



Survivor



"Are you drunk?" asked my father, fixing me with the disappointed glare I'd come to know so very well. He grabbed my arm, pulling me into a nearby hall. I knew better than to protest. He pushed me against a wall, practically growling, "Stay here. I'll call Nigel to pick you up."

"I'm fine," I insisted, though I knew from experience that lying to him was a useless endeavor. He always knew the truth. I straightened my jacket and pushed my hair back from my eyes. A stubborn lock resisted, falling back over my forehead. "I'm an adult. I can have a drink if I want to."

"An adult?" he rasped. "You? You're a nineteen-year-old infant."

"I said I'm fine," I repeated, trying to push past him and into the ballroom. He gripped my arm, halting me in my tracks. Not for the first time, I resisted the urge to cower before the much-larger man. I tried to jerk away. "Let me go!"

It was a futile gesture and only served to elicit a tightening of his already-ironlike grip. His fingers bit into my upper arm. "You will not embarrass me," he snarled, his weathered face like a thunderhead. "You will go with Nigel. And you will go home. Do you understand?"

I rolled my eyes, which, if I'd been even the least bit sober, I would have known was a grievous mistake. Without hesitation, he backhanded me across my face, and I staggered away, as much from my drunkenness as from the force of the blow. Tears in my eyes, I straightened to my full height, ready to challenge him.

"There are a dozen of the most influential men in Texas in that room," he said. "Appearances matter. One day, Pyramid Oil will be yours. You'll be in charge. And I won't allow you to ruin their impression of you. One day, you will need their respect. And you won't get it if you make a drunken ass of yourself. So, stay here. Wait for Nigel. Or there will be consequences."

The challenge died in my throat. "Yes, father," I said. "Whatever you think is best."



"I don't want to talk about it," I said, glancing away from my girlfriend, Kendall. She was, of course, pretty enough, but I couldn't stand the look of pity in her eyes. I didn't need her sympathy. Nor did I want to endure what she thought of as kindness, but I considered an acknowledgement of my own weakness.

"Are you sure?" she asked.

I nodded, forcing a smile as I turned my gaze upon her. Blonde-haired, blue-eyed, and perfectly proportioned, she sat on the wooden fence. Behind her, I saw my family's estate stretching off into the distance. Acre upon acre of good, Texas land – I should have been happy. I should have been content. But I wasn't. In fact, it had been a long time since I'd even brushed against anything resembling happiness. But I'd gotten pretty good at faking it.

"I'm sure," I said. "He's a controlling asshole, but he was right. I was drunk, and I had no business being at that party. I should have known better. I'm the future of Pyramid Oil, and I need to start acting like it."

It was a very mature statement, but I didn't mean it. I had no intention of slowing down – not anytime soon, at least. I wasn't responsible. It just wasn't in my nature. But over the course of my young life, I'd been conditioned to say the right things.

Kendall turned, looking out into the fields, and I leaned against the fence, propping my elbows on top of it. "It was so much easier when we were little, wasn't it?" she asked. "We'd just run around and play, and we didn't have to think about who thought what of us."

I nodded, though, for my sister and me, that had never been true. For as long as I could remember, I'd been forced to keep decorum at the forefront of my mind. But Kendall couldn't understand that. She was the daughter of our nanny. Nobody cared what she did or how she did it. The same couldn't be said for my sister, Eliana, or me.

"Yeah," I said, not really paying her any attention. "But it's different now. We're adults."

A truer statement had never been said, but I couldn't help but wonder when, exactly, I'd been allowed to be a stupid child. If that time had ever existed, it was long since gone.



"You know there's no way he's letting you attend out of the house like that," I said, looking at my twin sister, Eliana. She wore a sequined dress which was more mesh than not and clung to her every curve. And my sister had a lot of curves; the family's plastic surgeon had seen to that. With her voluptuous body, surgically altered nose, and bottle-blond hair, I sometimes barely recognized her as the girl I'd grown up with.

Eliana looked down, asking, "What's wrong with what I'm wearing?"

"Aside from the fact that you're practically falling out of that outfit?" I asked. "Nothing, Ellie. You look great."

"I'll have you know that Kim Kardashian wore this exact dress to the Grammy's this year," she explained. "It's called fashion, Ollie."

"Fashion or not, dad isn't going to go for it," I said.

Though we'd been minutes apart, Eliana was a good deal less mature. While I acted out by showing to the odd party drunk, Eliana lived her life as a pale imitation of those women who'd do anything for a bit of media attention. I hated it, but I couldn't bring myself to come down too hard on her; after all, she got it bad enough from our father.

"He probably won't even know," Eliana said, idly sucking on her pinky. "I mean, it's not like he's going to be there, right? And he doesn't keep up with gossip or anything. I bet he doesn't even know what *US Weekly* is."

I sighed. The country's leading – if that term even applied – gossip magazine didn't even know she existed. And even if they did, they weren't likely to send photographers down to Houston. But I didn't tell her that. Instead, I said, "He'll find out. He always finds out."

She groaned dramatically, rolling her eyes skyward as she collapsed backwards onto the bed. "This wouldn't even be a problem if he'd let me move to Los Angeles. I'd be happy. And he wouldn't have to deal with me embarrassing him. It's a win-win."

"Yeah," I agreed. "But you're not in L.A. You're in Houston, Ellie. And he'll lock you in your room for six months if you leave the house looking like that. You know it. I know you do. That's why I'm sure you have a backup dress in that closet. So, go put it on. Go to your party. And have a good time."

She sighed. "Fine," she said. "But I'm not going to have fun. I'm just not."



"You wanted to see me?" I asked, pushing through the door of my father's study. It was, like the rest of the house, richly appointed. Dark woods and leather were the theme, and as nice as it always was, the whole thing had always felt claustrophobic to me.

My father, Julian Santiago, sat behind a grand behemoth of a desk, sipping what I knew was expensive whisky. He motioned to one of the chairs across the enormous desk. "Have a seat," he said. I did, and he stood. Already much bigger than me, with him standing, it made me feel like a small child.

"What's going on?" I asked.

"I wanted to thank you," he said with a half-smirk. "Maria told me about that ridiculous dress your sister wanted to wear last weekend. You talked her out of it. Thank you."

I didn't respond. In all my years, I'd been so infrequently praised by the man that I had no idea what to say. It didn't matter, because he kept talking.

"You seem like you're starting to understand," he said. "We're not like other families. We have responsibilities – yourself, to our company, to our family. Your sister hasn't started to understand that yet."

"I know, dad," I said. "I'm trying. So is Ellie. And she'll get it. I know she will."

He leaned on the desk. "If she'll get her head out of the sky, maybe," he said. "I don't understand it, this fascination with fame, and I don't think I ever will. I've tried to give her everything she could ever want. I've given her the tools to become a proper lady. But she just wants to prance around half-naked while perverted photographers wait for some wardrobe malfunction. It's maddening."

"Just give her time," I said. "It's just a phase. She'll come around. I know she will."

"I hope so," my father answered. "I truly do."



"Yes, senator," said my father, gripping my shoulder. "This is my son, Oliver. Oliver, this is Senator Forrester."

I nodded, extending my hand. "Good to meet you, sir," I said with ever ounce of respect I could muster. I'd never heard of the man, but then again, I didn't follow politics very closely. He took my hand, shaking it vigorously.

"Your father says you're going to Princeton," the man said. He was pasty white and looked like he had one foot in the grave. But his grip was strong, and his hazel eyes were lively.

I smiled. "I haven't decided yet," I said.

"Oh, don't be coy," my father said. "He's going to be a Princeton man, just like his old us, Tom."

"Then Pyramid Oil will be in good hands," said the senator, ignoring my statement. The two men started talking about their alma mater while I did my best to look interested. It wasn't easy, but I think I managed well enough.

The truth was that I was incredibly bored, and I wanted almost nothing to do with more school – Ivy League or otherwise. But I couldn't say that because there were certain expectations that went along with being the son of one of Texas' most prominent oil men.

Pyramid Oil had been passed down, father to son, since it had been founded by my great grandfather. And one day, the responsibility of running the company would fall to me, whether I wanted it or not. Most of my life had been an effort to prepared for that eventuality.

"I'm going to take a gap year, first," I said, almost on impulse. The two men turned to look at me like I'd spat on the floor. "You know, see the world and stuff before starting college."

I felt my father's gaze boring into me, but I didn't back down. However, I was relieved when the senator said, "That's a wonderful idea! I did that myself, and I think it helped make me the man I am today. I'm sure you'd agree, Julian."

My father gritted his teeth together, his ire barely perceptible as he forced a smile. "Of course," he said. "We've been planning it for months."



"A gap year? Like, you're going to backpack around Europe or something?" asked Kendall as she sat beside the pool, topless. I was uncomfortable with her partial nudity, but I didn't want to seem too uptight. Besides, aside from us, no one was home. "Seriously? You?"

I sat on the patio chair beside her. "Why not me?" I asked.

"I mean, you're not exactly independent, are you?" she asked. "And I don't mean that in a bad way. It's just that you've had a butler your whole life. I don't even know if you know how to wash your own clothes."

"So?" I said. "It can't be that hard."

"Yeah, but –"

"And besides – it's not like I'm going to be roughing it," I explained. "My dad agreed to this, which means he'll fund the whole thing. I'll be staying in five-star hotels. I'm sure they have a laundry service."

"I...um...I could go with you," Kendall said. "I'm sure we could have all sorts of fun with that kind of privacy."

I knew she was going to ask, but as fond of Kendall as I was, I didn't want her going along with me. It might have been a spur-of-the-moment idea, but the whole concept had begun to grow on me. I wanted to be alone. I wanted to have my adventures, to see the world. I wanted to sleep with exotic women and befriend strange characters. And in that fantasy, there just wasn't a place for a girlfriend.

"I'm sorry," I said. "But dad wouldn't go along with it if you went. You know how he feels about us dating. Think about what he'd say if we were going to spend a year sleeping in the same bed."

"Yeah," she said, wilting slightly. "I guess you're right. Still, it would be fun, right?"

"Definitely," I agreed. "Definitely."

"Are you sure you want to do this?" asked my father, Julian. "I think it's a wonderful idea, of course, but if you'd prefer to get a jump on your education, I couldn't argue with that logic."

I knew he hated the notion of me spending a year gallivanting around the world accomplishing nothing. If it wasn't productive, it was a waste of time – at least as far as he was concerned. However, for the first time in my life, I had him in a corner. In our conversation with the senator, he'd extolled the virtues of seeing the world so much that going back on it now would have made him look a fool. And Julian Santiago would never let that happen.

"No," I said. "I'm doing it. I think it's a good idea. I've only been outside of Texas a handful of times, and I think it's smart to see what the rest of the world has to offer."

He nodded, asking, "You have the card, right?"

I patted my back pocket, where his Black Card was nestled in my wallet. "I've got it," I said.

"I wish I was going with you," said my sister, Eliana. She wore a simple, pink sweatshirt and a pair of bedazzled blue jeans. "But dad doesn't think women need to see the world."

"I don't think girls should travel alone," the eldest Santiago said. "You don't know how many dangers there are out there."

"Like you do," she said, crossing her arms and pouting. "But whatever. I'll be here. Going to school. Acting like I'm not a second-class citizen."

"Ignore your sister," my father said. I nodded, but I could sympathize. For my father, girls and boys lived by different sets of rules. He stuck out his hand, which I took. "Have a good trip, son. When you get back, you can start the rest of your life."





"Jesus," I muttered, watching the scantily clad women dance. Six weeks into my trip, and I'd made my way to Ibiza, an island off the coast of Spain that was known for its party atmosphere. And it had lived up to its reputation. For a sheltered boy from Texas, it seemed like a hedonistic paradise filled with drugs, women, alcohol, and any other vice imaginable. I'd already spent a week on the island, and I still didn't really know which way to turn.

"Pretty awesome, huh?" said Troy, a young man I'd met a few days into my stay. Like me, Troy was from a wealthy family, but unlike me, he was well used to the extravagant and excessive debauchery of the place. He practically yelled over the thumping music. "You want one of them?"

Wide-eyed and open-mouthed, I stared at the beautiful girls. There was nothing wholesome, nothing innocent about them – not like my girlfriend back home. Their every move advertised sex. "Are they...you know..."

"Whores?" he asked, grinning broadly. He shrugged, saying, "I don't know, honestly. But what I do know is that any woman who looks like that in a place like this is for sale, one way or another. Maybe you buy them things. Maybe you just hand them a wad of hundreds. But they're for sale if you're willing to pay the price."

Troy and I were the same age, but he seemed far worldlier than me, even if he didn't look it. With his blonde hair, cherub-like face, and baby blue eyes, he looked as much like a child as an adult. But behind those eyes was a level of experience I could only imagine. But there was only one way to catch up.

"One?" I said. "I want both."

Troy's grin widened. "My man!" he said, holding up his fist. I bumped it with my own, and he waved one of the club's attendants over. "My boy here wants to talk to those two ladies on the dance floor. Make it happen."

After Troy slipped the man a hundred-dollar bill, he scurried off to obey. I leaned back, waiting for what I knew was going to be a fantastic night.



"Dude," said Troy, his seemingly-disembodied face hovering in front of mine. "You are so high right now."

"What?" I asked, my own voice sounding far away. "I'm not really feeling anything. You?"

His only answer was an infectious laugh. Before I knew it, the both of us had collapsed into fits of giggles. Before coming to Amsterdam, I'd never really considered doing drugs. Sure, I'd been drunk on numerous occasions, but in my circles, that was seen as a largely acceptable vice. But marijuana and the like? That was reserved for losers. My stay in Amsterdam made me reevaluate that judgment.

After spending almost two months in Ibiza, Troy and I had made our way to the Netherlands. The other boy seemed to have taken it as his personal mission to make sure I got the most out of my gap year. And I, having no one else with me, welcomed the company. Without him, I never would have stayed past the first few weeks.

"Where next?" he asked.

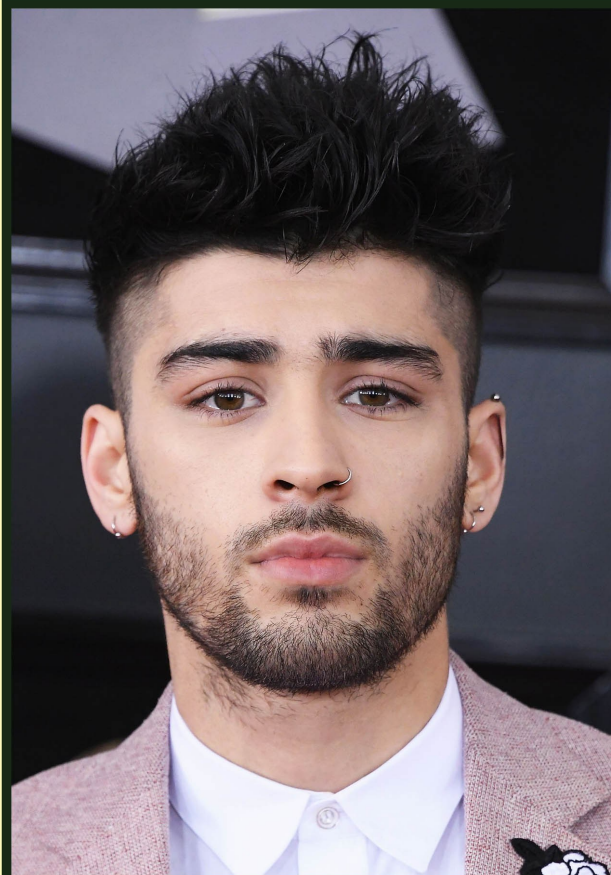
I shrugged. "I don't know," I said. "I'm kind of just winging it, you know? Australia? Thailand? What do you think?"

"I know some hot chicks in Sydney," he suggested. "We could go surfing at Bondi Beach."

"I don't know how to surf," I admitted, feeling somehow defective for the lack.

"It's not hard," he said. "But that's the best part. One of the chicks I know? She's a surfing instructor. It'll be amazing. I promise."

"Yeah," I said, smiling. "But first, let's get some more of those brownies."



"You don't think it's too much?" I asked, fingering my nose ring. It was one of many piercings I'd recently acquired, and I wasn't entirely sure how they made me look.

Troy nodded. "They look awesome," he said. "Less like some preppy asshole who's never been outside of Texas. But I still think you need a tattoo or two. Just so everybody knows you're not just pretending."

I laughed off the suggestion, but I knew it wasn't a joke. He'd been needling me to get a tattoo for over a month. In fact, the only reason I'd agreed to the piercings was so to get my new friend off my back. Still, it was nice having him around. If I was honest, it was the first time I'd ever really had a friend.

Growing up in exclusive, all-boys schools meant that someone like me – meaning, brown – meant that no matter how rich or important my dad was, I was always seen as something less-than. Some of the boys called me "terrorist", clearly thinking I was of middle eastern descent. Others called me the "maid's son", assuming my father had had a dalliance with the help. Wherever I went, the taunts changed, but the sentiment behind them didn't. I was an outsider, and I always would be.

But Troy didn't care about the color of my skin. Nor did any of the seemingly endless line of friends he had wherever we went. He just wanted to have fun. And he wanted to do it with me.

Sydney had certainly lived up to his hype; I had learned to surf. I had been with countless, nubile young women. And I was, for the first time in my life, happy. But soon, it would all come to an end. Only two months remained in my trip, and Princeton, along with all the responsibilities it represented, awaited.

"You shouldn't go back," Troy said. "Just keep going, man. Just keep having fun."

"I have to," I said. "I've got responsibilities. And –"

"Fuck responsibility," he said. "People weren't meant to live like that. Going to work, nine-to-five, stressing over how many millions you have? That's unnatural. But this? This is the best life has to offer."

I couldn't disagree, but I was in no position to take his advice to heart. I had a life waiting for me back home. A girlfriend. College. A family. People were depending on me.

"What do you think of Cancun?" I asked. "For the last month. Just drinking tequila all day? What do you think?"

He looked thoughtful for a long moment before saying, "I think that's the best idea you've had yet, man!"



Troy set the shot glass in front of me. I wanted to say no. I wanted to refuse. I was already drunk, and one more shot might just do me in. It wouldn't be the first time, but I certainly didn't relish the idea. However, in my inebriated state, I couldn't articulate a proper refusal. So, like so many drunken idiots before me, I grinned broadly, picked up the shot glass, and downed the tequila.

And that's the last thing I remember clearly. I must have passed out. I had to have. But I don't remember it. All I could really recall are bits and pieces of the following night. Stumbling around the bar. Pissing in a corner. Riding in an unfamiliar van. Incredible thunder. And then, nothing. Just nothing.

That night, I awoke to darkness. I tried to look around, but it was useless.

"Troy!" I called out, getting to my hands and knees on the rough, concrete floor. "This isn't funny, man!"

There was no answer. My mouth was incredibly dry. My eyes felt crusty. And I wanted to vomit. But more than anything, I wanted to know where I was.

I called out again. And again. Over and over, I called my friend's name, but nobody answered. I was alone. As my eyes acclimated to the darkness, I saw that I was in a featureless cell. The walls were made of cinderblocks, and a heavy, metal door hung in the center of the far wall. The entire room was probably thirty feet across and at least a long.

Finally, after what felt like hours, the door creaked open, admitting an enormous, bald man. He looked like he had muscles on muscles, and he ignored my pleas for answers. Instead, he tossed a black sack at my feet, saying, "Put it on."

"I'm not putting anything on until --"

The words died in my throat as he rammed his fist into my stomach. "Put it on," he said. "Or I hit you again."

I didn't resist a second time and, obediently, I put the black bag over my head.

I wasn't in Mexico anymore. Or rather, I wasn't in Cancun, at least. There was no salt in the air. No humidity. I was in a desert, and I was alone.

After putting on the bag, I'd been escorted to a car, which then drove me somewhere else. I don't know which way we went, but it took hours. When we finally got to our destination, I was shoved into another cell and left alone to ponder my own kidnapping.

Looking around my cell, I wondered how long it would take my father to pay the ransom. Certainly, it wouldn't take long. I had insurance for just that reason. But as I took in the wooden cot hanging from the dirty wall, I thought that it couldn't come soon enough.

However, help didn't come that day. Or the next. Or any day after that. Weeks passed, one day after another, and nothing changed. I got one meal each day – some watery stew, usually – and a little water sent through a slot at the base of my cell door. I lost weight. I cried. I yelled until I was hoarse. But it didn't matter. There was no one to help me. There was nothing I could do. My situation was completely, irrevocably hopeless.

I couldn't help but wonder why my father hadn't paid the ransom. The kidnappers knew who I was. They'd called me by name on multiple occasions, and even if they hadn't, I'd let them know. I'd told them about the insurance. Millions of dollars awaited their call. But they ignored me. Or rather, my father did. I didn't know which.

Isolation is a strange thing. On the surface, it seems infinitely endurable. Everyone's been alone before. Some people even prefer it. However, living your life, day in and day out, for months at a time without so much as a single shred of human contact can drive a man crazy. And I was on the verge. I knew it. So, when my cell door swung open, and I saw my captor.

"Come with me," the bald man said. "Resist, and you will be killed."

Resistance crossed my mind. It would be better than returning to the cell. But I still held out hope that I'd be rescued. So, I stood on wobbly legs and followed the man into the desert air.



I followed the bald man through the harsh sun and into a dimly lit building. In the center was a man strapped to a chair. My first instinct was to help him, which I quickly suppressed. I couldn't help myself, much less a stranger. And what's more, there was another man standing in the shadows.

My escort barked a harsh command in some guttural language I didn't understand, and another pair of men appeared to drag the unconscious prisoner away. He moved slightly, groaning very quietly – the only indication that he yet lived. Still, I couldn't concern myself with that. I had myself to worry about.

"You," said my captor. He pointed to the now-empty chair. "Sit."

"This is unnecessary," I said. "I don't...I want...I have an insurance policy. For kidnapping. Six million dollars. All you have to do is call the number in my wallet. They'll set up the exchange and –"

The bald man moved far more quickly than I ever could have imagined. One second, I was telling them about my insurance policy, and the next, I was on the floor, rubbing what felt like a dislocated jaw. The big man loomed over me. "When I give you order, you obey," he said. "Get in chair."

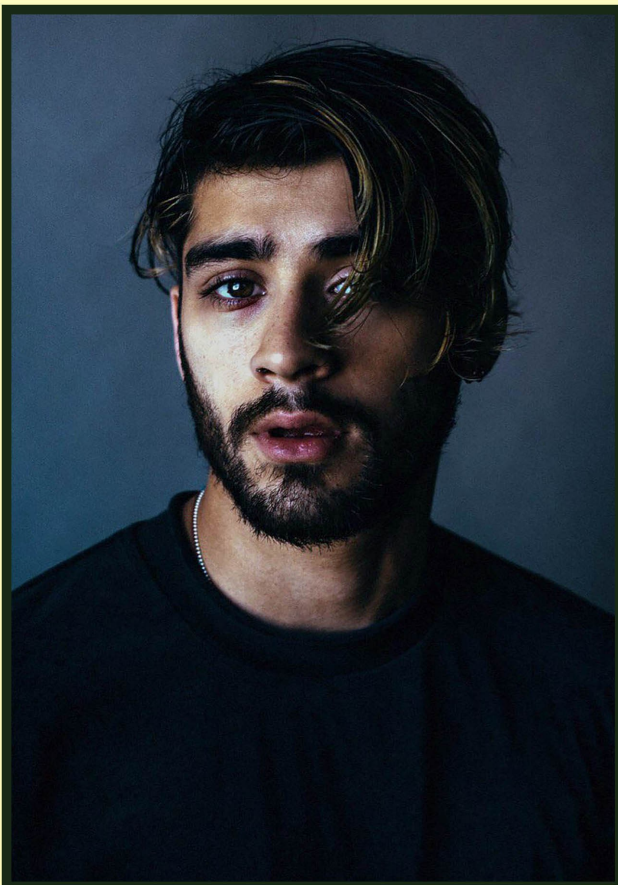
I took a deep breath, my head pounding out of my skull. With heroic effort, I pushed myself to my knees, rose to my feet, then staggered to the chair. Sitting almost felt like a blessing. It would have, if I hadn't seen the state of the other man, if I didn't know what was coming.

And come it did. The torture began almost anticlimactically. I didn't have the energy to resist as my bald captor and his assistant pinned me down. I didn't even realize what was happening until someone threw a wet rag over my face and started dumping water on me.

Waterboarding doesn't seem like it would be torture. You know you're not going to drown. That's not the point. But you also know that it feels like you are. And that sets off a panic, and when you're panicked, rational thought just doesn't matter.

I wish I could say that was the last time I was waterboarded. But it wasn't. For weeks, every single day, I was tortured. Sometimes, the methods were new. Sometimes, they returned to the tried and true techniques that had been used before. But there was one common threat – nobody ever asked questions. No one ever told me why. They just made me wish I was dead. That was my life.





I was at the end of my rope. It had been months since I'd been taken. Or at least it felt like it. I don't know. The timeline gets a little fuzzy when you're being tortured every single day. If I'd had the means, I would've ended it all in my cell. A blanket. A shoestring. Anything, and I would have hung myself rather than endure one more pointless torture session. But I didn't have that option. I wish I had.

One day, the door to my cell opened, admitting someone new. He was handsome. That was my first impression. And tall. And he seemed like he was in charge.

"W-what do you want?" I managed through parched lips.

"That is an interesting story," the man said in a slight German accent. "My name is Ryker. Wilhelm Ryker. And I want to help you."

"Help me?" I asked. "H-how?"

"My men were a little overzealous with you," he said. "You can't blame them, I think. They were promised millions of dollars that never materialized."

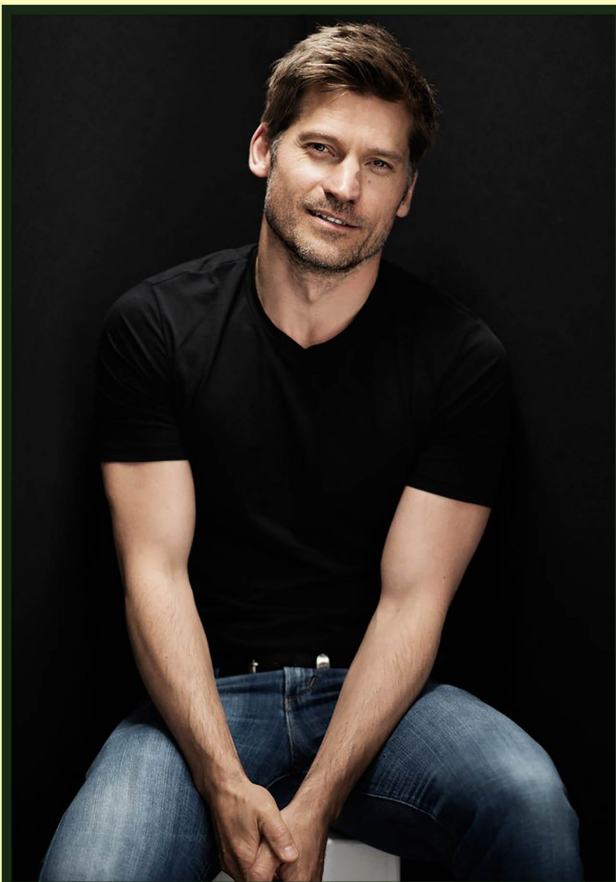
"W-what?" I asked.

"Your father refused to pay the ransom," he explained. "So, Vadim and his men took it out on you. But the good news is that I'm here to stop that unpleasantness."

I was confused. I'd woken up that morning expecting another day of torture, and now, this strange man was telling me that it was over? "Am I free to go?" I asked.

"Perhaps," he said. "But let's talk about that in another room. After you're fed and watered, yes? Follow me."

Admittedly, I thought it was a trick. I expected the rug to be pulled out from under me at any second. But I didn't have a choice but to follow him. So, I did.



Ryker sat on the stool, watching me gorge myself on the simple stew. I'd already eaten three bowls, but I was still ravenous. He smiled, clearly enjoying the sight. When I'd finally had enough, I leaned back in the chair. I almost felt human again.

"Good," he said. "That's better, isn't it?"

I nodded but didn't answer. Ryker took my silence in stride, continuing, "I've got a problem, you see? I spent considerable resources acquiring you. But now there's no payoff. No insurance money. No rescue from your father. Nothing."

"Let me call him," I suggested. "If I talk to him, he'll –"

"He has abandoned you," Ryker said. "I'm sorry to be so blunt, but it's true. He doesn't care whether you live or die. That's what the torture was about. Vadim wanted to show your father what was happening. He wanted to make the man understand. So, he sent your father the videos of the first few sessions. They were ignored."

The implications of the statement hit me hard. What hope I had of ever getting free died in that moment. "You want something from me," I reasoned.

"I do," he said. "But you won't like it. Not at first. But –"

"Anything," I said. "I'll do anything. Just don't put me back in that cell."

"I hoped you'd say that," Ryker said. "But I need to know for sure that you won't back out. This doesn't work without your acquiescence. But know that it won't be forever. At some point, you may yet earn your freedom. You may earn your life back."

"I'll do whatever you want me to do," I said, meaning it with every fiber of my being. I'd had enough torture. I'd had enough isolation. Whatever he wanted me to do, I'd do it. And if it meant I could avoid going back into that cell – or the other room – I would do it with a smile on my face.

"I want you to know," Ryker said, leading me through the building. It was an entirely different part of the complex than I'd yet seen, though that wasn't surprising. In the months since I'd been kidnapped, I had only seen two rooms – my cell and the torture chamber. "No matter what else happens, it won't go back to the way it was. I've put an end to that."

"So, I won't be tortured anymore?" I asked.

"No," he said firmly as we went down a hallway. He stopped at a door and opened it, revealing a stark but clean room. It wasn't much, but compared to my previous accommodations, it was practically luxurious. A bunk bed sat in one corner while a small table with some cabinets were directly beside it. And unlike my cell, it was climate controlled. "This is your new home. For now."

"What do you want from me?" I asked, suddenly feeling suspicious. "You said I wouldn't like it."

"Not at first," he admitted. "But you'll grow to like it. Even love it."

"And if I don't do what you want?" I asked.

"Then I'll have to find other ways of making back my investment," he answered. "But you'll agree to this. I know you will."

"Tell me what it is," I said.

"I want you to work for me," he said. "Or rather, I want you to work in one of my brothels. I want you to be a whore."





"I don't understand," the girl said. She was pretty enough, but I was in no shape to think about anything other than my own survival.

The first time Ryker had offered me the "job", I'd refused flat-out. The second time, I'd asked a few questions, thinking that I could sleep with a few women if it meant I could somehow gain my freedom. That hope had been dashed by the revelation that I wouldn't be a male prostitute. I'd be female. Or rather, I'd be female with a little something extra. I refused again. And the third time. The next visit didn't come for a week. I refused again. Another two weeks. Another refusal. And then, finally the girl showed up.

"What don't you understand?" I asked. "I'm not a chick. I'm not gay. This isn't going to happen."

"Don't you get it?" she asked. "He's going to get tired of asking."

"So? He said I wouldn't be tortured anymore," I said.

"You won't," she admitted. "But he'll kill you. He'll harvest your organs, one-by-one, and he'll sell them on the black market. It's coming. He'll do it."

"So, why are you here?" I asked, ignoring the threat. "Are you going to try to seduce me? It's not going to work."

"I'm here to tell you that I was in your position, once," she said. "I had a choice to make, just like you. I made the right one. I just want to make sure that you don't throw away your only chance of survival."

"But it's different for you," I argued. "You're a girl. You didn't have to give up your --"

"I wasn't always a girl," she said. "A few years ago, I was just like you. Stupid. Male. But I gave in. I let it happen. And believe it or not, I'm happy now. I can come and go as I please. My life isn't bad. You can have that, too. All you have to do is give in."

"N-no," I said. "I can't. I w-won't."

"Then you're going to die," she said. "Soon. He'll get tired of this game. I've seen it happen before. You've already lasted a lot longer than most. But that's because you're so pretty. He wouldn't have bothered if you were ugly. But his patience isn't endless. Remember that."

"H-he...he'll really kill me, won't he?" I asked.

"Without hesitation," she said.

"And if I do this...if I agree...I'll be like you?" I asked.

She shook her head. "No," she said. "You have to earn surgery. And if you don't want it, you don't have to get it."

"I...I'll d-do it," I said, thinking that, worst cases scenario, I could go along with it until I saw a chance to escape. "I'll do it."

"What's your name?" I asked, following the scantily-clad girl into another room. I was taken aback by how normal it looked; it had a barber's chair, a rolling cabinet, and a giant mirror, and what's more, the floors were made of hardwood.

"Layla," she said. "Get in the chair. The stylist will be in in a moment."

"S-so you were a boy?" I asked, doing as she said.

"I was," she answered. "I'm not anymore."

"What happened?" I asked.

She didn't answer, instead saying, "From here on out, you're a girl. That means you're going to act like one. Talk like one. You're going to think of yourself as one. Do you understand?"

"I do," I said.

"At first, it's going to be difficult," she said. "Learning what you need to learn won't be easy. But it'll become second-nature over time. But we'll start with a makeover. Makeup. Hair removal. Wigs. Everything. By the time we're done, you won't recognize yourself."

"L...I understand," I answered.

She opened the cabinet and retrieved a bottle, from which she extracted a pair of pills. "Take those," she said, handing them to me. I reluctantly popped them in my mouth. "You'll take two of those every single day. If you miss a day, you'll be punished. If you continue to miss them, you'll go back to square one. Do you understand?"

I nodded, wondering what I'd just put in my body.

"Good," Layla said. "Now wait here for the stylist. And pay attention to everything she does, because you'll need to learn to do this kind of thing yourself."





"I feel stupid," I said. "I look stupid, right?"

The whole process felt like it had taken an eternity. I'd never been plucked or prodded quite nearly so much. However, the results were undeniable. When everything was said and done, I looked almost unrecognizable. But in my head, wearing the low-cut, pink panties and ridiculous wig Layla had given me, I felt ridiculous.

"You look like you've got a little ways to go," she admitted, watching me remove my shirt. While the stylist had removed all of my body hair – painfully so, I might add – Layla had still insisted that I needed to "soften" my skin. Like the rest of the process, I wanted no part of it. However, I didn't see any way out of my situation. If I wanted to someday escape, I had to go along with their plan. "Get in the tub."

"You don't have to be so mean to me," I said, slipping my panties down my thin, hairless legs. I was stunned by how much weight I had lost during my captivity. "I'm doing what you want me to do."

"You're doing what you have to do," she corrected. "What I want is irrelevant. You want to survive, so you're doing what it takes. I'm just here to help you along the way."

I stepped into the tub, trying not to feel self-conscious about my nudity. I'd been naked for half the day, but I still felt embarrassed in front of her. "Are you really a...um...a prostitute?" I asked, settling in as the water rose.

"I was," she said. "Not anymore. Now, I help Mr. Ryker in other ways."

"Like this," I said, enjoying the warm water in spite of myself.

"Yes," she said. "Like this. Now shut up. Relax. But mostly, just shut up."



"You look fantastic," Ryker said. "Better than I expected."

"Thanks," I said. I'd spent the previous week trying to master my burgeoning femininity, including my voice. As Layla had predicted, it wasn't easy. I stumbled every step of the way. But slowly, I had started to get the hang of it. Still, I felt ridiculous, standing in front of my kidnapper, wearing a short, black dress, high heels, and a long wig. However, I couldn't deny that his compliment made me feel good, after a fashion.

"She's been trying her best," Layla interjected.

I still hadn't gotten used to her using feminine pronouns to refer to me. I added that to the long list of things that made me uncomfortable about the situation.

"I can see that," Ryker stated. "How long do you think before she's ready?"

"Six months," Layla said. "Maybe eight. It depends on how quickly the hormones work."

"Hormones? Is that what I've been taking?" I asked. Neither person acknowledged my question.

"Make it four," Ryker instructed, putting his hands in his pockets. "I want this girl making money. And she's not making anything sitting here playing dress-up."

"I can't work miracles, Wilhelm," she said. "You know that. We can't rush this."

"Four months," he repeated. "No more. Do you understand?"

She sighed. "Fine," she said. "But if she's not perfect, it's not my fault."



I adjusted the latest addition to my wig collection – a red and blonde monstrosity that I found particularly abhorrent. “I hate this one,” I said. “It’s red. And ugly.”

“You’ll have your own hair before long,” Layla said. “But you should be careful what you wish for. It’s a lot easier to style a wig.”

“I know,” I said. It had been almost two months since I’d started my transition. Sometimes, it was easy to forget that I was learning to act like a woman. The compound had its comforts, and though it didn’t feel like home, it didn’t feel like a prison. However, there were other times when I’d catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror, and the realization of it all would come crashing down on me like a tidal wave.

“Let me see them,” Layla said.

“You saw them yesterday,” I argued. She cocked an eyebrow, and I sighed. I lifted my gray shirt. “Fine,” I said. “They’re the same size as they were yesterday.”

Even as she stared at my chest, I felt embarrassed. I had breasts. No matter how I tried to justify it by acknowledging how small they were, I couldn’t deny that they were, in fact, breasts. Nor could I forget the reality that the rest of my body had been changing as well. The definition of my muscles had decreased dramatically, my butt had grown rounder and softer, and my hips had gotten wider. In short, the hormones were doing their work.

“Good,” she said. “You may want to think about implants, though. You’ll make more money that way. And the more money you make, the sooner you can earn your freedom.”

“Like he’s ever going to let me go,” I said.

“He let me go,” Layla countered. “I chose to stay, but I can leave whenever I want. Remember that. He’s not an unreasonable man. Do what he says, and he can be fair. Trust me.”

“Trust,” I muttered, letting my shirt fall as I shook my head slightly. It seemed an alien concept. But maybe she was right. Maybe I could earn my freedom. I still hadn’t quite come to terms with how I’d earn said freedom, but the idea of doing so appealed to me.



"I don't get a say in this?" I asked, trying in vain to use the bubbles to conceal my growing bosom. It wasn't big – far from it – but it was bigger than any man would be comfortable having. But that wasn't my primary concern. "It's my name, right? I can't pick it?"

"No," Layla said. "That's what was available. You get the name we give you. And we're giving you Sabrina Reyes."

"I don't like it," I said.

"I don't care," she responded. "Or don't you understand your position here? You are, at best, a slave. At worst, you're a prisoner whose organs can be harvested at any moment. That's your reality. And unless you stop complaining about every little thing, I'm going to recommend to Mr. Ryker that we go ahead and cut our losses."

"Y-you wouldn't," I said, my heart jumping into my throat. "After everything...I mean...I don't..."

"I won't unless I have to," she said, her tone a bit softer. "But I can't keep coddling you. Eventually, you're going to have to accept this."

"...I have," I said.

"No," she argued. "You haven't. Do you think I don't know what's going through your pretty, little head? You think you'll play along until you see a chance to escape, right?"

"W-what?" I said. "No. I don't...I w-wouldn't..."

"I thought the same thing," she stated. "I even tried it. They found me before I got three blocks from the brothel. And I got a beating you wouldn't believe. If I'd done it a second time, they would have just killed me. Gone. Poof. Dead. I chose the other route. And if you want to survive, you will too. Sabrina."



"How old were you when they took you?" I asked, looking up from my bed. Though the mattress was incredibly thin, I'd grown used to it. In that way, it was much like my entire situation – including my sometimes-surly mentor.

"Why do you want to know so much about me?" Layla asked. "I was taken. I had sex for money. Now you're my responsibility. What more do you need to know?"

"I'm just curious," I said. "We've been at this for almost three months, and I don't even know your real name."

"Layla is my real name," she insisted. "Or it's the only one that matters now. Why can't you get that through your head?"

"Because you were someone else once, right?" I said. "I just want to know who that person was."

She sighed, annoyed at my persistence. "Fine," she said. "You want to know? I'll tell you one thing. One thing, and one thing only."

I sat up, leaning forward. "What is it?" I asked.

"I was taken at fifteen," Layla said. "I was a normal boy. A little small, I guess. But normal. I played baseball. I had a girlfriend. Penny. She was the prettiest girl I knew. But my parents and me, we went to Mexico City on vacation. I don't know why they chose that city, but whatever. It was new to me. So I was excited. We got separated, and I got taken."

"By Ryker?" I asked.

"No," she said. "Other people. Worse people. They got me hooked on heroin before they sold me. After that, I would do anything to get high. They didn't even have to force me into prostitution. It sort of just happened. And the rest of it? It was a way I could get more money for drugs. Pretty boys got paid better. Boys that looked like girls got more still. It was an easy equation. I was a full-blown shemale within a year."

"And Ryker? When did he come into this?" I asked.

"He saved me," Layla said. "From all that. He got me clean. He got me healthy. I chose to work for him after that. Now – no more questions. Let's get back to practicing walking in those heels."



"You can yank on that little thing all you want," said Layla. "It's not getting hard."

"It got hard yesterday!" I insisted, though I knew it was mostly a lie. Semi-hard was a better descriptor. Mostly limp was even better.

"Just stop, Sabrina," she said. "It's getting embarrassing."

I sighed, releasing my still-soft and shrunken penis. It had never been huge, but it had been respectable. However, the hormones had done their work well, and the thing had become a shadow of its former self. Given that I was preparing for full-time womanhood, that fact shouldn't have bothered me. But it did. More than anything that had happened so far.

"If it makes you feel any better," she said. "You probably won't need that much going forward."

"No," I said, glaring at her. "That does not make me feel better. Why in the world would that make me feel better?"

"Because it brings you closer to your goal," she said. When I asked what that goal was, she said, "To get out there to make Mr. Ryker enough money to earn your freedom."

"And how much, exactly, is that going to be?" I asked, letting three months' worth of frustrations bubble to the surface. "Ten thousand? Twenty? A hundred? Where's the mark?"

"I don't know," she admitted. "But like I've said a hundred times, he's a fair man. He won't put it out of reach. Otherwise, you'll have no incentive to do a good job."

"A good job," I muttered, thinking of what that might entail. I shuddered at the thought. Though I couldn't change the reality of my situation, I was still horrified by the thought of doing sexual things with a man. But I didn't have a choice. It would happen, sooner or later. I just needed to wrap my brain around it.

"I hate it," I said, looking at my new room. It was in a different, more isolated part of the compound, and according to Layla, was something of a reward for my hard work. When I looked around the room, however, all I could think about was how isolated it was. It reminded me of the first cell, and it sent shivers up my spine.

"I don't care," Layla responded with a huff. "I swear – you act like you're too good for anything. You're not."

"I was –"

"It doesn't matter what you were!" she hissed. "Don't you get that? You were abandoned. Completely. Your family, whoever they were, didn't want you."

"You don't know that," I whispered. "You can't."

"You had an insurance policy, right?" she asked. I nodded. "That means that they call a number, tell them you're in their custody, and they pay the ransom, no questions asked. That's how they work."

"That's how insurance works," I stated.

"And your father wouldn't even let the insurance pay for your return," she said. "That's how much he wanted you back. Not his money. He wouldn't even use someone else's money to get you back. So, I think I'm pretty safe in saying that he doesn't want you. He probably never did."

"I know!" I blurted. "God, I know, okay? I know. I've known for a long time. You're not telling me anything new. I just...I j-just don't want to sleep by myself. I don't want my own room. I want to stay with you."

"With me?" she asked.

"With you," I said. "Please? You said I deserve a reward, right? That's what I want."

She studied me for a long moment before saying, "Fine. But I'm a demanding roommate, just so you know. And when I say jump, you ask, 'How high?'. Do you understand?"

I nodded eagerly.



"Lick my toes," Layla said, extending her foot toward me. I was so entranced by what was between her legs that I barely even heard her command. I knew she'd been male. She'd told me so herself. However, I hadn't truly believed it until I'd started living in her room. She didn't put much stock by clothing in her private space, and was often found naked, which had given me an up-close-and-personal opportunity to see that she hadn't been lying.

"W-what?" I asked, kneeling at the foot of the lounge chair.

"Lick my toes," she repeated. "Slowly. And act like you enjoy it."

When I'd moved in, it seemed that I'd progressed to a new part of my training. I don't know if it meant that I'd mastered the art of femininity, but it signaled a shift in our relationship. I'd already started to learn massage, which I saw as only slightly less sexual as the actual deed. Licking someone else's foot seemed like it crossed that line completely.

However, I knew better than to disobey, so I bent at the waist, took her dainty foot in my hand, and started doing exactly as she had asked.

"Good," she said. "Get between the toes. And don't forget to massage the soles of my feet."

I did as she asked, bending all my concentration toward doing the best job I could. Part of me felt like I owed it to her; after all, she had done so much for me. Another part actually enjoyed it, for what it was. I didn't have a foot fetish or anything, but there was something undeniably sexual about it. But there was still a significant portion of my mind that screamed its dissent at me licking the feet of someone with a penis. I did what I could to silence that voice.

It was easier than I might have expected, which scared me all the more.





"You look very pretty," came a masculine voice from the door. I looked up to see Ryker standing there, staring at me. I resisted the urge to cover myself. "I knew you'd turn out well."

"T-thank you," I said, forcing my hands to my sides. Layla had warned me not to show a hint of embarrassment at being admired by a man. It was difficult, but I did the best I could.

"Turn off the shower," he said. "I need to speak with you."

"O-okay," I said, watching him leave the bathroom. I did as he'd asked and wrapped a towel around my chest. When I followed him out of the bathroom, I found him sitting on my bed.

"Do you understand what will be required of you?" he asked. "Once all this is finished. It's not just dress-up, you know. There's a goal here."

"I know," I said.

"Say it," he responded. "I want to hear you tell me what you're going to be. I want to know what you're going to do."

"I...I'm going to be a whore," I said. "I'm going to h-have sex with men for money."

"Are you going to suck their cocks?" he asked.

"Y-yes," I answered, though the thought disgusted me.

"Will you let them fuck your ass?" was his next question. I nodded. "And will you enjoy it?" I nodded again. He stood, smiling. "Good. Layla tells me you're having trouble with that reality. I just wanted to remind you that this is what you signed up for. This is what you agreed to do. And I'm not the sort of man who lets people back out of agreements. Do you understand me?"

I nodded. "Yes," I said. "I u-understand."

"And then you just ease it in there," said Layla, pushing the pink vibrator into her well-lubricated ass. Almost as soon as it went in, her cock started to twitch, and by the time she turned it on, it had gotten respectably hard. "Now suck it."

"W-what?" I asked, realizing for the first time that my face was barely a foot from her erect penis.

"I told you to suck it, slut," she said.

"I...I can't," I said.

"You can," she said, her voice softer than usual. "And you will. A lot. You'll start to like it after a while. But this is the first step to becoming what you're going to have to become. Do you understand that, sweetie?"

"I...I do," I said. But I couldn't move. I wanted to – or at least, I think I did. I just couldn't.

"Tell me what you're going to become," she cooed. "You're going to be a cocksucker right. You're going to become the best damned cocksucker in the world. Say that. Say it." I hesitated, and she screamed, "Say it, bitch!"

"I'm going to be the best cocksucker in the world!" I said reflexively. As soon as the words left my mouth, it was like a weight had lifted off my shoulders. It was just a dick, I thought. I was going to do it at some point. It may as well be a girl's dick, right? It was all rationalization, but it worked. Before I knew it, was leaning forward, my mouth open and the hum of the vibrator filling my ears. And then I had my lips around it.

"Good," Layla said. "Suck that dick, baby. Suck it good."

And I did. Or at least I thought I did it well. There wasn't much technique, but as I got into it, my enthusiasm grew. And before I knew it, I was bobbing my head up and down her small, hard cock like a pro. Of course, that's what I was preparing to become. A professional cocksucker. Once, the idea had given me nightmares. But as I sucked Layla's dick, I couldn't help but think it might not be so bad.





"Why are you giving this to me?" I asked, taking the clear, plastic dildo from Layla. It wasn't thick, but it seemed intimidating nonetheless.

"Because you need to practice," she said.

"W-what do you mean?" was my next question.

"You did your best, but that blowjob needed work, sweetie," she stated. "And you'll need to get your ass stretched out before you hit the streets. Believe me, you'll thank me later. You don't want to be ripped apart by your first john."

"So, you want me to...you know...with this?" I asked, holding it up.

"You need to get over this being shy crap," Layla said. "I want you to masturbate with your dildo twice a day. And when you're done, I want you to suck it. Practice your technique. Pretend it's a real dick. And who knows, if you get better, I might let you suck me off again."

"Let me?" I asked.

"I saw how you were getting into it," she said. "I told you that you'd like it. I see now that I wasn't wrong."

"I...I don't...I mean...you can be such a bitch sometimes," I said. "You know that, right?"

"I know," she said. "But I'm the bitch in charge. And right now, I'm telling you that you've got homework. Now go to your room and fuck yourself silly with that dildo."

I nodded. It was saying something that her order didn't seem strange to me. In fact, there was a big part of me that very much looked forward to getting some alone-time with the plastic phallus.



"No," I said, eyeing the man who was responsible for the worst time of my life. I fixed him with a glare. "Just...no. Not him."

"Suck," Vadim said, unzipping his slacks.

Layla grabbed my arm, dragging me further away. "You will do this," she said. "Now. No questions. No complaints. Just fucking do it. I told him you were ready for it. Don't make a liar out of me."

"But he tortured me!" I hissed. "He wanted to kill me! I'm not giving him a blowjob. I'm just not."

"Do you have any idea what refusal gets you?" she asked. "This is a fucking test. If you don't do it, he'll know you can't adapt. That means you get your organs harvested. And worse, I'll probably be right behind you."

"What?" I asked.

"When I agreed to do this, I tied myself to you," she said. "If I succeed, he sends me back to America with a new identity and enough money to set me up. But if I don't, if you can't do this, I'm on the chopping block right beside you. If you would have washed out early, I might have wriggled out of it. But now? So late in the game? No chance. So either go over there and suck that asshole's dick, or we're both fucking dead."

"You don't understand," I said. "You can't. I don't --"

"He's a worst-case scenario," she said. "That's the point. You're going to let disgusting men fuck you. Men you'd never let near you if they weren't paying. And you're going to do it with a smile on your face. That's what this is. It's seeing if you've got what it takes to just do the fucking job. So do it. Now. Do it."

I sighed. There was no way out. I had to do it. So, I did. I strode over to the man I hated most in the whole world, got on my knees, and took his cock in my mouth. All the while, I had to tell myself not to bite the thing clean off.



"I remember my first real blowjob," Layla said, pulling me out of my thoughts. Though almost two days had passed, and I'd brushed my teeth numerous times, I could still taste Vadim's cock. I knew it was all in my mind, but that didn't seem to matter much. The act had shaken me to my very core.

"Good," I said, turning away. I didn't want to hear about Layla's sexual escapades. Nor did I want her to try to make me feel better. I just wanted to wallow in my own misery.

"It was probably a week after I had been taken," she said. "I didn't have the luxury of getting used to the idea. I just had to do it, you know? It was either that or my pimp was going to kill me. I almost let him."

I rolled my eyes. "And let me guess? You were so surprised you loved it, right?" I said. "You took one lick, and you –"

"I thought about just biting it off," she said. "It wouldn't have taken much force, you know. I could have done it."

"L...I thought that too," I admitted. "Why didn't you do it?"

"Because I wanted to live," she said. "I was a fifteen-year-old kid. I thought about all the things I wanted to do with my life. And eventually, I was able to sort of separate it from the rest of my mind. When I'm working, that's what I do. I don't think about who I'm with or what I'm doing. I don't look at it as sex. It's just a job."

"I don't know if I can do that," I said.

"You'd be amazed at what you can do," Layla said. "When you're properly motivated."



The days passed uneventfully, and Layla and I grew progressively more adventurous in the bedroom. Soon, I eschewed my own bed in favor of hers, and I became intimately acquainted with every inch of her body. Somehow, when I sucked her dick, it didn't feel like sucking off a man.

"You look good," she said. "Almost like a natural girl."

I wore a tiny, ruffled skirt and a tee-shirt which I'd tied in the back so it would expose my midriff. "Thanks? I don't really know how to take that," I admitted. I still wasn't altogether sure I wanted to pass as a woman, though I knew it was the eventual goal.

"Have you thought about surgery?" she asked, sitting in one of the nearby chairs. She threw her legs over the arm. "Get some real tits?"

"No," I said firmly.

"You still think you're going to get away from all this, don't you?" she asked. My only answer was to look away, embarrassed that I was so easy to read. "Forget that. Just accept your fate. That's what I did."

"I'm not like you," I said. "I've got a life back home."

"And I didn't?" she asked. "I had a family, too. I had everything waiting on me. But that's gone, now. Even if I could go back, I wouldn't. They've moved on. So have I. And besides, what do you have waiting? Seriously, why do you really want to go back?"

Again, I was at a loss for words. I wanted to say that I had responsibilities to my family, but if I was honest, I'd never really cared about any of that. It was just a burden I'd always thought I should have to bear. And obviously, my family didn't care about me; otherwise, they would have paid the ransom. No – there really wasn't any reason for me to go back, other than my stubborn refusal to surrender what was left of my manhood. And even that had steadily been waning.

"Just think about it, okay?" she said. "You'll be a lot happier if you just let all that go. This is the hand life has dealt you. Accept it. Play it. And live with your new life."

"Why can't I have short hair like you?" I asked, stepping into the shower. I was well past any embarrassment at my nudity around my roommate and sometime lover. However, I couldn't help but dwell on her manhood. I'm not sure if it was simple morbid curiosity, or if I was genuinely attracted to that part of her, but I could hardly tear my gaze from between her legs.

"Because you're training," Layla said, playfully turning the shower on me. "You haven't earned the right to choose your own hairstyle."

I held up my hand, blocking most of the water stream as I stepped closer to her. "I'm almost done," I said. "What happens then?"

"You go your way," she said. "I go mine."

"What if I want to stay with you?" I asked, only a few inches away from her. Our nipples were almost touching. "I think I love you."

Her expression changed in an instant. Gone was the playful smile, replaced by an unmistakable frown. She pushed me away, gently, but with enough force to make her intentions clear.

"You don't love me," she said. "You can't. You barely even know me. And even if you did, it wouldn't matter. The fact is that you just lack options right now."

"I don't believe that," I said.

"Then you're stupider than I thought," Layla responded. "Look – I don't want to be harsh, here. But this isn't love. It's not even real lust. You've been through a lot. And you've just latched onto the only person to show you anything approaching kindness. So, I don't want to hear anything else about love. Okay?"

I sighed. "Fine," I said. Then, under my breath, I added, "But it's not going to change how I feel."



I liked it. The realization struck me about as hard as anything ever had. I don't know when it happened. And I certainly don't know why, but with the dildo shoved halfway up my ass, I realized that I liked the feel of it. If I needed any evidence – aside from the genuine pleasure of it all – my penis had just gotten hard for the first time in ages.

I stopped mid-stroke, letting the thing slip out of my well-lubed rectum. I brought my knees to my chest, and I started to cry. It was so wrong. But it felt right. I hated it. But I loved it. I wanted to be a man again. But I couldn't. And if I was honest, I sort of liked the idea of womanhood. Everything – all those disparate feelings – came bubbling to the surface, erupting in a fountain of tears.

An hour later, that's how Layla found me. Clutching my knees to my chest, I couldn't get a word out for the sobs. She sat down next to me, putting her arms around my narrow shoulders.

"It's okay," she said. "I've been there. I know how you're feeling."

"I don't want to be a girl," I muttered.

"Yes, you do," she said. "But you're afraid of it. You feel like you're betraying who you really are. Right?"

I nodded but didn't voice an answer. I couldn't.

"You're not," she said. "You're evolving. You're becoming the sort of girl you were meant to be. I knew it the moment I laid eyes on you. This is who you were supposed to be."

"N-no it isn't," I stubbornly said. But I knew she was right. What man – what real man could have changed so much, so quickly? What real man could dream about sucking cock? What real man could imagine that his favorite dildo was a man's dick? What real man even had a favorite dildo?

"Just relax," she said. "I'm here for you. It'll be okay. I promise."





"I did go back once," Layla said, clutching the low hanging branch of the tree just outside our quarters. If I didn't know better, I never would have known we were in the center of a compound where I'd been tortured and feminized. It looked like nothing so much as the back patio of an apartment.

"Back where?" I asked, looking up. She wore a pair of high-waisted, denim shorts and a colorful bra, which, for her, seemed almost overdressed. I'd seen her naked so often that it felt strange seeing her wearing even the most basic of clothing. For myself, I wore a simple bikini as I lay in a patio chair, taking in the sun.

"Home," she said. "Cleveland. Or just outside of it, at least. I went back a few years ago. Ryker took me."

"Yeah?" I said. "And? What happened?"

She looked away, lost in thought. "I talked to my mother," Layla explained. "She was working at a real estate office. Mr. Ryker and me, we posed as a couple looking to buy a house. We spent the day with her, going from one house to another. She didn't recognize me."

I didn't know what to say. It must have been difficult not to be recognized by your own mother. I wondered if my family would have recognized me. I hoped so, but I sort of didn't want them to either. If they did, I'd have to explain what I'd become. Who I'd become.

"I barely recognized her, if I'm honest," she said. "It had been almost six years since I'd seen her, but it might as well have been a lifetime. She looked so much older. That's when Ryker told me I could go back if I wanted. He wasn't going to force me to stay with him. But I didn't belong there, you know? Not with her. That was Ray Parker's family, not Layla's."

It took me a moment to realize that she'd just referred to her male name. Looking at her, it seemed wrong. And it definitely didn't fit the girl I knew.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Don't be," Layla said. "It was my choice."



"You're making progress," said Ryker, standing in the center of the room, his arms crossed as he looked me up and down. I felt like a piece of meat, which, to him, I suppose wasn't that far off base. I was a commodity, nothing more.

"I'm trying," I said. It was a genuine sentiment. After everything that had happened, I had all but stopped trying to resist my feminization. It wouldn't have done any good, anyway. The best I could have hoped for was for someone to simply end it for me. And as much as I didn't want to be a girl or a whore, I wanted to live more.

"She really is," Layla interjected. "I think she's almost ready."

"Good," Ryker said. "Because you've only got a few weeks left. We're already behind schedule."

"I tried to tell you it would take more than four months," Layla said. The passage of time was a bit fuzzy without any context, but I knew that more than four months had passed. If I had to guess, I would have put it closer to six. "But a few more weeks will be sufficient."

"What about you?" Ryker asked, looking at me. "Are you ready for your new life?"

I nodded, feeling butterflies in my stomach as I imagined what awaited. I thought I'd come to terms with sleeping with men, but the thought still disgusted me.

"I don't know," I admitted. "I think so."

"Good answer," he said.

"You won't be ready until you're in it," Layla said. "Whatever you're imagining is wrong. It won't be what you think it's going to be."

"I'll be fine," I said. "I just want to get out there and earn my freedom. That's all."

"You'll have your chance soon enough," Ryker said.

"Come on," she said, bending over. "It's not that big of a deal."

"Are you serious?" I asked, kneeling behind her. "That's nasty."

"It's clean," Layla responded. "You know it is."

"Kind of not the point," I stated. "It's...you know...a butthole."

"I think of it as my pussy," she said. "You've licked pussy before, right? Well, this isn't any different."

"That's some mental gymnastics there," I pointed out. I'd had my fingers in there before. And I'd used vibrators and dildos on her countless times. But the idea of sticking my tongue in her ass seemed repulsive to me.

"Sometimes, that's what you have to do," she said, looking back at me. "This is a lesson, in case you didn't know. Sometimes, you're going to have to do things that disgust you. Your offensive attitude aside, I know how much you don't want to do this. Just like I know how much you're not going to want to suck some fat, old guy's dick. But you're going to have to do it. And that means you're going to have to figure out a way to make it okay in your mind."

"I...I think I understand," I said. "How did you do it?"

"Honestly? I don't know," she said. "But eventually, I didn't need to. After a while, it's just a job. You'll get used to it."

"I don't think I'll ever get used to it," I said.

"That might be true," she said. "But right now, lick my ass. That's not a request. It's an order. Do it, or I tell Ryker that you'll never be ready."

I knew it was an idle threat. She needed me to succeed. But she was right about it. I couldn't afford to be squeamish. So, I flexed my jaw, leaned in, and started licking her ass.





"I honestly don't know how to answer that," I admitted, leaning against the counter. We had just been relocated to a different part of the facility and into what I could only describe as an apartment. It had everything I could want – separate bedrooms, a kitchen, bathrooms, a television – and I couldn't have been happier.

"It's a simple yes or no question," Layla said. "Does that outfit make you feel sexy?"

"I guess," I said. "I don't know. I feel exposed more than anything."

"You need to get over that," she said. "You might be giving blowjobs in parked cars or letting some guy fuck you in a back alley. Modesty is something you can't really afford to have."

"I know," I said. "You've made that abundantly clear."

"Seriously? You're going to be a smartass now?" she asked. "I'm trying to help you, you know. If you go out there right now, they're going to eat you alive. You're going to do the job, sure. You won't have a choice there. But you'll get hooked on something that makes you forget how much you hate your life. Heroin. Pills. Something. And it's all downhill from there."

"I'm not you," I said. "I don't do drugs."

"And that'll last just as long as your hope does," she said. "But as soon as you come to the conclusion that your life isn't going to get better, you won't have any reason to resist. I've seen it happen. I lived it."

"Until your white knight saved you, right?" I asked.

"Until Ryker saved me, yeah," she elaborated.

"Do you honestly expect me to believe that?" I said. "That he just swooped in to pick you up? Or should I believe that you're making it up so I think he's a better person than he is?"

"I don't care what you think," she said. "I'm just telling the truth."



"As long as I have this, I'm not a girl," I said, holding my shrunken penis.

"Are you saying I'm not a girl?" Layla asked. "Because if you were, I'd say that was offensive."

"Come on – you can't think that," I said. "You're not really transgender. Neither am I. This was forced on us."

"Doesn't make any difference," Layla said. "As far as the rest of your life is concerned, you're a girl. So am I. The sooner you come to grips with that, the better off you'll be."

I pulled up my panties, tucking myself away. Sometimes, I wished they would have just removed it. They could have simply given me a vagina and a pair of real breasts and sent me to work.

"Why do they want us like this?" I asked.

"Because there's a huge market for girls like us," Layla said. "You'd be surprised how many men, given the choice, would choose us over regular women. Being American makes it better. It's some sort of power fantasy, I think."

"That's stupid," I said. I'd never once imagined having sex with a girl with a dick. It seemed wrong. Unnatural. And I had a hard time believing that other men might want it. But Layla was the one with experience. She knew. And she had little reason to lie.

"Stupid or not, that's the way it is," she said. "You'll see, though. They're going to be lining up for you. Even if you choose not to get surgery, you're pretty enough that you'll have plenty of regulars. More if you let them operate on you. But that's a decision for another day."



"Who is he?" I asked, staring at the impressive hunk of a man standing in the other room.

Layla responded, "Does it matter?"

I shrugged. "I don't know," I said. "I guess. Maybe? No."

"This is your introduction," she said. "So pay attention."

Without waiting for a response, she stepped forward, a seductive sway to her hips. She had always walked like a girl, but some small thing had shifted. Her motions were exaggerated and overtly feminine. Her every movement promised sex, which was appropriate. That's what she was about to do. Still, I was a bit surprised. Maybe I shouldn't have been.

Without a word, she stripped off her top, displaying her impressive breasts, eliciting an undeniable expression of lust from the man. I felt a twinge of envy; my own wouldn't have evoked nearly the same reaction from the nameless man. Mine were barely even developed. I was almost as flat as the boy I'd once been.

Layla stepped close, her hand finding his torso. She slipped it under his shirt, feeling what I knew were washboard abdominal muscles. A part of me wanted to switch places with her. The other part wanted to switch places with him. They kissed, their mouths coming together as they embraced passionately. Layla's free hand found the man's zipper and pulled it down.

Breaking away, she said something, though I couldn't quite make it out. He laughed, and she dropped to her knees, dragging his jeans and his underwear down at the same time. I almost gasped at the size of his dick; it seemed so substantial. So big. So enticing.

And then she started sucking, bobbing her head back and forth as she worshipped his cock. She was an expert. That much was absolutely apparent. And soon, I thought, so would I be.



Before long, the two were naked, and I realized I was seeing a completely different side of Layla. With me, she was always dominant. She never let loose. But with him? He was in control. She did what he wanted. And she loved it. That much was readily apparent from the very beginning. However, when she climbed atop him, letting his big dick slip into her well-lubricated ass, I knew that she was exactly where she belonged.

I didn't really need to see anything else. I knew I'd gotten the point she wanted to make. In the months we'd been together, I'd held onto the belief that she wasn't really happy as a woman. Maybe she had played the part so long that it felt real. Or maybe she simply told herself what she needed to hear in order to stay sane. But I was convinced that she really wanted to be the man she was supposed to be. And that belief was dispelled as soon as I saw her having sex with the man.

Layla was consumed by raw lust. She couldn't fake that. No one could. And I couldn't look away, I was so captivated by it. They fucked for what felt simultaneously far too short and like it would never end. But end it did, and with his cum all over her face. She basked in it, wearing his seed like a badge of honor as she approached me.

"You understand now, right?" she asked.

"I do," I whispered.

"This will be you," she said. "One way or another. This is what they expect. This is who you need to be. Fake it if you have to. I don't care. But you have to enjoy it, one way or another."

"I know," I said.

"Good," was her response. "I think you're ready for the final step."

I didn't need to ask to know what that was. I knew what was coming. I'd been preparing for it for months. And for the first time, I was actually looking forward to it. A little. Maybe a lot. I was so confused that I had no idea which was the case.



His name was Milo, but that didn't matter. Not really. All that mattered was what was expected. All that mattered was what I wanted. And I did want it.

I realized that as soon as his jeans slipped down his muscular thighs, revealing his long, thick cock. It was already hard. I did that. He wanted me. And a stirring in my fishnet tights told me that, even if I wanted to deny it, I couldn't. My own penis had already started getting hard.

"You can do this," Layla said, her hand on my ass. She shoved me forward, and I stumbled slightly. But months of walking around in high heels had given me the balance to remain upright.

"Is that for me?" I asked, approaching the man who would be my first male lover.

"You know it is, baby," he answered, his words thickly accented. I smiled as I reached out to grip the thing; it was almost as big around as my wrist.

I gave it a few, short strokes before leaning in to kiss him. His tongue invaded my mouth, forcing its way past my lips. It wasn't unwelcome, but it did take me aback. He was forceful. Insistent. Horny. That was for me.

I pulled away, my hands exploring his muscular torso. I'd never felt another man's muscles before. They were impressive. Powerful. Attractive. I could have caressed his brawny body all day. But I had another task. And as much as I'd once dreaded it, I was looking forward to it at least as much. I wanted to suck his cock. I wanted to taste him. I wanted to feel the thing tickling the back of my throat. But most of all, I wanted to please him.

So, I dropped to my knees and wrapped my lips around his manhood. He smelled so different than Layla. So different from me. He smelled like a man. He tasted like a man. He was a man. Not like me. Not like Layla.

I employed every ounce of skill I could muster as I sucked his dick. I licked. I tongued his balls. I even managed to deepthroat him without gagging a few times. It felt surreal, like a dream. But it also felt right in a way I couldn't really describe.



"No," said Layla. "You need to be on top."

I had positioned myself on all fours, thinking that he'd simply take me from behind. However, that didn't seem to be what Layla wanted. "W-what?" I asked.

"You heard me," she said. "On top. I want you to ride him."

I was in no position to argue with her. For one, I was ready to do it. Not only had I resigned myself to having sex with a man, but I actually wanted to feel him inside me. Maybe I was horny. Maybe I'd finally started to truly feel like a woman. I don't know. But I wanted to have sex with him. And if that meant I had to impale myself on his dick, then so be it.

Milo obediently lay on his back, his enormous cock standing straight up like a fleshy rocket. I admired it for a long moment before positioning myself atop him. I leaned back, lowering myself until I felt it brush against me. There it was. The moment I thought I was ready for. The pinnacle of my feminization. The reality of my new life.

"Guide it in," I said, lowering myself. It slipped in easily. Weeks of daily dildo usage had prepared me well. But still, I was surprised by the feeling. It was just different. Softer. Warmer. Better. The dildo, by contrast, was a poor substitute.

"Up and down," Layla said, leaning forward.

I continued to lower myself until I didn't think I could take anymore. It filled me so deliciously that I simply don't have the words to describe it. And then it hit the spot, and I let out a low, quivering moan of pure, unadulterated pleasure. I'd never felt anything like it, but in that moment, I understood the draw of penetration. I saw it so clearly. And I didn't want it to stop.

So, I did as Layla instructed, and I started to bounce up and down, each time I took it inside me, it hit my special spot. My cock was rock hard, but I didn't need to touch it. I didn't want to. It wasn't important. No – my ass was the only thing that mattered. My ass and his cock.

And then I came, slinging thin spurts of watery cum with every bounce. But that wasn't important. No – what was important was the arcing waves of pleasure emanating from my ass. I convulsed. My muscles contracted. I screamed. And on and on it went for what felt like hours. It was heaven. Ecstasy. A revelation. A confirmation. It cemented what, deep down, I'd known for a while. I was a girl. And there was no going back to what I was.



"I think you're ready," Layla said. "When Ryker gets back, that's what I'm going to tell him."

"A-are you sure?" I asked. I knew she was right. My first foray into real sex as a woman had opened my eyes to my own transformation. However, I was still very much dreading the day when Layla would leave my life. She'd become a confidant and a friend, albeit a sometimes surly and always moody one.

"Yes," she said, standing naked before me. "But you're going to have to make some choices. I know you don't want to, but you really should consider getting surgery."

"What kind of surgery?" I asked.

"He's going to insist on changing your face," Layla said. "You won't have a choice there."

"M-my face?" I asked.

"It goes with the territory," she explained. "We don't want anyone recognizing you. But that's not the point. You can get implants, too. As big as you want. And they can enhance your hips. Your butt. Whatever you want. But it's a one-time offer. Right now, Ryker will pay for it. But if you want to do it later, you'll have to pay for it yourself. And the doctors won't be as good."

"What do you think I should do?" I asked.

"I think you'll be successful either way," she said. "But you'll get more clients if you have bigger tits. That's just the way it is. A more feminine figure wouldn't hurt either."

"And the more clients I have, the faster I'll earn my way home," I reasoned. She nodded. "But I want to...I don't know...It seems like a big step."

"Think about it," she said. "He's going to want to know soon."



"You look good," Ryker said.

"Thank you," was my tentative response. The man, for all his apparent kindness and understanding, still creeped me out. He was, after all, responsible for my kidnapping in the first place, and I couldn't let myself forget it.

"Layla tells me you're ready," he said. "What do you think?"

"I am," I said with all the confidence I could muster. The two words sounded hollow, though. I'd just committed to starting my new life as a whore. Soon, I'd be having sex with random men for money. It was disgusting. But to my shame, it also turned me on.

"Did she tell you about the surgery?" he asked.

I nodded. "She said it's a one-time offer," I explained. "If I want your help, I should do it now."

"That's not what I'm talking about," he said. "It's true, but I'm talking about the facial surgery. Before we put you out there, you're going to have to go under the knife. We can do a lot more while you're down."

"Do I get a say in what I look like?" I asked.

"You do," he said. "You'll meet with the doctor soon. I expect you to have a decision on the rest of your body by then."

"What do you think I should do?" I asked, not knowing why I cared what he thought.

"I think you should do whatever makes you more confident," he said.

"That's kind of what Layla said," I stated.

"She's a smart girl," he answered. "But if you want something different, consider this: a new body and a new face will make it easier to adjust to your new life."



"You're going to do it," Layla said, pouring a cup of coffee. "All out, right?"

"What? I don't know," I said. "Why do you say that? I haven't even decided."

"Yes, you have," was her response. "I can see it in your eyes. I'd bet everything I have that you're going to go all-in on the surgery. Big tits. Big ass. Perfect face. You'll be popular, which I think is kind of the whole idea."

"I don't...I mean...I don't know," I lied. She was right. I'd thought a lot about it, and I had, in fact, decided that my best option was to look like a high-end escort. I didn't want to spend the next five or ten years sucking dick in an alley. I didn't want to stand on a street corner. I wanted better than that. And taking Ryker up on his offer of all-inclusive surgery seemed like the best way to do that.

"You can't lie to me," she said. "I made the same choice. I know what you're thinking. More feminine means more money. And that gets you out quicker. I did the same thing."

"What's it like?" I asked. "Being a working girl, I mean. I'm not talking about the sex and everything. I'm talking about the other parts of it. Do you make friends with the other girls? Or is it lonely?"

"A bit of both," Layla said. "Most of them don't stick around, so it's hard to have a real relationship with anyone. But you try because you don't have a lot of options. Nobody wants to go through this alone."

"I wish you could go with me," I said.

"A part of me wishes that too," she allowed. "But I need to go my own way. I've been working for almost six years for this. I'm excited about living my own life."

"I know," I said. "I hope you get what you want. I really do."

"I've always hated the color pink," I said, looking around the room. "And this room makes me hate it even more."

"You'll be moving on pretty soon," Layla said. "But it is pretty bad. I'll give you that."

I knew it was coming soon. A week. Maybe two, and I'd leave the compound forever. It's difficult, feeling nostalgic about a place where I'd experienced so much pain, but the mind is a strange thing. I felt a sincere pang of regret as I looked at the room. The stuffed animals. The garish color scheme. The trophies. I knew why they'd decorated it like that – the better to get me into my role – but I'd grown used to it. And out there, away from the compound and all the familiarity that came with it, was the unknown.

"Did you tell Ryker?" Layla asked, sitting on the polka dotted bed. She looked so out of place.

I pulled out the desk chair, saying, "I did. I'm meeting with the doctor in the next couple of days."

"Are you nervous?" she asked, lying back. "I was nervous before my surgery. I was convinced I would never wake up."

"Not really," I lied. "They've got too much invested in me to let me die on the operating table. I'm more worried about the recovery, actually."

"It sucks," she said. "And it'll be worse for you because you're getting so much work done. I bet it takes a good two or three months before you're back to normal."

"That's what Ryker said," I responded. "But it's the right decision. I think. It is, right?"

"It is if you think it is," she said. "What I think isn't important. It's all about what you want. And I think we've established that you want to look like your best self."





"One year," Layla said, looking as beautiful as I'd ever seen her look. "This is your anniversary."

It was true. It had been one year since I'd been taken, but it seemed like a lifetime ago. I could barely remember what my family looked like. I could hardly remember what it felt like to know my place in the world. My problems back then seemed so miniscule and inconsequential. I longed for something so simple as going to college. But after what I'd been through, it seemed like a pipe dream.

"Do you ever wonder what it'd be like if you hadn't been taken?" I asked.

"Of course I do," she said. "But I try not to dwell on it. It's a pointless exercise, trying to imagine something that can't happen. We can't go back, Sabrina. We can never go back. We can only keep going forward."

I shrugged. "I guess," I said. "If I have these surgeries, I know I can't go back to being a boy."

"Do you want to?" she asked.

"No," I admitted. "It's easier this way. I don't have to worry about being Oliver Santiago anymore if it's impossible. But I want to want it, you know? I feel like I should want it."

"But you don't," she said.

"I don't," I agreed.

It was a strange admission, but it was completely true. I didn't know if it was the result of the transformation forced upon me or if that transformation had simply awakened something that was already there. In any case, it didn't matter. I was going forward. I was going to be the woman they wanted me to be because it's what I wanted too. And Oliver, for better or worse, was just a memory.

"I wish this was easier," I said.

"It will be once you have the surgeries," was her response. "When you can look in the mirror and see someone else, the old you will start to fade away completely."

I nodded, but I didn't know if that's what I really wanted.



"Are you ready?" Layla asked, referring to the upcoming surgery.

"I honestly don't know," I admitted, looking back at my mentor. "I don't really know if I want my face to look different. I like the way I look now."

It was a strange thing to say, given the fact that I'd never asked to be feminized. I hadn't grown up wanting to be a woman. I wasn't really transgender. But I felt like it. As much as it hurt to admit, being a man felt alien to me. I could hardly remember what it was even like.

"You don't have a choice there," she said, stating the obvious. "I had to change my face, too."

"What did you look like?" I asked. "Before, I mean."

"Like a boy," she said. "More than you. I welcomed the change, and so should you. The doctor does good work. You'll be beautiful."

I nodded. During my initial consultation, I'd seen the computer rendering of what I should I expect. However, there was always the possibility of something going wrong. And even if it didn't, I wasn't altogether prepared for that face to look back at me in the mirror.

"You'll be okay," she assured me.

"I know," I agreed. "It's a big step, though. I'm going to spend the next couple of months in recovery."

"I wish I could be there for you," she said.

"W-what? You're leaving?" I asked.

She nodded. "A couple of weeks after your surgery," she said. "My job's done. I'm going back to the states."

"Oh," I said. I had known she would be leaving at some point, but I suppose I'd chosen to ignore it. And the idea hit me pretty hard. "I guess that makes sense."

"How are you feeling?" Ryker asked, looking as stylish as ever.

"Like someone just cut up my face," I muttered, resisting the urge to finger the bandages around my face. The surgery itself, though painful, had gone perfectly. The doctor had been pleased, at least. But to me, it just looked like a swollen mass of multi-colored bruises. I looked like a monster, which wasn't helped by the fact that I couldn't wear makeup. It was strange, but I'd gotten so used to it that I felt naked without it.

He laughed. "Appropriate," he said. "The pain should subside soon, though."

"And the swelling will go down in about a week," I added. "I know. I heard the doctor. I'm not a child."

He fixed me with an appraising look, almost as if he was just taking stock of me. "Fair enough," he said. "After you heal, we'll do some touch-ups. And then, a week later, you go in for the body modifications."

"I know," I said. I'd gone over my itinerary a dozen times in my head. "I just want it all over with."

"It'll be finished before you can blink," he said. "And then you'll be perfect."

"Can I ask you something?" I asked. He nodded, giving me his consent. "Why not just go all the way?"

"I thought Layla explained this to you," he answered. "You make more money for me this way."

"Yeah, but how? I mean, no offense – maybe this is your thing," I said nervously. "But most guys don't want a girl like...well...like me."

"I think you're selling yourself short," he said. "But I understand your point. The reality is that there's no shortage of genetic women out there. Pretty. Ugly. Fat. Thin. Any man can have whatever he wants, so long as he's willing to pay the price. But women like you? Or like you're going to become? That's rare. And rarity means I can charge a ridiculous price. It's simple economics."

"Economics," I muttered. "Yeah. That's what I thought."





"Hold very still," said the technician as she pushed the needle into my lip. Though they'd been numbed, it felt strange having the collagen injected, and not just physically. I'd often criticized my sister for wanting the exact same thing done to her lips. However, that had been another life. It was very likely that I'd never see Eliana again. And even if I did, she wouldn't recognize me.

The bandages had come off, and I was surprised to find that I looked very different, but strangely similar. There were pieces that I recognized. The eyes. They brow. The chin. But the whole? I was a stranger. And my transformation wasn't finished.

"The body comes next," said Ryker, sitting in a nearby corner.

I could see the look in his eyes. There was a hunger there. But I couldn't quite decide if it was for the money I'd bring in or if he wanted to fuck me. Perhaps it was both. He was a strange, complicated man.

"She is already quite beautiful," the technician said, steadying my chin as she moved to the upper lip. "But Dr. Martinez will enhance that."

"We're not really going for beautiful," Ryker said. "We're going for bimbo. And I'm sure she'll fit that moniker nicely."

I hated that label. No matter what I looked like, I was still me. I was still an intelligent, independent person. But I knew that, when they were done, I'd have a hard time convincing anyone of that fact. And if I was honest, I wasn't quite sure if the lack of expectations was a good thing or not.

For most of my life, I'd had to live with measuring up to my father's expectations. I had to be smarter than the other boys. Faster. More disciplined. But as Sabrina, the ready-made bimbo prostitute? Nobody would expect anything but for me to do my job. There was a certain freedom in that idea, I think.

The technician withdrew the needle. "All done," she said. "Perfect."



"Y-you're leaving?" I asked, staring at the enigmatic girl who'd become my mentor, disbelief etched on my face. "When?"

"Tomorrow," Layla answered. "Just before your surgery."

I didn't know how to respond. On the one hand, I had known from the very beginning that she would someday leave. Whatever we had shared – be it friendship or something a little deeper – had an expiration date. I knew that. But on the other, she had been the one constant in my changing life. Whatever else happened, no matter how much I changed, she was there. And now, she was leaving.

"Where are you going?" I asked. "Home? Somewhere else?"

"I think I need to tell my parents what happened to me," she said. "I need to let them know that I'm alive, at least."

"How do you think they'll react?" was my next question.

"Truthfully? I have no idea," Layla answered. "I know what I want to happen. I want them to hug me, to tell me that they're sorry for everything I've been through. I want them to accept me as I am now. But that's not really what I expect."

"You think they'll reject you?" I asked.

She shook her head. "No," she answered. "I mean, it's a possibility, I guess, but I don't expect that. But I do expect pity. They'll treat me like some broken little thing."

I almost laughed at the idea. I'd never met a stronger person in my whole life. Layla didn't break. She adapted. She had taken a life of slavery and turned it to her advantage. The notion that anyone would pity her felt alien. But I understood her concern.

"I wish I could make you understand how much you've meant to me these last few months," I said. "I wish I could go with you. That we could stick together."

"That's not how it works," she said. "But for what it's worth, I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you too," I said.

"Right here," the doctor said, marking my chest with dotted lines. His latex-gloved hands were cold on my nipple. "When we're done, you're going to be perfect."

I couldn't ignore the manic gleam in his eye. But then again, I didn't think a surgeon who'd work for a man like Ryker was exactly legit. Certainly, he was likely talented enough. But he couldn't be normal. Not and do what he was going to do.

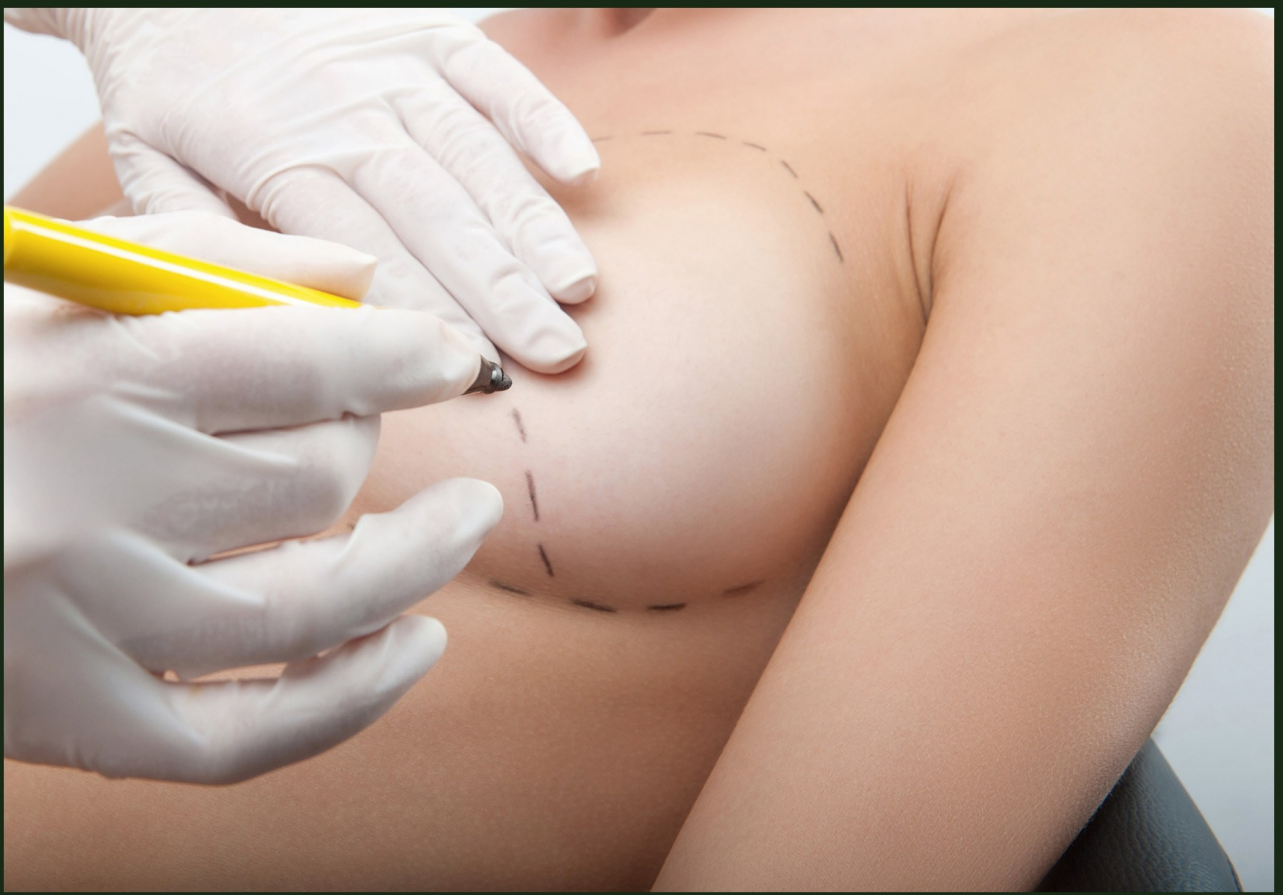
Still, I didn't respond. My fate had been sealed the moment I'd agreed to do the surgery. And despite the butterflies dancing in my stomach, I couldn't derail the operation – not at that late of a stage. The man had already been paid, after all. So, I remained silent as he continued to prepare me for the surgery that would render me completely unrecognizable as a man.

Part of me was eager; after all, I'd started to come to terms with who I had become and what lay in my future. I'd never be Oliver again. That had been decided the day I'd been kidnapped. But I could, one day, be my own person. I could have a life. I could be free, like Layla. She'd left without much ceremony – just a simple hug, a hasty goodbye, and she was gone. As the nurse placed a plastic mask over my face, I wished I'd done something more meaningful. But I hadn't, and as I drifted off into unconsciousness, I couldn't escape the fact that it was a fitting end to a strange relationship.

What felt like a split second later, I awoke to a cacophony of pain and unfamiliarity. It took my groggy mind a moment to remember that I'd just had surgery, and even when my memory caught up, I was surprised to see twin mounds of bandaged flesh sticking out from my chest.

"They're huge," I muttered. Or rather, that's what I meant to say. What actually escaped my mouth was a drug-induced mumbling moan of inarticulate nonsense. But as I drifted back into unconsciousness, the sentiment remained.

Over the next week, I drifted in and out of consciousness. And as time went on, the pain lessened, and I regained the ability to think straight. It was done, I remember thinking as I stared at my bandaged breasts in the mirror. It was finished.



"When?" I asked, topless and staring into the bathroom mirror. I was captivated by the woman staring back at me. I couldn't decide whether I hated my own reflection, if I was turned on by it, or if I was proud of it. However, when the final bruise faded and the last bandaged was removed, I couldn't deny that I looked every inch the woman Ryker had told me I'd be.

Standing nearby, he said, "A few more days," he said. "Are you still sore?"

Straightening to my full height – which was a good deal shorter than him – I gripped the underside of my breasts, saying, "A little. I'm definitely not used to the weight, though."

"You'll be fine," he said, smiling. "And your clients are going to love them."

"I wish they didn't look so fake, though," I said, turning this way and that as I looked in the mirror. "I guess that's the point, though."

"It is," he responded.

"Have you heard from Layla?" I asked.

He shook his head. "No," he said. "She's gone. I don't expect to hear from her ever again, honestly. New name. New life. She's out. Just like you will be, so long as you do as you're expected to do."

"I know," I said. "But I have a lot of questions about that. I'm not going to be standing on a corner, right? Will I have appointments? Do I just hang out at bars? Or am I going to be at a brothel or something?"

"I don't think you're quite ready to know that," he said. "Now, just focus on healing. Get better. And we'll talk about all that later."





I looked like a sex doll. Plastic lips. Perfectly contoured face. Enormous, gravity-defying breasts atop a slim, but curvaceous body. If the doctor had been trying to create the very picture of a bimbo, he had done his job well. And the worst part of it was the fact that I wasn't entirely displeased with my appearance.

"Is this what you wanted?" I asked, standing in front of Ryker, topless and wearing only a maroon-colored g-string. My manhood was well-concealed, giving my groin an completely smooth appearance.

"It's what I envisioned the moment I laid eyes on you," he said, sitting in the chair before me. "I'm glad you agreed to do it my way."

I cupped my breasts, feeling a twinge of self-consciousness. "They're so heavy," I said. "That's going to take some serious getting used to."

"Indeed," was Ryker's response. "But you'll get there."

"Where are we going?" I asked. "And when?"

"Mexico," he said. "And soon. The arrangements are almost completely finished. Don't worry your pretty, little head. You'll be out there working before you know it."

I didn't respond because I knew he was right. My body was completely healed; there wasn't even any soreness left. And there was no sense in delaying my new career any longer. It was daunting, knowing what lay in store. Hundreds, if not thousands, of men were my future. One dick after another for years and years. As much as I'd come to enjoy having sex as a woman, I didn't really know how to cope with the idea of being a prostitute.

My only solace was that I didn't have a choice. It didn't matter what I thought. It didn't matter how scared I was. It would happen, one way or another, with or without my input.

"You'll be fine," he said, almost as if he could sense my unease. "I promise. I'll take care of you."



"I still sort of wish you let me go all the way," I said, slipping my panties up my smooth legs. Almost on reflex, I tucked my genitals back, giving my groin a smooth profile.

"I've told you why that wouldn't work," Ryker responded. "You're more valuable this way."

Part of me hated being talked about like some sort of product. It was objectification of the worst kind. However, there was something about it that made me feel more worthwhile, in a way. More wanted. More special. It was comforting, knowing my place, even if that place was as a walking dollar sign.

"I know," I answered. "It would just be easier."

We'd just arrived in Mexico, which meant that the trip – short as it was – was my first foray into public with my new body. And everywhere I went, I drew stares. Women looked at me with mingled disgust, judgement, and jealousy. Men saw me with eyes filled with lust. I was built for one thing, and everyone knew it. And against all odds, I liked the way the attention made me feel. Curiously, Ryker never looked at me with the same sort of lust most men did.

"You need to rest," Ryker said. "The next few days will be trying for you."

"I'll be fine," I said. "I'm ready."

"You think you're ready," he said. "But that's because you don't know what awaits. This life isn't easy – less so if you're just breaking in. And I intend to test you, to push you to your limits."

"What does that even mean? I've already been pushed," I said. "I spent six months being tortured. I can take a little sex."

"This will be a different kind of torture," he said. "But that's in the future. For now, relax."

I sighed. "Fine," I said.

"Now, do I need to remind you that if you try to escape, you'll –"

"Be found immediately and sold to a Saudi Arabian asshole," I said. "I know."

I didn't feel like a whore. It didn't matter that I knew what was coming – in only a day, no less. I still felt like a version of me. Certainly, as I gazed past my reflection in the window, I didn't see Oliver staring back. I was changed, body and mind. But it was still mostly just me in there. As I contemplated the next day, I knew – at least deep down – that would soon change.

Idly, I wondered what my father would say if he saw what I'd become. No doubt, he'd be disappointed. I'd try to explain that I hadn't had a choice. I'd beg for him to understand. But he wouldn't. He couldn't. That just wasn't how he was built. He would have died in that cell rather than let someone change him.

My sister wouldn't be any better, but for an entirely different reason. She would be jealous. Angry that someone else was taking her well-earned attention. She'd hate that my tits were bigger than hers, that I was objectively prettier. She would call me a plastic bitch, all while making plans to copy me. And that was the best-case scenario. Worst case, she would just make fun of me. Eliana could sometimes be petty like that.

Would they try to hide me? Lock me away in some faraway location so I couldn't besmirch the family name? Would they give me a monthly stipend and try to forget I even existed? Certainly, that was how they dealt with any other embarrassing situation. Throw some money at it and pretend it didn't exist. It might as well have been the family motto.

One thing I knew for certain was that whatever birthright I thought I was entitled to had been forfeit the moment I'd gone under the knife. Even when I fulfilled my obligation to Ryker – if that ever actually came to pass – I wouldn't return home to resume my life. I would never go to Princeton. I would never take over Pyramid Oil. And I'd never have my father's respect. Those were the simple, absolute facts, and they were completely inescapable.

I pushed my hair back from my well-sculpted face, wondering if I even wanted to go home. It would be easier just to deal with life as a whore. If my current accommodations were any indication, I'd live well enough. There was luxury enough to go around. And Ryker accepted me.

I shook my head. No. None of that mattered, and it wouldn't – not until I earned my freedom. And that was a long, long way off.



"This...this isn't what I expected," I said, sitting in the backseat of the van, wearing nothing but a skirt and a white bra. Ryker was in the driver's seat.

"I know," the man said, his German accent a bit thicker than usual – the only indication of his excitement. "This is necessary."

I didn't like the implications of his grave tone. It didn't take a genius to realize that something distasteful was in my near future, and my mind ran wild, imagining what I had coming for me. I was so preoccupied that I didn't even notice when the van pulled to a stop.

"Get out," he said.

"W-what? Like this?" I asked.

"You need to understand that you're not special," he stated. "You need to realize that, to me, you're no better than the corner whores who'll give blowjobs for a handful of pesos. And with one word from me, that's exactly what you'll be. Do you understand?"

I nodded, legitimately scared of the man for the first time. I knew good and well what I was to him – at least from an academic perspective. However, until that moment, I had felt special somehow. He liked me. Or that's what I thought.

"Now get the fuck out," he said. "Come back when you have a customer."

"W-what do I charge?" I whispered, still in shock.

"A dollar," he said. "Because right now, that's all you're worth."



"How much?" the man asked in Spanish. Despite the fact that I'd grown up in a Latino family, I'd never had the knack for the language. However, I knew enough to at least understand his question.

"How much you got, baby?" I asked, thrusting my chest out. Out of necessity, I spoke English. He said something I didn't understand, so I just dropped the negotiation there. I had an assignment, and I was eager to get it over with. So, I grabbed his hand, saying, "A dollar" as I led him back to the van.

The man himself wasn't exactly a prize. Covered in tattoos, dirty, and smelling like he'd never even heard of deodorant, he was exactly the sort of man I had feared would be my first customer. But at least he was fit.

We crawled into the van, and Ryker said, "Money first."

My eager john fished a wad of pesos from his pocket, handing them to what I now realized was my pimp. "You're on," Ryker said, nodding at me.

Even before I dropped to my knees, the man had his cock out. It was thick, veiny, and looked almost angry. I felt my breath quicken, hating that even such a disgusting man could turn me on. But hate it or not, I was.

The man gripped my hair, forcing my face towards his manhood. I opened wide, my swollen lips enveloping his cock as he pushed the thing down my throat. I gagged, but he didn't stop. He wasn't interested in what I wanted. He was in charge. I was just a collection of holes into which he could stick his penis.

Then, without so much as a warning, he yanked his dick out of my mouth and flipped me over. He was inside me before I could even think, pounding his unlubricated cock in and out of me. He didn't even care that I had my own dick. All he cared about was getting off.

And as much as I hated myself for it, I was happy enough to be the means to that end.





"He came in my face," I said, so dazed that I didn't even think to wipe the man's semen from my chin.

"Use a condom next time," Ryker said.

The whole thing had taken less than five minutes, but it had irrevocably changed my self-perception. The word whore is one we all know so well. We know what it means. We know the implications it carries with it. But we don't know how it feels to have that moniker rightly attached to our identities. After that first encounter, I did.

I don't know what I imagined. Perhaps I thought it would be something like I'd seen in the movies. But prostitution wasn't like "Pretty Woman" and my client wasn't Richard Gere. He was a horny Mexican with a few pesos in his pocket. And I was no Julia Roberts.

"O...Okay," I said.

"Clean yourself up, and get back out there," Ryker ordered.

"W-what?" I asked. "I thought...I don't..."

"You worked for less than ten minutes there," he said. "You can get a hundred more customers today. And that's what I expect."

"W-why are you...why are you doing this to me?" I asked.

"Because you're an uppity bitch who thinks she's special," the German man said. "I need to get that out of you. Maybe, if you do a good job, you can get to a better corner. And then, if you do well there, you can move into one of the massage parlors. Then, a bordello. And finally, I'll trust you to be a real escort. But until you prove yourself, this is where you'll be. This is who you'll be."

I stared out the window at the dirty street, unable to talk, barely able to think. "I...I...o-okay," I muttered.

"But like I said," he stated. "Use a condom. I don't want you picking up some disease before I've got my money out of you."

Over the next couple of months, my life, such as it was, fell into a rhythm. Whatever illusions I had about life as a prostitute were soon dispelled. It wasn't like a movie. Nor was it anything like I had expected. It was, for lack of a better term, a job. And like any job, there were parts I enjoyed and other parts I absolutely abhorred. But I made progress.

The day I progressed to a corner in a better part of town, I was so proud. It would be more money, sure, but it would also mean a better clientele. Perhaps, I thought, I would even get a few tourists to break up the monotony of Mexican customers. That hope was short-lived, however. It was all just dick, no matter the color or ethnicity. And at least at my old corner, I had been alone. At the new one, there was competition. And they all saw me as an intruder.

I couldn't really blame them, I guess. I didn't look like them. I didn't act like them. It was no wonder they thought I didn't belong.

Their animosity made me work all the harder. I'd barely cleaned myself up before I was out there trying to hustle a new john. I wanted to progress. I wanted to get off the street and into an evening gown. And Ryker had made it abundantly clear how to do just that. So, I bent my efforts to pleasing him.

And I did. One satisfied client after another, I did exactly as I was told. And my mindset slowly changed. I thought I was a woman before. But after a three or four weeks of being fucked by dozens of men, I knew exactly what I was. With each customer, my old identity faded even further into the background. Oliver was a stranger.

I was Sabrina, and she was a whore.

Still, in the back of my mind, I wanted something more. I wasn't sure what it was, but I knew it was there. Perhaps it was whatever was left of my old identity trying to make the best of my situation. Or maybe it's something all girls in my position did to cope with their station in life. I don't know, and I'm not even sure if I wanted to.



"Like this?" I asked, bending over on all fours. Once, I might have felt exposed. But that was before I'd spent almost a month being fucked in vans and back alleys. As it stood, I was well used to a lack of modesty. And besides, I was happy. I was finally moving up in the world.

Ryker stood beside the photographer, his arms crossed. "Yes," he said. "That will do just fine."

As the photographer took the photos, I contorted myself into a variety of positions. They were an advertisement for my new position at the massage parlor. According to Ryker, prospective clients would see me on their website and request me when they came in. I was excited, and not just because I was getting off the street.

The massage parlor represented so much more than a better working environment. It was that, certainly, but it also meant quite a bit more money. And, of course, it also meant that I was one step closer to the ultimate goal – becoming a real escort.

When the photographer had finished her work, I slipped a robe over my shoulders, tying it closed. "You're doing well," Ryker said. "Better than I expected, really. It usually takes longer than this to move up."

I nodded. "I'm glad you're happy, daddy," I said, slipping into what I called my "whore voice". It was a little higher-pitched than my normal speaking voice and was punctuated with terms of endearment like "daddy", "sugar", and "baby". I knew I'd made a mistake when his face clouded over.

Without warning, he wrapped his hand around my thin bicep, gripping it tightly as he said, "Don't ever call me that."

I tried to wriggle free, but his grip was too strong. "I'm sorry," I said. "I didn't mean to –"

"Just tell me you understand," he growled, glaring at me with menace I'd never seen. "Don't call me that. Ever."

"Fine, I won't," I said. "I won't!"

Finally, after a long moment, he released me. "Good," he said. "Good."





Six months. I'd been a prostitute for six whole months. Even in my mind, it seemed like a significant period. However, it had felt like years. I'd been fucked by so many men that I'd lost count. I'd seen it all. Big dicks. Small dicks. Fat men. Skinny men. Black. White. Latino. Arab. I'd had them all. I felt like a seasoned veteran, and I knew I was on the verge of getting what I wanted.

"When?" I asked, looking down on Ryker. "When can I move up to the big leagues?"

Despite my sports metaphor, he knew what I meant. I'd done everything he had asked, and I'd done it well. I was easily the most popular girl at the massage parlor, and I had been their top earner from almost the moment I'd set foot in that building. That fact hadn't endeared me to the other girls, which was yet another reason I wanted to move on.

"Soon," Ryker said, leaning forward. It was the same answer he gave me every time. "Be patient."

"I'm tired of being patient," I said. "I want to be --"

"Next week," he said, interrupting me. "I'm setting it up next week. I've got to go out of town for a few days, but when I get back, I'll coordinate it all."

"What?" I asked.

"It was supposed to be a surprise," Ryker said. "But you're leaving the parlor next week. We've been setting you up as an escort. You'll have to do some videos. And you'll have to learn how to use social media. But this time next month, you'll have left this all behind."

"H-how will it work?" I asked.

"Men will see you online," he said. "They'll call a prearranged number, and they'll set up an appointment. They'll fly you wherever they want you to be. They'll pay for your hotel. Your living expenses. And you'll do more than just have sex with them. You'll be a companion, of sorts."

I didn't know what else to say, I was so excited, so I just told him, "Thank you. Thank you so much. I won't let you down."



I remember the day it happened like it was yesterday. I was on top of one of my regulars, bouncing up and down with as much gusto as I could muster. Some of my enthusiasm had faded since discovering Ryker's plans, but I'd grown quite adept at faking it. So, my client – a middle-aged hotel executive named Julio – had no inkling that I was distracted.

So, distracted as I was, I didn't notice the shadows behind me. Nor did I hear the muffled screams of the other girls. In fact, I had no idea that we were being raided until a trio of black-clad, Mexican police officers burst through the door.

Naked, I bounded off of my client, clutching my arm over my chest and my other hand over my genitals.

"Clear!" one of the men shouted in accented Spanish as he pointed his assault rifle at me, then at Julio. Then, in a lower voice, he asked, "Are you Oliver Santiago?"

I didn't answer for a long moment. I couldn't. I barely recognized my own name. In fact, I didn't respond until he shouted the question again.

I nodded. "I...I am," I said. "Or I used to be."

Before I knew what was happening, he'd thrown a robe at me, told me to put it on, and when I did, escorted me from the familiar confines of the massage parlor. Everyone I looked, men and women were being arrested. I didn't know why. I didn't understand anything. All I knew was that the cop knew my name. My real name. He knew who I was.

"What's happening?" I muttered as I was ushered out of the building and into a waiting SUV. "Where are you taking me?"

The man removed his mask, revealing a caucasian face. "We're taking you home," he said.

"H-home?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered. "We've been looking for you for almost three years. Your father sent us."



"Is this really what you're going to make me wear?" I asked, my hands on my hips. I felt ridiculous, wearing the nondescript, gray polo-style shirt, jeans, and white sneakers. "I have clothes back at my apartment."

"This is what your father wanted you to wear," my rescuer, Hal Reynolds, said. He was handsome enough, but what personality he'd showed me was severely lacking. "You'll be home tomorrow morning, and then you can wear whatever you want to wear."

The raid, such as it was, had been a cover for Hal and his men to rescue me. As it turned out, Ryker had lied when he said my father had refused to pay the ransom. In fact, nobody had ever even contacted my family to let them know I'd been kidnapped. It wasn't until I didn't show up after my trip was supposed to have ended that my father hired Hal's firm to investigate my disappearance. Eventually, their investigation led them to the massage parlor.

"Does he know?" I asked.

"Know what?" Hal responded, not looking up from where he was cleaning his gun.

"What I am," I said. "Does he know how much I've changed? Does he know what I was doing when you found me?"

Hal shook his head. "Not all of it," he said. "He knows about what happened at that compound in Colombia. He knows that you were forced to act like a woman. But he doesn't know about the surgeries. Or the prostitution. I didn't have the heart to tell him."

"He's going to find out soon enough," I said.

"So he will," Hal agreed. "But not from me. I have no interest in being that messenger."

I nodded. I didn't either. I could only imagine how he'd react.



I sat in the car for a long time, practically hyperventilating. I didn't know how I was supposed to face my family, knowing what I'd done, knowing what I'd become. I wanted to be confident. I wanted to hold out my hands and proclaim, "This is me, now!"

But I knew it wouldn't be so easy. It was so strange. Removed from the constant influence of Ryker and the reality of my everyday life, I'd grown somewhat ashamed at the things I'd done. Once, I'd been so sure of myself. I knew who I was, and I'd made peace with it. But facing my family's judgement? That made everything so much more complicated.

"Are you okay?" asked Hal, turning to look at me. There was no real concern on his face. I was just a job to him. He didn't care if I was a boy, a girl, an heir to an oil company, or a whore. His job was to bring me home, and he'd done just that. There was comfort in his lack of emotion.

"Not really," I said. "What am I supposed to say? How are they going to react?"

"I don't know," he said. "But we can't sit here all day. Your sister is waiting."

I saw her, of course. Frustrated. Angry. And staring at the car, trying to peer through the limo tint on the windows.

"I can't," I said. "I want to go back. I want to go back to where I was, okay? Just take me to the airport. I'll find my way back to Mexico."

"You know I can't do that," Hal said.

I took a deep breath, trying to steady my nerves. "Fine," I said. "Fine. Okay. I can do this. I don't care what they think." I'd been through months of torture. I'd been feminized and forced into prostitution. I'd been beaten. Starved. I had been transformed. If I could take all that, I could endure the judgement of my spoiled twin sister.

I opened the door and stepped out.

"Who the fuck are you?" blurted Eliana, staring at me. "Where's Ollie?"

"I...it's me, Ellie," I said. "It's your brother."

It wasn't the reunion I had expected. Or wanted. But Eliana just stared at me like I was a stranger. I knew she wouldn't recognize me. I'd changed too much, and it had been too long since I'd seen her. But it wasn't just a lack of recognition. It was so, so much more than that. She looked at me with mingling disgust, intrigue, and disbelief.

"It's him," said Hal, handing a folder to my sister. "The DNA tests confirm it."

"T-that can't...I don't...I don't know what to say," she admitted. Raising her hands, she said, "I can't do this. I just can't. I'm sorry, but this is way too fucked up."

As she turned to trek back up to the house, my first instinct was to stop her. I wanted to. But something held me back.

"My advice?" Hal said. "Just give her a couple of days. Let her get used to the idea."

"That's easy for you to say," I stated. "Your sister didn't just look at you like you were a monster."

"Fair enough," he said. After escorting me into the house, Hal said an awkward goodbye, leaving me alone in the palatial mansion. Sure, Eliana was there, but she wanted nothing to do with me. So, I made my way up to my childhood bedroom.

When I got there, I was taken aback by how immature it all looked. Posters of scantily clad women, sports trophies, and a hundred other little accoutrements of a teenaged boy's life lined the walls. I hated it because it reminded me of what I'd been, and I got out of that room as quickly as I could. Before I knew it, I had found my way into the bathroom. It seemed so much bigger than I remembered; the shower alone was the size of my apartment in Mexico. And it looked incredibly inviting.

I stripped off the androgynous clothing Hal had given me and stepped into the shower, where I took a long, hot, and luxurious shower. Never had warm, cascading water felt so good on my smooth skin.

"Jesus," said Eliana, standing in the bathroom, staring at my naked body as I dried off. "You really are...I mean, I read...I heard...I just...I just never expected you to look like this."

"Me neither," I admitted.

"Dad is going to freak out," she said. "Like freak the fuck out. He's here, by the way. In your room. And he's not happy."





"I'm very disappointed," said my father, Julian, as he looked me up and down. I suppose it didn't help that I was half-naked, with only a towel wrapped around my chest to conceal my modesty.

"What was I supposed to do?" I asked. "Seriously? I didn't have a choice."

"I have it on good authority that you did," he said, sitting down on what had once been my bed. I had a hard time thinking of it in those terms. It was Oliver's room, not Sabrina's. "But you chose to have these surgeries."

"What choice did I really have?" I demanded, feeling a bout of almost-righteous anger. "Really, dad – tell me what I should've done. They told me you had abandoned me. I spent, like, six months being tortured, living in solitary. I would have done anything to get out."

"And you did," he said. "You did whatever they wanted you to do. And what's worse, you did it with a smile on your face."

I felt a tear making its way down my cheek. I didn't want to cry. I'd told myself I wouldn't. But his reaction to being reunited with me was everything I'd feared it would be. He hated me. He hated what I'd become. And he was ashamed. I could see that in his eyes.

"I'm sorry," I said, sitting next to him. "I tried to be strong. I did. But you don't understand what it was like, dad. I was...I wasn't...I just couldn't go back to being in that cell."

"I'm not angry," he said. "Just disappointed. I expected more of you."

"I know," I said. "I know."



"You need to stop staring," I said. "They're just tits."

But despite my admonishment, my sister couldn't tear her eyes from my body. I was beginning to regret getting undressed in front of her. It wasn't that I was modest. Or ashamed – well, maybe a bit – but it was the way she looked at me, that mixture of disapproval, disgust, and a healthy dose of morbid curiosity, that made me rethink my decision.

"But they're huge," she said. "And I can't even see the scars. Who did them?"

"I don't know his name," I admitted. "They just did it, you know? I didn't get much in the way of explanations."

"Yeah," Ellana said. "I guess I get that."

I turned away, grabbing a pair of panties. "Thanks for lending me the clothes," I said. "They brought me here so quickly that I didn't get a chance to gather my things."

"Yeah," she said. "No problem. Look – I'm sorry."

"For what?" I asked.

"For the way I reacted," she said. "I was a bitch. And I shouldn't have been. It was just a surprise, you know? You just weren't what I expected."

"I know," I said, pulling the underwear – a pink thong – up my legs. I felt better once I had everything settled into place. "I get it. This is hard on everybody."

"To say the least," she said. "But for what it's worth, I'm glad you're home."

"Me too," I lied. The reality was that I thought I was better off back in Mexico. I didn't have money. And I was a whore. But I didn't have to deal with the judgement of a family who couldn't understand why I'd done the things I had done. But Ellana's apology helped. A little.

I suppose I could have been able to help it. It wasn't like anyone was holding a gun to my head or anything. Nobody forced me to suck his dick. But old habits die hard, and I was horny. And being back in America, I didn't really have many options. So, I called Hal, and I asked him to come over. To my surprise, he did.

"What the hell?" said Eliana, standing in the doorway, staring at me as I sucked his cock. "Really?"

Hal lazily looked toward the door, then asked, "Can you give us a few minutes, Miss Santiago?"

Eliana didn't know what to do. I could see it on her face. But surprisingly, she just backed away, shutting the door. I withdrew from Hal's dick.

"I'll have to remember how you did that," I said.

He gave me a crooked smile – the first sign of emotion I'd seen from the man – and said, "Yeah. Now back to work, whore."

I got butterflies in my stomach at the name. It was familiar. I understood it. And I clung to that identity like it was a lifeboat in the middle of a hurricane. I was a whore. It didn't matter if I was getting paid or not. Nor did it matter if I was in Mexico or America. I knew what I was. And nothing could change that.

So, he fucked me. Hard and fast. It was as satisfying as anything I'd ever experienced. Or maybe I was just relieved to have a short reprieve from thinking about the real world, about the judgement and expectations that went along with being back in the U.S. I don't know. But by the time he left, I felt ready to face the world.

And that was something, at least.



"You seriously don't understand," I said, sitting on the couch. "I'm not the same person I was before."

"I saw that," Eliana responded. "I mean, I have an idea what you went through. But...I mean...are you gay, now?"

"I'm a woman," I answered. "So, no. I don't get into other women. Not anymore."

It was so difficult, making her understand that I hadn't just changed my sexuality. Or my gender. Out of necessity, I had become a completely different person. Oliver had been a straight guy. Sabrina was a straight woman. Oliver hadn't changed. He'd been replaced.

"What about Kendall?" she asked. "What are you going to tell her?"

"Do I have to tell her anything?" I asked. "She probably moved on a while back, right?"

"Not so much," Eliana said. "She was so worried about you. I think she sort of went off the deep end when you left. And then when you went missing? That wasn't pretty. She's better now, but I don't know how she's going to react. But it'll be worse if she finds out from somebody other than you."

I sighed. "I know," I said. "It's just hard. I don't know what to say. And I definitely don't know how to say it."

"It has to be done," Eliana said. She handed me her phone. "Just call her. Tell her you need to talk. It'll be okay."

"That's easy for you to say," I stated.

"Not really," Eliana responded with a rueful smile. "I've had to talk to her at least once a week this whole time. I know exactly how this is going to go down."

"Great," I said, pulling the phone up to my ear. "That really helps. A lot."





I was so nervous. After all, I hadn't seen Kendall in years. I knew she would have changed, even if that transformation wasn't nearly as dramatic as my own. Once, we'd shared something of a bond. But as I sat at the table, searching the crowd for my former girlfriend, I couldn't help but wonder if that bond had completely faded. I hoped – probably selfishly – that we could still be friends, of a sort.

So, I waited at the restaurant table, scanning the crowd for the girl who'd once been my girlfriend. I didn't have long to wait, because a few minutes later, she showed up. Wearing a brief, yellow tee-shirt and denim shorts, she looked as pretty as she ever had. I wasn't attracted to her, but I could easily see what the old me had seen in her.

I stood. "Kendall," I said.

"Do I know you?" she asked. "Are you here with Ollie? Or...oh...oh, God..."

"It's me," I said. "But I'm not Oliver anymore. Call me Sabrina."

She didn't move. "Ellie told me you'd changed," she said. "And I thought you sounded different on the phone. But...I never...I didn't...how? How did this happen?"

"I guess I've got a lot of explaining to do, huh?" I said before gesturing to the seat across from where I'd been sitting. "You'd better sit down. It's a long story."

"I...this isn't some kind of joke, is it?" she asked, looking around warily before sitting down. "The real Oliver isn't going to pop out of a bush or something holding his phone, right?"

"No," I said. "It's me, Kendall. I can prove it if you want me to. I can talk about that time when we were eleven? In my treehouse out back? When we were playing doctor?"

She blushed a deep red. "No," she said. "No. That's fine. I believe you. I don't know how it happened, but I believe it's you."

"And you just went along with it?" Kendall asked.

"Seriously?" I asked, furrowing my brow. "Of course I went along with it. I thought I was alone. I thought I was going to be stuck in that life for years. A decade or more. What was I supposed to do? Just cling to being this person that nobody even cared to look for?"

I had told her everything – more than I'd told anyone since I'd been back – and she had responded with almost accusatory disbelief. I was understandably angry, and I wasn't interested in hiding it.

"I thought you wanted to understand," I said. "But I guess I just don't fit your idea of how I should have reacted in a fucked-up hostage situation. I was fucking tortured, Kendall. Tortured. For months. Tell me you'd be able to resist if you were in the same situation."

She looked down at the table, no doubt embarrassed by her lack of civility. No matter how well I looked, or how well I seemed to have adjusted, I had been through an incredible ordeal. And I was tired of everyone second guessing my reaction to that very real trauma.

"I'm sorry," she said. "This is just a lot to take in, okay? I came here thinking I'd see the person I've known since we were little. But then I see you? Like that? It's not easy to process."

"I know," I said, my nerves somewhat soothed by her contrite response.

"What now?" she asked. "Are you going to have t-those things removed? Are you going to go back to being Oliver?"

I shook my head. "If you'd heard anything I said, you would know that wasn't an option," I answered. "I'm sorry. I'm just too different now."



I hated myself for calling him again. I didn't love him. I didn't even like him. What we did was purely carnal, and it wasn't even that satisfying. But Hal was safe in that he wasn't going to judge me. And if he did, he certainly wouldn't let me know about it. Not like my sister. Not like Kendall. Or my father. Hal didn't care what I used to be, which reminded me of my days as a prostitute.

It was ridiculous to think that I was happier selling my body for money than I was back home. But in Mexico, I'd had a purpose. It wasn't reputable. Maybe it was even immoral. But I understood it. At home? I didn't know where I fit. More, I didn't think there'd ever be a day when people didn't look at me like I had somehow betrayed them.

But when I was with Hal, I didn't have to think about that. I could just lose myself in the act. And there was something to that, I think. Or maybe I was just fooling myself. It wouldn't have been the first time.

There was definitely a part of me that wanted to just leave it all behind. Write a note to my father and disappear. It wouldn't be difficult. I knew I could make a living, one way or another. I'd proven that much. And without their constant judgement, life would be so much easier. Or rather, it would have been less complicated.

But I couldn't do it. I couldn't just disappear. Not after I'd just gotten back. Certainly, one day, I'd have to strike out on my own. Maybe I'd return to prostitution. And maybe I'd do something else.

But as it stood, I couldn't let myself care about what they thought. Down that road lay disappointment and unhappiness.

Besides, if I ever felt cornered by my return to my family, I could always just call Hal. He'd set me straight.



"God, that's funny," said Eliana, pulling her clothes out of the bag. "You see the irony, right?"

"No," I said, feeling a little frustrated. "I don't."

"Dose of your own medicine, right?" she said. "You used to tease me about all of this. The plastic surgery. The outfits. And now look at you. Complaining that big, bad daddy doesn't love you anymore because you're like me."

"He...I never said he doesn't love me," I said, though in retrospect, it was probably true. Even as a boy, I wasn't sure he'd loved me. Saw potential in me, yes. Was proud of me at times, sure. But love? I don't really know if the man was capable of the emotion.

"You didn't have to," Eliana said. "Look – I've been dealing with this for my whole life. Do you have any idea why I care so much about all social media stuff? Do you know why I look at the Kardashians as role models?"

I shook my head, saying that I didn't. I'd never understood her fascination with everyone else's approval.

"Because that's all I have," she said. "Don't you see? Dad looks at you the same way he looks at me. I'm the daughter. I'm useless. He doesn't want me running the company, that's for sure. So, I've spent my whole life trying to make my own way as best I can. And I know I could have gone a different route. I could have gone to college and gotten a job, but do you think that would impress that man? No. But if I build a multi-million dollar empire, he'd have to pay attention that, right?"

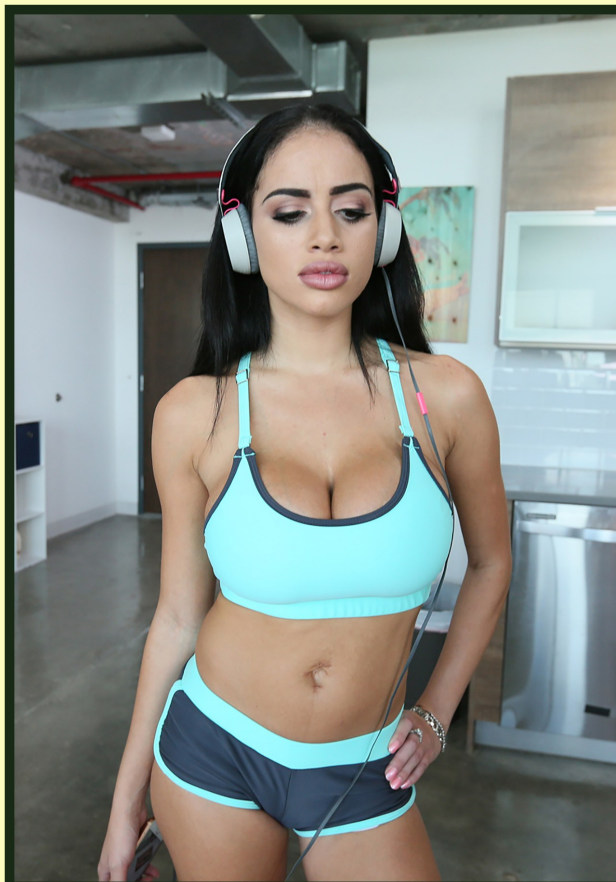
"I think my situation is a little different than yours," I said.

"You say that," she said. "But you don't really believe it. We're the same, now. On equal footing. And all that time you used to make fun of me for being who I am is coming back on you, now. You know I'm right."

"I know you're loving this," I said. "He doesn't even care what you do. Not now. Not with me here to take up all the hate."

She shrugged. "Maybe," she admitted. "But I'm just taking advantage of the situation. You can't blame me for that."





Eliana said something, but I couldn't hear it over the music. So, I pulled my headphones off, settling them around my neck. "What?" I asked. "I'm sorry – I couldn't hear."

"I was telling you that you'd better change," she said. "Dad's getting home sometime in the next hour or so. And if you want him to be in a good mood, you don't want to be strutting around, showing off how much you've changed."

"I'm not going to hide who I am," I said.

She shrugged. "Suit yourself," Eliana said, leaning back on the couch. "But he's going to be mad."

"Like I care," I said. "What's he going to do? Kick me out? Cut me off? I've been back for almost two months now, and he's barely said three words to me. Honestly, I'd welcome one of his tirades if it broke the silence."

"You really don't get it, do you?" she asked. "He's freaked out because he doesn't know how to treat you. You were his son. Part of him still thinks you are, that you'll come to your senses and get those things removed. Maybe he thinks you'll learn to be a man again."

"Not going to happen," I said.

"I know that," Eliana said. "And I think he does too, deep down. But that doesn't mean he's not confused. He is. He's not as young as he used to be, and you can bet he knows that the board won't approve of either of us as his heirs."

"They can't take our shares of the company," I said. "That's protected. And –"

"He doesn't care about that," Eliana said. "He cares about who's running the stupid thing. And he knows that he's the last Santiago who'll run Pyramid. He's having a little trouble accepting that fact."

"Doesn't give him a pass to be an asshole, though," I said. "And I'm not changing. If he's uncomfortable with my tits, that's on him."



"I'm at a loss," said Julian, looking for all the world like he'd just been posing for a portrait. My father straightened a tie that didn't need it. "I have no idea what to do with you."

"You don't have to do anything with me," I said. "Just leave me be. I'll find my own way."

My tone was one of defiance, which is something I never would have dared before. However, I hated the implication that he needed to manage me, like I was some sort of complication that had just cropped up. I was his child. Not a problem. And I didn't want to be treated as such.

"I don't think you understand my dilemma," he said, sitting down behind his desk. "I still want you involved in the company. You were born for it. It's your birthright. And that hasn't changed. However, I worry about how the board might react to the person you've become."

"I'm not changing," I said. "I don't think I could, even if I wanted to."

"I know," he said. "I read the reports. I know who you are now. In any case, I think I've got a solution."

"What's that?" I asked.

"I want you to start small," he said. "I can give you a job as a middle manager or something. They won't balk at that, even if you don't have a degree. And when you prove yourself there, I'll promote you into a more appropriate position."

"Y-you still want me in charge?" I asked. "You still want me as your heir? What about Eliana?"

"Eliana isn't cut out for this sort of thing," he said. "She's flighty. Materialistic. And she lets herself be pushed around. I don't think that describes you. Not now. Not before. The rest of it – the way you look, your gender, all of it – is inconsequential."

"I...I don't know what to say," I admitted. His confidence in me had caught me by surprise.

"There's nothing to say," he responded. "I just wanted to let you know what I was thinking. But you can go now."

"Is this a full-service massage?" I asked, settling into place on the table. I was naked but for a brief towel covering my posterior.

"I'm sorry?" asked the masseuse. He wasn't a big man – more of a boy, really – but I didn't care. I'd made my decision before I even saw him.

"Full-service," I said, turning a bit to give him a good view of my full breast. "I think you know what that means."

"I don't...I mean...this isn't, you know...that kind of place," he stammered. However, I could clearly see the outline of his hardening cock beneath his pants. And from what I could see of that growing bulge, it didn't match up with his diminutive stature.

"Not what I asked," I said, turning over. The towel slipped to the floor, exposing my body. "I asked if you're full-service. And just so there's no ambiguity here, I want you to fuck me. Right here on this table. I'll pay you whatever you want."

He didn't immediately respond, and I really couldn't blame him. After all, it wasn't every day that a beautiful woman – one with a cock, no less – propositions someone like him. But after he processed it, he smiled. "No need for money," he said.

"Yes," I said, turning back over. I positioned myself with one knee on the table, giving him clear access to my ass. "There is. But we can cover that later."

In what seemed like the barest instant, he was naked and shoving his cock deep inside me. It didn't last long, but it didn't really need to. It wasn't so much about the act itself, but rather the transaction. I wanted to use someone the way I'd been used so many times. And when it was all over, I threw a wad of bills on the table, saying, "That was good, sweetie. I might be back soon."



"You bitch!" hissed Eliana, wagging her finger at me.

"What the hell, Ellie? What did I do?" I demanded, holding a glass of champagne. She had just dragged me away from the party and into another room.

"You poisoned him against me," she said. "That's what you did."

"I don't know what you're talking about," I responded, genuinely perplexed.

"Oh? You don't, huh?" Eliana said. "Before you came back, dad was preparing me to take a bigger role in Pyramid. But now that you're back? He said he didn't think I was cut out for it. He said I didn't have the right temperament."

"Oh," I said, taking a hasty gulp of the alcoholic beverage. "That."

"Yeah," she said. "That. What the hell, Sabrina? Why would you do this to me? You don't even want to work at Pyramid. You said so yourself. But now you're taking a job? I don't get it."

"It wasn't my idea," I argued. "I didn't ask for it. Dad just threw it at me. And for your information, I haven't even accepted yet. I still don't know if I want it."

She sighed, pushing her bottle-blonde hair back behind her ear. "I guess you can't get anywhere in this family unless you have a dick," she said, sitting on one of the nearby couches. "You're a fucking whore. A literal whore. And he thinks you're better than me. I fucking hate him. I hate you. I hate everything about this fucking family."

"It's not like that, Ellie," I said, sitting next to her. I put my hand on her shoulder, but she jerked away.

"Just leave me alone, okay?" she said. "Just leave me the fuck alone."





"What are you doing?" I asked, looking at my reflection in the mirror. I'd chosen a red lingerie set that I thought was quite flattering. "Who are you trying to be?"

Both were good questions in that I couldn't really answer either one. I'd made no real effort to reintegrate into my old life. I hadn't tried to reconnect with my sister, with any old friends. I'd only had a couple of real conversations with my father. I was just drifting along, trying not to truly commit to regaining my place.

However, it went further than that. There was a big part of me that wanted – maybe needed – to go back to Mexico and pretend the rescue had never happened. In a very real way, I'd never really left my life as a prostitute, and I'd tried to replicate it with one meaningless tryst after another.

I wasn't Oliver, the privileged heir to a lucrative oil fortune. Nor was I really Sabrina, the plastic whore who'd been fucked so many times she'd lost count. Despite my insistence otherwise, I probably never was. It was a role. An act. It was me trying to be what Ryker and my clients wanted me to be. And I'd gotten good at it – so good, in fact, that I'd almost convinced myself. Almost. Close. But not really.

It was maddening, not really knowing who I was, but it was more frustrating not knowing who I wanted to be. And I couldn't tell anyone because they would never understand. How could they? What sane person would prefer a life as a prostitute? What normal boy could accept life as a woman? I knew I was abnormal.

I sighed, still staring into the mirror. I knew I wouldn't soon get any answers to my myriad questions. I could only put one foot in front of the other and hope that, somehow, I could find the right path.



"I wish you never had to go through all that," said Kendall. "It sounds awful."

I had just recounted the entire story to Kendall, and it felt incredibly good, getting everything off my chest. I don't know why I had chosen my former girlfriend as my confidant, but it felt right somehow.

"It was," I admitted. "Or some of it was, at least. I don't know, though. Besides what happened in that cell, I guess I'm just okay with how it went. Or maybe I just want to be."

"Have you talked to anybody about it all?" she asked. "Like a therapist or something?"

I arched an eyebrow. "Do you honestly think they'd have a clue how to deal with this?" I asked. "They would probably conclude that I had daddy issues or something."

"Do you?" was her next question.

"No," I said bluntly. I could understand why she'd ask, but the question irritated me.

"Listen – we've known each other for a long time, right?" she said. I nodded. As the daughter of our nanny, Eliana and I had grown up with Kendall. "I know this might sound self-serving. But I want you to understand that I don't want to get back together or anything. I'm past it. You're a different person, and so am I."

"But?" I suggested.

"But you need to be in therapy," she said. "You've been through a lot. More than most people can even imagine. And I wouldn't be surprised if you have PTSD. You were forced into sexual slavery, Sabrina. That leaves a mark. And I understand you think you're okay. I hope you are. But I'm afraid that you're not looking at all this objectively. I think you want to be fine so badly that you've convinced yourself that you are."

"And you think talking to some stranger with a degree in psychology is going to change any of that?" I asked.

She shrugged. "Maybe," she said. "But you won't know until you try."



"Interesting," said the therapist, Dr. Reynolds. "Have a seat, Miss Santiago."

"What's interesting?" I asked, taking the offered seat. As I settled into position upon the grey, leather couch, I studied the therapist. Young, fit, and handsome, he wasn't anything like what I might have expected.

He smiled. "Your attire," he said bluntly. "I'm not judging. It's just not what I typically see from my patients."

I shook my head, resisting the urge to smooth down my skintight, pink dress. It was extremely brief and had a cutout for my considerable cleavage. I knew it was inappropriate, but I didn't care. I liked it, and I had nothing to hide.

"It's one of my favorite dresses," I said, a note of defiance in my voice.

"No need to get defensive," he stated. "You're in a safe place."

"Am I?" I asked. "Because as soon as I walk in the door, you're judging my outfit. I know you know my story. I know what you're wondering. Was I really once a boy? Do I still have a dick? Do I –"

"I think you've got it all wrong," Dr. Reynolds said, standing. "I don't care about any of that. You can walk around in a bikini for all I care. I'm here to help you, Sabrina. Whether you let me do my job or not is entirely up to you."

"Your job," I muttered. "So, you're going to fix me somehow?"

"If you need fixing, I'll help you figure out how to do it yourself," he said. "But for now, I just want to talk. Would that be okay?"

I nodded. "What do you want to talk about?" I asked.

"For starters, your relationship with your father," he said.

I knew it was wrong, and on so many levels. But he was sexy. He knew how to listen. And I was horny. That's how, after my second session with Dr. Reynolds, we ended up going back to his place. To his credit, he didn't push for it. In fact, he refused my advances multiple times. It wasn't until I told him outright that I wanted him to fuck me that he finally gave in.

Afterward, though, I was angry. I was frustrated. And I was filled with self-loathing.

It wasn't that his performance was bad. It wasn't. He gave me exactly what I needed. However, I'd begun to recognize a pattern. Sex wasn't just about me getting off. It was an escape. A distraction. I wanted nothing to do with my real life. That's why I sabotaged my therapy.

As soon as I came onto him, I knew Reynolds would end our professional relationship. He was a good doctor, an ethical doctor. He wouldn't sleep with a current patient. And in hindsight, that's exactly what I wanted. I didn't want him poking around in my head. I didn't want him trying to fix my issues. No – I wanted to wear those problems like a coat of armor.

At the time, I told myself it wasn't about any of that. I just found him attractive. And as an independent woman who liked sex, I was free to do what I wanted to do. But deep down, I knew the truth. So did he, I think.

Whatever the case, that's how my brief experience with therapy ended only a few days after it had begun. I'm not proud of it, but that's just how it went.





I'm not sure why I did it. Maybe I wanted attention. Or perhaps I wanted Kendall to see me exactly as I was. In any case, when I stepped into the sauna, I didn't even bother covering up with a towel. Of course, her eyes went directly to my groin, where the lone remnant of my masculinity hung.

"Sorry," she said, looking away, embarrassed. Unlike me, she had a towel draped over her thighs, covering her sex. "I just wasn't expecting to see that."

"I know," I said. "It's okay if you want to stare. I'm okay with it."

"I half thought you might have gotten rid of it," she said.

"There's less money in that," I said, sitting down next to her. "Or at least, that's what my pimp told me."

"What was it like?" she asked. "Doing what you did, I mean."

"Being a prostitute?" I asked. She nodded. "Strangely empowering. It was degrading. And I felt objectified. But there's something about someone wanting you purely for sex, you know? They didn't care about me as a person. All they knew was that I was sexy and I could make them feel good. I liked that. It was simple."

"I couldn't do it," Kendall said.

I leaned back, throwing my arm over the back of the bench as I luxuriated in the heat. "It's easier when you don't really have a choice," I said. "But it's weird. It wasn't all that, you know? I really wanted to get better at it. I was on the verge of being a real escort before I was 'rescued'. I still wonder how that might have been different."

Then, I explained to her my journey from being a cheap corner whore to working in the massage parlor. With the benefit of hindsight, I saw it for what it was – an easy way to invest me in my own fate. When I reached goals, I felt a sense of accomplishment. And that sense of accomplishment made me want to get to the next step. It was manipulative, but very effective.

"But that's all gone, now," I said. "I'm just...I honestly don't know what I am now. I don't even know what I'm supposed to do when I go to work for Pyramid next week."

"You'll figure it out," she assured. "I know you will."



"This isn't what I expected," I said.

"Your father told me you might say that," responded my new boss, Katherine. She was a middle-aged woman with short, dyed-red hair. Once, she might have been pretty enough, but her body had begun to sag in all the wrong places. If anyone had ever needed to go under the knife, it was her. "But I'm to assure you that this isn't permanent. Do well, and you'll advance. Continue to impress, and you will get where you want to go."

"Where I want to go," I muttered, turning to look at my desk. Suddenly, I was struck by the notion that my life as a prostitute wasn't so different from the corporate life my father envisioned. In both scenarios, a series of "promotions" were dangled in front of me to ensure my cooperation. That one job had me bent over, having sex with random men and the other would see me answering phones and making copies didn't matter. They were basically the same thing, as far as I was concerned.

And I wanted nothing to do with it. Certainly, I could have done it. I had proven my mettle before, and I could do it again. But I just didn't want to go down that road. I didn't want to spend the next few years working towards something I didn't even know I wanted.

"You know what?" I said. "Thanks, but no thanks. You can tell whoever you want to tell that I don't want this."

"What? You're quitting?" the woman asked, clearly surprised.

"I think I am," I said. "It's not you. It's me. And this place. I'd rather be a Mexican whore than try to climb this corporate ladder."

"Well, I never..."

I didn't hear the rest of her statement because I was already out the door, my heels clicking on the hardwood floor as I hurried to put as much distance between me and that nightmare of a job.



"You're not posting those pictures on Instagram, are you?" I asked, looking my sister up and down. She wore a barely-there lingerie set that left almost nothing to the imagination. She might as well have been naked, for all it covered.

"What if I am?" Eliana asked. "It's not like you get to judge me from some high horse. At least I'm not a literal whore."

"Former whore," I sneered, trying to conceal the fact that her insult had hit home. More and more over the previous weeks, the implications of my past had come into focus. I didn't regret my actions, not really. But I was on the verge of regret, and I didn't want to be reminded of what I had been.

In any case, I kept telling myself that I didn't have anything to be ashamed of. Prostitution was known as the oldest profession for a reason. I didn't want to think of it as a source of shame. But I did.

"Yeah, sure," she said. "Whatever. I know what you did with that therapist. And the guy who rescued you. And who knows how many other men since you've been back. The point is that you have no right to act like you're better than me."

"I don't think I am," I said. "I'm just trying to help you to --"

"I don't care!" Eliana said. "God, can you please just stop? I don't need your protection. Or your advice. I just want to live my life. Can you let me? I already get this kind of crap from dad. I don't need to hear it from you, too."

I sighed. "Fine," I said. "Whatever. You want me to treat you like you know what you're doing? I will. We can be friends. We can go shopping together. We can go out to bars and pick up guys. We can talk about clothes and 'Dancing with the Stars' and all that if you want. We can be sisters. Is that what you want?"

"Yes!" she said. "That's exactly what I want."

"Okay, then," I said. "Then as your sister, I think you need to adjust your tits. Your nipple's showing, and I think that'll get it flagged on Instagram."

I didn't know what to do. No matter what I felt about my future or my past, the present could be described with one simple word: boring.

"Are you just going to sit there all day watching T.V.?" asked my sister.

"Maybe," I answered without looking at her. "Why? Is there something else I should be doing?"

"You know what today is, don't you?" she asked. I shook my head. "Mom's birthday."

"Mom's dead," I said. "She doesn't have birthdays anymore."

It was a harsh statement, but I had never really connected with the woman. Even when she was alive, she'd been a bit of a stranger to me. But to Eliana, she'd been a real mother. I couldn't help but wonder if my sister felt the same way about our father.

"You don't have to be a dick about it," she said.

"I just don't see the point in celebrating birthdays for dead people," I stated. "Especially for someone like her."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Eliana asked.

"It means that I remember her a lot differently than you do," I said. "You didn't want to see it, the way she treated dad. You didn't want to notice all the cheating. But I saw it. She was not a good person. I loved her because she was my mom, but I'm not going to look at it like she was some sort of saint. She wasn't."

"Well, I'm going to her grave today," she said. "I got flowers and everything. You're welcome to come if you want."

"Pass," I said, going back to flipping through the channels.





"What the fuck?" I said as soon as I recognized him. I looked around, searching for someone who might help me. I wasn't as fast as I once was – not with the enormous breasts stuck to my chest – but I was fully prepared to run if necessary.

"Hold on!" Ryker said, holding up his hand. "I just want to talk, okay? I'm not here to hurt you."

"About what?" I asked, my entire body tense. "About how you kidnapped me? Forced me into prostitution? What about how –"

"It's not what you think," he said. "I'm not who you think I am."

And then it hit me. "Y-your accent..."

"Yeah," he said. "Not really German. In fact, I'm from Houston, just like you. Please, Sabrina – just hear me out. I'm not asking you to trust me. I know that's probably not going to happen. I just want you to understand why I did what I did."

"Give me the short version," I said, rocking back on my heels.

He sighed. "Fine," he said. "First of all, my name isn't Ryker. It's Will Richardson. And I was once partners with your father. In fact, I helped build Pyramid into what it is today. He pushed me out, leaving me with nothing, and I did what I did to get back at him."

I narrowed my eyes. "Concise," I said.

"You told me to give you the short version," he said, giving me a crooked half-smile. "The long version involves you, your mother, and a drug cartel. Look - I know what I did was wrong. Unforgivable, even. But you've got to understand that I didn't really set out to hurt you."

"Just him," I said. "I was just the means to that end, right?"

"Something like that," he admitted.

"I think I want to hear the long version now," I said, relaxing slightly. "But if you make a move on me, I'm going to scream. Got me?"

"Yeah," he said. "I understand."

I had a lot on my mind. And as had become my custom, when things got too heavy, I retreated into the one thing I knew I had complete control: sex. It wasn't difficult, finding a partner. Nor was it difficult to get him to simply shut up and fuck me. But unlike my previous experiences, it didn't seem to work as the distraction I'd hoped. In fact, it only made my conversation with the man I'd once known as Ryker all the more troubling.

Like he said, he'd been an early partner of my father's, and for a while, things were good between them. They both profited, and they became friends. Things, however, began to sour when my mother came into the picture. She played them, one against the other, until my father snapped. He tried having his partner killed. However, Richardson escaped the attempt and adopted his new identity as Wilhelm Ryker.

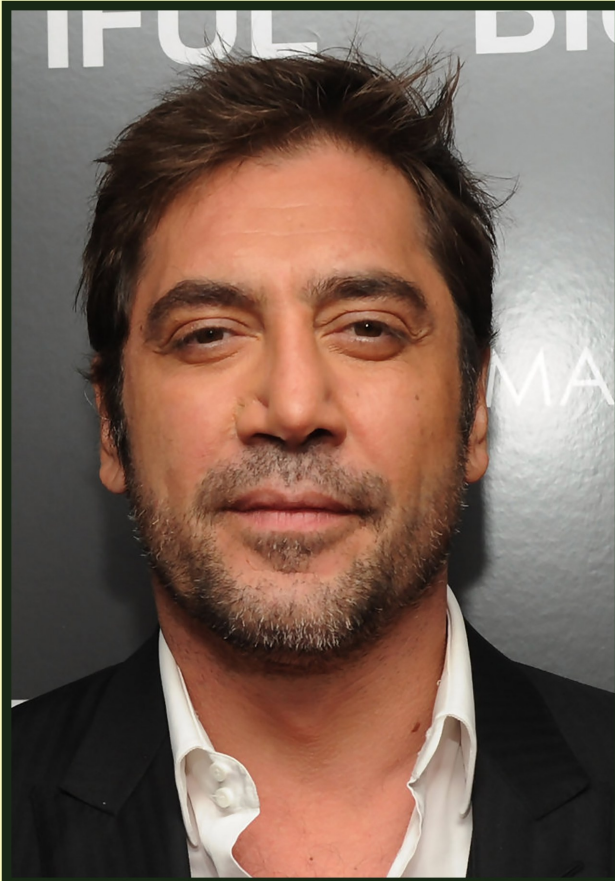
He became a black market arms dealer and sometime drug smuggler, and for a while, he managed to forget my father's betrayal – at least until he learned I was in Mexico. He arranged a hasty kidnapping, and the rest was, as they say, history. His plan was to embarrass my father, to rob him of the son who'd become his pride and joy and presumptive heir – which, I suppose, is exactly what he did. He'd even arranged my "rescue".

I didn't know what to make of it all. I was a pawn in my own story. I didn't matter to either one of them – not really. To my father, I was just an extension of himself. To Ryker – or Richardson, I suppose – I was a tool for his own revenge.

"I loved your mother," he'd said. "I still do. But I understand why she went with him. She was afraid. Your father is not a good man. If she went with me, he'd have seen her dead. Just like he wanted for me."

Even as my latest lover fucked me, his words rang in my head. Because in my heart, I knew they were true.





"Where did you hear that name?" my father asked.

"Does it matter?" I asked. "Just tell me what happened, okay?"

"What do you want me to say, Oliver?" he said, using my given name. Having just confronted him about Will Richardson, I wasn't prepared to make a big deal over the mistake. "Your mother was a troubled woman. She made mistakes."

"Like Will Richardson," I said.

He nodded. "She told me almost immediately. Evangeline never could keep a secret," he said, looking away, thoughtful. "But he wasn't the first, and he certainly wouldn't be the last. You knew that, though. You were old enough to see what she was before she passed."

I didn't immediately answer, because I simply didn't know what to say. My mother had been a serial cheater; I'd figured that out before I ever hit puberty. I also knew about her penchant for drugs and her love of alcohol.

"Did you have him killed?" I asked.

"I cut ties with him," my father said. "What happened to Richardson was his own fault for getting into bed with the wrong people. But no – I had nothing to do with his death."

So, he still thought Richardson – or Ryker – was dead. That was something, at least.

"I loved your mother," Julian stated. "Despite her flaws, I loved her more than anything else in the world."

"I know," I said. That knowledge was the reason I believed Ryker's story. He would have done anything to preserve his marriage, even if it meant having his business partner killed.

"I wish I could meet you somewhere else," I said, adjusting the towel as I looked at my phone. I didn't need to turn to know that Ryker sat in the corner. I could practically feel his presence.

"I don't want to be seen together," he said, using what I knew was a fake German accent. I suppose that after so many years, it was all but reflexive. "I've still got warrants out for my arrest in this country."

"What do you want from me?" I asked. "You want me to admit that my father screwed you? I believe he did. But that doesn't help either of us, does it?"

"I want you to help me get control of Pyramid," he said.

"Not going to happen," I said. "My dad's not going to let you –"

"I'm going to kill him," Ryker said. "The company will pass to you."

"And then I'm just supposed to give it to you?" I asked. "Or were you planning to kill me, too? Probably not the best idea to tell me it's coming."

"I could never kill you," he said. "You remind me too much of her."

I knew he was talking about my mother, but the statement confused me. I looked almost nothing like her. Maybe before all the surgeries, I had favored her, but that was long past.

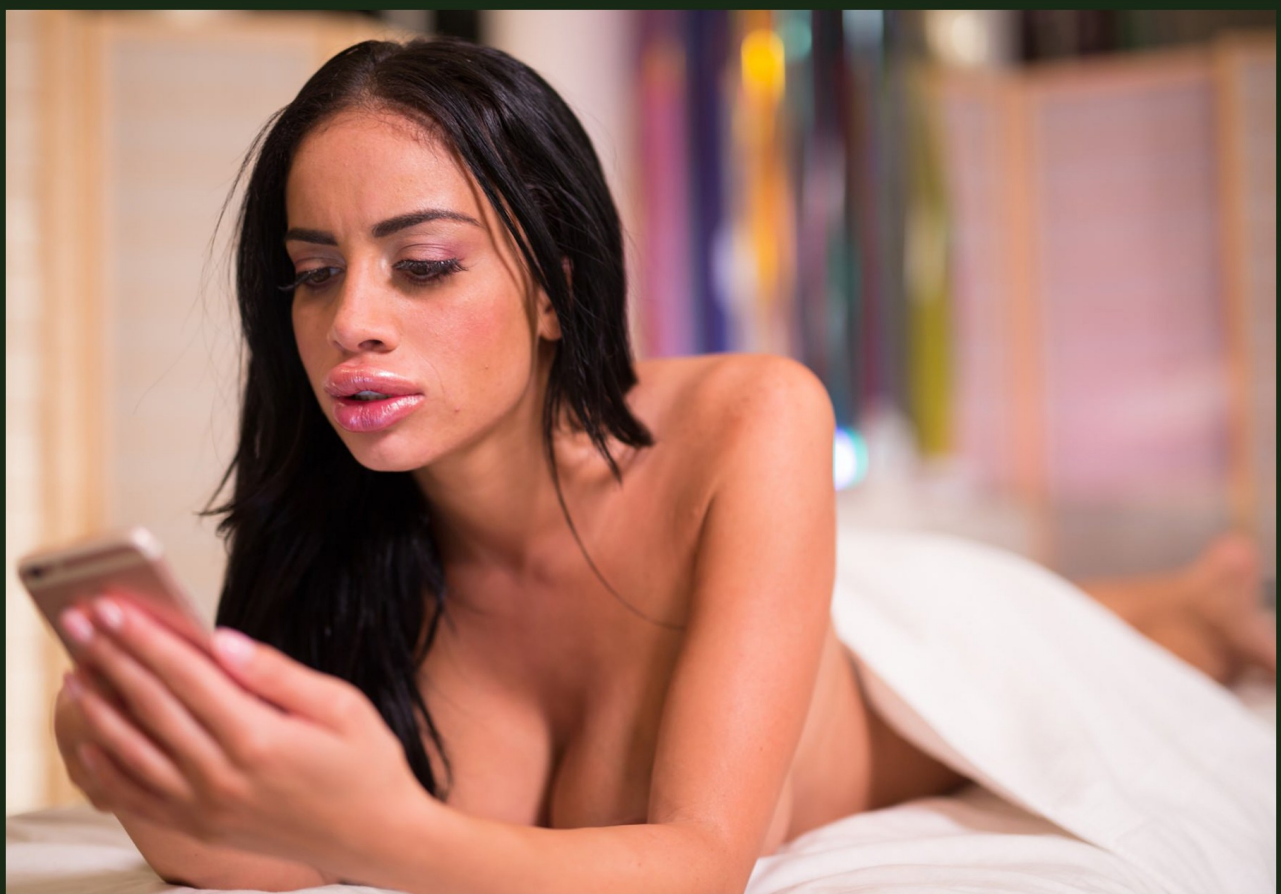
"Then what?" I asked.

"I want you to marry me," he said. "That's what this is about."

"Marry you? Are you kidding?" I said. "I fucking hate you. You made me –"

"You chose your path," Ryker said. "I gave you the choices, sure, but you decided which way you wanted to go. And I think you did it because you knew this is what you really needed. I think you knew that, inside, at least, you were a woman."

"I'm not marrying you," I said. "I don't care how you try to justify it. You're an asshole. A criminal. A kidnapper. I know you, Ryker. Or Richardson. Or whatever the hell name you want to use. That's why I'll never be with you. Not in a thousand years."





"Nothing?" asked Kendall, swaying her hips from side to side. She wore only her matching, red bra-and-panty set. She looked adorable, but I felt very little in the way of sexual attraction. It was strange, trying to remember a time when that wasn't the case. Of course, I could picture it. I could remember it. But it didn't feel real, almost like the memory had faded.

I shook my head. "No," I said. "Sorry. I wish I did feel something, but all I can think right now is that I love that lingerie set. And your hair is great."

She laughed. "Spoken like a true woman," she said, bending down to pick up her jeans. She stepped into them, slipping them up her slim legs. As she settled them into place, bouncing up and down slightly before zipping them up, she continued, "Do you think this Ryker guy is on the up and up?"

I had, of course, told her everything about my former kidnapper. She was the only person I trusted, and I had to tell someone.

"I think he's telling the truth," I stated. "But I'm not sure if he's telling me the whole truth."

"Do you want to marry him?" she asked, grabbing her shirt. She slipped it over her head, pulling it over her breasts.

"No!" I insisted. "I mean, I almost feel sorry for him. The way he talks about my mom, I know he loved her. But that doesn't excuse what he did, what he made me do."

"Listen," Kendall said. "You didn't ask my advice. But if you had, I'd tell you to run. Take whatever your dad's willing to give you and go. Move to Miami or something. Live like a queen. Just get yourself out from in the middle of all this, because it's not going to end well."

"I can't leave," I said. "I know you're right, but I just can't."



"Can you please put some clothes on?" I asked, trying my best not to look at my naked twin sister. "I'm trying to talk to you about something."

Defiantly, she crossed her arms under her breasts. "No," she said. "We're both girls, right? Just tell me what you want to tell me."

"Why are you naked, anyway?" I asked, looking around the room.

"Like that's any of your business," she answered. "But I don't care if you know. You can't stop me anyway. I'm going to make a sex tape. You know, like Kim Kardashian."

"A sex tape?" I asked, suddenly forgetting that I'd come to my sister to ask for her advice. "Are you serious?"

"Yes," she said. "I'm freaking serious. That's how she got famous, right? Or more famous, at least. And I'm just as pretty as she is. I even got a –"

"No," I said. "You can't do this. You don't want to do this."

"Yes," she said. "I do. And I'm going to. And like I said, there's nothing you can do to stop me. So, why don't you just tell me what you wanted to tell me and leave me be? Marcus is going to be here any minute."

I sighed. There was no way she was mature enough to give me valid advice. Though we were the same age, she was still a child. She'd never grown up. Maybe she never would. And that fact saddened me more than I care to admit.

"Nothing," I said. "It's not important. I just...I just want you to know that I don't think you need to do this. You can get whatever you want without having sex on camera. You're smart. And beautiful. And you deserve better than you've gotten."

"I'm doing it, Sabrina," she said. "And I'm not letting you persuade me otherwise."

"I know," I said. "Just be careful, okay? For me, be careful."

"I suppose you're here to beat some sense into me," I said, standing the doorway, staring at Vadim. He was just as imposing as he ever was. Thick, muscular, and bald, he looked every inch the thug I knew him to be.

"I'm here to fuck you," he said, his accent as thick as I remembered. "Ryker says I shouldn't, but I know you want it."

"He says that, huh?" I asked, flashing back to the one time I'd been forced into sucking the man's dick. I wanted to remember it as traumatic, but I just couldn't. That incident had opened my mind up to the possibility that my sexuality wasn't as concrete as I might have once thought. And since then, I'd learned the value of a man like him. He didn't waste time on tenderness or love. He was an animal, driven my instinct. "What if I say no?"

"You won't," he said with absolute conviction.

I didn't say no. Instead, I grabbed his hand and pulled him into the apartment I'd just acquired. Neither of us said a word as we undressed. We were too busy, too horny. And when he pushed me over the couch, I was practically begging for it.

In fact, I did beg. "Fuck me!" I screamed. And he did, plunging his enormous cock deep into my ass. Grabbing my hair, he thrust in and out of me like a jackhammer. It wasn't that it was that enjoyable. I'd had better lovers. But there was something raw, something wild and overtly masculine about Vadim. I never could have resisted him, even if he would have let me.

When he finally came, it was almost anticlimactic. Pulling out, he said, "Ryker needs to see you. Get dressed."

I nodded, loving the feeling that I'd just been used. It had been a long time since I'd felt that, and I had missed it.





"You sent for me, master?" I asked, sitting on the desk. I wore a skintight, maroon dress that I knew would give Ryker a great view of my breasts. The way I saw it, he had seen me naked enough times that the sight of me all dolled up would be far more impactful than if I'd been waiting in his temporary office naked.

"I'm not your master, Sabrina," he said. "I want to be your husband."

"You said that before," I said. "But then you send your thug to fetch me like I'm still one of your whores. I'm not. I don't know what I am to you, but I'm definitely not that."

"He fucked you, didn't he?" Ryker asked. I didn't answer, so, as he moved into the office, he continued, "I knew he would. And I knew you'd let him."

"Strange way to act for a man who wants to be my husband," I said.

"I think you misunderstand what I want from you," Ryker explained. "I don't want to own you. I don't want to have sex with you. I'd prefer it if we never even kissed. But I need your inheritance. It's the only way I can get what's rightfully mine. And, I think, it's the only way you can get what you want as well."

"What's that?" I asked. "Tell me what I want."

"Freedom," was his simple answer. "You want your freedom. You want to live your life without his expectations hanging over your head, right? That's what that little gap year was about. That's why you latched onto your life as a prostitute. You thought you'd escaped."

"And you can give me that?" I asked. "That's your pitch? That's why you think I'm going to help you kill my father?"

"I know you'll help," he said. "Because you hate him almost as much as I do."



"I don't know what you want from me," I said, sitting on the couch. "I don't know who you want me to be."

"I want you to be my sister," Eliana said. "Or my brother. I don't care which one. I just want you to support me."

"You're talking about posing for Playboy," I responded. "The Playboy. That doesn't go away. And if you think dad's going to —"

"I don't care what he thinks," she said, interrupting me. "Do you know how many times I've asked him to work at the company? Hundreds. And do you know what he always told me? That I just wasn't qualified. And I get that. I'm not. He didn't want to make an exception for me. It's a dick move, but it's understandable."

She sighed, sitting next to me. "But you're back for, like, a month, and he offers you a position," she said. "After everything you did. And with the way you look. You never went to college either. But he thinks you're qualified."

"I didn't ask for that," I said.

"No," she stated. "No, you didn't. And I don't blame you. I blame him. But if you think I'm going to give even a minute's thought to how he's going to react to me living my life, you've got another thing coming. I don't care anymore, Sabrina. I just don't. Just like him."

"I know you don't care about him," I said. "I get it. I don't blame you. But listen — this isn't what you really want. You should be —"

"How do you know what I want?" she asked. "You're so wrapped up in yourself that you can't even see me. Not really, at least. Well, it's my turn to be selfish. It's my turn to make bad decisions. It's my turn to embarrass the family. Maybe once he sees that, he'll start to respect me as much as he respects you."



"She's just acting out," said Kendall, leaning against the porch banister. She wore a simple pair of pajamas, just like me. It was nice, not having to act or dress sexy. "You don't know what it's been like for her."

"I know she's had a rough time," I said. "I just wish she'd listen to me."

"I don't think you know all of it," Kendall said. "When your mom died, Ellie had it bad. They were really close, you know? And then, suddenly, she was alone. Your dad had no idea how to act around a daughter. You remember how it was, right?"

I nodded. My father had never been a hands-on dad, relying on our mother to do the heavy lifting when it came to parenting. Certainly, the woman hadn't been perfect – she drank, she did drugs, and she was bipolar – but she loved us kids. And when she died, it left a void in our lives. I guess it was worse for Eliana.

"Ever since then, she's been struggling to figure out how to be a woman," Kendall said. "My mom tried to help, once. But Ellie, she's stubborn. And she didn't take it well. So, without any other choice, she looks to famous people for role models. It makes her seem stupid and vapid and fame-obsessed, but really, she's just a scared girl who doesn't know how to grow up."

"What's the answer?" I asked, sitting in the rocking chair, looking out at our property. I was only one who ever came out to the ranch anymore. Everyone else was too busy.

"I don't know," Kendall said. "I wish she'd let me be her friend again."

"Yeah," I agreed. "Me too. But I don't think Ellie wants friends right now."

"I don't think she has any idea what she wants, honestly," Kendall said, sitting beside me. "And until she figures that out, nobody's going to be able to help her."



"I don't know where I went wrong," Julian said, shaking his head slowly. He'd just found out about Eliana's Playboy spread, and though I found it quite tasteful, he'd been decidedly less enthusiastic about having a Playmate for a daughter.

"Plenty of ways," I said. "You basically made her feel worthless. You can't do that and expect her to follow your rules. She was bound to rebel."

"You call this a fucking rebellion?" he asked. "It's a slap in my face!"

"You can't blame her," I said. "If you'd just made an effort to include her, this wouldn't be a problem."

"She's an idiot," he said. "And you think I should've given her a job? Maybe I should have made her the CFO. Or the director of marketing. Or hell, the CEO, right? The company would have been bankrupt in a week if I'd given her the least amount of responsibility. She's as bad as her mother."

"But I'm better somehow?" I asked.

"Light years," Julian stated. "But you made me look like a fool, too. I went out on a limb for you, and you just threw the opportunity away. Sometimes, I think I should have just left you down in Mexico."

"Maybe you should've," I countered, feeling my ire rising. I couldn't help but remember Ryker's claim that I hated my father almost as much as he did. In that moment, as I stared the man in the face, I realized it was true. I did hate him.

He sat down. "Just leave," he said. "Leave me alone so I can try to figure out how to deal with this."

"You could just let it go," I suggested.

He barked a harsh laugh. "You know I can't do that," he said. "And even if I could, I wouldn't."

"I don't care," said Eliana. "I really don't. Not anymore. He can cut me off if he wants."

"He already has," I said.

"So? I've been preparing for this," Eliana said, rolling the fishnet stockings up her leg. "I can survive. I've got revenue from social media. The Playboy thing. I've got offers on the table."

"Just please tell me you won't end up in porn," I said, half joking.

"Yeah – probably not," she said. "I mean, if the right opportunity came around..."

"You're kidding," I said, my eyes wide. "Right? Please tell me you're kidding."

She looked up, smiling. "I'm kidding, okay?" she said. "I'm, like, ninety percent sure I'd never really do porn."

I rolled my eyes. "You're taking this a lot better than I expected," I said. "Probably better than he expected, too. I bet he thought you'd come running to him and apologize."

"Not going to happen," she said. "I made my choices and so did he. If he wanted a say in how I live my life, he should have been a better father."

"Right," I said. "Honestly, I'm kind of proud of you. I mean, I still think you were stupid for posing for Playboy, of all places, but it was your decision. You wanted to do it, so you did. A few years ago, I never would have expected that of you."

"Me neither," she said. "But I've grown a lot over the past few months. I don't know if I made the right decisions. I wish I did. But they were my choices, you know? I'm happy about that, at least."





"What are you doing?" I asked.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" was Kendall's responding question. She sat on the wicker chair, completely naked, and in a blatantly sexual position.

"It looks like you've wildly misinterpreted our relationship," I said. "I'm not into that anymore. I've told you this."

She sighed. "People don't change like that, Ollie," she said. "I know you think you're different. You are, I guess. But inside, you're the same boy who used to love me. You just need to remember that."

I sighed. She couldn't understand what I'd gone through. Nobody could. Not really. Sexual orientation doesn't just change. Sure, that's true. But I'd been forced to abandon the person I was. Oliver was gone. Nothing of him was left in me. And that included his sexual preferences.

"Kendall," I said. "I wish I could go back to being what you want me to be. Believe me, I do. But this isn't going to happen. I don't know how I can explain it to you where you might understand it, but I'm not a guy anymore. I'm a woman. And I like men. Even if I wanted to, I can't give you what you want."

She lit up. "I got some Viagra for that!" she said. "And we can use toys and stuff if you want. I just -"

"No," I said, realizing how unfair I'd been to try to maintain a friendship with Kendall. "I can't, Kendall. I wish I could, but I just can't. So please, just put on your clothes, okay?"

"W-what?" she asked, clearly surprised at my continued refusal.

"Just get your stuff and go," I said. "It'll be easier that way."

"You're going to stand there and turn me down?" she asked. "After everything we...after...you're turning me down?"

"I'm sorry," I said softly.

"Yeah," she said, standing. "Me too. Fucking faggot."



"Convince me to help you," I said, toying with my top's thin straps as I stared at Ryker. "Tell me why you deserve it. Because, from where I'm standing, you tried to ruin my life. I can't trust you."

He sat in the hotel room's lone chair. It was a cheap room, but it was the only place I knew of where I could be sure my father couldn't find us. I was pretty sure that the hotel's attendant thought I was a whore, based on how she'd looked at me. But I didn't care.

"You don't need me to convince you," he said. "You've already decided to help me. You just want me to reassure you."

"Just tell me something that will make me feel better about all of this," I said. "You're talking about me betraying my own father."

"First of all, he's probably not your father," Ryker said. "Your mother was promiscuous enough that it's almost certain that you and your sister belong to someone else. He only acknowledged you because he wanted an heir. He wanted someone to carry on his legacy. And Eliana was just along for the ride."

I didn't respond, mostly because I had no idea what to say. If it was true, I'd spent my entire life believing a lie. But if I was honest, it made sense. I had little in common with the man. I didn't even look like him.

"That's not enough, huh?" he asked. "How about this? I loved your mother more than you can imagine. You looked just like her – before all the surgeries, at least. That's why I pushed you to get the operations. You were beautiful just the way you were. But I couldn't bear to look at you because every time I did, I saw her. Now, it's only the eyes."

"What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"I want you to help me kill him," he said. "I want to marry you. And I want to take what's mine."

"That's all, huh?" I asked. "Patricide. A sham marriage. And a corporate takeover. You don't ask much, do you?"



"You're not doing it," said Eliana. "That's crazy."

"I am," I said, having just told her that I'd agreed to help Ryker kill my father. The plan itself was simple enough – just a little poison in one of his favorite bottles of whisky. It would look like the man simply had a heart attack. I held up the skimpy top. "Do you think this would look good?"

"What? No," she said. "I mean, I don't know. I don't care. Do you hear what you're saying? You want to kill our father? Really?"

"He's not our father," I said. "I explained that to you. And besides, I thought you'd be onboard. You hate him."

"I don't hate him," she said. "I just...I mean...even if he's not our biological father –"

"He isn't," I said. "I checked, you know. Last week. I wouldn't have agreed to this otherwise."

"So he's not," Eliana said. "He's still the man who raised us."

"And ignored you," I pointed out. "Drove mom into an early grave. He had Ryker arrested, imprisoned, and nearly killed. He's a horrible man with almost no redeeming qualities. The world would be a better place without him."

I wasn't as confident as I sounded. In fact, I was a tightly wound jumble of emotions, and I felt like I was about to pop. That was why I'd told Eliana about the plan. I'd needed to tell someone, and my only other friend wasn't speaking to me. Not for the first time, I wished that Layla was there. She would have known what to do.

"It's still murder," Eliana said.

"Justified homicide," I said. "He's killed people, you know. Ryker showed me the proof. Dozens of people, actually. He's as bad as some of those Colombian drug lords. If anybody's earned the death penalty, it's him."

"What do you want me to say?" she asked. "Do you want me to give you my blessing? I can't do that. I wish I could, but it just feels too wrong."

"Then I just want you to stay out of the way," I said. "Do that, and we can have what we've always wanted. We can have our freedom."



"Thank you for seeing me," Julian said as I stepped into his study. He wore a light, pink shirt and a matching tie, but otherwise, he looked much the same as any other day, which was troubling. I'd put the poison in his bottle of whisky three days before, which meant that he should have already succumbed to its effects. "Have a seat."

I did as he asked, asking, "What's up?"

"I'm a little confused," he admitted, raising his hand to rub his chin in thought. "I've spent the last twenty-two years trying to be a good father. I've made mistakes. Everyone does. But I've tried to provide you and your sister with the sort of lives you deserve. I did the same for your mother."

"I...I don't..."

He slammed his hand on the desk. "Shut the fuck up!" he screamed in a sudden outburst of anger. He stared at me, wild eyed for a long moment before taking a deep breath. In a much calmer tone, he continued, "Just let me speak."

I nodded, my heart racing. I'd seen him angry before. But he'd never shouted at me with such venom, such hate.

"I gave you everything you could have wanted," he said. "I stuck by you as you disappointed me, time and time again. All those failures in school, your lackluster performance in sports, your inability to get into a proper university – I supported you, knowing full well that you were not my son. I didn't need a DNA test. I could see it in your eyes. It didn't matter, though. I'd made a commitment. I wanted you to succeed. I even got you into Princeton, for God's sake. Princeton! With your grades. Even that was met with apathy."

He leaned against the desk. "I should have left you there," he said. "Down in Mexico. I could have. But I thought I had a responsibility to you. I thought I had an obligation. So, I brought you back. I gave you a job. And you spat in my face. And what's more, you tried to fucking kill me."

"I...I didn't..."

"You did," he said. "Your sister told me everything. She's an idiot, but at least she's loyal. So – the question remains – what do I do with you? I can't get rid of you. Even if I could stomach that, I could never get away with it. Your sister's loyalty extends to you as well, and I know she'd tell someone. No – I can't just cast you aside. But I can disinherit you. I can cut you off. I can take everything from you. And that, dear Sabrina, is exactly what I'm going to do."



"What the hell did you say?" Ryker demanded.

"He found out," I said. "I don't know what I'm going to do. I need –"

"I don't fucking care what you need!" he said, grabbing me by the arm. "How the hell did he find out? Who did you tell?"

"Nobody!" I said. He twisted his hand, sending a shooting pain up my shoulder. "Just my sister! Just Ellie, okay? I didn't –"

"You stupid fucking bitch," Ryker said, releasing me. I almost tumbled to the ground. "I swear to God. I spent hundreds of thousands of dollars setting this up. I called in so many favors. And you fuck it up by telling someone about it? I knew you were stupid. I just didn't think you were that fucking stupid."

"I...I'm not...I'm not stupid," I said, sobbing. "I didn't think she would tell."

"You mean you didn't think the girl who craves her father's approval more than anything else in the world would go running to him the second she thought she had something he might want to hear?" he asked. "Like I said – stupid. And now he knows I'm still alive. I can probably get out of the country before he finds me."

"W-what am I supposed to do?" I asked. True to his word, Julian had put me out on the street with nothing but the clothes on my back. My credit cards had been canceled. My bank account had been emptied. I had nothing.

"Do I look like I give a shit?" he asked.



Without any other options, and with no one to help me, I did the only thing I knew how to do – I went back into prostitution. And whatever romantic ideas I'd previous had about the nature of that particular profession went out the window almost as soon as I got back into the game. I remembered all the things I'd glossed over. The disgusting clients. The weird hours. The catty rivals. Oh – and the fact that I was selling my body.

But it was necessary because I had no other choice. Ryker was gone. My sister had abandoned me. I'd severed ties with Kendall. And I'd never really cultivated any other friendships. I was alone in the world, and I had no one to lean on but myself. So, I did what I had to do to support myself.

The first few weeks were rough. Giving blowjobs in back alleys isn't anyone's idea of fun. But soon, I was able to afford my own place. And then, I started my own website. I did my own cam shows. I cultivated my own clientele.

There were hiccups along the way, of course. I was robbed on more than one occasion. And more than once, I went home with bruises and bumps, black eyes and busted lips. The sort of men who'd hire a girl like me sometimes got rough. It was just part of the territory.

I guess, over time, I got used to it all again. I built a life of sorts. But it wasn't what I had. What I'd lost. That was gone, and I'd never get it back.

My sister ended up getting what she wanted when she finally released a sex tape where she was gangbanged by a half-dozen professional basketball players. She got all the attention she could ever want. The last I checked, she'd actually ventured into conventional porn. I suppose that didn't sit well with Julian.

I wish there was a moral to this story. I wish I could say that I lived happily ever after. But I didn't. Not really. I'm still just trying to put one foot in front of the other. I'm still just trying to survive.