

Reflection

Kallie

“So, Natasha.” Ethan tried to sound casual as he asked the question he’d come all this way to put to his sister’s creepy new girlfriend. It wasn’t hard; the wine had been flowing freely all evening. “How did you two meet?”

“See, that’s an unfair question.” Natasha giggled. “Not like I can ask you the same thing.”

Natasha was sitting at the opposite end of the couch. She was smiling, probably; that weird, knowing smile that always raised Ethan’s hackles. But he couldn’t be sure. He couldn’t stop staring at her arm, wrapped possessively around Emma, his twin sister.

“C’mon,” he wheedled, spreading his arms. “Don’t I get to know?”

“Be nice to him, Nat,” Emma said sleepily. “He’s just looking out for his kid sister.”

The two of them were slumped together; Natasha, leaning over on the armrest, Emma, half in her lap. Ethan didn’t like that. He didn’t like how at-ease Natasha looked. From how she lounged around, you’d think this was her apartment, not Emma’s. Except now it was both of theirs, apparently. She’d moved in after just two months. It wasn’t right. Something was up.

“Kid sister?” Natasha raised an eyebrow and took another sip of wine. “I thought the two of you were twins.”

“Twelve minutes.” Emma giggled. “But he never lets anyone forget it.”

Ethan shrugged good-naturedly. He was used to this teasing. “Twelve minutes is twelve minutes! Just let me have this, Em.”

The two of them laughed together, and for a moment it was just like old times. The two of them growing up together, or at college, thick as thieves. The twins. No secrets. No weird girlfriends.

“Twins,” Natasha repeated. The moment died. “You must get tired of hearing this, but it’s really something. The two of you truly are just about identical.”

Emma wagged a finger up at her. “Not identical! I’ve told you, dizygotic. If we were identical, we’d be same-sex.”

“That’s right. I remember.” There was a strange mischief in Natasha’s eyes. As if Ethan needed another reason to dislike her, besides the way she’d come into Emma’s life like a battering ram. “But still. That resemblance. Wow. It’s like... it’s like you’re a matching pair.”

“Similar genes, I suppose.” Ethan couldn’t quite conceal his irritation. He sure did get tired of hearing it.

Not that she was wrong, admittedly. As kids, Ethan and Emma had been mistaken for each other all the time. That was in the past now, but it had persisted long into their teenage years thanks to Ethan’s slight build and preference for keeping his hair long.

“Hey, I’m curious,” Natasha said, a wicked grin slapped across her face. “You two ever fuck with the same girl? Maybe even... at the same time?”

"What the fuck..." Ethan breathed, as Emma completely dissolved into helpless laughter.

"Ew!" she protested, after catching her breath. "A three-way? With him? Are you kidding me? How would that even work?"

Natasha shrugged. "I dunno. But he likes girls, you like girls..."

"Yeah, since, like, two months ago." Emma stuck her tongue out.

Ethan was aghast. Natasha's comment was extremely weird, of course, but somehow Emma's reaction was even weirder. A few months ago, she never would have laughed off a question like that. She would have been angry. Repulsed. That was the twin sister Ethan knew. She was proud, and she had always been so dignified.

And she wasn't a lesbian.

Was that fucked up of him to think? Maybe. Ethan certainly wasn't in the business of calling people's sexualities into question... mostly. But this was Em. He knew her better than he knew herself. They'd never kept anything from each other. If she'd displayed even the slightest inkling of being interested in girls, he'd have known about it. But no; by contrast, she'd always been a little boy crazy. She'd even had a fiancé - right up until she'd ditched him for this sleazeball.

Ethan didn't like her. It wasn't that she was trans, and it wasn't that she was gay. It was something more. It was the way she seemed to have Emma wrapped around her little finger. Something was up, and that shit-eating grin Natasha always wore was all but daring Ethan to figure it out. It was why he'd visited, not that he'd ever have told Emma that. If she was manipulating Emma - or worse - he needed to get to the bottom of it. He wouldn't have put it past her, especially after comments like the one she'd just made.

And what kind of job was being a hypnotist, anyway?

"That's really gross..." Ethan said quietly. He was hoping for some backup from Emma. He didn't get much.

"I told you, play nice." Emma gave Natasha a little tap on the arm. "You were about to tell him how we met?"

"Right." Ethan couldn't shake the feeling Natasha was smirking at him as she spoke. "Well, that's not much of a story. Emma came to one of my shows, we got talking, and the rest is history."

Emma pressed a little closer to Natasha and favored her with a winning smile. She seemed sickeningly infatuated.

"I see." Ethan nodded. He needed to keep his cool. See if he could trick any answers out of Natasha. "That sounds nice. And is this before or after you figured out that you, uh..."

He threw Emma a significant look.

"Are a lesbian?" She snickered. "Yeah, pretty much around that time."

"A little before," Natasha corrected. Her smirk was widening. "You might say I talked her through it, actually. Maybe made her realize a few things."

"Yeah." Emma's eyes became a touch unfocused. Clearly, she'd had a glass too many. "You were a big help."

"Oh yeah?" Ethan tried his best to feign simple curiosity. "How's that?"

Natasha just shrugged. "I've had shit to come to terms with too. Gender, sexuality... it's not so different." She looked down at Emma and licked her lips. "And then we hooked up. I guess I'm just a smooth talker."

The way she said it was just so twisted. And that look in her eyes. Once, in college, as he'd been walking back to his dorm room, all the other guys had been looking and talking to Ethan just like that. And when he'd opened the door, a bucket of cold water had fallen on his head.

But again, it was how Emma reacted that really caught Ethan's eye. She was squirming slightly in Natasha's lap, subtly rubbing her thighs together and pressing closer to her girlfriend. It was lurid. Ethan felt embarrassed to be watching. He cleared his throat conspicuously.

"That's amazing," he said, hoping he could keep the bitter insincerity out of his voice. "But, Em, I'm curious, what got you going to a hypnosis show? That doesn't seem like your scene."

She stopped writhing, mercifully, and shrugged at him. "I guess I was just curious."

"Lots of people are." Natasha snapped at the heels of that comment. "How about you, Ethan? You seem a little scornful."

That was putting it mildly. "Call it skeptical," Ethan replied mildly. He didn't want to put her on edge, but if he could get her talking... "Don't get me wrong, I'm sure you're a great performer! But it's not. You know. Real."

"It's real," Emma retorted quickly. "It works on me."

"It certainly does," Natasha laughed.

Emma squirmed again. Ethan had to fight not to blow his top.

"Maybe it works great on some people," Ethan amended. "A few people. But not... I mean, c'mon! How does that even work? You swing a little pocket watch in front of someone, and they start dancing around like a chicken? Please!"

"Oh, she doesn't need a pocket watch," Emma giggled.

Natasha, meanwhile, was just looking at Ethan. She didn't look offended, not in the slightest. But there was still something fiery about her gaze. It was like she was being challenged. No, like she was challenging him.

And from her grin, she was very, very pleased about it.

"So," she said slowly, "I'm guessing you don't think you're one of those 'few people' it works on?"

Ethan shrugged. "Nah. No way."

"But your sister is?"

Another shrug. "I guess."

"Now that's interesting." Natasha sat forward a little; Emma shifted to accommodate. "You know, you're right that not everyone is equally susceptible. But your sister? I can assure you, she's very, very susceptible. She really goes down easy."

Ethan felt a vein throb in his forehead at the innuendo. But that aside, she was obviously hinting at something. Some kind of influence she had on Emma. Was she really so cocky she was just going to tell him?

"But you two are twins," Natasha continued. "If you're really so different, doesn't that make you wonder? Maybe it's that old debate again. Nature versus nurture."

"That doesn't make sense," Emma interjected, sleepily and happily. "I told you. We're not genetically identical."

"Right. I forgot." It was as plain as day that she hadn't. "Still though. Makes me wonder... hey, babe? Sit up for a moment."

Emma grumbled a little, but quickly propped herself into an upright position and turned to face Ethan, with Natasha sitting behind her. Natasha's eyes moved slowly back and forth between the twins.

"Wow," Natasha remarked. "I know, I know, you're not identical, but... wow. You two. It must be like looking in a mirror."

"Not really," Ethan said wearily. Why was she so preoccupied with this? He was trying to get her talking about hypnosis. "Look, same birthday aside, we're really just brother and sister. It's not that special."

"Oh, I disagree," Natasha replied. "To me, it's remarkable. Twins or no, the similarity is striking. Maybe you're just too used to it? That happens, sometimes. You see something every day, for months or years, and it becomes mundane. You know what I'm talking about?"

"Sure, I guess," Ethan answered impatiently. Natasha had started speaking in this odd, slow way, drawing out the parts of each word into a song-like rhythm. It was kind of annoying. He really wanted her to get to the point.

"You need to get some perspective," Natasha told him. "Look at this with fresh eyes. At yourself, and your sister. Look. Really look. She looks just like you."

Ethan found himself obliging, staring straight at Emma. He wasn't really sure why. It was hard not to, he supposed, after listening to Natasha. Plus, he was a little drunk

himself, and it wasn't like there was anything else in particular for him to rest his eyes on. But also, admittedly, Ethan was wondering: did she have a point? Were they really so identical?

He wasn't sure, but he didn't think so. There were similarities, sure - eye color, long hair - but plenty more differences. Emma had long, feminine lashes and rounded cheeks, and was wearing makeup. Her hair was loose in a pretty, wavy bob, not tied back in a low, no-effort ponytail. There was a family resemblance, sure, but nobody was going to get the two of them mixed up.

"I... don't think so."

Ethan paused and frowned. He was speaking slowly too, and almost slurring his words. Maybe he was more drunk than he'd thought. That was no good. He needed to stay alert if he was going to save Emma from Natasha. Ethan took a deep breath and did his best to focus on Emma.

"Look deeper," Natasha urged, in that strange, soothing way of hers. "Past the superficial. You have the same eyes, you know. The same bone structure too. Same cheekbones. And your mouths - yes, those are definitely the same."

"I dunno," Ethan demurred. His bone structure? He couldn't really picture it, although as he looked at Emma, it was easy to imagine that it was similar to hers. That seemed about right. "But... does it matter? I was asking Em about why she-"

"We're getting to that," Natasha interrupted smoothly. "Promise. Just listen, OK? I'll explain everything."

Ethan was mollified by that. An explanation was exactly what he wanted. He didn't trust Natasha to tell him the truth, of course. Not really. He'd just have to pay close attention until he could figure out what kind of game she was playing.

“Like looking in a mirror,” Natasha mused. “Your expressions, too. So similar. I bet that’ll make it even clearer. Emma, smile for me.” She did so, the corners of her mouth pulling up into a blissed-out smile that matched the dazed, drunken, contented look in her eyes. “You too, Ethan. Let’s compare.”

After a brief moment of hesitance, Ethan smiled. It would have been harder not to, really. When he looked at his sister smiling, it made him want to smile too. Smiles were infectious, some people said. That must have been it. And besides, he reasoned afterward, he wanted to keep Natasha talking. It was best that he go along with this nonsense for now.

“See?” Natasha sounded vindicated. “Exactly the same. The same smile. Don’t you think so, Ethan?”

Ethan looked closely at Emma’s mouth, at her lips, at their shape. Was it the same? Did his smile feel like that? Look like that? “I’m... not...”

“Look closer. Really look.”

He did. “M... maybe?”

“Yes,” Natasha told him. It was hard to disagree when she sounded so sure. “It’s the same.”

Ethan still wasn’t sure. “I... I’d need to check. In a mirror, or something.”

Natasha laughed at that. “No mirror in here. But I bet you can just imagine a mirror. When was the last time you looked in a mirror? This morning, when you shaved? Think back, Ethan. Did you smile, for a moment? I bet you did. Look at Emma, and remember that moment. Imagine that moment.”

Ethan’s brow furrowed. He wasn’t really interested in indulging this absurd train of

thought, but it was proving hard not to. It was a bit like trying not to think about a pink elephant. If you tried not to, that meant you already were. As he stared straight ahead at Emma, it was remarkably easy to imagine that he was looking into a mirror. That her face was a mirror image of his own. And when he thought about it like that, her smile did indeed seem like a perfect fit for his face.

"I guess..." Ethan admitted slowly. "Yeah. Sure."

"Yes!" Natasha laughed. "I'm so glad you see. Emma, you can stop smiling now."

Emma's smile faded as her face relaxed back into a look of blank, dull, vaguely happy sleepiness. How many glasses of wine had she had? She looked seriously out of it. Ethan was a little worried for her. As he looked, his own face relaxed too. His smile faded, and his eyelids suddenly turned remarkably heavy. He supposed he hadn't had any less to drink than Emma had.

"I think I've just about made my point," Natasha said. Her smile was still so very wide. "You too look almost exactly the same. Identical twins."

"Yeah," Ethan agreed reflexively, before he caught the mistake. "Wait, no, that--"

"Oh, that's right! Thank you for reminding me." Natasha interrupted. Ethan was glad she understood. "We weren't just talking about that, were we? We were talking about hypnosis."

Ethan was about to open his mouth, to correct her about them being identical twins, but he didn't. It just seemed easier to let her talk.

"But, you see," Natasha continued, "I bet if you're identical physically, you're identical in other ways too. It stands to reason. After all, how you respond to hypnosis is as much a part of your body as it is your mind. Let me show you. Emma?"

Emma looked just a touch more alert as Natasha called her name, but that didn't last long. Natasha reached up with one hand and caressed the side of her face, the tips of her nails just barely kissing Emma's skin. It was so close, Ethan couldn't quite tell if she was touching her or not.

But she must have been, because Emma's reaction was remarkable. Her eyelids suddenly flickered up and down, and her eyes seemed to roll up into her head. Her shoulders slumped, and she looked like she might have fallen forward without Natasha's supporting arm around her shoulder. It was like her soul had departed her body, leaving nothing behind but a blank, empty void.

This was hypnosis. That was obvious, even to Ethan.

"What the..." Ethan breathed.

Was this how Natasha was controlling Emma? He wouldn't have believed it until this very moment.

But the moment didn't last. Once Natasha drew back her hand, light slowly returned to Emma's eyes - although not all of it. She looked completely dazed at first, but eventually she grinned, and blushed, and squirmed a little more. Ethan blushed too.

"It's a particular weakness of hers," Natasha explained. "Touch. A gentle touch, right there on her face. You have no idea how easy it is to put her in a trance that way. Don't you think it would work just as well on you?"

"N-no." Ethan tried to shake his head a little, but found that he couldn't. "There's... no way I'd-"

"You know, it's real tempting to find out." Natasha tilted her head.

Ethan's breath caught. "You can't do th-"

"Don't worry." Natasha kept interrupting him like that. It was annoying, but Ethan couldn't muster the energy to protest. "I'm not going to hypnotize you. We're just talking, OK?"

"OK." Ethan relaxed, reassured.

"But just look closely," Natasha urged, raising her hand to Emma again. "Look, and imagine. Imagine what it might feel like if someone were to touch you like this."

She began caressing Emma again in just the same way, stroking her fingertips across her cheek. Emma, once again, was rapturous. Seeing her react like that made Ethan shiver.

"It's the lightness of the touch that matters, you know," Natasha went on. "That's the trick. When you just barely touch someone like this, it's confusing. The nerves under their skin aren't quite sure if they're feeling something or not. It captures all of your attention. Makes you shiver. You've been touched like that before, right?"

Ethan just barely managed to nod. He felt like he knew what she was talking about.

"Good." Natasha moved her hand back up, ready to repeat the motion. "Then you know what I mean. You can remember it. Imagine it. Can't you?"

This time, when her fingertips kissed Emma's skin, Ethan gasped. He could feel it. He could actually feel it. It was faint, more like a phantom sensation than a real touch... but that was just what Natasha had been talking about, wasn't it? Focusing on it didn't banish the illusion; just the opposite, in fact. Ethan found his whole world consumed by that gentle, phantom touch. It left him shivering, free of thought, struggling to figure out what was real and what wasn't.

“There we go,” Natasha noted approvingly. “You’re imagining it. I can tell. So now, I’m sure, you can imagine just how relaxing this must be for Emma. The way it makes her mind so very still and quiet. You know the feeling.”

It was true. Ethan did. He could picture it vividly. As he was thinking, he noted that even though Natasha was touching the left side of his sister’s face, he could feel it on his right. A mirror image.

“See?” Natasha said. “It’s potent, isn’t it? Maybe if someone did this to you, you’d be hypnotized too.”

Ethan’s brow furrowed - but then unfurrowed. It didn’t feel right. Emma’s brow wasn’t furrowed.

“Like looking in a mirror, Ethan,” Natasha reminded him. “Identical. Remember that. You’re the same. Look at how deep she is. Look at her eyes. Look at how she feels. You’d be the same way, if you could feel this.”

Once more, she stroked the side of Emma’s face. Ethan shivered at her touch.

“See the light fading from her eyes, Ethan.” Natasha’s voice was like a song. It was as gentle as her caress. But there was a power to it; an undertow, irresistible. “Can you see that? Can you see that in your eyes, reflected in Emma’s? That reflection, fading, just like she is? Weakening? Sinking?”

Ethan could. He really could. It was just like looking in a mirror. They’d always had the same eyes. Everyone said so.

“Then that settles it,” Natasha concluded. “You’re just as weak to hypnosis as she is.”

It was hard to disagree. It was hard, because Ethan just couldn’t seem to think. He struggled, briefly, to muster some resistance, to find the words for a rejoinder, but it all

melted away when Natasha touched the side of Emma's face - of his face - again.

"Identical twins," Natasha sang. "Look at the twin in the mirror, Ethan. Look how deep she is. Look how deep you are."

Ethan couldn't seem to find the fault in her words. They just washed over him. He couldn't avert his eyes from Emma. He was just staring at her, searching her face for differences. There were none. Not really. Not that were anything but superficial. The deeper resemblances - those were all that stood out to him now.

They truly were identical. At least, in all the ways that mattered.

"And, you know, if you're a mirror of each other, you can't possibly be different," Natasha pointed out. "That wouldn't make any sense. So, if I..."

She leaned in and whispered something in Emma's ear. Ethan couldn't make out the words.

"Three," Natasha started counting. Something within Ethan tensed in anticipation. "Two. One. Now."

On her mark, Emma started raising her right arm into the air, up to the level of her shoulder, moving in a slow, smooth, almost robotic way. It was obvious she wasn't moving by her own volition, but by Natasha's; more than anything else, it was like watching someone pose a mannequin.

Ethan was captivated, and as he watched, something strange happened. A growing sense of lightness, of buoyancy, started swelling in his left arm and, after a moment, he saw movement out of the corner of his eye and realized that he was lifting it into the air. He hadn't meant to. He hadn't even known he was doing it. But somehow, it just felt right. It was automatic, and trying to force his arm back down again seemed like it would take more effort than he could possibly muster. Before he knew it, Ethan's arm

was up to his shoulder, and he was mirroring Emma's pose.

He was stunned. It was like magic, and it just confirmed what Natasha had been telling him. Looking at Emma was like looking in the mirror. They were identical. They were reflections. It was undeniable now. Ethan certainly couldn't see a way to deny it. He felt just as blank and dumb as Emma looked - and that was perfect. That was how it should be.

They were twins. They were the same.

"You understand now, don't you?" Natasha said softly. "You're identical. You're a mirror of each other."

Ethan did. He wanted to nod, but he couldn't. Emma wasn't nodding.

"Say it," Natasha instructed. "You're identical."

Ethan looked into Emma's eyes. Blank as they were, there was a kind of mutual recognition there. A tacit understanding of their place and their rhythm, and perhaps thanks to that, at the very same moment, they opened their mouths.

"We're identical."

They spoke in one voice, soft and dreamy, two layers of speech in perfect harmony. Natasha looked like she was having the time of her life as she fed Emma the next line:

"You're the same."

"We're the same." Two voices. One voice.

It was even easier, the second time. It felt perfectly natural. They were identical twins, after all.

"You're mirror images."

"We're mirror images."

"Good," Natasha said approvingly. "But, you know, there's something important about mirror images. They look the same, but they're not really the same. They can't be. One is the real thing. One is just a reflection."

She was right, Ethan realized. But what did that mean for him and Emma?

"Ethan," Natasha said, once more raising her hand to Emma's face. "You can feel this. We both know it."

She caressed Emma again - this time, on the opposite side of her face. Ethan shivered, and all the little hairs on his skin stood to attention. Each time, the phantom sensation got stronger and stronger. By now, it was no different than if she'd simply been touching Emma. And each time, Natasha's touch made Ethan feel a little dreamier, a little more docile, a little more mindless.

"You can feel it," Natasha repeated, as she repeated the motion. "But I'm only touching Emma. Don't you think that's funny?"

Ethan didn't know what to say - not that he could say anything at all, not when Emma wasn't talking. It wouldn't be right.

"I can touch her. But you feel it. If you touch someone who's looking at a mirror, you can see your hand in their reflection. But if you touch the mirror, they don't feel anything at all. Isn't that right?"

Ethan could clearly see that it was. He was waiting with bated breath for Natasha to help him understand.

"I guess that must mean that you're the reflection," Natasha concluded. "And Emma here is the real deal."

Hearing that made Ethan's heart quicker. He was... just a reflection? What did that mean? He wasn't a reflection, was he? He was a person. He was his own person - well, kind of. He and Emma had always been two of a kind, not just one. They were identical twins. But still. Surely he was more than just a reflection?

Ethan was about to insist on that - but then Natasha touched Emma again, this time in the center of her forehead. Inch by inch, she moved her hand down, over the bridge of her nose, then the tip, and then across her lips to her chin, all so gently she was just barely stroking the tiny hairs on her skin.

And Ethan felt it all.

With that touch, his protest broke apart like shattering glass. The pieces, slippery and ephemeral, slipped between the cracks of his hypnotized mind. He lost track of everything that he'd been thinking. Of everything he'd been worrying about. Ethan was left with nothing but the simple, rapturous pleasure of Natasha's touch. It was so gentle and perfect, it transformed him into nothing more than a lightning rod for that blissful, simple joy.

Once it passed, he was nothing. He was empty.

"You're the reflection," Natasha told him. "And Emma is the real thing."

Those words poured into the emptiness of Ethan's mind. He was grateful for them. They made him full. They made everything make sense again.

He was a reflection. Nothing more. He didn't know what that meant yet. But he was safe and secure in the knowledge that Natasha was going to tell him.

"And what does a reflection do?" Natasha mused aloud. "It reflects. That's all."

Ethan reflected Emma. He was Emma's reflection. It was perfectly simple.

"That's what you're doing now, isn't it?" Natasha pointed out. "And that's good. You're a very good reflection."

Natasha was right. Ethan was reflecting Emma. Mirroring her. Her pose. Her movement. Her speech. Her feelings. Her trance. Knowing that, hearing Natasha's praise, filled him with a faint, warm glow.

"But," Natasha added, "you're not perfect. And a mirror image has to be perfect."

The glow faded. Ethan was crestfallen. A mirror had to be perfect. Mirrors couldn't be wrong. If he wasn't perfect, it was like he wasn't a reflection at all - and that just wasn't right.

"After all," Natasha went on, "your hair isn't the same, is it? And you're not wearing makeup. Your skin is that little bit rougher. No skincare, I guess. It's a shame."

It really was. Ethan had pointed out many of those same differences before, but now they filled him with unbearable sorrow. What was he, if not a reflection of Emma? Nothing. Nothing at all. What was he going to do?

"Would you like me to fix that for you?" Natasha asked, before leaning close to Ethan's sister. "Say 'yes', Emma."

"Yes," Emma said - and Ethan did too, of course, at the very same moment.

He meant it. His sorrow was turning to yearning. He needed to bridge the gap between himself and Emma. And... Natasha could do it? He was so grateful.

"I'd be glad to," Natasha replied graciously. "Wait here a moment, Emma."

She managed to extract herself from the couch without disturbing Emma, who remained sitting perfectly still. Ethan did too. Natasha didn't need to tell him to do that. It stood to reason. He was Emma's reflection.

When Natasha reappeared in the corner of Ethan's view, she was holding in her hands a couple of combs and brushes. She sat down again, this time behind Ethan. That struck Ethan, but he couldn't figure out why. He couldn't think. Emma looked totally mindless and hypnotized. She wasn't thinking.

"Here." Ethan felt Natasha pulling out the hair tie he used to keep his simple ponytail in place. "Let me."

She started brushing his hair, and Ethan did his best to stay frozen still, like a reflection should. Her touch was as gentle as it had been when she was caressing Emma. It felt wonderful, and made it that much easier for Ethan to remain calm and relaxed. He'd never had his hair brushed before, but he liked it. It felt good.

He noticed that Emma looked like she was feeling good too.

After a few minutes of careful brushing with one implement after another, Natasha was done. She sat back and stood up.

"There," she announced. "Much better. Almost perfect, in fact. After a trip to a stylist, it'll be spot-on."

Ethan could see his own hair falling around the sides of his face now. It looked wavy and sleek - Natasha's brushing must have neatened it up and helped it regain its natural shapeliness. He didn't need to look in a mirror, of course. He could just look at Emma. He knew they were the same.

"Next," Natasha said, as she reached down to Emma's handbag, "makeup. I know just how Emma does it."

With painstaking care, she started doing Ethan's. First, foundation, then concealer and contouring, and then the finer touches: eyeshadow, eyeliner, lipstick, blush. It was clear she was well-practiced.

"I'm not doing it exactly like hers, of course," she commented as she worked. "You need a few extra touches. A little heavier on the foundation, a little more contouring. Feminizing makeup. Don't worry. You'll learn how."

Ethan absorbed that without question. He was in heaven. Each touch of Natasha's fingertips, each stroke of her makeup brush, felt wonderful - and the best part was knowing that, with each passing moment, he was getting closer and closer to becoming Emma's true reflection. To being exactly what he was supposed to be.

"Perfect!" Natasha announced, and sat back. "If I do say so myself."

Ethan didn't need a mirror to know how he looked. He was the mirror, and the real thing was right in front of him. He knew exactly how he looked: wonderfully, unmistakably feminine. He could have passed for a girl. He hoped he did. He needed to pass for Emma.

"Clothes, mannerisms..." Natasha sighed dreamily. "I guess there'll be time for that later. For now... hm. You know, 'Ethan' doesn't really suit you anymore."

That didn't bother Ethan. He no longer felt any real attachment to the name. Reflections didn't have names. Not really.

"It's really tempting to just call you 'Emma' too." Natasha giggled. "But I think that would get confusing. How about... Ella." She giggled again. "Emma and Ella. Perfect."

Natasha reached back and stroked the side of Emma's face as she addressed him directly. "Your name is Ella."

Ella shivered as that suggestion worked its way through her mind. She didn't doubt or question it. Reflections didn't have names, but Natasha had given her one, so she did. Simple.

Ella. It was practically a reflection of Emma.

And it was her name.

"OK, Ella," Natasha said. "You just stay there for one moment. No need to wake up. No need to think. Just sit there, nice and calm, nice and still. Like... like a reflection, when no one's looking in the mirror. Just be nothing."

It was easy. Being nothing was easy. What was a reflection anyway? Light on the surface of a mirror. Nothing.

"Emma." Natasha turned to Ella's twin. "Three. Two. One. Wake up."

Over several seconds, as Natasha counted, Emma stirred. When Natasha told her to wake, her eyelids flickered rapidly again, just as they had when she'd first hypnotized her. Then they opened, and for the first time in minutes, they contained a spark of life and awareness. It took a few long moments for the fog to clear, but once it did and she saw what had been done to Ella, Emma gasped.

"Nat, you... you actually..." Her entire face suddenly became flushed. "Oh my god."

Natasha laughed, and threw herself down on the couch behind her girlfriend. Both of them were staring at Ella. She hadn't stirred.

"Yeah, I hypnotized him," Natasha replied. "The asshole was practically begging for

it.”

“D-don’t say that!” Emma was trying to sound cross, but she couldn’t manage it; her voice was shuddery, and full of a strange excitement. “He was just looking out for his kid sister.”

“You should have told him it was too late,” Natasha purred, slipping a possessive arm around her waist. “That I’ve already got you. But you didn’t - and now I have him, too.”

Emma gasped breathlessly. “T-that’s so... fucked up.”

“Don’t look at me,” Natasha mocked. “You’re the one getting off on it.”

At that, Emma let out a high-pitched whine of protest that dissolved entirely into a moan as Natasha’s hand pressed insistently against the front of her dress. “N-n-not fair! Y-you made... me f-find fucked-up stuff like that h-hot.”

“That’s right.” There was a wicked glint in Natasha’s eyes. “Even the fucked-up stuff I did to you. Too hot to resist. Too hot to even want to.”

Emma was too far gone to even protest now. She just moaned and slumped against Natasha, unable to fight the predatory hypnotist.

“Hey, watch this,” Natasha said, and addressed Ella again. “Ella, see how turned on Emma is right now?”

Ella did. Now that Natasha had drawn her attention to it, it was obvious. Emma was flushed and squirming, she was breathing hard, and whenever Natasha touched her, she moaned.

“Time to be her reflection again, Ella.”

As soon as Natasha said that, it hit Ella. The heat. The arousal. It was physical and immediate, just like when Natasha had stroked Emma's face. Ella started panting and felt her face grow hot. Within moments, she was just as horny as Emma looked. The only major difference was that, in Ella's case, the arousal was also visible as a distinct, swelling bulge between her legs.

Natasha laughed when Emma moaned at the twisted display.

"W-what are you gonna do to him?" Emma breathed. "T-the same thing... y-you did to me?"

"What?" Natasha teased. "Make him a lesbian? Make him love me?"

Each possibility got a fresh moan from Emma's lips. She looked unbelievably turned on - and so did Ella.

"Maybe," Natasha mused. "You know me, babe. I'm impulsive. But I do like the idea of keeping you both. A nice little matching pair. Your "brother" is staying down here for... what? A week? That's plenty of time for some fun."

Her hand was up under Emma's skirt, touching her directly. She was putty in Natasha's arms. Natasha had made her so hopelessly weak and submissive.

"But for now, let's give your new sister a finishing touch," Natasha decided. She reached into one of the pockets of her jacket and pulled out a pill bottle, opened the lid, and poured one out into her palm. "I can spare a few HRT doses. Hey, Ella, open your- wait, no. I have a better idea. Emma, here."

Emma looked at her curiously and, before she could say anything, Natasha fed her the pill. Emma almost choked, but immediately accepted Natasha's fingers into her mouth.

"Don't swallow," Natasha instructed, before grinning. "Now. Kiss the mirror, babe."

Emma's eyes flew wide, and her cheeks turned a deeper red than ever before at the sheer, taboo thrill of what Natasha was intending. She shook her head a couple of times - but after the time Natasha had spent in her head, she was no longer capable of saying 'no'.

Ella had no reaction at all as, slowly and trepidatiously, Emma stretched out toward her. For some reason, she expected Emma's lips to feel cold - but they didn't, the kiss was white-hot. Driven by her own arousal, Emma kissed her twin passionately, lips pressed eagerly against hers in a desperate bid to sate her hunger. The taboo only made it hotter. Ella, of course, mirrored every little bit of her passion - and accepted the pill Emma passed into her mouth through the kiss.

Natasha just laughed as she watched the two sisters making out for her own sick amusement.

"Good girl," she praised when Emma finally drew back. Emma blushed again. "God. You have no idea how hot it is, watching you kiss. My very own matching pair."

"Y-yeah." Emma couldn't even bring herself to disagree anymore. She had been molded into a willing accomplice.

"OK, Ella," Natasha said, "I think it's time to wake up for tonight."

She snapped her fingers.

Ella almost slipped off the touch. He - she - could barely remember where she was. She just stared at Natasha and Emma, baffled by the lurid looks on their faces.

"W-what?" she said embarrassed. "What... happened?"

"I just hypnotized you," Natasha told her. "Guess it works just as well on you as it does on Emma."

"Oh." It was starting to come back to her now. They'd been arguing about it. For some reason, Ella had been agitated about... something. About Natasha? That seemed right, but then it seemed very wrong.

After all, Emma loved Natasha. Why would Ella feel any different?

"I hate to say I told you so," Natasha teased. "But..."

"Fine! You got me," Ella confessed. She shifted around on the couch a little, trying to hide the huge bulge in her pants. Why was she hard?

"So... what's my prize?" Natasha pressed.

"Your prize?" Ella blinked, confused. "Um... what do you want?"

Natasha made a big show of contemplating the question, before answering: "I think my prize is, I get to take you clothes shopping tomorrow."

Emma giggled. "Watch out, Eth- I mean, uh, Ella. You just know she's going to make us match. She's kind of obsessed with it."

Ella blushed. Hearing that made her feel strange, somehow. Tranquil. Needy. She nodded submissively.

"I guess I should have known better," she murmured. "We've always been identical twin sisters."

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