

**MY OWN  
WORST ENEMY**

**Ladylumps - 3**

**T.G. Grump**

# 1

My forefinger and thumb quivered as I lifted a piece of sushi to my lips, and gladly released their grip as my mouth took over the precarious task. Chewing, I smiled across the table at Rebecca. I wasn't sure how exactly I'd wound up here. Eating dinner at a fancy restaurant with Rebecca and her parents in their seaside hometown, was a far cry from taking the train back upstate to see my own parents, but I'd be damned if I let on that my usual course of action with sushi was to ask for a fork. I'd done a lot of pretending in my first college semester, and so far it had paid off for me. To my friends, I'm I was a little more polished, a little more mysterious, and a little more outgoing than I had been in high school. And it almost felt real. I just needed to keep it up, and eventually, it *would* be real. That's what I told myself.

Rebecca's phone buzzed face-down against the table and shifted slightly. She slid it gently to the edge of the table with a single slender finger, her blue nails glittering under the restaurant's dim lights. She glanced down at her screen and the corner of her mouth pulled upward into a mischievous smile. Tossing her dark hair gracefully over one shoulder, she leaned across the table to show me a picture.

"Look at that *outfit*" she giggled. It was a picture our friend Eleanor with her family. Normally Ellie was, well, I don't want to say *slutty*, but her outfits left little to the imagination, and were often a topic of discussion behind her back. We'd had our fair share of laughs at her expense, but this photo was hardly the Eleanor we knew. Gone were her too-small crop tops, tight skirts and dark makeup, and in their place was a plain, dumpy girl with a bun and an oversize sweater. Rebecca's eyes glittered with amusement. I cracked a grin as she pulled her phone back across the table, angled slightly so that her parents could not see the screen. I guessed Ellie's parents didn't approve of her usual attire. Or maybe they didn't know. Poor Ellie just couldn't win with us. But I didn't really feel too bad about it. It was all in good fun, and of course, what she didn't know couldn't hurt her.

"So Alex, Where are you from?" Rebecca's kind-faced father made eye contact with me from across the table.

"uh— Eastvale." I said.

"Oh! Eastvale. We have some friends there" Rebecca's mother piped in from my right. "Lovely town. Lovely people."

"Definitely" I said, forcing a smile. "It's nice to get out and see some new places though."

“So you’ve been enjoying your first year at Dudley?” Her father asked

“Oh yeah.” I said. “I never really got out of town much as a kid, so it’s really cool to be going to a big school and uh, meeting new people and all that.” I trailed off and turned my attention back to my sushi. Hopefully they wouldn’t ask me anything else about Eastvale, seeing as I didn’t actually live there. It wasn’t a *huge* lie, I actually lived a couple towns over in Burnt Ridge, but Eastvale was the wealthiest, and prettiest area nearby, and I didn’t want Rebecca’s parent’s to think I was just... well... I didn’t know what they’d think of me, so I just went for a safe option.

It was dark in the backseat of Rebecca’s folks’ minivan as we drove from the restaurant back to their house. Rebecca and I had spent the entire ride to the restaurant bent over her phone, so the darkness was disorienting. I didn’t even have a good idea of how long it would take to get back to her house. Of course, I’d been to friends houses before, but this felt entirely new and alien. Not only was Rebecca a *girl*, but we weren’t on campus, or even anywhere nearby anyplace I knew. I felt unmoored.

“Okay. So. When we get back, movie, popcorn, facial. It’s gonna be a proper sleepover.” Rebecca grinned at me, briefly illuminated as we passed a sheet light. I smiled back, glad that it was too dark for her to see my cheeks flush. It was kind of fun getting to do girly stuff with her. Maybe that’s what I’d been missing in my high school friendships. We were always shooting each other with nerf guns or playing competitive video games in Gabe’s basement. The thing I liked about Rebecca was that she didn’t act like any of this was weird. If my high school buddies had found out that had a sleepover at a girl’s house and got a facial, they’d probably have called me a fag.

Rebecca’s place was expansive. It had once been a colonial home that had been more recently renovated and turned into a split level. The two of us had free reign of the downstairs, as Rebecca’s parents seem to evaporate as soon as we returned to the house. I found myself lounging on the cozy living room couch as Rebecca searched the cabinet under the big TV for a suitable movie. It took her a while to find one, and I wasn’t complaining. It was nice in here. The room was dimly lit by the glow from the gas fireplace, and I couldn’t help but watch as the light played off her body, bent over at the waist. She had dressed casually tonight, and now that she had shed her faux leather jacket, her lean shoulders were exposed, framed by a deep red camisole and a pair of soft black leggings under which I could just make out the lines of her panties. She turned to me, a DVD case in hand.

“This one okay?” she asked. “It’s romance, but I don’t think it’ll be *too* girly for you.”

“Yeah.” I said without looking. I hoped she hadn’t noticed my eyes dart when she had turned. Rebecca and I were *friends*. Good friends, but not romantic. *She invited me here as a friend*, I reminded myself. *Stop staring at her ass, Alex.*

While the pre-movie trailers rolled, Rebecca went to the kitchen, and I could hear popcorn popping. When she returned, it was with a flourish that sent stray kernels scattering across the floor. Rebecca plopped herself down next to me. Very close. So close that our thighs were touching. She tossed her hair again, and I could smell her sweet aroma. I wondered if it was perfume, or laundry detergent, or... just her natural scent. If it was either of the former, I wondered if I could manage to get my hands on any. To be honest I was tired of the stinky men's deodorant I picked up at the local drugstore, and I'd never had the money to mess with cologne.

"Did I miss anything?" Rebecca asked

"Nah. Just some old trailers."

"Awesome." She turned to me, smiling, firelight glinting off her glossy lips. with a graceful swoop, She reached into my lap, and then lifted a single popcorn kernel to her mouth.

*You're friends*, I reminded myself. *Just friends*. the feeling of her thigh against mine was almost painful in its impossibility to push from my mind. We'd never sat this close together at school. and certainly never alone. *You're just friends. Be cool Alex. Be cool.*

## 2

“So what kind of porn do you like?”

It was now quite late. The movie had ended, and the two of us has taken to our laptops. I was fiddling idly with a game while Rebecca scrolled endlessly through her photos, occasionally asking my opinion. I didn't study photography, but I planned to minor in art, so I did my best to give what sounded like informed opinions with regards to composition and lighting, but mostly they were just hot. Our friend Chis had a camera, and would often drag our group on photo-gathering expeditions where he'd have us pose and stand around in the various brick-laden environments our college campus had to offer. Rebecca had all of these photos and more on her laptop, it looked like, but her focus was primarily the photos featuring herself, and occasionally me. She had told me she was compiling some of our best photos with the selfies we'd taken today for a Facepage post. A pretty innocent activity, but I could tell that she had been gradually losing interest, and expected her to suggest a new topic soon. What I didn't expect was to suddenly, and so directly be questioned about my porn consumption habits. I froze.

“Um.” I avoided Rebecca's eyes and watched helplessly as my game character was impaled on a spike. “Just like... regular stuff.” I said, hovering my mouse over the “try again” button. “Nothing um. Too weird.” I could feel Rececca's gaze on me. My cheeks were hot. Slowly I lifted my eyes.

“Sorry. I didn't mean to overstep—“ She said smiling. “Just something I like to talk about with my girlfriends. I mean porn. It's like... so weird, right?” I forced a laugh.

“Yeah. Like, couldn't you hire better actors?” Rebecca giggled.

“Not to mention the *writers!*” My mouse continued to hover over the “Try Again” button. Rebecca was expecting me to say something, but I didn't know what it should be. Usually with a group of friends I could kind of sense what someone was trying to get me to say. Usually I'd say it. That had worked well for me up until this point, but right now, in this dimly lit room, with Rebecca sitting so close to me, I couldn't have felt more alone, and helpless. What did she want me to say? “Personally I like feminist porn.” She said. “You know, where like, there's consent, and well, it's made more for the woman's pleasure. And— I'm not *gay* but like lesbian porn has, higher production value. It's just undeniable.” I struggled to keep my mouth from falling open. *Girls watched porn?* I mean, I knew they did. Obviously, but to hear it coming out of her mouth was really something else. “I'm sure you've watched some lesbian porn. I hear a lot of guys are into that too.” My face turned beet red.

“I-I Guess, yeah I've probably seen bit.” I had seen a bit. A bit more than a bit, to be exact. Rebecca leaned closer, a lock of her dark hair brushing the side of my laptop screen

“D’you wanna watch some porn?” I stopped breathing. My heart hammered. “Not to like— get off, but just to laugh at it?” My throat felt tight. I didn’t know if I could handle something like that. What would she say if I popped a boner? Would she notice? Who was I kidding. The mischievous girl next to me on the couch was a stranger. I didn’t know what would happen next. *I should say no.* I thought to myself. *It’s too risky.* But I couldn’t choke out the words.

“here, let’s see...” In a single fluid motion, Rebecca playfully snatched my laptop from me and slid to the thickly carpeted floor, where she stretched out on her stomach and kicked her legs joyfully. “Pornbub...” she said, typing.

“Oh I— I don’t have wi-fi here, we’re gonna have to use your—“

“I’ll log you in.” Rebecca retorted cheerfully. *Shit. Does Pornbub have recommended videos on the homepage?* I couldn’t remember. I sure hoped not. “Oho my God” Rebecca chuckles, her eyes glittering brightly in the glow from my laptop. My heart dropped out of my chest and through the floorboards.

“W-what?” I asked, breathlessly as I scrambled from the couch to the floor. Rebecca slid the laptop across the carpet and and slightly out of my reach. I could see the results now. Pornbub *did* have recommendations on the home page and now probably the best friend I’d made in my first semester of college was learning all about my shameful kinks. *It’s too late. You’re going to have laugh it off, or... or say your roommate stole your laptop... or say you have a virus—*

“I make you wear my panties P.O.V.” *oh god.* She was *reading* the titles. My words evaporated from my mouth. “Dress-Up with Mistress Minerva?” The pitch of her voice rose slightly as she became more excited. “Sissy training? *Bodyswap with Step-sister?* Oh. My. God.” Rebecca swung her head around, her face alight with mirth. “I had no idea you were into such *kinky* stuff, Alex! Why was she talking so loud? I glanced up at the ceiling, and back to her.

“*Shh*” I whispered. It was too late to try to explain myself. I was definitely red enough that trying to pass this off as someone else’s porn would be laughable.

“Oh, don’t worry about my parents.” Rebecca said, dismissively. “They’re heavy sleepers, and they’re alllll the way on the other side of the house. But *seriously.* I didn’t peg you for a *sub!* and all this feminization stuff— do you want to *be* a girl?” I hadn’t moved from my half crawling position on the floor since she’d turned around. I felt like I’d been turned to stone.

“I- No! I’m a guy. I just— I don’t know why I’m into it, it’s just interesting to me I guess.” I said, slowly arranging myself into a sitting position. As I shifted I felt a familiar tightness in my jeans, and quickly lifted one knee and folded my arms attempting to hide the

bulge in my pants. *No, Alex! This isn't the time. Stop it.* I willed my arousal to cease. Hell, I willed that my penis were gone entirely. I'd never been so embarrassed in my life.

"Maybe it's more about the clothes, then." Rebecca mused. I guess I *have* noticed you looking at my things when you're in my room, but I figured that was just... hormones." I stared at my hands. I couldn't meet her eyes.

"I'm sorry."

"Hey." Rebecca pivoted and took me by the shoulder. Suddenly she was inches from my face. I expected anger in her eyes, If I had been her in that moment, I probably would have felt violated. I'd betrayed her trust by looking at her stuff— but what I saw in her dark eyes was sympathy. "It's okay, Alex. I don't judge *anybody*. You know that." I nodded slowly, the loud rushing of blood in my ears beginning to ease. "I'm sorry I looked at your porn without asking. with my girlfriends, it's just something we do. There's no judgment. I mean, my best friend from high school gets turned on by *carpentry!*" Rebecca giggled, and released my shoulder. Was that what I was to her? A girlfriend? Something about that idea lodged itself in my brain. Was that so bad?

"It's okay, just... Please don't tell anyone Rebecca." my voice sputtered out of me in pitiful bursts.

"Of course not! I would never. You're my best friend." I felt myself choke up. We'd been calling each other our best friends since nearly day one of college after we hit it off during orientation. Someone in our group had mistaken us for twins, and in some unspoken agreement we'd played into it. We both had dark hair and slight builds. A sparse smattering of freckles. To the untrained eye we did look like we could have been related, and pretending to be twins for the first couple days before classes began had brought us close enough to learn that we had a lot more in common than just our looks. We played the same games, enjoyed the same books, art, and jokes and found our sophomore RA Bennie Michaelson hilarious. The similarities went on, and so we'd taken to calling each other best friends, but to a certain extent, that had all felt like a game to me. I'd never really confided in Rebecca before, at least not with anything big, or extremely truthful, and I hadn't gotten the impression that she had really done that for me either. This... This time it felt honest.

"Thank you." I said, looking down. I shifted again. My stupid penis was still at half-mast.

"Hey." Rebecca was looking dead at me again. the corner of her mouth hinted at a smile. "Maybe..." She was speaking much more quietly now, and I could practically hear her brain humming. She bit her lip, and I felt my member jerk slightly more upright. "Never mind." She looked away.

“What?” my voice was hoarse. Barely a whisper, and it had come from me almost unbidden. As if she’d drawn it from me.

“Maybe we could watch...” she turned to my laptop again and scrolled down a few rows. “um. ‘I make you dress up in my clothes J.O.I.’” My heart pounded rhythmically in my ears. “And maybe you could dress up in *my* clothes.” Her voice was barely a whisper now. my chest hummed. I struggled to move my lips, and when my voice came out it was strangled.

“I thought... you just wanted to watch porn to like... laugh at it.” I mean she’d suggested a J.O.I video for gods sakes. How was I going to sit through a jerk-off instructional and not... jerk off? And... *in her clothes?* was she serious? The thought of it sent tingles through my fingertips. I’d thought about it before. Wearing her clothes. Only a few times, late at night, when my roommate was out partying. Those weren’t my proudest moments, but the idea had lodged itself firmly in my mind.

“Yeah, I mean, at first. That’s what I’m used to doing with my girlfriends, but I can see I got you a bit... *flustered*, and maybe it could be... Kind of *fun* to help you out with that? Plus we’re already practically twins. You might even look good.” My mouth dropped slightly open in shock. She was *serious*. And there was that word again. *Girlfriend*. I teetered at the edge of the precipice. Silently the looming figure of Rebecca beckoned me to step forward.

“I... I dunno” I said, flushing.

“C’mon, I can tell you want to. Don’t you?” I felt as though I’d floated outside of my body and was only watching as a stranger nodded and breathed “I do.”

The next thing I knew my hand was in hers and we were tip-toeing breathlessly up the stairs. Rebecca had my laptop, still open, dangling precariously from her right hand. The blue light from the screen danced erratically on the walls as we ascended the stairs.



### 3

Rebecca had a loft bedroom. once I stepped through the threshold, the room opened up like a soft warm mouth. Rather than an overhead light, Rebecca had a selection of antique lamps, several of which she clicked on as I stood awkwardly, unsure of what to do with myself in the center of her room. my toes curled against the pink shag rug as my eyes darted around. Next to Rebecca's looming bed frame was a plain white door which stood out from the deep warm color of the walls, and drew my gaze ever closer. No stray clothes lay on the floor or tossed over chairs like they had in her dorm room. This room was immaculately tidy. Perhaps her parents work. Obviously, she hadn't been here in months. But behind that door, stood what could only have been a closet. That would be full of any clothes she hadn't brought to school with her. Rebecca placed my laptop at the foot of her bed and tossed several pillows onto the floor.

"C'mere." She beckoned with a slender finger. I gulped, and dragged my limp body forward. She sat poised atop a puffy down pillow and watched, chewing the edge of her lip, as I approached, steaming with shame, and anticipation. I couldn't stop myself. I sat down—awkwardly, trying to hide my obvious boner, and knowing that it was futile.

"do you watch porn with all your clothes on?" she asked, smiling at me, her face in profile. I wasn't sure how to respond. "You could stand to... get a little more comfortable, Alex." she said, matter-of-factly. Still I sat frozen. This situation was... the furthest from comfortable I'd probably ever been. It didn't mean that I didn't want what was to come, but my shame held my tongue like a vice. "Or I suppose you could wait until things start to heat up a bit more." She mused, as she leaned forward and clicked play on "I make you dress up in my clothes J.O.I."

The production value on the video was predictably poor. It looked like we were in for a single-angle tripod shot centered on a blank creme-colored wall. At the left of the shot a sliver of closed door was visible. The mic hissed dully. I breathed shallowly. We were really doing this. This was happening. Several seconds elapsed. The door at the left side of the screen creaked open.

"Hi Honey, I'm home—Oh my gawd!" A woman who appeared to be in her early thirties entered the room, stooping slightly to fit in shot. She was pretty, but not stunning. She wore a blue dress which showed off a fair bit of cleavage. Her hair was long and thin, platinum blonde and her makeup was dark and heavy. My body clenched in anticipation.

"Is this the kind of girl you like?" Rebecca asked, a smile dancing across her face. I couldn't form a reply.

“What are you doing in my underwear drawer?” the woman onscreen asked, aghast. She stepped closer to the camera.

“Answer her.” Said Rebecca.

“w-What?” I gasped.

“She’s talking to you. Answer her.”

“Are you looking for something?” The woman onscreen asked. My heart raced. Even watching these videos alone, I had never actually *played* the part. Not like this. I’d never *talked* to the models before. But Rebecca didn’t sound like she was asking. No, She had ordered me to do it, and though my face burned and sweat dripped down my back I knew I had to do as she told me. I wouldn’t have had it any other way.

“I- well- I’m...” What *was* I doing in her panty drawer? Maybe I was over-thinking this.

“Babe, why are you getting so defensive?” she asked. “I just want to know what you’re looking for in there.” Rebecca slid to her feet and tiptoed softly away from me and towards her own dresser which stood at the far side of the room. My gaze slid from the screen to her, and my heart hammered as she slowly slid the top drawer open. From my vantage on the floor I couldn’t see what was inside, but I knew. It was her underwear drawer. “Wait—“ Said the model onscreen. “Your belt is undone. Were you... going to *try on* my panties?”

“N-no” I said quietly. unconvincingly.

“Undo your belt.” Said Rebecca, leaning casually on her dresser. From this angle in the low light she looked rather formidable.

“But I’m not wearing—“

“Then unzip your pants.” She said without missing a beat. I gulped, and watched as almost of their own accord, my hands unzipped my fly. With a dull thud my already hard penis gladly found itself freed. It stretched the fabric of my boxers unmistakably. When I found the courage to look back up at Rebecca she was smiling mischievously.

“You *were!*” said the model, placing her hands on her hips and taking a step back. The loose pleats on her dress swung between her bare legs.

“tsk tsk tsk” said Rebecca, shaking her head playfully.

“I always knew you were a little pervert!” said the woman onscreen. “And now that I’ve caught you in the act, we are *finished!*” She shook her head and moved slower to the camera again, leaning down to give me another good look at her deep cleavage. I was thankful Rebecca couldn’t see the screen from where she was standing. “Oh, what’s that? you want to try to make it up to me?”

“Please... I’ll do anything” I breathed

“Anything, you say?” Well. If you’re ever going to get yourself out this one, I’ll need to see how much of a girl you really are.”

“A girl?” I asked as my fingers fidgeted nervously. “What-what do you mean?”

“Maybe we can work out some kind of arrangement. Maybe...” she rocked back and forth, one finger on her chin. “Maybe instead of being my boyfriend, you can be my little... *submissive... girlfriend.*” she emphasized each word, and I heard Rebecca echo “*Girlfriend*” from the far side of the room. My cock throbbed. I could see it moving through my boxers. I knew that Rebecca could too. “...And I could be your... *mistress.*” The woman onscreen smiled maliciously at me. “What do you say?”

“y-yes” I said.

“Yes, *mistress*” said Rebecca, stifling a giggle.

“yes, Mistress.” I said, twisting my clammy hands, afraid to lift my gaze to both Rebecca and the woman on the screen, but slowly I returned to the screen. The woman was laughing now.

“Good girl!” She said. “Now take off your pants. And your boxers. And your shirt. Show me what I’m working with.” she commanded. My heart stopped. Surely Rebecca didn’t want to me to *strip* in front of her. I figured I’d be putting on her clothes in the bathroom or something, but when I looked at her, the question on my face, she merely raised an eyebrow.

“You heard her.”

“C-can I?” I asked Rebecca

“You’d better” Rebecca said grinning. “Otherwise your *mistress* is going to punish you, you bad, *bad* girl.” I was transfixed by the way that her lips formed the words. *Bad, bad girl.*

I found myself standing, unsure of how or when that had happened. Onscreen the woman waited patiently, her hands firmly planted on her hips, disapproval etched on her face. Rebecca tapped her foot less patiently. Now that I was standing I was ever so slightly taller than her, but she looked no less intimidating. I felt small. I felt exposed like never before, and It was about to get worse. I felt my already unbuttoned pants slide to the ground, and almost against my will, my arms moved to strip off my t-shirt, revealing my milky skin and featureless chest. My nipples stood out starkly in the cool glow from the computer. I hunched slightly, trying not to show too much, but I knew I had to finish the task. My mistress—and Rebecca—wanted me naked. With trembling fingers, I gripped the waistband of my boxers and slid them down below my hips. the fabric was caught, and tenting over my now fully erect penis. I yanked harder and my boxers tumbled to the ground, my dick swinging wildly. I gasped, shocked by the suddenness of its appearance and I covered it as best I could with both hands, shivering. Rebecca was silent now. Her expression unfathomable. I crouched in shame, as though I *had* just been found rooting through a panty drawer. My mouth was dry.

“You never were much of a man, were you?” The woman’s judgment-filled voice on the laptop speakers jarred me from my stupor, and my attention once more found focus.

“No-no Mistress.”

“I think that you would look really cute in...” She bent down off-camera, and returned with a tiny pair of pink and white striped panties. “These.” She held them up right in front of the camera, and as the autofocus struggled to keep them sharp, I saw Rebecca rooting through her own drawer. “Go on. Put them on.” The woman placed the panties down just out of frame, and I turned to see Rebecca had moved once more to my side. Her hands were curled into “ok” signs, and a silky pair of black panties were grasped loosely between her fingers.

“I know these don’t match” She whispered, the feel of her breath bringing the hairs on the back of my neck to attention “but these are high-waisted, and since your dick...” she her gaze dropped to my navel, and the ghost of a smile played at her mouth. “...isn’t that big, I think it should fit into these.” The panties were featureless black fabric interrupted only by a small cutout just below the waist at the back, and a tiny black bow. My hands shook as I took the delicate garment from her. As I examined them She stepped closer to me. I could feel her leggings brush one of my bare legs, and I shivered. God. This was too much. I’d always dreamed of scenarios like this— well, not quite exactly like this— but for one of them to actually play out— I wasn’t sure I could handle much more of this. I gulped hard and tried to compose myself. Onscreen the woman continued to goad me.

“Go on. Be a good girl and put on your new panties. After this, you’ll never wear boxers again.”

“Come on, Alex.” Said Rebecca, her breath on my neck. In a swift motion, I took a step back, and doubled over putting one foot and then the other through the holes in Rebecca’s panties. I felt the soft fabric slide up my legs like butter as I pulled them as high as they would go. I expected to feel more protected, less vulnerable with my erection covered, and though, as Rebecca has predicted, it did fit beneath the waistband, I found myself even more embarrassed than I had been before. I remained half-crouched, covering my crotch. Rebecca giggled. “There’s nothing to be ashamed of Alex. *All girls wear panties.*” My face and neck burned. I could barely focus to hear what the woman in the video was saying, but it seemed like she was preparing to make we put on another article of clothing. I could feel a bead of pre-cum wetting a spot near the top of the panties. I hoped to go Rebecca couldn’t see it.

“This is turning you on, Isn’t it?” Said the woman onscreen. “Well we’re not done yet. Real women have *tits.*” With one hand, she fondled her own breasts, cupping them with her delicate hands, and with the other she reached beneath her dress’ strap and allowed her white bra-strap to fall from her shoulder. “*Big tits.*” She said, as she reached around her back, presumably unclasping her bra. She stepped forward toward the camera again, performing a maneuver I couldn’t quite explain which culminated in her pulling her unclasped white lace bra out from the neckline of her dress. She held the large cups up to the camera.

“*Wow*. Things are getting spicy now.” Rebecca mused. I turned from the laptop to her, and was shocked to see her performing the same maneuver we had just watched the woman do on-screen. Without removing her camisole, Rebecca produced her own smaller, plainer black bra. A little color flushed in her cheeks, and I could see her nipples, pressing against the fabric of her top. She placed the bra in my hands and whispered “Put it on” almost in tandem with the video. The fabric was warm in my hands. It smelled like her. I couldn’t move. I didn’t know how to put on a bra. Rebecca could tell. I think she found it amusing. “C’mon, we’ll do it the easy way.” She said, taking it back from me. She positioned herself in front of me and threaded the front of the bra behind my back, pulling the fabric tight and bringing the clasp to my front, just above my belly button. I watched as she connected the hooks, smiling mischievously at me. “There. Now we just slide it around...” She pulled the cups around my side and to the front of my chest, and yanked them up to the appropriate height. The bra was tight. Probably a little tighter on me than it would have been on her, and not exactly comfortable. Rebecca guided my arms through the straps, and stood back to admire her handiwork. I willed myself to melt into the darkness. I was wearing girls’ underwear for gods sakes. This isn’t something men did, and despite what Rebecca had said, I *was* ashamed. I was so ashamed I could die, but what scared me the most was that I wanted more. I didn’t want to run away, or stop. I wanted to know where this road would take me, and so at least for now, I was at her mercy. Not just the woman from the video. I was at Rebecca’s mercy. Perhaps I had been from the very start. I was powerless here, and it terrified me, but it also set fire to my loins. It was everything I could do not to reach down and touch my aching cock.

The woman from the video was commenting on my big tits now. Rebecca’s bra wasn’t nearly as large as hers, but as she fondled her now untamed breasts through the thin fabric of her dress, it was all I could do not to imagine those things attached to my own chest, and all I could do not to sneak a glance at the perky shapes tenting the fabric of Rebecca’s top.

“here... Why don’t we give you the real titty experience...” Said Rebecca, once again rooting through her panties. She returned with two additional pairs of panties, crumpled into little balls, and placed them gingerly into the cups of the bra. I had breasts. My penis throbbed violently, and I could feel it touch her leg, but I was too frozen to step back. She was so close to me. She grinned, her eyes on my chest. “look at that” she giggled. “Now there’s even more ‘twins’ in the room.” A nervous giggle escaped my lips, and Rebecca laughed aloud. “You make a good girl, Alex. Kinda cute that your name works both ways.” *Alex*. I’ve never thought about it, *but yeah. I guess Alex could be a girls name too*. A smile tugged at the corners of my mouth, but I bit the inside of my lip.

“Now say it. Say it you *sissy slut*.” the woman in the video was really upping the ante. “Say *I am a girl. I am not a man. I am a girl*.”

I didn't look back at the screen. Instead I stared directly into Rebecca's eyes, and she into mine.

"Yes mistress. *I am a girl.*" I breathed, and my voice hitched. It had come out higher than I had expected. Not feminine, but... god, maybe I was getting too into this role-play. "I am not a man." I said quietly. "... I am a girl."

"*Good girl.*" Both Rebecca and the woman onscreen spoke in unison.

"Now stroke that swollen clit for your mistress" spoke the woman in the video. "That's right. You don't have a dick anymore. Just a big. Fat. Clitoris." I went weak in the knees, and obediently began to stroke my coc—no. My clit. In that moment, her words were truth. I was a girl, and I was stroking my clit.

"Don't get too carried away down there..." Said Rebecca. "I think she's gonna make you put on her dress next, which means... we've gotta pick one out for you." She took me by my free hand. "C'mere." Rebecca led me to the white door, and pulled it open. My left hand kept working gently at my groin. I had been right. This was her closet, and it was positively full of clothes. The hangers near the ends of the rod were pushed to nearly forty-five degree angles. The mass of fabric in front of me was practically unfathomable. At home, before I had left for college, at most I had four or five things hanging in my closet. At college, even less. I was positively dumbstruck. "Go on. Pick one." Said Rebecca, stepping back. I slowly slid my finger through the selection of garments. Some were silky, some were satin, some were rougher, and other's linen and lace. Suddenly my hand came to a halt. I swirled an unfamiliar fabric between my fingers. A forbidden fabric. One I'd never even *touched* before, because it was simply not made for men. I pulled it toward me, and my eyes confirmed what my fingers had guessed. It was velvet. smooth black, and glittering where the lamplight caught it. "Excellent choice." Said Rebecca. "I wore that for my last piano recital before graduation. Go on. Take it off the hanger." The dress slid from the hanger and into my hands heavily. It was divided into three parts. A single seam ran around the middle and divided the flowing portion from the smaller, form-fitting bust section where a slim zipper began in the back. Above the shapely peaks of the front portion of the dress was a mesh and lace segment which extended down into long see-through sleeves. This dress... was *incredible*. Never in a million years did I think I'd be able to handle a thing of such beauty, let alone actually put it on. My fingers, half numb, undid the zipper and turned the dress over, puzzling at how to put it on. I'd never seen a girl put on a dress before. I wasn't sure how it was done. Should I step in through the neck, or—"put it over your head" Rebecca said, a hint of amusement in her voice. I did as I was told, and as the soft heavy ruffles of the dress slid down my shaking body and over the silky panties behind which my clit throbbed, I was overcome. I collapsed to my knees, and stifled a moan as I came

hard and fast. one shot after another. I panted, clutching at the bedpost, as Rebecca became aware of what had just happened to me.

“Wow. That was *quick*.” She knelt beside me as I shuddered, the orgasm still upon me. The video droned on in the distance, but I could no longer process the words. Rebecca leaned over and closed the laptop. Slowly I was coming back to my body. I was not a girl, I realized. I was a guy, dressed up as one. A guy who had just come all over the inside of his best friend’s panties and dress. I could scarcely look at her. “Did you have fun?” She asked, smiling at me. I couldn’t lie.

“Yes.” I breathed.

“when I asked you earlier if you wanted to be a girl... you said no.” Rebecca touched my arm gently. I could feel her warm palms through the mesh of the dress. “But you were quick to change your tune just now.”

“I—“ I couldn’t find the words to respond.

“There’s no reason to be ashamed. We like what we like. We want to be who we want to be.” She said. I could have cried. No one had ever said anything like that to me. I could never have even imagined it. Somewhere along the line I had decided that what I wanted was wrong. It was my greatest shame, but here was a girl who had just helped me realize one of my most secret fantasies, and she was telling me that there wasn’t anything wrong with it. with me. I felt the tears begin to well up. I could not choke them down, and I *did* cry. Long and hard, in her arms. In her dress. On the floor, leaned against her bed.

“It’s okay, Alex. It’s okay.” We sat there for a long time. Finally when my tears had dried, pulled away from her.

“Rebecca.” My voice was hoarse. “Thank you.” The corner of her mouth pulled into a sweet smile, and before I knew what I was doing, I leaned in, my mouth on a collision course with hers, but before I reached her I felt two hands on my chest, pressing her bra uncomfortably into my flesh. She pulled away.

“Alex, I—“ She looked away. “Tonight— was fun. But... I don’t like you like that. You’re my friend. But.. I don’t— I don’t want—“ The floor had dropped out beneath me. It was my mistake. All along I had been telling myself not to. *You’re friends*. I had reminded myself, and in a moment of weakness I had made a terrible mistake.

“I-I’m sorry. I understand— I’m sorry” I blubbered.

“It’s okay.” She said, standing up to move to her bed. “But I think... Maybe we should call it a night?”

“Yeah. I agreed, eyes cast down. “I should get changed.” I struggled to my feet then hesitated. Where—or—what should I do with these?” I gestured to my—her—clothes. “Should I put them in the laundry?” Rebecca shook her head from the bed.

“They’re yours.”

“What?”

“I have a lot of clothes.” she shrugged. “Seems like you’ll get more use out of them than I will. Keep them.” I tried to form a sentence in response, then when that failed, a word, but I couldn’t. When it became clear that I wasn’t going to say anything, Rebecca piped up.

“There’s a bed made up for you in the guest room. Next door to the left.” I nodded stupidly, fumbled for my clothes and my laptop, and opened the door. The hallway was mercifully dark and empty. “good night, Alex.” Rebecca said sweetly from the bed.

I managed to choke out a “g’night” as I closed the door, and tip-toed to the guest room, Rebecca’s velvet dress tickling me between my bare legs. Once inside the room I did not turn on the light. I stripped out of the dress, and the panties, and pulled up my boxers before fumbling with the bra. I couldn’t get it off. I cursed myself silently, wondering what to do. I certainly couldn’t cut it off, and if I tried to hide it under my t-shirt surely it would be visible— and then tomorrow at breakfast Rebecca’s parents would— the bra came undone with a snap and I breathed again. I dropped it to the floor and flopped wetly into the bed. I didn’t have the strength to cover myself with a blanket, and so I shivered, half-curled until I fell asleep.



## 4

I told myself I wasn't going to keep the clothes. That I would surreptitiously toss them into the laundry room on my way out, or shove them under the bed and forget about them, but when I arrived home the next evening stiff from the train, and tossed the contents of my backpack out onto my bedroom floor, there they were. I could scarcely remember having put them in there at all. My heart jumped into my throat as I saw the dark velvety mass that was Rebecca's dress tumble to the floor, stark against the white carpeting. Reflexively I spun around. No one at the door. Cheeks burning, I shut it anyway, and stuffed the dress, bra, and three pairs of panties back into the main pocket. I then zipped it up and slid the whole thing under my bed. *Shit.* If anybody found that I'd really be in for it. *What kind of guy comes home with girls clothes stuffed in the bottom of their backpack? A pervert. That's what kind.* I prayed that Eve wouldn't come snooping around in my bedroom. Maybe I needed a better hiding place. Maybe I should just throw them away. *But what if someone looked through the trash? No.* I relaxed my jaw and took a long deep breath. Eve hadn't snooped through my stuff since like eighth grade. I trusted her. Mostly.

"Alex! Dinner's ready!" the suddenness of her voice, and its proximity to my door nearly sent me into a panic. *It's okay.* I reminder myself. *No one's going to find it.*

"I'll be down in a sec." I said, hoping that my voice did not betray my nerves.

As the night went on and I regaled my parents and sister with tales of my first college term, some true, others embellished, some downright lies, I tried to forget about Rebecca's clothes sitting crumpled in my backpack under my bed, but I could not. Occasionally a small panic welled up within me, and I glanced hurriedly down at myself to make sure I was indeed dressed normally, in jeans and a grey hoodie. I could have sworn I felt velvet tickle my leg from time to time.

Eventually I settled back in at home. Things were normal. After a couple of days I didn't feel like an interloper. Of course many of my things were gone from the house. My books, my PC, my posters. And Eve seemed a little bolder than she had prior to my departure at the end of august. Of course she was a senior now. I remembered how that had felt. I tried not to let it worry me. She was practically an adult. Well, technically, she *was* an adult now, but in my mind she was still my little sister. My little sister who on occasion *did* sneak into my room and snoop through my things.

On the third day of my stay I decided to text Rebecca. Over the course of the semester we had kept in pretty much constant text communication, but ever since I'd left her house and returned home I hadn't heard from her. Part of my expected this after the strange dress-up

session and attempted kiss, but the next morning everything had seemed... Normal. We had giggled at the breakfast table, and hugged in the car after her parents dropped me off at the train station. Neither of us mentioned any of the events of the previous night, and a part of me had hoped that it had all been a very very vivid dream. But then of course... there were the clothes. A constant reminder that what had happened that night had been *very* real. I had been afraid to text for my first few days home. If we had made an unspoken agreement to go on as though that night had never happened, that was fine by me, but after that fateful lean-in, I didn't want to come off as needy, or give her the impression that I had a crush on her. But how long was too long to wait before it became weird? Three days apparently, was the answer.

I finally decided on, "Hey! how's winter break treating you?" as an ice-breaker.

I hit send and closed the app. Then clicked my phone off and placed it face down on the bed next to me. I fiddled with a hangnail while I waited for a buzz. When one did come it turned out to be an email from a local crafts store letting me know that I could get twenty-five percent off select products if I came in this week. I shrugged. I guess I *was* home. Maybe I would go.

I got tired of waiting for Rebecca to respond to me. Maybe I'd try the group chat "Kitchen Rats" which we had made during our first weekend in the dorm when Rebecca and I had first met Jackie, Eleanor, Chris and Bennie, the dorm R.A (whom we had originally assumed to be entirely unapproachable and way too cool for us) in the kitchen on our floor. This group of freshmen and sophomores would later come to form the core of our friend group. Though, the group chat had also been suspiciously silent since the start of break. A couple of memes and reactions had trickled in during the first day or so, when I had been at Rebecca's but after that... nothing. *They're probably all busy with their folks*, I thought. my thumbs hovered over the keyboard, but I couldn't think of anything to say. I sighed and put my phone back down. Radio silence continued through Christmas, and by the time new years had rolled around I was itching to get back to campus. Home simply was not as fun as it had been during high school. Without my PC I couldn't really game, save for a few small games on my laptop, and I was growing restless. Each time I entered my bedroom I caught the faintest hint of Rebecca's scent. Maybe I was imagining it. How could I smell her clothes through the backpack zipper anyway? But just to be safe I always shut my door tight.

It was three days before the date on my return ticket now, and I was beyond restless. I was downright, and aggressively bored. My mother could tell, and constantly tried to take me with her on errands, to the store, to get clothes, to pick up prescriptions, but her constant hounding was a prime contributor to my growing displeasure. Whenever I was out with her or

downstairs with everyone I itched to get back to my laptop and my bedroom, but when I was up there I wished I actually had something to *do* on my laptop.

After lunch I slipped away upstairs and found myself on pornbub. Hell, what else was there to do? Eve was out at a friends, and Mom and dad weren't likely to bother me. I sat myself on the edge of my bed and set my laptop on the dresser a few feet away. My headphones barely reached, and I had to lean a little bit forward to prevent my laptop from falling to the floor. I selected a video I'd already seen. "Waking up in a girl's body P.O.V" it was one of several of the genre I'd managed to find, and while the pickings were slim for this kind of content, this was probably my favorite. Most of these featured naked women wearing go-pro's masturbating in bed, and while that was all well and good, this particular video featured the woman exploring her new body in surprise, and then putting on clothes. I guess it was the clothes that really did it for me in the end. There was just something about the idea of *wearing women's clothes*... I smelled Rebecca again. I slid my hand up and down my half-erect cock gently, gritting my teeth. I couldn't focus on the video knowing that just two feet beneath where I was sitting was the answer to the itch that had been growing inside of me ever since returning home. I clicked my tongue, leaned over and slapped the spacebar. I yanked out my earbuds and crouched breathlessly on the floor. I couldn't believe I was about to do this in my own home with my parents downstairs. I stole a glance at the door. Closed tight. The shades? Drawn. My fingers trembled as I pulled open the main zipper on the backpack and reached a single hand into the dark maw. My hands connected with silk, and I excitedly pulled a pair of pink panties from the bag. These were one of the pairs Rebecca had used to stuff my bra. I rooted around in the bag for another moment, and located one of the lightly padded cups of Rebecca's bra. I pulled that excitedly from the bag, and the dress tumbled to the floor along with it. Heart beating wildly now, and with my cock fully erect I clambered to my feet and stuck my earbuds hastily back into my ears. I whacked the spacebar and allowed the video to continue as I kicked off my boxers, freeing my ankles. I was breathing as though I'd just run a mile. There was something exhilarating about crossdressing right under my parent's noses. Terrifying, but exhilarating. Onscreen was an improbable view of a woman's body from atop her head. She let out a gasp as she gingerly pinched one of her nipples.

"holy shit... I have tits." she whispered. My cock pulsed. Trembling bodily now, I bent down and stepped eagerly into the pink panties. They were cool to the touch and slid up my legs like an unexpected breeze on a hot summers day. I exhaled audibly as I hiked them up. These panties weren't high waisted like the one's I'd worn at Rebecca's house, and even pulled up all the way they didn't cover the length of my throbbing member. It strained against the fabric and I gripped the base through the panties. The material felt incredible against the sensitive skin. It

was like lotion, but not wet. I knew it right then that I was doomed. I'd be jerking off in panties for the rest of my life.

I tore my hand away from my member as the woman onscreen admired herself in a full length mirror, careful not to show her face and ruin the illusion. She was about to try on the bra that hung over the edge of the mirror. I bent down again and gingerly raised Rebecca's bra to my chest. No— not this way. I swung the bra around my back and brought the clasp to the front like Rebecca had showed me. My fingers trembled almost too much complete the task, but I was able to get the clasp closed. My cock leaped as I raised my gaze to see the woman on-screen donning her bra, though she had clasped it from behind. *No guy would be able to do that first try*, I mused. *Bad acting*. I slid my bra slowly around my waist to the correct position and began to slide it uncomfortably up my chest. I struggled to get my arms through the straps and in my haste one of them snapped loudly against my shoulder. I whipped around, checking the door once more, and froze for a moment, one earbud in my hand. Nothing. I was safe. Looking down at myself, I wasn't so different from the woman onscreen now. I mean save for the anatomy and perfect figure... All it took was a little imagination. I trembled. The woman in the video had bigger breasts than Rebecca. Either that or the camera angle was making it look that way. *What if I had bigger breasts?* I wondered. Suddenly I was struck by an idea. I leaned forward and slid open the top drawer of my dresser. Here were all the T-shirts I had opted not to bring with me to college. *Perfect*. With one hand on my throbbing cock, gently teasing, I used my free hand to ball up a t-shirt. Yeah. This was gonna be way bigger than some balled up panties... I shoved the shirt into the left cup. It was too big. Absurdly big. So big that it stuck out of the bra cup on all sides, and the ball shape began to falter, but I couldn't stop now. I stroked harder as I baled up a second shirt and forced it over my right pec, underneath the cup. The bra was painfully tight now, cutting lines into my back. "Oh yeah. I have... big... fucking... tits..." I whispered, under my breath. I could feel a bead of liquid growing at the tip of my penis. "*I am a girl.*" I breathed. "*I am not a man. I am a girl with big fucking ti—*

TAP TAP TAP

I froze. I knew my sister's knock instantly. I'd only heard it like half a million times over the course of my life. She was *at my door*. For a split second time stood completely still. I did not move. I did not breathe. My heart did not beat. Then in a swift motion, I slammed my computer top closed and dropped to the floor, out of her potential sightline should she open the door, hidden behind my bed, but I'd forgotten to take out my earbuds, and as I dropped my laptop clattered to the floor.

"Hey, Alex. You okay in there?"

"What's up?" I practically shouted. Did I sound out of breath? Did I sound suspicious? *Oh god. She was going to open the door. She had heard the laptop fall. She would be curious.*

*What was I going to do?* I began to struggle, trying to remove the bra, but it was on too tight with my stupid t-shirts jammed in there. God damnit, why had I done this to myself?

“My friends bailed on my, and mom and dad want to play Scrobble. Come down?”

“Y-Yeah! I’ll uh— be there in a minute!” I shouted, grimacing as I strained to get my hands to the middle of my back.

“What are you doing in there? Watching porn?” She giggled from outside the door.

“N-no!” My voice cracked.

“uh-*Huh*. So if I came in there right now, you’d be fully clothed?” She wasn’t convinced. But— maybe that was better. Minor embarrassment now, to save myself the ultimate embarrassment of being caught literally trapped in women’s underwear on the floor next to my bed.

“Okay— yeah. I’m watching porn.” My face burned. My arms strained. “I’ll meet you downstairs okay?” Outside, Eve cackled.

“Okay weirdo. I’ll see you down there. Don’t hurt yourself.” Her footsteps receded down the hall. With a snap the clasp on the back of the bra came undone and my t-shirts tumbled to the floor. I pulled the bra off in a tangle and stripped off the underwear and practically threw them back into the backpack. I grabbed up the dress and slam dunked it in as well. Zipper up. Back under the bed. I struggled to my feet, observing red lines etched into my shoulders where the bra had cut into me. I tossed my T-shirt back on and pulled on my hoodie, half zipped, before struggling back into my boxers and jeans. I hastily wiped the sweat from my brow with the corner of my sleeve, and took a few deep breaths before leaving my room. When I got downstairs Eve and my parents were already gathered round the dining room table with the Scrobble board set. I took my seat across from Eve, face still flushed, and took stock of my letters. After a moment I raised my eyes to see Eve looking directly at me, a half-smile playing across her face.

“Your shirts inside out.” she said.

## 5

The growing unease that pervaded my solitary winter break as radio silence continued from my friends finally came to a head my first day back on campus. Relations with my roommate remained unchanged. We exchanged hellos and nothing more, but my friends... were nowhere to be found. We all lived on the same floor, save for Rebecca who was downstairs, but I hadn't seen any of them since returning to campus. Finally I decided to go knocking on doors. Eleanor's door was wide open, colorful clothes strewn about the sunlit room, but no one was home. My gaze lingered on a long flowery dress, before I shook my head and headed down the hall. Bennie's room was next. Since he was an R.A he got an automatic single. I knocked three short taps, but no one answered. "Probably in a meeting or something" I muttered to myself, moving on. Jackie and Chris were a couple, and had somehow managed to become roommates officially. I think Jackie had checked off the box for "Male" when she applied for a room change, and no one from housing had double checked the facts. I rapped on their door, but again, was met with silence. Jeez. Where the hell was everybody? I thought about going downstairs to knock on Rebecca's door, but something held me teetering at the landing. I tapped my foot a few times before heading back to my room. *I'll catch up with them at lunch*, I decided.

Outside it was blustery and cold, but the sun beat down mercilessly. I wished I'd brought my sunglasses. On my way across the lawn to the cafeteria I squinted about, trying to make out the distinct shape of Bennie Michaelson, who stood about a foot taller than anyone else on campus, but I couldn't see much, half blinded by the sun glittering off drifts of snow.

In line to swipe my meal card I began to feel strange. Not only were my friends missing, but it felt like people were *looking* at me. *It's just nerves*, I said to myself. *First day back and all. No one's looking.* I rotated ninety degrees just in time to see a tall girl in a red puffer avert her eyes. *Conincidence.* I said to myself. I handed the stout woman behind the desk my meal card. *Beep.* I headed inside.

Predictably the spread at the buffet was impressive. The first couple weeks of fall term had featured fantastic dining (at least by college standards) which had then begun to deteriorate as the weeks dragged on. By the time finals rolled around, everyone's wallet was hurting from fast food and delivery pizza. I decided to make the most of the plentiful buffet and piled my tray high with extra chicken patties, fries, and pasta salad. Once fully loaded I headed into the atrium, where most of the tables were already full of hungry students. I peered over heads as I made my way from one side of the room to the other, and then finally, I spotted Bennie. He was wearing his favorite red beanie. Next to him on the left I recognized Eleanor's Flat-ironed

blonde hair, and on the other side Rebecca, Chris and Jackie. There were other heads I recognised too, all facing away from me. I headed over. From where I had been standing, my friends were all the way on the other side of the room, so it took a little while to navigate the maze of chairs and backpacks. Finally, just as I was coming up just behind them, I heard Rebecca speak in a hushed tone.

“Yeah, I didn’t tell you guys everything cause I was kinda wiggled out” I saw Bennie lean in to hear her better. I teetered to a halt, just a few feet behind their heads. “But it was super weird.” What could she be talking about? “He wanted to watch porn. which like— okay, sure, not too strange, I’ve done that with friends before, but then it was really *weird* porn. Like crossdressing stuff?” My heart plummeted. Suddenly my friends’ radio silence made sense. It had been Rebecca. She had... told some... horrible lie about me! And now she was rubbing it in!

“And then he wanted to wear my *clothes*.”

“Ew!” said Eleanor, somewhere between a whisper and a yell. a few nearby heads turned.

“*Obviously*, I didn’t let him, but then at the end of the night, he tried to *kiss* me, and I was like, ‘no sorry, I’m not into you’, but I was like super weirded out!” Rebecca was speaking animatedly now.

“Yeah. No shit. I’m so sorry that happened to you.” Said Bennie, comfortingly. “I never got that kind of vibe from him, but I guess you never *really* know people.

“Yeah...” said Rebecca. Her tone made me sick, but my friends were lapping up her story. “Okay, but then the *worst* part is, after he left... Some of my clothes were missing.”

“Oh my gawd!” said Eleanor, turning in her chair, almost enough to catch a glimpse of me out of the corner of her eye. I had scarcely moved since I first heard Rebecca speak, but I had heard enough. My life was ruined. My friends hated me. Rebecca had used me to... to... I didn’t even know! Why was she lying? I spun on my heels and marched away. Some of my fries fell to the floor but I didn’t stop. I made my way back across the atrium and slammed my tray down on one of the few empty tables near the trash cans. *I might as well throw myself into one of those cans*, I thought. My life here was over. *I hadn’t imagined people looking at me earlier. Probably half the people in the school had heard by now.* I cursed under my breath, and picked at one of my chicken patties with a fork. It had become so much less appetizing than it had been when I first got it. I couldn’t eat. I could barely even hear for the rushing of blood in my ears. I didn’t dare look up from my tray as I seethed. Why? Why? *Why?* What had I done to her to make her behave like this? We had been friends. Best friends. What was I being punished for? As I sat there, tensed from my neck to my toes, my shock began to turn to anger. I wanted to scream. I wanted to break my tray in half and scatter scraps all over the room. I

wanted to kick over the trash cans and punch anyone who tried to come near me. I had nothing to lose. Nothing to lose. Nothing to— *ow*. I had clenched my fists so hard that my fingernails had cut into my palms. I forced myself to sit back and exhale. I needed to relax. A part of me knew that smashing things and screaming wasn't going to get me anywhere. When I looked up from my tray, Everything was muted and grey. Everything except for Rebecca's table, and my friends, who were now laughing, all leaning in to listen to whatever lies and slander Rebecca was spinning about me now. They were smiling, and nodding, and she was right there in the middle. The center of attention. That was the place we had shared last term. Together we had glowed, And now Rebecca was doing all that and more without me. Had I ever even meant anything to her? I shut my eyes and the world fell away into pulsating red haze. A vein in my forehead twitched.

The red haze persisted through the afternoon, and my first class of the semester passed by without me uttering a single word. Twenty minutes later I was standing outside the cafeteria, and couldn't for the life of me remember what subject I had just sat through. I still wasn't hungry. The sun had already dipped below the horizon and the wind was bone-chilling, but I wasn't ready to go back to my room. In fact I was terrified to even step foot in my dorm. All of them lived there. Eventually I would run into one of my former friends. What would I say to them? what would they say to me? Or would we never speak again? Would they dodge my glances, and bustle past me in the halls, eyes on their phones? I wonder what would be worse. I turned around and headed towards the edge of campus. I was cold, but I had no interest in going inside. *I'm going for a walk*. I told myself. *To clear my head*. I quickened my pace and headed into the town, which blended almost seamlessly with the campus. *Maybe I'll freeze to death*, I thought bitterly as stray snowflakes caught on my eyebrows. *Maybe that wouldn't be so bad*.

Eventually I did feel like I might *actually* freeze to death, and begrudgingly pushed open the door to *The Songbird* the local karaoke pub. They only carded you at the bar, so this was a popular hangout for students both under and of drinking age. Despite the warmth that crashed over my frozen limbs the moment I crossed the threshold, I was greeted by a sight that turned my blood to ice. Everyone was there. Not people I knew well, but the place was positively packed with faces I recognized from school, and everyone but me was having a wonderful night. They were singing, dancing, drinking and catching up. There were wide smiles, raucous laughter, pats on the back. Hugs. Kisses. I stood, frozen in the doorway.

"Hey, shut the door, dude!" A blonde guy I had statistics with last semester shouted at me from the bar. I glanced down. Snowflakes were whipping past my legs and into the room as the warmth began to trickle out the door. "C'mon! In or out!" he shouted, more angrily this time. His friends grunted in agreement. I scowled at him, spun around and slammed the door behind me. Fuck the warmth. Fuck the people. I'd just lost all my friends. What right did these



assholes have to be having fun? I shouted wordlessly into the night, and the sound was carried away by the wind. There was nothing for me out here. I tucked my chin into my collar and hunched against the cold as I made my way back to the dorm.

I knew the way pretty well and didn't need to look up very many times to keep to the trail. My pace quickened as I re-entered campus. My cold feet slapped soundlessly against the asphalt, occasionally avoiding patches of ice. I had had enough of the cold now, and simply wanted to be inside, somewhere where no one would bother me.

*Thump.*

With my head down, I had collided bodily with another brisk night-walker. I recovered my stance, and was halfway through mumbling an apology to the parka-clad woman I had collided with when I smelled it. That scent I had become so well aquatinted with over the weeks I'd spent at home. That same smell that had wafted from under my bed. The smell of Rebecca's clothes. The smell of Rebecca. My eyes focussed, and peered into the darkness beneath her hood. It was her alright. I could see her recognize me. Her cheeks were flushed, her expression, unreadable.

"Rebecca." I said, loudly, and still barely audible over the howling of the wind. She did not respond. Instead she pulled her hood more closely around her head, and began to push past me. Without fully considering what I was doing, or what I was about to do, I put a hand on her shoulder. "Stop!" I was shouting now. It didn't matter. No one would have been able to hear me from more than a few feet away. And what did I care anyway? Nothing to lose. "I heard what you were saying about me at the cafeteria." Rebecca looked me dead in the eyes. The friend I had once known was gone. This was someone else entirely. Stone cold. "Why did you lie?!" My face was inches from hers. "Why did you tell everyone I'm some kind of pervert? What did I do to you that was so bad you had to turn all my friends against me? I thought you wanted to do that stuff with me! You *literally* suggested it!"

"*Your* friends!?" Rebecca shouted, face flushing now with anger. "They're *my* friends too! And you know what? I got tired of being the package deal. All of them liked you better. They liked you best ever since that first day in the kitchen." I was speechless. What the hell was she talking about? Sure, the two of us had shared a spotlight in that group, but that was just it—we had *shared* it. "And why?!" Rebecca's voice cracked. "You're not any funnier than me. You're not any smarter than me. You're certainly not any hotter than me, so why the *fuck* did they like you better?" My mouth dropped open slightly as I attempted to form a retort, the complex combination of anger, betrayal and confusion turned my tongue to lead.

"I'll tell you why," said Rebecca, her words quivering with distaste "Because you're a fucking *liar*. I looked you up. You're not from Eastvale at all. You're from some dump called Burnt Ridge." *Fuck*. "So I ask myself, what else has he been lying about? All his fucking

stories? All the shit you make up to get people to like you? I always thought you were a bit of a yes-man. But you know what? If you're gonna lie and cheat your way into a friend group—I can do the same goddamn thing. And you know what?" To my utter shock, Rebecca shoved me hard in the chest with both mitten-clad hands. I staggered back, buffeted by the wind "Go ahead. Go ahead and tell them what I'm telling you. Go on! No one will fucking believe you, cause I'm the *victim* now." she paused, breathing hard, and again I attempted to speak, but my thoughts were too confused. "But I'm sure you'll make some new friends...unless the whole school already knows you're a panty thief." To my surprise she grinned, a wide toothy grin I'd never seen on her before. It made me want to punch her right in the mouth. "Oh well!"

"You—You Bitch! Why!?" I finally managed to shout. In response, and with startling suddenness, Rebecca let out a cackle that cut through the wind.

"It was fun!" She laughed, stepping towards me. "It was fun cutting you out!" With each word she hit me again, hard in the chest, knocking the breath from me, and I staggered, slipping on icy bricks. When I clambered back to my feet Rebecca was already receding into the night.

"Fuck you!" I screamed, my voice tearing. "Fuck you, you fucking bitch!" But she was gone.

I was alerted to the fact that my return to the dorm would be anything but peaceful by the dull throbbing of bass which grew louder as I approached the door. How could I have forgotten about the party? There was always a party on the first day back. Immediately upon crossing the threshold I was buffeted by moving bodies, and shaken by the booming bass. Someone had changed out all the lightbulbs in the common room and in the hallways for colored ones, and drunken screams and laughter occasionally broke through the noise. I was about halfway to the staircase, head down and grimacing when I slowed to a halt. A girl in a low-cut red dress danced backward into me, swiveled around drunkenly and continued on.

One thing my friends knew about me, was that I was not a drinker. I think I had told them some tall tale where I got drunk and fought someone. "I'm an angry drunk" I had said, but the truth was that I didn't really know what kind of drunk I was. I'd never actually... been drunk. Truthfully I was kinda scared of the prospect of inebriation. I'd had a few drinks here and there, but never enough to do much to me. As soon as I started to feel... off, I'd usually stop drinking. But right now... The thought of lying in my bed and listening to the sounds of the party going on, wether I wanted to or not, was far less appealing than it had been a few minutes earlier. Shock and confusion had given way to a boiling rage that itched beneath my skin. Maybe I would be an angry drunk. Maybe I'd scream at some people or smash some shit. It wouldn't matter. It was a party. Things got wild. No one would remember in the morning. Or maybe I'd just forget... everything. Just for the night.

I found myself at the door to the first floor bathroom. The drinking room. The place was crowded. Half the faces I recognized, half I didn't. I pushed my way inside. The door to the big stall was propped open and inside a tall boy who's name I couldn't recall was filling red Oslo cups with a brownish-yellowish concoction with which the bathtub had been filled. It looked positively repulsive, and yet, I lingered. It was a little less loud in here, but I still had to shout to get his attention.

"What is that?"

"What, this?" he gestured to the liquid. It smelled like nail polish remover. I nodded. He shrugged. empty liquor bottles littered the floor around him. Normally I would have been disgusted, but tonight... Tonight was different. I took a cup-full from him, and brought it to my lips as I made my way out of the bathroom and into the hall. Somehow I downed the entire cup in a matter of minutes as an endless stream of partygoers came and went, empty cups filled, voices distorted. The walls vibrated. My skin was a sickly purple under the altered lighting. I was drunk. So this was what it was like. Slowly I slid to the floor. my head pounded. the lights were too bright. *Fuck*. I examined the empty inside of my cup, bringing it into focus just inches from my nose. *I'm a magnifying glass...* I thought vaguely to myself. The thought was not comforting. I could still smell the vile concoction. It was like sniffing a sharpo marker. I could feel my brain cells dying. Why had I put that inside of me. This didn't feel good. This wasn't what I wanted. I needed to turn the music down, but I couldn't find a volume knob anywhere. I didn't like this. The hallway swam. The distorted voices of my fellow students turned to the voices of aliens. I didn't know these people. Who were they all? What was I doing here? The bass boomed ceaselessly, and I felt my stomach turn. I was cold.

"Hey."

"Hey. Are you okay?" Someone had their hand on my shoulder. Long dark hair dangled into my cup. Slowly my eyes focussed, and for just a second I thought I was looking at Rebecca... but it wasn't her. That wasn't her voice, and this girl was wearing thick-rimmed glasses.

"I'm okay" I mumbled. I wasn't sure if she had heard me.

"I saw you come in." She was inches from my face, and still had to raise her voice. I found myself following the shape of her full dark-painted lips as she spoke. They didn't quite sync up with what she was saying, and I couldn't get my eyes to focus all the way. "You looked pretty upset. You doing okay?" There was that question again. I began to open my mouth to form a "yeah" but stopped. Was I doing okay? No. No I was not.

“No...Not really.” I said, surprised by my own truthfulness. Suddenly I was being hoisted to my feet. She was strong. A little taller than me, and not exactly skinny. I’d seen her before but I wasn’t sure where.

“C’mon, let’s get you some water.” Her voice had a nice texture. Rich. Maybe it was just the booze. With one hand on my back she guided me down the hall and into what I could only presume was her room. The lights were dim and reddish and the place was warm and smelled of incense. One bed. She must be an upperclassman, I thought.

“Siddown.” I found myself collapsing onto a beanbag chair, my legs splayed out as she moved away from me. When she returned moments later it was with a large thermos. Cool to the touch. She pressed it into my hands. “Drink up.” she said. Then, when I did not move, “It’ll help. I promise.” I unscrewed the top of the thermos and took a long swig of cool water. She was right. It was helping.

“Thanks.” I said.

“First time drinking?” she sat down on the edge of her bed, clasping her hands between her spread knees. “I know the look.”

“Something like that.” I said. My head still pounded, but the room was coming into focus now. I peered at her. Where did I know her from? Her expression was severe, but not unkind. Strong cheekbones. a smattering of freckles. black hair. Kind of impossibly black. Looked like a dye-job. *Jodie*. Yeah. It was rare to catch a glimpse of her, but I’d heard the hot gossip. Jodie was a witch. At least that was according to Bennie, who of course had been here a year longer than the rest of us. I didn’t really believe in that kind of shit. Wiccan, sure, that was common enough among college students, but actual witch, of course not.

“So what’s the occasion?” she asked, casually leaning forward.

I exhaled deeply and placed one hand on my forehead, slowly shaking my head. I had no reason to tell her anything and yet...

“She fucked everything up.”

“Ah.” Jodie leaned back and her bed frame creaked. “Girl problems. I know a little something about those. What happened? She die on ya?” Jodie laughed humorlessly. Had I been sober, perhaps I would have been alarmed by how friendly this girl I’d never met was being, but for some reason the words just... fell out of me.

“She lied. She told all my friends I... I stole her clothes.” I stared into my palm.

“Did you?” Jodie’s tone wasn’t accusatory. It was curious.

“No!” I said. “And now they all think I’m some kind of pervert, and no one will talk to me, and she did it because she wanted them all to herself! Fucking... Fucking...”

“Bitch?” Jodie offered, smiling in the half-light. I didn’t respond. She’d finished my sentence for me. There wasn’t much else to say. I took another swig from her thermos. My

body felt heavy. My head lolled to the side, and my eyes drifted to her half-unpacked suitcase. It was black and scuffed. Bits of dried dirt stuck to the material. It looked like it had been dragged through a swamp. It lay open and a surprisingly large black bra was neatly folded at the top. She was wearing a big sweater, so I hadn't really gotten a feel for how big her— *I have to stop this*. I tore my gaze away from the suitcase, and back to Jodie. *Why was I such a perv? My friends were right about me. Maybe I did deserve this.*

"I heard you're a witch" I said, hoping to change the subject. She laughed. It was a tired-sounding chuckle.

"Yeah." she said. Now it was my turn to let out an audible exhale through my nose. Almost a laugh. I hadn't expect that answer.

"So what do you do? Like... spells and stuff?"

"Mostly small stuff." she said shrugging. "grade adjustments, extra meal-card swipes, beautification... additional cup sizes. I take commission." I wanted to laugh. I really did. That was the dumbest thing I'd ever heard in my life, but there was something about the matter-of-fact tone with which she delivered the list of her abilities that threw me. She sounded dead serious. It didn't even sound like she was particularly interested in it. It was like asking the owner of a food-truck what they have. I shook my head, bemused. What a weird night this was turning out to be. My eyes slowly drifted to the open suitcase again. That bra *was* big. Maybe she'd done a couple of those cup size spells on herself. *Jesus, Alex. Stop looking! She's gonna know.*

Maybe it was the alcohol, or the incense, or the way that Jodie's nonchalance made me feel... kind of at home, but against my better judgment I found myself fishing my wallet out of my back pocket and kicking it across the scuffed hardwood floor to Jodie's feet.

"Do me a spell." I said, recklessly. Jodie leaned down slowly and picked my wallet from the floor with her forefinger and her thumb, holding it like a bag of dog poop. With her free hand she produced a wad of bills, pretty much all the money I had to my name, and proceeded to count them.

"I guess you *are* a bit flat." She said.

"What?"

"You've got enough in here for... F cups." I turned crimson.

"N-no not... that. I want... something else." I looked away. What did I want? I mean, obviously this girl wasn't a real witch, but if she *was*? What if she could do anything? What would I ask for? "I want..." Rebecca's face swam before my eyes. I wanted to punch her. I wanted to bury her in concrete. I wanted to kiss those angry li— No. I hated her. I clenched my fist, pushing her from my mind. "I want my friends back." I said, and that was true. But That wasn't all. Jodie knew it wasn't all. She sat silent, rapt. I was looking at her, but I was

seeing Rebecca again. In the low light their faces were too similar. Both pale girls framed by long dark locks, She was smiling at me. Rebecca. Laughter danced across her evil lying face. “*No one will fucking believe you. The whole school already knows you’re a panty thief...*”

“I want her.”

“You want... *her*?” Jodie leaned forward.

“I want her... to pay.” I said, my nails digging into my palms again. “Rebecca.” her name on my tongue felt like poison. “I want Rebecca Ferrocì to pay for what she did to me. I hate her. *I fucking* hate her. I want her to— I want her— I want her to pay.”

“Done.” Suddenly I could breathe again. I hadn’t noticed that I hadn’t been, but filling my lungs felt like waking up from a nightmare. The muscles in my hands relaxed. Jodie casually pocketed my cash and kicked my wallet back across the floor to my feet. As I watched, horrified at what I had just said to this total stranger, she turned a coin over and over again between her jet-black nails. For a moment I couldn’t think of what to say. She’d just taken all my money. And she’d taken my pride. I couldn’t believe I’d just told her that, But... I had just given it to her. The money. My feelings. Why had I done that?

“I’ve always thought that lust and loathing were two sides of the same coin.” Said Jodie, thoughtfully. I wasn’t sure if she was talking to me or the coin, which now seemed to command all of her attention. Then, without warning she flicked the glittering coin all the way across the room, and miraculously into my own hand, which I wasn’t even ware I had been holding out. I stared down at it in relative disbelief. It was an ordinary quarter. Probably one out of my own wallet. I put it in my pocket.

“So... Are you going to do a spell?” I asked, stupidly.

“It’s done.” Said Jodie, smiling. “I interpreted your truest desire, and the spell is cast. Might take a bit to kick in though.” I squinted at her. Was she serious?

“My truest desire?” I asked. “For Rebecca to pay, and for me to get my friends back?”

“That’s what you said.” Jodie leaned back again, still smiling. I felt a strange welling within me, and when I could not contain it any longer, I laughed, surprising myself. This was so weird. I felt stupid, but I felt... heard. Maybe I’d really just paid her for therapy.

“Okay.” I said. Leaning back into the soft beanbag chair. I felt the tension slowly drain from limbs, and my shoulders began to relax against the pillowy surface. Before I knew it I was completely asleep.

## 6

The first thing I noticed was that I was very warm. Too warm. I groaned softly as I struggled to focus my eyes. It was so bright. *Sunlight. It must be... morning.* I thought. There was something soft and heavy on top of me, and I could tell I had been sweating. I shoved the heavy mass off, and realized quite suddenly that I was not in my bed. The events of the previous night trickled back to me in a series of broken images and snatches of conversation. Was I still— Yes. I must have passed out on Jodie’s beanbag chair, and rather than wake me, she’d thrown a blanket over my prone body. I sat up. My head dragged behind me, throbbing. Ow. I rubbed my eyes hard, and attempted to center myself.

“Jodie?” I croaked. No answer. I rotated my stiff body, surveying the small room. I was alone. Maybe she’d gone to class? I dragged myself heavily to my feet. My wallet lay open on the floor. Bending down to pick it up I became aware that it was nearly empty. fuck. I remembered now. I’d been so drunk that I’d given Jodie all my money and asked her to do a spell! God I was stupid. Why the hell had I done that? I shook my wallet, and a single baco bill fluttered to the floor. I retrieved it angrily and stuffed it back inside. I’d had at *least* a hundred bacos in there yesterday, and that was supposed to last me half the semester! I cursed as I continued to survey Jodie’s room. Her decor was sparse. A couple of poster of bands, a large pink quartz crystal on her desk, laptop, suitcase, clothes. The bra I’d found myself drunkenly eyeing the night before at the top of her suitcase was gone, as were the clothes that had been inside it. Had she unpacked while I slept? *Jeez.* I must have really been out cold. I sighed. Maybe she’d left my money in her room, and I could just take it back. The thought made me nervous, but I was a hundred bacos down, and I was alone here. Now, where would she have put it? Maybe in one of her dresser drawers? I cast a wary glance at the door, and then swiftly pulled open the top drawer of her dresser. What met my eyes when I did caused my brain to short circuit. Not only was the bra from last night neatly folded in the drawer, but several more, matching bra and panty sets, all in black and lace were prominently displayed. Next to her undergarments was what I could only assume was a vibrator. It was big and black and penis-shaped, and appeared to be plugged into a charger. beneath that was a pair of *handcuffs*. My eyes turned to dinner-plates. I completely forgot about my money. I glanced over my shoulder again. Door still shut. Slowly I began to reach into the drawer. Was I going to pick up her underwear? Just touch it? Feel the fabric? Was I going to swiftly stuff a pair of panties into my pocket? Would I try to fit a bra in there? God, I couldn’t stop thinking about how her clothes would feel on my body. Rebecca her cursed me that night. Now that I knew how good women’s clothes felt...I hesitated. what was I doing? I couldn’t just steal this girl’s clothes. Those looked

expansive as hell, and unlike what Rebecca would have everyone believe, I was no pervert. I closed my fist, anger bubbling up in me again as I remembered the way her voice had sounded when she told me she'd done it. *Stop it Alex.* My internal voice was unconvincing. I shut my eyes to red haze. *Stop. What are you doing?* I shook my head and slammed the drawer shut, perhaps a little too loudly. I whirled around again but I was still alone. I shoved my wallet into my pocket, straightened my crumpled shirt, and exited Jodie's room. Once in the hall, and with several paces between myself and Jodie's door, I pulled out my phone from my back pocket. For a second I was confused. 12:00? Noon? Shit! I had a class that started at 11:45! Head still pounding, I broke into a run and burst through the door to my own room several seconds later. Mr roommate whirled around in his chair, shocked and slammed his laptop lid shut. Probably watching porn. Whatever. I had bigger problems. I slid a stack of books which I'd picked up yesterday morning from the bookstore directly into my backpack, hoping against hope that I'd have the right one for Psych 101, slung the bag over my shoulder and was gone before my roommate even had a chance to utter a word.

If I'd felt like everyone was looking at me the day before, it was nothing compared to the feeling of barging breathlessly into a lecture hall to be confronted by forty-some-odd faces starting down from the raised seats. Their expressions were a smorgasbord of disapproval and amusement. I cast my eyes down, muttered an apology to the uninterested professor and made my way to the back of the room. I wanted the fewest possible eyes on me, and the top row of seats would do the trick.

I could hear them whispering as I passed. Did they all know who I was? Had Rebecca already turned the whole school against me? My head was pounding too much to make out what anyone was saying, but their distaste was palpable. I shoved myself into a seat at the back left of the room and tried to tune in to what the professor was saying. I pulled out a blank pad of paper and a pen, but my lead hand was capable of doing little more than press the nib hard into a single point on the paper. Ink began to pool. How was I going to get through this term? At this point I had to assume that everyone knew about me via Rebecca. News traveled fast on campus, and that bitch probably told as many people as she could. The damage was done. All I could do now was to try to survive the fallout. God I felt sick. Was it anxiety or was I hung over? I'd never been hung over before, but I felt as though I was one sudden move away from vomiting, and my head thumped dully to the ghost of the bass from last night's party. I couldn't even focus on the professor's face anymore, let alone anything he was saying. He droned on wordlessly and my eyes drifted jerkily to my pen. It still hadn't moved an inch despite my best efforts to jot some of the things he was saying down. I sure as hell wasn't understanding them in real time, so some notes... any notes might help me. Still, my pen remained motionless. I exhaled sharply and



relaxed my hand. my pen lilted to the side, then fell from my grasp and rolled to the edge of the desk.

Something was wrong with my leg. It felt as though something heavy and hot like an iron was pressing down on on my thigh. I almost expected to see steam, but I couldn't see anything that might have been causing such a strange discomfort. I reached my hand gingerly into my pocket. Just when I was ready to conclude that I'd completely lost it, my fingers connected with a hot metal disk. I pulled the uncomfortably warm object from my pocket and placed it on the desk. It was a quarter. Unusually warm, and heavy, but... otherwise ordinary. *"Lust and loathing are two sides of the same coin"*

Jodie had flipped this very coin to me the night before. I could remember it now. Right after I had asked her to do a spell. But *what* had I asked her to do? Something about Rebecca. but *what was it?* I didn't like the way the coin seemed to draw my gaze. even my eyes felt heavy now. The damn thing was like a black hole on my desk. Unnaturally heavy. I *really* didn't like it. In a swift motion I tore the top page from my notepad and crumpled it into a little ball surrounding the coin. I tossed the paper angrily into the waste bin at the side of the classroom. I was a little bit shocked when it landed perfectly in the center of the basket. Perhaps the added weight of the quarter had made the shot easier. A couple students turned their heads at the sound, but I averted my eyes and pretended to be writing. Still I couldn't force my pen to move. *C'mon Alex... All you have to do is move your fingers...*

Something was wrong with my fingers. I felt like I was looking at someone else's hand entirely, but I couldn't quite place what *exactly* was so wrong. Was it my...*nails?* Had they been blue the night before? *No.* I'd never painted my nails in my life. Maybe someone had painted them when I had been asleep. Jodie? But how had I not noticed them before? I could feel myself turning red. It was both hands too. Perfectly painted dark blue nails on both of my hands. a drop of sweat landed on my desk. I glanced around the room. No one was looking at me. I sprung to action and began scraping at my right thumbnail with one of my other fingers. I managed to get my nail under the edge of the polish and chip off a large chunk. *Okay. I can chip all the polish off, and no one will be any the wiser.* I thought. After a few minutes I had most of the polish off my thumb, and had begun work on my right forefinger. This nail was proving more difficult. I breathed heavily. *Fuck.* This was *not* going to be easy. I rotated my hand slightly to come at my nail from a different angle and stopped dead. My thumbnail was blue. Again. The one I had just chipped the polish off. Whats more, the nail polish chips were gone from my desk. I was going crazy. I had completely lost it. Psychological break. My professor could probably smell it from a mile off. I was hallucinating. Obviously. There was no other explanation. But this didn't *feel* like an hallucination. I shoved my hands deep into my jeans pockets leaving my pen and paper unattended on the desk top. The faces of my classmates

staring at me as I entered the room swam before my eyes. I had come into class with *painted nails* and I was wondering why everyone had stared? And that blue... It was so familiar. My heart dropped out of my chest. I knew where I'd seen that color before. It was Rebecca's favorite nail polish. Right down to the very shade. It was beginning to make sense. My chance meeting with Jodie last night had been no coincidence. God, if only I had just gone home, and not had that drink! Jodie had gotten me to conk out on her floor, and Rebecca—or one of my former friends—hell, maybe even all of them had come into the room and painted my nails. And what else?! They could have done anything! I hadn't even looked in a mirror this morning. They could have drawn all over my face! They might have cut my hair— My panic swelled to overcome my shame, and I pulled both hands out of my pockets once more to grasp at my face—which felt normal. I pulled my hands away. No signs of smudged ink on my fingertips. God my fingertips were weird looking. had they always been that small? I ran my fingers up past my ears and through my hair, searching for any damage. So far so good. I ran my hands back towards the top of my scalp, and slowed to a halt. My fingers were laced deep inside my soft hair. Deeper than they normally went. My hair felt... thicker? softer too. Gingerly, I selected a lock in my left hand and drew it down in front of my eyes, but instead of stopping just within my field of vision as it should have, the hair just kept coming. Longer and longer. *What the fuck?* What I was looking at, out of focus, and too close to my face, appeared to be lock of hair almost a foot long. Had they put me in a wig?! I grabbed handfuls with both hands and tugged hard, but was met only with the familiar agony of pulled hair. No. This shit was attached to my head. More locks had fallen into my eyes now that I had tussled it. My panic had me shaking now. What had they done to me? I glanced up to see two students several rows in front of me turn hurriedly back to their books. They had been looking. I had to get out of there. There was very little else I knew with certainty in that moment, but I *needed* to be out of that classroom. I snatched up my open backpack and shoved my pad and pen off the desk. the pad made it into the pocket, but my pen clattered loudly across the floor. I didn't pick it up. Instead I slung my backpack over one shoulder and bolted. I'd never moved so fast in my life. In a matter of seconds I was out the door and down the mercifully empty hall.