythmic, a *uh uh uh* on every downstroke that she couldn't shape into words — were the

sounds of a woman getting fucked in the ass and loving it. She could hear the slap of her body on his, the wet suck of his cock in her, the creak of the headboard, and her own voice threaded through all of it like something feral she'd let out of a cage. This was her. This was Jenna Whitfield. Married. Thirty-three. Against the man whose cock was currently buried in the place her husband had spent three weeks lovingly preparing for a Saturday night that would never happen now, and she was riding him and begging for more and the woman making those sounds was the same woman who had stood in a bathroom mirror an hour ago in white lace looking like something sacred.

Nothing sacred left.

"Cum in me." She said it against his mouth and heard it leave her and the hearing was its own shock — the crudeness of it, the finality. She didn't take it back. "Cum in my ass, Ray."

"*Fuck—*" His hips jerked under her. His grip on her ass tightened.

"I want to feel it." She drove down. Rolled. Her forehead against his, her eyes open, looking at him while she said it. "I want to feel you cum inside me. Deep. Fill me up."

"Jenna—"

"I've been thinking about this." True. She hadn't known it was true until she said it but her body had known for weeks — the plugs, the training, the graduated patience, and underneath all of it the question she'd never let herself ask: *what would his cock feel like there?* "I've been thinking about you cumming in my ass since the first night James put the plug in me."

The sound he made was ruined. His hips lost their rhythm. His hands on her ass were shaking.

"Give it to me." She rode him harder. Her ass slapping against his thighs in fast wet smacks, her tits bouncing against his chest, her hands braced on his shoulders for leverage, the headboard knocking the wall. "I'm not leaving this room until I feel you cum, Ray. In my ass. Where my husband was supposed to be first. *Give it to me.*"

He swelled inside her.

She felt it — the shaft thickening, the pulse intensifying, the head stretching her wider from inside, his entire body going rigid underneath her. His grip on her hips was past bruising. His next thrust was desperate — graceless, the coordination gone, just the raw upward drive of a man whose

body had overruled his brain. The one after that broke his rhythm completely and he was gone.

*“Jenna—”*

Her real name. From a place in him she hadn't known existed. Not Blondie. Not baby. *Jenna*. Groaned against her mouth like a prayer in a language he'd forgotten he spoke.

*“Jenna — I'm — fuck — Jenna—”*

Her hand found her clit. She hadn't decided to reach — the hand went on its own, two fingers sliding through the slick mess between her thighs, and the first circle buckled her spine. She was already there. Had been there for twenty minutes, the orgasm sitting right at the surface, and Ray groaning her name into her mouth was all it took.

Two circles. Three. She came.

Her ass clamped around his cock in hard desperate pulses — her hips grinding down, fingers still working her clit through the aftershocks, her whole body wringing him in waves she couldn't stop. She was moaning into his mouth, raw and wrecked, and the words spilling out of her weren't English.

*“Raymundo — sí, sí —”*

The name hit him like a fist. She felt his whole body seize under her, the last thread snap, her orgasm milking his cock the thing that tipped him over. He was coming inside her.

She did not stop. She rode him through it — drove her hips down on every pulse, taking each spurt of him deep in her ass, her body clenching around him on every wave, milking him with the slow hungry grind she'd learned in the last hour. She felt the heat spread inside her. Thick. Heavy. Each pulse landing deep and pooling where no man had ever been. His cum filling her ass in warm surges while his hands crushed her hips and his mouth fell open against hers and the sound coming out of him was long and broken and guttural, climbing from his chest and cracking at the peak into something she would remember for the rest of her life.

She held him inside her. Rode him through every spurt. Her hand at the back of his neck pulling his face into the hollow of her throat. His open mouth wet and gasping against her skin. She could feel him emptying — pulse after pulse, thick and warm, flooding the deepest part of her — and her ass kept gripping him through it, clenching in slow rhythmic waves that

were the tail end of her own orgasm, her body wringing him dry because her body had decided this was hers to take.

When the pulses slowed she didn't stop. She rode him slow — long deep grinding rolls that pulled the last weak pumps out of him, her hips moving with a patience she'd learned from watching him. Draining him. His grip on her hips went slack by degrees. His groans softened into small helpless sounds against her throat — spent, almost tender, the noises of a man who had nothing left. She didn't stop until the throb of his cock inside her slowed and the heat stopped coming and she felt him begin to soften.

She settled at the bottom of a long deep roll. Stayed. He was still inside her — smaller now, spent, the warmth of what he'd given her already beginning a slow thick trickle out of her that she could feel running down to where their bodies met. She didn't move. Her arms went around his neck. His forehead came down against her collarbone. His breath shuddered against her chest.

“*Christ.*” Into her skin. Barely a sound.

She kissed the top of his head. The thinning grey hair. The hot damp scalp. He made a sound against her chest that she would never tell anyone about — small, helpless, the sound of a man set down somewhere he hadn't expected to land. She kissed his temple. The sweat there. Then he tilted his face up and she met his mouth and the kiss was slow and exhausted and tasted like both of them and the room they'd made together.

The bed settled. The headboard stopped knocking. The room was quiet except for their breathing finding the same tempo.

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The hotel room had been rearranged by what happened in it.

The duvet was on the floor. One pillow was against the headboard at an angle that defied explanation. The sheets were a twisted rope. The white teddy was — she spotted it draped over the desk lamp, the garter belt on the chair, the choker on the pillow. One stocking lay across the nightstand like a shed skin. The other was still around her ankle. She had no memory of either of them coming off.

She unhooked the last stocking from her ankle. Set it on the duvet. Walked to the bathroom on legs that were not entirely under her control. The cool tile was a fact against her bare feet. She caught herself in the mirror over the sink and stopped.

The woman looking back was a woman she half-recognized.

Her hair was a wreck — tangled at the crown, knotted in a thick rope at one side, the ends damp where his hands had been. Mascara ringed both eyes and had run where her face had been pressed into the duvet. Her mouth was raw — pink, slightly swollen, the lower lip carrying a small dark mark where he'd bit her. Red abrasions ran along the side of her throat where his unshaved jaw had spent too long. A faint bloom of a fingerprint sat on her hipbone. The flush on her chest had not gone down. She looked, in the unforgiving white of the bathroom light, thoroughly fucked. She looked like a woman who had done something that could not be taken back and had not yet decided what to make of it.

She held her own eyes in the glass for a long moment.

Then she turned on the shower.

The hot water hit her shoulders and she stood under it longer than she needed to. The hotel soap was generic — the same antiseptic-floral she'd smelled in a hundred identical bathrooms — and it erased him layer by layer: first the cologne, then the sweat, then the deeper musk that lived in his skin. She could feel the evidence of him leaving her body. The slow thick trickle from where he'd finished inside her, thinning in the hot water, circling the drain with everything else the night had produced. She stood and let the water take it and watched it go and felt, briefly, like she was watching something that belonged to her being carried away by a current she couldn't reverse.

She dried herself with the hotel towel. Thick. White. Institutional. Wrapped it around herself. Did not look in the mirror again.

She came out.

He was on the bed. Propped against the headboard, the sheet pulled to his waist. The mass of him — that was what registered first. Not a face, not an expression. The sheer physical volume of a man who had just emptied himself inside her and still managed to fill two-thirds of a king bed. His chest was flushed from sternum to throat, the grey hair matted with sweat. The belly rose and fell. His hands rested at his sides — the same hands that had gripped her hips hard enough to leave the fingerprints she'd just catalogued in the mirror. The knuckles were red. His face was slack. Not soft. Slack — the heavy jaw loosened, mouth open a fraction, the deep-set eyes half-lidded and unfocused. The pockmarks on his cheeks were more visible than they'd been in the dark. He looked spent. He looked like a

large, flushed, ugly man who had been turned inside out by something and hadn't put himself back together yet.

This was the man who had been inside her. This was the man she had begged.

Her phone was on the nightstand where she'd left it hours ago. She picked it up by reflex — the automatic gesture, the hand reaching before the brain could intervene — and the screen lit her face in the dim room. 3:47 AM.

Three missed calls from James.

11:22 PM. 11:48 PM. 12:31 AM.

Three green icons in a neat column. She stared at them the way you stare at evidence you'd forgotten could exist. He'd been calling while — she counted backward without wanting to. 11:22 was the lap dance. Her bent over the armchair with the plug visible and Ray's erection pressing against her through his boxers. 11:48 was the blowjob. On her knees between his thighs, her mouth stretched around him, spit running down her chin onto her chest while she looked up at the camera she'd asked him to hold. 12:31.

She closed her eyes.

12:31 was the first time his cock pushed into her ass.

James had been calling her while Ray Vogler was taking her anal virginity. Three calls. No voicemails. She knew James — knew the patience of him, the careful restraint. He would have sat in their bed, phone in hand, watching it ring out. Telling himself the session ran late. Telling himself she'd lost track of the time. Constructing the reasonable explanations one by one because James was a man who built structures out of reasonable explanations, and the alternative — the unreasonable one, the real one — was a thing he would not have let himself assemble at midnight alone in the dark.

*It won't go far.*

She'd said that to James sitting on the bed. In her jeans and cashmere with her voice steady and her boundaries in order. *I'll call you after.* That woman and the woman standing here in a hotel towel with Ray Vogler's cum drying on the inside of her thigh were the same woman. The distance between those two versions of herself was measured in hours and she could not cross back.

She set the phone face-down on the nightstand. The screen went dark. James went dark. She let him go.

“I need to be out of here by seven.” Her voice came out brisk. Professional. She could feel herself trying to reassemble — the analyst, the woman with a calendar, someone who had a next thing to do. The reassembly was not taking.

His eyes tracked her across the room. Not asleep — watching her the way he watched conference tables, even now, even emptied. The half-lidded attention of a man who was not done looking at what he’d had.

“Okay.”

“James is expecting me home by ten.”

His name again. Louder this time, or it felt louder. James. The husband who had called three times. The man who’d trained her open with silicone and patience and *go slow* and *tell me if it’s too much*. The man sleeping alone in their bed right now with no voicemail and no callback and nothing but the silence she had chosen to give him.

“Okay,” Ray said again.

She should leave. Her room was two doors down. Her clothes were on the chair — the jeans, the cashmere, the ankle boots she’d worn to the crisis session a lifetime ago. She could get dressed, walk the fluorescent hallway, sleep in her own bed, put sixty feet of hotel carpet between what had happened and what came next.

She didn’t leave.

Some of it was simple: her legs would not carry her. Her body had a heaviness in it that went past tiredness — a bone-deep fullness that sat in the ache between her hips, in the specific tenderness deep inside her that pulsed when she shifted. She had been fucked for three hours and her body had loved it and the loving had left her hollowed and leaden and strange to herself. Some of it was not simple at all.

She had said *Blondie*. After years of correcting him — every clipped *my name is Jenna* in conference rooms and hallways and the hotel room the first time. She had said it face-down with his cock buried in her ass and the saying had felt like setting down something heavy she hadn’t known she’d been carrying. She had said *yours*. Loud enough to startle herself, loud enough for the next room to hear. She had looked Ray Vogler in the face and confessed that she’d been fantasizing about this since the first night James put the plug in her, and the confession had left her mouth before her

mind could stop it because it was true, and the truth of it was so deep and so ugly and so completely hers that the telling had been its own kind of orgasm — a release she hadn't known she needed until it was out.

She had given away pieces of herself tonight that did not come back once given. And the giving had done something to her that she could not undo by walking down a hall.

She could feel it sitting on the edge of this bed. Wrapped in a towel. Hair wet. Phone dark on the nightstand. Something in how she understood herself had been rearranged. Not broken — the walls were the same, the light was the same — but the paths through it were different now and her body knew the new paths before her mind had drawn the map.

The new paths led here. To this bed. To the warm depression his body pressed into the center of the mattress. To the man who had told her what name to say and when to say it and she had obeyed — not because he forced her, not because the leverage or the evening or the circumstances made it inevitable, but because the obeying was the thing she wanted. The wanting lived below the analyst and below the wife and below the woman who had filed an HR complaint, and it was so raw and so wrong and so entirely hers that resisting it had become a performance she could no longer sustain.

And underneath everything else — the heaviness and the surrender and the demolished promises — a fact she was not going to examine tonight. That the thought of standing up and walking out of his room felt, in some deep unlit part of her, like leaving without being told she could. That the thought of *asking* him whether she could go would have appalled her. And that both of those feelings lived in her at the same time, and the contradiction was a thing she would have to set down somewhere later and pick apart alone. Not tonight. Tonight she was going to lie down in the dip his body had made in this bed. The wanting was crude and final. She was done pretending it was anything else.

She pulled the sheet back and got under the covers.

He didn't say anything. Didn't make it a thing. Just shifted — the mattress dipping toward his weight, her body rolling the half-inch into the warm valley his mass created. She settled on her side, facing away from him. His arm came over her waist. Not gentle. Heavy. The arm of a man putting something where he wanted it. His chest against her back. The gut warm against the base of her spine. His breathing slow and deep and certain

behind her, the way everything about Ray was certain, even now, even emptied, even undone.

She closed her eyes. The last thing she registered before sleep took her was the weight of his arm and the heat of his body along the full length of hers and the quiet knowledge — forming already, taking shape behind her eyes like something crystallizing — that she would not tell James about tonight. Not the real version. Not the one where she said *yours* and *Blondie* and *cum in my ass where my husband was supposed to be first*. She would build him something else. A version with the center removed and a different center installed.

The lie was already taking shape when she fell asleep.

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He stayed awake longer.

He lay with his arm across her waist and could not slow his breathing to match hers. His body was finished — spent, emptied, the heaviness settling into his limbs like poured concrete — but his mind kept running the way his mind always ran, except the thing it was running on had changed and he couldn't locate exactly when.

She was here. She was in his bed.

She had walked down the hall, put on white lace and let him have things he'd been carrying as private footage in his head for three years, and the having had not played the way the footage played. Something about the evening had shifted. Somewhere in the middle of it the frame had changed and he hadn't noticed until now, lying in the dark with her breathing against his forearm and the smell of hotel soap in her hair and underneath it — surviving the scrubbing — the warm specific animal smell of her skin that was going to be a fact he carried for the rest of his life.

He tried to find the moment.

Was it her hand pressing his against her sternum? Her fingers laced through his, the tenderness of the gesture so wrong inside the crudeness of what they were doing that it had briefly confused him — Ray Vogler, who was never confused, who had been reading rooms since before this woman was born? Was it the small rolls of her hips in his lap, the control she'd taken, the way she had held his orgasm in her body and made him wait?

No. It was the confession.

*I've been thinking about you cumming in my ass since the first night James put the plug in me.*

Foreheads touching. Her eyes open. Her hips grinding down on him. She had said it into his mouth and the sentence had reached past every wall he'd built around the wanting and touched something behind it that he didn't have a name for. He had engineered the evening — the room, the bag, the lingerie, the patient disassembly of her resistance. He had planned for the teasing and the blowjob and the slow escalation. He had even planned for the plug, known what it would mean, known what it would tell her about what he wanted. He had planned all of it.

He had not planned for her to confess that the thing her husband had been building for weeks was something she'd been imagining giving to *him*.

That was hers. She had brought it into the room unprompted and the bringing had cracked something in the machinery that kept his categories clean. Before that sentence, the evening was a win — access secured, a fantasy realized, a deal closed with the efficiency of a man who understood leverage and patience and the slow conversion of reluctance into consent. After that sentence, the evening was something else. Something that didn't fit in the file where he kept the rest of it.

He held her closer. A fraction. She didn't stir. Her ribs expanded and contracted under the weight of his arm in a rhythm he was trying to learn because learning it was the only thing he could do with it.

He had a word for what he wanted now. *Keep her*. The word arrived with the clarity of a number at the bottom of a column — simple, undeniable, the sum of everything above it. Not the sessions. Not the negotiations. Not the careful plays and the texts to James and the engineering of opportunities. He wanted *her*. The breathing. The sleeping weight of her body against his chest. The mornings.

He wanted Jenna in a way that required James to not exist. And the wanting was already converting itself — the way wanting always did in him — into operational questions.

She did not wake. The room was dark except for the clock and the thin bar of hallway light under the door. Her phone sat face-down on the nightstand. His was on the floor somewhere. The mattress held them both in the depression his body had made and outside the window the parking lot was empty and the sky was the blank black of a small city at four in the morning and the woman asleep against his chest had chosen to stay and the

choosing was doing something to him that three years of obsession had not prepared him for.

He fell asleep with his face in her hair and the word *keep* in his chest like something swallowed whole.

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She woke early.

Grey light through heavy curtains. The thin institutional grey of hotel morning — not the warm gold of their bedroom at home, not the pattern of the blinds she knew by heart. Wrong bed. Wrong weight in the mattress. Wrong smell.

Then it arrived. All of it. Where she was. Who she was next to. What she'd done.

She lay still. The soreness was there — specific, deep, a tenderness that pulsed faintly with her heartbeat. She shifted her hips and felt it bloom and the feeling was a timestamp. Proof. Her body keeping the record in a language more honest than anything she'd tell herself later.

She turned her head.

His body in the morning. The mass of him under the sheet, on his back, taking up two-thirds of the king bed. His face was slack in sleep — the heavy jaw loosened, mouth slightly open, the pockmarked cheek pressed into the pillow. The sharp small eyes were closed and without them his face looked older and less dangerous. The lines deeper. The jowls softer. Pink scalp visible through thinning grey hair. The thick arm that had been around her was thrown above his head, exposing the damp underarm, the grey hair there.

Just a man. Fifty-three years old. Overweight. Snoring faintly.

The man who had trembled when he first pressed inside her. Who had held her hips like something he'd been starving for. Who had said her real name at the end — not *Blondie*, not the word he'd spent the night putting in her mouth, but *Jenna*, groaned against her lips like something torn out of him by force.

She lay still and let the inventory run.

Nobody pushed her. She had called James — called him, told him about the evening, told him *it won't go far*. She had walked to Ray's room. Put on the white lace. Let him undress her with his eyes and then with his hands. She had knelt for him. Turned over when he told her to. Said *Blondie, my*

*name is Blondie.* Ridden him, held his hand against her sternum, confessed about the training. Every step was hers. Or felt like hers.

The conditional complaint. The professional leverage. Ray's reading of the situation, the way the excuse and the wanting were woven so tight she couldn't find the seam. Had every step been hers?

She closed her eyes. Opened them.

She thought about James. At home. In their bed — or not in their bed, not at this hour. Maybe in the kitchen making coffee. Maybe on a run. Maybe lying awake staring at the ceiling fan, three unanswered calls on his screen. The night they'd planned. Their Saturday. James so patient. So careful. *Tell me if it's too much.* Building toward the thing she'd promised they would do together.

She was supposed to give that to James. She gave it to Ray on the Saturday that was supposed to be his.

The thought sat in her chest. Not guilt — not yet, not the full weight of it. More like the awareness of a debt that hadn't been tallied. Something taken from one man and given to another. The giving had been a choice. The choice was hers. She was going to carry it home with her.

She tried the version that let her hold it: *James wanted this.* Thursday night, the way his body had answered when she whispered about going behind his back. He came hardest to the version where she went further than he knew. She had given him that version. She had made the fantasy real. The reasoning was clean and simple and she could almost believe it if she didn't look at what lived underneath — the confession she'd made with her forehead against Ray's, the word she'd whispered into a pillow, the fact that when Ray's cock was inside her she hadn't been thinking about what James wanted at all.

She got up quietly. Showered — the second time in six hours, the hotel soap working to erase what the first shower had already diminished. Dressed in yesterday's clothes. The jeans. The cashmere. The ankle boots she'd worn to the crisis session, a lifetime ago. She looked at herself in the mirror. Professional. Composed. The red mark on her neck was fading. The mascara was gone. She looked like a woman leaving a business trip.

When she came out of the bathroom, he was awake.

Propped on one elbow, watching her. The sheet pooled at his waist. His body in the grey morning light — the mass, the hair, the belly, the thick arm supporting his weight. His eyes were sharp again. The softness of sleep

burned off, the close-set gaze doing what it always did: reading her, measuring, putting her somewhere inside himself for later.

But there was something else on his face. Something she didn't want to examine. Proprietary. Almost fond. The expression of a man watching something he considers his — not aggressively, not with the crude possessiveness of the night, but with the quiet certainty of ownership. Like she was a view from a window he'd just bought.

She picked up her bag from the desk.

"I have to go." Brisk. Professional. The same voice she used in conference rooms. Nothing in it that belonged to the woman who had been in this bed an hour ago.

"Jenna."

She paused with her hand on the door handle.

Not Blondie. Her real name. Said quietly, with something in it that had no business being in his mouth. The same voice that had groaned it against her lips when he came — not commanding, not crude. Just her name from a man who had been inside the most private part of her body and was now watching her leave and the watching had a weight to it she could feel on her skin like a hand.

She didn't respond.

She opened the door. Walked into the fluorescent hallway. The door clicked shut behind her. The carpet was grey and the hallway smelled like nothing and her heels were loud in the empty corridor and she walked the sixty feet back to her room without looking behind her.

---

She called James from her own hotel room. Sitting on her own bed — the bed she hadn't slept in, the sheets still crisp from housekeeping — with her bag packed and her hair pulled back in a low knot and the session an hour away.

He picked up on the second ring.

"Hey." His voice. Careful, warm, the specific tenor that had been the first thing she'd heard every morning for seven years of marriage. Something tightened behind her sternum that she swallowed before it could reach her voice.

"Hey. I'm so sorry I didn't call last night."

"I tried you a couple times."

“I know. I saw.” She let a pause sit. The pause of a woman choosing how much to say. “It was a lot.”

“What happened?”

She told him.

Not what happened. What she’d built. The version that had been taking shape behind her eyes since before she fell asleep — assembled now, polished, ready. Close enough to the truth that the telling came easy. The best lies were mostly real.

“I did the dance,” she said. “In the outfit. The whole thing — the lace, the garter, the heels. He sat in the armchair and I told him hands on the armrests and he actually listened for about ninety seconds.”

“Ninety seconds.”

“Generous estimate.” She heard James exhale — the short half-laugh, the sound of a man hearing something that was arousing and awful in equal measure. She knew the sound. She’d been calibrating against it for months. “I turned around and bent over and he lasted maybe three rolls of my hips before his hands were on my ass. Both of them. I couldn’t even see them under his palms.”

“Then I got on my knees for him.”

She gave him the blowjob. The real blowjob — the weight of him on her tongue, the width that spread her jaw past what her jaw wanted to do, the gagging, the spit, both hands on the shaft because there was no getting all of him in. The way he’d fisted her hair at the nape and held it back so he could watch. The way he’d talked to her through it — *good girl, get it wet* — and the way she’d looked up at him with her mouth full and felt her whole body flush.

“It took *forever*.” She laughed — small, rueful. “He’s so thick I could barely get past halfway. I was down there for — I don’t even know. An hour? My jaw was shaking by the end. I had spit all the way down to the bow on this thing.” She let the image land. “I finished him with my hands because my mouth physically could not do any more.”

“Jesus.”

“Yeah.” She sat with the word. Let it breathe. “I was so wiped out after that I didn’t even shower. I went straight to bed. I didn’t see your calls until this morning.”

The silence on the line was the specific silence of James processing — the quick mind sorting the inputs, running the images, his body responding

to the details the way his body had been trained to respond. She knew what was happening on his end of the phone. The compound. Shame and arousal. The thing he couldn't separate.

"I got video for you," she said. Quieter. "He held my phone while I — you can see me. From above. It's not cinema, but." She let it trail off. "I'll send it."

A pause. She could hear him breathing.

"Send it," he said.

The gentleness in his voice was the worst part. She sat on the hotel bed with the phone against her ear and the lie in the air between them and his kindness coming through the speaker like something she didn't deserve, and for one second the truth rose in her throat — the whole thing, the real night, the white lace and the plug and the way she'd said *yours* into a pillow and ridden Ray's cock in her ass and begged him to finish inside her — and she felt the words pushing upward, felt them crowding at the back of her teeth, and she held very still and breathed and the second passed and the words settled back down into the place where she was going to keep them.

"Listen," James said. "Something came up while you were gone. Mike called me last night."

Mike Reeves. James's closest friend from college. Six hours north, outside Erie. They talked every few weeks, saw each other twice a year. Good guy. Quiet marriage. Two kids.

"Laura's been cheating on him."

The words landed in her ear and sat there.

"He found out Thursday. She admitted it. Some guy from the gym — it's been going on since January." James's voice was flat. Tired. "He's a wreck. He's sleeping in the guest room and the kids don't know yet and he asked me to come up and help him move his things into storage. He can't do it alone."

"Oh my God." She heard her own voice — the right tone, the right shock. Both were real. The sympathy for Mike was genuine and immediate and the cold thing underneath it was something she acknowledged and did not examine. "James, of course. Go."

"I'm already packed. Heading out within the hour."

"How long?"

"Few days probably. However long he needs."

“Okay.” She was nodding. He couldn’t see her nod. “Tell him I’m thinking of him. Tell him — God. I don’t know what you say to someone.”

“Yeah.” A pause. “I don’t either.”

The line was quiet. She could hear him breathing. She could hear, faintly, the sound of the kitchen — the hum of the refrigerator, maybe the tick of the coffee maker cooling. The sounds of their house with only one person in it.

“Drive safe,” she said.

“I will.”

“I love you.”

The words came out the way they always came out — without decoration, without performance. She meant them. That was the thing. She meant them completely and the meaning did not contradict anything she’d done and the fact that it didn’t was a problem she would carry for a long time and was not going to solve on a hotel bed on a Sunday morning.

“I love you too,” James said. “Come home safe.”

She hung up.

The phone went dark. She sat on the bed. The room was quiet. James was leaving. Mike Reeves was sleeping in his own guest room because his wife had been lying to him for five months.

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