

Up to Eleven

by Pan

?

Eric flew home the next day.

His boss hadn't been happy about the idea. They'd had a big lunch meeting scheduled (to build out the next year's timelines) but at the sight of Eric's panicked face, his boss had held her tongue, and immediately agreed that he should go attend to whatever had happened.

Eric spent the entire flight home trying to work out what he'd say to Jamie. What *could* he say to Jamie? The previous night, she'd sobbingly confessed to him what she'd done.

She'd just wanted to dress up for him. That had been the whole plan: to get him off with her photos and videos. She'd wanted so desperately to get him off; even hours later, he could still hear the echoes of need in her voice.

But as her number had climbed higher, she'd unconsciously begun dressing for a night out.

She'd donned a clubbing outfit, the sort of thing she'd been wearing the night that they'd met. She'd put on heels, stockings, done her make-up.

Not to look pretty. Not to look classy.

Jamie had put on make-up to reflect how she felt inside. Needy. Worked-up. Horny.

Slutty.

And then, in a sexual stupor, Jamie had called a cab and gone out.

Eric didn't think he'd ever forget the distress in his wife's voice as she'd described it. "It was like I couldn't stop myself," she wept. "It's like I wasn't in control."

"You weren't," he'd wanted to console her. "This isn't your fault. None of it's your fault. It's mine. Mine, and this damned app."

But he hadn't. He'd just stared at his phone silently, watching his wife sob in a stranger's house, his stomach turning as he waited for her story to finish.

She hadn't even made it to the club. She'd offered the cab-driver a night he'd never forget. Jamie had purringly asked him if he'd ever had his dick sucked while he drove; if he'd ever taken a passenger in the back seat of his car.

He'd taken her back to his place, and spent the next several hours having his world – and bed – rocked by the horny housewife. They'd fucked again and again, Jamie sobbingly told him, until she'd had the longest and loudest orgasm of her life, finally finding relief after the days of frustration she'd been experiencing while Eric had been away.

After the cab-driver came inside her, Jamie had lay in bed, her eyes widening as the impact of what she'd just done hit her. When the stranger – she didn't even know his name! – fell asleep, Jamie had sneaked into his living room to call her husband.

At the end of her story, Eric's wife had once more begged him to forgive her, told him that she had no idea what had come over her and sworn she'd never, ever do it again.

But Eric knew that wasn't true.

Or, more accurately, that it wasn't entirely up to her.

If he didn't adjust her app, if he left things in the loop – the beautiful, glorious loop that they'd been experiencing for the last few months – his wife would cheat on him the next time he wasn't available for a day. Calling twice a day had been enough to keep her number simmering at Six, but the first time she'd gone a full twelve hours without being able to call and cum together, she'd literally fucked the first man she'd seen.

After half a decade of happy monogamy, Jamie had cheated on him. His wife had been unfaithful, and it hadn't even been her fault.

It had been his.

“It’s okay,” he’d said, shushing her gently. “My darling, it’s okay,”

Jamie had tried to explain to him that it wasn’t, that she’d ruined everything, and he’d just smiled a watery smile and told her to go home and wait, and that he’d be back soon and they’d sort it out then.

Booking a last-minute Sunday morning flight from Florida hadn’t been cheap, but Eric hadn’t balked at the price. He needed to get home. He needed to be there for his wife.

And once he was there...well, he didn’t know what he was going to do.

Jamie had met him at the door. Her eyes told Eric that she hadn’t slept, that she’d spent the night crying, reliving what she’d done while she waited for him.

“I’m sorry,” she started, but Eric held up a hand to silence her. “But—”

“Jamie,” he interrupted. All of a sudden, he’d realized exactly what he had to do. “Jamie, I need to show you something.”

On his flight, Eric had debated showing his wife the app, but the idea was easily dismissed. He couldn’t. The betrayal was too great; he knew that she’d never forgive him for what he’d done.

He didn’t deserve to be forgiven.

But at the sight of his wife, the devastated look in her eyes, the guilt emanating from her every pore...Eric knew that he didn’t have a choice.

He’d done this to her. He’d broken his wife, worse than even the time her libido had dipped to Zero.

Using the app had been immoral; he’d known that each and every time he’d opened it. From the moment he’d downloaded it to when his plane had landed and he’d checked Jamie’s number, Eric had known that he was crossing the line. That he had access to something no man should.

What had happened had been entirely, one hundred percent his fault...and worst of all, Jamie thought it was hers. Eric knew he wouldn’t be able to live with himself if he didn’t tell her the truth.

His wife didn’t deserve this. She didn’t deserve anything that had happened to her. He’d betrayed his spouse, the person he loved most in the world, and she needed to know what he’d done. Who he was.

“Honey,” he said with a sigh. “This isn’t going to make sense, not straight away.”

Jamie fell silent as Eric opened the app, and started telling her how it worked. His words spilled out; he’d never spent any time considering how best to share the details of such an impossible thing. After all, he’d never planned to tell anyone.

Especially not Jamie.

She didn’t argue the details or protest at the absurdity of what he was telling her. Either due to exhaustion or – as Eric suspected – because the tale he was sharing offered a better explanation of the last few months than anything else could.

When he was done, her tears had dried up. She was staring at the phone as he watched her, biting his lip, desperately waiting to learn what his wife thought of the truths he’d just shared.

Finally, she looked up at him, and Eric’s heart sank. Her pupils were pinpoints of fury.

Jamie was, for the most part, quite easy-going. The way she’d accepted their new sex life was reflective of her attitude towards most things; Jamie took life as it came, and was rarely regretful or frustrated. If Eric had come home one day and told her they had to move to Antarctica, she likely have nodded, asked a few questions, then immediately started packing for their new adventure together.

She was still human, of course; every few months she'd get into a new fight with her sister, but it always ended with an aimable reunion. For the most part, she made the most out of what they had.

It was rare that Jamie wasn't happy, or – at the very least – content.

But the look Eric saw on his wife's face wasn't one of contentment, or happiness. It was an emotion he'd only seen a few times in all their years of marriage.

Jamie looked mad. Angrier than he'd ever seen before. She hadn't been this upset when her sister had sold their family home without warning. She hadn't gotten this angry when the neighbor had accidentally run over their cat.

In eight years of knowing his wife, six and a half years of living together, and five years of being wed, Eric had never seen her look nearly as furious as she did in that moment.

He gulped, which she seemed to take as a signal to respond.

"You did this to me?" she said, her voice low and dangerous.

Eric nodded.

"You used an app to control me? To manipulate me?"

Opening his mouth to object, Eric realized that he couldn't. He hadn't thought of it in those terms, not exactly, but...well, it was true. He had.

He'd used an app to control his wife. He'd manipulated her feelings. Her libido.

Everything she was saying was true.

"Yes," he responded, feeling smaller than he'd ever felt in his life.

"You used me," his wife said. Her voice was steady, but there was an unmistakable note of sadness in her voice.

No, not sadness.

Betrayal.

He'd betrayed his wife.

The previous night she'd betrayed him physically, but he'd been doing worse than that for months. He'd been betraying her autonomy. He'd reached into the core of her and tweaked levers without even knowing what they did.

"You used me," Jamie repeated, more insistently.

She needed to hear him say it, Eric realized. For reasons he didn't understand, she needed to hear him say what he'd done to her.

"I used you," he echoed hollowly.

"You used me...for sex."

"Yes," he replied, his voice a low rasp. "I used you for sex."

The anger drained from his wife's face, and she slumped back. All of a sudden, the exhaustion was back.

She looked at him wearily.

"Why?" she asked, her eyes looking through him, as though he wasn't even there. "Why would you...I would have had sex any time you wanted. All you had to do was ask, and I would've..."

Jamie trailed off. Eric opened his mouth, then closed it once more.

There was no answer that she would have accepted. No, more than that – there was no answer to give.

Nothing he could say would justify what he'd done. There was no possible justification. There was just greed. Selfishness.

Cowardice.

“Give me your phone,” Jamie demanded wearily. Eric didn’t try to argue. He handed it over. She unlocked it (they had never had any hesitation in sharing their passcodes; it had always been a marriage of trust) and stared at the app, as he’d done so many times.

*Four.*

“I’m going to bed,” she said, without even glancing at her husband.

She didn’t need to say that he wasn’t welcome. They both knew that he wouldn’t be welcome in her bed for a long while.

Eric spent the rest of the day on the couch, staring up at the ceiling, not sure what to do, or even what to think. What *can* one think, after the love of your life discovers that you’ve betrayed them? That for months on end, you betrayed them repeatedly, uncaringly.

No, not uncaringly. He’d always cared.

He’d just cared more about satisfying his libido.

Jamie’s words were bouncing around his head. He didn’t think he’d ever forget the hollow look she’d had on her face as they’d quietly slipped out of her mouth, her weary-looking eyes staring into the distance.

“I would have had sex any time you wanted. All you had to do was ask.”

That wasn’t true. Was it?

After all, that was why he’d been so drawn to the app in the first place. Because they weren’t having sex as often as...they were only making love when...

If Eric could’ve sunk into the couch and never emerged, he would have gone willingly. The eight years they’d been together...he’d always waited for Jamie to make the first move. At first it had been out of fear; anxiety that she’d think he only wanted her for sex, a desire to make sure she truly wanted whatever they were going to do.

After that it had been...habit.

No, not habit.

Fear.

If he made the first move, he risked being rejected. If he went to his wife and asked for sex, she might have turned him down. Better to wait for her to come to him; if Jamie approached him for sex, it meant she definitely wanted it.

He’d made sure he never risked being rejected...and in the process, shifted that burden entirely onto her. Perhaps she’d been just as afraid of being turned down as he was.

Eric’s eyes shot open. Oh, god. Was that why she’d approached him so infrequently? All that time, he’d thought she just had an almost-non-existent libido...but by putting all the work onto her, he’d essentially trained her to think that he was only interested in twice-a-month sex.

Or worse: maybe *he’d* trained *her* to only want to have sex every two weeks. He’d watched her numbers, after all; she didn’t masturbate, or seem to desire sex more often than once every two weeks. Aside from when they were making love, he’d never her number go up, except...

Squirming uncomfortably under the sheets he’d taken from the linen closet, Eric realized that he had seen his wife’s number rise outside of sex before.

Once.

The night he’d tested the app. He’d rolled over, kissed her, and then left for his office. She’d gone straight to a Seven, the highest he’d ever seen up to that point.

In five years of marriage, in eight years of being together, he’d only ever once made a move on his wife. And as soon as he had, her number had hit a record high. She must have been so excited that her almost-asexual husband was making a move on her.

And then, to add insult to injury, he'd made an excuse and left. He'd turned his wife on and then disappeared, abandoning her to look at an app, waiting in his office until her number had dropped, until she'd fallen asleep.

God. What was wrong with him?

"All you had to do was ask."

But he'd never asked.

"I would have had sex any time you wanted."

Eric had fantasized not about a wife who wanted him whenever he wanted her, but of a woman who always made the first move.

He could've had the sex life of his dreams. He could've had everything he dreamed of.

But he'd been too cowardly to try. Too stupid to see what he had.

And now he'd be lucky if his wife took him back at all.

As Eric finally drifted into a restless, uneasy sleep, he couldn't help but wonder.

The phone that his wife had taken. The app which he'd obsessed over since the moment he'd downloaded it.

What number was it showing now?