

LUCIFER AND LILITH SYND
PRESENT:

Giantess Spa

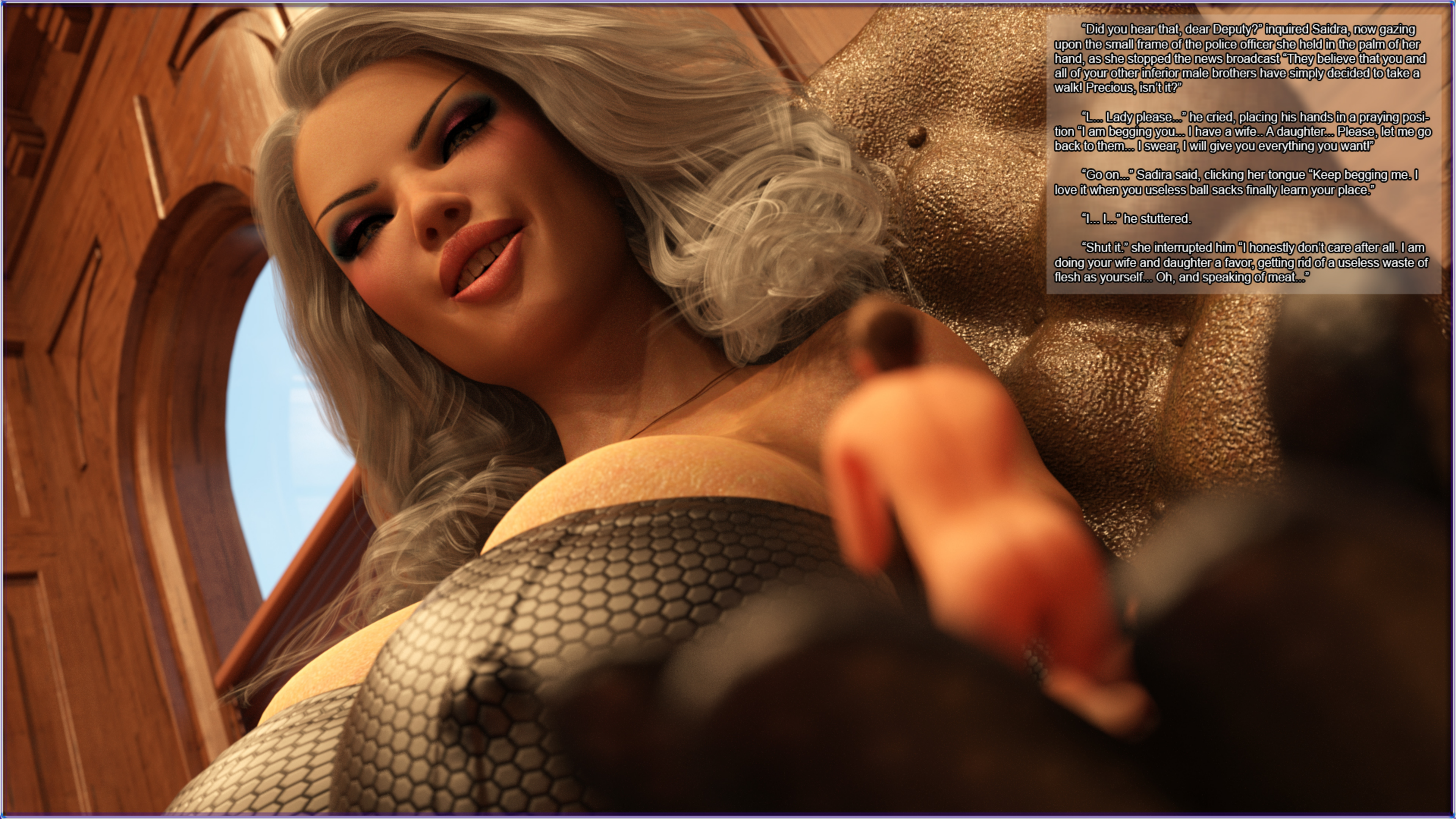
Sixth Issue



"Today's main story..." said a man's voice from the speaker of Sadira's laptop, in a typical journalistic tone "...is about the disappearance of the General Attorney of the United States, Mr. Steven Johnson, and three more of his colleagues. Law enforcement are in complete state of alarm as Chief of Police Robert Edwards and Deputy Carl Stevens have gone missing as well in the late hours of today's afternoon..."

The CEO of the SPA sat on her chair as if it was a throne, her legs crossed and a vicious smirk on her lips, just observing the images on the screen with complete satisfaction. The shrunken man in her hand, however, was in a completely opposite mood, fearful and trembling like a leaf in the wind.

"Search teams have been dispatched all around the city but there is no current evidence to suspect a kidnapping, nor if there was any sign of forced entry into their offices, leading the investigators to believe their disappearance to be of their own will."



"Did you hear that, dear Deputy?" inquired Saidra, now gazing upon the small frame of the police officer she held in the palm of her hand, as she stopped the news broadcast "They believe that you and all of your other inferior male brothers have simply decided to take a walk! Precious, isn't it?"

"L... Lady please..." he cried, placing his hands in a praying position "I am begging you... I have a wife.. A daughter... Please, let me go back to them... I swear, I will give you everything you want!"

"Go on..." Sadira said, clicking her tongue "Keep begging me. I love it when you useless ball sacks finally learn your place."

"I... I..." he stuttered.

"Shut it." she interrupted him "I honestly don't care after all. I am doing your wife and daughter a favor, getting rid of a useless waste of flesh as yourself... Oh, and speaking of meat..."

“...I think it is time to have a little afternoon snack...”

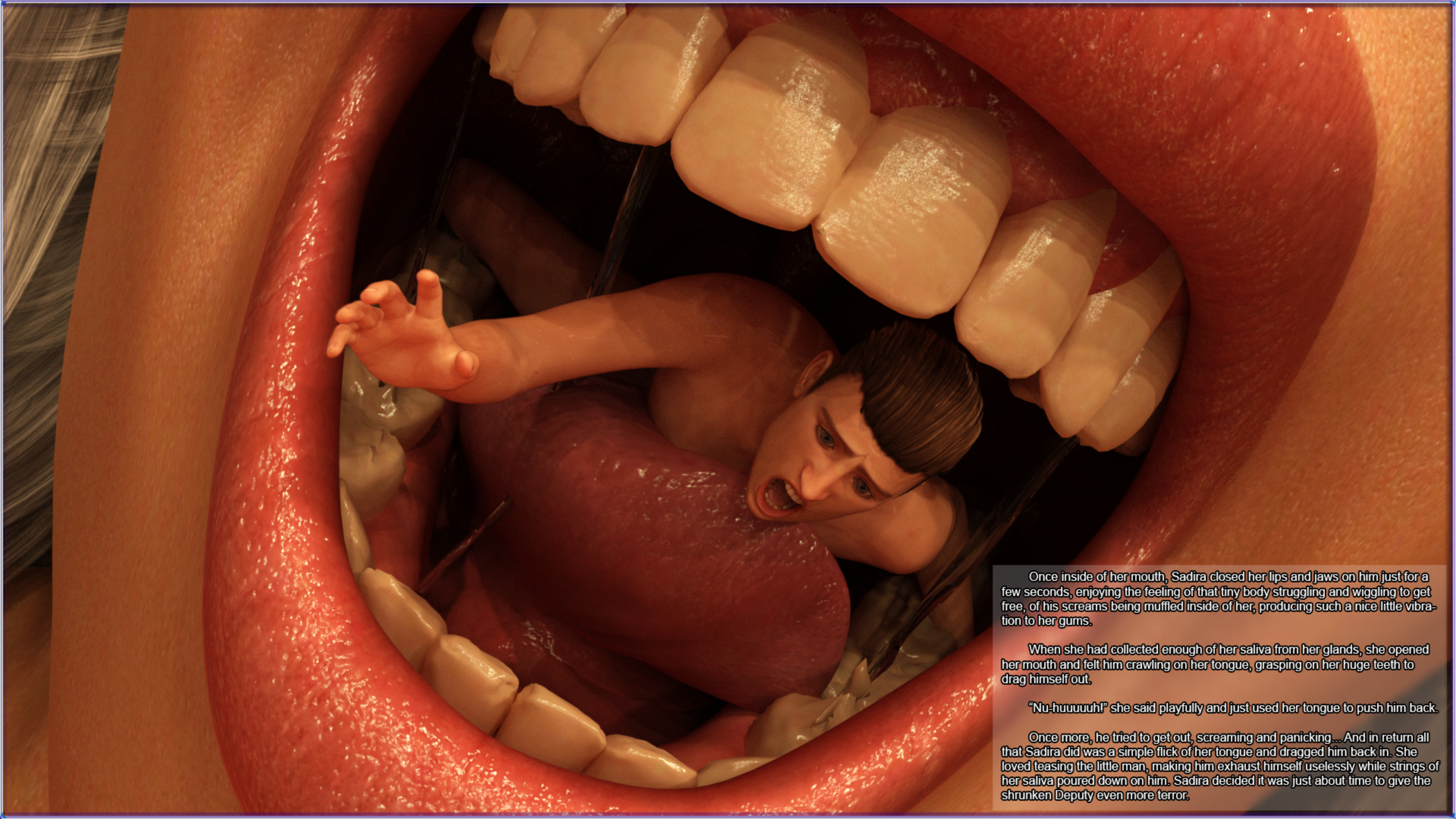
Just hearing these words froze the blood running through Deputy Stevens' veins but nothing compared to the sudden rush of adrenaline unleashed by pure fear as Sadira moved her hand towards her face and opened her mouth.

“Oh God!!! Oh God, please help me!!! Help me Lord!!!!” He began to shout and cry out, his voice cracking in horror. Sadira stopped for just one second.

“There is no God to hear you, my little bitesized man... And even if he was real, who could be sent to help you? Nobody knows you are here, there are no traces... You are helpless... Now shut up and let me enjoy your taste...”

Sticking her tongue out, Sadira guided the man inside of her cavernous mouth, holding him just by his ankle to drop him right on her tongue, wiggling it while licking his frame, slowly dragging him in.





Once inside of her mouth, Sadira closed her lips and jaws on him just for a few seconds, enjoying the feeling of that tiny body struggling and wiggling to get free, of his screams being muffled inside of her, producing such a nice little vibration to her gums.

When she had collected enough of her saliva from her glands, she opened her mouth and felt him crawling on her tongue, grasping on her huge teeth to drag himself out.

"Nu-huuuuuh!" she said playfully and just used her tongue to push him back.

Once more, he tried to get out, screaming and panicking... And in return all that Sadira did was a simple flick of her tongue and dragged him back in. She loved teasing the little man, making him exhaust himself uselessly while strings of her saliva poured down on him. Sadira decided it was just about time to give the shrunken Deputy even more terror.

She timed it perfectly: her tongue stopped pulling him back and when only his arm was sticking out of her mouth, she shut it close.

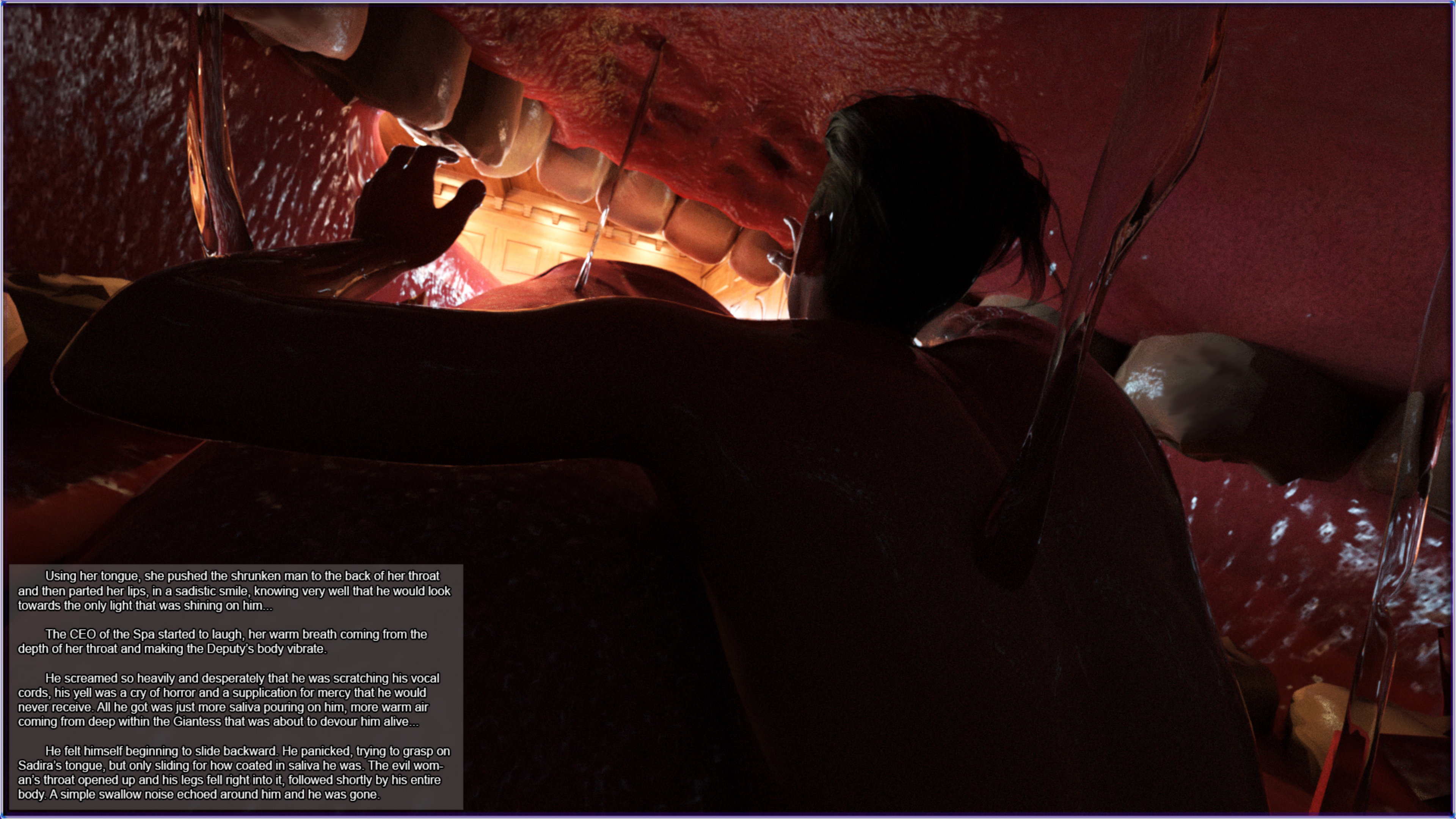
"Hmmm..." she hummed in delight, puckering her lips.

The platinum haired cruel woman began to suck on the shrunken body of the Sheriff Deputy, slowly pulling him back in and seeing his arm disappear, only his hand remaining stuck between her soft lips.

He screamed for dear life inside of her mouth, his fingers wiggling and thrashing, trying to grasp onto anything that would help drag himself out of that trap of wet flesh and saliva, finding nothing but thin air.

Sadira kept to taste him slowly, allowing his fear to flavour her snack, rolling her tongue on him to coat him real well in her liquids... And finally, when she felt she had enough fun torturing him, she tilted her head backwards.





Using her tongue, she pushed the shrunken man to the back of her throat and then parted her lips, in a sadistic smile, knowing very well that he would look towards the only light that was shining on him...

The CEO of the Spa started to laugh, her warm breath coming from the depth of her throat and making the Deputy's body vibrate.

He screamed so heavily and desperately that he was scratching his vocal cords, his yell was a cry of horror and a supplication for mercy that he would never receive. All he got was just more saliva pouring on him, more warm air coming from deep within the Giantess that was about to devour him alive...

He felt himself beginning to slide backward. He panicked, trying to grasp on Sadira's tongue, but only sliding for how coated in saliva he was. The evil woman's throat opened up and his legs fell right into it, followed shortly by his entire body. A simple swallow noise echoed around him and he was gone.

Sadira relaxed on her chair, keeping that smirk on her face as she felt the man sliding down her aesophagus and getting dangerously close to her digestive system, her stomach.

"Aaaaah..." she moaned softly "I must admit, you were a delicious little treat, Deputy... Almost making me wish there were more of you."

She followed those words with a cruel chuckle, something so icy that could have frozen Hell over, starting to rub her lower chest and right above her stomach as soon as she felt that her victim had reached it.

"How is it in there? Nice and cosy?" Sadira's voice was nothing less than pure excitement and lust "Don't get too comfortable though, it's going to become horrible quite soon..."

A gurgle from her belly...



...and slowly her stomach got filled with acids.

Carl Stevens' final moments were some of those that nobody would ever possibly wish to go through... Sadira's stomach fluid began to melt his entire body, starting with the easiest thing, his hair. They were burned out in just a few instants and then his skin was next.

His screams of agony were so powerful and excruciating that the Giantess heard them indeed from the outside.

"Mmm that wonderful sound of agony..." her voice echoed and rumbled "Scream... Suffer... Struggle with all your might!" she concluded with a glacial laughter.

Her acid began to destroy his body while her words did the same to his mind. His muscles and bones began to melt and as his legs were completely consumed, he disappeared under the acid... never to be seen again.



Sadira purred in ecstasy as her stomach finally went quiet and her tongue came out of her mouth, licking her lips... She felt herself having a small orgasm right there and then, without even touching herself, just at the feeling of having devoured a man and digested him mercilessly, hearing every last scream of pain from him.

It didn't matter how many times she did it, killing those inferior apes always filled her with a pleasure that she never felt with anything else in her life: no toy, not cock, no woman ever satisfied her like the thrill of the kill.

Satisfied from this first victim, she was about ready to start with her second, which was struggling somewhere inside of her desk.



But then reminded herself that duty always comes before pleasure. She reached with her left hand towards her phone, which was sitting right on top of the desk, while the right one began to search for the handle of one of the drawers, where her next victim was kept.

She had thought for quite some time about this, after Morgana and Sylvia had left earlier that day: the two girls had plenty of potential, it would have been a terrible shame to have them just as simple customers.

No... Sadira had to make absolutely sure that they would have joined her crusade that was just about to shape itself into the proper direction... So, she began to dial Sylvia's number.



Inside of an apartment, miles away from the Spa's headquarters, a phone began to buzz and vibrate on the floor, right next to two poorly arranged pair of shoes that seemed actually thrown without any care in the world, almost as if their owners were in a hurry.

With the buzzing, some other noises could be heard in the room: the squeaking of a mattress that was being strained and the wet squishes of aroused feminine intimates, partially covered by the notes of "Master and Servant" by De-peche Mode, which was playing from a speaker somewhere in the room.

The music was mixing with the loud moans of pleasure of two women, that seemed unable to contain their lust.



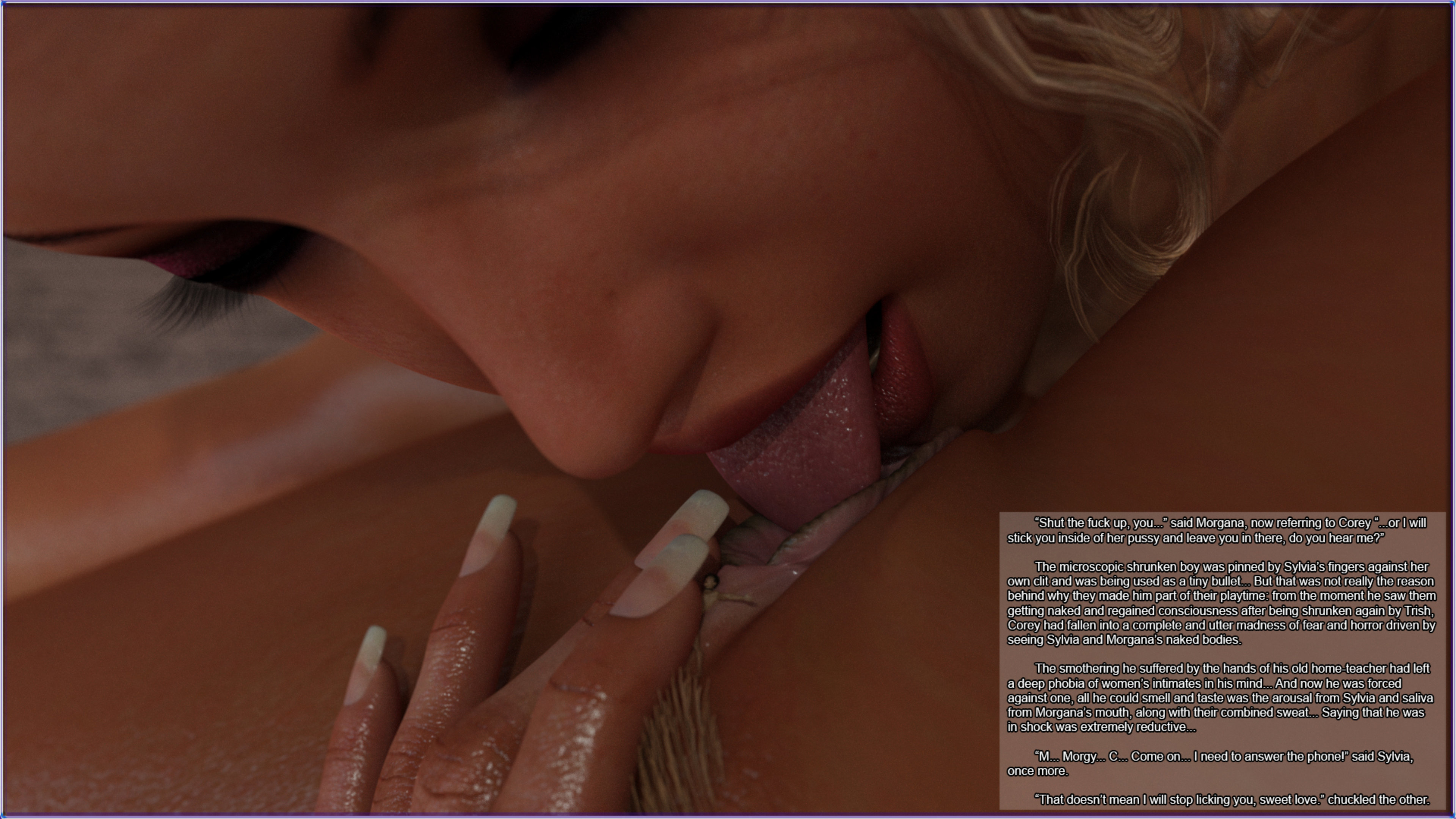


Sylvia was resting on her upper back against the mattress and had her legs kept spread open by Morgana's arms and hands... She was being licked deeply in her soft intimate folds by her lover while she pleased herself with her left hand rubbing against her clitoris and her right one squeezing her breast.

Sylvia's mouth was wide open, breathing in and moaning out so loudly... Her finger skilfully rubbed to increase the amount of ecstatic pleasure that Morgana's tongue was already unleashing in her depths...

"Aaaahhh... M... Morgy... Th... AAAAAHHH... The phone..." said the gorgeous glasses-wearing blonde.

"Hnnnn..." moaned the other above "Just let it ring, they will call back if it's important..." she said while still guiding her tongue deep inside of Sylvia's pussy, suddenly thrusting hard, causing the other to jerk and push harder on her own clit... and a tiny squeak to be heard.



"Shut the fuck up, you..." said Morgana, now referring to Corey "...or I will stick you inside of her pussy and leave you in there, do you hear me?"

The microscopic shrunken boy was pinned by Sylvia's fingers against her own clit and was being used as a tiny bullet... But that was not really the reason behind why they made him part of their playtime: from the moment he saw them getting naked and regained consciousness after being shrunken again by Trish, Corey had fallen into a complete and utter madness of fear and horror driven by seeing Sylvia and Morgana's naked bodies.

The smothering he suffered by the hands of his old home-teacher had left a deep phobia of women's intimates in his mind... And now he was forced against one, all he could smell and taste was the arousal from Sylvia and saliva from Morgana's mouth, along with their combined sweat... Saying that he was in shock was extremely reductive...

"M... Morgy... C... Come on... I need to answer the phone!" said Sylvia, once more.

"That doesn't mean I will stop licking you, sweet love." chuckled the other.

"Y... Yeaaaah?" said Sylvia's voice from the other end of the phone, broken by pleasure.

"Hello there, my darling... It's Sadira, from the Spa. Did I catch you in a inappropriate time, judging by your voice?" the platinum haired woman giggled playfully, knowing that she had just embarrassed the other... And squeezed hard her thighs around her second victim, Chief of Police Rober Edwards, causing him to grunt and scream in pain, even if his voice was choked out by Sadira's powerful legs and nothing escaped his mouth but gurgles.

"O...H... Sadira... H... Hello... What can I... Do for you?"

It was clear now to the CEO of the Spa that the two naughty girls were having a good time, since Sylvia was trying her best to keep her voice composed.



Morgana had switched positions now... She picked up Corey and placed him on Sylvia's gigantic right nipple.

"Lick and bite her... And do a good fucking job! I want her moaning.. You know what happens if you fail, lousy vermin!"

Scared by the consequences, the shrunken micro boy obeyed while the blonde woman guided her tongue again inside of Sylvia's intimate lips... And a finger in her anus, making her partner gasp in sudden pleasure: she had to bite her own lip down to not scream right there and then.

"Oh, you know..." said Sadira's voice from the other end of the phone "I was wondering if you girls had already eaten... I would like to invite you both for dinner at our luxury restaurant, here in the Spa."

"O... Ohhh... That s... Sounds great, Sadira... B... But why so soon? We just saw each other a few... hoocccours ago..." replied Sylvia.

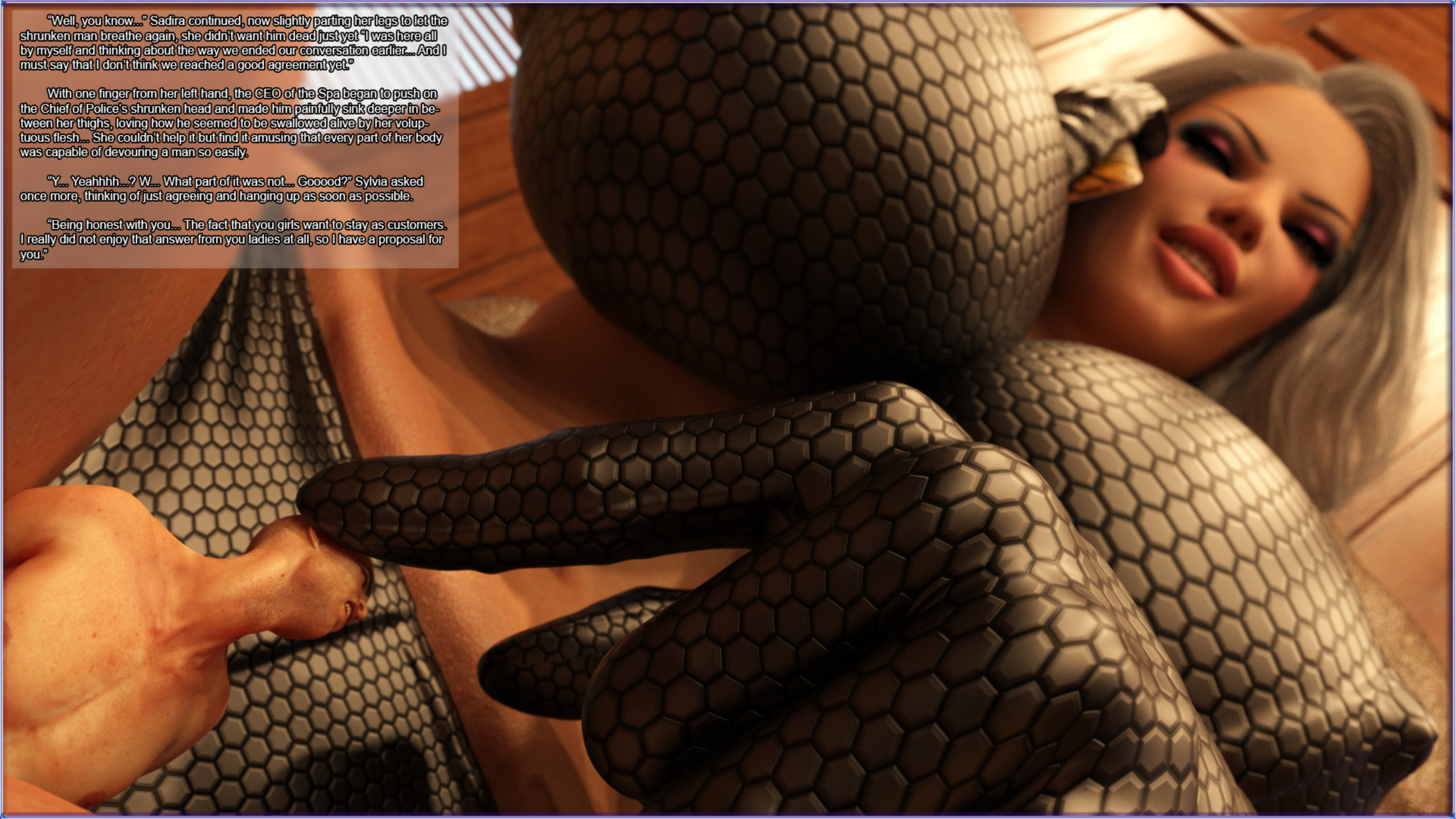


"Well, you know..." Sadira continued, now slightly parting her legs to let the shrunken man breathe again, she didn't want him dead just yet "I was here all by myself and thinking about the way we ended our conversation earlier... And I must say that I don't think we reached a good agreement yet."

With one finger from her left hand, the CEO of the Spa began to push on the Chief of Police's shrunken head and made him painfully sink deeper in between her thighs, loving how he seemed to be swallowed alive by her voluptuous flesh... She couldn't help it but find it amusing that every part of her body was capable of devouring a man so easily.

"Y... Yeahhhh...? W... What part of it was not... Gooood?" Sylvia asked once more, thinking of just agreeing and hanging up as soon as possible.

"Being honest with you... The fact that you girls want to stay as customers. I really did not enjoy that answer from you ladies at all, so I have a proposal for you."





"I... hnnnn... I see..." Sylvia replied, unable to pay much attention anymore considering the pleasure she was feeling inside of her body.

Corey, on top of her nipple, was doing a sloppy job, more a confused mess than anything else, but he was still managing to increase the pleasure that his Mistress felt while combined to Morgana's skillful touch and mouth.

"W... Well... I am afraid that... oooh... This is what we want for now... We were ve...ry clear about it, I believe..."

"Lick her harder, you stupid fuck!!!" growled Morgana to Corey, startling the microscopic boy "You want to fucking end up inside of my ass instead, uh?! Want me to trap you forever in my stinky hole?! If not then fucking lick her properly!"

She wasn't happy that Sylvia didn't climax yet... She wanted to make her pay for answering the phone, so the best way was to make her moan and scream in pleasure.



"I understand, darling... Hold on just a second..." Sadira replied and focused for an instant entirely on the shrunken man.

She had parted her legs more now and reached with her hand to grasp his head so he wouldn't be able to move away... With a grunt, she strained her intestines, and released a rumbling and horribly stinking fart at point blank range. The smell was revolting, a mix of digested bodies, rotten eggs and boiled vegetables, something that nobody would be able to breathe in without gagging and retching... and that is exactly the reaction the man had, flailing his arms to attempt to escape from the thick and potent gas but unable to do so as Sadira held him close to her ass until she watched him shrink furthermore.

"Alright, I am back..." said Sadira "Sorry, had to take care of a little problem with some air freshener on a little toy... So... I suppose that even if I throw in the secret to shrink people into the offer, you still wouldn't happen to be interested in joining my staff, darlings?" concluded the platinum haired woman as she kept gassing the man.



"WAIT...WHAT?! ARE YOU SERIOUS?!" screamed Sylvia all of a sudden in pure surprise, causing Morgana to stop as she got the scare of her life and look up.

"Love?! What is going on?!" asked the other, as she reprised to lick.

"Absolutely serious." replied Sadira "I will be expecting you in two hours at the Spa, ok? You are free to bring even Corey with you, I am sure he would love to have a nice trip back here..." chuckled the owner of the Spa.

"F... For sure! We will be there, don't worry! I can't wait to find out how you shrink people!" shrieked Sheyla excitedly, now causing Morgana to completely halt at the huge reveal of what was about to happen.

"Then see you in a bit, darlings. Bye bye!" and the conversation was cut.

"N... No way..." began Morgana "Is she seriously gonna tell us how t..."

Sylvia's legs closed around Morgana's head, trapping her shoulder along with it.. She squeaked in pain and before she could say anything at all, Sylvia's hand came to grasp on her hair and shoved her face deep in her pussy lips, smothering her.

"HMMMMPHHH!!!" yelled Morgana.

"You wanted to make me moan like a whore on the phone uh? Teasing me like that. You're a bad girl, Morgy! Fucking lick me, you dirty little slut. Take your punishment for being a naughty girl! Lick my pussy! NOW!"

Yep, Morgana realized that she didn't really think this through at all... Not like she minded, though, and happily went back to lick her beloved Sylvia.



Sadira placed her phone back onto the desk and stood up, bringing the shrunken Chief of Police along with her.

"I am quite happy now..." said the gorgeous woman "So you get to live another day. Ain't you the lucky one? Here..." she concluded, moving and trapping him in her cleavage "You get the highest honor of riding in the softest seat of the SPA... But don't get your hopes high, you're still gonna die... I just want to make sure it'll be a creative death."

With a smirk, she pushed on his head gently with her fingertip until he was nicely secured and had no way at all to fight against the weight of her enormous breasts.

"And if you dare to talk.. I will stuff you into my shorts instead and let you breathe in all that left over fresh air. If there is none left, I will just make more. Only for you!!" with a final glacial laugh she left her office.



The long corridor with the different torture chambers welcomed her. There were some hidden speakers in the roof, to cover up the screams from the men that were being shrunken or abused from her staff, and the radio must have been the same Sylvia and Morgana were listening to because Depeche Mode were now singing about "Domination is the name of the game, in bed or in life, they're both just the same, except in one you're fulfilled at the end of the day".

At each step Sadira took, which she timed to the beat of the song almost as if she was dancing, her huge breasts bounced and enveloped the man resting in her cleavage, smothering and crushing him each time her globes would come together.

A series of screams caught the woman's attention and she decided to observe what was going on in the torture chamber to her left, walking a bit closer to the wall.



Yoko and Liz were in there, doing what they did best: blasting their endless obnoxious flatulence on top of five different captured men, shrinking them to oblivion and most likely just trying to asphyxiate them to death with their farts.

The room itself had become a gas chamber, who knew for how long they had been going with the same single endless barrage of gas... It would have been deadly to get in there even for a Woman: Liz and Yoko were the only ones to be immune to their own toxic emissions, all the rest would just shrink down or choke on the incredibly thick and obnoxious gas... If they didn't puke their own souls out before that. With a simple chuckle, Sadira kept walking onward, there was no reason to stop their fun.

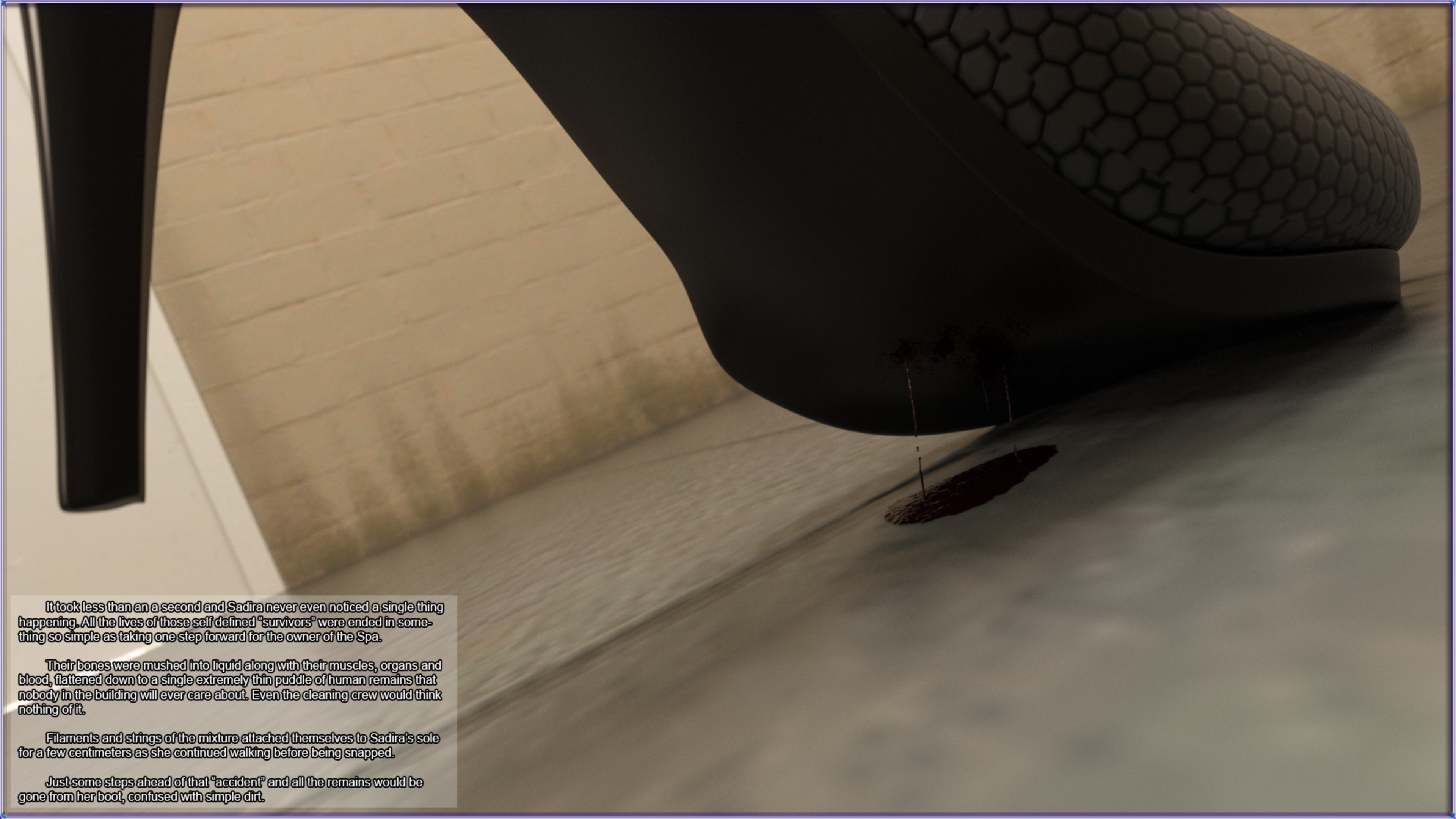




Down on the floor, along Sadira's way, was a group of microscopic shrunk-en men that had been reduced to such a small size that their own captors lost interest in their lives and condemned them to forever roam the endless halls of the Spa. They had decided to stick together, to try and fight this at the best they could, to find a way out.

Sadira didn't even notice them... But they for sure noticed her mastodontic footsteps approaching and shaking the ground with vicious and violent earth- quakes.

They began to run away, scattering in all directions while others just aban- doned all hope and fell on their knees as the sole of the Giantess eclipsed all light and fell down upon their bodies.



It took less than an a second and Sadira never even noticed a single thing happening. All the lives of those self defined "survivors" were ended in something so simple as taking one step forward for the owner of the Spa.

Their bones were mashed into liquid along with their muscles, organs and blood, flattened down to a single extremely thin puddle of human remains that nobody in the building will ever care about. Even the cleaning crew would think nothing of it.

Filaments and strings of the mixture attached themselves to Sadira's sole for a few centimeters as she continued walking before being snapped.

Just some steps ahead of that "accident" and all the remains would be gone from her boot, confused with simple dirt.

"Oh yes, she works here! It's so good to meet a friend of Heljal!" said Claire from behind the reception desk.

Sadira had just reached the front of the house after having her little stroll through the building and was quite surprised to see this new person that, judging from the words of the British receptionist, was apparently an acquaintance of her closest member of the Staff.

"Pleasure is all mine..." replied the red-headed woman facing towards Claire, in a very strong Scandinavian accent, marking her r's instead of rolling them "Could I please meet her? I would like to at least say hello to her, before going to my hotel..."

"She's busy at the moment, I am afraid..." Claire started to answer but halted as she saw that Sadira was now in front of her as well.





"Good evening, Miss Sunderland!" said Claire, having a very respectful tone and manners considering she was now on her working station and was requested of her to greet her boss properly.

"Good evening to you too, Claire. Are we not past closing time?" Sadira noted with some slight remark in her voice, but nothing too serious "We should not be accepting customers anymore."

She was playing along of course, she had heard very well the short conversation the two women had before she came in plain sight.

"Oh, I am very sorry if I caused some disturbance... I will come back tomorrow then." sincerely apologized the goth-clothed woman.

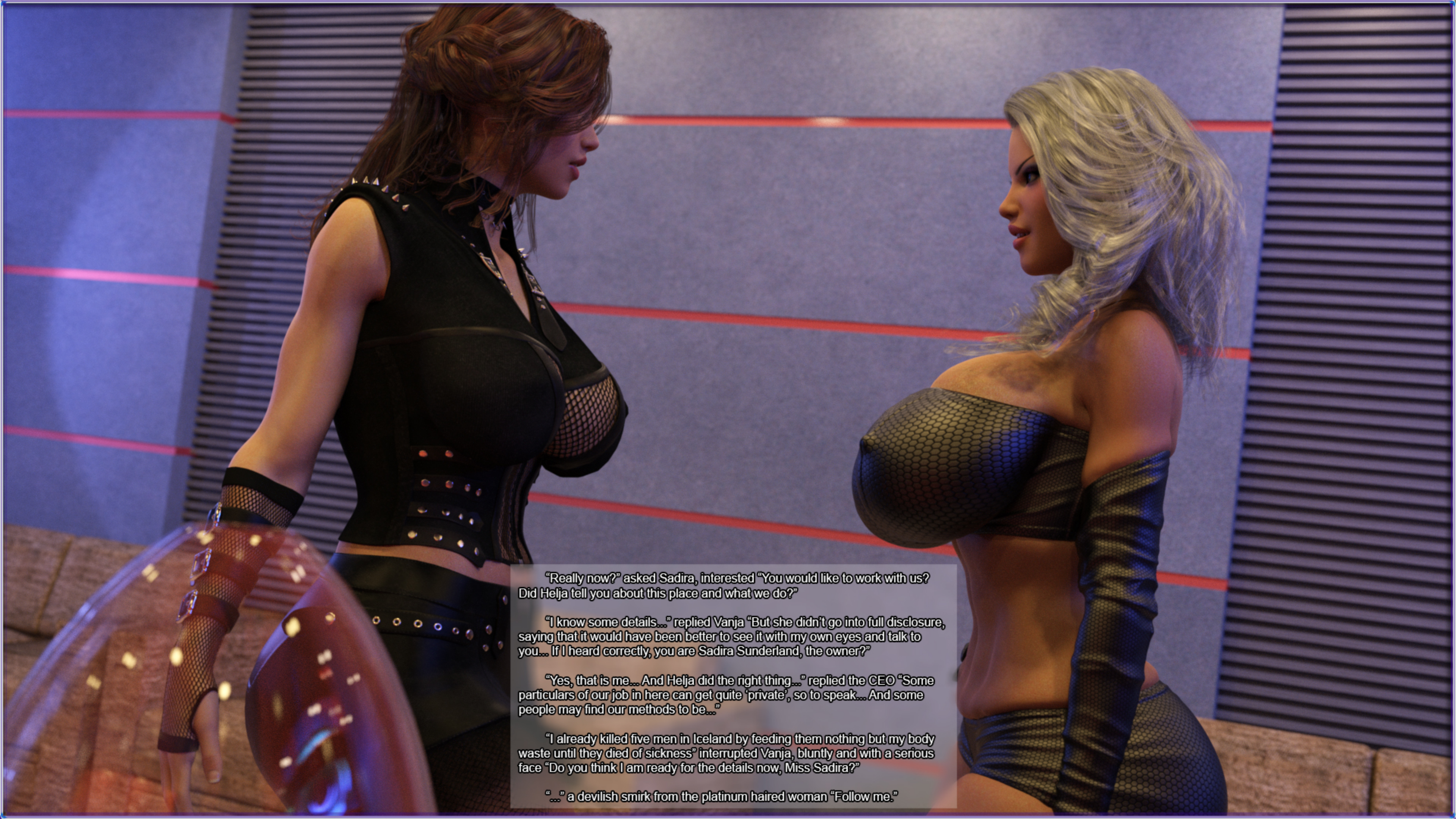
"Don't worry about that." replied Sadira "Care to introduce me, Claire?"

"Of course, ma'am... This is Vanja Jónsdóttir, a good friend of our Helja. She landed just a couple of hours ago after a long flight all the way from Reykjavik, Iceland." Claire spoke, in a very gentle and polite tone of voice "She was just stopping by to get a chance to speak to her friend, if that was possible."

Vanja was not extremely tall as Helja, standing 'just' at 178 centimeters, but her body looked to be a perfect war machine nevertheless: not just because of her beautiful facial features, that would be able to lure any man into her grasp, but for her legs: they looked incredibly thick and muscular, nothing would escape them without her consent... Sadira found herself noticing all of these details before anything else and a smirk formed on her lips.

"She knows already about our establishment" continued Claire "...and was telling me that she was interested in joining our Staff, that is if we have any openings available for her."





"Really now?" asked Sadira, interested "You would like to work with us? Did Helja tell you about this place and what we do?"

"I know some details..." replied Vanja "But she didn't go into full disclosure, saying that it would have been better to see it with my own eyes and talk to you... If I heard correctly, you are Sadira Sunderland, the owner?"

"Yes, that is me... And Helja did the right thing..." replied the CEO "Some particulars of our job in here can get quite 'private', so to speak... And some people may find our methods to be..."

"I already killed five men in Iceland by feeding them nothing but my body waste until they died of sickness" interrupted Vanja, bluntly and with a serious face "Do you think I am ready for the details now, Miss Sadira?"

"..." a devilish smirk from the platinum haired woman "Follow me."



"So, why did you do it?" asked Sadira, after walking for a bit into the lower floor corridor of the Spa, towards the room where Helja had been destroying the three Attorneys.

"Because they deserved it. Those assholes were responsible for having Helja expelled from competitive sports in Iceland... I had to make sure they paid dearly for having insulted her like that."

"A very loyal friend indeed... I like that." Commented Sadira "But why go to all these lengths? Why use that method, which must have taken, what... Ten days?"

"Sixteen days, three hours and fortyfour minutes is what took for the last one to die, to be precise." corrected the red-haired woman "I wanted to experiment on them, seeing how long some well trained, healthy men could last with eating and drinking nothing but body waste... And as well, the thrill of torturing them was quite exciting. That is all."

"Wow..." the owner of the Spa was pleasantly surprised "A true Viking woman uh? Cold hearted and ruthless..."

"You can bet your ass I am..." chuckled Vanja, playfully "So, where are we going?"

"Helja was tasked with the duty of killing three potential obstacles to our ascension. She should have been done by now, we're going to meet her in the room."

Sadira grabbed the handle of the door and twisted the knob...



...and both the women received one hell of a startle as a cloud of dust exploded when the door was completely opened: inside of the room, now wrecked and with bits of concrete that had burst from the floor littering it everywhere, was Helja... Now grown at least six times her regular size and pushing heavily on the ceiling, which was still resisting.

"S... Sadira... VANJA... Please help me!!" said the Scandinavian Amazon, clearly shocked by what was happening to her, had she not been terrified, she would have been happy to see her dear friend.



"Hvur djöfulinn?!" shouted Vanja in her native language, scared and backing away from her friend's huge hand "Helja! Wh... What has happened to you?!"

"I... I don't know... My body began to grow without control. Please make it stop! The building will crush me if I keep going like this!"

Sadira looked extremely serious as she began to walk inside of the room, not afraid at all.



"Helja, listen to me..." spoke the platinum haired woman "There is nothing to be afraid of, this is just your body adapting to the Gene of the Goddess and sprouting alive from being asleep for so long... You are having a growth spurt, it happened to me as well."

"H... How do I stop it? P... Please help!" said again Helja, panicking.

"Relax, Helja!" said Sadira, firmly "What you're going through was always meant to be, it was written in your DNA! You can control it, just in the same way you are able to decide how much you want to shrink the inferior males! I need you to breathe deeply, now, my girl... In with your nose, out with your mouth... Focus..."

Helja did just that, under the incredulous eyes of Vanja, whom observed from the distance. Slowly, the Scandinavian Amazon began to feel herself calming down and the growth stopped... Her huge body tingled all over and slowly began to lose mass finally.



"That's it, girl..." said Sadira again with a very soothing tone of voice, almost as if she was a psychiatrist trying to calm down her patient "You are not one of those walking ballsacks... You are a Woman, you are a superior being, part of a gender that was always meant to rule the apes... You are in complete control of this..."

Helja let the voice of the CEO enter in her ears, letting it soothe her... And she could feel herself shrinking even more, slowly returning to her regular size.

"I... I feel so tired..." said the red haired Amazon.

"Yes, it's normal... Your body needs nutrition to grow, you cannot simply do it like that... Just keep breathing in and out, calm yourself down..."

Helja kept doing what she was told and feeling her body lose even more mass... And when she was back to her normal height, she passed out on the floor.



Sadira observed with pride in her eyes onto the unconscious body of her dear Helja: not only the woman had awoken the true essence of the Gene of the Goddess inside of her, but even succeeded in controlling her initial growth... This was absolutely perfect, for the platinum haired woman.

"W... What the fuck was that all about?!" asked Vanja, all of a sudden.

"You will get to know very soon, my dear." replied Sadira "For now, I believe that your friend requires your assistance.. Do you not agree?"

The red haired Viking, as Sadira named her, rushed inside immediately.



Vanja rushed to Helja's side, crouching and immediately starting to caress her naked back, speaking gently to her...



"Helja... Heyrir þú í mér? Helja? Er í lagi með þig?" she kept saying, in her native language, trying to see if she could manage to get her senses back.

"Stay with her... If she wakes up, just reassure her... I am coming back soon with the other girls and we will take her to the infirmary, ok?" said Sadira.

"S... Sure... I will stay here... Just hurry up!" replied Vanja, with clear worry in her voice.

"Don't worry, she is not in danger. I will be back as soon as I can."

And with that, the CEO left the room.

As she was walking away, a devilish smile spread wide on her lips, from ear to ear... She looked ahead of herself with so much confidence, her steps were prideful.

Now, she was no more the only one who could grow... She had found out the real formula to recreate the perfect Gene of the Goddess, she could give this power to any woman she wanted...

Soon enough, the Spa would have been able to create an army of chosen and loyal superior beings that could turn into Giantesses and shrink down all the opposition at the same time... Her dream of a perfect Femdom Society, a utopia that seemed impossible to realize at first, was now within her grasp.

The song on the speakers ended, with the lead singer shouting with a very deep and strong voice "Master and Servant!".



*To be
Continued*