

The Subordinate

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CHAPTER ONE

She's so tall. She's so much taller than me.

It's difficult to keep that thought from filling my gaze with unwelcome awe as I stare across at her. My bully. No, my *former* bully. I need to remind myself of that. It's been years. Still, I have to fight to keep my eyes narrowed with disinterested contempt, and my voice nothing more than businesslike.

"Ms. Robinson," I say, straightening my back, "what makes you think you'd be suitable for this position?"

Ivy smiles, and her smile goes right through me. I have too many memories of being victim to that smile.

"Ms. Robinson?" she draws. "C'mon, Olive. Is that really necessary?"

I twitch. "This is a job interview. Let's keep things professional."

Ivy shrugs. "Sure."

I pause, waiting for her to answer. My patience breaks first. "Well? What makes you think you'd be suitable?"

"I think you'll find I'm more than qualified," comes her smooth reply.

She's not wrong. It's all on her résumé. For an entry-level position like this, she's an outstanding candidate. When I was scanning through the stack of applications, that jumped out to me almost as much as her name did. Once I double-checked that it was actually her, I considered throwing her application straight into the trash. But I didn't. I had to see

her. Didn't I?

She's in really good shape. Way better shape than me. I bet she works out a lot.

"It's about more than just educational background," I retort, pushing down on that thought. "We take our work ethic very seriously here. You might be expected to work some long hours."

Long, long hours. I can feel the heavy, gray bags hanging under my eyes. None of those on Ivy. She's immaculate, as ever. Tonight will be another late one. I'll have to tell Luna I won't be home for dinner. She won't like that, although I'm sure she's getting used to it.

Maybe I should try harder to work less overtime. But...

"No problem," Ivy assures me. "I work hard. You have my references?"

I do, and they're all utterly hagiographic. Frankly, looking at it on paper, I have no reason to pass Ivy over. Looking at it otherwise, I have every reason. Christ, it'd be an HR disaster waiting to happen.

Her breasts. She's so busty. So much bustier than me. How's that fair? How does that even make sense? Isn't she trans?

I push out my chest. "Well, you'd need to be a team player too. You'd be-" I hesitate. "Ivy, you'd be working under me. For me. You get that, right?"

"Of course." She's unruffled.

"You understand that you'll be my subordinate?"

For the briefest of moments, something glints in her eye. Something that frightens me. It passes. "Oh, yes. I understand perfectly."

"And you're... really OK with that?" I ask.

It's difficult to believe. All through college, she took vindictive pride in having me wrapped around her little finger. I still remember how easily I fell for her. She offered me her hand in friendship whilst the

clique of hyenas she kept around her barely hid their snickers. I was too stupid to realize what was going on. Too socially inept, as always, and too lonely. Too desperate for company.

Before I knew it, I was writing her assignments for her. She didn't need that - she's smart - but she loved that I would. When she was tired after a soccer match, she'd make me rub her feet. And most of all, she'd make me buy things for her. All her meals, drinks at the bar, new clothes... whatever she wanted. Even drugs, I think. She's always been into that scene.

I could have stopped whenever I wanted, I guess. But not really. I wasn't strong enough, and we both knew it. She was in my head, completely and utterly. All my buttons were hers to push. I was intoxicated with Ivy Robinson. Probably, if you'd asked, I would have called her my best friend. Even as she took me to the brink of ruin.

God, I still remember that phone call I made back home, to my parents, asking for a little more allowance. Trying to laugh, trying to play off all my spending casually. Telling them I'd been going out a lot. Socializing. Enjoying myself. Overdoing it a bit. My folks didn't question it too much. If I had to guess, I'd say they were just grateful their quiet, sheltered, weird, nerdy little girl was having a good time in college, not keeping herself cooped up alone like I always had in high school. They were inclined to be indulgent, but that didn't mean my heart wasn't pounding like crazy for the entire call.

Then, after our class graduated from college, it was all just over. Like it was a nightmare I was waking up from. I don't think my heart has ever pounded like that since. Not even with my girlfriend.

Until here. Until now.

What do I look like, to her? I'm still so small everywhere. So mousy. I'm not athletic like her. Do I look just like I used to? Can she see how much I've grown? Can she?

"Why wouldn't I be OK with that?" she's asking me. She's smiling.

What am I supposed to say? "We have some... personal history," I settle on eventually.

She knew she was taking advantage of me. She always knew. I have

no doubt about that.

But Ivy just shrugs. “Water under the bridge,” she replies easily. “I mean, unless you’re not OK with it.”

My heartbeat quickens even more. It’s an offhand comment, but I hear in it something more. A challenge: can I handle her?

Of course I can. All of that was ten years ago now. I’m a grown woman. I have a senior position here. I’m in charge.

“Don’t be silly,” I tell her, and smile. I feel good about being able to say it like that.

“Great!” Ivy beams back at me. “Do you have any more questions for me?”

“I don’t think so,” I reply, checking my notes. “Do you have any questions for us?”

She dials the job-winning smile up another notch. “Just one: when can I start?”

She’s so pretty. God, she’s so pretty. So much prettier than me.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves,” I say stiffly. “There are many other candidates under consideration.”

But none of them are going to stick in my mind like Ivy does. I definitely shouldn’t hire her; that goes without saying. It’s just that there’s genuinely nobody more qualified, and that means if I don’t, I won’t be able to shake the feeling that it was because I’m afraid of her.

I’m not, I tell myself. That would be ridiculous. I know that, but I need to make sure Ivy knows it too.

Anyway, maybe I can take pleasure in it. In having her under my thumb for a change. Bossing her around. Treating her like shit. Making her fetch me coffee. Making her days long and miserable.

Yeah. That doesn’t sound too bad at all. It’s kind of embarrassing how good it sounds, actually. The thought fills me with a girlish thrill I

haven't known since college.

I stand up and offer Ivy my hand. "Well, in any case, you'll hear from us soon."

She nods, rises, smiles politely, and takes my hand. And as we shake, she has this look in her eyes like she already knows what I've decided.

* * *

It's little surprise to me when, after just a few weeks, Ivy is the office darling. The queen bee. She's still an assistant, nominally, but you wouldn't think it from the way they all treat her. None of it challenges professional boundaries, of course. It's simply that they like her, and they want her to like them.

How could they not? Ivy's so striking. She's tall, and the contrast between her dark skin and her platinum-bleached hair makes a statement of her confidence. And she dresses so well - never flashy, just magnificently stylish, in clothes that make little secret of her perfectly-maintained body. It makes me embarrassed of the way I dress each morning, grabbing one of my rote outfits from the closet as I hastily brush my mid-length, plain, brown hair into some semblance of neatness.

Her presence and her popularity itch at me. I was never outgoing in the first place, but now, more and more, I find myself retreating to my little corner office. When the door's shut, nobody disturbs me. One of the privileges of being a manager. It's like my little fortress. While I'm in here, I don't have to think about Ivy. I don't have to think about the contrast between us; about how damn boring my life is, while she's chattering about weekend plans, or about how nobody looks adoringly at me the way they do at her. All I have to do in here is work.

And work. And work, and work, and work. More than ever. The company keeps asking for overtime - it's a crunch period - and I say 'yes' more often than 'no', even though Luna wishes I wouldn't. I've always been like this, a little. Working is one of the few things in life I'm truly good at. It's nice to feel like I have a place. A purpose. An identity. Finding the right balance with that has always been a struggle, but Ivy being here has made it worse. I'm not exactly sure why. It's not career ambition. I think maybe I'm trying to show her up, in a way. Prove I'm

more hard-working. Come in earlier, stay later. Impress her with my dedication.

Not a good way to try and show her up, obviously. Out of sight in my office, behind a door. Just the only way I've got.

Anyway, it's not all bad. There are small pleasures to having Ivy Robinson working as an assistant in my office. She's polite. Deferential, even. She has to be. When I ask her to do things, I get to hear her say 'Yes, Ms. Barnes' in that coffee-smooth voice of hers, and it sends shivers down my spine. It makes me fantasize. And there's such a thrill to the little ritual that plays out each morning, when she knocks at my door and waits to be told to enter so she can set down my coffee on my desk. That's always the moment I'm glad I hired her. Ivy Robinson, my subordinate.

There's that HR disaster waiting to happen.

We don't talk much, outside of functional little work exchanges. It makes sense; I'm no conversationalist. Not until one evening, when she cracks open my door to tell me she's going home. She catches me at the worst time, mid-phone call to my girlfriend.

"Again? Olive, you said you were almost done with this..."

"I know, I know. We were... are. Just... not quite yet."

"They work you too hard, I swear." A little laugh, mostly to conceal the fact that it's not 'them' she's unhappy with.

"Sorry, Luna," I offer eventually.

"It's OK. You... gotta do what you gotta do, right?"

"Yeah."

"We should really do something romantic soon. Something intimate. It's... it's been a while." It sounds like more of an ultimatum than she means it to. "I miss you."

"We will," I offer quickly. "Promise. I miss you too. All this will be over soon. I'm just... well, it's a busy time of year."

“Right.” Another pause. “Well, take care, OK?”

“You too.” I hesitate. “Bye.”

“Bye.”

She hangs up. I sigh - and then see who’s standing in my doorway. I freeze. I wonder how much she overheard.

“I was just about to head home,” Ivy says, entirely professionally. “Working late again, Ms. Barnes?”

“Yeah,” I reply, and end up yawning my way through the word, embarrassingly.

“Oh no.” Ivy frowns. “You work too hard, Olive.”

I’m instantly suspicious, but she sounds so genuine in her sympathy. It seduces me. “I know, I know. I really do.”

“Everyone’s always talking about it.” Now it’s more than an exchange. It’s a conversation. Ivy takes a step into my office. Into my territory. “You’re the most dedicated worker here!”

My heart skips a beat. Is that respect I hear in her voice? Is Ivy Robinson impressed with me? I dare to hope. “Well, I... the higher-ups are depending on me. You know how it is.”

“Of course.” Ivy carefully closes the door behind her. “It’s what I expected, when I started working here! I remember you telling me about that. I was pretty surprised when it turned out to be just another email job.”

I frown. “What do you mean?”

“Oh, I just mean... sure, they always put out those calls for overtime,” Ivy says casually, stepping over toward my desk. “But it’s not like they’re compulsory. Hardly anyone takes them up, except you.”

“Maybe everybody else should start considering it,” I tell her tersely.

“Point taken,” she admits with a laugh. “It just makes me wonder why, you know?”

“I’m a team player, Ivy. A hard worker.” I fold my arms. I can’t resist taking a jab. “Maybe that’s why you’re out there on the floor, and I’m in here with the nice office.”

It doesn’t seem to land. Ivy ignores it. “A hard worker,” she mulls. “A team player. Yeah. Absolutely. Takes me back to college. All those long nights you spent out in the library.”

Doing Ivy’s assignments. That part remains unsaid. I start trembling. It’s been ten years, but suddenly it doesn’t feel like it at all.

“Is this import-“

I start to rebuke her, but then she perches on the edge of my desk, and in doing so, knocks over my stationary. Shifts a few papers, too. She lets out a little ‘oops’, but the look on her face says it’s no big deal.

But it is. At once, it starts to itch at me. My desk is painstakingly arranged. Every paper, every pen, every computer peripheral in its place. It’s how I like it. How I need it. And now it’s all wrong. Everything scattered and strewn. Pencils rolling haphazardly around.

It’s no big deal - not to her, and I wish it wasn’t to me either. I’m instantly upset by the unfairness of it. Why does it have to throw me off this bad?

“Honestly,” Ivy draws, “it’s like you can’t help yourself! You’re not saving up for something big, are you?”

“No,” I blurt out in reply, before I can stop myself indulging her. Her presence is overbearing. Perched on my desk, she looms over me.

An apology is on the tip of my tongue. Why? Why do I want to say sorry? What would I even be apologizing for? For... myself?

“Didn’t think so,” she says. Her amusement is plain. “Wild. It made sense back then. I mean, it’s not like you had anything else to make time for, right? But now you have a girlfriend waiting for you at home. That’s a little sad, Olive.”

“This... this is inappropriate,” I tell her quietly, just barely managing to keep my voice measured. Even saying that is a gargantuan effort. Ivy’s attention is so potent. I can’t quite hate it, even when it’s too much, and her slight but palpable mockery is all it takes to make my head spin.

“I didn’t mean it like that!” Ivy laughs and holds up her hands. “Don’t get me wrong, I’m grateful! Thanks to you pulling these crazy hours, the rest of us get to go home nice and early. You’re doing me a favor.”

“I am?” I squeak. “R-right.”

I didn’t think about it like that. But now I certainly am, and I know instantly I won’t be able to think of it any other way. Why did she have to put it like that? Why did she have to ruin it all for me?

Oh no. It’s happening again, isn’t it? It’s just like before. Nothing’s changed.

“Which, I mean, again, just like college,” Ivy remarks. She smiles. I twitch. I’m trying to marshal my thoughts, but it’s so hard. “Hey, why don’t we go out again sometime? It’ll be like old times. You clearly need to blow off some steam. Maybe spend some of all this overtime pay on some drinks and-“

“Ms. Robinson!” I yell abruptly, bolting to my feet. Ivy looks startled. I’m startled too; I didn’t mean to get angry like this. “This is inappropriate!”

I was this close to saying ‘yes’ to her. That’s what spurred me into action. That old instinct is rusty, perhaps, but it’s still there, oh yes, and everything Ivy said was helping to grease it up. I couldn’t take another word out of her. I’d break.

But that would be unbearable. It would make me the worst, irrecoverably. I’d never be able to forgive myself, and all the anger I’ve ever felt toward Ivy Robinson rose like a tide to save me.

Watching Ivy jump up and flinch back is like a red rag to a bull. I have to give everything not to let it all flow out of me. Everything I’ve been bottling up all these years. That little hint of fear in her face is the ultimate intoxicant. The only way I can keep control is by promising myself that there’s still more satisfaction to be found in holding the

high ground.

“I am your superior,” I tell her sternly. I’ll make her listen. “You are my subordinate. I suggest you take that under consideration when you decide how to speak to me.”

“Woah.” Ivy throws up her hands. There’s still a kind of smirk on her face. I want to wipe it off. “It’s just a little reminiscing, that’s all! I didn’t mean anything by-“

“Enough!” I snap. “Yes, Ivy, you did. We both know it. Well, guess what? This isn’t college anymore. Grow up. I have.”

There’s a sudden, terrible darkening of Ivy’s face. It cuts through my anger. I’ve seen that look before. It’s the one she gets whenever she hears ‘no’.

“Be careful, Olive,” Ivy warns, her voice low, silky. “Why don’t you lower your voice? You wouldn’t want anyone to overhear us, would you?”

She’s wrong. I don’t care. Let them all hear. I want them to hear this bully getting put in her place. “That’s Ms. Barnes to you, Ivy. And if I have to remind you again, you’ll be looking for another job.”

Ivy stares daggers at me. I’m terrible with eye contact, but just this once, I push myself to my limit. I stare back at her, even though it makes me twitch a little.

When she blinks, I feel like a god.

“Of course.” Ivy nods her head submissively. “I’m sorry, Ms. Barnes.”

I want to smile and cheer and rub it in her face. Instead, I just keep staring. “Now get out.”

With that, I’m treated to the sight of the tall, busty, muscular, beautiful Ivy Robinson turning her back and fleeing out of my office. I can all but see the tail between her legs. Once she closes the door behind her, like she knows I want, the smile comes to my face. No, more than just a smile. A giddy, stupid, girlish grin I don’t think I’ve ever felt before. My hands are shaking up and down, overcome with the energy of the moment. I can’t stand still.

I did it. I beat her. I won.

Nothing could be more vindicating. Suddenly every single decision that led me here feels like the thread of destiny. It's perfect. All of it.

And its glow keeps me warm even as I sit back down, fix my desk, and prepare myself for the long, lonely night ahead.

By the next morning, the glow has faded and curdled into trepidation. I have to see Ivy again. My rattled nerves tell me that she'll have found some way to rally herself. To turn the tables once more, in the little psychological war between us. I'm far from best prepared for it. In the end, I crawled home for barely six hours of meager sleep. I barely got to speak to Luna.

When Ivy does make her appearance - not early, but certainly not late - my fears are banished. She's dressed a touch more modestly than usual - black slacks, a plain blouse that buttons up very high - and she knocks on my door so meekly I don't realize it's her at first.

"Good morning, Ms. Barnes," she says politely. "Your morning coffee."

"Thank you."

My eyes widen slightly as she sets it carefully down on the corner of my desk. It's not the usual stuff from the shitty machine in the break room. I don't recognize the cup, but the aroma tells me that it's good. Pricey, I have to imagine.

"I thought you deserved something a bit nicer than instant," Ivy says in answer to my questioning look. "Since you've been working so hard."

Nothing on earth could keep my face from lighting up. At once, I get it: this is a peace offering. No, better. It's tribute. She wants to get on my good side.

And why shouldn't she? I'm Ivy's boss. I gave her this job, and I can take it away. She's in the palm of my hand. *My* hand. After all this time. Fuck, it feels better than I'd ever imagined.

Ivy's watching me expectantly, and I don't even mind that she's seeing me with such a stupid, goofy grin on my face. Like I'm a kid opening her birthday presents while all her friends have to sit at the table and watch. Her watching is fine by me. I want to savor the moment, and I want her to marinate in it. So, I reach for the cup and drink. I hope Ivy will look relieved when she sees I'm enjoying it.

The flavor is wrong. It doesn't match the aroma. The coffee is pleasant, but chasing on its heels is an aftertaste that's faintly but unpleasantly chemical. Some kind of artificial sweetener? There's no way it's deliberate. If Ivy Robinson is lowering herself to bringing me a shitty cup of coffee as petty revenge, I've won by even more than I'd thought. Maybe it's an acquired taste. In any case, it's not that bad, and I really do need the caffeine. I drink more.

"How do you like it?" Ivy asks after a moment.

"It's good," I reply at first, reflexively, but the chemical taste is sticking in my mouth. I frown. Maybe I should just send her to get something from the machine. "It's a bit..."

I look down at the cup and see two of them.

Two... cups?

No.

Double vision?

Why does it take me so long to think of that?

I'm so slow.

But then Ivy steps up to my desk, and she's not slow at all. She's quick and pretty and tall, taller than ever, and strong, and I can't tell if there's two of her, or five, or a dozen, or a hundred.

"Drink up, Olive," she instructs.

And I do. I don't want to, but I do. Ivy's command is a weight on my back, one so much greater than I can bear. I sink to it. I bring the cup to my lips, slowly and clumsily, and slurp more of the coffee.

“Why does it taste like that?” I ask absently.

Why did I ask something so stupid?

There are a dozen more pressing questions I should be asking, but when I reach out for one, it slips through my fingers. Only the dull chemical taste in my mouth remains.

Stupid.

All the same, I look blearily up at Ivy for an explanation.

“Because it’s drugged,” Ivy tells me. “I put something in it on the way here. Something I got from a friend of a friend. I don’t think it has a street name yet. But it’s very strong.”

It’s... strong?

No, wait.

That’s not the important part.

But it’s so hard to tell, when everyone she’s saying is twinned too.

Echoing itself. Layering. Obliterating all sense.

“D... drugged?” I manage. The words ooze from my mouth.

I say them before I even remember what that means.

“Yeah.” Ivy is standing right next to me now. Above me. I look up, and the ceiling light behind her head forms a halo. It hurts to look at. “More specifically, you’re being put in a nice, calm, suggestible state. People have been using this to relax, but I have my own ideas about the kind of fun we can have with it.”

“Fun...” I echo dumbly. “R-relax?”

I smile, at first. That sounds nice.

Then I pull Ivy’s words apart, and the rest catches up with me.

“Sug... suggestible?” It takes two tries. The first time, my mouth ends up mangling the word. It’s like I’m drunk.

“That’s right. You know what that means, don’t you?” Condescension drips like overflowing venom from Ivy’s perfect lips. Yesterday, that would have made me angry. Today, it just makes me feel small. “It’s like... it’s like your mind is the kind of foam that holds its shape perfectly when you press into it. You know?”

Like... foam? I’m like foam?

I shake my head. Analogies are beyond me now.

Why? Why am I so stupid?

It must be the coffee. The drug.

That’s right. I’m drugged. Ivy drugged me. I almost forgot.

She laughs at my plight. “Don’t worry about it,” she says. That’s all it takes to quiet my mind. I can’t go against her. “You’ll see, soon enough. See, we need to have a little chat, Olive.”

I’m drugged. That thought is finally starting to stick.

That’s bad, right?

Out of the corner of my eye, I can see the door. It’s closed. Ivy must have closed it.

Is anyone coming to help me?

No. No way.

I could call out. Couldn’t I?

No. I can’t muster the will.

“I did a lot of thinking after I went home last night,” Ivy explains. Her voice isn’t loud, but it *feels* loud. Inside my head, it’s a cavernous, deafening sound. “About what we were talking about, Olive. Until you cut

me off. That was very rude of you. Very rude.”

She says that with singular emphasis - and it hits me like a wave.

Rude. Very rude.

I cringe at myself as that conviction takes form.

I was rude. I shouldn't be rude.

My wet lips shiver as they strain to form an apology. Ivy's curl upwards. She can see the effect she's having on me.

“All I was really getting at was: where's the fun in your life, Olive?” Ivy asks. “The joy? The spark? When I took this job, I was curious to see how you'd turned out. But what's there to see? You overwork yourself, day after day, in here, at this boring office job. You barely talk to anyone. You have a girlfriend at home that you barely see. I'd have guessed a lot of things for you, but not that you'd wind up this pathetic.”

I cringe and shrink back. Not from her words; no, when she speaks quickly like that, it's all just meaningless sound.

I shrink from her tone. That serrated contempt that bites deep into me. I have no defense against it. My ego has been broken open. Ivy is pouring into it.

Her last word, though. That resounds.

Pathetic.

I whimper. Pathetic. It's what I am.

“At first, I was confused,” Ivy goes on. “What makes you live like this, Olive? What makes you tick? But then I figured it out.”

I'm gasping like a fish.

She figured it out.

Figured... what?

Me?

Suddenly, it's like I'm barely here. Like I have no substance at all. Ivy can see right through me.

"Oh, don't look so scared," Ivy admonishes. "I'm gonna help you out. We're old friends, right? And that's just what friends do."

Friends. Yes.

I relax. We're friends.

And she'll... help? That's so kind.

I soften. I exhale. The part of me that would normally see how insincere Ivy is has been smothered by her drug. Instead, I'm filled with naive, childlike gratitude.

Oh. That's right. I've been drugged. She drugged me. I almost forgot.

"Thank you, Ivy," I sigh fondly.

She laughs a little at that. "First things first," Ivy says, fixing her gaze on me. "Let's get something very important straight: I am superior to you, Olive."

Her pronouncement is slow. Deliberate. She's letting me drink in every word. Letting me absorb their meaning. Stew in their tremendous force.

Superior?

I feel it. Right away. Superior. Inferior. Just look at us. Look at her. So pretty, so tall, so strong. It's only natural.

It certainly comes naturally to me.

"Y-you're..." I babble. "S-superior?"

Ivy repeats it. Her words are like nails into my skull. "I am superior to you."

Superior.

What does that mean?

It's like something someone would say as a joke. But Ivy isn't joking. And since she's so completely and utterly sincere, my mind starts grappling with the task of absorbing her words as my new truth.

Superior. It's such a big word. So encapsulating. My mind starts to race with the implications.

It's one thing for someone to be better than you at something, or higher up in the company, or something like that. But superior? That's something greater. It transcends any particulars. She is simply superior, and I am simply inferior. That's a fixed point in our lives now. A guiding star. Something I can always look to. Something I can always know.

That way of thinking comes so easily for me. It's not just the drug. It's the fact that it's just like riding a bicycle. It's an old groove, easy to find once more, despite all the intervening years.

Superior. Inferior.

But then I learn that I'm not defenseless. Not quite. There it is again. That anger. It might not be enough to throw off the drug, but it proves to be enough to pierce the soporific veil it's put over me. At least for a moment.

I can't go back to that. To being inferior. I can't.

"N-no," I bleat. "I'm n-not."

Ivy raises an eyebrow. "You're not? Not what?"

"Not..." my voice trembles. Fighting her is so hard. "N-not inferior."

Ivy laughs again, this time incredulously. Like my defiance impresses her. But she refuses me even a moment of indulgence.

"Olive," she sings, "look at me, babe."

I can't resist two thoughts at once, so I look right at her, as close as I

dare. Long practice has taught me how to fix my gaze just below someone's eyes, sparing me direct contact.

"No, no, no," Ivy chides. "Look at me. Properly."

All of a sudden, her hand is on my chin. She grips it mercilessly. Her strength feels infinite as, between that and her words, she compels me to look directly into her eyes.

I start twitching. I'm not good with this. I'm really not good with this. And she knows it.

"You see?" Ivy coos, and her words are as soft as silk, threads pulling tight around me. "You can't even look me in the eye. Can you?"

I can't.

She relaxes her grip enough to let me shake my head. Maybe she makes me shake it. I can't tell.

"Can't even look a woman like me in the eye," Ivy mocks. "How can you say you're not inferior?"

How can I?

I...

Can't. The words won't come.

Her simple, brute demonstration has crushed whatever flickering spark of resistance had briefly flared. I could summon it again, but then I'd have to keep looking. I can't handle that. It's already unbearable. Her eyes are too sharp. They pierce me too deep.

"You can't," Ivy tells me. It's a fact. More true than ever, now that it's passed her lips. "Say it."

"I can't," I repeat dully.

She rolls her eyes. "Not that, idiot. That I'm superior."

"Oh." My head spins briefly as I reel from my mistake. I'm an idiot.

“You’re superior.”

She’s superior.

Instantly, it’s worse

Ivy was already taller, but now she towers over me. She was already hotter and stronger, but now she’s a goddess. The light behind her head was already bright; now it’s blinding, and it’s inside her, in her eyes and pouring out of her mouth as she speaks.

I’m lost to it.

“And...” she prompts, waiting for me to make the connection, before she realizes I’m way too fucked up for that. “You’re inferior.”

I nod. Even I can figure that out.

“I’m inferior,” I echo.

I am. It’s true.

I’m inferior.

Within an instant, that’s etched into every fiber of my being. Only, wasn’t it already? Wasn’t it always? When Ivy tells me that, it’s like connecting the last bit of a circuit. The Christmas tree inside me is lighting up.

Yes. I’m inferior.

And it’s so... comfortable.

How many times have I said that to myself over the years, inside my head or at the mirror? But now it’s more real than ever. Now there’s no doubt about it.

I’m inferior.

I’m inferior to Ivy Robinson.

She’s the one who puts me in my place.

“I’m taller,” Ivy pronounces slowly. Heavily. Letting each quality sink in. “Stronger. Hotter. Smarter. More confident. More sociable. More competent. More dominant. Superior.”

They build and build. My eyes widen, even though it hurts. They’re full of awe.

Stronger. Hotter. Smarter. Superior.

“Yes,” I whimper, because what else can do I for such a superior woman but agree? “Yes.”

“I’m so glad you get it.” Ivy releases me and turns away. Finally, I can breathe a little easier. Facing her is like being in the eye of the storm. I blink my eyes, grateful - pathetically grateful - for the respite. “Because that’s the key, really. To everything about you.”

That’s the key?

What is?

I don’t understand. It must be because I’m so inferior.

So stupid.

But that’s OK. I know Ivy will enlighten me.

“It’s like...” she pauses, considering, surely, how best to dumb down the concept for someone like me. “It’s like how, at a sports game, there are players and there are spectators. Both of them are having fun, but only players get to *do*. Spectators just get to *watch*. That’s you, Olive. You’re a spectator.”

Naturally, I nod. My mind is like the desert soil. Cracked, dry, parched. Eager to drink deep of whatever it’s fed. I absorb it all.

A spectator.

I just get to watch.

That’s right. That makes sense. I’m inferior, after all.

It hurts too, of course. What Ivy tells me digs into a wound that, in a way, has always been open. Since college, since high school, since before. But that doesn't mean I'm resisting. My resistance has already been broken.

"That's how you were in college, after all," Ivy goes on. "My little spectator. Always watching. Always hanging on. Living vicariously, through me - because that's simply the best you can do. That was exactly where you belonged."

Exactly where I belonged.

I'm caught up in the terrible flow of her words now. It's getting easier to follow, as my fragile self-esteem buckles and bends to Ivy's will.

It's where I belonged. Her spectator.

The notion feels so poisonously right. Didn't I always enjoy it, a little? Ivy bullied me, yes, but there was a certain pleasure in being her hanger-on. I loved the little kiss of glamor it gave me. Made me seem progressive, too. And like there was more to me than just being some bookish, anti-social nerd.

I can't tell if that's the drug talking, or just me.

But if it wasn't true before, it is now. My memories are already softening in their haste to conform to Ivy's decrees. In my mind's eye, those college days are already turning rosy and warm as a sickly kind of comfort colors them.

Yes, it was a shame that I couldn't be a player. Couldn't be like Ivy.

But at least she let me watch.

It's where I belonged.

"Poor thing." The faux-sympathy in Ivy's voice makes me feel smaller still. "You've been lost without me, haven't you? But don't worry. I'm here now. I'll give you something to latch on to."

To latch on to.

It makes sense. That's just what I need. A spectator like me. I need to live through Ivy.

I'm so grateful.

"I'm going to help you enjoy life," Ivy draws. Her face twists gleefully. "But I'm going to do it by taking away everything you have. Everything you're too pathetic to enjoy properly by yourself. And you're going to thank me for it."

"Thank you," I whisper at once.

Of course I'll thank her.

I'd do anything for Ivy. My thanks are the least I have to give.

There's a pit in my stomach, put there by insult piled atop insult, but a growing sense of anticipation takes the edge off the pain. I can't wait for what Ivy's going to do.

"Let me see." Ivy glances around my office. She's wondering where to start. "I wonder how many nights you spend in here. Working hard, when you could be doing anything else instead - if you weren't such a loser. It sounds miserable. But I guess you must have a little fun when nobody else is watching, right?"

I must?

I frown, confused. I want to say yes, to please her, but my sluggish mind can't grasp what she's referring to.

"Oh, you know." Ivy laughs at my baffled look. "I can just picture you sitting behind your desk, late at night, hand shoved down your boring panties."

Shoved down my panties?

What does that mean?

Once it hits me, I blush deep. I really do want to agree with her, but telling the truth to my superior seems more important.

"N-no!" I pant. "I... never... I couldn't!"

Ivy snorts mockingly. "Guess a private office is wasted on you, then. Time to start, Olive. Right now."

"W-what?"

My blush deepens as I'm stained through with shame at the very thought, but that doesn't stop my hand from twitching downward, guided by Ivy's command. She is utterly in control of me.

"Go on," Ivy urges. "Do it. Touch yourself."

The way she looks at me is at once lurid and dispassionate. It's the way you'd stare at a particularly interesting bug before you swat it away. Those eyes leave me no room to squirm out of this. Already, my hands are fumbling clumsily with the hem of my pants.

But it doesn't make sense.

There's something missing.

"But..." I'm not so much protesting as questioning. "But, what..."

That's it. I'm not aroused. That's why this is so strange.

Ivy senses it at once. And she grins at me as she says: "Just look at me."

It's simultaneously a command and an explanation. She wants me to look at her, and so I do. But my chemically-shattered brain takes it another way.

Look at her.

Ivy is pretty. Hot. Tall. Strong. Superior.

No wonder I'm touching myself.

Now the arousal comes. I find that I'm wet and desperately sensitive. It's been a long time since I've had any gratification in that department.

Longer than I'd care to admit. Sex just isn't a big part of my life. I've never had much of a sex drive.

But I sure do now.

Within moments, I'm frantically rubbing at myself, letting out choked gasps of pleasure as my back arches. Maybe it's the drug. Maybe that's why this is so intense.

Or maybe it's just her.

I'm looking at Ivy the way I've never looked at another woman before, with the shameless, rabid gaze of a pervert. My bulging, bloodshot eyes flick back and forth across her body, seeking out details to make the object of my lust.

Her tits. Her waist. Her ass. Her face, her lips, her tongue. Her legs. Even her height, her strength, her makeup. All of it dazzles me. All of it arouses me like nothing ever has. I can feel the rabid heat Ivy's inflicted on me dumbing me down. Making my thoughts lewd and coarse. Warping me to fit her shape.

"See?" Ivy says casually. "This is what I do to you."

This is what she does to me.

That makes sense, doesn't it? She's so superior to me. Every part of her I look at isn't just a source of arousal. It's a point of comparison. And everywhere, I come up short.

It's a double-edged sword. But the gnawing insecurity just spurs me on.

This is right. This is how I belong. A spectator. Inferior.

"Yeah." Ivy sighs fondly. Pleased with her handiwork. "This is so you, Olive. Locked up in your office, getting yourself off under your desk, while everyone else is out having fun. I bet you do it all the time."

I don't - but I do now. Her words make it a part of my being.

I nod furiously.

“You know, there’s something else about this drug I should probably mention,” Ivy adds. “It makes it very, very easy to form psychological connections. To make sure your wires get crossed, so to speak. Especially when there’s a source of pleasure involved.”

Now that I’m busy fucking myself stupid, it takes me even longer to process that. Once I do, I realize the danger. I should stop. Right now.

I can’t.

She hasn’t told me to stop.

It feels too good.

“I’m actually priming you for it just by telling you that,” Ivy throws out. “And with that in mind, since we’ve established that you can’t get any real use out of all that overtime pay you’re earning, let’s give you a new way to enjoy it.”

Ivy reaches for my phone, set down on my desk. She holds it up to my face, letting the recognition software unlock it. She starts scrolling through apps. She finds what she’s looking for. She’s tapping the screen. Typing.

I don’t stop her. I don’t even consider it. This is my place. Watching. A woman like Ivy can do whatever she wants.

“Here.” After a moment, Ivy shows me my phone with a flourish. “This is what you’re going to do.”

It takes a long moment for my eyes to focus on the screen, especially with my fingers still in my cunt. Once they do, I see that it’s my payment app and that Ivy has set up a transaction from my account to hers. To send her my money.

And the sum is eye-watering. In the hundreds.

Disobeying Ivy is unthinkable, but going through with this is just as impossible to conceive of. How many hours of hard, boring, thankless work does that sum of money represent? Admittedly, it’s not set aside for anything in particular, but seeing my bank balance grow and grow has

always been a source of satisfaction. It's made it all make sense - all my hard work, all the overtime.

If I just give it to Ivy, just because she tells me to, then what was it all for?

"Don't worry," she promises. "I'll spend it better than you could."

I shiver.

That's right. She'll spend it better.

She's superior.

"And this is just the first installment," Ivy adds. "You're going to start putting in even more overtime from now on." She licks her lips. "Go ahead. Press it."

The app needs my touch to authenticate the transaction. My fingerprint. A security measure. My free hand is already reaching out, helpless to fight Ivy's superior will.

My other hand is, of course, still buried between my legs. Any protests I might hope to make, any questions I might hope to ask, all of them dissolve into pathetic moaning. The yawning anxiety I feel about giving Ivy all my money melds with my arousal, becoming something greater than either individual emotion. Something sharp-edged that bites deep into my psyche, making my heart pound and pump me full of adrenaline. Something that fills me with a thrill I haven't known since college.

To my drug-addled mind, it's confirmation.

Ivy, my new god, is in her heaven. All is right with the world.

And so I smile as I reach out and press my quivering fingertip to the touchscreen.

In an instant, the transaction is done. It cannot be undone. All that money, gone. Given. Tributed.

To her. To Ivy.

My stomach drops. I feel like I'm in freefall. The pleasure has never been greater. My fingers are furious as they plunge in and out of my cunt. When I look at Ivy, I see stars.

Ivy checks the phone screen and grins. I can already see that this isn't satisfaction, for her. It's not the end. This is just the beginning. Then she looks at me and spits the command that seals my fate, searing my newly-formed fetish for financial domination into my every brain cell.

“Cum.”

CHAPTER TWO

All I need to do is reestablish professional boundaries.

When I put it like that, it sounds simple. Clinical. Routine. That's good. I can do simple, and clinical, and routine. That's exactly what I need after yesterday.

After yesterday...

I don't remember what happened. Not exactly. I remember Ivy bringing me my morning coffee, and then it's just a blur. When I peer into my memories, it's indistinct. Like paint going down the drain. But I remember Ivy said some things, and I remember I did some things. Humiliating things.

I'm glad to be riding the elevator up to the office alone. There's nobody here to see me blush.

As far as I can tell, I spent the rest of the day in a haze. It was like I was out of myself, out of my own body, watching from the other side of a screen. Unable to take control. Unable to do anything at all to keep myself from working far, far too late. Eventually—maybe just out of habit—I left the office and headed home, zombie-like. Luna, my girlfriend, hadn't been pleased. We talked, but not really. She did all the talking.

For the entire day, I was just a spectator. For some reason, that specific word sends a throbbing shiver down my spine.

Waking up clear-headed this morning had brought back all the shame, clear and sharp like ice, even as the memories stole away. I considered calling in sick, but that would have felt too much like

running away. I can't do that.

This is my life. Mine. Ivy might have controlled me once, years ago, but I won't let it happen again. Not again. Not again.

That's the other half of my refrain, as the elevator door opens and I step out into the office. Not again. All I need to do is reestablish professional boundaries.

Then I see her. I freeze.

More than ever, Ivy is a queen holding court. As usual, there's a gaggle of women standing around one of the desks, chatting, catching up, as they wait for the workday to kick into motion. This time, it's Ivy's desk. She's at the heart of it, and I recognize all too well the fawning, sycophantic looks on their faces as they bend at her, and coo, and giggle.

It's just like college.

That singular thought churns my stomach. I just stand there, stupidly, watching. The coward part of me starts suggesting: why not do it later? I could call her into my office. That would be easier—except it wouldn't, not at all. As much as I don't like crowds, I do need witnesses. Just in case Ivy does... something.

Then, after a moment, it strikes. It isn't just like college. It's like high school too. I'm on the outside looking in. Watching forlornly as another group of girls chats.

"Hello, Olive," Ivy says, looking up. She's neither surprised nor concerned to see me. I don't panic the way I feared. I just feel myself growing smaller as I slip under her gaze. "Good morning."

"Ivy." My voice is shaky. It's hard to talk while some of the other office girls are giggling at Ivy's informality with me. To them, it's daring—but innocent. To me, it's anything but. "I... um... there's something—"

"Oh, hey, chief," says one of the other girls. Amanda. She doesn't mean to interrupt. She probably didn't notice I was talking. "We were just checking out Ivy's new watch! Ivy, show her."

With a wordless smile, Ivy lifts her hand and lets me see what's on

her wrist.

It's fancy. Luxury, I presume, although I don't know watches. The brand—Cartier—means nothing to me. It's nice, anyone could see that. But that's not what gets me. What gets me is that it's new, and that, with all that gold, it's plainly very, very expensive.

Beads of incriminating sweat form on my forehead.

"Isn't it lovely?" Amanda prompts.

"Y-y-yes, lovely," I stammer.

"I can't believe you could afford something like this," another girl admired. "Was it a gift?"

Ivy is turning her hand this way and that, letting me admire the watch from all angles. I'm all but hypnotized by it.

"Something like that," Ivy remarks. That all but confirms my suspicions.

I paid for this watch. Last night, with the money I sent to her. Until this moment, I hadn't been sure it had really happened.

While I'm stewing in unfathomable emotion, the girls gathering around Ivy are just making adoring little noises. "Lucky!" one of them says. "From family?"

"Nope," Ivy replies. She just keeps looking straight at me. It's unmaking me. Why are my cheeks so hot?

"A lover?" another guesses.

The mirth in Ivy's voice is merciless. "Absolutely not."

I'm lucky that all my coworkers are too busy fawning over Ivy and her watch to register the utterly stupid, stunned, humiliated look on my face. I'm offended, of course. Ivy is shamelessly flaunting the money she... stole? Took. Took from me. The sheer audacity is staggering. I'm forced to quietly pray and plead that Ivy doesn't tell all the other girls just where that money came from. I would never live down the

reputation it would give me.

I hate it. I *should* hate it. And yet.

Why am I so wet I can already feel the dark stain forming on my panties?

The sense of violation is transmuted in my stomach, becoming a nauseous, queasy thrill that sets me hopelessly off-balance. It's like I'm falling, and falling, and falling, and I can't stop. Maybe I don't want to stop. Sometimes, when you're standing on a balcony or at the edge of a tall rooftop, you feel this paradoxical urge to throw yourself into the open air and let gravity take you. This is just the same. One of the reasons I can't speak is that I have to bite down on my tongue, or else I might find myself offering Ivy even more.

Why? Why would I do that? Why would I want that?

Because Ivy deserves it.

I can't explain the answer. But it is *the* answer. She deserves it. And I don't.

The whimper that escapes my throat can't be heard over the ambient conversation going on in the office.

"Something wrong, Olive?" Ivy asks. She knows. "You look a little peaky."

"I'm f-f-fine." I don't sound it. I have to remind myself. Not again. "Ivy, I... I need to speak with you."

"Of course," Ivy replies, unperturbed. "In your office?"

"No!" I blurt out. I need the safety of the crowd. "Here is fine. I, um..."

I pause. Where to begin? I rehearsed what I was going to say a dozen times in the mirror, but not the start. Why didn't I practice the start?

"Perhaps you wanted to follow up on the conversation we had yesterday?" Ivy suggests sweetly.

“N-no.” I pale. “No, that’s, um...”

Everyone is looking at me. Why does everyone have to look at me? It’s not fair. I can’t take it. I try to look down, but Ivy’s watch catches my eye instead. It’s so bright. All that gold. Gold has never really suited me—but it certainly suits her, with her height, and her immaculate makeup, and her rich, dark skin. She’s so glamorous. So graceful. I could never be those things.

She’s so much better than me. That’s why I pay for her to be glamorous instead.

Pleasure throbs from between my legs. I almost moan.

“I-I-In my office!” I cave. “Yes. Yes, that’s... fine. Um.”

I need it, it turns out. The safety and privacy of that familiar space.

Waving a quick goodbye to the other girls, Ivy follows me inside. I shut the door. In my office I do, indeed, feel safer. Stronger. Even if being in such close quarters with Ivy is almost painfully distracting. I draw a deep breath.

“Yesterday,” I begin, launching into my spiel without prelude. “What happened between us was entirely u-untoward. I won’t... um... that is, ideally, there’s no need for us to involve anyone else, but I think it’s important that we put an end to... to whatever that was. For the sake of professional boundaries.”

I sound just like a kid on the first day of school. It’s pathetic, and Ivy knows it. Her amusement and disapproval are like hot smoke on my skin, itching at me. She lets me stew in it for a beat.

“Or what?” she says eventually.

I clench my eyes shut for a moment. I was hoping she’d simply agree, but I’d prepared for this.

“Or,” I recite calmly, “I’m prepared to raise this matter with HR.”

It’s my killer threat. And after a moment, Ivy just laughs in my face.

“You’ll go to HR?” she mocks. “Olive, Olive, Olive. You really didn’t think that one through, did you?”

Suddenly I feel so small. How can she do that to me? I’m not small. I’m not inferior. I’m not.

“W-what are you talking about?” I demand.

“You’ll go to HR and tell them... what, exactly?” Ivy asks.

Already, I’m deflating. “I’ll tell them exactly what happened,” I bluster. “That you... that you coerced me into t-that transfer. The watch! It’s evidence, even. I-“

“Is that right?” Ivy interrupts. “You’ll tell them that I, your employee and new hire, was bringing you coffee in the morning, and then you started touching yourself in front of me. You’ll tell them that?”

My cheeks turn the deepest red. It wasn’t like that! Was it? I don’t remember. The coffee. Wasn’t there something about the coffee?

“B-but the watch,” I protest. “It-“

“And tried to bribe me into silence, too,” Ivy laughs. “Wonderful story, Olive. Shall we go right now?”

It’s at that moment that I realize just how deeply, awfully powerless I am.

“No.” I slump. It feels almost natural, in front of her.

“Good,” Ivy purrs. “I’m glad we’ve put an end to that stupidity.”

My cheeks burn. Stupidity. Yes. How didn’t I see it? I feel like a child again, trying to stand up for myself. Failing.

Ivy knows best.

It’s only natural. I’m inferior.

“And when I was being so nice to you!” Ivy adds, before I can interrogate where that particular thought stems from. “Look. I even

brought you coffee again.”

She gestures, and I turn to my desk. Sure enough, right there, in front of my computer, there’s a cup of coffee. It’s just the same as it was yesterday. That, more than anything, activates my fight-or-flight urge.

Ivy’s lips are thin, as she smiles. “Drink up,” she instructs.

I tremble. I shouldn’t. I know that much, even if the reason eludes me. “Maybe later,” I say feebly.

“Now.”

Being chastened like that makes me shiver. Again, it’s that child-feeling. The scorn in Ivy’s voice hits me the same way the watch on her wrist does. It feels bad, but my body yields to it willingly. Eagerly.

I could try to disobey, but what would be the point? Ivy’s already taught me how that goes.

As calmly as I can manage, I sit down at my desk and take a sip of the coffee. It tastes off, in an eerily familiar way.

“More than that.” I can tell Ivy is growing tired of my petty little rebellions. I should have known better than to think she’d be satisfied so easily. “Drink up properly, Olive.”

She sounds like a school teacher. I take a big mouthful of the coffee and drink it down with a gulp.

Just a few moments later, the world around me slows to a crawl.

The sensation is familiar, this time, and that déjà vu brings back with it the dawning horror of everything that happened before. I remember it now, in detail. Once it’s too late.

The drug.

Already, I’m too skullfucked to even articulate my dread. I just look at Ivy, stunned, opening and closing my mouth like a fish. My double-vision splits her lopsided, smirking grin into two shapes, linking at the end, an impossibly wide crescent moon of cruelty.

“That’s better,” Ivy simpers. “Isn’t that better, Olive?”

It’s better.

I’m nodding before even one of my slow, small thoughts has crawled across my mind.

It’s better. It must be.

Ivy says so. Reassured by that, I sit back. I smile. It’s easy to smile. This is better.

Then, after a few long moments, I remember that there was a question.

“Y-yeah,” I sigh dreamily.

“Of course it is,” Ivy laughs. “You’re certainly much better this way. Much more manageable. It’s the way you belong, Olive.”

It’s the way I belong.

That’s good. That’s nice.

It’s... what?

Drugged?

Yeah. Yes. There was a drug. I remember now.

I’m supposed to fight it. At least, I think so. I remember impressing something like that on myself. But it sounds so futile. My physiology is succumbing even quicker than before.

Oh well. It’s the way I belong.

“But I think we have a problem, Olive,” Ivy says lazily. “You still don’t seem to understand your place.”

My... place?

It's right here, isn't it?

This is my office. My desk. So this is my place.

I don't... understand?

What don't I understand?

In my ignorance, I feel small and weak. Ivy is anything but.

"What..." I slur. "What's... my place?"

Ivy smiles. She's pleased I need to ask her. "Look at this."

She raises her hand, presenting her new watch for me to see. In truth, she didn't need to tell me to look. The way the light glints off the gold catches my eyes instantly. It's almost childish, really. I can't seem to look away from something so shiny.

But of course, that's not the only reason I'm instantly fascinated.

"You paid for this," Ivy tells me simply.

The confirmation almost brings me to moaning. Hearing it like that, from Ivy's lips, makes it more real than real.

I paid for this.

Fuck. That's so hot. Fuck.

I can't process why. Between the drug and the need, I'm overwhelmed. I just know nothing has ever been so potent.

I paid for this. For her.

"You know what's funny?" Ivy asks as she turns her hand over. "Let me ask you something: why haven't you ever bought a watch like this?"

Why... haven't I?

A watch. Yes. A watch like... what?

I don't know anything about watches.

Maybe that's the reason. Is that the reason?

I don't know. I just know it never occurred to me.

"You could have," Ivy reminds me. "You have the money."

I don't bother trying to think. It's easier not to. I know Ivy will serve up the truth for me on a silver platter.

"You didn't," Ivy says, "because you don't deserve things like this."

I don't?

I don't. That settles on me, and it settles heavy.

I don't deserve things like Ivy's watch.

But she does. Even I can make that connection.

"You don't deserve nice things," Ivy whispers. Pouring more poison in my ear. I know it for what it is. I just can't fight it.

It feels right.

Yes. That's right. I don't deserve nice things.

A little voice in me wants to argue. It wants to tell me I do. Isn't this what I work so hard for? To afford things? To buy the kind of life I want?

Another voice rises, and says the opposite. I work so hard because that's what I deserve. Not the nice things. The work. And Ivy's just the opposite.

"But," Ivy confirms, just as I'm reaching the thought. "I do."

I nod, as her words become part of me.

"I deserve them," Ivy continues. "Because I'm better than you."

I nod faster. I'm greedy for it. Her truth.

"Because I'm superior."

And because I'm inferior.

She's a player. She gets to play life. To enjoy it. I'm a spectator. I work. I watch. That's all.

A big, dumb grin comes to my face as I figure it out. As all the different things Ivy has put in my head start to join up, forming a unified, twisted ideology. I'm like a little girl, pleased as punch because I finally figured out the dumb little puzzle the teacher gave me to solve.

"You..." I say—slowly, but I'm pushing myself. I want to show Ivy I figured it out first. I want her approval, even now. I guess I always have. "You deserve my... my nice things."

Ivy throws back her head and cackles. There's nothing but cruelty in her laughter, but all the same, it's warm as it washes over me.

I made her smile.

"That's right. Aren't you clever, little Olive?" she coos.

Aren't I clever?

Aren't I?

Am I?

I don't know. I don't feel clever.

Ivy feels clever.

"I deserve your nice things," Ivy repeats, rich with glee. "Which is why I'm going to make you send me more money. Lots more."

More. More. Yes.

It makes sense to me, of course. I'm inferior. I'm a spectator. And Ivy

deserves things.

But it does more than just make sense.

It turns me on like nothing else ever has.

As I sway and pant, my vision starts clouding over into pink fog. I slump over, drawing closer to the watch as I do, and my hands start straying between my thighs, drawn there by the fervent need that burns within me.

I hope Ivy makes me send to her. I hope she does it right now. I need it.

Ivy sees it at once. “God, you’re easy,” she sneers. “You get off on it. Being exploited.”

I nod again, eyes still fixed on the watch. I’m all but drooling on it.

Being exploited. Being used.

I get off on it.

Whatever part of me might want to rebel against that suggestion is smothered by how overwhelmingly obvious it is. Just look at me. Anyone would think so.

“You get off on sending me money,” Ivy repeats, hammering the message still deeper.

I nod. She’s right. She’s so right.

I’m not sure I’ve ever had a kink before. But I do now.

A fetish.

It strikes me that Ivy knew even before I did. She always knew.

She knows me better than I know myself.

“Say it,” Ivy tells me.

“I g-get off,” I say, my voice trembling and wet, “on sending you money.”

Ivy laughs at me. I smile too. The repetition is instructive. I understand better now. What I am. What she is.

I hope she lets me send her money again soon.

“That’s right. Good girl.” Ivy’s praise is sardonic, but all the same, it warms me. That’s just how superior she is. “And that’s why you’ll be working late tonight too, won’t you? Racking up that overtime? It wouldn’t do for my personal little wallet to run out of cash.”

Run out?

No. No, that wouldn’t do.

I can’t send my money to Ivy if I don’t have any.

I’m drooling. I can feel it. Threatening to let my globs of unworthy saliva drip all over Ivy’s watch. I need to send to her.

It just feels that good.

So I need to... work late? Again?

That strikes a bitter note. A chord of resistance within me I didn’t even know was there. With great effort, I stop myself nodding. It’s my promise. My promise to Luna.

“I... c-can’t...” I beg.

Ivy cocks an eyebrow. She’s impressed—genuinely, this time. “Wow. Didn’t think you had it in you.”

“P-promised...” I drool. It’s hard to go against Ivy. It’s not right. I’m inferior. “My girl... my girlfriend...”

Ivy’s laughter is louder and crueler than ever. “Well, aren’t you a romantic?” she sneers. “That’s funny. I remember just a couple of nights ago, you were telling her you had to keep staying late.”

“I... uh...”

I don't remember. Two days back is too far for my addled mind. Ivy's drug has me far too incoherent to form anything close to an argument.

“You were going to turn over a new leaf, huh?” Ivy guesses—rightly, of course. She tuts at me theatrically. “Silly girl. You never learn, do you?”

I... never learn?

I guess not. I guess I don't.

I'm a silly girl. Yes. That's right.

So small.

So weak.

“Girls like you never turn over a new leaf,” Ivy reminds me. “You're just a spectator, Olive. You don't get story arcs. You don't get character development. I'm a main character. You're a... a sidekick.” Her lips curl up. “If that.”

“R-right.” I shrink into myself. She's right. She has to be. Ivy knows best.

And it sounds right, doesn't it? How many times have I promised myself that I would change things up? How many New Year's Resolutions have I let lapse?

I'm... a sidekick.

“You're still the same girl you were in college,” Ivy concludes. “And I'm superior. Let me show you.”

As whiny and needy as I thought I already was, it's nothing compared to how I feel when Ivy reaches up, unbuttons her blouse, and lets it fall to the floor.

The way she moves, confident and sensual, is meant to catch my eye. It does, effortlessly. The moment the white peels away, revealing beneath Ivy's dark, rich, perfect skin, is a revelation. She looks so good, and so

effortlessly. The sight of her is the only thing that could have wrenched my attention away from the golden watch.

Ivy's breasts. She's wearing a push-up bra. Fuck, they're perfect.

"You like what you see, Olive?" Ivy asks. Her tone is unmistakably provocative. It fills me with heat.

I nod dumbly.

"Of course you do," Ivy purrs. "Pervert."

That word courses through me and makes me quiver.

Pervert? Is that what I am?

"Keep watching."

Ivy doesn't need to tell me that. I couldn't possibly look away as she reaches behind herself, unhooks her bra, and flicks it aside.

Stupid. I feel stupid. That's the only way I can describe it. The way my thoughts slow to a base, horny crawl as I stare, drooling, at Ivy's bare chest. Her tits make me stupid, because I'm a pervert. I get it now. Her chest is perfect, of course. Full, proud, shapely—and above all, bigger than mine.

When my thoughts start racing again, that's all I can think about.

Ivy is bigger than me. Better than me. I ache with the knowledge of it. Making the comparison is instinctive. I search for all the imperfections that would undermine me if I were in Ivy's shoes. The moles, the blemishes, the wrinkles and scars. There are none. There's nothing—at least, nothing that does anything more than accentuate her beauty.

Ivy is so much better than me. Ivy is superior.

I've never known it as deeply as I do now, with it staring me in the face.

"Keep watching, little Olive."

As Ivy removes her skirt, I should be thinking about how monstrously inappropriate this would look if any of my subordinates happened to come over and open the door to my office. I'm not. Instead, I'm just thinking about how I could never do what Ivy's doing. I could never have her poise. Her confidence. Her perfection.

She's superior. And I'm inferior.

I keep turning that thought over in my head. It's bittersweet; each time, it grows sweeter and more bitter.

It hurts. Obviously. Seeing that I'm not as good as Ivy, despite it all. That I'm still just her lesser. Knowing it hurts. Feeling it hurts.

But isn't it... right?

In a way, it's a relief. I don't have to fight anymore. To resist her. To prove myself to her. I don't have to look back on my college years and cringe with shame.

It was only natural. Just like this is only natural.

This is my place.

I drool. I grin. That idea throbs through my being. It fills me with a sickening warmth, and has me rubbing at myself surreptitiously over my clothes. This is my place. This is the way I belong.

After Ivy's skirt is gone, she takes off her shoes, and then there's only one thing left: her underwear. She swiftly moves to remove those too. The merest hint of her bulge beneath the plain fabric makes me drool twice as hard. I need to see it. But I know this isn't for my benefit. This isn't a striptease. It's a demonstration. The way Ivy moves isn't sultry, merely supremely confident. It's like she's unveiling a work of art. Her very own masterpiece.

And I'm awestruck by it.

Yes, she could be in a museum. There's no question about it. Every inch of Ivy is perfection made manifest. She works out, a lot, and it shows in the lines of musculature sculpted all across her physique. She

has the kind of perfect figure only a combination of genetics and hard work can give you: hourglass, with wide shoulders and wider hips, full with the fruit of femininity.

This is why I get turned on when I send her money. It all makes sense now. It's perfectly natural. A superior being like her is owed tribute. The arousal is my reward for submitting to the natural order.

Dazzled, my eyes flit across her, overwhelmed by the staggering spectacle that is Ivy Robinson. Perhaps I'm looking for a sign that she's just a mere mortal like me. An imperfection. But there's none, not that I can see. Her hair, sleek. Her lips, full. Her nails, long and painted. It's all perfect.

Her cock.

Once I look at that, I can't look away. Ivy is only half-hard, but that's enough to make it clear that she's big. The need that grips me as I think about that is so great and so deep it sweeps all self-control aside. I need it. I need her. I'm so turned on, from sending her money and seeing her watch and everything else. I'm inferior. She's superior. So it makes sense, doesn't it? I owe her service. I need to let her use me. Only half-consciously, I start to tip forward, my mouth drooling open, ready to slump forward to my knees and take her in my-

"What are you doing?"

Ivy's mocking voice halts me. I look up at her, a lost lamb in need of guidance.

"I appreciate your eagerness, Olive," she scoffs. "But no. You don't get to touch me like that. Not yet, anyway."

I nod and hang my head. Of course not. How could I forget?

I'm inferior. I don't have the right. I'm still learning just how wide the gulf between us is.

I'm stupid.

But I have Ivy to teach me.

“It’s time for another lesson, Olive,” Ivy draws. “If you want things, you have to ask nicely.”

I have to ask nicely.

That’s right.

“Do you want to touch me?” Ivy asks.

For a few seconds, I just nod. Then the lesson lands.

“P-please,” I whimper. “Please, Ivy, c-can I touch you?”

My voice has never sounded so pathetic. But it’s not enough. Not even close.

“C’mon,” Ivy taunts. “You can do better than that.”

I flinch. Her cruelty provokes no resentment in me. It’s simply her right. I lower my head even further. Whatever dignity I have left, I’ll gladly throw away.

No, I’ll offer it. To Ivy. Just like everything else I have.

“Please!” I cry, voice a rising crescendo of maddened lust. “Please, Ivy, I... I’ll give you whatever you want. I’ll work as long as you want! Please. I... I could make you feel good!” An empty boast, probably, but I can’t help myself. “Whatever you want! Just... please.”

“Oh, that’s good.” Ivy’s praise, however sarcastic, makes me smile. “Really. You’re a natural, Olive. Almost there. Just... think about a little more. Think about your place.”

My place?

The unfairness of it brings petulant tears to my eyes. Ivy expects something from me, clearly. But I don’t know what. I can’t seem to figure it out. Stupid. I’m so stupid.

My... place. What’s my place?

My mind is utterly clouded with lust, but I force myself to think. I

look at myself. I'm sitting in my office, behind my desk. It's a place I feel strong. Safe. Important.

But that's not right. I'm not any of those things. Not with Ivy.

This isn't my place. But what is? In a flash of inspiration, the answer comes to me.

Compared to Ivy, I am utterly inferior. My place is simply the lowest I can be.

I slump forward, out of my chair, and collapse on the floor, prostrating myself. I press my face to the ground in a posture of abject groveling.

"I... I whimper meekly. "I beg you."

For a moment, tension grips me. Is this right? But even before Ivy speaks, I can sense her satisfaction.

"Very good," Ivy tells me. "You can touch me, Olive. But only the very lowest part of me."

I turn my face to one side and see Ivy nudge her foot towards me. There's no mistaking what she means or what she wants. It's demeaning. It's humiliating.

I couldn't be more grateful.

Without hesitation, I crawl toward Ivy and press my face into her foot. Immediately, I'm smearing my drool all over her—it's disgusting of me, I know, to soil her perfection with my filth, but I can't help myself. There's only one thing I can do for a being as superior as Ivy.

Worship her.

And I do. Eagerly. Fervently, although my haste ruins any sense of reverence to what I'm doing. I kiss, I lick, I suck, intoxicated beyond reason by the wondrous gift Ivy has given me by allowing me to touch her. I must look like a dog to her, licking scraps from the floor. She's standing over me, towering and strong, and in my mind's eye, Ivy only grows and grows.

She's all that matters. She is my god.

"You're just as good of a bootlicker as I'd hoped," Ivy comments. "Not that I'm surprised."

Her praise fills me with a dull warmth, but it's immediately stolen away from me when she steps around to sit down in my chair, behind my desk, robbing me, for a moment, of her feet. I scramble after her, and am rewarded when she sits back and plants her heels on the floor, feet crossed at the ankles. At once, I start lapping at her soles.

"That feels good," Ivy purrs. "You're a natural."

I'm a natural. A natural at licking feet. Keen to make her feel better still, I reach forward and start massaging her feet; one, then the other. Her little sounds of pleasure are like music.

This feels so good. So right. This is my place.

I pour myself into the act of worship, and I am diminished by it. I'm a smart girl. I've been to college. I have a respectable job. But none of that matters now. I'm just Ivy's creature. Her devoted servant. The thoughts in my head have become simple and crude. I focus on making sure every last inch of Ivy's feet receives the attentions of my tongue and my fingers. The approval I can sense coming from Ivy is so poisonously affirming.

I'm good at this. It only makes it all the more obvious. This is right. This is the proper order of things.

Out of the corner of my eye, I notice that Ivy is hard.

"C... c-can I..." I venture, pushed by my own need, "touch myself?"

I have to ask. I need it. My body is a boiling cauldron.

"Go ahead," Ivy sneers. "Help yourself."

I moan a "thank you," the words melted together by moaning and drooling. Deep at the back of my mind, a voice warns me: this is dangerous. This is how the drug works. Pleasure sears Ivy's words into

me and makes them permanent.

I don't care. I'm past caring.

I reach back with one hand and push two fingers inside my cunt, to the knuckle. I hear myself dripping all over the ground.

Fuck. It feels incredible.

It takes me no time at all to bring myself to the edge. At least, I don't think so. Time has lost its meaning. For all I know, it's been hours. Maybe I've missed meetings. If so, I don't care. I could spend forever like this. It's so simple. So easy. Worshiping Ivy like this is the thrill I've been craving my entire life. It's everything I've been missing.

I get that now.

Ivy takes notice as I get close. I'm an open book to her. She leans forward. "You want to cum," she says. It's not a question, so I don't reply. I just keep sucking on her toe, steaming in the scent of her sweat. "But you can't. Something's missing."

Something's missing.

With her words, I sense a barrier between myself and the release I crave. I whine, but I don't argue. I don't stop.

"Give and take, Olive," Ivy taunts. "Here. You know what you need to do."

She reaches down to me, my phone in her hand. It's just like before. My payment app is on the screen. A transaction has been prepared—an eye-watering, four-figure sum. All I need to do is tap with my finger.

I can't do it. I mustn't. For a second time, I'd be throwing away hours of tireless work. Days. Maybe weeks. And worse, I can feel my psyche ready to snap. Ready to alter itself. Maybe now, even now, I can pull back from the brink. I can stop an indulgence from becoming an addiction. All I have to do is hold back.

But I don't even want to.

I reach out and press my finger to the screen. The transaction goes through.

It's like I can feel it happening. Like I feel something precious departing my body. Instantly, it's irrevocable. No matter what I do, I'll never not be the stupid girl who sent thousands of dollars to my bully, just so I could cum.

That's who I am. That's Olive, from now on.

And I want to do it again. Already. I want to give and give, more and more. I want to make Ivy greater. I want to make myself lesser. The humiliation of it bites so deep. Nothing else comes close. Nothing else makes me feel this alive. I want to give until there's nothing left of me.

Oblivion.

I collapse in a heap as I cum all over myself.

Ivy watches, almost dispassionately, as I do. Then she stands up and, slowly, deliberately, wipes each of her feet off on my limp, twitching body, leaving my clothes soiled with my own drool. Ruined. Then, she starts to dress herself.

"I think I'll be leaving early today," she announces. I'm beyond replying, and she knows it. "A little shopping trip, maybe."

I gasp. I see stars. The mere thought of what she might spend my money on has me eager for another orgasm.

"You can stay late tonight," Ivy tells me. I just nod. I understand now. I can't disobey her. "But don't worry about your girlfriend. Soon, she'll have me to keep her company instead."

I freeze. It feels like a knife has gone into my chest.

"Didn't I tell you?" Ivy says as she leaves, a crooked smile on her face. "I'm going to take everything from you. *Everything.*"

CHAPTER THREE

What does ‘everything’ mean to a woman like Ivy Robinson?

I have plenty of time to contemplate the question as I settle into the purgatory of our new status quo. As days become weeks, the boredom of corporate drudgery compounded by the sickening indignity of unending submission. More than once, I’ve tried to tell myself that this is as bad as things can get, but in my heart of hearts I know: I have so much more to lose.

And she’ll see that I lose it. ‘I’m going to take everything from you’. That was Ivy’s promise. I hear it over and over again in my head, on loop, a worse earworm than any pop song and stained through by sordid sense-memories; the taste of the sole of Ivy’s foot, the chemical, back-of-the-throat burn of the drug Ivy doses me with, and—worst of all—the deep, coiling heat of my arousal.

Weeks later, and it still reaches out to lick at me. That heat. That need. I wish so very badly that I could ignore it. That I could chalk it up as an awful, one-time mistake.

I can’t. Ivy has branded that heat into me with her drug and her bullying. Now, when I dwell on it—on her—I find my hands moving between my legs.

Everything. But what?

Maybe she meant every last cent in my bank account. If so, she’s well on her way. My acts of tribute to her have become a regular ritual. Weekly, daily. Whenever she commands. However much she commands, too. Never a truly ruinous amount, but... an obscene amount, frequently. Never for something quotidian. Always for something

luxurious. A meal at a fine restaurant. Jewelry. Lingerie. Expensive makeup. Ivy always makes sure I know exactly where my money has gone. She chooses things I could certainly afford, but could never actually buy. They wouldn't suit me the way they suit her.

Because she's superior, of course.

In every way. In every conceivable aspect. That thought, more than any other, has been steadily drilled and drugged into the core of my being. Every day, when she looms over me effortlessly, it's a reminder. Every day, when I admire her beauty. Every day, when I envy her charisma or compare our chests or when I am struck by her style or when I notice her perfect skin or when I wonder how long it takes her to do her immaculate makeup or when I wrap my lips around the exquisite digits of her feet. She is superior. Simply superior. In every way superior. And what do you do to something superior?

You worship it. And I worship, and worship, and worship. With my lips, with my words, with my wallet. I worship on my knees, under my desk, or else behind it, for hours, and hours, hand shoved rudely down my pants, fucking myself into a fervent trance, overawed by my own inferiority, drooling into my own inadequate cleavage, thinking of her, her, her, her, her.

I've long since lost track of how many hours I've wasted like that.

Maybe that's what Ivy wants to take. Maybe that's what everything means. My time. My days. Certainly, thanks to her, my work days have grown even longer. Overtime at every opportunity. I need to fund Ivy's expensive habits, and obscure how much I'm spending from Luna, my girlfriend. Meanwhile, all the hours I have are worth less. The ones at home, I'm too exhausted to enjoy. The ones at work pass in a kind of delirious haze, equal measures ashamed, drugged, and too horny to think.

I waste a lot of that time masturbating, too. Ivy likes me that way. I think she just enjoys how embarrassing it is. She likes the idea that I simply can't resist.

And now I can't.

Ivy eats up my time in another way too, a way far more abstract but no less poisonous: she has changed the way I think about my own

timeline. Life, I once thought, is a process of steady growth and maturation. My years under Ivy's thumb in college were easy to dismiss as an embarrassment of youth. Something to be left behind. My recent relapse has obliterated that self-understanding. It has exposed the fact that I have not grown. I have not changed. I have not matured. I am now as I was then: weak, submissive, inferior. However many years older I am, I'm still the same girl, helpless and fawning. The interval between is recast as nothing more than a dream-like interstice; the years *BI*. Between Ivy.

When I think about it like that, it seems almost certain that nothing will ever change.

I'm not sure that Ivy thinks about it the same way. If I had to guess—if I dared to guess at the mind of someone so infinitely greater than myself—I would imagine that the objectives of her conquest are far more direct. When she says that she wants to take everything from me, she means my pride. My dignity. My self-respect. My autonomy, even. Every last shred. Every last speck, until I forget to even hope for their recovery. She wants to take everything; she wants me to be nothing.

I want to resist, of course. But even more than that, I want to surrender. She made me want it, but that doesn't mean the desire is not mine. It lives in me. It animates me. It makes me pathetically, shamefully grateful for each moment that Ivy Robinson turns her cruel attention to me and blesses me with the gift of her attention.

It's more than I deserve.

It happens regularly, although not so often that I could be permitted to think that I am an important part of Ivy's life. Without warning, she'll waltz into my office. My space—although it becomes hers, of course, as soon as she occupies it. She'll flash me a look that lets me know we're dropping the thin pretense of employer and subordinate that the workplace requires of us. Then she'll make me kneel, or beg, or massage her, or pay her, or simply thank her for the words of abuse she heaps on me.

Ivy drugs me sometimes too, although just as often her mere presence is plenty intoxicating. Shamefully, I wish it wasn't. I wish she would drug me more often. I've long since given up denying or disavowing the way my heart leaps when Ivy sets down that telltale coffee cup on my desk before me, a knowing smirk on her wonderful

face, or when I pour it down my throat as she watches, savoring the first hit of that unpleasant, chemical taste and the stupid, gullible, helpless trance it plunges me into.

When I am drugged, I am free—free of even the pretense of resistance. There's no chance I can fight her, not like that, so instead I can slump down into the submissive abyss Ivy offers me. I can be my worst self. I need not fear what she'll take next. I'll deserve to lose it. I'll long to lose it. When I'm drugged, I shrink and Ivy grows, and it just feels so right.

Everything? Isn't that everything? Perhaps the real question is: what's left?

But then, I already know the answer to that. Ivy's already indicated it to me.

It's Luna.

My girlfriend. My love. We've been together for a couple of years now. We suit each other perfectly—I've always believed that. Two quiet little things against the world, sharing our quiet little comforts. Of all that I have, losing her would be the most unforgivable. Admittedly, though, I'm not sure what giving her to Ivy would mean, exactly. It's not like I can send her with the touch of a button the way I can all my hard-earned salary.

Maybe it's just losing her, though, and I sense that I'm already well on my way to that. Even before Ivy re-entered my life, Luna had been asking me to spend less time at work and more with her. Now the balance has tipped far in the other direction, and all my broken promises weigh down us like lead. My home life has become as tense and heavy as my work life.

I wish that I could just tell Luna. In my head, it's so straightforward: I simply cannot say 'no' to Ivy. But Luna wouldn't get it. She still sees the world the way normal people do. Not the way I do, with everything cast in shades of black and white; Ivy and I, the starkest shades of all.

Superior. Inferior.

Instead, I just have to keep Luna fobbed off with weak, non-committal apologies and with whatever feeble gestures of romance and

affection my drug-addled exhaustion will allow. She's patient, of course. So, so patient. She loves me, after all. But she deserves better, and we both know it.

After a time, it hits me: I really am about to lose her.

That spurs me into... not resistance, exactly. But into action, at least, or the pathetic facsimile of it. One day, when Ivy is in my office—when I am in her presence—and as I am on my knees before her, I find what little grit is left within me. I look up at her as evenly as I can.

"This week," I begin, and already my voice trembles, betraying me, "I need to go home early. I mean... at the normal time."

Above me—so, so far above me—Ivy raises an eyebrow. She looks impressed, a little, that I've found this in me. She's perched on the edge of my desk, reading a few reports, enjoying my quiet subservience. And my tongue on her expensive shoes. The ones I paid for.

Just thinking about that makes me light-headed and horny. I have to fight to remain true to my purpose.

"Are you asking?" Ivy challenges. "Or telling?"

I could answer 'telling'. That's the way it should be, after all. I'm her boss. Her employer. But that role, and the status it implies, feels so distant now. And I already know what would happen. The slightest show of backbone, and it becomes a battle. A battle becomes a loss in no time at all.

And I can't lose. I need this. Luna needs this.

I bow my head, just slightly. Just enough for Ivy to see that she's beaten me again.

"Asking," I say meekly. And then, because I know it's expected: "Please."

I'm hoping for an ounce of mercy. A boon granted without question. It's too much to hope for.

"Interesting." I should have known Ivy wouldn't let anything slip by

her notice. She's too smart for me. Always was. "And why now, Olive?"

I shrink. I regret having said anything at all. The only thing I can do is hope to please her with my baseness. I kiss her foot again before I answer her.

"B-because," I whisper, "I need to spend some time with my girlfriend. If I don't, I... I think she's going to break up with me soon."

Ivy laughs. Her laugh reminds me of how small my concerns are.

"Oh, well, we can't have that, can we?" Ivy says mockingly. "As much as being single suits a little loser like you. Fine, fine. I'll let you go home early for a date night."

My face lights up. I can't believe her benevolence. Ivy laughs again.

"Thank you!" I bleat.

I've gotten ahead of myself. Ivy quickly shows me that.

"If." She raises a taunting finger. "You ask properly first."

My cheeks burn. I should have known. Now I have no choice but to do whatever's expected of me.

"Yes, Ivy." I hang my head. "H-how should I ask?"

Ivy tilts her head to one side for a moment. Contemplating. Then her smile widens. She's in a mood, I can tell.

"I think," she says slowly, "that since you've been such a well-behaved little girl, you can ask me this way. A favor for a favor, right?"

She makes it sound as though anything could ever be fair between us. But that small, petulant complaint is wiped away at once when Ivy reaches down, unzips her pants, and fishes out her cock.

My eyes widen. Pupils dilate. I hate that they do—but they do. Her cock has become a symbol of so many things. Her superior womanhood, even though she wasn't born to it. Her power; the brute, simple, biological capacity to penetrate, to invade. I tried, at first, not to think

about it in such terms; it's not kind, not progressive, but I gave up when it became obvious that Ivy was entirely comfortable lauding that particular faculty over me. And most hatefully of all, Ivy's cock has become a symbol of aspiration.

I don't deserve to touch it. To so much as gaze upon it. Ivy's made that more than clear. That's why I spend so much time with my face pressed to the floor instead; kissing her feet, shining her shoes with my tongue—and eagerly finger-fucking myself to it the moment I'm given permission. The whole time, if she deigns to disrobe, her magnificent shaft, half-hard from the pleasure of dominance, hangs in the air above my head. In those moments, she reminds me, in a perverse way, of those Greek marble statues of naked goddesses. Superior. Powerful. Alluring—but forbidden.

But Ivy's made it just as clear that, perhaps, one day, once she's whipped and trained me to her pleasure, I will be blessed with her taste. My stomach should churn at the very thought. Instead, I've long known that the moment will feel like a baptism. I will be grateful for it. That's just the natural order of things.

Superior. Inferior.

And now she's given me all the more reason to crave it.

"M-may I?" I venture hesitantly, as I raise myself up onto my knees. Already, I reach for her—but I need to be sure I won't be struck down for it.

"You may," Ivy replies languidly. "But impress me. Assuming you really do want to see your girlfriend, anyway."

Her permission makes me salivate. I pause again, though, as it strikes me that I have absolutely no idea how to suck cock. I've only ever been with cis girls—and even then, not many of them. I don't have experience, and I'm not used to dealing with unmarked territory. But asking would make me sound even more pathetic than I already do, wouldn't I?

I can't keep Ivy waiting any longer. With rarefied caution, I lower my lips to her and press them upon the tip of her cock in a reverent kiss.

Pleasure shudders through me. My cunt drips against my pants. I was

right. It really does feel like a baptism.

She isn't really that hard. That's normal, isn't it? It makes sense. We're only just getting started, and I'm sure she doesn't find my pathetic groveling very attractive. Appealing, yes—but not attractive. I decide to take it slow. To warm Ivy up the way I do Luna when I'm going down on her. I kiss Ivy's cock again, then again, then again, moving my lips just a little each time so that not an inch of her skin is without my fawning, worthless attention.

As I worship, I have time to contemplate what I feel for Ivy—for Ivy's cock—in this moment. Above all: gratitude. Why is that? I shouldn't feel grateful for this. What Ivy is doing to me is monstrous. Drugging me, degrading me, forcing me to suck her cock for petty privileges... and yet, I should feel grateful, shouldn't I? After all, Ivy is just that far out of my league. I should feel grateful just to touch her. To suck her cock? That's nothing short of a miracle. A girl like me, and a woman like her? More of a freak of nature than a miracle.

Her cock twitches against my lips. She's getting hard—for me. Suddenly, the gratitude floods through me. Drowns any scruples. I let out an awed little gasp of dumb, childish delight. Maybe, just maybe, I can be good enough for this, even if I'm worthless.

Spurred on by my success, I try harder. I extend my tongue, lapping and licking at Ivy's shaft. I part my lips and begin to suckle gently on her tip, feeling her swell to full hardness for me. I grow bolder. I begin to take more and more of her into my mouth, minding my teeth as best I can, starting to bob up and down on her.

In my head, it's already becoming a twisted point of pride. I want to give Ivy a fantastic blowjob. I know I can. I can bring her pleasure. I can make her feel good for me. A good cocksucker? Maybe that's not much to aspire to, but it's something. Better than nothing. I know Luna enjoys it when I go down on her, even if it's been a while. This isn't so different. Nice and slow. Get her hot for it. Let her sensitivity build. Fast, then slow.

I can do this. I can be Ivy's good little cocksucker.

"Christ." The boredom in Ivy's contemptuous drawl cuts through me like a knife. "You really are terrible at this, Olive."

I freeze. I'm tearing up. How can she make me feel so worthless with

just that?

There's no time for me to dwell on it. No time before Ivy plants a hand on the back of my head and forces her cock all the way to the back of my throat.

Immediately, I choke. It's the closest I've come to actually fighting Ivy in weeks—not out of my own volition, but simply because my own body rebels at the force of her intrusion. My gag reflex is fierce and my arms spasm along with my throat; without thinking, I try to push myself away from Ivy.

She doesn't like that. Her other hand joins the first, fingers knotting themselves into my hair. And for all my violent reflexes, Ivy is so, so much stronger than me. She masters me like a tamer breaking a wild horse, backing off just enough that I don't throw up, then holding me there until my throat tires and my thrashing relents. It takes several minutes, but eventually, my body simply gives in. It accepts her.

And as she starts to move, I become something infinitely lower than a cocksucker.

A hole.

“So much for impressing me,” Ivy laughs cruelly. “Guess you'll have to get used to this, until you learn.”

I cannot imagine how anyone could get used to this—to having my head jack-hammered up and down by Ivy's powerful arms as she face-fucks me without mercy. Without a thought spared for my need to draw breath. With each stroke, my lips kiss the base of her shaft as she bottoms out inside my throat, and my gag reflex rises again only to be pounded freshly into submission by Ivy's girth and force.

The sensation is monstrous. My throat aches from being forced open. My jaw screams from being held wide. The lower part of my face is drenched with my own drool, and my vision is hazy from lack of oxygen. I must look even worse than I feel—but most insidious of all is the sense of my own personhood falling away.

Ivy won't even permit me to suck her cock. I'm just a hole.

Cock goes in. Money comes out.

Then she moans—actually moans—and I forget it all. I glow in the warmth of her approval. Despite it all, the urges Ivy has conditioned into me scream that I’m lucky. That I am blessed.

Ivy notices, of course. “Hey, Olive,” she sings out. “Do you want to rub yourself stupid again?”

My eyes water. I choke on her cock. And through it all—I moan my eagerness.

“Go ahead.” Ivy waves a hand. Her every word to me is fresh poison, but I don’t care. Her face is flushed now, from the pleasure, from the rush, and I’m feeling it all too. Vicariously, of course. Only a spectator. “Enjoy yourself.”

Despite my delirium, I’m still able to be ashamed of just how quickly my hand snaps down and snakes its way into my panties. Yet another urge Ivy has ingrained into me. Yet another thing she’s made me perilously weak to. I just can’t resist. Not with her. Not with her cock in my throat. I’m too cock-drunk to be in any way artful with my own masturbation. I just rub my fingers against my cunt, desperate, overeager.

As the pleasure hits, my gratitude is overwhelming. My light-headedness is too. I’m in heaven.

“Hey,” Ivy snaps. She reaches down with one hand and idly slaps my cheek. “Stay with me, Olive. Wasn’t there something you wanted?”

She’s right, inevitably. The magnificence of Ivy’s cock had almost made me forget. But I can’t lose sight of Luna. I can’t lose her. Simply for the sake of answering Ivy’s question, I start to pull away from her.

“No, no,” Ivy chides, as the hand on the back of my head clamps down again. “You can ask me just like this.”

“C-caaa...” I choke out. The idea of talking while being face-fucked like this is a joke, but I must try. “Caa ah... go... hom... earrii... liss... heek?”

Ivy laughs breathlessly at my plight. “What’s that?” she demands. “Can’t understand you, Olive. Are you too brainless to talk?”

I whine breathlessly, then try again. I have to. And more importantly, Ivy wants me to.

“Caaan... I... go... hoo... ealy... hiss... week... an... see... my... giafren?” I beg, around her cock.

Another gentle, chiding slap. Then one more.

“Of course you can, Olive,” Ivy says sweetly. “You just had to ask nicely.”

What can I feel toward her except overwhelming thankfulness for her benevolence?

Ivy keeps fucking my face for a little while longer. I just kneel there, limp except for the hand working over my own cunt, until finally, she has her release. I cum too, at the very first moment I feel her cum pouring down my throat.

Not a good cocksucker. Not yet. But at least I can be a good hole for her.

“You can go home early tomorrow,” Ivy offers kindly as she recovers from her orgasm and wipes away my drool and her semen onto the sleeve of my blouse. “And get changed. Do try to look nice, for once. Make sure your girlfriend does too. I’ll pick out a bar—I’m sure you have no taste.”

I just blink, confused. “U-um...”

“I said you could spend time with your girlfriend.” Ivy’s face is utterly malicious. I wish I could hate her the way she seems to loathe me—but it wouldn’t be right. She’s my superior. “And so will I.”

She licks her lips at me, as I quiver with horror.

“Your treat, of course.”

* * *

Luna was so surprised when I told her we were taking my subordinate

out for a drink. For two reasons, I think. Firstly, crushingly, she was surprised that I had actually followed through on my promise for once. Secondly, she was surprised that we would have a third, but once she got over her surprise she seemed to relish the idea. The next day, after I got home from work—pleasantly on-time, just as Ivy had promised—I found Luna eagerly getting herself ready. I suppose that to her, it's precisely what she wanted and better than she had hoped. A fun couples' night out, with another pair of eyes to make it feel all the more real and to suggest that I am, at long last, taking a big step toward having a real social life.

My own feelings are far more turbulent. I'm happy that Luna's happy, of course. But I can't stop thinking about Ivy's promise. About what designs she might have on my girlfriend. That makes my stomach churn appallingly—but there's something else, too.

I want to see Ivy.

I just can't help it. The idea of going to the bar with her is, despite it all, exciting. It happened in college, sometimes, and those nights always left me as giddy and happy as they did my wallet empty. I relished being in Ivy's company. In being worthy of her company. Not that I am or that I ever was—but maybe, just maybe, some other people, some strangers, will look at me and think that I'm like her. That idea itches at me. So in the end, taking Luna to the bar to meet Ivy feels as good as I bet relapses always do, before the inevitable crash.

The bar Ivy picked out is so desperately classy and cool, I feel woefully out of place. It's the kind of joint that's on the bleeding edge of trendy: self-evidently the place to be, but not yet so popular that it's packed to the gills on a weeknight. It's expensive, too.

I'm sure Ivy won't hesitate to enjoy that.

She's already there when we arrive, sitting in a private booth. Ivy greets us with a friendly wave, all smiles, and beckons for us to take our seats, Luna next to her, and me sitting opposite. Unlike me, Ivy is a perfect match for our surroundings. Stylish. Handsome, even. Ivy wears sleek, black pants and a black shirt, nicely belted, underneath a striking, white blazer. Her shirt is open a few buttons at the top, exposing her full figure and rich, perfect skin, and the entire outfit is cut perfectly slim. She looks like a model.

And Luna notices. Oh yes.

Her eyes light up. She's amazed, impressed; surprised too, probably, that this woman is my employee and not my boss.

That just proves it, doesn't it? Ivy is superior to me. In every way.

Especially since Luna's eyes also light up with attraction.

Not the lurid glow of unfaithfulness. No, Luna would never. I hope she would never. She's not planning anything, or indulging in any inappropriate thoughts. But... Ivy is very, very beautiful. And she responds to it.

I whimper. The bar music smothers the sound.

Luna is, like me, a little out of her depth here. Like me, she's a slim, slight thing, although I've always thought she wears it better. She's got a little of that classic, nerdy girl charm—dyed blue hair, big, round glasses, and the simple, black dress she's wearing suits her to a T. She's always been the more social of the two of us, too; we're both introverted, but she's been blessed with a certain insensitivity to how people see her, and that makes it easier for her to talk.

"You must be Luna," Ivy says, as we settle. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

Luna smiles back at her. "I suppose Olive's told you all about me?"

"Not really." Ivy grins. "But she should have. You look good."

Luna blinks in surprise, then relaxes into a giggle. I wince. Does she really need to sound so giddy?

"Thank you," Luna titters. "But you... I mean, wow."

Ivy nods her head, taking it in stride. She turns her head to me. Her scorn doesn't need to be put into words. "Olive, would you fetch us some drinks?"

She bosses me around so naturally, Luna doesn't even notice how strange it is for Ivy to be asking the woman above her to fetch drinks. I,

of course, receive an involuntary shudder of satisfaction from it—I know that I’m so, so much lower—but that’s not quite enough to offset the stab of fear I get from leaving Luna alone with Ivy.

“I’ll have a whiskey. Neat. The best they’ve got,” Ivy tells me. “Since you so kindly offered to pay.” Another shudder. “And you, Luna?”

“Guess all that overtime is being put to good use,” Luna giggles. She doesn’t know how right she is. “Um, I guess... a margarita?”

Ivy nods. “And you can have a lemonade, Olive.” Her smile twists. “After all, I presume you’re driving.”

Luna tilts her head a little at me, confused. Instinctively, I try to play it off. “S-sure, Ivy.”

I stand up, head over to the bar, and order the drinks. Dutifully, I pick the very most expensive whiskey from their menu for Ivy. I even order a lemonade for myself, despite the fact I would have preferred a soda. As I slot my credit card into the machine to pay, the total appears and I let out another little whimper. I’m affronted at being so nakedly exploited, but the humiliating pleasure I feel has become second-nature, as has the pleasant, affirming buzz I receive from seeing my inferiority take on a dollar price tag.

That dissonance has become the soundtrack of my daily life, these past weeks. Luna’s presence, though, is making it bite harder than ever.

Once the drinks are poured, I bring them back to our booth like a good little serving girl. As I get close, my heart starts throbbing. It’s only been a minute or two. Were they sitting quite so close together before? And they’re really getting along, by the looks of it. Luna is hanging on Ivy’s every word, a fawning, merry grin on her innocent face. Ivy is smiling too, exuding that rakish confidence that’s so hard not to respond to.

I’m imagining it. I must be. They aren’t that close, are they? Maybe that’s normal. But then as Ivy notices me approach, she stretches out one arm across the back of the seat—like she’s putting it around Luna’s shoulders. Like Luna is hers.

She’s not, I tell myself. She’s mine. I can trust Luna. She would never.

“Thank you, Olive,” Ivy replies, dismissively rather than gratefully, although Luna doesn’t pick up on her tone. I set the drinks down on the end of the table; as I move to sit down, Ivy reaches across to take her drink, and to place mine in front of my seat. I’m surprised at the thoughtful gesture.

Until I see a little pill fall out of her palm, and begin to fizz as it rapidly dissolves into my lemonade.

I stare aghast at Ivy. My wide eyes make the plea: not here. Please, not here.

Not that I expect her to listen.

Ivy raises her expensive liquor to her lips to take a sip, as Luna drinks from her glass and purrs her enjoyment. “Drink up, Olive.”

I shake my head slightly. That’s it. That’s as much defiance as I can muster. I can’t disobey Ivy.

Superior. Inferior.

Gingerly, I drink. There it is. That chemical taste I’ve come to know well. My body responds to it like an old friend. In just seconds, the room is spinning.

Ivy leans over and whispers something to Luna, too quiet for me to hear. Luna, riding high on the atmosphere and the first few sips of her cocktail, giggles happily. The whole time, Ivy’s eyes are on me.

I’m underwater. Under the influence of her drug, everything is magnified—the agony of seeing the two of them so close, and the ecstasy of Ivy’s torment. And most of all, the incessant drumbeat of our respective positions.

Superior. Inferior.

Player. Spectator.

Magnificent woman. Stupid little girl.

Perhaps that's why something in the back of my head—a little voice Ivy has been growing from the seeds for weeks—whispers to me that all of this is absolutely right. All that's mine is Ivy's. Luna might be no exception. Who am I to quibble if Ivy reaches out and takes her?

And, after all, wouldn't that be better for Luna too?

I can feel the smile on my face. It's big and broad and utterly, utterly stupid, but just a little lopsided. Everything feels so, so right. Everything except for the deep heartache pang exploding through my chest, dragging half of my smile into a look of unspoken wretchedness.

I reach down. I start to smother the pain. That's what Ivy would want, isn't it? Better that way. I can't fight her, so I should just enjoy this. And at the mere thought of enjoying it, another reaction stirs within my body, infinitely more treacherous than anything else.

Fuck. I wish I could touch myself right here at the bar so, so bad. I'm so horny. Being around Ivy always makes me feel this way.

What the fuck is wrong with me?

A few minutes pass; Ivy and Luna chatting, me in a drugged stupor. Then, Luna sidles out of the booth.

"Excuse me," my girlfriend says. "Sorry, I need to go to the restroom."

"Sure," Ivy tells her easily. "Take your time. We have all evening."

Luna heads off. Ivy turns her full attention to me. There's that shark's grin.

"Well, well," she says softly. "Isn't she pretty? I'm surprised you got her to sink to your level, Olive."

To my... level? I frown. I sway.

What's my level? Oh, I know the answer to that!

The floor. I belong on the floor. On my knees.

I'm the lowest of the low.

But Luna isn't! She would never...

Shame floods me. I join the dots. Ivy's so right. Luna deserves so much better than me.

"I... I'm... s-sorry," I mumble.

Ivy laughs. "Poor thing," she mocks. "Luna, that is. I can see why she's getting frustrated. Bet you never show her a good time."

Never? Never.

But... but she's having a good time now, isn't she?

With Ivy.

Oh.

I shake my head.

"Of course not," Ivy sneers. "A girl like you doesn't know how to treat a woman."

I blush with shame as her words hit me.

I don't know.

Of course I don't.

I'm a stupid, fumbling little girl.

That's all I've ever been.

Not like Ivy. Superior.

Inferior.

"But I do," Ivy adds. "Don't I, Olive?"

I nod, and for the briefest of moments I'm just happy to have the

answer to her question.

It's an easy one. Ivy knows.

Ivy always knows.

But she definitely knows women. I remember that from our college days.

She never failed to show anyone a good time.

"And you want Luna to have a good time, don't you?"

Another easy one. I nod happily.

The drug has me blissfully ignorant of what she's setting me up for.

"Good. Good girl."

Ivy's praise is such a rare thing. I glow with it. I throb with it. I'm wet between my legs, and squirming, and blushing.

"T-thank you," I bleat, like a stupid child.

"You want Luna to have a good time," Ivy explains to me. She's joining the dots for me. Ivy's so smart. So helpful. "And I can give her one."

The penny drops. My eyes widen again. Out of their corner, I can see Luna returning to us. Not quickly enough to save me.

The worst part is, I can already feel myself bending to Ivy's cruel logic.

She's superior to me. I cannot fight her.

"That's why," Ivy concludes, with merciless firmness, her words etching themselves permanently onto my weak, stupid, malleable mind, "I'm going to fuck her. And you're going to make it happen."

CHAPTER FOUR

“You want me to what?”

I giggle idiotically as the tension breaks, ran through by that simple question, spat from my girlfriend Luna’s lips, as harsh and shocked as anything I’ve ever heard from her.

Not that it’s a surprise, of course, given what I’m asking.

“I want you to cheat on me,” I affirm, lips wet. “With Ivy.”

The proposal thunders through our quiet apartment. Even though we’re right next to each other on the couch, I sense her shrink from me, disgusted. Luna looks down, quiet for a long moment.

“I can’t believe you would ever ask me to do something like that,” Luna says quietly.

In truth, I can’t either. It strains against the bounds of my self-image, distorted as those already were by insecurity and anxiety. A singular truth is impossible to escape: I didn’t have to ask for this. Nobody could force me. Ivy told me to, yes, but she isn’t here. I could have lied to her. I could have openly defied her. I could have done anything else.

Instead, I’m ruining my relationship at her command.

Because she’s superior, and I’m inferior.

I know, of course, that she’s been drugging me. Knowing that doesn’t help. After all, I also know that I’m not drugged right now. I’m in full possession of myself. I’m acting according to my own will. And if Ivy

and her drug have permanently stamped themselves onto my will... well, that simply further attests to my complete, total, pathetic abjection. I am now the version of myself she has revealed to me, all the harder to deny because it so perfectly echoes the shrunken, helpless, subservient girl I was in college.

There's no escape. There never was. In my heart of hearts, I know this above all—and I thank Ivy for showing it to me.

“I'm sorry,” I say to Luna—mostly just to break the silence.

Her eyes turn up at me, and they're filled with scorn. She can see: I'm not sorry. Not really.

Because I want this.

That's the other reason I can't bring myself to resent Ivy for instructing me to bring Luna to her bed. I want this, plain and simple. It's not that any of my initial horror at the concept has dimmed. Instead, it's simply that it's lit a twisted spark in me that has grown and grown at Ivy's goading, driven ever-deeper into my drugfucked skull by taunts and commands given to me as I fuck myself for Ivy's pleasure on the floor of my nice corporate office.

Now, after a few days, having Luna stolen away from me has cemented its place as foremost among my fantasies. It consumes me completely, burning between my legs like a fever. I can't keep myself from replaying every little detail of that evening the two of them first met. The way Luna looked at Ivy. The way she laughed at her jokes. The way she was so impressed with her. The way she kept leaning in, attentive, eager.

Fuck. I'm already wet again.

It was both agony and ecstasy—but it's not enough. I need more.

I'd beg both of them for more.

“I just...” Luna squeezes the bridge of her nose. It's like she doesn't even want to look at me. “Why? That's what I don't get. Why? I thought things were finally going to get better between us. And then... this.”

“They will,” I promise feebly. Falsely. I’d say anything to get my cuckold’s fix. God, I’m pathetic. “I just... um... I thought you might... be open to the idea?”

Clearly, the wrong thing to say. Luna looks at me like I’ve just slapped her.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she demands.

“You just...” I grope around. “It seemed like you and Ivy were really... getting along.”

Worse and worse. “Christ, Olive!” Luna explodes at me. “Is that really what you think of me? I thought we talked about this when we started dating! We set boundaries! We’re monogamous. I’m starting to think only one of us is taking that seriously.”

“T-that’s not...” I spluttered. This was all going wrong. I had been hoping I’d be able to do this the decent way. “It’s just... I mean, don’t you think she’s hot?”

Somehow, Luna senses my warped intentions. Somehow, even though this is all new to her, she understands exactly what I’m fishing for with the question.

Fetish fuel.

“Gross,” she murmurs, scandalized.

The look in her eyes pierces right through me. I understand, in that moment, that I’m losing something forever. A measure of Luna’s respect. She might be willing to pretend this never happened, if I ask, but she’ll never actually forget it. If there was any part of my life that had been kept safe from Ivy, trapped, kept idyllic like a scene in a snow globe, it was my relationship with Luna. Now here I am, poisoning even that. As it shatters, the shards rain down on me, and the fresh knowledge of how fragile it always was makes them bite all the deeper.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper.

I’m ashamed. I really am. Luna’s scorn is like cold water, drenching my face. But somehow the shock doesn’t bring with it any clarity, any

sanity. Instead, it's like a baptism. It feels rapturous.

Finally. Finally, Luna sees me the way I really am.

Inferior.

Like that night with Ivy, at the bar, it's a first taste that has me instantly hooked. As one voice at the back of my head screams at me to stop this, to stop ruining my life, another drives me to push harder, to debase myself further.

How disgusted can I make Luna? Can I get her to look at me the way Ivy does? The way I truly deserve?

I'd love to pretend that voice is Ivy's. But it's not. It's my own.

"I just..." Luna attempts, "can't understand why you'd ask me something like that. You love me, don't you?"

I nod.

"Then... why do you want to see me fucking somebody else?" Luna throws up her hands in despair, whilst I shiver with appalling eagerness. "I don't get it, Olive! I mean, I can't even imagine wanting something like that. And... god, why even call it 'cheating' if you're going to ask? It makes it sound so..."

She wants an explanation. She wants this to make sense. I'm not sure I can offer her that. What could I possibly say? How could I possibly explain the force that's bending my back; an overwhelming, cosmic need to bend every part of my life into the rightful shape Ivy has shown me?

"I just..." I flail uselessly. "I need it."

"To... be... satisfied?" Luna suggests, for want of a real answer. "Sexually?"

It's so much more than that—but I just nod.

"Right." Luna sighs, and sags. "So, um, it's basically a fetish. Right?"

Again, I nod. I suppose that's not inaccurate, at this point.

"Wow." Luna relaxes a little. Even smiles, very slightly. "I... I had no idea you were into that kind of thing, Olive."

She seems faintly comforted. It's just a fetish. Just a sick, twisted little fetish. Nothing to worry about. She can wrap her head around a fetish, however gross, and however vanilla our barely extant sex life is. I sense Luna's disgust for me abate, and I almost regret letting her see it that way.

"That's... really out there, though. Wow." Luna shakes her head. "Have you... always...?"

"It's... more of a recent thing, I guess." Not untrue.

"Right." She nods her head. Not a longstanding secret. Another comfort.

"So, um..." Need needles at me. As much as I should let it settle, I must press her. "Do you think... maybe..."

That earns me a sharp look. I can't help but relish it. "God, Olive," she says quietly. "Just give me a moment here."

I do. A series of looks passes over Luna's face. It's like she's trying to imagine what it would be like. She really is trying, for my sake. Eventually, though, the expression that sticks is plain, clear repulsion.

"No," Luna says, with an air of sobering finality. "I'm sorry, Olive- or, no, I'm not sorry. No. This is just a boundary for me. We're exclusive. That's something we agreed on, and I never want to break with that. Even if it's with your permission. I just... don't think that's something I can ever feel comfortable with." She glances at me. Her reproach softens. "Sorry."

I'm broken-hearted—but not for the reasons she thinks. What's eating at me isn't disappointment or dissatisfaction. It's the foreshock of exquisite shame and guilt beyond any I've yet known.

"Um..." Luna ventures anxiously. "You can be OK with that. Right?"

“Yeah,” I lie.

“Good.” Luna looks at me very seriously. “Don’t ask me again. I.. I don’t care what kind of porn you look at, or what kind of fantasies you enjoy. But I really want to pretend this conversation never happened. Understand?”

I nod eagerly. “Of course.” She smiles at me. I return the gesture. “Hey,” I suggest. “How about you sit right here while I go make us some tea?”

“That sounds really good right now,” Luna agrees, trembling slightly as the tension of confrontation fades. “Thanks.”

I’m all nods and smiles—all the way into the kitchen and out of her sight. Then, I just barely manage to set the kettle boiling before I slump over the nearest counter, overwhelmed by something halfway between blinding panic and delirious arousal.

I can’t believe what I’m about to do.

I can’t do this to Luna, can I?

But I can. I will. I know I’m going to.

I have to. Otherwise, Luna won’t cheat on me with Ivy, and that’s more important than anything.

It’s what’s best for her, too. I know that now. Luna can’t see that for herself, so I have to help her. Ivy knows how to treat a woman. She knows how to show Luna a good time. Better than I ever will, that’s for sure.

I’m just a girl. Luna deserves a woman.

It’s for the best.

I tell myself that, like I’m doing something altruistic. Like I’m not soaking my panties at the prospect.

Ah, I’m the worst. I’m pathetic. Beyond pathetic. Beyond inferior. I’m a spectator, and that’s all I’ll ever be. Not someone who does.

Someone who watches. And I want to watch so, so bad. I get off on watching, just like I get off on sending Ivy money.

The worst. And I've already betrayed Luna so deeply. I don't deserve her.

But Ivy does.

She deserves to take everything for me.

The kettle boils. With unsteady hands, I pour into two mugs. Then I reach into my pocket, and retrieve the object Ivy gave to me when she left work earlier.

A pill.

I know exactly what it is. Ivy told me as much, in no uncertain terms.

It's the drug she's been dosing me with, whenever she needs to hammer home my utter, abject subjection to her will.

And it's the drug I'm going to dose Luna with.

That's what Ivy told me to do. I don't have to. Just like asking Luna to cheat on me—I don't have to. Ivy isn't here to look over my shoulder and egg me on. I could defy her. I could lie to her, if necessary. Try to worm my way out of it. Instead, as her words swim in my head, as I feel her great presence above me, looming over me, looking down on me, I...

I twist the two halves of the pill apart and let the white powder fall into Luna's tea.

In just a few moments, it's dissolved. Invisible. Now there's no going back.

At least, that's what I tell myself, as I pick up both mugs of tea and start to bring them back out to my girlfriend. There's no going back.

Is that really true?

I could pour the tea out. Drop the mug. I could tell Luna. I could confess everything. Maybe she'd understand. Maybe she'd be able to save

me from Ivy.

But then I'd never again experience the privilege of being able to kneel before Ivy, and kiss her feet, and suck her cock, and finger my worthless cunt for her amusement. I'd be back to pretending to be a normal, regular person, just like everybody else.

That just wouldn't be right.

I'm inferior. I know it. Everybody should know it. That knowledge has transformed me. It has infected me with base, disgusting needs. I need to send my hard-earned money to a superior woman. I need to work long, punishing hours to make up for the insolence of pretending I ever stood above Ivy in the corporate hierarchy.

I need to be cheated on.

That's why I can't go back.

"Here you go," I say, as I put Luna's mug down in front of her, keeping a pleasant smile plastered to my face in the hopes of hiding the way my hands are shaking from nauseous excitement.

"Thanks." Luna notices my shakiness right away—but she doesn't see it as suspicious. She grips my hand reassuringly. "I love you, Olive."

"I love you too, Luna."

The words feel like treason, coming out of my mouth. They make my blood burn in my veins. I'm a storm of conflicting urges. In one instant, as Luna lifts her mug and blows across it, I'm a heartbeat away from slapping it out of her hand. In another, I'm utterly placid, virtually entranced by the sight of the drugged substance in her cup, all but drooling at the prospect of her drinking it.

"I was thinking, um..." As she speaks, Luna brings the mug to her lips, all but touching it as she judges the temperature. "Maybe we could... I don't know, try to spice things up a bit? Pick up a few, uh, toys? I think there's a store, actually, just a few blocks away. Perhaps we could go together, sometime? I mean, I'm not really sure what I'd... but, well, it doesn't seem like a bad idea."

She's trying. She's really trying to offer me an olive branch.

And all I can think about is what's going to happen when she takes a sip. About how awful it's going to feel. About how good it's going to feel.

Ivy really did a number on me, didn't she? I'm a twisted knot of fetishes and incapacities.

And now Luna will...

"N-no!" I blurt out stupidly.

Luna pauses, surprised by my desperate tone. Lowers her cup. "You don't want to?"

The pendulum swings back the other way. Ivy's grip binds down tight around my mind.

"N-no, um..." I blather, feverish. "I m-meant... no, it's n-not a bad idea."

"Oh, right." Luna relaxes again. I'm acting weird, obviously—but is that really a surprise? "Soon, then. Maybe the weekend?"

"Uh-huh," I pant.

She's lifting her cup again. Blowing on the hot tea again.

And then...

She drinks.

I twitch. I squeeze my legs tight together. It takes everything I have not to moan.

Partly, it's that I know exactly what it feels like. I know exactly how quickly Ivy's drug works to dull the wits and slow the mind. I know how completely and effortlessly it can break someone. As I watch Luna sipping her hot tea, I can just imagine Ivy's presence entering her. Infecting her.

And Ivy isn't even here.

It's just me. I am a tool of Ivy Robinson's will.

Fuck, that's so hot. The thought that I could serve as an extension of such a superior woman. Surreptitiously, I slip a hand down my front and start massaging myself through my pants.

It's OK. A few moments, and Luna will be too far gone to notice.

"Any ideas about what kind of..." Luna pauses to take a larger sip of tea. "Of..." She looks at her tea and frowns. "This tastes a little... did you use some kind of... artificial sweetener?"

There it is. In her voice. That spaciness. It makes my brain catch, and my body boil.

"D-don't worry about it," I pant, my unnatural, fetishistic lust drooling out in my voice. "It's nothing to worry about."

"Nothing to... worry about..." Luna echoes.

Fuck.

"T-take another sip," I encourage. I can't help it. "You'll like it."

Luna sips absently. "Like it..." she echoes. "Another..." Another sip.

With barely a hint of resistance, she's gone. In the grip of the drug.

In the grip of my words.

My heart is pounding. Luna has never been more mine. I could say anything to her. Do anything with her.

If I warn her about Ivy now, she'll be safe from her forever. She'll trust me implicitly regarding the danger, and what Ivy's made me do. Even now, this is salvageable.

Or, of course, I could do as Ivy would. I could have my way with Luna. I love her, of course, but like any relationship, ours has its little frictions and incompatibilities. Those could be a thing of the past. I could make her dote on me eternally. I could make her perform my

every little fantasy. My every deep-seated fetish.

It would be wrong, obviously. But in a position like this, who wouldn't be tempted? In a way, it would be like beating Ivy. Plucking the fruit she's drooling over before she has a chance to take a beat. I'd feel so superior. So powerful.

And it would be so easy. Luna is sitting right there, placid and vacant, sipping at her drugged tea. She's yet to even realize what's happening to her.

All I need to do is lean over and whisper in her ear, and she'll be mine forever.

"Y-you," I drool pathetically, as my fingers find their way inside my panties. "Y-you think Ivy Robinson is t-the hottest woman in the world."

"The... world?" Luna's eyes widen. There's the faintest hint of shock at what I'm saying, but it's quickly swept away by the sheer hyperbole of my statement. Most wouldn't take it quite so literally, but in the grip of the drug, Luna's usual mental filters take a back seat. "H-hot..."

As the meat of the suggestion dawns on her, pink taints her pretty cheeks. Mine are already dark red, and Luna's arousal quickens the pace of my fingers.

"S-so hot," I breathe. "You'd... hgng... do a-anything for a chance with her."

"A... chance? With... her?" It escapes Luna's soft, parted lips like a sigh of longing. It's only natural; to her—and to me—Ivy's the hottest woman in the world. "A... anything?"

She's less certain about that. Her reluctance tugs at my heartstrings. It makes me think twice about what I'm doing.

Unfortunately, it also just makes giving in to Ivy even hotter.

"Anything," I affirm. The repetition sinks it twice as deep into her psyche. "Even... g-god..." I can barely choke it out through intermingled shame and pleasure. "E-e-even cheat on me!"

“C-cheat?” A frown threatens to break over Luna’s placid face. She twitches, fighting to rouse herself. Swimming against the current. “N... no... t-that-“

“Yes,” I insist, eagerness driving me. “You’d c-cheat on me. W-with—fuck—Ivy!”

I need it. I need it so much. It’ll feel so right.

“B-but... but...” Luna is settling again. The force of my words have her bound in a knot. “Nnot...”

I’ve been there, so I know exactly what’s going on in her head. I know that a new conviction is warring against an old one—and winning. Finding Ivy hot should mean nothing compared to Luna’s deep-seated aversion to unfaithfulness. It would on any other day. But today, with Ivy’s drug in her system, her entire system of values is softening and warping. Not cheating on me is becoming less and less important to her, and simultaneously, Ivy’s sheer animal magnetism is looming large in her mind.

I know how deep it goes. It’s not just about one decision. Luna’s becoming the kind of person who might cheat on their partner, if the other woman was hot enough.

And I’m here to put my thumb on the scales.

“You think,” I pant, my voice a breathy, creepy, perverted whimper, “c-cheating on me with Ivy is hot.”

Luna twitches. It’s like she’s shaking her head—but blushing, too.

“R-really hot!” It explodes out of me. A vile, humiliating need. God, my panties are soaked.

“Really... hot?” She can’t stop it washing over her. I can tell. Her eyes widen. A new fetish is born inside her.

What am I doing? Why am I ruining the woman I love like this?

Because I have to. Because I need to. Because Ivy’s superior, and she told me to.

Because more than anything else, I want Luna to cheat on me.

“You w-want to cheat on me.” The sound of my wetness as my fingers plunge in and out of my dripping cunt soils my words.

“Cheat... want?” Luna’s still twitching—but somewhere along the line, the shakes of her head became nods.

“Yes!” I seize on her implicit agreement. “You want to cheat on me. You want to c-cuck me.”

Ivy taught me that word. People call it that as a fetish, apparently. Luna seems to recognize it the same way; a sharp gasp escapes her lips.

“C-cuck... yeah,” she hisses. Her body is tense. Flushed.

“Cheating on me with Ivy is so—fucking—hot,” I pant, stringing it all together. “So hot you’d do a-anything.”

“Anything,” Luna drools, nodding emphatically. “Anything.”

That’s it. It’s part of her now.

She wants to cheat on me.

She’ll cheat on me.

That’s what Ivy told me to ensure. But I can’t stop here.

“Ivy i-is better than me!” I bleat, masturbating furiously. “I-Ivy will make you feel b-better than I can.”

“Better... than...” Luna turns her head to look at me, just slightly. Beneath the glassy haze in her eyes, a new emotion forms. A kind of pity. “Oh...”

For just a moment, I white-out. I cum all over my fingertips. This feels perfect. This feels inevitable. Sharing the truth Ivy taught me with Luna, at long last, drives me into an ecstatic frenzy.

“S-so much better!” I scream. “I-I can’t even compare to her. She’s j-

just so much hotter.”

Nothing has ever been as twisted or as beautiful to me as the way pity and contempt begin to taint Luna’s drug-addled face, even as her body begins to heave with longing for Ivy. It’s a car crash. I have to drink it all in. Every jagged angle, every crumpled surface.

And I’m the one behind the wheel.

“Ivy is i-incredible,” I babble through my ongoing orgasm, slumped back against the couch, desperately fingering myself. “S-superior! Superior to m-m-me.”

“Superior...” Luna echoes breathily. “Incredible.”

I’m a sweaty, gross, soaked mess, hunched over, rubbing my cunt, but Luna’s incapable of registering that. She remains calm and placed, overwhelmed by the picture I’m painting. By the words I’m writing into her head.

By her newfound adulation for Ivy Robinson.

“Perfect!” I scream, an ejaculation, bursting from me. I need Luna to see the world like I do. I need to show her the worst parts of myself, so that she understands. “N-n-nothing like me.”

Luna nods. She understands. I can see her joining the dots. If Ivy is perfect because she’s nothing like me, then I’m...

“F-f-fuck,” I whimper, feverish. I’m making myself cum again and again and again to my own abasement, and each orgasm worsens my delirium. “Y-you love me, but you’ll never forget Ivy’s b-better!”

“I love you,” Luna tells me slowly, absently.

It sounds different from usual. Fully loving, yes, but poisoned by the other woman who now looms large in her thoughts. She loves me, but she’s thinking about somebody else. She’s more impressed by somebody else.

I cum again.

And again.

And again.

“C-cheat on me!” I find myself begging pathetically, after saying goodness knows what else. “I... I f-fucking deserve it!”

Luna nods. She can’t stop nodding. She’s like one of those ridiculous dashboard toys as I indelibly mark her mind with my sickest urges. I need to stop. I know I need to stop. This is going way too far. Farther even than Ivy instructed. But I can’t help it. I’m out of control. The fantasies that are filling my head are so sharp and biting they leave me blind to any restraint, to any caution.

“You l-love cheating!” I moan deliriously, and cum yet again as Luna nods.

“Cheating... love,” she echoes. There’s no longer any hint of resistance, just a certain, breathy eagerness—suppressed beneath the drug, like everything else, but palpable enough to make me even more crazed.

“You w-want Ivy to s-s-steal you from meeee,” I whine.

Luna nods. An awful light is breaking through from behind her glassy eyes.

“I’m ju-ust a spectator! And sheeee’s a p-player!” I bleat, pouring Ivy’s twisted, degrading ideology from my broken brain into hers. “And y-you love it!”

Is she flushed? I can’t tell. I hope so. But compared to me, she still looks immaculate. She’s not a sweating, exhausted, slovenly mess of a girl like me. Luna is so calm and still. She looks beautiful. God, my girlfriend is so beautiful. In that moment, something innocent comes over me, and I just want to reach out and touch her. Maybe even just stroke her face.

But I can’t.

That’s not for me.

It's for Ivy.

At once, images flood my mind. Ivy, touching Luna's cheek with the intimacy of a lover. Ivy, kissing her. Ivy, undressing her. Ivy, bent over her. Ivy, plowing into her with her superior cock. Ivy, putting moans into Luna's mouth and her name on her lips. Ivy, turning my girlfriend into the very opposite of the pure, faithful, loyal, immaculate woman I love.

Ivy, shutting the door to our bedroom in my face, while Luna flashes me a smug, contemptuous smirk.

"Y-you... eager... cheating... b-bitch!" I scream, as my fingers plunge into myself one last time, bringing my bliss to a dizzying, orgasmic peak.

This orgasm is the one to last. It doesn't fade quickly. It lingers, my every heartbeat breaking a fresh wave of it across my body. I've never been quite so utterly, feverishly high on pleasure, not even with my lips wrapped around Ivy's perfect cock. It's all-consuming. I lose time from it. I can't tell whether I pass out or not.

Either way, once it recedes, my filthy appetites have finally had their fill. The fetish Ivy gave to me is sated, for the moment. But post-orgasmic clarity brings with it no comfort. Only horror.

I look at Luna.

What have I done to her?

It's too late for regrets. I know that. I know Ivy's drug is potent. Perhaps even permanent. I consider trying to brainwash Luna back to normal again before it wears off, as absurd as that sounds, but both fatigue and Ivy's iron commands prevent me. Instead, fucked stupid by my own fingers and fantasies, I simply sit there, watching, waiting for Luna to come to.

Praying that all the vile, perverted impulses I bequeathed to her don't take.

It's possible, right? Ivy's drug is potent, but not all-powerful. After the first time, I was still able to push back a little. I remember that, even if I can't help but consider my earlier resistance to be deluded hubris. I'm

sure one exposure isn't enough to warp Luna on any deep level. She's strong. She's principled! She was furious at me earlier for even suggesting that she and Ivy hook up.

Yes. That Luna will find her way back to me. I'm sure of it.

I cling to that hope—and when Luna eventually stirs, as if waking from sleep, and looks at me, my heart swells at the smile on her face. It's so genuine. So joyful. It reaches her eyes, which are full of simple delight at seeing me.

She's in love with me, and utterly pleased with me. It's so obvious.

I should never have been so worried.

That's what I think, right up until her smile twists into something devilish and knowing. And all too late, I realize that it's not me Luna is so pleased with.

It's what I had just been begging her for.

“Hey,” Luna says as she licks her lips, in a voice altogether unfamiliar to me. My one final, desperate hope is that when I look into Luna's eyes, I'll still see them clouded and addled by the drug—but no. They're perfectly sharp, and unmistakably lustful. “Actually... you have Ivy's number, right?”

I thought I was done. I really did. I thought my body's needs were completely expended. But on hearing that, I cum treasonously in my panties one last time.

CHAPTER FIVE

It's six forty-six PM. It's been another long day. Everybody else has long since gone home, but as usual I offered to stay late and work overtime. Another exhausting, boring week of corporate drudgery for Olive Barnes.

And Ivy Robinson is at my apartment, fucking my girlfriend.

I'm reading a quarterly fiscal report and typing up a summary and Ivy is fucking my girlfriend. It's completely dark here at work, the light from my desk lamp casting a long glow out the door of my office, and Ivy is fucking my girlfriend. I keep reaching for my coffee cup even though it was emptied a long time ago, even though caffeine would do nothing but further heighten my anxiety, and Ivy is fucking my girlfriend. The numbers and tables, profits and losses on the screen before me turn into a jumble of meaningless symbols as I scroll, my mind at a rolling boil, and Ivy is fucking my girlfriend. I keep trying to type, my fingers twitching over-eagerly at the keyboard, pantomiming the behavior of a good little office drone, and Ivy is fucking my girlfriend.

I pause. I stare at the screen. In my delirium, I actually typed out those words. *Ivy is fucking my girlfriend*. I peck at the backspace key, carefully erasing the letters one by one, but they remain fixed in my mind's eye, as bright as burning coals.

Ivy is fucking my girlfriend.

And it's so fucking hot.

That's not all it is, obviously. It's awful. It's a betrayal—in both directions. I drugged Luna into it, after all, and the guilt from that

remains unbearable. In exchange, she is cheating on me. She is giving herself into the arms of another woman. Jealousy rises inside me at the very thought, green and monstrous, matched only by my acute, overbearing sense of insecurity and inadequacy. Anger is there too, pale but certainly present; a distinct flavor of the unpleasant emotions that flash hot and cold by turns in my chest. Being cheated on like this is awful. It's unbearable. Of all the violations and humiliations I've suffered at Ivy's hands so far, this is easily the worst.

And yet—it's the hottest thing that's ever happened to me.

The result of that seething mass of contradictions is a never-ending barrage of intrusive thoughts. I cannot stop picturing Ivy and Luna together. I imagine their hands intertwining. I imagine their lips, pressing together. I imagine their fingertips, caressing. I imagine it all, from the first, tender seductions to the final, obscene acts. It won't stop. My mind's eye is my worst enemy. Every fantasy brings me to tears even as it makes me roll my hips beneath my desk with uncontainable need. I am useless. A beaten dog, scratching at its own wounds. I am beyond pathetic.

It's been like this all day, ever since Luna and Ivy calmly informed me of their plans together; Ivy, with an air of supreme, entitled malice and Luna with the eagerness of someone who's more excited to give a gift than they are for the recipient. As far as she's concerned, she's doing this for me—but in the single day since I brainwashed her, it's already become more than that. I went far beyond making her do it. I made her *want* it. I made her into an adulterer and now when she talks about what she'll do with Ivy, she glows with the thrill of self-discovery.

It's all my fault.

Or is it Ivy's fault? I've tried telling myself that. After all, she's drugged me dozens of times now. My mind is little more than her soft clay. I can sense her fingerprints all over my thoughts. I should find it easy to blame her.

I don't.

She was too clever for that. When Ivy remade me, she plucked strings that have been buried in me for years, whether I like them or not. When I think back over my experiences with her, there is no sharp change or discontinuity that I can make the fulcrum of my resentment.

No before to cling to, no after to reject. In college, I was her plaything. Today, I am her plaything. Ivy has done little more than strip away the pretense that things could ever be otherwise. She has laid bare the simple paradigm that defines our relationship.

Superior. Inferior.

I am inferior, and I've always known it. Today is the latest and finest proof. Today is the day Luna will see that for herself. Feel it for herself. Taste it for herself. Since Ivy left work early a couple of hours ago, I've been consumed by thoughts. What are they doing right now? Have they started? Have they finished? A fresh cycle of images and fantasies washes over me. I begin drooling on myself. It feels so right, in a poisonous way, but it's more than I can handle.

Abruptly, something gives way.

What am I doing? Why am I going along with this? I love Luna. I need Luna. She's my girlfriend, and while we've had problems, she's always been so patient with me. And I'm about to just let somebody else take her? I'm about to just let Ivy Robinson sink her teeth into her?

I'm about to just sit here at my office desk in a horny fugue and sleepwalk my way into losing everything that truly matters to me?

It's six forty-seven PM and Ivy is fucking my girlfriend.

I have to stop this.

I can't tell if that thought is hubris or lucidity. All I know is that I can't go through with this. In a fever, I leap out of my chair and race out of my workplace. I throw myself into my car and drive home with such reckless abandon it's a miracle I don't cause a crash. I'm not thinking about the road or the speed limit. Only about Luna. I'm trying to convince myself that I can still salvage something of my life.

I'm not too late. I'm not.

Luna won't have gone through with this. She's always valued being faithful and true so highly. She's strong. She's not like me. She doesn't want to fuck Ivy. One little pill can't change all that.

She's come to her senses. I'm sure of it.

I have to be sure of it.

I park the car. I hammer the elevator call button until it comes. I race through the hallways of my apartment building, frantic to save Luna from my sins—even though picturing what I might be about to walk in on makes me so wet I can feel it dripping down my thighs as I walk. Once I reach our door I spend a long moment fumbling with the key before I manage to slide it into the lock. As I push my way across the threshold, I'm ready to call something out—although whether it's a profession of love for Luna or a challenge to Ivy, I'm not quite sure.

What I see when I step inside steals the breath from my lungs and the wind from my sails.

I was hoping for normality. I was braced for debauchery. Somehow, the scene that greets me is even more nauseating—in part because of how normal it might seem to anybody but me.

They're sitting on the couch together, Ivy and Luna. Both clothed, thank god—Luna in one of her shorter dresses, Ivy in a robe. The robe makes me twitch, but at least it's closed. Perhaps there's an innocent explanation. The two of them are pressed close together, Luna leaning into Ivy, Ivy's arm stretched languidly across her shoulder. Perhaps there's an innocent explanation. The two of them are in the midst of happy conversation; Luna laughs at some offhand remark, her fingertips brushing fondly and tenderly against Ivy's rich skin as she does. Perhaps there's an innocent explanation.

My heart is a jackhammer; to calm it, I try to muster that explanation. I tell myself; nothing has happened. They're just talking. That's all. Ivy came here, as planned, but Luna decided not to go through with it. Now they're simply chatting as they wait for me to come home. And why not? They seem to get along well. Luna doesn't know what Ivy is. It's normal enough for friends to get a little affectionate when they're sitting and talking. Luna probably made them tea, and I bet Ivy spilled some on herself. She changed into a robe. Her clothes are just drying in the other room. That's all.

That's all.

Please, let that be all.

I wish my cunt was saying the same thing.

I stand there in the entranceway, silently praying, until Ivy and Luna turn their heads to me.

“Oh hi, babe,” Luna says, smiling. Her voice isn’t breathy, is it? “We weren’t expecting you for a little longer.”

Does she have to put it like that? ‘We’?

“We did indeed,” Ivy purrs. She seems surprised by my early arrival, but only faintly. It’s perfectly clear that she doesn’t view my presence as a challenge. Merely as entertainment. “I hope you’ve been enjoying yourself just as much at work as we have here.”

As one, the two of them giggle. Their peals of laughter curdle into mockery in my ears. Ivy’s words threaten to pierce my desperately fragile hope that all will be well. What am I doing here? I’m just standing in the door to my own living room. I should say something. Do something. Assert myself.

I can’t. It’s already going wrong. As ever, I am my own worst enemy.

Simply looking at Ivy threatens to unmake me. Her superiority is undeniable. She’s tall, strong, radiant. She’s everything I am not. Now that I’m in her presence once more, all the little worms she planted in my brain start to burrow deeper, threatening to overturn the brief resurgence of my social survival instinct.

Doesn’t she deserve everything from me? Doesn’t she have the right to take whatever she wants? And don’t I want to give it to her? My world has become a thing of sharp paradigms: superior/inferior, player/spectator, woman/girl. They begin to reassert themselves upon my thinking, and I wonder what right I have to be here at all. Shouldn’t I still be at work, busily lining Ivy’s bank account?

Shouldn’t I be disappointed Ivy isn’t currently marking Luna’s womb with her cock?

They look so good together, too. I know that thought is being whispered to me from the most ruined, poisoned depths of my drug-

broken brain—but I’m still listening. I can’t help it. They really do look good together. Ivy is tall, handsome, stylish; Luna, small, cute, mousy. They bring out each other’s charms. It’s like Luna belongs at Ivy’s side, clinging to her arm, doting on her every word. It’s like she belongs in Ivy’s lap, arms wrapped around her neck, lips presented upward, yearning for her kiss. It’s like she belongs beneath her as Ivy mounts her on my bed, her legs-

I twitch. I whimper. Was I going to say something? Was I supposed to protest?

No. Of course not.

All is right with the world.

“Come on in, Olive,” Ivy invites, kindly beckoning me into my own apartment. “Don’t just stand there. I’ve certainly been making myself at home.”

Once, Luna would have been the first to leap to my defense against a boss overstepping the proper boundaries. Now, she simply giggles along. I stumble a few paces inside.

“How was work, babe?” Luna asks me, smiling. A normal question. Normal is good. Normal is the only thing keeping me going.

“I... uh...” I stammer stupidly. “It... g-good, I... you know... u-uh...”

“You weren’t too distracted?” Ivy puts in.

Both of them laugh. The rush of heat I feel is blinding.

“D-d-distracted?” I bleat. It’s like she knows. Of course she knows. She knows everything about me. That’s just how she is. “No, I-... well, um, a l-little, but-“

“Good,” Ivy interrupts. “Really, it’s a shame you couldn’t be here.”

Another twitch. And I notice that Luna is beginning to turn a deep shade of red.

“B-be here f-for what?” My voice sputters out of me like a boiling,

overflowing pot.

“For the two of us getting to know each other, of course.”

This time I’m not the only one to twitch. Luna does too. I can’t tell if the look on her face is shame, or excitement. I have to hope for excitement, as awful as that is. If it’s shame, then I’m already too late.

“H-h-h-hhhhhow did it g-go?” The way my voice breaks betrays the deep voyeurism underpinning my question. My head is still swimming with fantasies, and I keep losing track of what kind of answer I’m hoping for.

“Very well,” Ivy assures me smoothly. “I think Luna here is feeling entirely satisfied.”

That look on her face—pink, flushed, delicate—is only growing. Whether it’s shame or excitement, I know its true meaning: succumbing.

I have to stop this.

But I can’t. In Ivy’s presence I am a stammering child. Raising my voice to her, let alone my fists, would be an inconceivable act of hubris—not to mention useless. She’s better than me. She’ll always win. I could try to convince myself otherwise, but any spare willpower I might muster for the task is being drained away by a constant sequence of lurid fantasies, each more explicit and obscene than the last.

“W-what... what... h-happened?” I finally ask. I’m beyond hoping. I need to know.

Or maybe it’s just my cuckold’s voyeurism getting the better of me.

Ivy looks at me keenly. She’s enjoying, I can tell, drawing this process out. “Why don’t you sit down, Olive?” she suggests. “No need to stand on ceremony.”

I nod awkwardly, immediately bending to her wish. But how? Ivy has taken my place on the little couch Luna and I usually cuddle up on. We’re not used to guests. I’ll have to pull up a chair. But when I had off toward the dining table, Ivy swiftly halts me.

“No, no,” she says dismissively. “No need. You can sit right here.”

She points down at the floor directly in front of her.

My heart skips a beat. She can't be serious—but she is, and the worst part is that I am too. I know at once that I don't have the strength to fight her on this. My every instinct guides me towards obedience. Ivy is a superior woman. I have no right to disobey.

I approach her. I sink to my knees.

I glance, of course, at Luna. It's the first time she's seen any real hint of the sick little submissive dynamic I've sunken into for Ivy. Shock, disgust, betrayal—all these, I expect to see on her face. They'd all hurt, but not quite as much as the overawed, adoring look in Luna's cheeks and parted lips.

She's not even looking at me. She has eyes only for Ivy.

From my knees, it's even harder to imagine disobeying Ivy. It's even harder not to want her to have her way with Luna—if it hasn't already happened. I'm closer to them now, and I can taste a certain scent in the air. Sweat, tinged by something else, warm and passionate and intimate. My eyes bulge. My arousal spikes. It doesn't help that I'm used to servicing Ivy from this position. Beyond the drug, she has trained me as finely as Pavlov did his dogs. I am quite literally salivating—but all the same, it feels hallucinatory when Ivy reaches down and begins to unfold her robe.

“W-w-w-w-what... what a-are... you... p-please...” My voice breaks like I'm a pubescent teenager. I throw my eyes to Luna, begging for mercy.

I'm facing down the final collapse of fantasy and reality. My safe place, my sanctuary, my stable domestic life, is about to be speared through on the tip of Ivy's cock. Mercy is a foregone conclusion. Ivy's desire for discretion is the only thing I can hope to appeal to.

No use. She parts her robe. Her shaft, slick and hard, springs free. My vision telescopes. This is my world. She taught me that.

I can't look at Luna. My eyes are fixed. I can't see the look on her face. I don't want her to see me like this—but I do, I want it so very much. There it is again, that poisonous sense of rightness. I crave Luna

seeing me the way I see myself. I yearn for my every carefully curated insecurity and doubt to be carved into reality. I don't deserve a sanctuary. I don't deserve a stable domestic life. It was always just pretending. I know what I am.

Inferior. Inferior. Inferior.

"You know what to do," Ivy tells me firmly.

I do. I bend forward, open my mouth, and wrap it adoringly around Ivy's cock.

And I taste Luna.

Our sex life has never been particularly active, but all the same, I'd never mistake Luna's taste. It's all over Ivy's cock, as I willingly take it into my throat. I can tell, at once, that Ivy planned this. That she wanted me to have this moment, wanted to see the awful recognition dawn in my eyes. All my hopes shatter, and as I wave goodbye to the quiet, sweet, innocent relationship Luna and I once had, I experience a single instant of perfect despair.

It breaks me.

There's no way a fragile ego like mine could ever survive this—being forced to deep throat the woman who just fucked my girlfriend. Shrinking is my only survival strategy. My hope, my self-respect, my pride—whatever's left of these things, I sacrifice. At once, as tears well up in my eyes, I become the smallest and worst version of myself, and sure enough, it's precisely what Ivy has told me to be: an eager, inferior little pervert who gets off on being cheated on.

It's the only way to cope. And, fuck, it feels so good.

I wanted this, didn't I? That's what I remind myself, as I lick and clean Ivy's shaft with increasing eagerness. I begged Luna to do it. Hell, I drugged her into it. All to satisfy my disgusting little fetishes. What was I so worked up about? I should be grateful.

Thank you. Thank you, Ivy, for stealing my girlfriend.

I force my fetishistic euphoria to the top of my mind until it's all I

feel. I say it with my mouth, as I worship Ivy's huge, hard cock. I say it with my eyes, wide with gratitude and awe as I blink back the senseless tears that keep falling onto my cheeks. I say it with my fingers and my cunt, reaching down to finger-fuck myself there on the ground. I can't help it, and the pleasure makes not thinking all the easier. It's so easy to become a willing participant in my own obliteration. That's the lesson Ivy's cock has for me today.

I can be happy here, like this. All I need to do is snuff myself out until I am nothing more than this.

But what does Luna think? My girlfriend, my beloved. I glance at her, hoping only for more disgust, more humiliation, more pleasure. The look on her face now is one of intense embarrassment. Like me, she's always been a little prudish. It's hard for her to just sit there while I noisily, messily suck her new lover's cock. She blushes, she squirms, she clings even tighter to Ivy, sitting tall and confident. It's like she doesn't want to be here.

But there's something else too, something that grows larger and darker in her face with each passing moment. A certain sinister fascination. She has, of course, cheated on me, but until now that has been a private, one-time affair. Easily intelligible, even if it's new to her. But this? This is something else. This is something entirely foreign; a twisted, lopsided love triangle that her life now pivots around.

Once, it would have disgusted her. Not anymore. I have infected her with my sickness. She looks at me, and she sees an inferior little girl. She looks at Ivy and she sees a real, superior woman. She looks at what we are doing, and she sees something as simple and natural as a lioness tearing into a gazelle. The suggestions I drugged her with are slotting into place. This is, to her, a revelation. It feels as miraculous as revelation always does.

I know that feeling first-hand.

"Good," Ivy coos eventually. "Now her."

Without a second thought, I shift over to Luna. She looks briefly hesitant, but a look from Ivy quickly reassures her. Luna spreads her legs and hikes up her skirt. She's wearing nothing underneath.

But something sticky and white drools from her well-used cunt.

I dive into my task with relish. I taste Luna—just like Ivy’s cock, only fresher—and I taste Ivy’s cum; that, too, now a familiar flavor. It’s good. It’s all so good. The worse, the better. The more humiliating it gets, the better I feel.

And what could be more humiliating than this?

Luna is feeling good too. That much is clear from the way she whimpers and twitches and folds her thighs around my head. That’s new. Normally, she’s as mousy and innocent in bed as she is outside it. But thanks to my words and Ivy’s drug, she is changing. Something sensual in her is coming free. Her moans are almost as greedy as my tongue as I eat her out; I keep pushing deeper, trying to lap up every last drop Ivy left inside her. Like I’m saving her from being soiled, somehow.

Too late for that. Much, much too late.

“Very good, Olive,” Ivy purrs, as I bring Luna to something approaching an orgasm. I can’t make her cum like Ivy can; I know that in my bones. But at least I can clean up after her. “Sloppy seconds suits you.”

I gasp. I throb. “T-thank you,” I bleat.

I mean it. I am grateful. Sloppy seconds—a fine reward, for a spectator like me.

“That was...” Luna says quietly. Her world is expanding. I’m shrinking to nothing in her eyes. But that’s OK. Ivy’s so much better than I ever was. “Wow.”

“Olive,” Ivy says. “Why don’t you go and make some coffee? For Luna and yourself. None for me.”

I take her meaning at once. Chills race down my spine. What can I do but obey? “Yes, Ivy.”

I’ve been her slave in the office for weeks. Now I’m her slave in my own home. With the meekness of a servant, I stand and shuffle off into the kitchen to prepare a pot of coffee.

When I return, Ivy and Luna are much as I first found them: Ivy, tall, resplendent, effortlessly dominant, Luna, intoxicated, doting, clinging. A few minutes in another room has done nothing to dispel my delirium. I set two cups of coffee down where Ivy indicates, and then focus on imprinting each and every moment of the two of them together into my memory.

For me to masturbate to later, naturally.

“Here.” Ivy passes one cup to Luna, and slides the other toward me. Luna doesn’t see her slip the pills into the coffee, but I do—and say nothing. “Drink up. In fact, why don’t you sit here, Olive?”

She stands, and allows me to sit beside Luna. The way Luna looks faintly disappointed by the exchange inflicts on me a new and rapturous feeling of abasement.

As we nurse our steaming cups, though, Luna does spare a moment to check in with me.

“So...” she ventures, a touch bashfully. “Was it as good as you wanted it to be?”

It was unbearable. I feel like my heart is breaking in two. “Yeah,” I pant, voice breathy and wet. “It was a-amazing. It felt so good.”

And that’s true too.

“I’m glad to hear that.” Luna looks relieved. My answer has unburdened her. Should I be grateful for that? Or simply afraid?”

“A-and... was it g-good for you?” I ask. The way my voice drools out in a needy whimper makes it entirely obvious what kind of answer I’m hoping for, even if a tiny part of my brain screams otherwise.

Luna’s face turns a deep shade of red. She can’t meet my eyes. Eventually, the truth comes from her lips in the faint, fond exhale of someone reliving a treasured memory. “Yeah. Yes. Ivy’s so... God, yes.”

It’s all I can do not to start touching myself all over again.

“But, um,” Luna adds, after a moment spent savoring the reminiscence, “are you sure you’re OK with this? I know you asked, but... I want to be sure. It’s a lot, and you look... well...”

Clearly she lacks the words for the precise kind of wrecked I look.

Nonetheless, Luna’s question is so stunningly benevolent it brings tears to my eyes. Even now, even after what has transpired, she offers me this chance to claw my way out of hell. All I need to do is tell her the truth. All I need to do is tell her that I can’t handle it. She’d understand, I’m sure. She’s not too far gone for that, even now. We could cuddle and cry and reaffirm our faith to one another. We could share our fears and pains, and enjoy a moment of comfort. Share in the joy of a connection rebuilt.

Except...

Except I can tell what kind of answer Luna is looking for. There is a hunger to her. It’s there in the slight wideness of her eyes, and the parted eagerness of her lips. She’s already looking forward to the next time.

And who am I to deny it to her?

“Of c-course I am,” I promise. In the end, it’s the arousal that makes the choice. I’m a stupid, lesser girl and a slave to whatever gets me off—which most certainly includes Luna’s newfound predilection for infidelity. A horny, utterly stupid smile comes to my face. “I asked, right?”

“Right.” Luna shares my smile. “Course.”

There it is, then. All her doubts put to rest. Now she can go on cheating without hesitation.

Fuck.

If I were alone, I’d already be fucking myself stupid. But I am not alone. We are not alone.

“Drink up,” Ivy reminds us poisonously. “Your coffee is getting cold.”

I take a sip. Luna does too. As in all things, there’s no point fighting

her over this.

Within moments, the drug takes that possibility away from Luna and me once and for all.

I see it dawn on her face before I feel it take hold on my mind: that strange high, the sense of utter, elated gullibility that leaves me hanging on Ivy Robinson's every word. Our realities grow soft and malleable, ready to be deformed and reshaped beneath a sculptor's firm fingers. I find an unnatural joy in the thought that even though Ivy has made plain her intention to come between Luna and I, in this moment we are closer than ever, our drunk, brainwashed expressions the perfect mirror of one another's.

Once we have drifted deep enough into our stupors, Ivy begins.

"Olive," she addresses me. Her voice is musical, and my name calls me instantly to attention. "What are you?"

A warm smile comes to my face. It's a nice, simple question. Even I can get my head around it.

Better yet, I know the answer! I can please Ivy.

"I'm inferior," I reply happily, dreamily.

The echo that comes from right beside me sends a chill racing down my spine.

"You're... inferior," Luna agrees.

She... why...

Oh. Right.

I'm inferior.

Yes. That's right. I know that.

But... Luna...?

"I'm inferior," I find myself echoing, even more distantly.

It's then that I realize what's happening, slow and stupid as I might be. Ivy's drug leaves us open to suggestions. Any suggestions—even those coming from each other's lips. In a moment of awe, I see Ivy's design laid out before me. Luna and I will brainwash each other over and over again, each of us a diminishing echo of the other, each of us bringing the other lower every time we open our mouths.

And all Ivy needs to do is ask a few, simple questions.

"Good," Ivy murmurs, grinning mercilessly. "And what else are you?"

What else am I?

I know the answer. I hear it in her voice, and it rises to my lips before I can stop it.

"I'm a s-spectator."

It's more true now than ever, isn't it?

"You're... a... spectator," Luna echoes. I can sense her wrapping her head around the notion. Swallowing it.

And as I hear it in her voice, I do the same.

I'm a spectator.

I watch.

I don't touch. I don't play.

I watch. That's what spectators do. Even I know that.

I'm not like Ivy.

"I'm a spectator," I murmur.

It's true.

"That's right," Ivy affirms. "And what else?"

We could be here for hours. There are so many truths Ivy has etched into my soul.

It's just a question of which one floats to the surface first.

"I'm a p-pervert." I certainly feel like one, after what I just did.

"You're... a pervert," Luna nods along. The words sink into her—and then into me.

"I'm a pervert," I echo blankly.

I am.

I already knew it.

But all the same, I feel myself getting wetter.

"What else?" Ivy presses.

"I'm..." The answer comes slower now, "Your... own personal wallet."

I echo what Ivy has told me. Luna echoes me. A chain of brainwashing.

"Y-you're... her own... personal wallet?"

A hint of confusion in her voice. I suppose that makes sense. She hasn't been introduced to this facet of my subjugation yet.

Maybe she's angry.

Maybe she's disgusted.

Either way, she will accept it.

"I'm her own personal wallet," I repeat. Heat blossoms through my chest, and between my thighs.

"You're her own personal wallet."

Luna echoes me again, and in her quiet voice, barely a breath, I hear acceptance.

Just like that, it's normal.

My financial domination at Ivy's hands is woven into the tapestry of my life and my relationship, whether I want it to be or not. And there's no going back.

The heat grows.

"Good," Ivy purrs. "What else?"

"I... I..." Her insistent questioning forces me to pry deep into the churning mass of psychosexual insecurities Ivy has left me with. However deep I go, there's no escaping her. "I-I'm just a little girl. N-not a real woman."

The negative is a necessary qualifier. In my mind, it goes hand-in-hand with the first part.

Ivy is everything I am not. That is what matters.

"You're... a little girl," Luna echoes. "Not a... a real woman."

The way she says it is devastating. Slowly, at first, her drugged mind straining to wrap itself around the enormity of the concept. But then, confidence comes. Agreement. Acceptance. And by the end, I hear the condescension seeping into Luna's pretty, loving voice.

In her eyes, I am no longer a real woman.

Not that I am in mine, either.

"I'm a little girl," I agree, signing my own ego's death warrant. "Not a r-real woman."

This is not the first time I've had that thought impressed on me, but it lands heavily all the same.

I shrink in my seat. I quiver.

I am a little girl in the presence of women.

Compared to Luna, let alone Ivy, I am hopelessly unworthy.

The best I can hope for is not to take up space, and to be of use to my betters.

It seems more right than ever that they get to fuck each other—and I don't.

“Very good.” Ivy seems satisfied with my abject self-destruction. She turns her attention to Luna now—but I'm still the one she addresses. “And what is she?”

She?

Luna?

“She...” I'm on uncertain ground. My brain is sludge. “S-she's my girlfriend.”

As Luna repeats the sentence, Ivy laughs at me in a cruel, condescending way that threatens to put tears in my eyes.

“That's right, I suppose,” Ivy concedes. “But what does she think of me?”

That triggers the memory. I provide the answer excitedly, before its significance dawns on me.

“She thinks you're the hottest woman in the world,” I supply. “She'd do anything for a chance with you.”

“I think she's the hottest woman in the world.” Luna's dreamy echo curdles my blood. “I'd do anything for a chance with her.”

“S-she thinks you're the h... hottest woman in the world.” The drug compels me to affirm Luna's new world-view. My feeble effort to fight it only brings a tremulous eagerness into my voice. “She'd d-do anything for a chance with you.”

“What does she think,” Ivy licks her lips, “about cheating on you with

me?”

I know this answer too.

I wish I didn't, but I just saw the proof with my very own eyes.

I can still taste it on my lips.

“S-she thinks,” I whine, “cheating on me with you is h-hot.”

“I think cheating on you with Ivy is... is hot,” Luna agrees.

So much less resistance than last time.

She sounds so eager.

Arousal churns within me.

“So,” Ivy continues with soft menace, after Luna and I finish echoing one another. “What is she?”

Oh. I know this.

The answer comes to me at once.

But...

I have to fight it.

This might be the last chance I ever get to save Luna.

If there was ever a time to fight Ivy, it's now.

“She's,” I oblige, “an eager... c-cheating... bitch.”

As if.

“I'm an eager, cheating... b-bitch,” Luna repeats after me, with the slow reverence of someone quoting scripture.

I feel her shiver next to me.

I sense her mind's openness.

I sense her internalize it. This new pillar of her being.

My heart breaks. My cunt drips.

"Cheating... bitch..." I echo dreamily, knowing that I sound equally reverent.

"Perfect," Ivy mocks. She turns to Luna. "You love Olive. But you love cheating more."

"I love Olive," Luna agrees readily. "But I love cheating more."

An eager, cheating bitch. That's who my girlfriend is now.

"And you, Olive," Ivy goes on. "You love it too."

One last nail in my coffin.

One last seal upon my fate.

"I... love it too," I repeat.

And I do. I really do.

The real me, the old me, is like a porcelain doll that's been dropped on the ground. I shattered into pieces. Parts of me have been ground to dust. Parts of me are gone forever. But what remains, however pitiful, still fits together. It can still be made to resemble a functional, adult woman. Like tape and glue, Ivy's words seal over the cracks in my soul. They furnish me with a new identity, a new sense of self, a new way to cope—however ugly.

I am what Ivy Robinson has made me.

And nothing more.

"Here." Ivy Robinson reaches into her pocket and produces a pill bottle. She presses it into my hand. "You know what these are. You will make sure Luna receives any necessary reinforcement."

I tremble. I moan.

“Y-yes, Ivy.”

I will. I know that immediately. There’s no fight left in me.

I’ll keep drugging my girlfriend. And it’ll make me cum every single time.

If I could string words together without permission, I’d be thanking Ivy for the opportunity.

That’s my new normal, then. My hopes dashed, I will go on as before. I will work myself to the bone for Ivy’s amusement and reward, and then go home to a girlfriend who has been twisted beyond belief into a shameless adulteress. My life will keep shrinking. Will keep spiraling. Ivy once promised to take everything from me. What’s left for her to take? How much worse can it get?

Ivy bends down to my level. She gazes into my eyes and seems to see my silent, screamed question. Her answer is not the meager reassurance it pretends to be. It’s simply another dose of venom.

“Don’t worry,” Ivy tells me sadistically. “You’ll get used to it.”

CHAPTER SIX

I get used to being cheated on.

Like they say, it really is amazing what you can get used to. The human capacity for adaptation is almost infinite, and now it works against me like a disease. My new life as an exploited, cheated-on, degraded slave is a swamp, and each day I sink a little deeper. Each day it clings to me a little tighter, and little things—like the obscene overtime I work, or the taste of another woman on my girlfriend’s lips—slip beneath the horizon of my astonishment and become, in a sense, unremarkable. Each day, it all gets a little more normal.

But normal does not mean painless. I don’t think I’ll ever truly become numb to the way Luna cheats on me with Ivy after she goes home, leaving me at the office. How could I? I love Luna, and this is the ultimate betrayal—made all the more agonizing by the inescapable knowledge that I’m the one who helped to make it happen. As I press my nose to the grindstone to earn overtime pay I don’t get to keep, the lurid images of Ivy and Luna that flash through my head are like a hundred stabbing needles. They bring me to the point of tears. They make me feel like my heart has been seized in a vice. They make me so nauseous it feels as though I’ll throw up anything I eat.

It’s unendurable. Or at least, it should be. But there’s a famous quote I half-remember from a philosophy class that I once wrote Ivy’s assignments for: she who has a why can bear any how. In other words, you can put up with anything provided there’s a good enough reason.

And I have a why. I have a reason.

It’s that Ivy Robinson is a superior being.

That one simple conviction, stamped into the core of being, robs me of any cause for complaint. Ivy is better than me. The sleek elegance of this worldview leaves me helpless to do anything but dig myself deeper into the awful groove Ivy has carved through my life. How could I possibly object to anything that has happened? Ivy is my superior. She can take what she wants from me. My time. My money. My girlfriend. Anything.

Everything.

Besides, it's not like I don't enjoy it. And isn't that the ultimate proof?

Each one of those stabbing needles lights a fire inside me. The tears that fill my eyes are accompanied by a delirious, masochistic grin. The nausea in my belly brings with it a nauseatingly warm, clenching pleasure in my cunt. I enjoy my fantasies of cuckoldry with relish. They are the high point of my sad little life. They feel more real and more intense than my actual sex life with Luna ever did. I should thank Ivy for that. For putting me in my place, and teaching me the kind of pleasure that best suits weak, inferior little spectators like me.

The shattering of my home life has, ironically, been of great benefit to my career. I spend more time working than ever. It's what Ivy wants. Luna too, actually. Even though Ivy enjoys rubbing my face in them, they both seem to prefer that I'm out of the way of their trysts. I suppose that makes sense. The presence of a drooling loser in the apartment would probably kill the mood, even though my implanted voyeurism would give anything for a chance to see it up close and personal. Moreover, I know that Luna must still have reservations. She's my girlfriend. She loves me. It's easier on her, I'm sure, if she can pretend that I don't know and that she isn't hurting me. That must be it.

As a result, I spend an ever-increasing amount of time at the office, clocking up meaningless overtime. The extra padding in my paychecks goes straight to Ivy, but my bosses don't know that. All they see is a highly-motivated manager filing her paperwork weeks ahead of deadline. Thanks to me, our office has become the most productive in the entire company. Corporate higher-ups know my name, and they mention it approvingly.

Am I proud of that? It's hard to say. In truth, I've always considered my corporate position to be as much a black mark as a badge of honor. Given my social ineptness, it's always been easier to sequester myself in

a cubicle or a private office than to develop much of anything beyond a career. My professional success often seems to taunt me; a reminder of my failure to properly cultivate the other areas of my life. To be rising even higher under these circumstances is little more than a further twist of the knife—and yet, in defiance of all that, I am proud. I have to be. Everybody needs something to be proud of, no matter how petty or poisoned. This is what I have—it is all I have—and so my ego sinks its claws into it and clings on for dear life.

There it is again. That human capacity for adaptation, working against me.

The pride I feel is juvenile. I know that. Like I'm a child bringing a good report card back to a broken home and expecting my divorcing parents to truly care. It's a regression. Thanks to Ivy Robinson, I am shrinking in every way. I should deny it. I should resist it. I should do anything at all but sleepwalk through my own annihilation—but I don't.

Well, never mind. After today, it won't matter. Today, my boss is coming to visit. The regional manager. It'll be a surprise to most, but not to me. I know why she's coming here. I know what's going to happen. What Ivy told me will happen. It makes me sick to my stomach.

I can't wait.

At the appointed time, I cue Ivy to head down and escort my boss up. Giving her instructions feels like an obscenity, but in public she will play the perfect, obedient employee. A few minutes later, Ivy returns—and with her, Mrs. Samson. The woman I am professionally accountable to. The woman who has, it seems, been singing my praises. After greeting her briefly, I rally the troops.

"Everyone! Gather round, please." My excitement bleeds into my voice. It takes a moment for most of the office to take notice, but with Ivy's assistance they quickly catch on. "We have a visitor today—Mrs. Samson, from the head office. Please give her your attention."

A hush settles over the crowd of a few dozen office workers. They're nervous; nobody likes it when head office comes calling. Unbeknownst to them, this is good news. Mrs. Samson, a middle-aged, put-together, entirely professional-looking woman, is all smiles. I am too. I'm buzzing with excitement.

“Thank you, Olive,” Mrs. Samson begins warmly. She turns to address the room. “I’m sure all of you are perfectly aware of how hard you have been working over the past couple of months. What you may not be aware of is that, in fact, in this past quarter, this office has surged ahead to become the most productive in the company. You owe yourselves a round of applause.”

The applause is, of course, obligatory. As they clap, many of my subordinates seem a little confused at their supposed newfound productivity—as well they might. They don’t know the kinds of hours I’ve been working. Ivy joins in, although she doesn’t look confused in the slightest. Neither do I. I’m grinning, and everyone who looks at me takes my grin for pride. As the clapping dies down, Mrs. Samson goes on.

“But as we all know, it takes a captain to steer the ship—and at head office, we can see that you have an excellent captain over here. So please, another round of applause—this time, for Olive Barnes.”

They all clap for me. Even Mrs. Samson. Even Ivy. I let it all wash over me. My grin is stupidly wide. I let myself relish it all, as the knot in my stomach grows and grows. This might be the last moment of pride I am ever permitted to feel.

“In light of her frankly herculean efforts,” Mrs. Samson continues, “I am pleased to be able to present Olive here with some formal recognition. Olive Barnes, I hereby award you our quarterly prize for—”

“Actually,” I interrupt, “Mrs. Samson, there’s something I need to come clean about.”

The ice beneath my feet breaks, and I am falling into freezing water.

As Mrs. Samson stares at me, astonished at my temerity, the vertigo I feel is almost enough to make me pass out. In her shoes, I’d be astonished too. It’s only thanks to Ivy’s instructions that I have the boldness to do this. She has choreographed this moment and I am, as ever, her obedient pawn.

“What do you mean?” Mrs. Samson asks.

“I can’t take credit for what’s been happening,” I begin. “It’s not my hard work that’s to thank.”

A complete lie—although Mrs. Samson takes it for inopportune modesty instead.

“Yes, I’m sure it was a team effort,” she says, irked. “But this company believes in rewarding effective leadership, which is why we’ve decided to—”

“No, that’s not what I mean,” I interrupt again. I’m shaking, both from the anxiety interrupting Mrs. Samson in front of the entire office brings me and because of excitement at what will follow. “I mean that I haven’t been working hard.”

Mrs. Samson’s eyes widen slightly. If anything, now she looks concerned. “Ms. Barnes,” she suggests, “perhaps we ought to discuss this privately?”

I shake my head. As much as I would love not to have dozens of pairs of shocked, suspicious eyes raking across my skin, I can’t accept the offer. It has to be this way. Ivy told me so.

“No, thank you,” I insist. “I want everyone to know. I’ve been cheating. I haven’t been working as hard as all of you think. In fact, I’ve been pawning all of my work off on my assistant, Ivy Robinson.”

An egregious lie. The polar opposite of the truth. These past few weeks, Ivy has barely lifted a finger while I’ve spent myself to the point of gray exhaustion at the office. The sheer unfairness of what Ivy has forced me to falsely confess should chafe at me. It doesn’t—because I am sick. Ivy has made me this way, and now sickness sings through my veins, whispering with a twisted promise that overrides any concern for dignity or fear of humiliation.

“Ms. Barnes!” Mrs. Samson’s concern has evaporated. She looks furious. I’ve made a pantomime of her visit. “In your office. Now.”

I shake my head. “I want to come clean. I want everyone to know.” I’m delirious from the mixture of shame and anticipation. That idiotic grin is still plastered to my face. “I’ve been lying to you all. It’s inexcusable. I can’t take it anymore.”

The room around me is a sea of gasps and shocked faces. “But,” someone pipes up, “don’t you always stay late?”

“Just p-pretending,” I reply, my voice trembling. “I’m not doing any work. I let Ivy go home early—but that’s part of it too. She takes all my work home with her.”

All the eyes go to Ivy. “Ms. Robinson,” Mrs. Samson asks, “is that true?”

A pause. A swelling of compassion. Eventually, Ivy looks down. “It is,” she confirms.

The rest of them cannot help but respond to her quiet, upright dignity. Compared to me—feverish, shivering, grinning—she is infinitely believable. With her comment, the room shifts from shock to scorn.

“Well, given that you both agree on the matter, I suppose formal grievance proceedings aren’t...” Mrs. Samson is slow to reassert control—odds are, she’s never experienced anything quite like this—but reassert it she does. Her professional instincts take hold, and she glares at me icily. “The kind of wholesale deception and falsification you have just confessed to are clear grounds for termination. Do you understand?”

I nod. I feel myself in free fall. I’m losing everything—but my prize is so close at hand. That knowledge keeps me smiling anxiously, even now. It’s like I’m riding a roller coaster. My heart feels like it’s going to explode. How damning is it that my first thought is: if I get fired, how will I be able to keep sending Ivy money?

But I won’t be. Ivy would never let me slip away that easily. This, too, is part of her plan; now, just as choreographed, she intercedes on my behalf.

“Mrs. Samson, if I may,” Ivy begins. “As the injured party, I’d like to say that, as wrong as Olive’s actions were, I’m grateful to her for coming clean. I know this is asking a lot, but I’d like you to give her a second chance.”

All the staring eyes around the room shoot wider than ever. Mrs. Samson’s most of all. “Really?” she asks, astonished.

Ivy nods earnestly. Even now, she is the very picture of dignity. “Yes. I’m sure of it. You see, Olive and I have a little personal history. We went to college together, and I occupied a senior role. I think she might have

been struggling to handle our respective roles here in the office. I can sympathize—and for the sake of our old friendship, I don't want to see her put out of a job."

"That's very magnanimous of you," Mrs. Samson replies. She's impressed. They all are. "It's unorthodox but perhaps, under the circumstances... although there can be no question of Olive remaining above you, of course."

I nod. "Of course."

A contemptuous look passes over Mrs. Samson's face. "And now I truly must insist," she says. "The two of you, in private. Now."

Our public performance complete, Ivy and I both nod. We follow Mrs. Samson into my office— my former office—to discuss new arrangements. She is not sparing with her disgust as she explains, in detail, the severity of my transgressions. I am, naturally, to be demoted. From now on, I'll be out there, with my former subordinates. The only question is about who will step up to fill my old position.

Who else but Ivy Robinson?

On a provisional basis, anyway. It's quite the promotion, but as far as Mrs. Samson knows, Ivy's been doing my job for months. She's competent—and more importantly, Mrs. Samson likes her. She is impressed with her. That counts for a lot. There's a certain risk of impropriety, but since impropriety has already occurred, Mrs. Samson clearly feels that it's best to avoid the expense of a new hire. She will look into transferring me, but Ivy is already laying the groundwork for letting that die on the vine. She wants me exactly where I belong: in my new place, as her subordinate.

We spend a couple of hours writing and signing documents to formalize everything that has been decided. I drift through it like it's some awful fever dream. I want so very badly to pinch myself, to wake myself up, but I can't. I mustn't. I need what's coming to me. When I am made to put my false confession in writing, my hand shakes so badly that my signature is barely legible. The act of fraud I'm committing makes me more nauseous than ever, but it doesn't truly feel like a lie. How could it? It's in service to a deeper truth. The one Ivy has meticulously etched into every atom of my being.

Once all is said and done, Mrs. Samson leaves. There's still so much to grapple with—the animosity of my new peers, especially—but for now, once we're alone, I'm free to turn to Ivy with all the giddy excitement of a puppy with a ball in its mouth.

“Very good, Olive,” she tells me sardonically. “You played your part perfectly.”

Her praise raises my hopes to dizzying heights. I need this—more than ever, after what's just happened. I need the reward Ivy has promised me. I need it, because it'll hurt so badly that, in the moment, I won't be able to think about the trainwreck I've just made of my entire life. “S-so,” I bleat, uncontrollably giddy. “D-does that... does t-that mean...”

“Oh yes,” Ivy tells me. She smiles, showing teeth, and it's almost genuine. It's almost like she's actually proud of me. “It means that this time, you can watch.”

* * *

The bedroom is loud, full of rich, ravenous moans and the raucous slapping of flesh against flesh. The lights are dim, and reflect in alluring patterns off the sheen of sweat coating Ivy's dark, perfect skin. Beneath her, Luna is a vision of sensuality and satisfaction, and between the two of them, the entire room feels romantic and hedonistic like never before.

I sit slumped on a small chair, shoved untidily into a far corner. My legs are splayed. My skirt is hitched up. My fingers are inside my cunt.

The two of them have been fucking for what feels like hours. Ivy has awakened in Luna a cavernous appetite, and she works tirelessly to satisfy it. With her, Luna seems so much greater than before. A woman blossoming into her maturity, at last wholeheartedly embracing adult pleasures. I have never before heard her make moans like this, or move her hips like this, or wrap her legs around her partner's body from sheer desperation like this.

My head slumps forward as I stare, enraptured, eyes wide and bloodshot. I cannot look away. I cannot miss even a moment of this. My body is on fire. My mind is on fire. My heart is in flames. My fingers move vigorously inside me, matching Ivy's rhythm. I wish desperately

that I was either one of them. I wish I could be Luna, of course, and taste the pleasure that's writ large all over her face. But much more than that, I wish I could be anything like Ivy. I wish I could have her virility. I wish I could make Luna feel the way she's feeling now. If I could be her; if only I knew what it felt like to be inside Luna, filling her, feeling her tighten and rut and give herself to me.

But I never will. Because Ivy is superior to me. I am inferior to her. She knows how to treat a woman. I don't. I might as well be a mouse wishing to be a lioness.

And because of that, there's no going back.

Every kiss Ivy plants on Luna's skin stains it irrevocably. Every mark Ivy leaves with her firm hands and possessive teeth glows as bright red as a fresh brand. As they move together, Ivy's cock buried to the hilt inside my girlfriend, I can sense that she is breaking Luna to her shape.

Permanently.

Luna will never be mine again.

My hand quickens. I can feel my heartbeat in my cunt. I'm moaning too, in weak, ragged, stillborn gasps of abject, masochistic grief. The sheer, transcendent humiliation of this moment washes away everything else I am. All my achievements—such as they are—mean nothing. This is the crowning moment of my life, and I am frantically rubbing my pussy while I watch somebody else claim my girlfriend's body. I am far, far beyond shirking from my own pleasure. This new sexuality of mine, revolving around loss and shame, has only recently been stamped onto my psyche, but it's been stamped so deep as to become fundamental. It's the truest thing about me. Every other facet of my personality might change—but not that, because Ivy has made sure of it. It is who I am. This is who I am.

Watching the two of them fuck makes me feel small. It's like how being in a church feels. I've never been particularly religious but I still remember how, as a child, going to services made me feel like I was in the presence of something greater. Something transcendent. It made me feel small—but a comforting smallness. A comforting insignificance. If everything about me is so small, then nothing really matters—provided I offer my devotion.

My goddess is in my girlfriend. All is right with the world.

I am smothered by my utter defeat, but there is an insistent pain in my heart that refuses to completely disappear. A clawing, gnawing knot that binds tighter and more painfully as Ivy starts to thrust faster and deeper, bringing herself to the edge. I try to suppress it—it isn't right, Ivy is superior, she deserves this—but all the same, as the adultery playing out before me approaches its climax, I find myself staring desperately at Luna, hoping, praying for any hint that she might balk. That she might be faking her loud, enthusiastic pleasure. That she's feeling any reluctance or discomfort at all at doing this in front of me.

Each sign of hope I fail to find hurts my heart, and sends an electric shock of pleasure racing through my body. I'm soaking the chair beneath myself with my frenzied masturbation. My pace far exceeds Ivy's as I lose control of myself. Pleasure and pain are the same to me. Ivy looks so powerful and so potent as she plows in and out of my girlfriend, her low grunts and lopsided grin betraying the masterful pleasure she takes in her conquest. Luna looks so beautiful as she crashes through one orgasm into the next, awoken to a pleasure she had never known before, basking in the feeling of being claimed, used, watched.

Glowing with the thrill of being an eager, cheating bitch.

It's agony. It's bliss. But Ivy's orgasm washes all that away. And then, so does mine.

The sight of Ivy pulling out of Luna at last and leaving behind a visible trail of thick, white, virile cum leaking out of my girlfriend is what pushes me over the edge.

There's nothing dignified about the way I cum. My shrieks of pleasure are high, desperately, polluted by sobs and tears. All the same, I keep rubbing myself all the way to the end, milking every last drop of pleasure I can get from this humiliation. Despite the noise and the mess, Ivy and Luna do not give me even an instant of attention. The worst is still to come, as the two of them pull close to one another and settle down in our bed—my bed—to cuddle.

A placid, dangerous calm settles over me. A euphoric, post-orgasmic haze. My pain recedes and, despite the tears still wet on my cheeks, I break into a grateful smile. This was so wonderful. For good or bad, I've never felt so alive. For a spectator like me, this is perfection incarnate.

I'm so, so glad I ruined my life so I could watch.

Eventually, Ivy and Luna rouse themselves and, at last, turn their attention to me. Ivy's face registers little more than contented, effortless disdain, whilst Luna's is impishly gleeful, her eyes lit up with a spark that makes my stomach flutter. Ivy swings her legs off the bed and perches on the edge. She spreads her thighs apart, allowing me to enjoy the sight of her cock. I immediately begin to salivate. I know what comes next.

"Come clean up after your girlfriend, Olive."

"Yes, Ivy."

I obey. It's only right. This, too, is my place.

Not long after that, Ivy takes her leave. She never bothers to sleep over. In her absence, I become uneasy. Ivy is like the sun. The sheer pressure her magnificent presence exerts on my psyche is immense. It blots out everything else. Without her, all the shadows and dark things inside me come creeping out. The pangs in my heart return, and I wonder why they ever left. Can all this truly be what's right for me, if it hurts so much?

Of course it can. Ivy has impressed that on me a hundred times. She is superior. I am inferior. She is a player. I am a spectator. She knows best. It's that simple. I can't question it. But I can, in my own way, seek solace from it. My girlfriend is still here, and she still loves me.

Right?

"H-hey." I am alarmed to find myself nervous as I crawl onto the bed and position myself beside Luna. She's still lying there, basking in her glorious afterglow. A fresh wave of jealousy and insecurity bites into me. I could never make her feel that way. "I love you."

"Hey," Luna murmurs absently. Dreamily. Like she's barely talking to me at all. "Love you." When her eyes finally focus on me, the expression on her face is beyond my ability to read.

"D-did you have a good time?" It's a foolish question. I'm just hoping some of the eagerness and gratitude she feels toward Ivy will rub off.

“Yeah.” Luna’s answer is immediate, and followed by a full-throated sigh of contentment. “Oh yeah. Ivy’s so... wow. I’m already looking forward to the next time.”

That remark sends a wave of dread through me, but I try to channel it into something positive and playful instead. “You know,” I whisper, sidling up to her. “It’s been a little while, for us. If you’re eager for another round, then maybe we could...”

I’m doing my best to sound eager and suggestive, as difficult as it is to project any genuine confidence after weeks of Ivy Robinson messing with my head. It immediately gets ten times more difficult when Luna, my beloved girlfriend, fixes me with a smirking look that straddles the line between pity and amusement.

“You mean, without Ivy?” she giggles. The smile on her face slips into my chest like a knife. “Oh, Olive, that’s so...”

Funny? Ridiculous? Unappealing?

“What do you mean?” I ask, wounded. Luna doesn’t answer. Not right away.

“I’m a little too tired for anything else tonight,” she announces, stretching out on her back. It’s impossibly tempting to let the conversation end there. Ivy’s brainwashing is suffocating, but I know that if we head silently to sleep now, everything I’ve just seen will be replaying on the insides of my eyelids, leaving me aroused and ashamed in equal measure. Can I seriously go on like this?

“How about tomorrow, then?” I press. “O-or another night? You’ve always been saying that you want us to spend more time together.”

“I... suppose I have, haven’t I?” Luna’s brow furrows. She looks suddenly distant, and sounds confused by her own words. My heart strikes a double beat. Maybe there’s hope. Maybe I can talk her down from all this madness. I’m not exactly sure what that would look like. I know I can’t save myself, after all. But maybe I can save Luna. She always was my better half.

The hard part is that Ivy doesn’t want that, and what she does and doesn’t want looms large in my thoughts. Ivy is superior to me. That has

become the axiom of my entire existence, and now it fights in a tug of war with my desire to save Luna's soul. The words I want to speak come slowly to my lips because I have to bite back the shame I feel at committing such a blasphemy. Before I can cross that line, Luna speaks again.

"Well, hey, how about this?" Luna turns to me as if offering an olive branch, but the wild, salivating expression on her face sends a shiver down my spine that heralds the devastation her next words bring. "There's this girl at my work who's made a couple of passes at me. Bet she'd be willing to let me cheat on you with her."

What's worse? Hearing Luna say that with such untempered joy in her voice? Or the fact that it makes my whole body quiver with arousal?

"N-no," I squeak, fighting to beat back my own treasonous, malformed desires. I want it so badly, even if I wish I didn't. "I meant, um... just you and I... we could h-have... sex?"

All at once, the glee disappears from Luna's face. "Me?" she scoffs. "With you? That's ridiculous."

Her voice is bad enough. Her eyes are worse. It takes me a moment to put my finger on it, but once I do, I realize with horror that she's looking at me the same way that Ivy Robinson looks at me.

Like I'm categorically inferior.

"B-but..." I plead. It's like there's an anchor chained to my soul, dragging me down into submission. I am inferior, aren't I? To Luna? To everyone? It's taking everything I have not to meekly bow my head in surrender. "We're d-dating, Luna."

"We... are," she concedes. Again, that look of faraway confusion sweeps over her. It's like Luna doesn't quite understand what she's feeling, or why she's treating me this way. I can only hope that her uncertainty is a crack I can pry open.

"Hey." I take Luna's hand and look into her eyes. If I open my heart, I'm sure she'll respond to me. She loves me. She's my girlfriend. "How about we s-stop doing this?"

"Stop?" Luna echoes dimly. She looks shocked. I immediately

understand why. The suggestion is shocking to me too. Thinking about defying Ivy is like thinking about defying the tides.

“That’s right.” I whisper it eagerly but furtively, as if Ivy might somehow overhear. “We don’t have to keep doing this, Luna. It c-can just be you and me again. Isn’t that all you really wanted? To be happy together, as girlfriends? We can go back to exactly how things were before all of this madness!”

Luna stares into the distance for a moment. I can see the prospect working its way through her mind. My heartbeat quickens. I can sense her coming back to me. Luna is such a good girlfriend. We’ve had our problems from time to time, yes, but she’s always been so patient with me. We’re right for each other. We might even be soulmates. One little drug can’t take that away.

That’s what I tell myself, in the moments before her face twists into an expression of gleeful, adulterous malice that sets my entire being burning.

“Olive,” she laughs derisively. “Why would I ever want to go back?”

The color drains from my face. I shake my head in numb horror. Evidently, I didn’t understand her horror at all.

“But-“

“Until Ivy, do you know how long it’s been since I got fucked properly?” I flinch at Luna’s vulgar cruelty. Those things come to her so naturally now. They didn’t before. “Years. Since forever. Since I started dating you. For a while, I thought I just didn’t like sex very much. Now I realize that you just weren’t up to the task.”

That shame that courses through me is unimaginable. A hundred times worse than anything Ivy could inflict herself—because after all, she’s not wrong about our sex life.

“Now I realize there’s a whole world out there full of gorgeous dykes who actually know how to treat a woman,” Luna continues, closing her eyes for the briefest of moments as she throbs with the glowing memory of sex with Ivy. “As if I could ever turn my back on that. Remember, Olive. You’re the one who asked me for this. Who begged me for this. You can’t show me this pleasure and then expect me to turn my back on

it. You made your bed. Now watch me lie in it.”

The shame is soporific. Beaten deeper into my mind by each of Luna’s words, it effortlessly drowns out the brief flare of defiance that drove me to broach this conversation. I know I can’t fight it. I can already feel myself sinking. Shrinking. All that’s left to me is to bleat one last impotent plea.

“B-b-but I love you,” I whine pitifully.

“And I love you!” Luna replies, with surprising passion. I’d been wondering if Ivy had taken even Luna’s love from me. Apparently not. It’s almost enough to make me start hoping again, but I immediately sense something malformed and sinister about Luna’s affection. “Olive, that look on your face as you were watching us... fuck! I’ve never seen anything like it. It was so pathetic. And the way you kept rubbing yourself! I can’t believe it. I can’t get enough of it. I need it.”

A broken smile comes to my face. She needs it—which means she needs me.

Luna loves me. I’m so happy.

“Having you there in the corner was driving me crazy,” Luna moans. She is a woman transformed, drenched in newfound eroticism. “I thought it would be creepy, but it was amazing! Feeling your eyes upon me while I felt Ivy’s cock. Just knowing how jealous you were. How much you were wishing you could be her. It’s like...” Her cheeks are a ravishing red as she gropes around for the words. “It makes me feel like I’m this wonderful, beautiful, perfect ornament. A prize. A treasure. And I’m all yours.” She bites her lip. Love and sadism glow within her as one. “And you’re watching me get broken in half.”

Luna’s aroused, deranged rant is stamping on what remains of my heart—but all the same, I nod along to her words. I get it. I feel it too. The intensity. Before this, I had never known anything like it. We’re both crazed. We’re both ruined. It’s horrifying.

“I’m going to get that girl from work to fuck me tomorrow,” Luna decides. She springs out of bed. “I want to cheat on you again so bad. It’s so hot. I already have the perfect outfit. Ivy left it for me earlier. Let me show you. It’s so slutty. I never would have worn it before. But now, all I can think of is how it’s going to make everyone look at me. I want you to

be the first to appreciate it. For you, it'll be special. For you, it'll mean knowing you'll never get to have me like they do.”

My twisted desires betray me. I moan fervently as I watch Luna head toward the other room. Thinking about being cheated on again unmakes me. I know it's going to feel so good—and I know that this is the pattern my life is going to fall into from now. I will be betrayed over and over, and I will greedily fuck myself to it every time. Arousal and despair blend into something indescribable. The familiar drumbeat Ivy hammered into my skull is already telling me in my own voice: this is right. This is what I deserve. This is what I get for being an inferior little spectator. But just this once, my heartbreak drowns it out. Seeing Luna like this, so completely transformed, is more than even I can accept.

Luna pauses before stepping through the doorway. She turns back to me. “Don't ask me to stop again,” she warns softly. “This is who I am now. Accept it.” She grins and—devastatingly—winks at me. “You're dating an eager, cheating bitch.”

Upon hearing that, it takes everything I have not to start touching myself on the spot. Ivy has filled my head with poisonous dreams, and now they're all coming true. I can't stop feeling so turned on, but I also can't stop feeling like I'm staring down the barrel of a gun. I tried my hardest to get through to Luna, and I failed. I couldn't save myself, so why did I think that I might be able to save her? It's over. We're doomed. We have been remade according to Ivy's whims. From now on, I'm a broken, cuckolded loser, and Luna is an eager, cheating bitch. Only, I can't handle that. Luna deserves to be better than this. There has to be something I can do. Even now.

Right?

I strain to grasp the shape of a solution. I can't defy Ivy. I can't get through to Luna. I can't think of anyone who might be able to help me. Certainly not anyone Ivy wouldn't be able to outsmart. She's the root of all this. Maybe that's the key. Maybe I need to find a way to deal with her directly. But how?

Then it dawns on me. It's so simple, it's embarrassing that I haven't thought of it before. I have to check my handbag just to confirm the possibility is real—and sure enough, the pill bottle is there. Ivy's drug. The one she's been using on me, and making me use on Luna. Clearly, Ivy was so sure I was completely broken, she didn't think twice about

letting me hold onto it. She was almost right—but not completely. And thanks to her hubris, I have the only weapon I need to turn the tables.

All I need to do is bring Ivy Robinson her morning coffee.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Reducing Ivy Robinson to a drugged, drooling, placid, empty receptacle is easy.

Almost an anticlimax, really. I barely sleep a wink the night before, as the idea burns a hole in my mind. I'm torn between terror and excitement, and that anxious combination leaves me obsessing over every little step of my admittedly primitive plan. I visualize it. I rehearse conversations and excuses in my head, knowing full well that it's all likely to melt away as soon as I meet my superior's gaze. Over and over again, as I toss and turn in the bed Ivy fucks my girlfriend in, I fight to summon my courage up and out of the jaws of the nauseating brainwashing she has inflicted on me. What I'm plotting is the ultimate blasphemy. A violation of the hierarchy that has been sunk bedrock-deep into my brain. It's simply wrong for me to do this. I know that. I feel that.

But I have to. For myself. For Luna.

The sadistic, teasing comments she makes all evening about her flagrant cheating both sap and steel my resolve. Sap it, because the arousal they conjure makes my knees weak and fills my head with poisonous mantras. Steel it, because it's a reminder of the abomination Ivy Robinson has twisted my kind, gentle girlfriend into. I have to save her. I'm the only one who can.

By the time I reach the office the next morning, I'm so feverish I sway with every step. I walk towards Ivy's office—my office—with all the reluctance of a condemned murderer marching to the gallows. The looks I get from my coworkers do not help. They feel suspicious, even though I know they're merely contemptuous. As I have swiftly learned, it is impossible to descend the rungs of power gracefully. The fact that I

was once higher than my new peers makes me, now, in their eyes, all the lower. I'll never be one of them. They'll always steer clear of me. I'll always be lesser. I'm inferior.

And Ivy is sup-

I stifle both the thought and the moan that comes with it. It's nightmarishly magnetic—but I cannot give in.

Unsteadily, I reach Ivy's door. My head throbs. I almost drop the spiked coffee cup in my hand. I'm certain I have some abominably stupid, obvious look on my face, but all the same, I knock.

"Enter."

I push the door open. Ivy sits behind my old desk, resplendent. It suits her better than it ever did me.

Wait. That's the kind of thing I'm not meant to let myself think.

"Come in, Olive. Is that my coffee?" One of her instructions the day before. I'm sure she relishes the inversion.

"Yes, Ivy," I reply, my stomach in agonizing knots. I place the coffee cup down on her desk.

Without a moment of hesitation, she picks it up and takes a thirsty sip.

I'm left stunned. I was braced for Ivy to see right through me. I had already half-resigned myself to facing the consequences. After all, it's precisely the way Ivy subdued me, and she knows perfectly well that I have access to her mind-altering drug. She provided me with it herself, so I could reinforce Luna's brainwashing. It's all but unfathomable to me that this ploy wouldn't have crossed her mind.

But that's just it, isn't it? She and I aren't alike. Ivy Robinson is never nervous or paranoid. She does not need to be. She is possessed of the singular, ironclad self-assurance of a woman who has gone through life dominating every room she enters. I can't even begin to fathom it. The confidence of an apex predator at the top of the food chain.

Yet again, I have to snap myself from a worshipful reverie. I tell myself instead that Ivy's arrogance will be her downfall.

"Being my secretary really does suit you better," Ivy mocks. "I'm glad we can finally drop the pretense." She takes another long drink from her coffee cup, then frowns. "Perhaps I spoke too soon. Can't you even handle a simple coffee order, Olive? This doesn't taste right at all. It's awfully..." she blinks very slowly, "chemical."

The penny drops—and it's too late. I can tell. I recognize intimately the telltale sagging, fading look in Ivy's eyes. She hangs on longer than I might have, fixing me with an accusatory, disbelieving scowl. "You..." Ivy begins to say, but it's all she can muster. I remember once seeing a nature documentary in which a lion was shot with a tranquilizer dart. As it went down, it seemed more offended than wounded, and retained a certain calm, unimpeachable dignity as it sank to its knees. So it is with Ivy too—but after a few, tense moments, she does go down. She goes still. Even the scowl drains from her face, and she's left with a look I know all too well: the look of yawning emptiness that belongs to someone who will hearken to any voice she hears.

Even mine.

She's mine.

I won. Ivy Robinson is within my power.

It takes an eternity for it to sink in. Breathless minutes pass with me standing there, paralyzed, unable to believe my own effortless success. It feels as though Ivy will snap out of it and assert her will over me at any moment—but she doesn't. She can't. She's helpless.

She's the helpless one now.

Once that finally dawns on me, my dread falls away and is replaced with utter, manic euphoria. A ridiculous grin forms on my face, and giddy, high-pitched giggles fall from my lips with every breath. I can't keep still. I twitch, I pace, I shiver with the uncontrollable glee of a child on Christmas morning. Ivy Robinson is like a goddess—and I have her in the palm of my hand. Unlike Ivy, I do not handle my newfound authority with grace or ease. It does not sit comfortably on my shoulders. I'm excited and anxious in equal measure. My head fills with a thousand different fantasies of revenge, each one an abstraction, each one

hopelessly tripping the others as I try to form the words that would make it real. I'm delirious. I'm a mess.

It's OK, I tell myself. With Ivy's door closed, we aren't likely to be disturbed. I can take my time. My torment is finally at an end.

The world is my oyster. I can do anything.

And I don't know where to begin.

I literally do not know, and my uncertainty quickly begins to undermine my glee. I start talking to Ivy, right? And she'll listen, right? It's that simple. It certainly was with Luna, but it seems too straightforward, somehow, for the kind of utter inversion I need to inflict on Ivy. Can I simply tell her, straight to her face, that she's inferior to me, and that'll... work? It'll really sink in?

Or do I need to talk her into it? Make it like a seduction? Frame it carefully, so that it slips between the cracks in her ego and reshapes her from within? That makes a little more sense to me, I suppose, but leaves me even less certain of how to proceed. I don't have Ivy's silver tongue. I always trip over my words. I don't know how to get under the skin of someone as formidable as her. Maybe I can't-

No. I take a deep breath. I'm just getting caught up in my own head, like usual. I can do this. I just need to begin with the first step.

"Ivy," I squeak. My mouth is too dry. I wet it, and try again. "Ivy. Can you hear me?"

"Yes," Ivy replies. I shiver, instantly enraptured. To hear that emptiness and openness—in her voice. A frisson races across my skin. I am a child with her hand in the cookie jar.

But like a child, I can be impetuous. I decide to throw caution to the wind and embrace the first urge that takes me, even though the sheer transgression of it leaves me all but tongue-tied. "K-k-kneel."

"Whhhuutt?" Ivy slurs, her sagging eyes widening ever so slightly. She's not completely empty. Not yet. Even now, there is a faint note of incredulous defiance in her voice. I know what that's like—to be locked inside your own head, watching like a helpless passenger as someone rewrites your life.

For her, though, it just doesn't seem right.

The merest suggestion of Ivy's disapproval plays havoc with my nerves. My heart beats a frantic rhythm in my chest, like it's begging me to stop. I can't. Not now that I've come this far.

"K-kneel," I repeat, attempting—and failing—to sound more commanding. When Ivy simply stares bleakly at me, I change tack. "You... um... you want to kneel?"

I hear my own uncertainty repeated back to me in Ivy's voice—but the repetition is intoxicating anyway. "I... want to kneel?"

Ivy doesn't sound convinced. But she sounds convincing.

"Y-yes," I insist. "You want to kneel."

"I..." There is a hint of something resentful in Ivy's eyes. It fades. "I want to... kneel?"

My will, extinguishing Ivy Robinson's. Only her miracle drug could make that possible.

"That's right," I tell her again. "You want to kneel."

It's like part of Ivy recognizes what is being done to her—but all the same, the thought slips past her defenses. It's new to her, and irresistible. A spark catching tinder. "I... want... to... kneel."

Her resentment melts away. In its place, agreement. Desire.

"You want to kneel." Those words feel powerful to me now. I cling to them. My voice is breathy. I feel like I'm going to be sick from excitement. "S-so kneel."

It's incredible to see Ivy Robinson be so hopelessly slow. Slow in mind, and slow in body as she begins to slump in her chair—in my chair—guided by her new desire to sink to her knees. Watching her is like watching a star implode. Both awe-inspiring and existentially terrifying. In my fever, I give in to yet another childlike impulse.

“N-n-not there,” I stop Ivy, tittering. “You want to kneel in front of m-my desk.”

“In front... of...” Ivy’s brow furrows. “I... want... but...”

“You want to kneel in front of m-my desk.”

It’s a struggle for me to think of the desk as mine, with Ivy still sitting there. I can sense she’s hung up on that too. But this is exactly the kind of thing I need to push past.

“My desk,” I tell her, with all the firmness I can muster. “You w-want to kneel in front of it. In front of m-me.”

The way the nervous stutter keeps infecting my voice is maddening. It’s not enough to undermine me, though, in the face of Ivy’s artificial gullibility. She will believe whatever I tell her. Even this.

“I... want...” Ivy nods. Her brow twitches. “But... you?”

That visible incredulity sends a treasonous pang through me. I ignore it. “Yes. You want to kneel in... in front of m-me.”

“I...” Ivy’s incredulity bends. Then breaks. “I want to kneel in front of you.”

I can’t contain a shrill giggle. The euphoria those words bring me is so extreme it feels like vertigo. “R-right. Right! So... um...” I’m briefly unsure of the best way to prompt her. “K-kneel.”

And she obeys.

I wonder how it is in Ivy’s head, as she staggers to her feet and trudges around to the other side of her—my—desk, vacating the seat she worked so hard to steal. How does she rationalize something that flies so flagrantly in the face of her true nature? Perhaps the mere desire is enough. Perhaps Ivy Robinson is a creature so unfamiliar with denial and restraint, she is content simply to follow her wants wherever they lead. Certainly, there is a faint glow of pleasure on her face as she sinks to her knees, her expensive suit barely creasing from the elegance of the motion. She wants this now, and that provides satisfaction enough.

Only in the deepest shadows of her eyes can I still see the sleeping tiger.

I do not dare stare into them for too long. But now I can fortify myself. I set my sights on my former desk. My former chair. It takes many long seconds for me to muster the willpower to take even the first step toward them, but eventually I manage to sit in the place I once sat when Ivy brought me coffee and ruined my entire life.

Now I get to do that to her.

I start giggling again. It's all I've ever wanted. Finally. I'm the powerful one. I'm the one in control. My heart is pounding. My chest throbs. And yes, I'm turned on, too. This feels so wicked and so wrong. So dangerous. Thanks to Ivy, my sexuality is hardwired to respond to the feeling of dizzying vertigo that surges through me now. It's how I imagine I'd feel if I was up in a plane, about to skydive. I feel as though I'm about to take the plunge, to throw myself into the abyss, safe in the knowledge that my revenge is righteous and that my feelings of guilt are-

Wait.

Why do I feel guilty?

That's ridiculous. Stupid. Downright moronic. What's wrong with me? Why would I feel guilty about doing this to Ivy? She deserves it! Nobody could deserve it more. It's the very definition of poetic justice.

Is... this what she's done to me? Have I become incapable of going against her? Is that why I keep stuttering and tripping over my words? Why there's a cold sweat on my forehead? Why I still, despite reclaiming my rightful place, feel like a child? When does it stop?

Am I broken forever?

No, I tell myself. I can't think like that. This is normal. Anyone would feel like this, doing what I'm doing. Drugging someone. Fighting back. It's normal. I'm in control. I'm the powerful one here.

I just need to show Ivy that.

“N-now,” I tell her, fighting and failing to keep the quiver out of my voice. “You’re going to s-strip.”

“I’m going to... strip?”

There’s a flash of something in her eyes—but briefer than before. Ivy doesn’t want to believe me, but she does. I can already see her mind softening beneath the clumsy pressure of my words. She’s going to strip. We both know it.

“Yeah,” I tell her breathily. “You’re going to strip for me.”

“For... you?” Ivy blinks blearily. “I’m going to strip.”

The thought seems to provoke little resistance. After all, Ivy is more than comfortable with her nakedness. The idea that it’s for me is clearly stranger, but she cannot fight it, formidable though she is.

“Y-you’re going to strip for me,” I titter. I find myself flushed at the prospect. I’m going to get to see Ivy naked again. Anticipation becomes impatience. “R-right now.”

Ivy trembles slightly at the eagerness of my words. So strong, yet so empty. A hollow sock puppet of herself. It’s breathtaking. It’s nauseating. “Right... now.”

I gasp in shock at my own success as Ivy raises herself up on her knees and starts to remove her clothes. Slowly, methodically—blazer, then shirt, then she unfastens her skinny belt and begins to shuck out of her pants. Once that’s done, her underwear follows, each item of clothing discarded to one side until she is finished. Until she is naked. The way Ivy strips is practically robotic. She evinces no shame, no modesty. Even without clothes, she simply is.

And me? I’m slumped in Ivy’s chair—my chair—with my hand between my legs, rubbing myself in a steady, unmistakable rhythm over my clothes.

I can’t help it. Ivy’s so hot.

Every piece of clothing she removes exposes yet more of her rich, gorgeous skin and leaves me drooling with awe. When she unclasps her

bra and lets it fall away from her body, my breath hitches. Her chest is still so much bigger than mine. I suppose some things will never change. When she peels her underwear away from her body and slides them down her thighs, it's all I can do not to moan. She isn't hard, obviously, but even the sight of her soft conjures to mind the scents and tastes of the rare, precious occasions on which I am permitted to kneel before her and take her superior cock in my mouth and-

My mind softened slightly by self-pleasure, it takes a great deal of effort for me to sever that particular train of thought.

I try just as hard to wipe the look of overawed, blushing, breathless shame from my face—without success. It's all very well and good to tell myself that I don't need to feel embarrassed. Ivy never was, after all, when she used me for her pleasure. That's all I'm doing now. Using her. Enjoying her. It's my right, now that I've turned the tables. Red-faced, slack-jawed, compulsive staring does not suit a master. A superior.

It's just that what I'm doing feels so... dirty, somehow.

It's becoming difficult to think, with Ivy naked. All I can think about is her superior body. Her perfect face. Her incredible chest. Her toned abs, and slender waist. Her wide hips and her magnificent cock. Her shapely thighs, and even her gorgeous, pedicured feet, barely visible behind her. I tell myself that it's only right for me to see her this way—as a sex object, as a source of pleasure—but I can't shake the feeling that it's the other way around. That Ivy Robinson is swallowing me up, somehow, even kneeling there on the floor, drugged out of her mind.

Why can't I stop drooling over her feet? That was never a fetish of mine—but it is now. I get stupid and drool and rub myself to superior women's feet.

And Ivy is so superior.

Even now. Especially now, naked. Fuck, she's so hot. I'll never look like her. She's so much better than me. My hand quickens. My pleasure grows. Even kneeling, she has so much more presence. It's clear who's taller. Who's greater. Suddenly it makes so much sense that I'm sitting here, masturbating, because that's what I do, that's my role, like when Ivy fucks my girlfriend, I'm a spectator, and she's-

With a pathetic, agonized groan, I tear my hand away from my body.

It's not fair.

Why does she keep beating me?

And how can I ever fix this? How can I rip my poison out of her head?

My only hope is to do to her what she did to me. To break her mind in half across my knee.

I could do it with a single sentence—that's a nice thought, isn't it? A good thing to keep telling myself. It stills my fraying nerves. It makes me feel powerful. I'm the one in control here.

Only, am I?

There's another reason it was so easy for me to lose myself in self-pleasure: because I'm procrastinating.

I still don't know where to begin. Making Ivy kneel, making her strip—that's merely rearranging deck chairs. A way to get a cheap thrill, in the hopes that one act of daring snowballs into another. Nothing I've done to Ivy will leave any lasting impressions on her psyche. And it hasn't worked—I'm as filled with doubts as ever. About the procedural stuff, of course, the hows and wheres, but about something much deeper, too.

About...

Morality?

I know Ivy deserves what's coming to her, but telling myself over and over again that she deserves it isn't making this any easier. Perhaps morality isn't exactly the right word. Inhibition? I've always been a little goody-two-shoes. I know that. I don't break the rules. Not ever.

Not unless Ivy makes me.

She has infected my sense of right and wrong completely. What I know doesn't matter. What I feel is all-important—and what I feel is that violating her this way is unforgivable. It produces the same sense of revulsion as contemplating committing a murder. The gnawing guilt,

the itching fear that, at any moment, I will be somehow discovered, that my superior will catch me in the act and force me back to my knees, all the lower for having so insolently forgotten my place.

The anxiety is more than I can handle. I'm simply not the kind of person who does things like this.

Maybe it's even deeper than that. It's aesthetic. What right do I have to ruin Ivy Robinson? To put a clumsy stain on her supreme charisma and effortless supremacy? It would be like taking a knife to a famous painting. Trying to imagine her reduced to the status of a sniveling, servile wretch like me makes me shudder with instinctive horror. Just look at her!

I look at her.

I lose myself in her.

Everywhere I look, she is perfection. Everywhere I look, she is superior.

And I'm-

I snatch the poisoned thought from my mind's gullet with a plaintive, childish sob. Why can't I do this? Why can't I get free of her? It's so unfair.

Just one sentence, Olive. That's all you need to say.

Tell her she's-

My mind recoils from the very words. I'm like a whipped dog. I bury my face in my hands.

To make matters worse, I'm keenly aware that I may not have long. I've wasted so much time, and I am not sure how long the drug's effects last. When Ivy uses it on me, I lose all sense of time; when I use it on Luna, I'm too delirious with arousal to mark the clock. Brainwashing Ivy is quite the task, and at this rate, I will never have another opportunity.

It's now or never, Olive.

“You...” I begin to say.

In my silence, Ivy drifted off into a kind of trance. Now she looks up at me, her resistance long faded, her eyes registering only that she may be about to learn more about herself. She’s like a doll, ready to be posed. I could do anything with her—but my voice faltered, yet again, before it even left my lips.

Enough stalling. I close my eyes. I take deep breaths that swell my chest. And I focus on what exactly it is that I’m fighting for.

My old life. Calm and peaceful. Working hard every day in the office. Coming home to see Luna at night. It was so...

Meaningless.

Instantly, that word is a bell that cannot be unrung. A discordant note that echoes through me again, and again, and again.

My life was... meaningless?

That can’t be right. I had a career.

Where I shut myself in my private office, talking to as few people as possible, filing reports for a faceless corporation that never cared about anything but its bottom line.

Meaningless.

But I had Luna.

My girlfriend. The one I let down over and over again, even before I pushed her into Ivy’s arms. The one I always disappointed, because I couldn’t help staying late at work. The one I offered only comfort, never excitement. Never passion.

Meaningless. As hard as it is to face up to, it’s the truth.

But I had...

Nothing else.

Nothing to match the excitement of being Ivy's little spectator. Ivy's little wallet. Ivy's little cuckold.

It's been so fucking hot

That's another devastating truth. The artificiality of the pleasure is made unimportant by its intensity. So what if Ivy did this to me? Without her, how would I have been able to experience something so hot, so terrible, so shocking, it left me seeing stars? Without her, how would I have ever known the grand, cosmic satisfaction of sitting at the very bottom of the natural order, and knowing—deeply, perfectly knowing—that I was exactly where I was supposed to be?

It dawns on me like the rising sun. I'm such a boring little loser, kneeling and touching myself while Ivy fucked my girlfriend on my bed is the most exciting thing that's ever happened to me.

No.

No.

No!

I cannot let myself think these things. I turn my hands into white-knuckled fists and I make the conscious choice to shut down the part of my mind that thinks and doubts. Awareness of the ticking clock on the wall itches at me. There's no more time to waste. No more time to think. Only to do. My skin pale and gray, my face set in an expression of self-loathing and resolve, I set my sights on Ivy Robinson. I just have to do it exactly the way she did it to me. Her words are better than mine ever could be, and trying to think for myself has merely led to tying myself in knots. I just have to think about what she would say, in this position. Even I can do that, right? Even a spectator can be a brainless little copycat.

My head is empty. I open my mouth. "Ivy."

And it slips out, the way it was always going to.

"You're superior."

My surrender.

“I’m superior.”

At first it was an honest mistake, of a kind. I meant to say what Ivy said to me that very first time, and I ended up echoing her sentiment rather than her words. But as I watch the effect of those words ripple through Ivy without resistance, as she straightens her spine and tightens her face into a slack facsimile of her familiar, superior smirk, I realize that this is no mistake.

It’s simply the truth.

Ivy is superior to me. I’ve always known it—yes, always, even before she used the drug to bring me back to heel. Back in college, I drank deep from that well. I drowned in her, and she’s been living inside me ever since. I have always been in her shadow. I was lost without her.

Because she’s superior.

And I’m inferior.

I shiver rapturously, even as tears of defeat fill my eyes. It feels so good to finally admit it with all of my heart.

“You’re superior to me, Ivy,” I tell her. The words fall from my lips like a prayer. “And you always will be.”

“I’m superior to you. And I always will be.”

No hesitation this time. Not from either of us.

“I’m inferior.”

“You’re inferior.”

“I’m so inferior to you.”

“You’re so inferior to me.”

With each suggestion, the cold smirk on her face grows a little firmer. A little more palpable. It’s beautiful. The world set to rights.

“You’re a player,” I remind her. “And I’m just a spectator.”

“You’re just a spectator.” She half-smiles in her drug-induced sleep. “I’m a player.”

“R-right,” I drool. Hearing that from her brings the heat to my cheeks. Even fully clothed, I’m the pathetic one here. Good. “I’m just a spectator. I o-only get to watch.”

“You only get to watch.”

I don’t know what effect it might have, telling Ivy this while she’s under the drug’s influence. It hardly seems to count as brainwashing. As far as I know, she already believes it with every fiber of her being.

But if there’s any part of her that doubts. Any part of her that feels guilt. Any part of her that might show mercy. Surely, I am snuffing it out forever.

God, that’s hot.

“I’m j-just a girl,” I bleat. The thought of making Ivy even worse has me almost delirious. “And y-you’re a real, superior woman.”

“You’re just a girl. I’m a real, superior woman.”

I want it all. All of Ivy’s cruelty. All of her neglect. I want her to trample my entire life under her feet until it holds the shape of her heel.

Because she’s superior. And I’m an inferior little spectator.

“You deserve m-my money,” I moan. “Every penny. Everything I earn. You can take it from me.”

“I deserve your money.” Something that is almost a laugh rises to Ivy’s lips. My cunt throbs. “I can take it from you.”

“I d-deserve to be exploited by you.”

“You deserve to be exploited by me.”

When she says it, I can feel it sinking deeper into my mind too. After

this long under Ivy's thumb, her words have a profound effect on me, and that effect is magnified by the knowledge that I am, in turn, letting her speak through me. I am a mouthpiece of my own unraveling, and I find myself entranced by its rhythm.

"I don't deserve real pleasure. Only you do."

"You don't deserve real pleasure. Only I do."

That's right. Ivy's right. Ivy's always right.

"I only deserve to watch and touch myself like a perverted little spectator."

"You only deserve to watch and touch yourself like a perverted little spectator."

I am utterly in the grip of my own conditioning and my own arousal. I'm letting it carry me away into truly dangerous territory. I know just as well as I did when I first walked in here that Ivy is the reason I'm so pathetically weak to this. That doesn't matter. That's hot too.

Ivy deserves to rewrite me however she wants.

"You d-d-d..."

I falter, briefly, as I consider what I'm about to give away. My one true treasure. The one thing I was doing all this for. The one thing I wanted to save from Ivy.

But I don't have the right. I'm inferior.

"You d-deserve my girlfriend!" I erupt, the backdraft roaring through me, white-hot. "You deserve Luna."

"I deserve your girlfriend."

"You deserve to take her from me."

"I deserve to take her from you."

Fuck. I'm rubbing myself again. I can't stop. I'm pathetic. I'm

unforgivable. I'm inferior.

"Y-you deserve to m-make her yours."

"I deserve to make her mine." Ivy seems to hearken to the messy pleasure in my voice. She's grinning now, as assured and confident as ever. Meanwhile I'm slumped over, hand between my legs.

Superior. Inferior.

"I-I'm a pervert!"

"You're a pervert."

"I'm y-your own personal wallet!" Something is swelling inside me. A climax. A deathblow to my free will.

"You're my own personal wallet."

"I'm a c-c-c-cuckold! I love that she... that my girlfriend is your eager, cheating bitch!" I'm moaning each of my new commandments long and loud now. It's fortunate that Ivy's office is soundproofed—not that I'd care if someone overheard.

I want everyone to see the real me.

"You're a cuckold. You love that your girlfriend is my eager, cheating bitch."

Hearing that note of derisive contempt creep back into Ivy's distant, dreamy voice pushes me over the edge.

"Yoouuuu de-de-serve to taaake eeeverything from meeee!" I howl as I cum.

And when I hear Ivy repeat those words back to me, I sink deep into myself.

In that sunken place, in a post-orgasmic haze so deep that its stillness consumes me, I hear Ivy's voice. She tells me that she deserves to take everything from me, and more besides. She tells me that I am inferior, and she superior. She tells me I'm a spectator, and she a player. She tells

me I'm just a girl, and she a woman. She tells me that and more. I hear every mocking, mind-rending proclamation of hers echoed back to me, over and over again. And just like me, they sink deep.

i accept it. Peacefully, joyfully, i accept it. Ivy is my entire life, and beside her, i am nothing.

This is who i am.

Forever.

After minutes or more, i begin to return to myself. i stir, and i see Ivy still kneeling on the ground before me.

That's not right.

i still cannot form words to set it to rights. i can only apologize with my body. Falling down is effortless—down, out of my chair, onto the ground. Inferiority is my gravity. On hands and knees, i crawl around my desk and place myself before Ivy. Slumped and shrunken, i am smaller than her in every way.

i bow my head. i wait.

But as i wait for Ivy to awaken and punish me, temptation stirs in me yet again. i am, inevitably, weak. Not temptation to overthrow Ivy, obviously. i know now that it's impossible. Even the desire has withered inside me. It's a different impulse that stirs me to speak.

Ivy Robinson is at the center of my world—but i could never be at the center of hers.

What if she gets bored of me?

"i," i murmur, barely loud enough to reach Ivy's ears, "am your perfect victim."

Once more, her eyes focus on me. "You are my perfect victim," she recites slowly.

i blush. Hearing that from Ivy is indescribably special. Even if i inflicted it on her.

“You want to go on ruining me,” i whisper. Doing this is wrong—but only a little. It’s not like Ivy has shown any interest in stopping.

“I want to go on ruining you.” Ivy looks at me anew. Her eyes, still distant, widen slightly. Fresh passion lurks in their depths.

“F...” It takes me a long moment to pluck up the courage to speak the last word. “Forever.”

Ivy echoes it without hesitation. “Forever.”

A sudden realization strikes me, and almost sweeps away the guilt i feel at tampering with the mind of a superior being.

What if that was already true?

Ivy came to me, in a way. Didn’t she? What if she sought me out, after all these years? What if she’s been craving it, since college—a nice, tender piece of meat for her to sink her teeth into and rip apart? Where else would she find a victim of my caliber? Where else would she find someone who’s so perfectly easy to exploit?

Maybe i’ve always been her perfect victim. The two of us bound together by the intimate relationship between predator and prey.

That is the closest thing my hopelessly warped mind will ever again know to a proud thought. As i lapse back into silent waiting, it keeps me warm. When Ivy finally begins to awaken from her drug-induced stupor, i ready myself to greet her. i bent forward and press my forehead against the itchy carpet. i do not move until she speaks.

“You...”

The first lucid word from Ivy’s lips brings it all flooding back. The regret. The guilt. The hope i had, and wasted. The certain knowledge that i will never have this chance again, never be free from her, and that i have consigned the woman i love to forever be a twisted mockery of her former, thoughtful self.

i look up at Ivy. There are tears in my eyes.

“You stupid, worthless loser,” Ivy snarls. She’s angry, yes. But excited, too. Sadistic. She is delighted by my utter failure as a human being. “I’ll make you regret this.”

i hope she does. i really do.

It’s what i deserve.

And i know Ivy Robinson will not let me down.

EPILOGUE

Today is the happiest day of my life, and the worst.

Those two things now walk hand in hand, for me. In the months since my final surrender to Ivy Robinson, agony and ecstasy have become so intertwined within my emotional landscape that i can barely imagine them apart. No pleasure but abject masochism. No pain that my broken mind cannot transmute into a source of unhealthy arousal. All that truly matters to me is the certain knowledge that i am inferior, and each day brings another of Ivy's reminders to be grateful for. Each another nail, hammered still deeper into whatever remains of my soul. My life is a marriage of torment and bliss.

A marriage. What an apt thought.

After all, it's my wedding day.

Not long after i shattered myself in Ivy's office, Luna and i agreed to tie the knot—as, more importantly, did Ivy. Our relationship has long since become like that ridiculous old Christian meme. “The myth of consensual sex—isn't there someone you forgot to ask?” Ivy Robinson stands between my new wife and i, a greater presence, one that delights in placing us in awful little tableaus the way a sadistic young girl would her dolls.

Isn't there someone i forgot to ask? Of course not. i would never forget about Ivy. It's just that i would never waste her time by asking her if i'm allowed to fuck Luna. i already know the answer.

For her part, Luna has become equally pliable to Ivy's whims. She is not, though, inferior the way i am. She does not obey because it is her place. She is simply in tune with Ivy the way a prize female might be

with her alpha. And it certainly took no convincing for her to accept Ivy's proposal. The mere prospect of cheating on a wife rather than a girlfriend practically made her cum on the spot. i've never seen her so happy as when i slipped the engagement ring on her finger, daydreaming about what her cheating partners might think of it.

Luna was still glowing with that thrill, that pleasure, as she walked down the aisle and as we spoke our vows. She looked so beautiful in her dress. We both did, or so they all say. Ivy was careful to choreograph our outfits. i looked merely acceptable enough not to raise eyebrows. For Luna, no expense was spared—my expense, naturally. She was a splendid vision, overflowing with a joy that, unbeknownst to the priest, stemmed from the way so many eyes were set on her in jealous admiration. The ceremony itself was mostly traditional; it amused Ivy, i think, to preserve the superficial appearance of happy matrimony. It makes what she has done to us—is doing to us—all the more real. Only the truly keen-eyed would have noticed that Luna was looking past me while she said “I do,” gazing longingly at my sole bridesmaid in my place: Ivy Robinson.

i imagine the priest must have realized that Luna's vows did, in fact, omit the traditional promise to be true.

Now, at the reception, Luna is even more ravishing. She has let down her hair, and her true charm, as i have come to appreciate it, is on full display. My beloved Luna has, under Ivy's tender care, become a creature of wanton appetites. Her hunger shines out from within her, sparkling in her eyes, smoldering in her cheeks, throbbing through her body as she presents herself for consumption, chest held forward, painted lips slightly parted in an expression of shameless want. She is a dark star, glowing as she devours, and with her gravity she pulls objects into her orbit. So it is with her bridesmaids, clustered around her at our table. Friends new and old, she sits facing them, facing away from me, holding their attention effortlessly with constant, light, suggestive touches and remarks.

She's already fucked them all, of course.

Thanks to that, each of them knows exactly what i am. They know enough, anyway; not the full story, but they know that i derive pleasure from Luna's shameless adultery. Thanks to that, they look upon me much the way my wife does. As they flirt with her, they sometimes throw contemptuous glances in my direction, reminding themselves with my every blush and shiver that i enjoy being cuckolded. Sometimes, in

moments of particularly blatant overstepping—a hand up Luna’s dress, a stray finger on her lips—they will even look me dead in the eyes, teasing me, daring me to break out of my role as spectator. They know i won’t. i couldn’t, even if i wanted to.

It strikes me as unlikely that all these women were quite so cruel when they first took to Luna’s bed. At the beginning, i’m sure most of them would have balked at my presence. Provoked by Luna in some way, each of their first seductions were the usual, surreptitious, guilty sort. But slowly, the pleasure of superiority has taken root in them. Pride is a corrosive thing, and they look as proud as well-fed wolves as they surround the two of us now, plotting further assaults on the sanctity of our marriage.

i wish i could thank them for it; maybe i will, later, privately. i’m sure the looks on their faces at hearing my gratitude would tear the scab in my heart open anew. i crave that feeling more than anything. It’s the only pleasure that means anything to me anymore. The only thing that keeps me from falling at their feet right now is that seeing Luna treated this way at our wedding has me in such a delirious mood, i’m too tonguetied to speak.

Fuck. All the bridesmaids are looking at Luna like she’s just a juicy piece of meat. It’s shameless. It’s despicable—and so much worse is the knowledge that they’ve all tasted her. My breath is coming in desperate pants. Beneath my dress, my underwear is soaked. All those hands. All those tongues. Everywhere, all over her body. Places i’ve never touched. Pleasures i could never awaken. Fuck. And worst of all is the fact that Luna loves it. She is as aroused as i am right now. She loves being a piece of meat. Being a trophy. She will fuck them all and a dozen other people over and over again—all because of me. Because of what it means to do this to me. Fuck. i love being married to an eager, cheating bitch.

Will they let me watch some more? i hope so. i really hope so. i wish i could touch myself right now under the table without giving myself away, but even more than that i wish they’d let me watch.

i wonder what I’d have to sacrifice to get them to let me watch.

i’m about to start crying at my wedding reception and everyone will think i’m overcome with joy when really i’m just desperate to watch my wife fuck superior women instead of me. i’m such an inferior little spectator.

It drives me crazy that it's such a competition, too. i can see the bridesmaids striving to outdo each other with acts of daring. A foot up under the table. A cherry offered up to Luna—and with it, a juice-stained finger pressed past her lips, for her to obligingly wrap her tongue around in worship. Eventually out comes the finger, then the pit—and then the stem, tied in a knot.

When did Luna learn how to do that? She shouldn't be able to. She's not that kind of woman.

She is now. And it drives me crazy.

It drives everyone here crazy. i can see it in the bridesmaids' faces. They all want to be the one to fuck Luna on her wedding night.

It's too bad for them. On that front—and that front alone—they will be denied. Luna's marital bed is already spoken for.

"Hello? Olive, dear?"

A familiar voice snatches me from my torrid thoughts. i stand and turn, trying to hide the look of drooling masochism on my face even as my blush reasserts itself. i cannot reveal my true nature in public. Not to my family, of all people.

My parents and my sister stand next to our table, all smiles. They've been keeping to themselves throughout the reception; my introversion runs in the family, and besides a few stray aunts and cousins, there aren't many other guests from my side of the relationship for them to recognize and chat with. i have few friends, thanks to Ivy's machinations. Perhaps they've come over here to make their excuses after a little conversation.

"Hi Mom, Dad," i manage, after catching my breath. A few of the bridesmaids titter behind me. Luna too, i think. That doesn't help. i nod to my sister. "Alyssa."

"Hey sis!" she waves. God, they all look so proud. It's so wrong.

"Your father and I just wanted to tell you again how proud we are," my mom says. "Both of you were so beautiful at the ceremony—it was just

perfect!—and it was all I could do to keep myself from sobbing. You were always such a quiet girl, and every so often we worried... but this happiness is all we ever wanted for you.”

i get the sense a few glasses of champagne have loosened her tongue. Dad seems to think so too, judging from the sheepish look on his face. “Thanks, Mom,” i reply awkwardly.

‘This happiness.’ They have no idea, do they? My own parents don’t know how wretched and awful their daughter is. How inferior. They think i’m essentially normal—shy, quiet, but seeking the same kind of happiness as anyone else. They don’t know that i know the taste of Ivy’s feet better than i do my new wife’s lips. That i spend as much time kneeling beside Luna’s bed as sleeping in it. That three nights ago i paid Ivy five hundred dollars for the privilege of eating out Luna’s ass after she got done fucking it.

How would they look at me if they knew? The question itches at me, even as i fight to suppress it. Surely my family, of all people, should be safe from these thoughts—but Ivy’s forceful brainwashing is not so discerning.

It’s wrong for them to look at me like i’m normal. Like i deserve their well-wishes. It itches at me.

I need them to see what i truly am.

Inferior. Inferior. Inferior.

I need them to know that i’m just a little spectator and that my eager, cheating bitch of a wife is sleeping around every chance she gets while i drool over it and-

Dad mistakes the look on my face for embarrassment at my mom’s comment. “Yes, you two will be very happy together,” he says, a touch awkwardly, resting his hand on my shoulder and glancing at Luna. He’s never been great with feelings. “She’s a keeper.”

She is. Dad doesn’t know the half of it.

But maybe Alyssa does. My big sister is a little more adept at reading the room. The look of concern on her face tells me that she has picked up on the fact that something is deeply, nauseatingly wrong here. That

the unwholesome smirks on the bridesmaids' faces mean something—even if she doesn't know what. She draws close to me and drops her voice, the smile on her face stained with concern.

“So, Olive,” she probes, with forced, failed lightness. “Is all this...” she gestures around vaguely, suggesting more than just the reception, “how you always wanted it to be?”

What a question.

Is this how i always wanted it to be? A deranged marriage to a cheating wife, the both of us brainwashed puppets of my former college bully, a woman who has meticulously obliterated my ego, stolen my job, ruined my reputation, and who has made me eager to turn over my paychecks so i can masturbate at her feet while she takes Luna on fancy dates at my expense?

Yes. Yes, of course it is.

Under Ivy's leadership, i have hammered my psyche into the necessary shape for that to be my truth. Whatever hopes and aspirations i once had besides serving as her plaything are long forgotten. This is what is right for me, and every bone in my body knows it. The fact that i once thought differently is meaningless; the fact that i once thought i deserved better is downright laughable. You don't bother asking a grown woman if she's sad about her unfulfilled childhood dream of becoming an astronaut.

i have grown out of the delusion of my independence. And i can no longer imagine a world in which anything gives me more pleasure than this.

“Yes,” i tell Alyssa truthfully. “It's perfect.”

The tears welling up in my eyes may not banish all suspicion, but they're convincing enough for now. Then Luna stands up from the table and comes to join us, and the moment passes.

“Mr. and Mrs. Barnes, Alyssa, thank you so much for coming!” Luna greets my parents warmly. In front of them, she is flawless. She's not always a cheating bitch. Probably, her profligacy waned without my pathetic, agonized reactions to enjoy.

“Of course, dear!” Mom replies, hugging her. “Wouldn’t miss it for the world. Oh, I was just telling Olive that you looked beautiful up there at the altar. I was so moved! And then, my goodness, the announcement! We had no idea.”

My blood runs white-hot. Oh god. It’s the one thing i’ve been fighting not to think about, for the sake of my remaining sanity.

Luna giggles. “It’s still so early. We only just found out ourselves, and... well, what better time to share the happy news?”

She rests her hand protectively on her belly. My stomach drops.

“It’s just so wonderful!” Alyssa coos. Even she’s caught up in this sick performance now.

“It is, it is!” Dad agrees. He looks so pleased with me. It’s devastating. “It’s your news to share, of course. We were just so surprised—you never told us you were doing IVF, or whatever it was.”

Luna spares a moment to throw me a look that sets my heart aflame and almost brings me to my knees. “No,” she agrees viciously. “We didn’t.”

At that moment, of all moments, she appears. My new goddess.

“Forgive me for interrupting,” Ivy Robinson purrs, as Luna and i part to admit her to the conversation. She’s wearing a perfectly tailored, luxurious tuxedo, opened along with the shirt beneath to expose her cleavage. She looks immaculate. Like a model. She and Luna make a wonderful couple. “I simply wanted to pay my respects.”

i shuffle my feet. i look down. Her presence only makes it harder not to slump to my knees.

But i can’t. i must be the dutiful host. “M-mom, Dad,” i stammer. “This is I-”

“Ivy Robinson!” Mom jumps in. To my shock, she seems as pleased to see my superior as Luna does. “Your... well, your boss, now anyway. We’ve already met.”

“I introduced myself earlier,” Ivy explains. She grins a shark’s grin at me. “I do hope that’s alright.”

“O-of course,” i mutter. As if anything she did could be anything less than perfect. Ivy is entitled to take anything she wants from me.

But my family..

As i lapse into uncomfortable silence, the conversation flows freely and easily around me. Jokes, remarks, compliments. Better than it would if i was trying to hold the room, i’m sure. Ivy wields her charm like a knife. Affecting her charismatic magic on my parents is effortless for her. Within a minute or two of small talk, something appalling becomes clear to me.

They like her.

They like her more than me.

They don’t love her more, obviously. That’s something different, and i am still their daughter. But i’ve always been awkward, even around them. And Ivy? She’s simply so easy to like.

Watching them talk, i can envision the rest of my entire life playing out before my eyes. It will be exactly this—forever. Wherever i go, Ivy will be there. If i won any advantage in our final contest of wills, it is merely that: her permanent attention. She will never grow tired of me. She will never show mercy to me. From now on, i will only ever walk in her footsteps. A follower to my master, as she takes and takes and takes. As she devours everything in my path. Her supremacy over me will grow with each feast, and i will become smaller and smaller with every passing year.

My cunt drips against my panties. Its rhythm matches the incessant drumbeat mantra in my brain.

Inferior.

Little.

Spectator.

Forever.

“Well, it’s getting late, and our taxi’s here,” Dad announces. “So I think we’ll be heading off. A pleasure meeting you, Ivy. And Olive, Luna—congratulations, once again. For all of it.”

We all exchange hugs and well-wishes and goodbyes. i barely hear any of it. i am barely present. i am consumed by my own weakness. My parents leave. My big sister will stay a little longer, but she drifts away toward the bar. In her absence, Ivy is free to reach across and rest her hand possessively on the very faint bulge at the front of Luna’s wedding dress.

My thighs clench. It’s almost too much. i need to rub myself right now. i need to be on my knees. i need to kiss the cock that knocked up the love of my life.

Soon, i’ll get that wish. Ivy has planned that too. Soon, the three of us will ascend to the honeymoon suite of the hotel. i will kneel next to the bed and listen as Ivy consummates my marriage in my stead, my bridal veil wrapped around my eyes like a blindfold so that i can only grow sick with abased arousal at that joyous sounds that Luna makes.

Cuckolded, on my wedding night. Fuck, it’s so hot. Fuck, Ivy’s so good to me.

Because this, to me, is happiness. The only happiness left to one as inferior as me. Ivy and her drug have brought me to that enlightenment—and they have not abandoned me since. Ivy Robinson, in her supreme generosity, will keep finding ways to make my eyes tear up and my heart skip beats and my stomach churn with nauseous, self-disgusted arousal. i am her perfect victim, her subordinate, and thanks to that, she will always find ways to show me fresh heights and new lows.

What is that, if not happiness?

She does it yet again, as she guides Luna and i away from the reception. Ivy noticed, it seems, my earlier discomfort when she was speaking with my family. But she and i both know that my reluctance is not resistance. Not anymore. i have none of that left. i know my place. i love my place, and i love Ivy Robinson for twisting the knife still deeper with just four small words of sinister promise as we board the elevator.

“Your sister is hot.”

i consider it a wedding gift.

I would like to express my gratitude for the generosity of all those who support me on Patreon, and to give my thanks to the following patrons in particular for their exceptional support:

Artemis, Chloe, GrillFan65, Dasterin, Dex, orangesya, Joanna, dmtph, Ember, MegatronTarantulas, NewtypeWoman, Madeline, Sarah, Mattilda, Emile Queen of sloths, jlc, Neana, Art, Jackson, Abigail, Ashe, Hypnogirl_Stephanie_, Jade, mintyasleep, VariableGear, Michael, Tasteful Ardour, Dennis, Full Blown Marxism, S, Brendon, Jim, Bouncyrou, Erin, HannahSolaria, Cristopher, hellenberg, Miss_Praxis, Noct, Charlotte, Faun, B, Foridin, Zhennyfyr, EepyTimeTea, Devi, dylan, Phoenix, IvyLeather, Jim, Sebastian, Joseph, Cryocrspy, Thomas, Liz, Ash, naivetynkohan, Daedalus Fall, Ada, Basic dev, Katie, Lily, Alphy D, Mal, Cusco, Nimapode, GladiusLumin, Alan, Geckonator, Anonymous, The Moth Court, Michael, Thomas, Yodasgirl, Astral Gen, prolekvlt, Djuran, Jakitron, HazelPup, Ana, DOLLICIOUS, likenyah, Griffin, ferretfyre, Latavia, KBZ, 41666, Calamity, naughtzero, Aletheia, a pelican, soda girl kate, Rami Hound, Junefox, Abigal, Motoyuuri, Valmire, Ambition, Evelyn M, personalityPersonified, Anjou, Olivia, Jotunn, Samantha, Kait_Storm, HazelDuck, LunarLambda, Malu, Fern, official video gaming, FluffiestTail, incrypt, Vivid, April, Benjo, nidee, Abricot, Nicholas, Nette, cob, patience, magnolia, Veronica, sable, RaspberryWolf, Evelynn, A Needy Bunny, Rhiannon, Roxie, Codzilla, Sasha, Tog, Spencer, Emily, WhyamIhere, Nervous Crow, Dulcinea, Laurel, Narilka, Nikki, Jacqueline, 417aba7b, Roxanne, jakester, Gamer, KnightsRequiem, I do things, Ana, Cintia, That Jess, Octavia, Elia, starryknight, Latebakr, Charity, Daelyn, ProxyWitch, Bumblefluffy, Nadine, DONALD, boidbwain, Danielle, Nick, Skaetlett, Max, Ben, A Needy Bunny, R., cv, Asher, asd asd, RoxyNychus, Thalia, Ro, AmplitudeAngel, Dana, Ivy, Ellie, Lavender, ashywashy, Diana, Theja, Boletum, Zoe, Hawker