

Creeps

Chapter One

Summer vacations, in one's youth, serve to cement friendships that will feel as though they go on for a lifetime, even if most of them crumble during the first five years after high school, leaving nothing but an irksome obligation to extend and accept wedding invitations for another decade or so after. After high school, summers revert to occupying an opposite niche. For those who attend college, summer breaks force the necessity of departing the company of one's new social circle and an attempt to reintegrate with the old crowd despite the friction of new affects, while those who entered the workforce more immediately try to remember a life when "summer break" was a thing and humor old faces still living by the old calendars. For those who remain in education even after college, summer breaks become a fact of life, an awkward listless phase demarcating the line between adults with normal – some might say "real" jobs – and those who teach.

And so it was that summer for the disjointed group of misguided assholes roped into or otherwise tangential to the lecherous schemes of Stacey Reeves. For young Kira, her post-graduation summer was a pastoral season of celebrating milestones and fond farewells. For big sister Stacey, a bitter and awkward reminder of the friends she'd gladly left behind, escaping her humdrum hometown to Lakeview as often as she could get consecutive days off work from her same old gig waitressing at Applebee's. For Naomi, there was the slow life of summer in a college town, drinking more than she planned and reading less, taking on a new lover who did even less for her than the last.

And for Martin Manning, summer was a scramble of self-reinvention. First came convincing the dean of his department at Lakeview to let him stay on as an adjunct in the fall – a bid that proved successful, netting him part-time temporary no-benefits employment for wages comparable to an Uber driver. He downsized his apartment, working in loose concert with Stacey in preparation for the next step of their own disturbing plans for future intercourse. Beyond that, he learned to appreciate the taste of PB&J ten meals a week, splurging occasionally on canned veggies but otherwise filling the corners of his growling tummy with fevered dreams of two Reeves at the same time.

And then it was August, and summer was over, and a new season began.

“Stacey! Hey, been a while since... face to face. You look great. Your tits look absolutely—”

“Don’t.” She held up a hand. “Just don’t.”

The test had been scripted, and both of them knew it. Despite being the hypnotist in the relationship, Martin had precious little experience with how durable his interventions could be. She had told him not to expect things to be like they had been in the spring, and it seemed she had been right. Just how much “progress” had been lost, he would discover in time, but for now, this was confirmation enough not to expect courtesy gropes to sustain him.

“They do though,” she replied, giving each bump a little pat, features softening. A concession to civility, demonstrating that they were at least well ahead of where they had picked up last year. No gun either, he noted. No room for one in clothes that tight. That too connoted progress, no more baggy pants and bulky sweatshirts to frustrate the male gaze. Just pure, natural, perfect Stacey Reeves.

Or rather, *physically* perfect, anyway. Beyond that... Martin had had three months in which to ponder the nature of her request. Admittedly, a request to which had assented, but “under duress” didn’t begin to cover it when there was a creature that heavenly dangling wildly enthusiastic virginal sex as a signing bonus. Still, in the days after, with those orgasms fading from compulsory masturbatory impulses to idyllic masturbatory memories, it occurred to him that Stacey might actually be kind of an awful person.

It wasn’t the incest.

No. It wasn’t *only* the incest. There. So much exposure to it as a casually exploited fetish in their porn viewing had dulled him to the reality of it. Martin was not an only child, and the practical aspects of such prospects were actually rather disturbing. Dwelling on Stacey’s request so much had even sparked a horrifying dream about his own mother, about which he would never tell anyone. (Though imagine his undying dismay if it ever became a casually shared factoid in an erotic story.) What he had done with Stacey, planting hetero seeds in lesbian soil, that had been controversial. What he’d agreed to do to Kira, however, was *wrong*. Simply because Stacey was hotness personified likely meant nothing to a sister. Shit, his own sisters were neither of them “hot,” but both well within objectively acceptable margins for a man of his own appearance. Even so, the idea of... *that...* with *them...*! If Kira harbored even half his own reticence, this would be a violation of no small magnitude.

It was nevertheless bigger than even that, though he devoted a significant portion of his available mental resources to not exploring all that. In for a penny, he told himself. After all, he’d given up his relationship with Naomi for this. Whether or not they’d really clicked as a couple, the sex with her had been unbelievable. Maybe not as unbelievable as with Stacey, but Naomi put out four nights a week, at least one of those

going out of her way to generously indulge his fetishes. No, she hadn't been Stacey hot, and no, she hadn't been legitimately hypnotized, but she was hot, and she faked it damn well. Now he was single, on top of which he had to shop at the Target in the next town over or else suck it up and become a Walmart guy. There was no going back.

"So how do you like the new digs?" Martin gestured around him. Here were the offices of the Manning Mental Wellness Clinic, a name the two of them had workshopped together for maximum banality. He'd advocated The Mesmer Institute, which she had not only rejected but forbade him to even speak the words again, neither within nor outside of her earshot. Normal-sounding was key, and he had to admit the Manning Mental Wellness Clinic was the most normal-sounding option they'd workshopped.

The clinic was the physical evidence of what had once been his limited savings in this world. Stacey had declined to assist on the financing, though only because he let slip that he could just barely afford it unaided so long as he didn't put any new furniture in his upstairs apartment. "Upstairs apartment," his euphemism for "stuffy yet drafty attic space." If the zoning commissioner ever learned of his inhabitation of this commercially zoned space, they would have a fit. If there even was a zoning commissioner, and if they were prone to fits over minor violations of local zoning ordinance.

"Wow. This actually looks pretty incredible, Martin," she said, taking a lap around the office. There wasn't much to see. The Manning Mental Wellness Clinic was part of a strip mall on the outskirts of town with a hodgepodge of other small businesses eking out their dreams. The storefront, through which she had entered, featured a small sitting room with a half dozen chairs he'd picked up on sale from the closing of a local doctor's office. There was a desk for a receptionist, though that was miles beyond the limits on his budget. For now, he'd placed a help wanted sign there and nowhere else to at least promote the appearance that he was legit.

Inside was where the real work would happen, where Stacey was now admiring a cheap yet still-more-than-he'd-spent-on-himself-since-April painting, abstract but with what he hoped was a soothing pastel palette. Other features included his old desk chair, which he would need to haul upstairs between sessions for use at his "home" desk to keep looking for a suitable second job; his old sofa where Stacey had entered her very first and later her final trance; various implements of the hypnotist's toolkit. According to Stacey, Kira was tight-lipped about her hypnotic history with this Dr. Rivers back home, a woman who herself kept a low profile online. Stacey didn't know if it was swinging pendants, ticking metronomes, or the simple vocalizations he himself employed that were her sister's preferred. He was well read on all of them, in fact, but had relented that it would be wise to be prepared for anything when Stacey guided young Kira through his doors.

“You think? I worried the paint was a little too bright, might make it hard to relax, but... I don’t know. It probably won’t make a difference. If I can hypnotize somebody in a stranger’s apartment or a university chapel or a gender-segregated sorority house, surely I can do it in an office built precisely for hypnosis.”

She nodded, glancing at his selection of books on the shelves. “I think the paint is fine. Interesting selection of reading material, here. Are you just hoping she never looks at the titles, or what?”

“Yeah, the shelves were built in, and it looked weirder with nothing on them. I only have two physical books on hypnosis, both paperback, so I had to supplement the best I could. One of the college bookstores was doing some house-cleaning, so I stole what I could from their trash. Dumpster-diving by flashlight isn’t the best opportunity to be picky, though, especially since they share a dumpster with the Panda Express next door. Ugh.” With a shudder and a concerted effort at suppressing his gag reflex from that especially pungent memory, he went on. “So I cleaned up what I could, filled the shelves the best I could. You want to furnish a few thousand bucks worth of more appropriate lit just so she can think I’m legit, go for it.”

“Don’t be passive aggressive. I was only pointing out a flaw in case you hadn’t realized it. Try cutting the books back by a third or so and filling the empty spaces with diplomas, family photos, artsy stuff, that kind of thing. As far as Kira knows, you’re a therapist who specializes in hypnosis, not a hypnotherapist, so some generic psych stuff will play fine. I’ll see what I can find for the rest. Might be able to swipe something from DAT house.”

Still not an offer of financial assistance, but hand-me-downs from her sorority would be most welcome. Martin had been surprised to learn that Stacey wasn’t independently wealthy – or at least, that her family wasn’t, considering she herself was only a senior in college. They were comfortable, yes, but she was taking out loans, and received a stipend of unspecified magnitude for her role as sorority VP. Last year, most of that had gone to her sexy costume kink. More precisely, the funds had gone to the sexy costume kink she’d asked him over the summer to instill in Kira, who wore nearly the same size clothes. (She was two sizes bigger than her older sister, but that was one more item on Martin’s hypnotic checklist.)

Martin snatched a book off the shelf – *Clean Code: A Handbook of Agile Software Management*, a textbook common to individuals taking courses that would empower them to vastly out-earn him. It went into the trash, to make sure she appreciated that he meant to take her suggestion to heart. “Good call. Just text me before you come over with whatever you scrounge. I can’t hear crap down here from the apartment, and the buzzer doesn’t buzz up. I told the super, but I don’t think he cares.”

“Anything else you need from me?”

“Nothing material,” he replied, trying not to think about the bottle of ketchup and quarter jar of strawberry preserves currently stretching their legs in their isolation within his new used mini-fridge upstairs. “But... maybe let’s go over it one more time, make sure our stories sync up? I know this state doesn’t require a license to practice hypnotherapy, but if she catches us on inconsistencies and scratches beneath the surface, we’re going to have a whole other level of trouble on our hands.”

She took her usual seat on the couch. Martin leaned back onto his desk. (That one had been a real steal – literally, as he’d swiped it while the high school on the north side of town had been doing some summer cleaning, scores of the things sitting in the lot and only minimally observed.) Her expression was reassuringly serious. Stacey was no more interested in solving his problems now than she had been last year while she was teaching him to make sex slaves of the unwilling. If this went wrong, however, the two of them would live out the rest of their lives with their top google search a headline reading *Woman Hires Stage Hypnotist to Make Sex Slave Out of Sister*.

“All right. So remember, wherever possible, keep it to the truth. Last fall, I saw one of la Mesmer’s hypnosis shows. It made me think of my mom and Kira’s shrink back home, so I asked you if you did that kind of thing, and after we talked, you said...?”

“I always wanted to try, but I’d always been too afraid to go all in on a business.’ But are you sure we should mention la Mesmer? Cheesy, skeevy stuff like that might turn her away.”

“Don’t bring it up, obviously. But if she does, don’t go into detail about what it entailed. You advertised it too hard to scrub la Mesmer from the internet, so we don’t want to risk her finding it out on her own and have us look like you hid it more than someone logically would trying to go legit.”

Martin nodded. “OK. Smart. So then, you and I worked through some of your issues, and had real success using my techniques.”

“And if she asks about those issues?” Stacey prompted.

“Locked safe,” he replied confidently, turning an invisible key in his mouth and then opening wide to swallow it. She didn’t crack a smile. “That way we don’t need to lie, and it’ll reinforce that everything we do is confidential, even from family – in case she worries about our prior relationship and confiding in me herself.”

“Right. Though remember, you’re not her actual therapist. Don’t go dicking around in my sister’s life beyond what you need to. She needs to want to fuck me, same as last year except for pointing it at me instead of you. She doesn’t need to work through her issues. Frankly, if you poke around and actually solve them, she might want to stop coming, so it’s in everybody’s interest to leave well enough alone.”

“Sure, sure. OK. So let’s see, then, I took on some clients – some I found on my own, some referrals from you – and got up enough scratch to start out my business. We

opened this summer, and that's why no receptionist, why she won't see anybody in the waiting room, and so on."

"Good." She inspected the couch. "It feels weird inviting my sister to lie down on a couch I've come on so many times. You know?"

"Yeah, no, a totally normal place to draw the line about sisterly issues," he observed dryly. "But it's been steam-cleaned. Cum-free, guaranteed. At least until we get her to add a little of her own." They both laughed, and had anyone else been in the room, they might have added the qualifying term "chillingly."

"You'll get her. If you could get me, you can get her. We can do this, Martin." She approached him, placing her hands firmly on his shoulders. "I trust Martin Manning."

"Yeah?" Tentatively, he settled his own hands on her hips. To his surprise, she didn't stop him or back away. "Yeah."

The loose embrace lingered a moment, and finally they released one another in unison. "So freshman move-in day is this Thursday. It's a pretty packed weekend, if I remember my own correctly. But Mom made me promise I'd get her in as soon as possible. Something about having read so many positive reviews about your little start-up online."

All of those reviews had been written by Stacey and Martin. They'd spent a weekend in July following some online tips leaked from a Ghanaian election interference hub funded by the Russians. The troll farm had produced quite a harvest of fruit.

"All right. So next week, hopefully?"

"Hopefully. Just make sure you answer your phone when I call, and assume she could be in earshot of whatever you say – no 'hey Stacey, missed the taste of your dribbly pussy' bullshit, OK?"

"Roger."

To their mutual surprise, she leaned in and planted a brief kiss on his cheek. "See you soon, Mesmer. Can't wait to fuck you again."

"I mean, I guess that'd be OK. If I'm available."

She grinned. "If you can swing it by winter break, I'll give you a bonus lay."

"Kira's straight, right? There's half the battle where I'm concerned, and for you, you're totally hot enough for most girls to experiment with. You keep her coming to regular appointments, and I'll have her tied up in a bow for you by Thanksgiving."

Stacey clapped her hands giddily. "Just this once, slap me on the ass on my way out. Gotta make sure I can still lube up for ya."

Martin pinched, rather than slapped. Stacey flowed right out the door, an upthrust thumb doubling back just before it closed behind her.

So at least one courtesy grope. It would have to do.

It took until the third week of classes before Kira Reeves would walk into the Manning Mental Wellness Clinic. In the meantime, he busied himself with prep for and commencement of the introductory 101 classes he was teaching at Lakeview that semester. It happened as something of a last-minute rush, as Martin had been paying minimal attention to his teaching with everything else occupying his thoughts and screens. The syllabus was imposed by the department, and he had lecture materials already completed from years past. Some personal touches, adjustments to a slide or two, and some tweaking to accommodate a new textbook thanks to the overachieving Dr. Knox, his old supervising professor, who'd published a new edition of the old book. That was it.

So when Kira suddenly walked into the sweltering closet he'd been assigned for Friday discussions, he very nearly dropped his tablet.

She was her sister's sister, all right. Side by side, nobody would miss the resemblance. She was a couple inches shorter than Stacey, and where the elder Reeves's frame was slender all over with a last minute effort to pack some fat onto the right places, Kira had the curves baked in. He had lost a great many hours that summer combing through Kira's vigorously prolific online presence, and all in all the effect was a Stacey whose tummy and thighs had been snipped away at, with the removed bits ground up and reapplied to the tits and hips. He thought he still preferred Stacey, but he'd had a lot more time and reason to appreciate the way her body was configured. Martin was nothing if not open to having that perspective challenged.

Not that it was such a contest. In fact, in some of the blurrier or more distant pics the girls had posted from their family trip to Cape Cod back in June, he'd had trouble distinguishing which Reeves was which if Kira wasn't showing off her tattoo, a sunburst on her right leg just above the knee. Somewhere over the summer Kira had dyed her hair with just a touch of red, subtly enough he'd nearly missed it, but it was one more scant clue to tell her apart from her sister's straight black waves. Their faces were too close for comfort, save for Stacey being a bit more subtle with her makeup and an attempt at perfect grooming, whereas Kira didn't hide from a thin gap between her front teeth. It was the only obvious imperfection he could find on her, which only made her more perfect.

Acting was not La Mesmer's strong suit – that was what he'd had Naomi for, to distract with her cleavage from what he couldn't conceal behind his mediocre showmanship. In the meanwhile, when he saw Kira in class, he bided his time and tried not to act too strangely around her or give her undue attention. The girl didn't make it easy. Kira took an active role in his class both in person and online, and seemed to be one of the few students who made it obvious they'd actually done the readings. It might have come across as show-offy if she hadn't seemed so earnest. He simply tried not to appreciate her embrace of modern collegiate fashion trends – i.e. a variety of normal

outfits modified chiefly by the addition of the term “scantily” – and keep his eyes from lingering.

By the second Friday of the semester, he’d still heard nothing from Stacey. But then, it was Kira who approached him.

“You’re the man who hypnotized my sister, right?” she said as the class was filing out. Not filed out enough for his liking; the accusation raised a couple eyebrows and turned a few heads. It wasn’t an accusation, though. It was stated as a plain conversation starter, without judgment.

In the absence of the rigid confines of the plan, suddenly he was forced to improvise, so improvise he did. “You know, I wondered if you might be related to Stacey. I thought I saw a little bit of a family resemblance there, and of course the name. Wow, small world, huh?” Too small for his liking.

“Yeah, I guess so.” She smiled, and it was a warm, comforting smile. When Stacey smiled, it made him nervous. Or horny. Both, oftentimes. But Kira simply looked sweet. There was an innocence to her that he couldn’t imagine Stacey ever having possessed. Though that appearance of innocence only made him even more nervous. “She would not shut up about you this summer, you know? I guess you really did a lot for her.”

“She did, did she? Well that’s good to hear. I can’t say as she talked a lot about you, but you obviously have a lot in common.”

“Oh yeah? Like what?” It was distracting, being alone with a girl this pretty, especially one he’d pledged to turn into her sister’s love slave in exchange for the right to tag-team her with said sister. His department had required him to go through the same training he’d received upon arriving at Lakeview for his TA position, namely to avoid being alone with someone of the opposite gender whenever possible, triply so if the door was closed. And this door had already swung shut automatically behind the last student to exit.

“Well, you’re both very bright,” he said. That was an easy, and valid, compliment. What else could he say? Only once the alleged commonality had left his mouth had he realized most of their other similarities NSFW. There was a thin sheen of perspiration on her forehead that was also faintly discernible at the bottom of his peripheral on her broad expanse of cleavage. “And, well, you just look so similar,” he finished awkwardly. Hopefully that wasn’t crossing a line. They did, after all, and most women wouldn’t object to being compared favorably to Stacey Reeves.

“People always say that,” she replied, smile fading. Shit. “But yeah, that’s actually why I wanted to take this class. Not that it isn’t interesting or anything on its own. But I was feeling like fifteen credit hours wasn’t enough, so I picked up the course catalog and I saw ‘Martin Manning’ and I was like no way, Stacey’s therapist, how crazy is that, so... yeah, I figured why not, right?”

“Sure, sure. Well I’m glad you did. You bring a lot to the table.” Incredible boobs, he meant mostly, but the muted voice in his head that gave half a crap about his academics did find her curiosity charming enough. Kira nodded, then stood there, watching him. Was he supposed to say more? Was he supposed to know that her sister was trying to nudge her into his other office? But she only stood back, watching.

“Is there anything else I can do for you, Kira?” he asked finally when she didn’t budge.

“So... Stacey really didn’t say anything about me?” she asked softly. There was an edge to her voice, though, something that hadn’t been there before. “Like, a year of therapy, and she never *once* brought me up?”

“Um... no?” he answered – then tried not to hit himself for forgetting the script. “I mean, well, you can appreciate there’s such a thing as patient confidentiality. Anything a patient says to me, I’m prohibited from mentioning to anyone else without their consent.”

Kira nodded slowly, and then that reassuring smile of hers was back. “Right, right. That’s cool. But yeah, like I said, she really hyped you up. My sister, she... I guess I don’t need to tell you, she’s kinda fucked up sometimes. So I’m glad she got some help.”

An intriguing statement; he wondered how their perspectives on the fucked-up nature of Stacey Reeves aligned. “I was glad to. And, ah, she probably told you, she helped inspire me to go into business on the side. So, yeah. I owe a lot to her, too.” There, he’d pointed out the business, but hadn’t solicited. That would be weird, right? Being her professor, and then...? Right? His and Stacey’s script hadn’t said anything about this, damnit!

“Hey, from what I heard, she didn’t exactly cut you a check, did she? Payment-wise, that is.”

What?! What was she implying? “Uh... No, but... What are you asking, exactly?”

“I mean, she said you took her on pro bono, didn’t take a cent.” He let out a sigh of relief at the tame interpretation of how Stacey had paid for her time with him. “I’m only saying, you don’t owe her. She owes you, sounds like. Stacey has kind of a way of making people think she’s doing them a favor when it’s the other way around, that’s all.”

Did she ever. “Oh. Well in my case, I consider myself fortunate to have crossed paths.”

“Yeah. I guess you would.” Then her smile was back in full radiance. “Anyway, I’ll see you around, Mr. Manning. Have a good weekend, yeah?”

“Yeah, you too, Kira. Hope you’re settling in nicely at Lakeview.”

She nodded happily. “I love it here. Everybody’s been so nice to me, you know?”

It took Stacey nearly half an hour to calm him down. Her reassurances that Kira couldn't possibly fathom what they'd been up to the past year were hard to swallow through all the implied knowledge she'd brought to bear. He hadn't missed a bit of a cold attitude toward Stacey, either, giving him doubts about whether she could even get the girl through his door in the first place.

He ended the call feeling little better than he had when he'd first picked up the phone. Martin's constant low-grade panic only subsided, in fact, after he answered a call from an unknown number Sunday afternoon. He had been trying to savor each bite of an oatmeal cream pie, his reward to himself after his visit to donate plasma at the hospital. \$60 well-earned. Just enough that he could afford the rent on the place this month, so long as he continued walking two miles to campus for his professorial gig.

"Hey, is this Mr. Manning?" asked a familiar voice.

"Yes – who's this?"

"This is Kira. Kira Reeves? From your class?"

"Oh – right. Uh, what's up, Kira?" Had it been any other student, Martin would have demanded to know where she'd gotten the number and flatly instructed her to email him from then on, then hung up. But she was not any other student, and as it so happened, her call was in regards to exactly what he hoped.

"Sorry to call your personal number. That's what this is, right? I got it from Stacey. I was gonna wait to call until normal business hours, but she swore it'd be fine. You're not mad, are you?"

"Mad? No, of course not."

Faint, bitchy words made their way through the phone. "See, I told you, Kira."

"Shut up, Stacey!" Kira said, her phone held away from her face, but not far enough. "Anyway yeah. So, um, I wondered if you, you know, had any, um, openings? Like, for... patients? At your other job, I mean, the... what was it called. The Wellness Clinic thing. I'm so sorry, I should remember. Don't be mad." Before he could eagerly accept, however, she rushed onward. "Like, I get it if you can't, that would make total sense since you're my teacher – professor, sorry – and you're already seeing Stacey—"

"I told you, I'm not going in any more," Stacey's voice droned in the background.

"*Shut UP, Stacey!*" This time Martin had to hold the phone away from his ear, but she went on in a non-shriek. "And it's totally understandable if you can't, don't feel bad at all, and I don't know if you're allowed to take a student as a patient, or a patient's sister, former patient's sister whatever, or what, so feel free to say no, but—"

"Kira?"

"—my mom has been all over me because I see somebody back home, and she's worried I'm going to backslide if I don't have someone here even though I said I could just go home and keep seeing my old doc once in a while, which is kind of a far drive but

I said I didn't mind, but Stacey just keeps going 'omg go see Martin Manning, he's the mother flippin' best' and she's got Mom convinced—"

"Kira."

"—that you'd be great for me, because if you can untangle the big ball of issues that is my sister, then you can handle someone relatively normal like me." There was no pause, but suddenly the phone was quieter, removed from the mic, albeit not by enough. "Oh shut up, Stacey, don't even start. No, you know what? You know what I'm talking about. Bull crud. You know what I'm... Do you want me to bring it up to him, right now? Let's all have a big open talk about it. Yeah, didn't think so. Anyway—"

"I'd love to have you come in," he blurted forcefully.

"Yeah?" The voice was nervous. It was the voice of a young woman plainly being coerced into something she didn't want to do, except a mom was involved, and that was that. If that was what it took to get her in his office and under his spell, he'd take it.

"Well OK."

"Why don't you text me some times that would work for you – and I'll see if I can't work you in. How's that sound?"

"Cool." There was a pause. "You're sure this won't be weird?"

"What's weird, Kira? You're the only person who needs to be OK with it. What I think, your family thinks... none of that matters. As far as I'm concerned, you're getting help, and there's nothing weird about asking for help." There, that sounded like something a therapist would say.

"Yeah?" Her voice brightened, and he could see that smile return. "OK. I'll text, as soon as we hang up. Which, yeah, I guess we can now."

"Have a good night, Kira."

"You too, Mr. Manning."

"Oh and Kira?"

"Yes?"

"Martin is fine."

She giggled. "Oh. Yeah. G'night, Mister... Martin."

It was an effort of will not to make an immediate response to her text. Meanwhile, he browsed through his favorites from her galleries, fapping unmercifully to that innocent smile with its easily forgivable gap, a face so like and unlike her sister's. Then the 8 PM deadline for commenting on the weekend's discussion prompt arrived, and Martin took a moment to admire Kira's thorough, articulate response. When he finished inputting grades, Martin booked her for the earliest appointment he could.