

What Makes a Man Bear - Behind the Scenes

Written by Commandlz©

Now that the story is done, I can *finally* share with you guys what's been going on behind the scenes both *before* and *during* the writing process of this long story.

Be warned - there's gonna be some deep stuff here but also a lot of humor. Also, I'm gonna nerd-out on some such weirdly specific details... 🤪 hope you'll appreciate it. But I'll also take an eyeroll if you promise to stick it to the end 😊

How I came up with the idea?

Ahhh, damn it... I'm gonna have to get really dark, *really* personal, *really* quickly here.

The basis for the story's idea came to me a couple of years ago, after my wife and I had a near-divorce crisis in our marriage. It was probably the most difficult time in my life, actually. My wife had been (rightfully) hurt by members of my family after they made her feel invisible and disregarded her needs. I'd tried to foolishly mitigate everything between making my wife happy and my family happy so that everyone was at least somewhat satisfied and no one got hurt. And everyone got hurt. Mostly my wife did, to the point she'd considered divorce after about 10 years of marriage at that time.

It was the first (and hopefully the last) time that we slept in separate beds, whilst in the same house. That night, I went to sleep alone before she did, and when I woke up in the middle of the night - her side of the bed was empty. Dreadfully going to the living room - I found my wife asleep on the couch instead of in our bed. You can imagine the gigantic pit this put in my stomach (and if you can - read chapter 1 again...)

The next morning was Saturday. I was being forced to wake up by my 2-year-old daughter at around 05:30 a.m. and play with her. My 7-year-old son woke up a few minutes later and we all played in my daughter's room some silly board game. All the while - their mom was a few feet away from us, asleep on the couch. I nearly cracked down when my kids insisted on going to the living room and I had to find an excuse to explain why mommy was asleep on the couch instead of our bed.

So... yes, dark times. Safe to say that it broke something inside of me and made me realize that whatever I'd been trying to do - wasn't working. I'll skip the long, agonizing road ahead that my wife and I did together to repair our marriage but I'll just say that I changed course, learned from my mistakes, apologized to her for what I needed to, and worked very hard to regain her trust again and make sure that she'd always feel my top priority.

It's been a couple years since that day and thankfully we're in such a different, much better, happier place today.

Anywho, for some reason, during this horrible period, as I was taking my kids to the living room and trying to explain why mommy's on the couch - my relentless mind, astoundingly, came up with this idea that - *"hey! This might actually be a super powerful scene to write. I mean... sort your shit together first and make sure you're still married. But, like... after that - write it."* So I did. And yes I know I'm insane for thinking that while the event is unfolding. 😊

However, while my wife and I had thankfully gone on the healing path - I thought, "fuck it, let's explore what *would've* happened if things went south from there."

Now, I have to say something for the record or I'm in deep shit - my wife is not a "Marla". She has tons of empathy, love, support, and so many more amazing qualities that made me fall for her years ago and to this day. However, she was angry at the time, and again - she had every right to be after what she went through.

As a writer - you sometimes want to take inspiration not from an entire person and copy them, but just a certain aspect of them. Then you can attribute other qualities to your character. So I took my wife's justified anger, but then amplified it in Marla. I also made Marla fight so dirty and unfairly, taking shots below the belt at Clarks, using his slow, methodic thinking against him by cutting off his sentences and making him lose his train of thought so he'd lose the argument.

So, in summary - my wife is not a "Marla", but actually much more of a "Lina". Hope I emphasized it enough times to stay married 😊

Characters

Clark Kessler

The main character is a guy who's in a dark place, his marriage is on the brink of collapse. My goal is to gradually tip him over the edge, while exploring his inner conflict. Clark's deal is that he considers himself a moral man, who puts his family above all else, including his own happiness.

However, he's in such a fragile place, after not getting true love, appreciation and sex (yes, some fucking sex!) for so long - that his own morality stands in a real test when he meets Lina. Being confronted by such an unstoppable sexual force, right when he's the most vulnerable - might be more than he could resist. I'll be honest, I initially really wanted Clark to cheat on his wife, and I actually gave the story the temporary name "cheating story". I just wanted to explore that. Yes, when I gave you guys the draft of the first couple chapters -you pretty much unanimously told me how devastating this would be to you if Clark cheated, and I realized I had to rethink that concept.

I sort of knew who I wanted Clark to be, because his personality was pretty much me (mostly, at least). I'm a pretty goofy guy and try not to take myself so seriously. I'd like to think I'm empathetic, a good listener, like to help others in need, and I take my job very seriously (yes I have a grown-up job as well 😊). I'm also extremely forgetful, I tend to space out a lot, and I swear I have good intentions but I'm so clumsy sometimes (ok, *most* of the time actually...). And I constantly crack my knuckles. I infused so much of myself into Clark that it sometimes became hard to dissociate myself from the story.

Marla Kessler

I knew who Clark's wife was, because I took about 2% of my wife from that dreadful night, then exaggerated the other 98% of her personality to be an absolute monster of a wife (who is, again - not my own wife. Hope I said it enough times by now 😊).

Marla is a woman who's much more practical than Clark, and in a way, that's what attracted them in the first place many years ago. She was his counterpart, and where Clark would drift off - she'd take care of things. They *were* happy in the beginning, but time took its toll on their marriage. Whereas once she's been ambitious and sharp, and now all that's left is resentment. She resents Clark for forgetting stuff, spacing out, goofing around instead of being more dedicated towards making more money and not providing her with the lifestyle that she thinks she deserves.

That's why she keeps having snarky comments, being passive aggressive with him, withholding sex and affection, and also buying stuff online and just living beyond their means. She's sure she's always right and is allergic to taking accountability or apologizing for anything. Marla has convinced herself that *she's* the victim in all of this, with Clark not providing her with what she wants, and that's why she believes her actions are justified.

Lina (Catalina Rivera)

Lina is the third corner of this triangle. I had to really think about her character. Initially, I thought of making the girl who'd be Lina into a one-dimensional sex-dream. But it just felt wrong and empty.

Clark, who'll eventually fall in love with her - was initially a man who did do so many right things in his marriage, but instead of being appreciated for it - he was punished for them again and again, for 14 years, until he lost sight of what's right and what's wrong. He's been conditioned by his wife to apologize for everything, even when he had nothing to apologize for. To always feel like he didn't do enough, or like he was the most horrible person in the world for forgetting things or spacing out.

That's why I knew Lina had to have some depth, some actual personality. She needed to be a woman who carried herself with unapologetic confidence, because she'd eventually need to be his counterpiece, and show him that - he's not crazy. When Clark would do something goofy and stupid - Lina would need to be there to laugh at his goofiness, instead of criticizing it. When Clark is sad and drained, she'll need to be there to lift up his chin, and re-teach him that he's

good exactly as he is. She'll need to show him that he's not "broken" or needs training for how to be a good man, because he's already a good man as he is. Lina shows Clark that his so-called "shortcomings" are actually his strengths, and she's the one who helps him see what makes him a man (*'starting to see the connection to the title?'*).

And somehow, it just came to me - she has to be Colombian. I have some distant family from Colombia, and the women in that family are exactly what Lina is like. They're beautiful, confident, compassionate, with a great sense of humor, and empathetic, but they also know exactly who they are and they don't take shit from anyone. It just felt perfect for Lina.

All those drawls of Lina's words, her large hand-gestures, her specific accent, all the "ay", and "ay dios mio", the "Mr. Cheffied" instead of Mr. Sheffield - that was all from them. Them... and Sofia Vergara, who I hope I don't have to tell you about her sex-appeal and sensuality 😳 I felt like I could get these little Colombian details *just right* because I've known these people all my life.

Lina has two main conflicts:

- 1) Attraction to a married man: She's so attracted to Clark and finds herself falling in love with him so quickly. Yet she doesn't want to be a homewrecker. We see her treading that fine line, where she sometimes crosses it (i.e., Salsa dance), or almost crosses it (texting teasingly with Clark while getting herself off in her apartment). Then she takes a step back once she realizes she went too far. Her heart breaks, but she doesn't want to cause more trouble. Only when Clark comes to her after his separation from Marla does she allow herself to let go and get intimate with him.
- 2) Finding her home: She reveals her overbearing family, the overboard expectations to care for her disabled brother to the point of giving up on her own life. Lina developed a natural desire to be in such a position of a SPED teacher, while also *needing* to escape her family as far as possible to set the firmest boundary she could. She practically flees to the U.S., in the pretense of finding a better job there, but really it's to allow herself the space and time to find out who she is.

We see glimpses of this pressure from her family when her mom keeps calling and texting her when Lina's gonna return to Colombia, as if the U.S. is a little vacation she's taking and not an entire reroute of her life. Lina still misses home, though. She's drinking Aguardiente (I'll talk about this later) and contemplating buying return tickets to Colombia but then cancelling. But eventually, in the Epilogue, when Clark and Lina start their life together and buy a house, her conflict is resolved with her saying it's the first time since she got to the U.S. where she feels like she's home.

Setup and pre-writing work

Learning about Special Education and integration into Clark's life

Clark, being the guy that he was, had to have some noble-profession that brings in a lot of satisfaction and a lot less money. I eventually settled on Special Education (or SPED they call it) because it just felt like it fit that box the best.

I knew almost nothing about the special education world. That's why I've done some massive research (probably much more than necessary, actually 😊).

I learned how a day in the life of a SPED teacher looks like and just how much workload they have (a *lot!*).

Salaries are unfortunately low (I personally believe these saint people should make much more money with how important their job is). When Marla asked Clark about the raise he intended to ask for - that's where this came from.

I learned that SPED teachers might deal with student-meltdowns, and lack of support from administration (i.e. - Mr. Sheffield who was too cheap to put a few bucks to repair the classroom).

They deal with burnout. Remember how drained Clark was? This job can take such an emotional and physical toll on a person. And the only thing that could've helped him keep his head above the water was to come home to a loving, supporting wife. Yet, unfortunately - Marla was the exact opposite of that.

SPED teachers have a lot of paperwork to fill (remember the IEPs that Clark and Lina discussed?).

Also, "regular" teachers sometimes treat them as lesser teachers (of course not all teachers do that). The Sandra scene during lunch at the staff-lounge where she was so disrespectful - that was it.

To refine Clark's personality further - I learned that SPED teachers are usually patient (remember how Clark patiently worked with each child?).

They're emotionally attuned and optimistic. Clark believes in his students and tries to see the good in them. When little Shira built the pyramid he showed her how proud he was of her, despite what others might've thought. That's what led to this paragraph:

"Shira was more challenging, non-verbal and with some major disabilities moving around. Mr. Sheffield had told Clark when the year started that he'd be wasting his time on Shira. Well, Clark had a somewhat tilted yet fully built Pyramid to prove him wrong, right in front of him."

And lastly - they're kinda used to being underappreciated. Clark just - did what he needed to do, knowing he's not gonna get much appreciation from the school principal nor his wife. But he did it anyway for the kids's sake, because they needed him.

Seriously, how are these people not being paid more...?

Jargon

Here's some *really* specific jargon that I learned for the purpose of writing this story. It's... useless information if you're not in the field... 😄 But for those who're interested in nerding out:

- **IEP (Individualized Education Plan):** A tailored plan for each student with a disability.
- **Inclusion:** When special ed students join general education classes.
- **ABA:** Applied Behavior Analysis (often used for autistic students).
- **Para or Paraeducator:** A classroom aide who helps implement instruction/behavior plans.
- **Social stories:** Visual or written guides for how to behave in specific situations.
- **Fidget toys:** a small object used for pleasant activity with the hands, commonly used by those with sensory difficulties.



- **Visual tasks card:**



Location

Listen... the research I've done for this might've been a *bit* over the top... but I just couldn't stop. 😊

I knew I wanted a suburb because in the “big city” I learned that they’re paid more there. So Clark would’ve had the option to work in Chicago, for example, but he chose Aurora because the kids needed him there, despite the school having less resources. Also, Clark and Marla needed to live near-ish to the school, but not in the same town so that Clark has a long commute by public transportation.

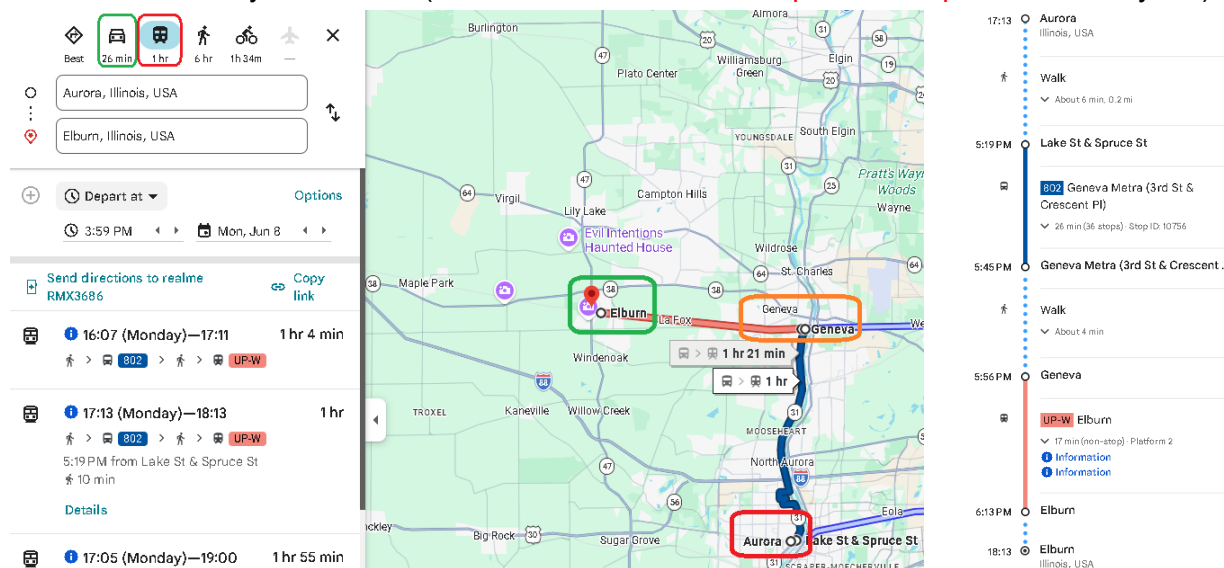
Checking several potential suburbs, the other honorable mentions were:

- Lockhart, Texas
- Placerville, California
- Shelbyville, Tennessee
- Pahrump, Nevada

I eventually decided on Elburn, Illinois, because it had the setup that I needed as I said above.

Remember Clark's 1-hour road of bus ride-wait for train-train ride-walk home (and vice-verse in the morning)? Well... Google maps was my friend in this case. I actually checked his public transportation options, and what I described in the story as his route - is the actual route.

Returning from the school in Aurora, it'd take him a total of **1 hour**, whereas if he took the car - it would take him only **26 minutes** (see the difference between **public transportation** and by **car**):



Also, I literally checked out Elburn's train station and saw that it had a parking lot next to it (where Clark looked at all the cars in the parking lot, but then started walking instead), and that it was about 15-minutes walk from most houses in Elburn:



Man-Bear metaphor

So where did this weird man and bear metaphor come from?

Essentially, the story was about a man who's just been dealing with too much shit in his life, and nowhere to unload that weight off his shoulder. Now, I'm well aware that men are not the only group of people on the planet with shit to deal with. Women have their fair share, and **very valid** shit to deal with. Other minorities and various groups of people do too. This is not to invalidate other people's struggles (don't come at me in the comments, please 😊). However, as a man myself around pretty much the same age as Clark right now - I wanted to shed a spotlight on these types of struggles that men usually face. A lot of times - silently.

I know personally, as I'm sure a lot of guys do as well - what it's like to have life throw one shitbomb after another at you. If you're lucky, you have a good partner that helps you through it, listens to you and actually cares about how you feel. But in many cases - we're conditioned as men to just "suck it up" and keep going somehow.

Having to provide for your family, come to work and get no appreciation for it, work your ass off, only to come home and get yelled at and criticized - that's a whole lot of weight to bear on your shoulders. And that's usually a silent struggle, because again - a lot of us just suck it up and keep going. When I had that moment with my wife sleeping on the couch and somehow had to keep going, then go to work on Monday and just "plow through" - that's where I felt like I'm bearing the weight of the world on my shoulders. And that's what I tried to convey for Clark as well.

Then came Lina. She was there to help Clark break free from his grinding routine. To show him that he doesn't have to bear all that weight alone, and that he can have a partner that actually supports him and lifts him up instead of bringing him down. In the Epilogue we see how life still isn't that easy with the divorce and all, but it's so much easier when he has a girl like Lina to come home to.

Implementing the idea in the story:

It occurred to me that - what better way to have Clark realize this point than have his own student teach *him* that? As part of his job, he has one-on-one sessions, so I decided to use it.

Having the title "What Makes a Man Bear" - it only made sense to me to use the double meaning of the word "bear", as both "carrying weight" and the animal bear. However, I needed something that would make sense. Here I can tell you I *really* dug deep to find the right metaphor. I studied bears' routines, their day-to-day lives, their obstacles, enemies, when they struggle and when they thrive.

Eventually, I landed on two halves to this metaphor that complete each other:

(1) bears need a nourishing ground to flourish and survive the long winter. If the ground is barren - they won't consume enough nutrients. Then, during the winter hibernation - their bodies will literally eat its own muscles to sustain their heart. This was a direct callback to the fact that Clark had nothing in his life that would help me flourish. His job took a huge toll on him, and when he came home - he had nothing to re-energize him. Marla provided nothing but criticism and negativity. She was a barren ground, as Clark said in their breakup scene at the hotel elevator.

(2) the other half is the more subtle fact that - as large and strong as bears are, they can't do it all by themselves. They need someone or something to scratch their backs ("*rub trees*"), or often use other bears for that. It's not just for scratching an itch, but it actually reduces stress hormones in their bodies, and has a whole social effect on their lives. This was Lina. Clark didn't need another person to fight with. As solitary as he learned to be, relying on himself and being this big, strong guy, Clark needed someone to "scratch his back", support him and be there for him. It took him time to realize that his marriage with Marla wasn't healthy for him and that it's not only others who need help. He needs help too.

Lastly, in order to logistically convey this to Clark and have this realization slowly sink in, I needed Evan, his student, to have a very specific disorder, and ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) was perfect for it. It, of course, varies a lot from one person to another, but in general, there are many people who have ASD who obsess over something specific and learn everything that they can about it.

For Evan - his "*thing*" was animals. Evan gradually made his way through the animals until he got to bears, then laid on fact after fact about them in a very direct, cold manner, without needing to spell out the metaphor's meaning to Clark. Only later on would these facts come together for Clark when he saw the "Chicago Bears" sticker on the hotel elevator and realized he's the bear who's been living with a barren ground and needed to seek other ground in order to survive.

This was my first time really doing something so "crafty and poetic" in any of my stories so far. 😊 I hope I got it right and that it came together nicely for you guys when you read it. I'd love to know what you thought of it.

Other “nuggets” in the story

Here are some additional “nuggets” that I thought some of you might find cool to know:

- **Lina's braid**: I've never dealt with hair so far but I learned to appreciate a **thick** hair on a girl. I just find that so attractive and feminine.
- **Aguardiente**: This is a general name for one of the most popular liquor drinks in various parts of Latin America, including Colombia. I wanted something that would make Lina feel like home, which is why I wrote “*Lina took out the half-empty bottle of Aguardiente that she'd brought with her to the U.S. from the liquor cabinet.*” She escaped home, but she also didn't want to detach from it completely, and a part of her was very connected to her roots.
Also, I really didn't want to say a specific brand name and get in trouble with some liquor company 😊
- **Salsa dance**: I'm no pro Salsa-dancer by any means, but I did take quite a few Salsa lessons a while back and learned a few moves. This definitely helped in writing Clark's and Lina's dance scene.
Also, for those of you who know - you might appreciate just what a dirty little trick Lina played on Clark, suggesting she'd teach him the ‘*Closed Hold*’, claiming that ‘*it will just be easiest to learn*’. Usually people start learning ‘*Cuban Style*’. However, the ‘*Closed Hold*’ is much more intimate and the dancers stand much more close to one another, practically almost hugging each other. Exploiting the fact that Clark didn't know any better, Lina opted for the style that would gain her the most physical contact with him and still be able to pass as “teaching”. Lina, you dirty little minx... 😊
- **Clark talking to Emily after returning home after the Salsa dance**: When Clark returned home and just wanted to finally relieve himself after the hot Salsa dance - he met his daughter, Emily. I guess Emily is considered ‘*Gen-alpha*’, and her talking style had to be adjusted accordingly. Words like ‘*straight up*’, ‘*blanked*’ and ‘*cap*’ were used there (seriously, that's not English, and you're not gonna convince me otherwise. You can call me a “boomer”, even though I'm a Millennial. I don't care 😊).
Also - Emily talked about the artist ‘*Sombr*’. I **really** spent **way** too much time researching it, but looking for an artist that (hopefully) was someone ‘gen-alpha's liked - I landed on him. I even learned his backstory, that he used to skateboard, and that his full name is shortened to SMB and that only “real Sombr fans” know these facts. And had Emily scold her dad for saying ‘*Somber*’ instead of ‘*Sombr*’. All intended to make Clark, who just wanted to jerk off after having danced intimately with Lina - suffer and wait as much as possible. Sorry Clark... 😊
- **Marla saying she wanted to sleep in the hotel**: I've been waiting to share this with you. You may call this my own sweet, petty little revenge on my ex 😊

Many years ago my ex-girlfriend and I took a trip to Barcelona. I was looking forward to this trip because, well... she was a virgin, and we'd been dating for... many months by then, without getting intimate. I swear I've been the most understanding and patient boyfriend that I could, didn't pressure her and gave her as much time and space as I could. But it's been a long time, and blue balls are a real thing...

Anyway, a week before our flight she started dropping **heavy** hints of "sexy times" ahead, and I really thought that this trip would be it. That we're finally gonna have sex. And I do mean **heavy** hints on her part. I brought the necessary '*equipment*' with me. After many hours of flight, a lot of rubbing and teasing on her side all the way - we landed, waited for a taxi. While we're waiting, she hugged me tightly, then said the following sentence (quote):

"Baby, I can't wait for us to *finally* get to the hotel... (pause, meaningful gaze for a few seconds) - and **sleeeeeeeeeeeep!!!!!!**", while balling her fists up in the air in a tired motion.

You might understand how crushed and devastated I was at that moment. I would've been ok if it weren't for all those sexual hints she'd dropped before, but she *really* teased me there. The rest of the trip was filled with a lot of blueballs and no sex...

Anyway - I hope she's happy and fulfilled today wherever she is right now. It's been years, no hard feelings on my end (anymore). But this scene was a tribute to her in the worst (and best) possible way I knew how to do it - write. 😊

- **Clark lying on top of Lina's breasts as bouncy beanbags**: I just want to say it out for the record (and tell me if I'm wrong. No, don't tell me. Tell me... I don't know, ahhh!!): I think there's a chance that this is the first time in erotic literature history that a guy was in "this" specific position. Being surrounded by tits, literally *sitting* on them while having sex with the girl riding on top of him. If so - I'm claiming trademark rights 😊 If not then that's fine, I'm not devastated to my core at all. But at the moment of writing it - it suddenly occurred to me that I've been reading erotic, BE-stories for over 20 years and have never encountered *this* exact position. I gotta know. Don't tell me. Tell me, please! 😊
- **Tying loose ends in the Epilogue**: the epilogue was particularly fun to write. It had a much calmer pace, the calm after the storm, and it was the opportunity to tie those loose ends I've been dropping along the way. Starting with the raise that Clark got while being with Lina (after Marla had initially teased him about it). It was also a chance to show what life now looked like for Clark, having Lina by his side, especially with the little things, like how she supports him, appreciates him (i.e., opening the door for her), doesn't need to control him (sitting quietly while he's driving) and so on, and how much peace that brings to both of them. Also, it brought so much drive to Clark to be the best partner to Lina that he could be, showing that a partner doesn't need to use force and control, but love and compassion instead (sorry if I get a little cheesy about it 😊).

And of course, I had to tie the story with the bear metaphor again, now arriving in a very literal sense, with Clark literally bearing the weight of Lina's massive boobs on his shoulders, and saying how this is a weight he's happy to bear.

Summary

I hope you enjoyed this '*Behind the Scenes*' recap. As you may be able to tell by now - this story was personal for me on many levels. I hope this helped make the story feel more real for you guys. I really opened my heart here, so hope you appreciate it 😊

I know this story was a very slow burn, taking at least 9 chapters to get to the juicier stuff. But I also knew I had to make it worth your while. I tried to deliver on the promise and give you as epic a sex scene as possible. Hope you didn't have blue balls like I had with my ex 😊 (or whatever the equivalent of blue balls is for the ladies 😊).

I'd love to know your thoughts (whatever you feel like sharing, of course):

- What resonated with you in the story?
- Did you have any similar experiences as I did that popped into your mind?
- Which scene in the story did you like the most and why?
- What did you think of Lina's initial and final sizes (before and after decompression)?
- How bad did you hate Marla? 😊
- And for the love of god - am I the first or not to write this sex position???

Thank you all ❤️
Commandlz